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Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



Project “Youth Digital Kickstart”, № 2022-1-BG01-KA210-YOU-000081205

# **Report on a qualitative study with focus groups in the town of Vidin**

*Discussion focused on opportunities for career guidance and overcoming youth unemployment by creating conditions for sustainable integration in the labor market, providing chances for career development and personal satisfaction.*

**This report has been created under the "Youth Digital Kickstart" project with #2022-1-BG01-KA210-YOU-000081205 under the "ERASMUS+" Program**

**The project is implemented by "ESTETICA" in partnership with the Association "Neoanalysis"**



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## **Introduction:**

Youth unemployment is one of the biggest socio-economic problems in Bulgaria and in many other countries in the world. It is not surprising that young people are particularly affected by unemployment, as they are at a decisive stage in their lives when they have to start their careers. Although youth unemployment is seen as a problem that affects many countries in the European Union, this problem is particularly acute in Bulgaria, where young people are subjected to significant economic and social difficulties.

In the Vidin region, as in other places in Bulgaria, youth unemployment is a serious problem. The population of the town of Vidin is about 40,000 inhabitants, and part of them are young people who have completed their secondary education or are studying at universities and colleges. Although the city offers a number of employment opportunities, there are still many young people who are unemployed or working in low-pay jobs that do not match their skills and experience.

In order to overcome this problem, it is necessary to consider different ways of creating conditions for the sustainable integration of young people in the labor market. One of these ways is through the use of focus groups to focus on the discussion of career guidance opportunities and tackling youth unemployment. This report aims to examine what focus groups are, what their advantages are and how they can be used to overcome youth unemployment by creating conditions for the sustainable integration of young people in the labor market and what are the results of the project's focus groups, related to unemployment.

One of the most serious problems related to youth unemployment is that it is constantly growing. Although young people are exposed to many opportunities and have numerous skills, many of them still feel hopeless because of the lack of jobs. This can lead to young people feeling isolated and helpless, which, in turn, can have a negative effect on their mental status and society as a whole.

In this context, focus groups are a tool that can help to understand the biggest problems and challenges that young people face when it comes to finding a job. Through focus groups,



young people can express their opinions and ideas, as well as learn about different opinions and experiences of other young people in similar situations. In this sense, focus groups can be used as a tool to promote debate and exchange of information between young people and professionals in the field of employment and education.

Digital technologies represent an important element of modern society and are an important factor for the sustainable integration of young people in the labor market. Nowadays, when the whole world is connected through the Internet, young people have endless opportunities to get acquainted with new technologies and be trained in this field. This gives them the opportunity to develop their skills and prepare for their future careers. However, this does not mean that digital technologies can replace the human factor and contact. On the contrary, modern technologies can be used to support and improve communication and cooperation between people, especially in the context of career guidance and improvement of professional skills.

One of the main objectives of the conducted focus groups is to explore what the needs and challenges of young people are and how they can be solved by creating conditions for sustainable integration in the labor market, including with the help of digital technologies and digital arts. The focus groups focused on various aspects of career guidance, such as professional skills and experience, labor market requirements, training opportunities and training programs, and how digital technologies can be used to improve these aspects. Therefore, it is important to develop and improve programs and courses that train young people in digital skills and provide them with practical experience in this field.

The purpose of the report is to present an analysis of the research results and to propose adequate solutions to support the sustainable integration of young people in the labor market in the area. These solutions may include proposals to create new training programs, establish partnerships with businesses, develop digital resources, among others.

In conclusion, conducting focus groups is an effective way to explore the needs and challenges of youth in Bulgaria, especially in smaller cities and rural areas, and to prepare concrete solutions to support their efforts for sustainable integration into the labor market.



Considering the importance of digital technologies in modern society, they can be an important tool to overcome youth unemployment and to create conditions for career development and personal satisfaction. It is important to ensure the availability of educational programs that prepare young people to work with digital technologies, as well as to promote the development of the digital arts sector. However, we must not forget that digital technologies cannot replace the human factor and we must not forget the importance of personal contact and interpersonal interactions in the professional sphere.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that conducting focus groups is an important tool for researching the needs and challenges of young people in Bulgaria, but on its own, it is insufficient. In order to achieve real results and support efforts to tackle youth unemployment, concerted and targeted action is needed by various institutions, including government, educational institutions, employers and non-governmental organisations. This requires sustainable partnership and cooperation between all stakeholders and constant dialogue with youth to ensure that career guidance and education programs meet the real needs of young people and are relevant to the modern labor market.

It seems clear that youth unemployment is a serious problem in Bulgaria, but it is also seen that there are solutions and ways to support youth in their efforts for sustainable integration into the labor market. Conducting focus groups and researching the needs and challenges of the youth can serve as a basis for developing real programs and measures to support the youth in Bulgaria. But in order to achieve real results, it is necessary to have a sustainable partnership and cooperation between the various institutions and stakeholders to ensure that the programs and measures meet the real needs and problems of the youth in Bulgaria.



## Presenting the issue:

Youth unemployment is one of the biggest socio-economic problems Bulgaria faces. Although this problem is not unique to Bulgaria, youth unemployment in our country is at a level that is significantly higher than the average for the European Union.

