

RisiAlbania is a project of the
Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



REVEALING POTENTIAL

CAREER GUIDANCE
BOOSTING ALBANIAN
YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY

In partnership with:



Implemented by:



HELVETAS



PARTNERSALBANIA
FOR CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT



CASE STUDY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive summary	3
1 Introduction	5
2 Background.....	6
2.1 Youth unemployment in Albania	6
2.2 Key transition moments	7
3 Setting the strategic framework	8
4 Career guidance interventions in practice	11
4.1 Strengthening public career guidance services.....	11
4.2 Enhancing career centres at universities.....	13
4.3 Expanding career guidance in pre-university education.....	15
4.4 Promoting private sector innovations in career services	15
4.5 Building capacity for career counsellors	17
4.6 Leveraging media to shape career choices.....	19
5 How the system changed	21
5.1 Evolution over time	21
5.2 Partner interactions and collaboration	23
5.3 Innovations leading to system change	24
6 Improved career decision-making among young people	26
7 Lessons learned and future directions	28
7.1 Key takeaways for future initiatives	28
7.2 Operational recommendations	30

Tirana, 28 May 2022

Author: Katharina Walker

Contributor: Ermira Shyti

This document has been produced by RisiAlbania.

The views and conclusions contained here do not necessarily reflect
those of the Swiss Government or the Swiss Agency for Development and
Cooperation (SDC)

In partnership with:



Implemented by:



HELVETAS



PARTNERSALBANIA
FOR CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

Executive Summary

Over 29,000 young women and men have received quality career guidance services in Albania from 2019 to 2025 thanks to RisiAlbania. RisiAlbania is a youth employment project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, in partnership with Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation, implemented by Helvetas and Partners Albania for Change and Development.

The youth employment project has supported the transformation of the career guidance system through multidimensional and complementary interventions. This case study sheds light on these interventions and shows how the different innovations like pieces of puzzles built up and improved the Albanian career guidance system.

CAREER GUIDANCE AS A PUBLIC GOOD: the first career office at municipal level opened its doors to pupils, students, and parents in Tirana. The municipalities of Lushnje, Berat, and Elbasan replicated the career offices in phase 3 of the intervention.

CAREER GUIDANCE SERVICES AT PRE-UNIVERSITY LEVEL: to ensure that teachers are well-equipped to deliver a new career guidance module for grades 6-9.

CAREER GUIDANCE SERVICES FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: students of four big public universities benefited from quality career guidance services.

PRIVATE PROVIDERS COME UP WITH THEIR SOLUTIONS: an intermediation provider and a training provider reacted to the market developments and designed their own fee-based offers.

WELL-TRAINED CAREER COUNSELLOR AS THE BASIS: five cohorts of Career counsellors graduated from the upgraded master programme and four international tests were standardized to the Albanian context and became available as instruments for career counselling services.

MEDIA PROGRAMMES FOCUS ON CAREER INFORMATION: various media programs featuring career information became available in the Albanian media market and reached hundred thousand young people.

RisiAlbania supported the partners ranging from universities, private providers to the municipality depending on their needs. Overall, the support took the form of:

- Institutional and organizational capacities of service providers.
- Development of content (digital tools, tests, manuals).
- Development of career counsellors.

The case study further illustrates how the different actors interacted with one another. A key success factor in this regard was the collaboration between Albanian and Swiss institutions. Ultimately, this resulted in a high-quality and innovative career guidance system that served both young people and companies: young people gained the ability to make more informed career decisions and found employment more easily. Placement became faster and more effective — the skilled workforce better matched the needs of companies.

Introduction

Ebi Shaphasaj is an 18 years old student who finished the American-Albanian high school in Tirana in the summer of 2022. A friend suggested to her to visit the at that time newly established career centre of the Municipality of Tirana, the first of its kind in Albania, as Ebi was not sure what to study at the university. The career counsellors listened to Ebi and guided her in her decision-making process using different types of career tests. Ebi says that the tests helped her to understand what she likes and what she is good at. She decided to study finance at the university.

Many young people in Albania have similar open questions about their future career path and need quality career guidance services. For that purpose, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) through the RisiAlbania project facilitated the establishment of new and improving of career guidance services in Albania. This has happened at different levels: The Municipality of Tirana opened the first Albanian career guidance centre end of 2020 serving the public including students of all ages and their parents, four universities dispose of career guidance offices in their premises, a private intermediation provider effectively links jobseekers and employers, and a private trainer introduced career counselling as a separate service to their training offers. Future career counsellors, a key bottleneck, graduated from the new Master at the Faculty of Social Sciences. Different media products shaped the kids, youth and parents' perception related to career-related decisions.

Since 2019, 29.000 young people (16,447 female) have benefitted from career services. This case study aims to identify, validate, and document experiences in career guidance in Albania. RisiAlbania started working on career guidance through media in 2013 and increased the scope in the second and third phase. Sharing experiences captured at different levels has been central from the beginning, examples are former capitalization products such as the case study on the role of media in career guidance or the recent career guidance¹ weeks on different online media.

¹ Gavin Andersen, Inspiring and influencing the young jobseekers of Albania, Tirana, 2016.

