



Issue 5, April 2021

albanianskills

Dear Reader,

You are browsing the fifth edition of the Innovet Albania newsletter, but at the same time as in any publication so far, you are also witnessing the fruits and achievements of more than 7 years of dedication, work and endless sleepless nights of a great team of hearts and entrepreneurs. who worked hard and believed in the mission of Albanian Skills provided on and through the VET process for our dear beloved Albania.

My name is Arlinda Baçi, I'm a Civil Engineer contributing today as an entrepreneur in our family business in Screen Printing and Publishing sector, based in the charming city of Durrës and I'm also the Co-founder and member of the Board of AS. In February 2015 I embraced the beautiful dream of Ana to give our children and future generations a real and formative instrument on the road to life; an auxiliary instrument to find and strengthen the great light they carry within themselves.



Arlinda Baçi

Look around you, with nowadays rapid development of technology everything it's changing. The solutions, the mindset of contribution and work have already changed radically. Everything is possible! You just need to want it and have enough will to dedicate yourself to work knowing your goals. You will certainly be the model employee and the example of your working group just as much as you can be the Project lead entrepreneur who chooses his collaborators. **Trust in yourself and your knowledge, do not stop training your mind and remember, now, It's your time to make the difference!** Work and dedication always bring only satisfaction and achievements.

Arlinda Baçi

Co-founder and Executive Board Member of AS - National Association for Skills Competitions

Rubrics of Innovet Albania - 5th Issue

This publication was prepared and edited by: Fatma Memalli & Danja Zoto

Albanian Day of Girls in ICT

This year, on the 10th anniversary of this global initiative, Albanian Skills also launched the "Albanian Day of Girls in ICT" initiative, joining in this way the worldwide efforts to strongly support girls in ICT.

Testimonials From Participating Girls in "Albanian Girls in ICT" week.

Testimonial from Isabela Tabaku, Lura Shehu and Albesja Berisha on their experience throughout all the activities held this week.

Girls Way in Tech, an online community to empower girls in Technology

Interview with Albina Peposhi Girls Way in Tech it's an online community aiming to help close the gender gap by getting more girls into technology, empowering and supporting them with resources, different courses, coding sessions together...

VET Education through VET learner's eyes

Testimonials written by Klea Bërmeta, student at the Vocational School "Hermann Gmeiner" and Aishe Celami, student at the Vocational School in Kamza.

Meet out INTERVET WB partners!

In today's newsletter we will travel to Bosnia & Herzegovina and meet IUS Lifelong Learning Center and the International University of Sarajevo (IUS).

BrainCamp: A Unique Journey to Neuroscience

Testimonial from Fabian Pirra and Sabjan Haska on their experience on BrainCamp Albania.

ALBANIAN DAY OF GIRLS IN ICT

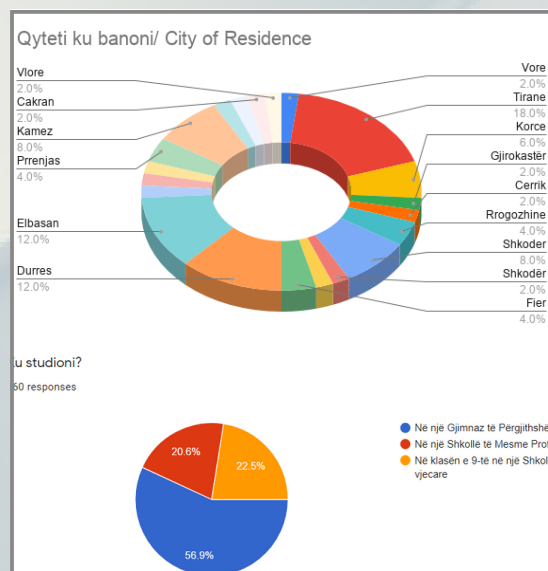
Technology is becoming an inseparable part of our lives, starting with the most usable devices that are now a common part of our daily lives, and extending comprehensively to the service sector or to the variety of industries today. Technology is also creating endless employment opportunities in the labor market, and yet the gender gap in this sector has not closed. According to a global study conducted in 2020, in the field of programming and software development, the vast majority of this sector is dominated by men with about 91.5% of all respondents. International Day of Girls in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is an initiative of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), to minimize and bridge this gender gap through raising awareness and empowering young girls to consider a future ICT career.