According to Eurostat data for the third quarter of 2021, youth unemployment (age up to 25) in Bulgaria is 19.3%, which is higher than the average level in the European Union, which is 14.1%. In addition, youth unemployment in Bulgaria has been increasing since 2020, when it was 18.6%.

When looking at youth unemployment by region in Bulgaria, it is noticeable that it is particularly high in regions with low incomes and limited economic opportunities. In the region of the town of Vidin, youth unemployment is more than double the national average, reaching 42.4% according to the data of the National Statistical Institute for 2020.

This problem has a significant negative impact on young people and their personalities.

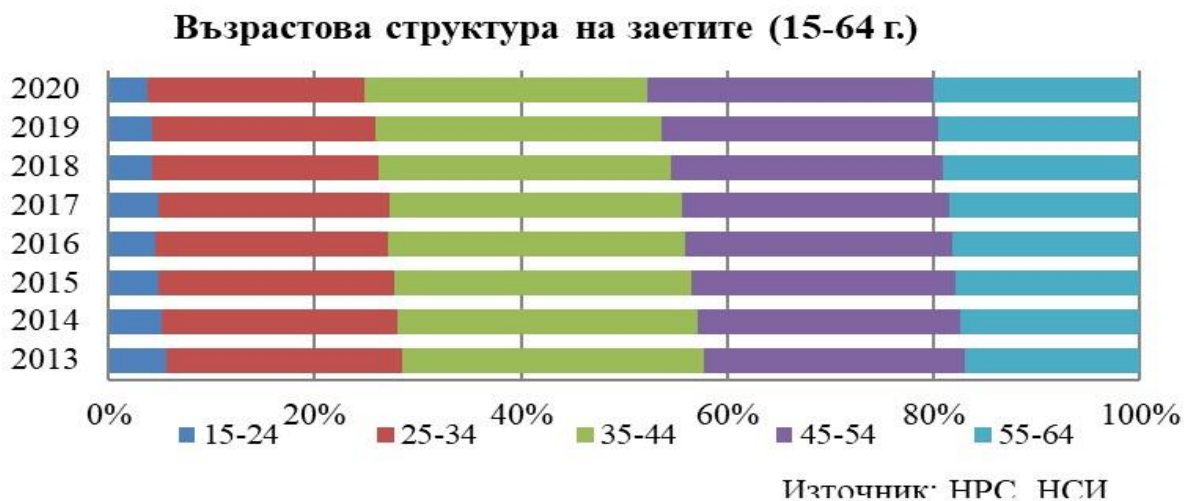
Unemployment can have many negative impacts, one of the biggest being alienation and lack of confidence in one's skills and abilities. Young people who cannot find work can become depressed, feel worthless and can lose faith in the future. They may feel left out by society and may have difficulty maintaining personal relationships.

Additionally, unemployment can also have a financial impact on youth, who may struggle to meet basic needs such as food, rent and medical care. They may find themselves in a position where they are forced to accept jobs that are not related to their interests or skills, which can lead to additional levels of stress and frustration.

Unemployment can have long-term effects on young people, who may have difficulty acquiring the necessary skills and experience to compete in the labor market when job opportunities become available. This can have negative consequences for their future success and financial well-being. According to the World Bank's Youth Employment Development Report



2020, youth who are unemployed for long periods of time are less likely to find work in the future. This factor can contribute to increasing youth unemployment and hinder their economic prosperity.