Background

2.1 Youth unemployment in Albania

Albania is a small country with a population of 2.8 million inhabitants. Young people (15-29 years old) make about 23% of the population of Albania, according to data in 2020. Out of 661,365 young women and men, 16% of them are registered and frequent secondary education, while 20% attend higher education. As of the fourth quarter of 2023, Albania's official unemployment rate for individuals aged 15-29 stood at 22%. Addressing youth employment has continued to be a high priority for the Government of Albania in recent years and the foreseeable future. Albania has experienced significant youth emigration, with approximately 46,460 individuals leaving the country in 2022, which is a 10.5% increase from the previous year.

The proportion of young people aged 15–24 not engaged in employment, education, or training (NEET) was 24.6% in 2023, more than double the EU average of 11.7%. The persistently high youth unemployment and NEET rates were primarily attributed to low labour demand, ineffective job matching services, and a lack of relevant skills. Many parents are desperate for their children to study a prestigious subject like law or medicine, but it is very difficult for university graduates to find jobs, whereas there is a shortage of skilled people in other sectors. Young people find it difficult to find jobs because they do not know how or where to find them. Jobseekers and potential employers alike complain that the avenues available to them in their searches are limited. This indicates that mechanisms or institutions that mediate between jobseekers and employers, matching the supply of jobs with the demand for them, are missing or not performing properly.

2.2 Key transition moments

Every person faces key transition moments in her or his path from education to employment (Figure 1). These are moments when important career decisions are taken. The ability of young people to meet informed decisions ultimately impacts finding (better) employment.

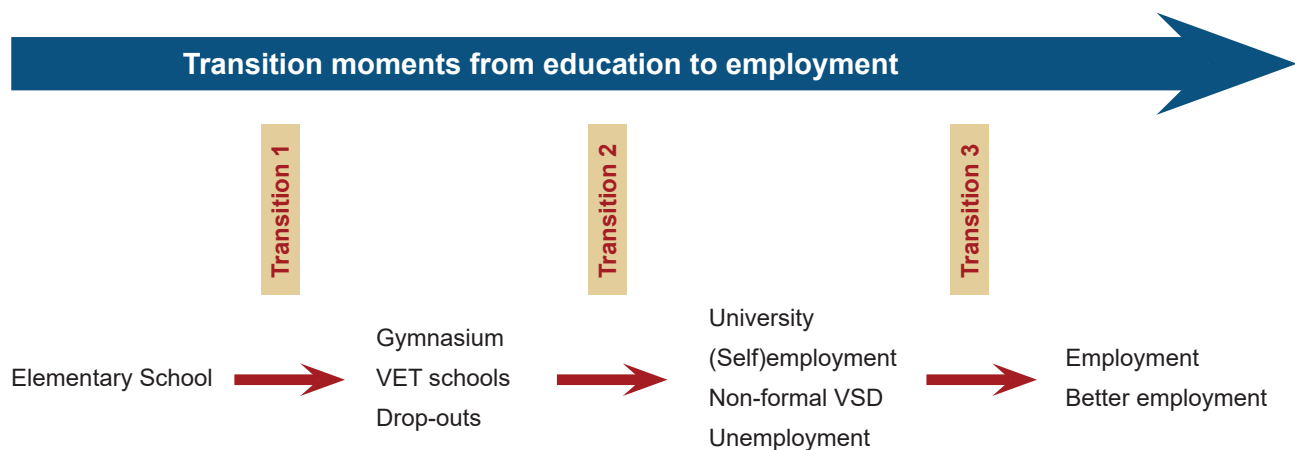


Figure 1: Transition moments

Research commissioned at the start of phase 2 explored seven distinct pillars of career guidance, both within and outside the education system. 1) compulsory education, 2) general high education, 3) higher education, 4) vocational education, 5) municipalities, 6) public employment services, and 7) private recruitment companies.¹ Important root causes of this situation are limited understanding of the career guidance services and their importance as well as fragmented labour market information.

¹ Visar Ademi and Sokol Avxhiu, Review of current state of Career Guidance and counselling in Albania, 2017

Setting the Strategic Framework

To meet their employment needs, RisiAlbania worked on providing effective ways of linking Jobseekers with the job opportunities that best match their skills, needs, and interests. RisiAlbania's outcome on *job intermediation and career guidance* was oriented towards both intermediation services and career guidance. This case study focuses on career guidance.

Career guidance refers to services and activities designed to assist individuals of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make education, training and occupational choices, and to manage their careers. Such services can be found in various locations and providers: schools, universities, training institutions, public employment services, in the community and private sectors. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education programs (to help individuals develop their self-awareness, opportunity awareness and career management skills), taster programs (to sample options before choosing them), work search programs and transition services.

Looking at career guidance, the outcome of RisiAlbania is clear: young women and men make more informed career choices and gain better employment opportunities thanks to a strengthened job mediation system.