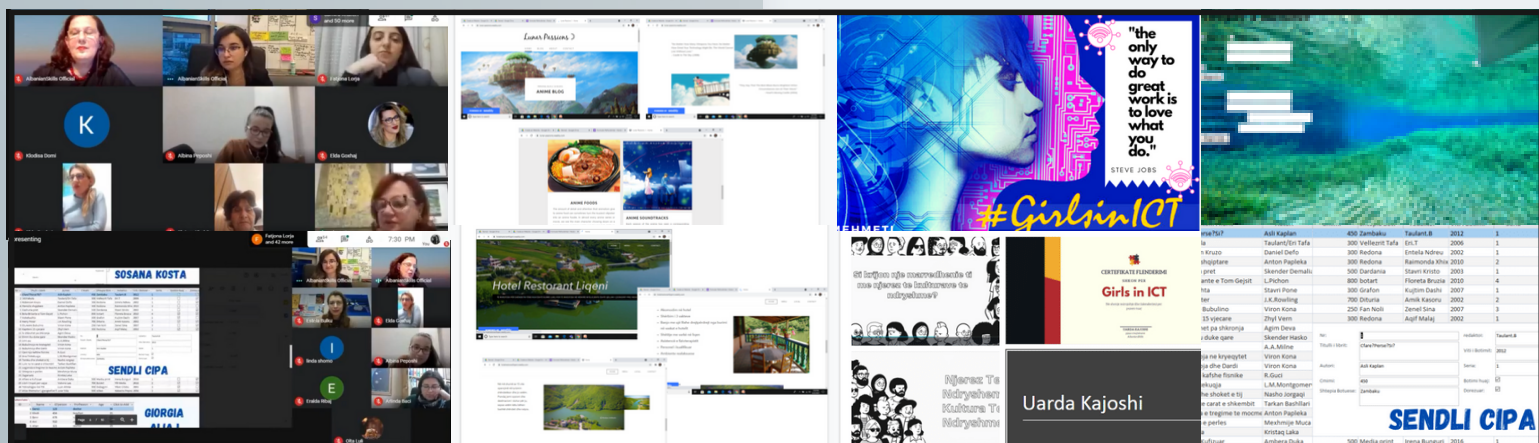
This year, on the 10th anniversary of this global initiative, Albanian Skills also launched the "Albanian Day of Girls in ICT" initiative, joining in this way the worldwide efforts to strongly support girls in ICT. Thanks to the close cooperation with Polis University, Smart Center, Easy Pay and Hermain Gmeiner Vocational School, this initiative became a reality. "Albanian Day of Girls in ICT" was conceived in holding a week full of activities and daily training sessions for participating girls which was finalized on April 22, the International Day of Girls in ICT. Since the beginning of this journey, we noticed a great interest by young girls to join this initiative, marking a total of 160 applications of girls aged 14 - 19, with a wide geographical distribution in many areas of Albania.

The journey of these activities started on April 16 and for 3 days in a row the participants attended several training sessions on these topics: creating an application with Glide, creating a database, a web page with Weebly and through programming, key tips to be a design manager of social networks, under the leadership and mentoring of coaches: Kleona Elezi, Fatjona Lorja, Sindilajda Gjipali, Kristi Janku, Albina Tocilla and Mirela Murati. After three intensive days of trainings and two days of individual digital works from the participants, was held the closing event of this initiative with the presence and greeting speech by Ana Zacharian from Albanian Skills, Albina Peposhi - a young girl in Tech, Linda Shomo from Easy Pay, Alma Stana from Smart Center, Flutura Xhabija from SHGPAZ, Eralda Ribaj from Polis University, Estela Bulku from UN Women and Elda Coxhaj from the Municipality of Patos.

