YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Platform for Labour Improvement & Success

A proposal for the United Nations Development Programme by the 2014 Salzburg Academy on Media & Global Change
INTRODUCTION

The BiHPLUS project will create a website targeted towards the young and unemployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We seek to help empower post-graduates with self-paced online tools to help overcome the mismatch of skills contributing to the imbalance of labor supply and demand in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The website will act as a one-stop site for employment-related resources, offering basic training and technical education online to prospective members of the workforce, cultivating the youth’s potential to gain new skills which will help in building a professional career path.

PART I: FRAMING THE PROBLEM

Country: Bosnia and Herzegovina

Issue: Youth Unemployment

Rationale:

With an estimated population of 950,000 from ages 15 to 29, the youth represents approximately a quarter of the total population in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As the youth unemployment rate stands at about 63%, the country witnesses the second highest rate of youth unemployment in Europe and the world - second to Armenia among 129 countries (World Bank 2014). As a result, youth unemployment continues to form a crucial issue for Bosnia Herzegovina, as it constitutes one of the major causes for poverty in the country. Youth unemployment is also a major concern for other developing countries: studies show that the more people struggle to find jobs in their first few years, the more they will be at disadvantage for the rest of their career (Huffington Post). For this reason, tackling youth unemployment is crucial in order to put an end to the upcoming “generation jobless” reaching the labor force.

More than a decade after the end of the Bosnian war, Bosnia and Herzegovina still faces deep ethnic divisions among the different communities that make up the country’s population (Bosnians, Croats and Serbs). Political deadlocks, instability and ethnic divisions make the country one of the most corrupt state in Europe (Transparency International). Despite the challenging transition from war to peace, Bosnia is also facing the challenge of moving from socialism to capitalism. Consequently, the youth seem to suffer from this transition to the modern market democracy. As new industries continue to flourish in the country and the privatization process continues to unfold, a mismatch emerged between the skill supply and demand. One of the fundamental causes of this mismatch is the failure of the education system in Bosnia to “equip its graduates with employable skills” (Confederation Suisse). Subsequently, numerous job vacancies cannot be filled.

The issue of youth unemployment in Bosnia did not seem to enjoy the support of the media. In February 2014, while protests were rising in the streets of Bosnia over high unemployment, the media seem to have provided little coverage of the events. For instance,
CNN and CBC, purposely limited its coverage in order to limit the spill-over effect in the Balkans (AboveTopSecret). However, media has power to gather worldwide attention over a particular issue, which in our case, can result in influencing and pressuring more developed countries to assist Bosnia in reducing its youth unemployment. As for our suggested website, general media is a word spreading tool addressing the project potential, its impacts and benefits.

PART II: THE SOLUTION

The proposal aims to address the problem of youth unemployment by bridging the gaps between employers and employees while also creating a joint platform linking different stakeholders. The courses will rely on an open-source backbone fueled by content from open-source websites as a start, with Universities’ involvement coming as second step. Content will be presented in a structure that keeps basic levels unlocked for all fields, while also being designed in a simple structure to facilitate navigation. Courses will be focused on different fields such as business, engineering, management, etc. and will also provide tips and tutorials for proper vernacular work conduct and culture localized on the country’s norms and values. As users complete the sessions, more advanced ones will unlock after attaining a minimum passing score on the final quiz of each session. This quiz will be randomly generated from a test bank in order to minimize cheating. The website will allow users to sign up for an account, take courses, check their progress and use the tools to train for interviews.

The platform will offer video courses that will help develop the skills in order to reduce the mismatch: the videos will be graded and the progress will be filed so that both firms and pupils can keep track of it in order to pair interests. This approach aims to engage both sides and motivates them as it answers both needs: the employers; by enabling them to look for candidates of their interests (who fulfill their requirements), and the potential employees by enabling them to enroll in courses from their study discipline or ones tailored to their future jobs. The videos will also provide tips for job interviews, resume writing and job application forms that will equip the students with the necessary tools to increase their employment opportunities.

This approach will be effective because large Internet penetration levels in the country will enable us to reach a wider audience of our main target, the Bosnian youth (aged 16-25). In 2013, the number of Bosnians with access to the Internet was 2.3 million, which amounts to approximately 67.9% of the whole population (Internet Society). Meanwhile, according to Socialbakers, people aged between 18-24 are the most active Internet users. According to the Telecommunications Indicators from Communications Regulatory Agency of Bosnia & Herzegovina, the total number of active mobile subscriptions in 2013 was 3.49 million, which represents 99% of the entire population. Among them, 90% of mobile users have 3G/4G capability within mobile networks, which amounts to almost 3.14 million people (Communications Regulatory Agency of Bosnia & Herzegovina).
Implementation:

In January 2010, a project funded by MGD-F brought United Nations bodies including the UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNV and the IOM together to partner with the national ministries of civil affairs, security, human rights and refugees, and foreign affairs, as well as the government of Spain to create the Youth Employability and Retention Programme (YERP.) The program facilitated the creation of 16 Centers for Information, Counseling, and Education (CISO) around Bosnia, each location providing career counseling and on-site skills training especially for the young and unemployed (MDG Achievement Fund b) . Although YERP expired in June 2013, we hope to engage existing stakeholders (counselors, volunteers, former clients, donors, etc.) in Bosnia to reuse existing infrastructure and resources.