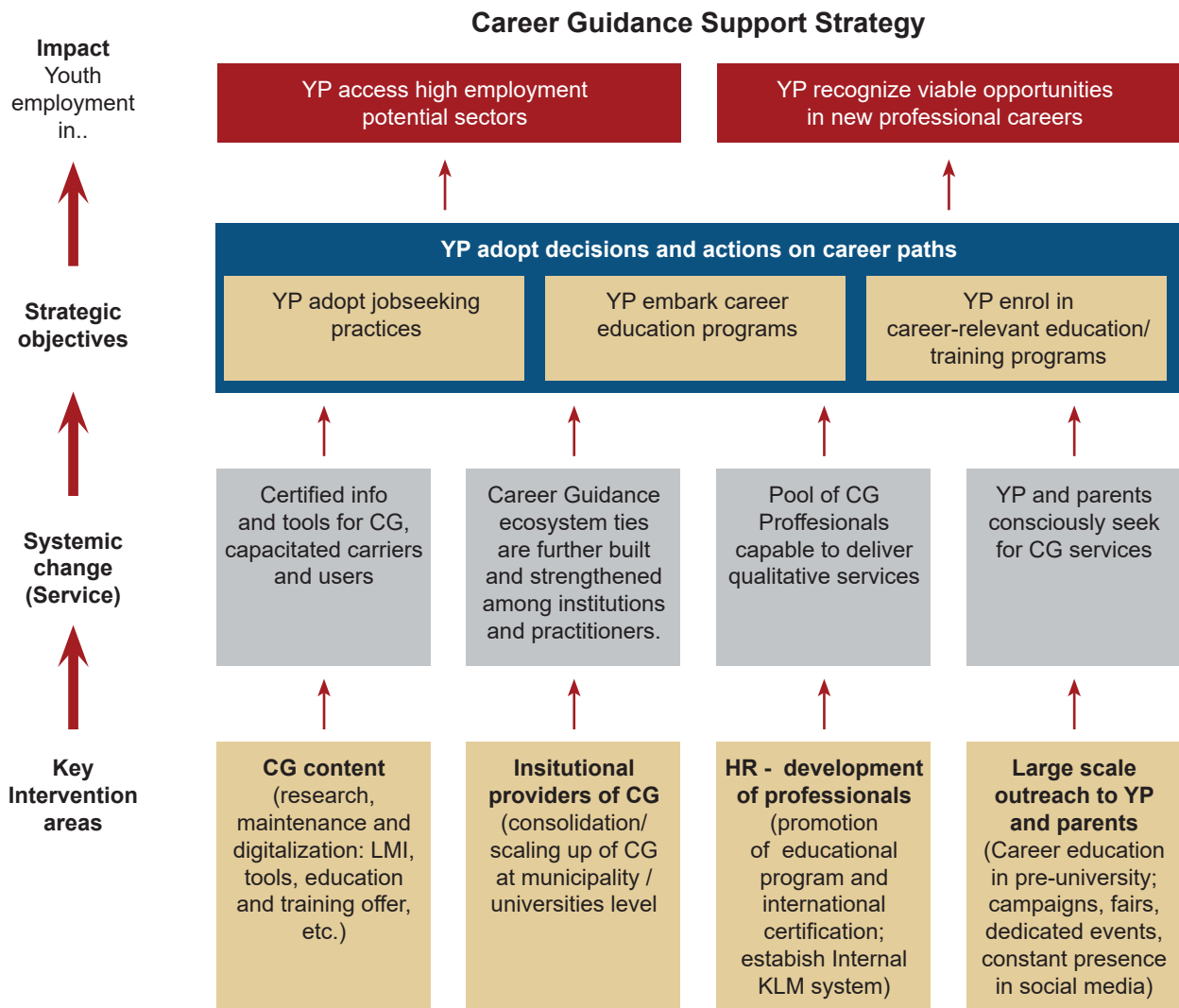


Figure 2 Career guidance support strategy

RisiAlbania aimed to reach diverse youth groups (ages 15–29) as well as the broader public — including parents — by combining direct service improvements with media outreach. To achieve this, the project designed a holistic, multi-pronged career guidance support strategy focused on activating and reinforcing all key functions within the system:

- 1. Improving the quality of career guidance content and services** through research, tools, and continuous digitalization.
- 2. Strengthening the professional capacities** by equipping human resources with the necessary skills, training, and certification to deliver quality services.

3. Building robust institutional capacities ensuring committed institutional providers, from local municipalities to universities, can deliver and scale services effectively.

4. Maintaining large-scale outreach using national media, campaigns, fairs, and social media to provide career orientation information to youth and parents.

This combined approach aimed to shift young people's decisions and actions along their career paths by encouraging job-seeking practices, engagement in career education programmes, and enrolment in relevant training. Ultimately, this led to young people accessing sectors with high employment potential and recognizing viable opportunities in new professional careers.



Career Guidance Interventions in Practice

The subsequent sections offer a detailed explanation of the various interventions related to career guidance.

4.1 Strengthening public career guidance services

Rubenc Krifsa, an 18-year-old high school student, recently visited the newly established career centre in Tirana, as he was unsure whether to study medicine or programming. He especially appreciated that the counsellors listened and discussed so intensively with him, and that he could make use of the PGI test¹, a test, he believed existed only in the United States of America.