The event culminated with the virtual fair of digital works prepared during the Digital Art Works Camp where Klaudia Meha and Ejona Xhaferi were selected by Polis University as the winners of the Innovation Scholarship. At the end of all this initiative, 95% of the girls stated that this was a very valuable experience for them, in which their ICT skills were enriched as well as the interest to pursue a future career in IT sector. At the end of this journey we are extremely happy that we were able to promote and support the girls' dreams and visions for their future.



Virtual Fair of Digital Works



Testimonials From Participating Girls in "Albanian Girls in ICT" week.



Isabela Tabaku

I have to admit I had a great time! My afternoons starting at 17:00 and continuing with the evenings until 21:00 were quite enjoyable, filled with training, conversations, new knowledge and new experiences. I must emphasize that this was my first participation in such an event. The online classes were quite accomplished thanks to the dedication shown by the trainers. I felt their presence as if they were my teachers. I take the opportunity to say this because of the very comfortable and modest communication they had with us. Thanks to the knowledge I gained during these training hours I feel more confident and well informed about the ICT field. Among the very interesting training hours we had was the one with the trainer Kristi Janku. During this hour I imagined myself as a future designer. I want to thank the organizers of this event, the trainers and the Albanian Skills team!

Thank you for bringing girls closer to technology!

Thank you for educating the pillars of this society!



Albesja Berisha

Greetings to all the readers of INNOVET Albania Newsletter! I would like to share with you a pleasant experience I had during the week of "Albanian Girls in ICT". I would describe this experience as a great opportunity to expand knowledge in the field of technology by feeling positive energy and inclusiveness in every moment. We all already know that the world has taken its turn towards technology, where in addition to digitalisation it aims to improve the effectiveness of human-technology interaction. Due to its diverse nature, technology offers everyone the opportunity to find themselves in one of its fields. You can be a good designer, a programmer, a website designer, a project manager or you can make a connection between the world of technology and the world of business.

These were also the topics of this week, where the given information was very clear and valuable, explained by lecturers who worked passionately and showed us the desire for the field of technology as a way to empower young girls. Despite the barriers that online meetings can raise in terms of interacting, I managed to get the right motivation for the future career I aspire to pursue in technology. I also got the opportunity to connect with other young girls, but also professional women who work hard for their dreams and goals.



Lura Shehu

I am Lura Shehu from the city of Durrës. I am 12 years old and I study at the school "Vinçenc Prendushi". I was probably the youngest girl participating in the "Albanian Girls in ICT" week. This experience taught me that girls and women, as in many other areas of life, are capable of being successful in the ICT field as well.

Thanks to participation in this initiative, I learned that ***"when girls are offered opportunities, passion can become a reality very easily."***



Girls Way in Tech, an online community to empower girls in Technology

Albina Peposhi

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself to INNOVET Albania Newsletter readers?

I am Albina Peposhi, a 17 years old high-school student. I spend most of my time studying technology, science, reading books, doing sports and learning foreign languages. I started coding at the age of 12 and it seemed really interesting to me. The deeper I dive into programming, the more challenges I face and it's exactly the hours I spend solving problems that I enjoy the most. Of course, being self-taught means that there won't always be the motivation to keep going, the late-night hours in front of the laptop can become exhausting, but participating in different events and keeping the balance with other activities has helped me to also build the discipline and shape my mindset.

2. How did your journey to ICT begin? Can you tell us something more about the course of this journey, for the challenges and achievements that have marked it?

