

## **Choose a job you love - Career Development and Counselling Program as a new library service**

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### **Abstract:**

*Education system in Macedonia is in the process of transformation. Youngsters found themselves in a situation when making a choice of their future development is rather hard. Unemployment is a continuing problem in the Macedonian economy and many young people in Macedonia find themselves in difficult or precarious situation.*

*The national and local authorities are recognizing that future prosperity of the community depends on its young people. Therefore education, employment and youth are main priorities in almost all strategic documents adopted by the City of Skopje, local-self-government unit responsible for all secondary schools in Skopje. Youth development is also one of the priorities of the Strategy for Development of the City Library “Braka Miladinovci” - Skopje, which is under the jurisdiction of the City of Skopje.*

*Because the career guidance and counselling services are not present or are not working actively in the schools, there was a need of establishing official Career Development and Counselling Program that is accessible to all young people, regardless of their place of living and school they are going to. The City Library is ideal place for offering this service, as it strives to provide equal access to information for all. Career Guidance and Counselling Program was established as a new library service. Career guidance has never been provided by any library in Macedonia, so the project was considered as one innovative.*

**Keywords:** young people, education, career development, partnerships, library, library service

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## Introduction

In the last 10 years the education system in Macedonia is in the process of transformation. **Primary education** lasts for nine years and it is compulsory. **Secondary education** is compulsory since 2008. It is divided into Secondary Grammar School (Gymnasiums) and Secondary Vocational Schools (with three or four-year curriculum). The interest among the students is greater for the gymnasium and for the four year Vocational Schools than for the three-year Vocational Schools. The pupils make their choice among these schools upon enrolment. They can transfer to a different type of curriculum or school in the upper classes under the strict conditions and if they pass the exams.

With the decentralization in education, primary and secondary schools are responsibility of municipalities (local self-government units - LSG).

**Higher education** is not compulsory. Besides existing four state universities, a number of private faculties and universities have been established. Since 2003 Bologna concept has been introduced at universities. As a consequence the number of students in the higher education, as well the diversity of offered programs and choices for education has been significantly increased. Youngsters find themselves in a situation when making a choice of their future development is rather hard. Upon graduation from the secondary school pupils make their choice of the higher education institution and program<sup>1</sup>, or they decide to look for a job.

**Unemployment** is a continuing problem in the Macedonian economy where a large percentage of the Republic's qualified labour force cannot find work. National unemployment averages from 32% to 36% in the period 1993-2012. In terms of their employment, many young people in Macedonia find themselves in difficult or precarious situations and the financial and economic crisis has had a strong impact on their lives.

The national and local authorities are recognizing that future prosperity of the community depends on its young people. However, they are one of the most vulnerable groups, as the country is in transition since the 1990s. The authorities recognize that educational qualifications are still the best insurance against unemployment.

Therefore education, employment and youth are main priorities in almost all strategic documents adopted by the City of Skopje, local-self-government unit responsible for all secondary schools in Skopje. In the Youth Strategy of the City of Skopje 2014-2018 the main priorities are: supporting youth access to information by use of IT, improving formal and informal education, encouraging employment and self-employment, increasing the cooperation between the schools, LSG, NGO and youth, improving the quality of life of youth etc.

Linked and similar priorities are defined in the Strategy for cultural development of the City of Skopje 2012-2015 and Strategy of the City of Skopje for cooperation with NGO.

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<sup>1</sup> National Report of the Republic of Macedonia on Education for Sustainable Development, 2011

Youth development is also one of the priorities of the Strategy for Development of the City Library “Braka Miladinovci” - Skopje, which is under the jurisdiction of the City of Skopje.

## **Career Development and Counselling Program**

Because the career guidance and counselling services are not present or are not working actively in the schools, there was a need of establishing official Career Development and Counselling Program that is accessible to all young people, regardless of their place of living and school they are going to. Two **factors** are critical to project: location and partnerships. **Location** of The City Library is ideal place for offering this service, as it strives to provide equal access to information for all.

The Library is under jurisdiction of the local self-government of the City of Skopje. It provides services to 600.000 citizens from Skopje and surroundings at 14 locations. The citizens are free to use services in any branch library, regardless of their place of residence. However, the library hasn't reached its goal of being modern multi-functional community-based centre with excellent access to information yet.