The Municipality of Tirana started including career guidance services in their structure in form of dedicated staff as part of the social services and budgetary commitments in 2019. The career office opened in December 2020 and has been offering career education for pre-university students, group and individual guidance, and career development training for young people and interested adults since then.

The Swiss career centres served as an inspiration when drafting the various services and products. Swiss career counsellors shared a wide range of materials, which were adapted and translated to the Albanian context. An online self-service² portal was added to the centre's offering, providing information and tools for career guidance, as well as details on education and training opportunities, internships, and jobs. The counsellors

¹ Personal Globe Inventory, a career test

² www.karriera.tirana.al, inspired by the Swiss knowledge portal www.berufsberatung.ch



Career session with young people at the career centre in Tirana

received training according to international professional standards and exchanges with Swiss counterparts. The counsellors received training aligned with international professional standards and engaged in exchanges with their Swiss counterparts. They used contemporary tools to explore areas of career interest for jobseekers, assess their counselling and guidance needs, and identify the challenges young people and adults faced when making decisions in their professional journeys.

In summary, RisiAlbania supported the Municipality by:

- Facilitating exposure to Swiss career guidance practices through exchanges, training, and mentoring;
- Supporting the development of a career portal with a comprehensive information bank showcasing professions, available education, and training opportunities; and
- Assisting in the development of a virtual infrastructure.

After establishing Albania's first career centre at the Municipality of Tirana, the model was successfully replicated in the municipalities of Lushnje, Berat, and Elbasan. Staff were trained and coached to deliver career guidance services, including in-depth instruction

on using career instruments. Infrastructure investments further improved the centres, creating welcoming spaces for the community to access these services. The centres actively promoted their offerings through school visits, participation in youth events, and cooperation with other stakeholders.

In 2024, the Tirana Career Centre underwent significant positive change by relocating to a new, larger office with an expanded team, allowing them to serve a broader segment of the community. Their services intensified, attracting increasing numbers of students from various schools. The centre also continued to promote its services through activities such as the Social Services Festival, which drew over 250 participants, and participation in seven fairs across Albania to expand outreach. Additionally, in line with the Youth Guarantee implementation in Albania, the Tirana Career Office entered a partnership with NAES, the institution responsible for overseeing the Youth Guarantee. Together, from a shared office, they worked to address the needs of many young NEETs, providing career services and training to enhance the efficiency of employment efforts.

4.2 Enhancing career centres at universities

In Albania, most young people opt for university studies. In the academic year 2023–2024, a total of 116,994 students were enrolled in tertiary education programmes across Albania. RisiAlbania collaborated with four public universities, which together accounted for more than 55% of the total student population enrolled in universities across Albania, including the country's largest institution, the University of Tirana.

Five young people studying at these universities shared their experiences with the university career offices for this case study. The counsellors advised them on writing CVs and motivation letters, informed them about internship and job opportunities, and provided life skills through various trainings. The interviewed youth expressed their hope to work in professions aligned with their studies and to pursue them with passion — whether as a foreign language teacher, like Ermir, or as the owner of a corporate law business, like Iris.



When we don't have the right people, with whom we work, then this is a bigger problem than lack of money. The training enabled five staff to provide professional services to our students.

Shpresim Domi leads the career guidance services at the University of Agriculture of Tirana

RisiAlbania supported the selected universities to strengthen their role and capacities in serving their own students and alumni. The services aim to increase the employability of students, like adopting job searching practices. Xhafer Rakiplari, who has been leading the career guidance services at the university of Durres put it as follows: *“Helping youngsters to make a good transition from universities to work life.”*

To further improve and diversify services, RisiAlbania organised a series of exchanges with the Warsaw University of Technology. This online process began at the end

of 2020, with the universities themselves leading the exploration of topics of interest for the development of their services. This enables the universities to increase their human resources capacity based on best practices and strengthen their network of career professionals. The project furthermore supported the introduction of performance measurement instruments, which provided universities with the means to measure the satisfaction of students/alumni with their services and to continuously improve and tailor their services. 75-85% of students participating in the first survey indicated that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the services provided by the respective career offices and would suggest these services to their peers as well.

In summary, RisiAlbania's facilitative support included:

- Establishing university-level study programs to train career counsellors;
- Providing training for university staff through the international Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF) programme;
- Supporting the development and diversification of services, digital content, tools, and methods (such as a career manual, career tests, and webinars), along with the introduction of performance measurement instruments;
- Promoting exchange and collaboration among universities, including partnerships with the Warsaw University of Technology.

With a consolidated network in place, the universities' career counsellors actively exchanged information, developed and reviewed annual career service plans, discussed shared challenges, and worked on improving the promotion of career services. Promoting these services among students was also a central focus of the national campaign for career guidance and lifelong learning. To enhance the visibility of the career offices, universities organized promotional events reaching approximately 350 students, showcasing available services and sharing success stories from individuals who had benefited. Following a change in university management in the summer of 2024, the project prioritized engaging with the new leadership to raise awareness about the importance of career guidance for students, recognizing its crucial role in consolidating and sustaining career services within the universities.