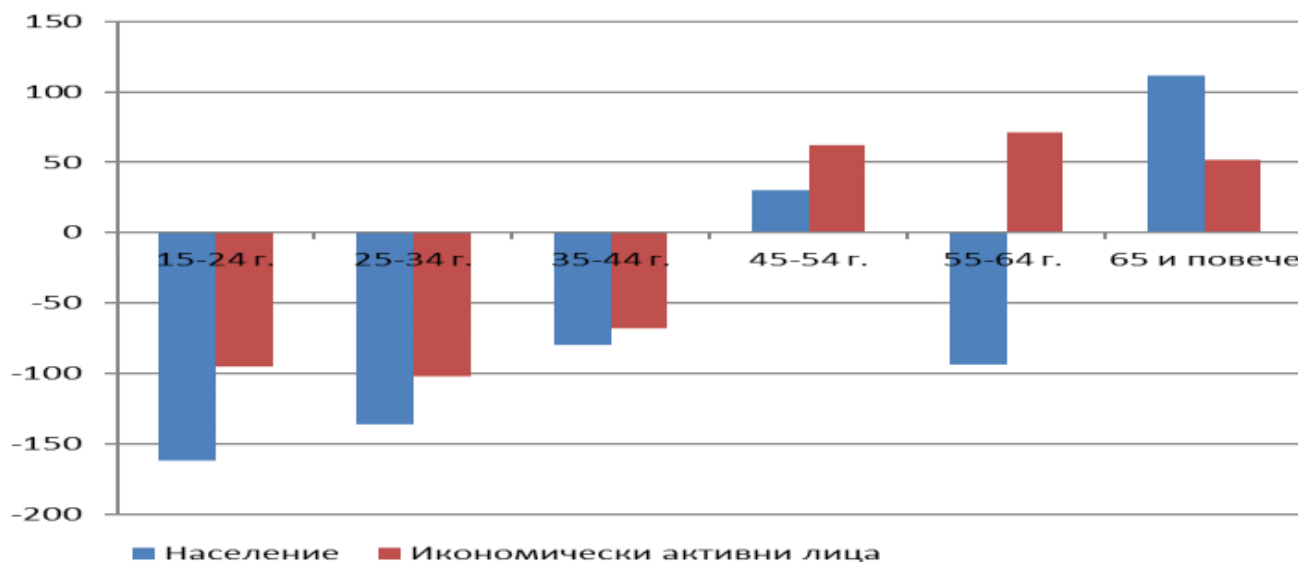


As can be seen on the graph, during the period 2013 - 2020, there was an increase in the number of employed persons in every age group, with the exception of the youngest, from 15 to 24 years old. The largest growth of the employed is in the age group of 45-54 years old and 55-64 years old, with their shares reaching 26.8% and 19.6%, respectively. The decline in youth employment and the rise in the employment of older groups is due to the changing age structure of the population as a result of its aging.

This can also be seen in the next graph. The negative growth of economically inactive persons in the age intervals 15-24 years, 25-34 years and 35-44 years is mainly due to a decrease in the population. Despite the observed decrease in the population in the 55-64 age range, an increase in economic activity is observed due to the longer stay in the labor market.



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Source: Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2030

The reasons for this are firstly, young people often do not have enough experience in the labor market to make them competitive compared to more experienced job applicants. Second, the education system does not always offer skills and competencies that meet the needs of employers and the labor market. Third, many young people choose to continue their education rather than enter the labor market, leading to increased competition for a limited amount of jobs.

On the other hand, unemployment among older people in Bulgaria is decreasing, due to factors such as the greater experience of the workforce and better adaptation to changing labor market conditions. Also, older people tend to have more stable jobs and less tendency to change employers, giving them more job security.

**In order to reduce youth unemployment in Bulgaria, it is necessary to take measures regarding:**

- Investment in education and preparation of young people for the labor market.
- Encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation to create more opportunities for young people to set up their own businesses and be self-employed.
- Awareness to encourage digital professions, such as:





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- Programmers;
- Web designers;
- Cybersecurity specialists etc.

The aforementioned offer very good opportunities for career development, high pay and flexible working hours. Moreover, they are associated with innovative projects and technologies that contribute to the development of business and the economy as a whole.

### **The development of digital professions in Bulgaria**

In order to promote the development of digital professions in Bulgaria, it is necessary to invest in education and provide funds for training the youth in these fields. Also, conditions must be created for the development of businesses in the above-described areas, which would lead to more jobs and increased competitiveness on the labor market.

Ultimately, the promotion of digital professions will not only help to reduce youth unemployment, but will also contribute to the modernization and competitiveness of the Bulgarian economy on a global scale.

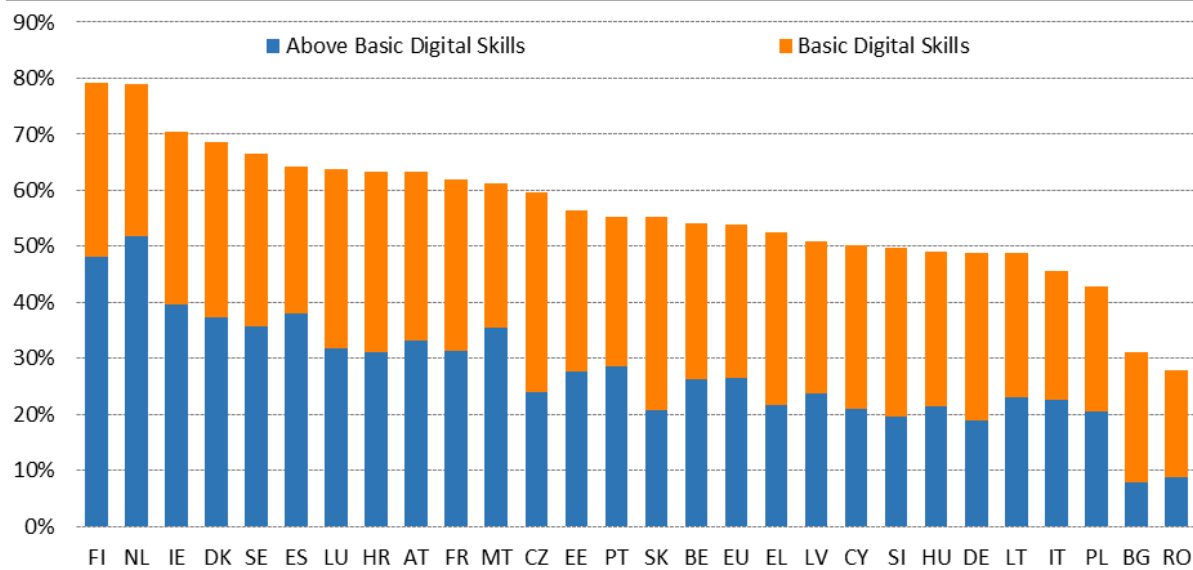
According to various sources, the level of digital literacy in Bulgaria is far below the EU average. Although progress has been made in the development of digital skills, there is still much work to be done to improve the overall level of digital literacy in the country. This is important not only for the personal development of citizens, but also for Bulgaria's competitiveness on the international stage.