The library collection includes about 1.000.000 samples and provides:

- Traditional library services (borrowing of books/prints /newspapers)
- Reading rooms, some of which are open 24 hours/7 days a week
- Public access to Internet through 15 computers
- E-library - recently established at library's web-site

Skopje is the capital and largest city of Macedonia, the country's political, cultural, economic, and academic centre. In fact, City library is the largest library at Metropolis and is the core of local community and the population from the central area of The City gravitates to it, where most of primary and secondary schools are concentrated. Skopje is multicultural city with around 67% Macedonians, 20% Albanians and 13% Serbs, Turks, Roma and others. 21 secondary schools spread in the area of Skopje are also under the competence of the City of Skopje. This project will target 6 of them.

The Library is known as a center of cultural and educational events in The City where the most frequent visitors are young people. While the library is a window on the local government under whose jurisdiction is.

To bring these ambitious goals, The Library had united with the public, community and business organizations to expand their domain by forming strategic partnerships. The library has expanded its scope and influence in the community exactly through partnerships with individuals, public and non-profit organizations, agencies, community groups, educators and. and businessmen. So, this project resulted in the establishment of a strong **partnership** between the local authorities that have strong interest in supporting this initiative, as it is beneficial for the broader community, the Ministry of education and Union of the blind people of Macedonia as a national NGO which have recruit young people with visual and hearing impairment to take active participation in the project activities.

## **Inovative Library Service**

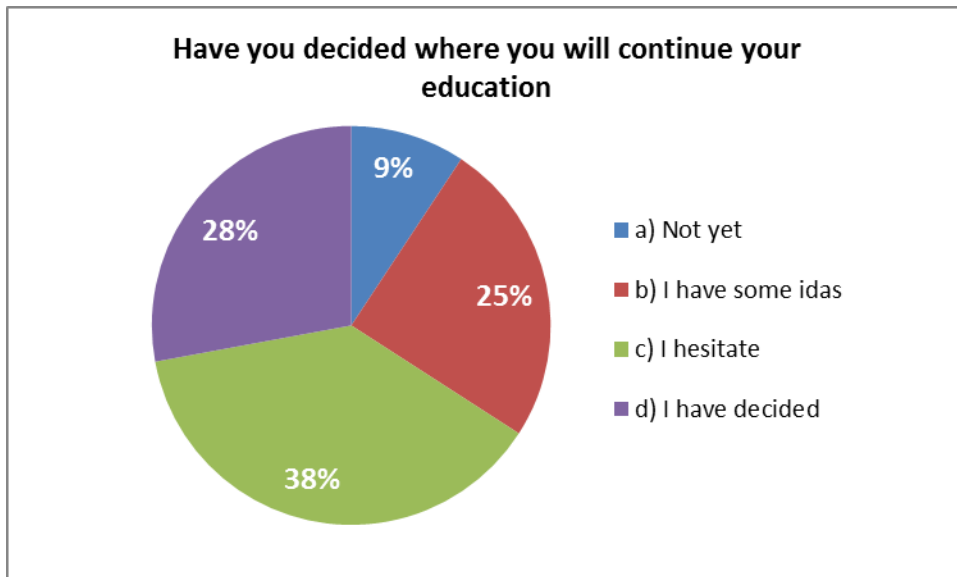
Choose a job you love - Career Development and Counselling Program as a project was applied to the PLIP program of EIFL grant in 2014. Although entered into closer competition and was not selected City Library decided to implement as new service. City Library provide support to children and young people and strive to connection parents, educators and young people in the campaign for raising awareness about the priorities and efforts to close educational gaps. One of priority of library strategy is adapting and an inventory. To remain worthy to new demands and interests of its customers, continuously adjust and accept everything that is new and advanced. We are an institution that is constantly innovating and investing in its employees, infrastructure and technology to verify their activity.

Career Guidance and Counselling Program was established as a new library service. The project aims to support youngsters in a process of selection of their further education and professional orientation, to promote use of IT technology and foster use of on-line sources for career and as a tool for exploring options for continuation of education, self-development and employment, to present to the secondary school students different professions, choices and options for further education in the country. This project promotes equal opportunities for all by encouraging gender diversity and involving youth with visual and hearing impairments. Career guidance has never been provided by any library in Macedonia, so the project was considered as one innovative.