According to RisiAlbania's monitoring, other private and public universities have recently introduced career services. As student awareness grows, the demand for these services is increasing. To improve quality, accessibility, and impact, institutions must make greater efforts. However, challenges remain, particularly in the variety of career counseling tools and resources, as well as ensuring high-quality individual support. Institutional commitment to career guidance should be proactive, to ensure meaningful support for students professional development.

Student satisfaction with university career guidance services

The recent student satisfaction survey evaluating career guidance services at the four partner universities showed high satisfaction levels:

- University of Tirana (UT): 92%
- Polytechnic University of Tirana (PUT): 89%
- Agricultural University of Tirana (AUT): 80%
- Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durrës (UAMD): 71%

These figures highlight both the quality of the services provided and the effectiveness and expertise of the trained career counsellors.

4.3 Expanding career guidance in pre-university education

Following the introduction of career guidance modules in seven secondary and high schools in Tirana in 2023 — fully aligned with Instruction No. 600 issued by the Minister of Education on October 19, 2023, regarding the *Career Orientation Guide for Students in Secondary Schools* — the module for grades 6–9 became a core component of the training programme for teachers in pre-university education.

Throughout 2024, efforts to scale up the introduction of these career education modules were underway. This expansion included designing and delivering customized training sessions for 202 teachers from seven additional schools, adding these institutions to the growing network of schools implementing the modules. The goal was to ensure that teachers are well-equipped to deliver the career guidance modules effectively. During the 2023–2024 academic year, 4,312 students from seven different schools benefited from these career modules.



Personally, the counselling session at the Berat Municipality Career Office gave me a new perspective on my professional path. It encouraged me to believe more in myself and take concrete steps toward the future, keeping me more motivated and confident in the decisions I am making.

Dion Vokopola, high school student

4.4 Promoting private sector innovations in career services

The private intermediation provider **Expert Lane** acknowledged the slow but steady improvement of career guidance systems at universities — yet also identified clear gaps and recognized a promising niche.

Positioning itself as a one-stop shop for career services, Expert Lane set out to bridge this gap by offering customized career counselling and, when requested, soft skills training. With RisiAlbania's support, the company expanded its platform and services including assessments, counselling, training, intermediation, and placement. RisiAlbania helped connect Expert Lane to other key actors, such as the Faculty of Social Sciences and university career offices. Expert Lane's clients include both jobseekers and employers, particularly in the ICT and BPO sectors. One such client was Albi Alikaj, 27, who, after a background in mechatronics and several years working in the tourism sector, decided to shift his career again by studying information systems in business. He signed up for a personal career counselling package for two main reasons: to gain a better understanding of his abilities and to further develop his business idea (digital marketing).



Jobseekers receiving customized career counselling at the one-stop shop of Expert Lane

Training providers also recognized the need to help young people better understand professional fields at an early age, before they chose formal education pathways or shorter training programs. This was the case with the **Albanian ICT Academy**, a RisiAlbania partner providing ICT training. The Academy initially offered career orientation services, but these were not formalized. RisiAlbania supported the provider in consolidating these services and developing a Career Orientation Manual on ICT.

Today, the Academy's career orientation for high school students and their parents includes not only ICT but is gradually expanding to cover other fields of employment. The business model leverages the interplay between career guidance and training: in one scenario, a young girl enrolls in counselling, completes assessments, and pays a fee; if ICT emerges as a field of interest, she can then access free training at the Albanian ICT Academy. In another scenario, a young boy joins the ICT training at the Academy and receives the orientation services free of charge.

This innovative initiative from a private provider reflects the growing awareness among stakeholders across the labour market about the importance of career services — and it demonstrates that young people are willing to pay for high-quality, targeted support.

During phase 3, the newly established career and job portal “**Albanian Jobs**” (an expansion of a previous project initiative) commenced providing career guidance and training to youth, with the aim of better aligning their skills with the vacancies offered by businesses. The portal has facilitated webinars and networking activities for career development, participated in university career fairs to showcase its platform and services, and has been enriched with a new sub-portal dedicated entirely to skills, the “**Albanian**

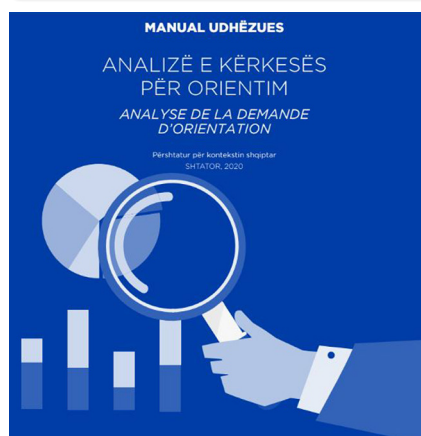
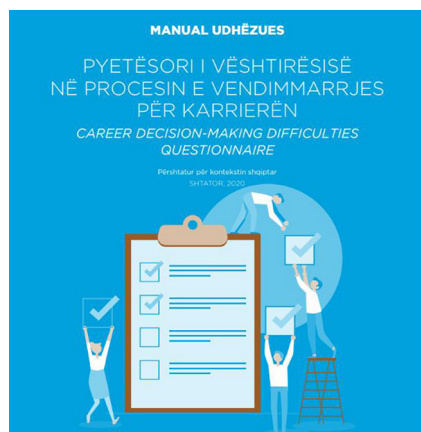


Skills Platform.” In 2024, a total of 247 young professionals received career guidance services, while 24 individuals (including 12 from marginalized groups) were trained in employability and soft skills.

