



Let's contribute towards a stronger VET Community!
INNOVET ALBANIA NEWSLETTER



Issue 4, March 2021

Inspiring young girls and women to dream, believe and dare!

albanianskills



Dear Readers,

I am honored to introduce you the fourth issue of **INNOVET ALBANIA Newsletter!** My name is Fatmira Prodani and I am an IT & Multimedia lecturer at "Aleksander Moisiu" University of Durrës. My teaching career began at a vocational school, where I met Ana Zacharian with whom I collaborated for a long time on the improvement and enhancement of the vocational education quality. When I received Ana's proposal to join the Albanian Skills, I felt privileged to be part of this amazing initiative that promotes young people's professional skills. I was closely associated with VET and I knew how important it was to the job market. Even nowadays many parents and young people are still hesitant about choosing vocational education. From my personal experience, I am fully convinced that the VET system is an asset that should be embraced by all those young people who have a passion and skills in various professional fields.

Fatmira Prodani

I see the difference in the Information Technology & Multimedia students. Those who come from vocational schools or those who have attended vocational training are more ready and prepared for the job market than other peers. In most European countries, especially German-speaking countries, VET system produces highly skilled, ready-to-work new employees for businesses, serving as a very important economic incentive. We should try to preserve traditional careers and develop new creative ones that build up young people's talents and interests. There are skills such as those of graphic designers, web designers, web developers and video editors that offer many opportunities and career paths for creative jobs and for people with a diverse range of talents and interests. During these 6 years as a member of the Graphic Design jury in Albanian Skills Competitions I have witnessed the interest and willingness of the business to hire and train talented young people. **Creative professionals who are on the cutting edge with the latest industry tools, technologies and trends are always in high demand and therefore it's important to make learning an ongoing priority.**

Fatmira Prodani

Executive board member of AS - NASC & Graphic Design jury of the National Skills Competitions

Rubrics of Innovet Albania - 4th Issue

This publication was prepared and edited by: Fatma Memalli



When Passion turns into Profession!

Meet Elsa Pashollari and Xhesika Lleshi through their inspiring stories, as the female winners of the 6th edition of Albanian National Skills Competitions.

Global Innovation Index for 2020

Since 2007, the Global Innovation Index (IGI) annually ranks more than 130 countries in the world..

Coffee Talk 7, a meeting dedicated to girls and women in VET!

**"Man. the captain of his destiny"
Interview with Arjodita Mustali**

Founder of VIGAN Group and some successful companies in Albania with national and international impact, as well as General Director of ABSA.

The first Center of Vocational Excellence in Albania

An interview with Flutura Vaqarri, principal of the Vocational School "Hoteleri-Tourizëm" in Tirana since 2005 .

VET Education through VET learner's eyes

INTERVET WB Project in a Snapshot!

Intervet WB is an amazing opportunity for all actors involved in the VET system in the WB. Its goal is simple and effective..

Meet out INTERVET WB partners!

In today's newsletter we will travel to Kosovo and meet Prishtina Rea.

Celebrate International Girls in ICT Day with AlbanianSkills!

WHEN PASSION TURNS INTO PROFESSION!

Meet Elsa & Xhesika through their inspiring stories as the winners of the 6th edition of Albanian National Skills Competitions

Greetings to all the readers of INNOVET Albania newsletter!

My name is Elsa Pashollari, I am 19 years old and I live in the city of Korça. I am currently taking a professional hairdressing course and I am almost finishing it. My experience with AlbanianSkills has been beautiful and successful at the same time. An experience that goes beyond borders and will give me the opportunity to participate in a European event such as EuroSkills. I am looking forward to this experience, because I consider it very valuable for my professional growth. Being a successful girl in the career path I have chosen, is like a dream I have always had and I am already pursuing it. I have discovered my passion and talent in this field when I was 14 years old, while doing small things that meant a lot to me.



Elsa Pashollari

I loved working with hair and often explored different hairstyles and styling methods. I was a young girl looking to move forward and I wanted to discover new things. Until it comes a day when I was given the opportunity to turn my dream into reality. I decided to start a hairdressing course and after a month I had the opportunity to participate in the National Skills Competitions organized by AlbanianSkills. I participated and told myself that I would give my best to win. I achieved my goal, won the first place and I was extremely happy. After this experience I have only grown in my professional journey.