## **Survey**

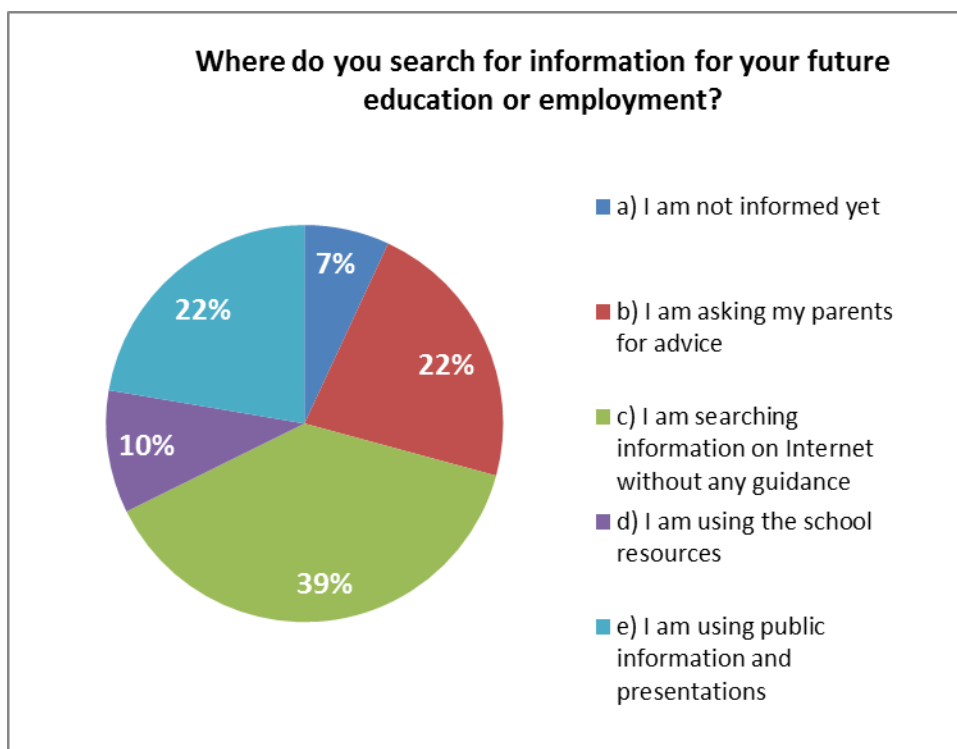
In order to identify need assessment for the project “**Choose a job you love!**”, the City Library “Braka Miladonovci” from Skopje, in December 2013 and January 2014 has conducted a survey among the secondary school and primary school students.

In total 163 youngsters were surveyed, 19 % of them are going to the primary school and 81% are secondary school students. Taking in consideration that the interest and response of the primary school pupils were low, the following analysis includes only the answers provided by 131 secondary school students. 131 young people at age 15-18 from Skopje have responded the questionnaire with 19 questions. 3 questions were about the age, sex and education, 5 questions were intended to explore the interest of the students for Career Guidance and Counselling Program and are used for this needs assessment, while 11 questions were related to their interest in different occupations and will be used for creating workshops program and agenda, in the course of project implementation. 38 % of respondents were male, while 62% were female.

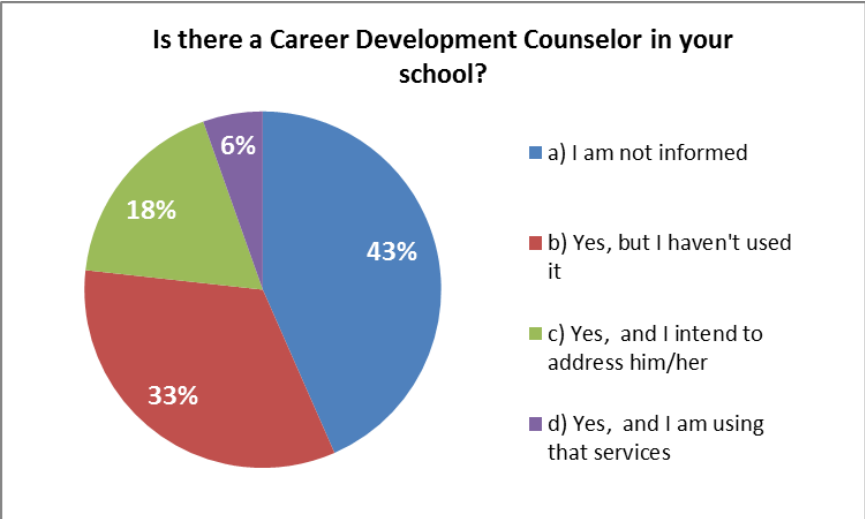


The results showed that only 28% of respondents have already made a decision about their future development. The other 72% doesn't know, or hesitate, or have some ideas, but still not made their choice.