4.5 Building capacity for career counsellors

Research confirmed that the education of career counsellors was a key bottleneck in Albania's career guidance system. For the system to improve qualitatively, the training of those who counsel young people was seen as a crucial missing piece. In response, RisiAlbania supported the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Tirana in its ambition to become a national centre of expertise for career guidance services through the following areas of support:

- Facilitating a long-term partnership with the University of Lausanne;
- Improving the master's and bachelor's program curricula related to career orientation, including enhanced teaching materials and capacity development for teachers;
- Strengthening research capacities.



Through the master's programme Professional Orientation at the Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS) of the University of Tirana — supported by a strong partnership with the University of Lausanne — the role of career advisor was introduced to the Albanian labour market. During the 2024–2025 academic year, 36 career advisors were enrolled, including professionals from universities and municipalities, reflecting a notable increase in both the quantity and quality of students and growing national interest in the programme. With the support of Lausanne experts, FSS adapted four contemporary international career guidance tests to the Albanian context and actively promoted the master's programme both nationally and internationally. Building on their close cooperation, FSS and the University of Lausanne are now working together to establish CerCo, a dedicated centre for strengthening research capacities in career guidance, developing new instruments, and managing complex cases. Additionally, plans are underway for a joint Swiss-Albanian PhD programme in career guidance. These initiatives aim to strengthen the research base, ensure the delivery of high-quality career-focused training, and solidify the career advisor's role in helping young people make informed professional decisions.

4.6 Leveraging media to shape career choices

"I am very grateful to the media programme *Think Big*, which has changed my life," said Aleksia Bega, who landed her first job to complement her computer engineering studies after seeing the company featured in *Think Big*, one of the programs supported by RisiAlbania. Since 2015, RisiAlbania aimed to transform how media reports on employment and career guidance. Early on, it supported media organizations in building capacities and business models to sustainably deliver labour market content. Six media outlets (three TV channels, one radio station, one newspaper, and one online portal) produced dedicated content focused on labour market information. It demonstrated that such content can be developed as a commercially viable business model within Albania's media landscape. A media impact assessment showed that 34.4% of young respondents said these programmes influenced their choice of education or training, 43.2% said they shaped how they look for work, and 32.3% were motivated to start a business.³

By phase 2, six media programmes focused specifically on career orientation, including *The Path to Success* (Club FM), *Towards Work* (Shqiptarja.com), and new TV programmes like *The Best in the Country*, *The Job That I Want*, and *Woman's Ray*. *Woman's Ray* engaged women entrepreneurs and promoted decent work, while *Think Big* offered 360-degree insights into professions through on-site business interviews.⁴

In Phase 3, RisiAlbania shifted its focus toward strengthening the capacity of its partners to promote their own career guidance services, using a mix of promotional events and tools that reached over 98,600 unique users. A major highlight of 2024 was Albania's first National Career Conference, *Career Guidance: The Present and the Future*, which brought together field experts, top representatives from public and private institutions, and a wide range of stakeholders. The conference served as a milestone

³ Rruga me Pisha Foundation, Measuring the audience/viewership/listenership and perception of selected Media Programs on Career Orientation for Young People, 2021

⁴ The names of all six media programmes are originally in Albanian, but got translated in the case study.

event, showcasing the achievements and challenges in establishing Albania's career counselling system, emphasizing the critical role of state institutions, and reflecting on the contributions of international experiences and technological innovations. It provided an important platform for stakeholders to assess progress and outline future steps for advancing career guidance in the country.

Alongside the conference, a national campaign on career guidance and lifelong learning was launched to raise awareness among young people, parents, and businesses, underlining the importance of career services in shaping future opportunities. At the local level, municipalities increasingly partnered with businesses, regional education authorities, and labour offices to promote these services. Universities also remained active, organizing fairs, trainings, business meetings, and open days to engage students directly.

The third phase's expanded outreach efforts played a key role in shifting young people's perceptions and behaviours regarding employment, education, and career planning, while reinforcing career guidance as a recognized and valued service.



How the System Changed

5.1 Evolution over time

Career guidance was central in phase 1 of RisiAlbania (2013-2017), when the project focused on improving the quality and quantity of labour market information being produced by the local media, ultimately influencing the choices that young people make about employment, education, and training. The principle was to not use mass media as a short-term tool to disseminate information, but rather to change the way that media reports on employment in a sustainable way – an entirely new concept in Albania. Using conservative estimates, over 110,000 people (49% women) were informed about labour market issues through sustainable mass media programmes, leading to over 71,000 people (48% women) changing their perceptions of the labour market and over 35,000 people (46% women) actively changing their behaviour (such as job searching, enrolling in training, etc.).¹

In Phase 2 (2017-2021), RisiAlbania facilitated multi-level interventions to enable young women and men to make more informed career choices through a more effective career guidance system. The project partnered with a range of actors including universities, municipalities, private intermediaries, and non-formal training providers to: (i) introduce and continuously enhance the quality of career guidance services; (ii) build the professional capacities of human resources by equipping them with appropriate knowledge and methodologies; (iii) strengthen the institutional capacity and commitment of key providers; and (iv) continue collaborating with national media to produce and disseminate career orientation information.