I have also encountered obstacles in this journey because it is not easy to take the career path of your life. I have been able to overcome them by giving myself the task of never stopping in front of them. I am illustrating this with a very simple example. At first, I found it very difficult to style braids properly and I tried hard every day to achieve it. Only thanks to the continuous work over time I managed to successfully do it. Today I tell myself that I will never give up until I become a professional hairdresser and teach young girls what I started and became today. This is also my message to all young people: **Continue the dream you have and never give up.** Go ahead and just walk, despite the obstacles you will encounter on your way. **It is a long road that has endless turns, but in the end there is a light where your dream shines!**

I am Xhesika Lleshi and I am 18 years old, currently studying Communications and Graphic Design at European University of Tirana. I am working as a freelance photographer. My passion for photography started firstly from my older sister and then it grew more throughout my first year of high school, when I created the first photography club at school. We used to get together and learn about new things regarding photography. Throughout my first participation at Albanian Skills National Competitions, in the 5th edition, although it was my first time shooting with a professional camera, I managed to take amazing pictures and win the first prize. Now it's been 2 years that I practice photography as a profession. Being back in the 6th edition of Albanian Skills Competitions helped me realize how much my work had been improved.



Xhesika Lleshi

The community of photographers is growing everyday and it is very supportive and helpful to each other. I have had some difficulties but I have always managed to turn them into something that I could benefit from to improve myself. This is also what I would say to all youngsters. Never give up from what you want to accomplish. **Success is never immediate. If success were easy, then everyone would be able to do anything.**





"Man, Captain of His Own Destiny"

Interview with Arjodita Mustali

VIGAN
State of giants

Arjodita Mustali

Founder of VIGAN Group and some successful companies in Albania with national and international impact, as well as General Director of ABSA

1. You have already managed to build a successful professional career in the field of business and entrepreneurship. What would you pick out as the most challenging moment of this journey and how did you manage to overcome it?

The entrepreneurial journey can begin very spontaneously and I would say it's even better that way. However, this can only be called a journey if it becomes a mission. As an entrepreneur, you are always between the client and the staff, you are the trusted party of both and you should always maintain communication, professional ethics and a sense of benefit and reward between the two. For an entrepreneur every day is a challenge, a challenge of remaining true to your values with others but more importantly to yourself. For example, my challenge has been to maintain and transmit the values I believe, in my employees, at a time when I had nothing to offer. What did I do? I chose to offer them a dream, a mission, a goal, and they kept running with me. Not just in my early days, but even today there are challenges.

2. What is it like to be a young woman entrepreneur in Albania? How would you describe your beginnings, did you encounter obstacles related to your gender status and how is the business world evolving in this regard?

Gender differences exist and entrepreneurship is no exception. It is certain that for reasons unrelated to your ability, you realize that you are not as far as you have worked to be. As a young entrepreneur, the more you expect this, the more you run the risk of becoming discouraged. It is true that we do not have in our minds the mentality of each or the collective mentality, but it is up to us to face this situation, not to avoid it. Thanks to entrepreneurial women and girls who were not discouraged by prejudice and objectification, today we have a more open and accepting business world.

3. What is innovation for you? Based on your experience, what are some of the innovations brought by the BPO sector in Albania?

Innovation is the future: for business, for society and especially for the young people. The heart of innovation are startups. BPO (Subcontracted Services) and the entire Technology Services Industry are a solution and facilitation for any industry and a faster path to the development and growth of businesses as a whole. This growth has come in the most advanced form, as a symbiosis between companies and staff. Outsourcing services have increased cooperation between companies by strengthening the B2B economy. Also, BPO promotes the support and growth of free professions, which brings our country a few steps closer to the point where it has been designing itself for years. For many years, recognizing the values of BPO, I have worked in promoting this industry to be known and functional in Albania through various forms, in cooperation with the government and companies. I believe that the time has finally come to recognize the values of this industry.

4. What did this ongoing pandemic taught to the business world and towards what skills is the future going to?

This pandemic found Albanian business unprepared, not in terms of staff, not in terms of business procedures or structuring, but in terms of digitalization. The pandemic woke up the business and made it realize that it needs to build a risk plan, where the main component is digitalization, as operating in extreme conditions for a business can be fatal if the business has not embraced innovation and digitalization. I can say that the company should equally take care of the digitalization of employees (Digital Skills) as it needs a great human potential in terms of quality to run the digitalized structures in the business.