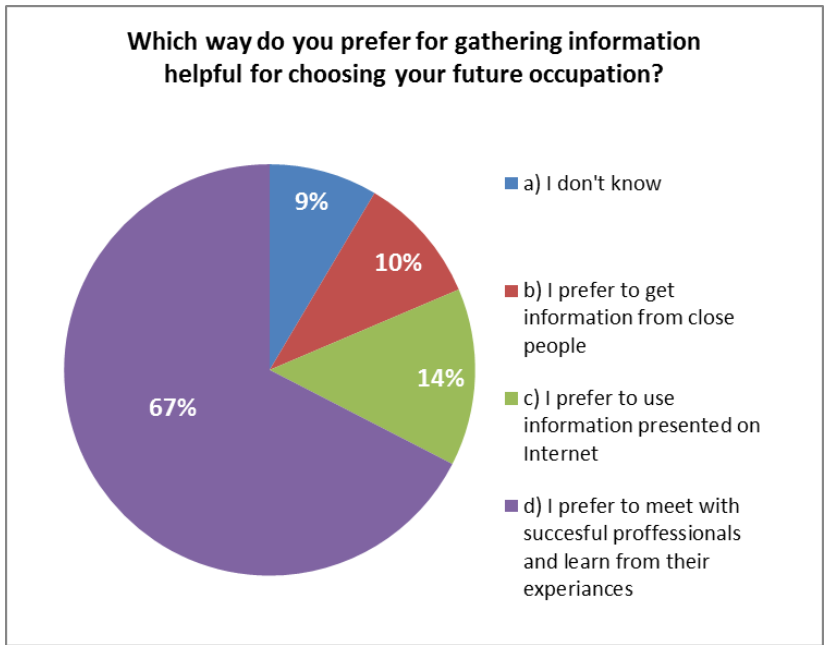
43% of students are not informed about presence of any career development counsellor in their schools. It is not only because they lack the information, but because it really does not exist in many schools.



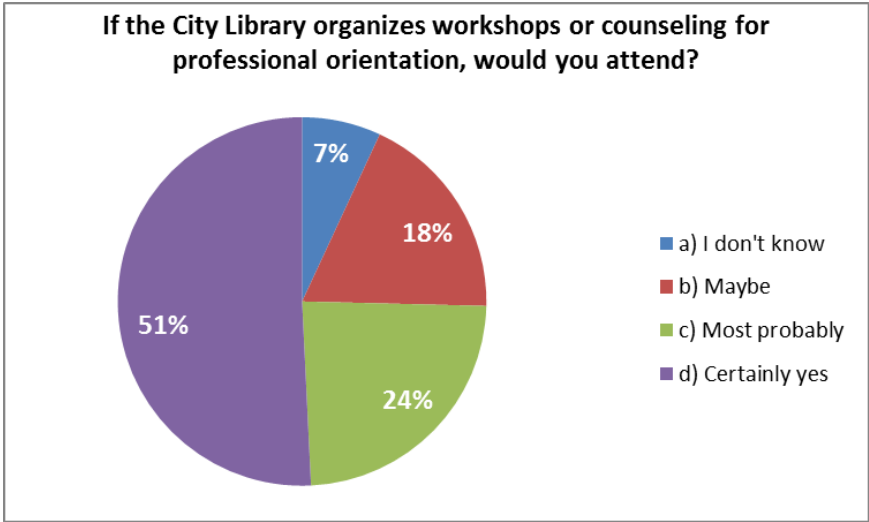
As the career guidance and counselling services are not present or are not working actively in the schools, it is visible that young people mostly rely on their parents guidance or they themselves are researching on-line sources. However, the fact that 61% in total are individually searching for information on Internet (39%) and are attending public presentations (22%) shows that education and career development is of high concern of this young people.



67% of respondents stated that they would like to meet with successful professionals and learn from their experiences. It clearly shows that young people have a need for interactive communication in which they will be able to ask questions and discuss issues related to making a decision about their future development.