In phase 3 (2021-2025), RisiAlbania significantly progressed in enhancing the career guidance system, ensuring the necessary functions are well-established and active: institutional providers, service content and design, the qualified human resources, and awareness among young people and their parents regarding the importance of career

¹ Gavin Andersen, Inspiring and influencing the young jobseekers of Albania, Tirana, 2016.

guidance has significantly increased. Furthermore, interactive engagement among stakeholders has been strengthened.

In addition, the project has contributed towards sustainable and innovative employment (job mediation) services by National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES) as the biggest accommodator of low to middle skilled young people, and by private employment services providers.

Figure 3 illustrates the evolution of the partners and services over time. RisiAlbania deliberately experimented with its partners, continuously learning from experience and adapting its approach. This iterative process, which is rooted in adaptive management, strengthened the public provision of career services and catalysed the involvement of new private actors. The entry of new actors at one level was driven by experiences at other levels, resulting in increased scale in both the number of organisations providing career guidance and the number of young people accessing services.

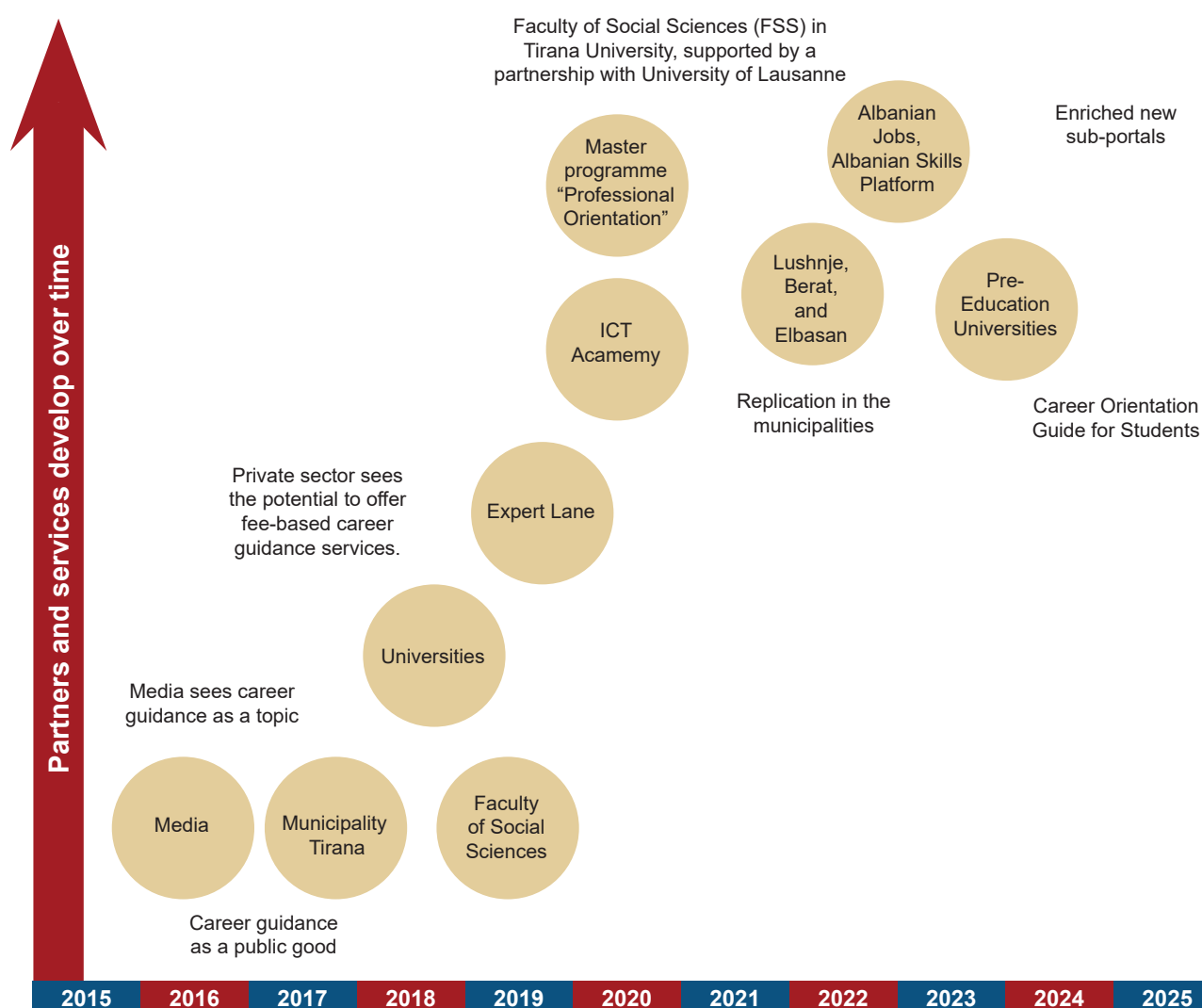


Figure 3: Evolution over time

Various market actors responded by strengthening or improving their roles across different levels of the ecosystem. The Ministry of State for Youth and Children, for example, drafted the New National Strategy for Youth 2022–2029, making the development of youth career guidance services a key focus area. Partners Albania, the Albanian NGO that also acted as RisiAlbania’s implementing partner, launched a nationwide promotional campaign to highlight the importance of career guidance.