The graph below shows that according to the 2020 DESI European Digital Skills Index, Bulgaria is in 27th place among the 28 EU member states in terms of digital skills, only ahead of Romania and last in digital skills above average. This means that there is great potential for improving the



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level of digital skills in Bulgaria.



Another study by the America for Bulgaria Foundation states that as of 2020, 40% of young people in Bulgaria believe that digital technologies are of great importance for their future career. However, the same survey states that only 17% of young people have enough digital skills to take advantage of the opportunities that these technologies provide, which means that there is a need for more serious efforts to improve education and digital literacy of young people in Bulgaria.

Nowadays, digital technologies play an increasingly important role in the economy and the labor market. More and more companies require their employees to have digital skills and to be familiar with the new technologies that are used in production, sales and marketing. Therefore, the availability of digital skills can be a key factor in the success of youth job search and overcoming youth unemployment.

At the same time, digital professions are on the rise and can provide opportunities for career growth and development for young people. For example, programmers, web designers, marketing specialists and digital managers are increasingly in demand in the labor market, and these professions also offer high salaries. Thus, the acquisition of digital skills and qualifications can provide opportunities for young people to focus on professional realization in these fields.



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In conclusion, digital professions and the acquisition of digital skills can represent an important opportunity to overcome youth unemployment in Bulgaria. Creating favorable conditions for the development of these professions and skills is essential for the future of the economy and for the success of young people in the labor market.



## **METHODOLOGY, TASKS AND ORGANIZATION OF THE RESEARCH:**

### **- Aims and objectives and research methodology:**

Within the framework of this activity, the target group for conducting 5 focus groups are young people from the Vidin region, Bulgaria between 18 and 30 years old, not engaged in work, including young people at risk of social exclusion and those from marginalized communities who are interested in developing digital skills.

Each of the focus groups includes 10 people, selected by the team of the lead organization in cooperation with local youth development organizations.

The purpose of conducting the focus groups is to conduct a qualitative study of the needs of young people in learning innovative, digital skills with a view to their career realization. The idea of using focus groups for this purpose arose from the fact that they are an appropriate method of gathering information that can be used to better understand the problem and formulate effective solutions.

The focus groups were led by a moderator, a representative of the lead organization team, who directed the discussion to issues related to career guidance opportunities and tackling youth unemployment. The aim was to identify the problems, needs and motivation of the participants and to propose effective solutions for them.

The focus groups were conducted in the Vidin region of Bulgaria, which was chosen as a location due to the high youth unemployment rate in this region. The target group for conducting the focus groups are young people with a diverse profile, but with a primary interest in acquiring digital skills and their career development. This will help to obtain a comprehensive view of the needs of young people in this area and to formulate effective solutions to improve their opportunities for career development and successful integration into the labor market.

The information collected from the focus groups will be analyzed and processed using qualitative methods for statistical analysis and data interpretation. On the basis of the obtained results,



proposals and recommendations will be prepared to improve the training program for young people in the field of digital skills and their career development. Thus, the research will contribute to the development of effective strategies to improve the educational system and career opportunities of young people in the field of digital technologies, which is essential for the future development of their career and their successful integration into the labor market.

### **Questions for discussion during qualitative research with focus groups:**

#### **Demographic questions:**

- What is your age?
- What is your gender?
- What education do you have?
- How many years of work experience do you have?

#### **Socio-economic issues:**

- Do you think that the university/school provides the necessary knowledge and skills for successful implementation on the labor market?
- Do you think that the family plays an important role in determining the professional path of each individual?
- In your opinion, what are the main difficulties in finding a job among young people under 30 years of age?
- Do you think that employers should invest more in the initial training of personnel in order to facilitate candidates without work experience?
- What are your priorities for choosing a workplace?

#### **Digital knowledge and experience:**

- Are you interested in digital art?
- Can you define yourself as a creator of digital art?



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- Do you believe that digital professions are an opportunity to overcome the demographic crisis and unemployment in the poorest regions of Bulgaria?
- Are you familiar with blockchain technology, cryptocurrency and NFT (Non Fungible Token)?
- Would you be involved in future project activities and training related to the creation and marketing of digital art?



**ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH RESULTS:**

**Analysis of demographic issues:**

Of the study participants, 58% were female and 42% were male.

56% of the participants were aged 18 to 24, the remaining 44% were aged 25 to 30. In the 18 to 24 age group, 68% were female and 32% were male. In the second age group of 25 to 30 years, 41% were women and 59% were men.

In terms of their education, the participants indicated the following - 20 people have a secondary education, 4 people have a primary education, 14 people have a bachelor's degree and 12 people have a master's degree.