5. One of your most intriguing projects is the book "THE FEMALE LEADERS OF TOMORROW, in which you were a co-author. How can we encourage girls and women to believe in their potential as leaders and dare?

It is essential for women and girls to firstly understand themselves and to be educated in being able to see the best side within them. That is where the human potential lies. This potential highlights leadership traits and they come with risks. A woman is not only a leader in business, but also in family, society and wherever she is. If we take the concept of the leader out of the box, then every woman will find herself daring and leading.

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

Sometimes young people associate youth with freedom without commitments and thus miss opportunities to become those who they want to be in the future. True freedom is felt when commitments are embraced. By this I mean the commitments of the mind. Encourage your mind to be curious, to ask, to say YES to the possibilities and to continuously learn. This is how you can make the expression:

"Man is the captain of his destiny" a reality.

Global Innovation Index (IGI) for 2020

From the discovery of the first sparks in the early prehistoric period of the Stone Age, to the controlled use of fire through a series of transformations in the variety of forms we know today, innovation has accompanied us throughout our human existence, influencing radically the way how we create, develop and update new methodologies and practices to meet the challenges of the time. Just a few months ago, innovation - mainly in finding effective treatments and vaccines in response to this pandemic - was the beacon of hope to overcome isolation and the multifaceted global crisis. Innovation can be considered as the heart of progress. But did you know that there is an index that measures innovation on a global scale?

Who will finance innovation?

Since 2007, the Global Innovation Index (IGI) annually ranks more than 130 countries in the world based on their success and capacity for innovation. The purpose of this index is to provide detailed data on innovation and to assist policymakers and economies in assessing their innovation performance and undertaking well-informed economic policies.

The 2020 edition, published in an unusual situation of an economic turmoil, examines and addresses an extremely fundamental question: **Who will finance innovation?** The ability to rely on and secure access to sustainable financial resources is an ongoing challenge for innovators around the world and is becoming particularly difficult as a result of the current pandemic. Funding sources play a vital role in every stage of the innovation cycle from the conceptualization of a product, service or technology to its commercialization and beyond. Prior to the pandemic, in addition to public funding schemes, young sovereign actors and non-profit organizations had begun to appear on the innovation funding scene, while the findings of this report show that this crisis has begun to slow down this development.

References: [https://www.globalinnovationindex.org/Global Innovation Index Report 2020 13th Edition](https://www.globalinnovationindex.org/Global-Innovation-Index-Report-2020-13th-Edition)

Global ranking for 2020

IGI evaluates innovation based on three indicators:

- **Innovation Input Sub-Index:** Five input pillars capture elements of the national economy that enable innovative activities.
- **Innovation Output Sub-Index:** provides information about the output product that comes as a result of the innovative activities of economies.
- **The overall GII score:** is the average score of the Input and Output Sub-Indices.

In the global innovation ranking, Albania is ranked 83th.

	GII	Innovation inputs	Innovation outputs
2020	83	74	91
2019	83	70	93
2018	83	69	95

The chart shows the top 10 countries in the 2020 GII ranking: 1. CH (Switzerland), 2. SE (Sweden), 3. U.S. (United States), 4. U.K. (United Kingdom), 5. NL (Netherlands), 6. DK (Denmark), 7. FI (Finland), 8. GER (Germany). Albania is at rank 83.



Flutura Vaqarri

**Principal of the Vocational School
"Hospitality-Tourism" in Tirana
since 2005 .**

Since 2005 you successfully lead the Vocational School of "Hospitality & Tourism" in Tirana. What are some of the challenges you have faced and to overcome in this long journey?

Since September 2005, I'm the principal of the Vocational School of "Hospitality & Tourism" in Tirana, after an 8-year experience as a teacher of professional subjects in this school. Certainly it has not been easy to perform this task, as the school itself as an institution but also the youth have their challenges. At the time I took over this duty, the school building was damaged, there was generally a lack of professional practice facilities, equipments and textbooks were missing, vocational teachers were in the initial stages of their training, and so on. In those years there was a relatively limited number of students studying in the direction of Tourism, which later became the most popular one among students. All of these were the challenges of that time for me as a director. An Albanian school was offering for the first time in Albania, the study program of hospitality and tourism, thanks to a cooperation between the Albanian and Austrian governments.