I've always been interested in technology. When I was younger I used to spend a lot of time on the laptop trying to figure out how it worked. However, everything begun 5 years ago, when I was talking to my sister about informatics, and she sent me a link to an online course on HTML. I started that day and found it really interesting how easily websites can be built. After that, I started learning other fronted development technologies (like CSS and JS). I kept building small websites and at the age of 15 I started learning C++ and some Python. On 9th grade I participated and won in the Informatics Olympiad in Durrës. 1 year after that, I won the National Olympiad in Informatics. I'm qualified for this year as well, but due to the pandemic the Olympiads are delayed. Throughout the pandemic, every event was online, and that was my opportunity to participate in endless trainings, webinars, workshops, hackathons etc.,

At the end of the last year I did a 2 months Software Engineering training, where I worked with Amazon Web Services and the MERN Stack. The training was a real challenge, because I used to spend at least 10-12 hours coding, besides school. After that I finished a four-weeks online piscine at 42Heilbronn - a coding school (university) in Germany. This was another month I spent on coding 14 hours a day, and being the youngest was probably the biggest challenge there. I passed it and I will most likely join it the next year, after finishing high school. Last month I started working as a part time full-stack developer for an American company. Now I am focused on school, work and some side projects.

3. What is it like to be a successful young girl in the field of ICT? Do girls face barriers or obstacles related to their gender status in this field and how can the number of girls who choose to pursue careers in the ICT field increase?

Working in ICT isn't easy in the first place and then being a girl is even harder. Truth be told, coding takes a lot of dedication, focus and working hours. Girls face obstacles, mostly because when you say "I'm a programmer" the first picture that comes in one's mind is a boy typing in a keyboard with black screens in a dark room. By this I mean that it's the mentality of people - they think programming is a man's job. I continuously get asked "you are a girl and you code?" or "so girls can code?" and these are not nice to hear. During the conversations with some women I met on some events, there was always the talk about the 2 different groups formed based on the gender, about harassment speeches and the way they are continuously being underrated and how their ideas and thoughts are not being taken under consideration. Truth is that females are a minority in ICT - only 11% of developers in the world are females, but recently we've seen the numbers have been increasing rapidly and that is a good sign. However, I think we can do far better. We cannot make a change without sticking together, and we have to know that actions speak louder than words. We can create more events and communities to share experiences and resources with each other. Most importantly, we have to replace the "technology is a man's field" into "technology has no age or gender requirements".

4. You have created a very interesting platform for Girls in Technology. Can you tell us more about this platform?

Yes, **Girls Way in Tech**. It's an online community aiming to help close the gender gap by getting more girls into technology, empowering and supporting them, with resources, different courses, coding sessions together and webinars or other events which are coming this summer. We're on Instagram, discord and our website will be coming soon.

5. How was the idea to create a platform for girls in technology born, and what do you intend to achieve through it?

The idea was originally by my sister, Brigitte Peposhi. A few years ago, as she got more informed about this gender gap and inequality in ICT, she got the idea of creating a platform to inspire and motivate girls, to show them that they are capable of doing more if they set their mind and goals higher and that we cannot be defined by what other people think we are able to achieve. The example that motivates us the most is: the first computer programmer was Ada Lovelace - a woman. Our main goal is to create a place where we can grow together and work on different projects, we can talk, share our experiences. We also got some boys in our server, supporting the Girls Way in Tech movement. We got a lot of work ahead of us, but we are really proud of how it all is coming together.

6. What would your last message be to all the readers of the newsletter and to all the youngsters in Albania?

When you are passionate about something and when you really want to make it happen, then stop dreaming, wake up and work hard, because we all are capable of doing great things, no matter what people around us say. At the end of the day, our perspective and opinions matter, and we can do as much as we set our minds to, so make sure to get rid of the limits. I would also say take good care of your body and your mind, workout and eat healthy, because you'll need these assets along the way.



VET Education through VET learners eyes



Klea Bërmëta

Greeting to all the readers of INNOVET Albania Newsletter!

My name is Klea Bërmëta and I study at the Vocational School "Hermann Gmeiner", currently in the second year. After finishing the 9th grade, I was in the middle of two "fires", to continue general education like most of my peers, or to study to a vocational education school. I researched a lot on the internet, asked many people who had previously completed such education. I searched for what was the best for my future and finally came to a decision. I "knocked" on the door of the VET School "Hermann Gmeiner".