In the age distribution of 18-24 year olds, 4 of them have primary education, as they are still students and are in the process of completing their secondary education. Of the secondary school graduates, 17 of the participants belong to the younger group. It also includes 7 people who have already completed their bachelor's degrees. The group of 25-30 year olds includes 3 of the participants who graduated from high school, 7 of those who graduated with a bachelor's degree, and all 12 who graduated from higher education with a master's degree.



In the distribution by gender, primary education was declared by: women – 2, men – 2. With secondary education, there are 15 women and 5 men. 6 women and 8 men have higher education with a bachelor’s degree, and 5 women indicated a master’s degree and 7 men.

The conclusion that is required from the above data is that the lower level of education of women is determined by the fact that the participants are younger and are still in the process of completing their education. Men are more highly educated, because they belong to the second age group and have had sufficient time to complete their education.

As for work experience, as can be seen in the graph below, 20 of the participants have no work experience, 14 have up to 1 year work experience, 10 have between 1 and 2 years and 6 have over 2 years experience.



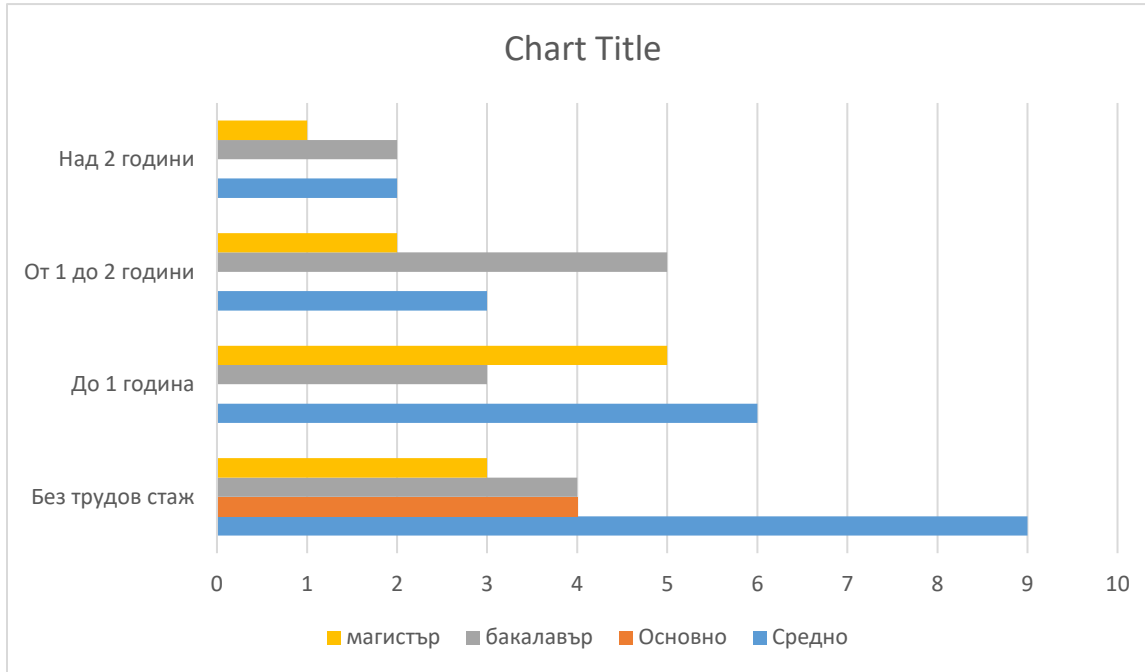
An analysis by gender shows that in the group without work experience 8 are men, 12 are women, 8 men and 6 women indicated under 1 year, 3 men and 7 women with between 1 and 2 years experience are included and with over 2 years - 2 men and 4 women.

In the younger age group, there are 7 men and 10 women without work experience, under 1 year there are 5 men and 2 women, from 1 to 2 years - 1 man and 3 women. In the age group from 25 to 30 years without work experience there are 1 man and 2 women, under 1 year there are 3





men and 4 women, from 1 to 2 years of work experience there are 2 men and 4 women and over 2 years 2 - there are men and 4 women.



From the above-mentioned data from the diagram, it can be concluded that a large number of participants with higher education (bachelor's or master's) have no work experience or have work experience of up to 1 year. This is due to the more time spent in education and the difficulties of young people in their realization in the labor market.

### Socio-economic issues:

One of the essential problems in the realization of young people in the labor market is the role of education. When the participants were asked whether the university or school provided them with the necessary knowledge and skills, 86% percent answered that it did not, and 14% believed that the school/university provided them with the necessary skills and knowledge. This high percentage of respondents shows the distrust of young people in the educational system (school and university). Some of the participants believe that the current education system is not suitable for creating interest in certain sciences. Others point to shortcomings in the current



education system such as outdated content, lack of modern methodology that meets the requirements of the 21st century and the way of teaching that is from the time of socialism.