How much has the situation in the field of Vocational Education and Training in Albania changed since 2005 until today? What would you mention as some of the most influential and innovative strategies in promoting girls in VET?

In recent years, Vocational Education have become a priority and this is the reason why our schools became directly subordinated to the ministry responsible for employment, as the connection and cooperation of the school with businesses and Labor Offices, would guarantee the professional training of students in school, and directly to the workplace. As I mentioned above, in our beginnings the number of students studying in our school was relatively limited. The first graduations but also the early employment of students were giving a positive image, but we still had a small number of girls. To balance the number between boys and girls, we worked hard

with middle-school students and especially with their parents. For this reason, we decided to accept girls without considering their Grade Point Average (GPA) criterion, including girls from the Roma and Egyptian communities. Year after year, this ratio have improved.

Just a few months ago, the "Vocational School of Hospitality-Tourism" was selected as a Center of Vocational Excellence by the ETF - European Training Foundation and it is now part of this network and part of the large family of excellence. Can you tell us something more about this journey?

In 2019, the European Training Foundation, requested from central institutions of Vocational Education, the schools nominated to be part of ETF Network for Excellence / ENE, with a focus on **"learning in the workplace"**. The ETF later selected our school. The purpose is the cooperation between the schools of this network by disseminating experiences, working towards qualitative improvement of the current professional practices, creating partnerships between the schools that are part of this network and beyond, further trainings of the school principals and the school business coordinators, improving funding opportunities for students and monitoring teachers of professional practices in businesses. Among the initiatives of this network is "The role of Vocational Schools of Excellence, for learning in the workplace".

What does it mean to be part of this network and can you tell us something more about the future projects you are working on, mainly about those that focus on innovation?

Being part of this excellence network is firstly a responsibility and certainly requires even more work and dedication. On the other hand, it is an appreciation and satisfaction for the great work we have done so far in our school and especially in cooperation with our business partners, which two years ago reached 266 partnerships. As for other projects, the school is currently part of a project of OEAD (Culture-Contact), Austria where the focus is on cooperation with the school dormitory (the concept of a teaching hotel), not only to organize the professional practices of students in the dormitory, but also improving the quality of food and service for dormitory students. On the other hand, our teachers, in cooperation with their Austrian colleagues, have trained teachers of other vocational schools, a training about building the professional competencies of their students, based on the national curricula. Recently, we have also completed the textbooks and learning materials for the programs of hospitality and tourism profiles.

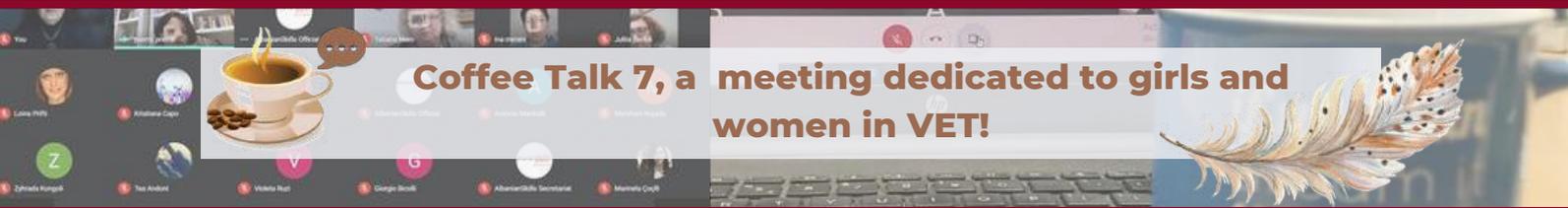


How can we encourage young people in general and young girls in particular not to be "afraid" of studying in vocational schools? Can you briefly introduce them with successful and inspirational stories from your school students?

I think young people and their families have already realized that vocational education is the right education. The students of our school are already employed during the years of schooling, and continue to be part of the labor market even if they study at HEIs. I can proudly say that today many of our students perform managerial duties in many prestigious hotels and restaurants in Tirana, but not only. They are many stories of success of our students even beyond borders, in Germany, England, Ireland, Malta and Dubai

What is your message to all the readers of this newsletter and to all young people in Albania?