Before studying on a Vocational School when I thought about this kind of education and moreover in a like ICT, the first thing that came to my mind was a school full of boys. But I was wrong, there are a lot of ambitious girls in that school. At that time, this fact made me even happier and more convinced of the decision I had made. Somebody might ask what are the advantages or the benefits of studying in a vocational school. I am listing some of them:

- First of all, vocational education gives you the opportunity to participate in numerous professional practices both in laboratories within the school, as well as outside of school environment, in different businesses, partners with school. We are in close and constant contact with our future jobs. There are also cases when many students who are trained in these businesses get a job while studying. In my opinion and experience, the possibility to be employed after finishing this kind of education is much higher and faster. After finishing the 4-year period of VET training, many students have already created a CV with different experiences, which can be submitted in the application for a job.
- Secondly, VET orients you to the skills required by the labor market.
- Thirdly and most importantly through vocational education we get prepared for what awaits us later in life. We become independent and self-sufficient at an early age.

I want to motivate every girl who thinks that coding or any other career path they want to follow is not worthy or suitable for them, after they notice that these fields are dominated by men, that they are wrong. We must be the ones to change this mindset. **There is no gender that determines the level of ability to learn and work.** There can be plenty of girls who perform better in the so called "men jobs".

Vocational education is synonymous with innovation. These schools are the source of hundreds of innovative ideas based on the market demands. Today more than ever the market needs innovators. Studies confirm that about 90% of businesses are in search of innovative ideas, thus making innovation a priority for them. VET is always in progress, it never remains the same and monotonous. To sum up, if I were to go back in time and have to choose between general and vocational education without thinking twice I would choose the second one. VET education has given me things that I believe many of my peers do not have the opportunity to have. All of you who are in a dilemma like me at first do not hesitate to give it a try. You won't be disappointed!

Hello! My name is Aishe Celami. I am 18 years old and I live in the small town of Vora. I study at a Vocational School in Kamëz in the direction of ICT (Information and Communication Technology). It was a bit difficult in the beginning to make a final decision about the education I wanted to pursue, as there was no vocational school in our area. I was getting more and more convinced to study in a VET school, as I wanted to acquire a profession and the opportunity to connect more quickly with the labor market. And I found the support I needed in the wonderful teaching staff of Kamëz Vocational School. The school where I study is complete with labs and all the equipment suitable for a well-organized professional education. After receiving the first degree at the end of the second year, we are given the opportunity to participate in internships in businesses or to connect directly with the labor market. I feel satisfied with the knowledge I have acquired through this education and I am very passionate to continue my studies and further expand my knowledge in the field of IT.

I want to convey a message to all the girls to not hesitate to be part of vocational education, as there they will find endless opportunities to lay the foundations of success in their future careers. **#BeLikeMe. We can show the world that IT is very well represented by girls!**



Aishe Celami



MEET OUR INTERVET WB PARTNERS

14
project partners

6
regional partners

8
EU member states

Six regional partners are involved in the INTERVET WB project: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia, as well as 8 partners from EU Member States: Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Malta, Spain, Slovenia and Poland. In today's newsletter we will travel to Bosnia & Herzegovina and meet IUS Lifelong Learning Center and the International University of Sarajevo (IUS).

Article written from Mirsada Mehremic - Assistant Director LLC

IUSlife

56
PRO-type mobility

360
Mobilities

54
Job shadowing experiences

36
teachers in summer schools

Mirsada Mehremic



Dear colleagues and readers!

I am really honored to be invited by the Albanian Skills team to give my contribution to the INNOVET Albania newsletter and especially to present our IUS Lifelong Learning Center and the International University of Sarajevo. International University of Sarajevo (IUS) was established by the Foundation for Education Development in Sarajevo in 2004. IUS with its 5 faculties (Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Faculty of Business and Administration, Faculty of Law, and Faculty of Education), 6 leading centers, 21 study programs, and 19 graduate programs has been one of the leading institutions of higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina and has been named the best private university in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The vision of IUS is to become an internationally recognized institution of higher education and research and a center of excellence and quality through the shared efforts of the founders, academic and administrative staff, students, and all stakeholders. IUS aims at becoming a leading international institution of higher education and research center. IUS has up to 2000 students coming from 56 different countries. The university employs more than 200 full-time faculty and staff members from more than 22 different countries.