Given UNDP’s previous efforts in counseling and training, and following its success in helping 2.37% of the unemployed youth find jobs, our main platform aims to build upon UNDP’s work by providing a more powerful digital media presence. Since websites are one of the most efficient ways for delivering free digital content, our online resource center will offer online tutorials that will help prospective job applicants to advance in their professions and will act as a digital version of the previous UNDP’s offices in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Building the website will cost around $2K or $3K for the basic structure to be ready. The cost of hosting the website will be around $100/year on an ASP.NET platform. Seeing that we have been able to build parts of the website in a week which shows that the process is feasible and can be completed in a short period of time. It could be launched in late September/early October. For the meantime, we will focus on using open-source websites to gather and deliver content. In the long run, institutions of higher education can be enlisted to assist in providing resources. Future partnerships with companies in related job fields would be the optimal outcome in order to sustain the website in terms of funding and industry support, as well as strengthening the connection between the employer and potential employee as trusted and responsible parties.

In order to assess the outcomes of our project and its reach, we will implement analytics to collect data on the amount of traffic on our website. Users will need to create a profile if hoping to use our online resources, such as video tutorials and courses. If entering the website as a guest, a site tour will be provided to help facilitate navigation and learn more about its features through the testimonies of people who have previously benefited from CISOs. Translating user activity into data will serve as a justification, proof and incentive for future funders, which we project will be a potential mixture of governmental entities such as the Ministry of Education and Science, universities, and private companies.
Website Architecture:

- Home
- Job Bank
- About Us

Home Page
- Online Courses
- Your Account (Log IN)
- Resources
- Sign Up (Log Out)
- Our Network
- Contact Us

ONLINE COURSES
- Improve English literacy (To seduce multinationals)
  - Word definitions
  - Sentence completion
  - Grammar & Syntax
  - Sound files for pronunciation
- Improve IT Skills
  - Office Skills Training (Online Session & Courses).
  - Job Interview Tips (Based On Local Language & Norms)
  - How To Speak
  - What To Wear
  - Usual Documents To Get
  - PDFs: Powerpoint Presentations, Short Videos
  - Templates (.doc, .docx)
  - Online CV form creation tool (PDF output downloadable)

RESOURCES
- How To Write Your CV + Samples (In English, Serbian & Croatia)

OUR NETWORK
- Read Testimonials
- Get In Touch With previous graduates.
- Articles
- Videos
- Contact Information
- Google Geo Charts

JOB BANK
Geographical Location
- Not Accessible To the User, User selects 3 choices for job positions & based on the priority and skills, a notification will be sent to him

Database:
SQL Server
Site Admin Adds Jobs through a separate Job-Entry Page
Our Homepage is the same for Guests & Registered users but the only difference lies in the code and the way the links and buttons work and where they redirect you to.
The Contribute section allows the prospective contributors to enlist their help. By selecting the resources they can provide we can keep track of our resource progress and work on improving resources that are lacking in quantity or quality. The How Did You Hear About Us question is there for us to know which of our marketing efforts is reaching the most people.
Creating an account requires a username & a password at this stage. However the next iteration will require the prospective user to submit his Gender, Birthday, Email and educational level.
Going to the courses section you are given a choice: Choose a Topic (Engineering, Business) and Sub-Topic (dependant on the Topic). Once both are selected the list of courses is displayed underneath.
The user can check as many courses as he wants to and then press Continue to access an overview regarding each of them.

In our case we chose the first course “ECE01” and pressed Continue. We are now shown the course along with an image related to this course and our current progress regarding exercises completion and Quiz grades.
The course overview contains a great amount of tools and information related to the course.

The university logo shows which College contributed to the course. Only one university can contribute to provide the course.

A small introductory video to the right gives an overview of the course with Professors and students sharing quick information about this course (No more than 30 seconds).

Information regarding the Course are presented to the left of the page, here we can learn about the prerequisites, the concentration track related to this course, the course outcomes and the course format.

**Course At A Glance** shows the requirements of the course, in our case the course will be reset to its initial blank stage when the time limit (4 weeks) is exceeded. It also shows an estimate of working hours per week, followed by the spoken language and the subtitles.