75 % of respondents have answered that they would be interested to attend workshops and participate in Career Guidance and Counselling Program organized by the Library (51 % answered “Certainly yes” and 24% answered “Most probably”).



## Conclusions

- Most of the young people (72%) have difficulties to make a decision about their professional orientation.
- They need support in their career planning to manage the transitions from one educational level to another or to the labor market successfully.
- There is a need of establishing official Career Development and Counselling Program that will be accessible to all young people, regardless of their place of living and school they are going to.
- The City Library is ideal place for offering this service, as it strives to provide equal access to information for all. The Career Development and Counselling Program within the Library will support existing similar programs that exist in some schools and will fill in the gap in those schools which don't have this kind of service.
- The local authorities have strong interest in supporting this initiative, as it will be beneficial for the broader community.

## Project goals

Career guidance has never been provided by any library in Macedonia, so the project was considered as innovative. New IT technology and **equipment**, software, social networks were new service used for some proposes and the equipment will keep the same function after the project completion, as the Career Guidance and Counselling Program will continue with activities. The computers with Internet access are used by the students to practice how to: search for education and job opportunities; prepare applications and CV and use on-line learning resources. Lap top computers allow mobility, so the activities were organized anywhere in the library, even in some of the branch offices. Regarding the software, the additional page was added to the existing library web-site, containing all project related information and a discussion forum. Particular software for 25 youngsters with visual/hearing impairments was innovating by the students from FINKI - Faculty for information and technical sciences, which provide introduction with education and job opportunities in the country for this vulnerable populations. Social networks also are used for dissemination of information, attracting the students and discussing career related issues.

**Marketing, communication and advocacy** were important elements of realizing the program in areas of attracting people to use the service, communication with local media and other stakeholders about the new service and how to convince local government and policy makers to sustain the Service.

The Project Team promoted the project by posters and flyers distributed in secondary schools in Skopje, providing information about the project and workshops. The project motto is "Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life." The library's web-site, secondary-schools web-sites, specially created facebook page and web-sites of interested NGOs are used for promotion. The Library has regular communication with local and national media. These channels are used for spreading information about the foreseen activities. The Project Team have appearance in contact program of some national TV stations, in order to popularize the project among the



broader public. This project is in line to almost all priorities of the Strategy on Youth 2014-2018 adopted by the City of Skopje. It is also in line with the National Program for Development of Education of Macedonia 2005-2015.

**Trainers and promoters** on workshops: universities' representatives, remarkable professors from different areas, technical and social; prominent professionals from the private and public sector through their life story to motivate young people in choosing their profession; public figure from politics, art, singer, TV faces, everyone with different story and suggestion about celebrity work; trained librarians who promote their profession - 10 librarians attended Career Development Facilitator Training and Training on Moderation and Communication Skills in order to be able to develop Career Guidance and Counselling Program.

All of them were invited to take participation in the project.

### **Project work plan**

In period march-april (period when students make decisions about enrollment in the new school) were organized 15 workshops, 10 to present to the secondary school students different professions (10 different prominent professionals and public figure), and 5 workshops about choices and options for further education in the country (universities' representatives, remarkable professors), on the use of ICT in preparing application, CV and finding job announcements (duration of the workshop – half a day).

To promote equal opportunities for all at the stage of choosing careers, project team carry out a workshop for 25 youngsters with visual or hearing impairments, presenting education and job opportunities for them in the country

## **Impact and Project results**

The expected results of the project and the expected impact of the project were achieved:

- 6000 secondary school students and professors were introduced with newly-established Career Guidance and Counselling Program within the City Library;
- 400 students were participated at the workshops and introduced to 10 different professions;
- 25 youngsters with visual/hearing impairments were introduced with education and job opportunities in the country;
- 10 librarians attended Career Development Facilitator Training and Training on Moderation and Communication Skills in order to be able to develop Career Guidance and Counselling Program.
- On-line forum for discussion of career opportunities created at the library's web-site.

### **Long-term impact :**

Career Guidance and Counselling Program, provided ICT equipment and capacity building of the library staff guarantee long term sustainability and benefit which will continue beyond the scope of this project.

The project increase the visibility of the library in front of the community, as well as the number of library visitors.

The project is in line with the priorities of the City of Skopje.

The policies and strategies for guidance and career counselling have become a political priority in Europe, supported by the European Commission.