The school's mission is to equip young people with practical and professional skills, and Vocational Education creates many opportunities and chances in life. Our students' message to all the young people who are ahead of their career choice is: **"We have made our choice, now it is your turn."** This message goes from our students to all young people who want to guarantee their future through theoretical-practical training in Vocational Education schools.



Coffee Talk 7, a meeting dedicated to girls and women in VET!

Coffee Talk, our monthly meeting with actors of VET institutions and schools, parents, students and people interested for a better quality on education, where we all can contribute, this time took place in a very special atmosphere. In March, in the Month of Women's History, we discussed about the journey of girls and women in Vocational Education and Training in Albania; with all the ups and downs, challenges and achievements that have marked this journey. Moderated by Kostanca Doku, a teacher at the ICT Vocational School in Korça, teachers and students shared their experiences and stories, discussing in more detail the obstacles they have encountered, influenced by different gender stereotypes that exist in the selection of certain professions. It was a discussion where the experiences between the generations were intertwined, from the situation of girls in Vocational Education and Training in the political system of the previous regime to the experiences and the current situation today.

Under the presentation of Kostanca Doku, but also the director of this school Julita Bimbli as well as other members of the teaching staff shared with the participants some successful activities, practices and strategies that their school has followed for the encouragement of girls towards professional skills. This CoffeTalk conveyed once again the message that when we all come together we can contribute to the advancement and progress of VET in Albania! **To join us in this mission, we invite you to follow us on our social media and become part of our monthly meetings!**



VET Education & training through VET students eyes

Erika Mersinaj

Testimonial from Erika Mersinaj, student at ICT Vocational High School, Korça.

My name is Erika and I am studying at the School of Information and Communication Technology in the city of Korça. It has been almost 4 years since I made the decision to study in a vocational school, and I can say fully convinced that it was a wish of mine for which I have not regretted at all. Among the reasons why I chose to study at this school is the fact that you can get a profession at an early age, basic knowledge, specialized skills, excellent career opportunities, but above all it gives you the opportunity to connect faster with the labor market. The school where I study has met all the conditions and provided us all the studying equipments. Meanwhile, special attention is paid to professional practices in school laboratories, which are also in very good conditions. And, at the same time, we are offered the opportunity to do the professional practices also in businesses.

I feel very satisfied and fulfilled by the skills I have gained through this education and I aspire to continue my studies further. Shortly, I would describe the program I have chosen to study with great passion as a field of study that integrates the science of electronics, telecommunications, informatics and media. Through this brief description of vocational education I want to convey a message to all young people, and in particular to all girls who may be skeptical about going towards professional skills. **If you aim to be a successful and accomplished girl in your professional career in the future, choose vocational education today because there you will find endless opportunities.**





INTERVET WB Project in a Snapshot!

Giulia Quaglietti

Project Coordinator from Uniser, a cooperative offering learning mobility services since 1998.

Benefits of the INTERVET WB for all the VET learners and VET teachers. Why shouldn't they miss out this amazing opportunity?

Intervet WB is an amazing opportunity for all actors involved in the VET system in the WB. Its goal is simple and effective: to introduce the culture of learning mobility in Western Balkans VET systems to improve the employability of students. **How to do that?** The key is the implementation of mobility schemes in the WB in order to improve the key competences of the participants and of the VET organisations within new networks of stakeholders that will sustain the outputs of the Projects through time. . As coordinator of the project, Uniser believes that Innovation in the WB's VET system is the absolute protagonist of INTERVET. Summer schools, Job Shadowing, Transnational meetings, Training Assignments and Thematic Team are all containers of expertise that will be focused on the implementation of new ways of bringing internationalisation within the WB VET System. The WB schools that will take part in the Project activities will have access to a solid process of participation, validation and recognition of mobility that focuses on one main factor: **accessibility for everybody involved.**

A short overview about the 2020 activities

As we all know, 2020 was a complicated year due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Even Though this situation created a series of challenges for mobility in general, thanks to the support of all partners involved, the Intervet WB project was able to carry on most of the activities scheduled, with successful results.