You can also order a physical certificate for a fee (your online certificate is provided for free and stays with your account).

A radical change of the course might require you to retake the course if you haven’t completed more advanced courses in that area.
Determine the response
\( V_o(j\omega)/V_{SRC}(j\omega) \)
both in magnitude and phase, the passband gain, and the corner frequency in Figure P10.1.5.

**Figure P10.1.5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voltage</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Resistance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(A) increases</td>
<td>increases</td>
<td>increases</td>
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<tr>
<td>(B) does not change</td>
<td>does not change</td>
<td>does not change</td>
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<tr>
<td>(C) does not change</td>
<td>decreases</td>
<td>increases</td>
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<tr>
<td>(D) does not change</td>
<td>increases</td>
<td>decreases</td>
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<tr>
<td>(E) decreases</td>
<td>decreases</td>
<td>decreases</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**CHOOSE YOUR ANSWER:**

**PROGRESS: 10%**

This is a work-in-progress of one of the exercises in the course. It is multiple choice and is different from one user to another. You can check your progress and have a limited time to solve the question once you commit to it. Before committing the questions would be blurred out and you can only commit to one question at any given moment.
APPENDICES

1. In-depth country profile

With an estimated population of 950,000 aged from 15 to 29, the youth represents approximately a quarter of the total population in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As the youth unemployment rate stands at around 63%, the country witnesses the second highest rate of youth unemployment in Europe and the world - second to Armenia among 129 countries (World Bank 2014).

The youth therefore continues to face considerable barriers when trying to integrate into the working force. Many vocational and tertiary graduates are unable to find jobs in relevant domains, while a considerable amount of them turn to the informal sector for low quality jobs. According to the World Bank data, “less than half of all employed people below the age of 29 manage to find work in a field in which they were educated”; creating a prominent incentive for youth migration (World Bank 2013).

As a result, youth unemployment continues to form a crucial issue for Bosnia and Herzegovina, as it constitutes one of the major causes for poverty in the country. Youth unemployment is also a major concern for other developing countries: studies show that the more people struggle to find jobs in their first few years, the more they will be at disadvantage during the rest of their careers (Huffington Post). According to the International Labor Office, the number of youth, aged between 16-24, unemployed and not enrolled in any education or training, is larger than the population of the United States and the number is expected to reach 660 million by 2015 (Huffington Post). For this reason, tackling youth unemployment is crucial in order to put an end to the upcoming “generation jobless” reaching the labor force.

2. Media landscape

Since the website is at the core of our project, online media landscape is crucial. Large Internet penetration levels in the country will enable us to reach a wider audience of our main target, the Bosnian youth (aged 16-25). In 2013, the number of Bosnians with access to the Internet was 2.3 million, which amounts to approximately 67.9% (Internet Society) of the whole population. Meanwhile, according to socialbakers, people aged between 18-24 are the most
active Internet users. According to the Telecommunications Indicators from Communications Regulatory Agency of Bosnia & Herzegovina, the total number of active mobile subscriptions in 2013 was 3.49 million, which represents 99% of the entire population. Among them, 90% of mobile users have 3G/4G capability within mobile networks, which amounts to almost 3.14 million people (Communications Regulatory Agency BiH).

![Internet penetration graph]

Source: Telecommunications indicators, from 2005 to 2013, by Communications Regulatory Agency BiH.

As shown in the below graph, the highest percentage of Internet users is amongst the younger population. According to the Open Society Foundation, in 2012, more than 75% of the BiH Internet users aged between 10 and 75 use the Internet every day and even several times per day. Meanwhile, the 15–24 age group covers 93% of users and therefore forms the biggest group of Internet users in BiH, which will enable us to spread our project and reach a large audience as the latter is our target audience (Open Society Foundation).

![Internet Coverage Among Age Groups]


Social media outlets, such as Facebook and Youtube, have a large popularity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the Regional Reports of Social Media Platforms, social media in BiH is widely used, especially among young people. There are 1.16 million Facebook users in Bosnia, leading to an 80.5% Facebook penetration in the country. Furthermore, Facebook receives more than 500,000 unique visitors a day from Bosnia only. Youtube is also popular in BiH. It receives over 300,000 unique visitors daily from Bosnia (MVF Global Customer Acquisition). These social media outlets could serve as influential platforms for advertisement for our project.
3. Background research on issue

As demonstrated above, youth unemployment in Bosnia and Herzegovina needs immediate action. Previous efforts have tackled mostly one side of the problem, either the market side (employers) or the young Bosnians (prospective employees); hence efforts still need to be integrated into one bilateral approach. In the case of BiH, digital tools will enable us to fill the gap between the market and fresh graduates by creating an online platform linking both sides. The advantage of using the digital media is enabled and enhanced by the high internet penetration rates in the country and especially among young Bosnians, which will allow us to reach a wide audience of the Bosnian youth.