Another view is that the education system offers above all knowledge and not practical skills for the realization of the labor market. The participants have no motivation to acquire a higher degree of education, they would rather focus on practical courses and internships to acquire professional skills. In the group that gave a positive answer, the opinion was expressed that education leads to the creation of social contacts, which subsequently play a positive role in finding a job and a professional career. Of these 86% have primary education - 10%, 38% have secondary education and 52% - higher education. Of the remaining 14% who responded positively to the question about their current education, 58% had a secondary education and 42% had a university degree.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that participants with a higher degree of education tend to think that it does not provide the necessary knowledge and skills.

The next question that the participants discussed was about the role of the family environment and to what extent it plays a role in the professional path.



As can be seen in the graph, the majority of respondents believe that family plays a role in each person's career path. The respondents believe that in the early years of a child's life, the family can inspire and encourage their interests, which can affect their future career. The family can also



help them choose the right career by encouraging them to explore different options and find work that matches their skills and interests. In addition, the family can act as a mentor and provide advice and guidance to youth on how to meet the challenges of work and how to develop their skills and careers. In conclusion, the participants believe that the family can be a source of support and motivation for young people when they face difficulties or failures in their professional life. When family shows interest and support in their career endeavors, it can strengthen youth to strive for success in life.

Of these 32 participants who are of the opinion that in some cases only the role of the family matters, 14 are men and 18 are women. Of the 12 who think it does effectively play a role, 2 are men and 10 are women, and among the remaining 6 who are of the opinion that the family environment does not play a role - 5 are men and 1 woman.

When asked about the role of employers, whether they should invest more in the initial training of staff in order to facilitate candidates without work experience, 74% of the respondents are of the opinion that it should be invested in, and the remaining 26% believe that it depends on the field on work. Of this 74%, 56% are aged 18 to 24, and the remaining 44% are aged 25 to 30. Of the remaining 26% who think it depends on the field of work whether employers should invest more, 54% are aged 18 to 24 and 46% are aged 25 to 30. The data show that older participants do not rely on employers' investments in them, but most likely on their own efforts.

The next question of the discussion, "What do you think are the main difficulties in finding a job among young people under 30" led to many opinions. The most common answers are:

- Young people are uncompetitive in the labor market compared to older people and are put in a disadvantageous position.
- Young people do not have the necessary experience
- Young people do not have developed practical skills to help them realize themselves
- Employers have unrealistic experience requirements
- Not enough jobs
- Insufficient financial motivation



- Employers may have prejudices that young people are less responsible or unreliable.

As for the question of the priorities for choosing the workplace, the participants expressed different opinions, which can be summarized in several directions:

- Good salary
- Flexible or convenient working hours
- Good team
- Favorable working environment
- Opportunity for career development
- Culturally enriching environment
- Financial incentives / bonuses
- Possibility of additional work / overtime

During the discussion, popular answers that correspond to the age groups were pointed out. Thus, in the group of 18 to 24 years, the main priority is pay. In the 25 to 30-year-old group, the main priority is the possibility of free time from work. All young people who took part in the focus groups were not actively employed.

### **Digital knowledge and experience:**

When asked if they are interested in digital art (given the definition of digital art), 42 people shared that they are interested and only 8 expressed that they are not. One of the most common arguments in favor of digital arts is that they allow artists to create new and innovative works that would not be possible with traditional techniques. Another view is that digital arts can also be very accessible to people by giving them the opportunity to create and share their creations over the internet. Participants felt that this could be particularly important for young people who are receptive to



new technologies and forms of expression. Some participants are skeptical of digital arts, they consider them unskillful, superficial or artificial, and therefore have no interest in them.

To the question "Are you a creator of digital art", the overwhelming majority 68% answered in the negative. Of the respondents, 16% of people are considered creators of digital art: of these, 6 are women and 2 are men. Beginners in the field of digital arts are 16% of which 4 are men and 4 are women. During the discussion, digital art creators and first-timers were represented from both age groups and all levels of the education system. The reason for this is that digital arts do not require a document for a certain degree of education, but depend on personal interests and motivations.



88% answered positively, and the remaining 12% negatively to the next question - "Do you believe that digital professions are an opportunity to overcome the demographic crisis and unemployment in the poor regions of Bulgaria". It should be mentioned that this 88% includes the people who are interested in digital arts and consider themselves as digital artists. Of these 44 people who responded positively, 1 had a primary education, 19 had a secondary education, and 24 had a higher education, which can lead us to the conclusion that a higher level of education makes it possible to see the perspective of digital arts in the future youth development. Most of the participants indicated arguments that digital professions are an important factor for the development of Bulgaria's economy. This includes the possibility of creating new jobs, as well as



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the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, which can be very useful for poor regions of the country. Digital occupations can also be accessible to people of different educational and cultural levels, thus helping to reduce unemployment in regions where it is higher.

Regarding the knowledge of the participants about the various digital manifestations (cryptocurrencies, blockchain technology and NFT), 62% of the participants share that they have heard of and have basic knowledge about them. However, only 20% of them fully know what they are. A small fraction of them, 18%, have not heard of any of them. Participants with primary and secondary education have no knowledge. This shows that higher education implies more awareness.

The last question that was covered at the discussion was "Would you be involved in future activities related to the creation and sale of digital art". 76% of the participants are enthusiastic and would join other similar projects and trainings, 20% would consider it and 4% would not join. We note that a large part of the participants see the perspective of digital art and can be expected in our next activities from the project.