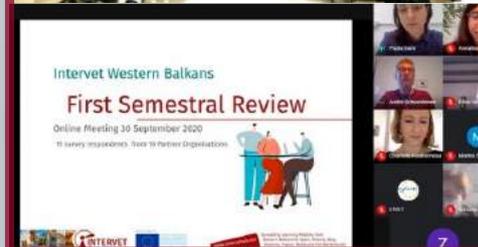
The participation in these activities was remarkable, to bring a few examples the Thematic Theme meeting brought together online more than 130 VET workers all around Europe to discuss VET mobility, especially for teachers and school staff; The Training Assignments took place online and were held by Uniser Project Managers and Coordinators with Intervet WB hosting and sending organisations, with a series of meetings dedicated to the management, the organisational and the management of all activities forecasted in the Project. Finally, the first Summer School gathered many teachers and school staff from WB schools to discuss the theme of Internationalization and mobility.

A short overview about the Albanian participants in 2020 activities

Albania participated in all the activities above, in the call for students for short term mobilities that will take place in June 2020 and in the call for teachers, both for Job shadowing and for the Summer School. Thanks to these calls, students will have the opportunity to travel through Europe to have 360° internship experiences of one up to three months length that will surely enrich their curriculum vitae and their set of soft and hard skills. On the other hand, teachers are fundamental in the process of internationalization and they will be involved in job shadowing activities and summer schools held by organizations that are excellences of the European VET systems. Once these experiences will be over, teacher and school staff members will bring back their experience to their home schools, in order to improve their own VET sector and enrich the academic curricula with mobility.

Next Activities

In April the second call for students' mobility to Poland, the second call for Job Shadowing and for the Summer School that will be dedicated to teachers and school staff will be open. Many are the opportunity that Intervet WB is creating, thanks to the outstanding work of all partners involved and the enthusiasm of the participants. Learning mobility is a life changing experience that everybody should try once, it does not matter if you are a student or a teacher. These kinds of experiences allow the improvement of personal and professional skills and intercultural competences, creating a bridge between youth, education systems and the work market. It is always important to push ourselves out of our comfort zone and give a try to the world that awaits for us!



Let's contribute towards a stronger VET Community!

14
project partners

6
regional partners

8
EU member states

MEET OUR INTERVET WB PARTNERS

Six regional partners are involved in the 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 Kosovo and meet Prishtina Rea.

56
PRO-type mobilities

360
Mobilities

54
Job shadowing experiences

36
teachers in summer schools



Ahmet Jetullahu-Meti

DEVELOPMENT INNOVATION LEAD



Prishtina Rea

Prishtina REA, with 20 years of professional service provision experience in the region, harnesses the unique smart SME development experience & expertise through its technical assistance services to the national & international development, programs, proven knowledge transfers arm of international partners.

Over 300 projects implemented in 20 years

Prishtina REA has been established since 2001 to provide in a professional and cost effective manner technical support, advisory services and business training services to Youth, Education-VET, Employment-Startups, SMEs, entrepreneurs, local & central level government institutions in Kosovo and as promoter of local economic development.

Prishtina REA focuses on the design and implementation of competition and innovation strategies, and assists clients by being organized around issues related to development, innovation and competitiveness to ensure sustainable growth and high quality life towards current generations and those of the future. Our "Seal of Quality" is our experience in engaging experts of respective fields, as well as based on development trends of Entrepreneurship, SMEs and employers who are struggling to adapt to the circumstances of global markets and economic development achievements. Prishtina REA implements projects targeting Digital Transformation of SME, ICT and Digital sector, Innovation and internationalization. Prishtina REA is the 'Enterprise Europe Network Kosovo' coordinator and implementing partner of EU 'Support for the Competitiveness of Kosovo's ICT Sector', as member of Enterprise Europe Network family, working with 900 Kosovar businesses towards their internationalization to EEN network (Prishtina REA is country partner of 'VET Internationalisation System in WB', a three years' project, targeting around 620 mobilities to EU countries.



THURSDAY, 22 APRIL

Celebrate International Girls in ICT Day with AlbanianSkills!

All across the world, in many countries, including Albania, women and girls still continue to be under-represented in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). We live in the technological age, thus making gender equality one of the global priorities. April 22 marks the International Girls in ICT Day and AlbanianSkills will join the worldwide celebrations and activities of this day. Lets celebrate this day with inspiring stories of women in the ICT sector, exchange experiences and connect with each other. Stay tuned and join us in this day!!!

Follow us on social media - AlbanianSkills



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