IUS Lifelong Learning Center (IUS Life) established in 2013 aims to help the personal and professional development of the public through various educational programs. To create a better-trained workforce and to contribute to the economy of Bosnia-Herzegovina, various vocational training, professional and personal development programs, foreign languages and computer literacy courses, certificate programs, and seminars are held by the IUS Life. Especially through the non-profit vocational programs, IUS Life wishes to enhance the spirit of entrepreneurship, to open new avenues for business. To this end, IUS Life works in cooperation with all public and private sector and international bodies. An integral part of our IUS Life is the **English Language School (ELS)** accredited by Eaquals.

The main objective of (ELS) is to provide high-quality intensive English Language instruction to those students who are admitted to the IUS without the needed language skills. ELS is also open to the public offering courses in, traditional, online, and blended versions. IUS / IUS Life is involved in Erasmus +, Mevlana Exchange Program, and participates in many projects funded by EU, USAID, and state agencies.



BRAIN CAMP 2021 - A Unique Journey to Neuroscience

BrainCamp is a project initiated by Egzona Morina and M&Xh Foundation. BrainCamp International is a week long course where Ph.D students from world's top universities teach neuroscience to high-school students. This year for the very first time BrainCamp was also held in Albania along with other European countries. The goal of BrainCamp is to inspire young people to think about science in a new light and potentially motivate them to invest their time in a future career path in this field. Let's meet two of the BrainCamp Albania participants and their experience remarks.

Fabian Pirra

My name is Fabian Pirra and I am 16 years old. I am currently a student in the tenth grade. To me neuroscience is a branch of biology which is as complex as it is beautiful. I consider neuroscience field as broad source of information for understanding and learning the brain functions and nervous system. I consider neuroscience as a source of knowledge that will help me in the future, as I want to continue the university of medicine and then specialize in neurosurgery. My goal is to become a neurosurgeon.

I saw Brain Camp as a golden opportunity to broaden my knowledge. From my experience it was something very special and beautiful. The teachers were polite, cheerful, open-minded and friendly. What distinguished them from the other teachers was that their ability to explain complex issues, in the simplest possible way so that we could get to the essence of what they were explaining. It was a wonderful experience from which I learned a lot of valuable information, that will help me in my future professional journey. From Brain Camp in addition to knowledge, I also learned how simple a explanation can be given for incredibly complex issues. During the Brain Camp I also had the opportunity to strengthen my critical thinking skills, where we had to come to logical conclusions and to defend our opinions and ideas based on neuroscience arguments.

To conclude, this experience was special. It was such an impressive experience that if Brain Camp is to be held again next year, I will attend it. The message I want to convey to others is: "Never give up on your dreams and use every opportunity to achieve them" because with work, will and logic we can achieve everything!

Sabjan Haska

My name is Sabjan Haska, I am 15 years old and I am in the ninth grade. I live in the city of Gjirokastra and I study at the non-public school "Frymë Dashurie". Before my experience at BrainCamp I was not aware of neuroscience field and it was something unknown to me. From what I learned about it, neuroscience seems very interesting and I think it will massively affect the development of humanity. Although I liked this branch of science very much, at the moment I am more focused on the science of mathematics in combination with the arts and painting, as these are the fields I'm more passionate about. In the future I'm thinking to study architecture, but it is still too early to decide as there are plenty of other branches which I can pursue.

My journey with BrainCamp was a special experience I did not really expect to be so impressive. At first I took it simply as an activity on a topic where I had no previous knowledge. But it turned out to be an experience I will not easily forget. The teachers and the topics were both interesting and fun. Although everything was conducted in English, I had no difficulty in understanding the information received. I learned so many things about which I had little or no knowledge in my daily life.

I would like to tell future potential participants not to hesitate, as it is a very wonderful experience where you not only get information about different topics, but you have endless fun with the conversations and jokes that take place during that short lessons. If I was given again the opportunity to participate for a second time I would do it with the greatest pleasure.