## Conclusion:

Digital arts are an important factor in tackling youth unemployment. New technologies and digital manifestations provide many opportunities for young people, especially in the field of creativity and art. Focus groups are one of the most effective means of investigating the problem and generating new ideas to improve the situation.

It is important to invest in training and skills development related to digital arts. As the participants shared, 74% believed it was important for employers to invest in staff, this could be done by creating training and mentoring programs, as well as funding internships and jobs in the digital arts. Of those 74% who think that a step should be taken by employers, 57% are young people between 18-25 years old.

The idea of forming focus groups in the town of Vidin to investigate youth unemployment, as a means of creating an informal environment and strengthening the sense of empathy, was very well received. Qualitatively structured discussions contributed to the rapid accumulation of information and the opportunity for young people to develop their personal skills.

It is important to keep in mind that solving the problem of youth unemployment requires socio-economic and cultural spheres to work together. Investing in the digital arts can be a key factor in economic growth and improving the lives of young people in the city.

Looking at the labor market in the town of Vidin, we noted that youth unemployment is a serious problem in the region. 88% of the participants believe that the digital arts represent an opportunity to overcome this problem, as they can contribute to the creation of new jobs and business opportunities.

In recent years, digital arts have become more and more widely applicable in various fields, discovering new ways of their use and application. However, only 16% of our respondents consider themselves to be digital artists, despite the high interest in digital arts among the 42 people surveyed. In this context, digital arts can help solve the problem of youth unemployment by creating new employment and business opportunities.



Digital arts have huge potential for business and employment development, while young people need the right training and preparation to take advantage of these opportunities. In this regard, educational institutions and the business community must cooperate and provide the necessary skills and resources for the development of digital arts. During the discussion, a number of criticisms were leveled at educational institutions and the weak role of education in creating skills and competences. Of the participants, 86% consider that these institutions do not provide them with the training they expect. The participants from the younger group of 18-24 years - 22 in number, and from the age group of 25-30 years - 13 in number, have the greatest mistrust in the educational system.

The idea of using focus groups is very suitable for researching the problem of youth unemployment and for creating new opportunities. Focus groups provide an opportunity for dialogue and exchange of views between young people and the business community, thus creating a better connection between the two sectors and facilitating cooperation between them. Many shared that they had never had such a discussion.

Our participants believe that digital arts can not only help solve the problem of youth unemployment, but also help create new opportunities for the development of the area and change the present. They can contribute to attracting new investments and business by turning it into a center for new promising technologies. This can create jobs for the youth and convince them to stay in their hometown instead of looking for better opportunities outside.

Additionally, digital arts can also be used to boost tourism. For example, interactive museums and exhibitions can be created to attract tourists from all over the world. This can contribute to increasing the town’s income and, in this way, employment opportunities for the youth.

The idea of forming focus groups to investigate the issue of youth unemployment in the town of Vidin is essential. They can help to better understand the needs and challenges of the town’s youth and lead to the creation of concrete solutions and programs to overcome unemployment. The organization of focus groups can contribute to strengthening the sense of





empathy and responsibility among young people and motivate them to actively engage in the process of overcoming the problem.

In conclusion, digital arts are an important factor in overcoming youth unemployment, as they can create new opportunities to develop and change the present. Focus groups in the future can help research the problem and create concrete solutions and programs to overcome unemployment. It is important to invest in training and skills development related to digital arts, and to strengthen collaboration between educational institutions, business and the community to ensure wider access to the opportunities provided by digital arts. In general, this process can be defined as a symbiosis between the community, business, education and youth, all of which have an important role to play in changing the present and creating a better future. This was also visible from the opinions of the participants, who agreed that an important role in building a career is played by the family environment, the educational system and the presentation of opportunities by employers.

It is also important to pay attention to the personal development of young people and how unemployment can affect them. Focus groups can be not only a place to discuss professional issues, but also to exchange thoughts and ideas, support and motivation. This can have a positive effect on the self-esteem and confidence of young people, which will ultimately be a key factor in their successful integration into the labor market. How focus groups influence can be seen in the discussion on the last question, where 76% of participants are motivated to get involved in future activities, 20% would consider and only 4% have no interest. Of the 76% who will join, 24 of them are from the younger age group of 18-24 years and 14 are from the older age group of 25-30 years.

Finally, digital arts and focus groups can make a big contribution to tackling youth unemployment. They can create new opportunities for development, for the training and improvement of youth and for improving the quality of life in society as a whole. It is important to invest in these areas and ensure wider access to the opportunities they provide. Also, it is important to continue the work in this direction in order to achieve a sustainable and successful result in overcoming youth unemployment.



## **Main inferences:**

Digital sciences play a key role in the fight against youth unemployment, including in the town of Vidin. By investing in training and skills development related to these technologies, young people can gain competitive advantages in the labor market and find work. These skills are necessary in today's world, where the computer is at the heart of almost every area of life. At the same time, digital technologies can create new opportunities for city development and help change the present. The bottom line is that digital manifestations must become a priority. There is a need to invest in training and skills development, as well as to promote cooperation between educational institutions, businesses and young people. This will create new opportunities for the development of the town and for fighting unemployment.