Given UNDP’s previous counseling and advising work, and following its success in helping 2.37% of the unemployed youth find jobs, our main platform aims to build upon UNDP’s work by providing it with a more powerful digital media presence. Since websites are one of the most efficient ways for delivering free digital content, we decided to create an online resource center, which will offer online training that will help prospective job applicants to advance in their professions and will act as a digital outlet for local UNDP offices in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The courses will rely on an open-source backbone fueled by content from open-source websites as a start, with Universities’ involvement coming as second step. Content will be presented in a structure that keeps basic levels unlocked for all fields, while also being designed in a simple structure to facilitate navigation. Courses will be focused on different fields such as business, engineering, management, etc. and will also provide tips and tutorials for proper vernacular work conduct and culture localized on the country’s norms and values. As users completes the sessions, more advanced ones will unlock after attaining a minimum passing score on the final quiz of each session. This quiz will be randomly generated from a test bank in order to minimize cheating. The website will allow users to sign up for an account, take courses, check their progress and use the tools to train for interviews.

4. Related or similar initiatives, successes/challenges

Youth Employability and Retention Programme

The Youth Employability and Retention Programme [YERP] was implemented for three years in Bosnia and Herzegovina from January 2010 to June 2013. The program was jointly organized by the UNDP, UNICEF, UNV, IOM and the Bosnian government and was aimed to increase youth employability by “increasing the capacities of the education system, enhancing the capacities of the Civil Society and minimising the negative impact of irregular migration” (MDG Fund). The project is financed by the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund, an initiative of the Spanish government, with an estimated budget of 6 million USD. With 17 information, counseling and training centers across the country, the programme was able to
assist and train more than 20,000 unemployed youth, while more than 3,000 others were able to find jobs (MDG Fund). As for migration, “mechanisms for monitoring migration” were put in place and legal migration was encouraged through benefits and opportunities (MDG Achievement Fund a). The programme succeeded in that sense, but at a rate of 3,000 employed out of the more than 20,000 assisted since its implementation, a considerable coverage would take years: without considering the total number of unemployed youth, that represents a 15%, which can be expanded when offering those same services by widening access to them through digital media. Encompassing such an effort is not an easy task, therefore convincing others to volunteer, as something additional for their CV is a good idea to expand the programme’s reach and increase the number of centers and offices.

Case Study: Coursera (MOOCs)

During the last couple of years, Massive Open Online Courses have been gaining reputation and users. One of the biggest MOOC’s platforms, Coursera, reached 4 million students in less than three years since its foundation (Forbes.) Students can obtain certificates or Verified Certificates as proof of their enrollment and fulfillment. Coursera recently created Specializations, a certification obtained after completing connected courses under a certain subject. As stated in its website, “some students who are currently enrolled at other universities have been able to get credit for taking these courses” (Coursera), and others have increased their job opportunities as well. The platform offers courses created by world universities in many fields, with science, technology, engineering, programming, economics, and management, among them. But instead of an actual education institution, Coursera is considered by many as a continuing education platform. The challenge with this platform is that many courses (depending on the universities that creates them) stick to old pedagogical norms instead of seizing tools and models in accordance to digital media. Also, certified completion rates after enrolling in a course strive under 20% for most courses (Universities UK). New ways to engage students to complete their courses are needed.

5. Detailed elements of proposal

Building the website will cost around $2K or $3K for the basic structure to be ready. The cost of hosting the website will be around $100/year on an ASP.NET platform. Seeing that we have been able to build parts of the website in a short period of time shows that the process is feasible and can be completed in a short period of time. We are aiming for a launch in late September/Early October. For the meantime, we will focus on using open-source websites to gather and deliver content.

However, in the long run, institutions of higher education can be enlisted for resources. Further steps of the project will involve cooperation from educational institutions such as universities and vocational or technical schools that will together generate new new and localized video lectures. Such cooperation will give universities the opportunity to study the
missing skills and tools needed to respond to this issue; which might potentially also lead them at a later stage to update their curricula.

We would also like to engage former BiH Plus students who would be willing to share with others what they have learned and help them acquire new skills. Enterprises’s support is also necessary to know and understand what are the skills demanded by the market. They can be engaged through enterprise coopertition (cooperation+competition) and rankings on issues such as trained staff, employee progress, skill development, labour efficiency, workers productivity, etc. On the other hand, the support offered by firms and businesses can be perceived as social action, therefore gaining in public perception. Unemployment is a big issue for the Bosnian governments, especially considering the uprisings that took place during the first months of 2014. As a whole, all pillars of a State are involved: both parts of civil society, nonprofit and profit -private enterprises-, as well as the government. Unemployment concerns them all.
6. List of resources