Digital arts have great potential to tackle youth unemployment. As seen from the opinion of our participants, 42 people are interested in them. Of them, 24 are women and 18 are men. New technologies offer new opportunities for development and career advancement to young people, which can also benefit the town as a whole. To achieve this, it is important to pay special attention to young people and give them the opportunity to talk about their needs, challenges and interests.

Listening to young people and involving them in the process of creating programs and solutions to overcome unemployment can be the key to success. Youth forums, discussion groups and other forms of public discussion can provide useful information about the needs and problems of young people in the region and help create specific solutions and programs for them.

It is also important to invest in the education and development of young people's skills related to digital manifestations, only 20% of our participants have a good knowledge of NFTs, cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology. This will enable them to compete successfully in the labor market and ensure career stability and success in the future. In this context, educational institutions and businesses must cooperate to create trainings that meet the needs of the labor market and to ensure the successful integration of young people into the work process.



It is known that nowadays a highly qualified workforce is essential for the successful development of a business. Young people make up a large part of the workforce and it is important to invest in their training and development, especially in the field of digital arts.

The survey found that 76% of the youth who participated in the focus groups believed that employers should invest more in the training and development of young people without experience to prepare for the demands of the labor market. Also, participants shared that there is a need for initiatives such as academies and extracurricular activities to help them develop the necessary skills to successfully perform in the labor market. This is what 86% of the participants who did not get their skills from school or university think - 53% of them have completed their higher education.

Such investment in training and skills development is critical to the future of the region's youth and will enable them to compete in the job market, particularly in the digital arts. In this way, better opportunities will be created for their successful professional and personal development.

Tackling youth unemployment requires cooperation between different sectors of society. The young people who took part in the survey emphasized that educational institutions should work more actively in partnership with business and the public sector to create opportunities for young people to get involved in work projects and develop skills needed in the labor market .

They proposed various ideas for cooperation, such as organizing internships, trainings and internships in companies, extracurricular activities, supporting young entrepreneurs, etc. Cooperation between different sectors can lead to a better understanding of youth needs and help to create programs and initiatives that have a real positive effect on the fight against youth unemployment.

In order to achieve better cooperation between educational institutions, business and the public sector, meetings and discussions like this between these sectors can be encouraged more often, as well as the creation of platforms and networks for communication and exchange of ideas. Of those asked, 76% of whom 25 women and 13 men were willing to participate again, 20% of



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



HUMAN  
RESOURCE  
DEVELOPMENT  
CENTRE

Project “Youth Digital Kickstart”, № 2022-1-BG01-KA210-YOU-000081205

whom 4 women and 6 men would consider it and only 4%, of whom 2 men, had no interest. It is important to keep in mind that this is a long-term process that requires the commitment and participation of all stakeholders.



## **Recommendations:**

In the modern world, digital technologies play an increasingly significant role in all spheres of life. They change the way society functions and influence business and the labor market. In this context, young people starting their careers face the challenge of acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge related to digital arts and technology.

The town of Vidin is no exception to this process. Young people in the city face many problems, one of which is youth unemployment. To overcome this obstacle, it is necessary to provide adequate opportunities for learning and developing skills related to digital arts and technology. In this regard, based on the conducted research, the following recommendations are offered:

- Cooperation between educational institutions and businesses is crucial to prepare young people for work in the digital and creative industries. As our participants shared, one of the biggest problems for the realization of young people is the lack of sufficient jobs, this is what 20 people from the age group of 18-24 years and 12 people from the age group of 25-30 years think. Businesses can provide real training and work opportunities that will help young people develop the skills and experience they need for a successful career in the field. Educational institutions, for their part, can provide quality training and ensure that young people have the necessary knowledge to work in modern business.
- Investing in digital arts training and skills development is critical to the future of young people in the area. Employers should invest in training programs that provide young people with the opportunity to train in accordance with business needs and develop the necessary skills, 74% of the participants think, of which 22 are women and 15 are men. This can be done through financial support for educational institutions, providing better conditions for training and development of young people, as well as by providing infrastructure and means of training in accordance with the requirements of modern business.
- Creating innovative educational programs and projects is critical to preparing young people for work in the digital and creative industries. These programs must meet the needs of business and be aimed at developing specific skills that are relevant to work in the modern economy. Such



programs can be provided by educational institutions, business organizations and other institutions that can cooperate in their creation and implementation.

- Support for entrepreneurship is key to creating new jobs and stimulating economic growth. Local governments and the business community must work together to create an enabling environment for start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises. This can be achieved through various initiatives such as providing financial support and educational programs for entrepreneurs, as well as creating start-up incubators and networking events.

In conclusion, the development of digital and creative industries in the area can bring many benefits to the local economy and youth. Creating an enabling environment for learning, working and entrepreneurship is essential to achieving these goals. If local governments, educational institutions, the business community and youth organizations work together, significant progress can be made in the development of these industries and the local economy as a whole.



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