New actors joined forces with RisiAlbania in recent years, such as the University of Tirana and Polytechnic University of Tirana, and new initiatives emerged, including the boostemployment platform providing digital labour market information (initiated by Swisscontact). UNICEF also delivered a career guidance training programme for teachers, addressing career guidance within compulsory education aimed at supporting adolescents and young people.

5.2 Partner interactions and collaboration

To strengthen system performance, RisiAlbania worked closely with diverse partners, promoting interaction and joint learning. Figure 4 shows how these actors interacted to create an innovative, high-quality career guidance ecosystem.

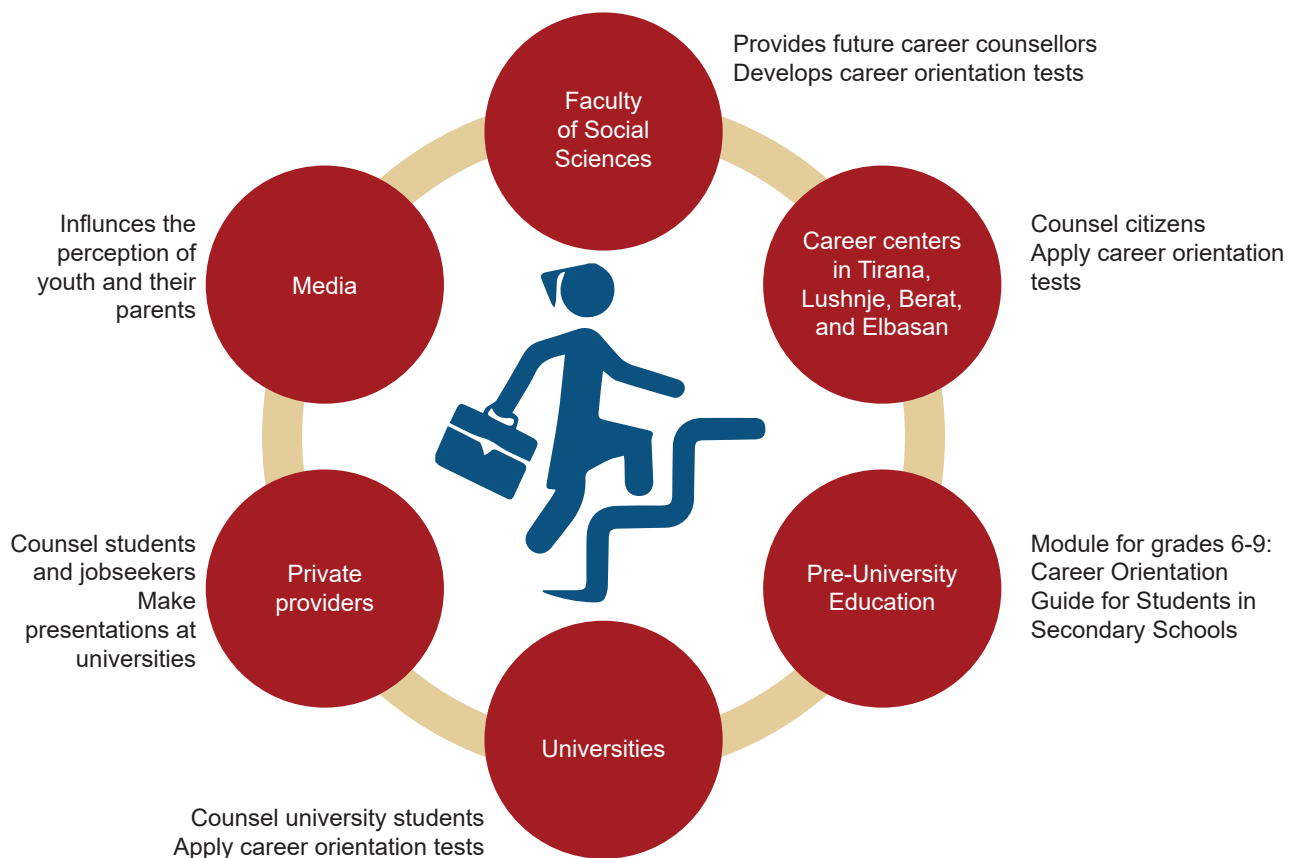


Figure 4: Interaction among partners

5.3 Innovations leading to system change

RisiAlbania introduced a range of innovations into the career guidance system, creating a more conducive environment for the delivery of career services. The municipality of Tirana became the first in the country to establish a career guidance centre offering services to local schools and young people outside the university setting. This centre provided a solid platform for developing labour market information and tools, which had previously been lacking or not available in a user-friendly format. The Tirana model served as an example and laid the groundwork for scaling similar services in other municipalities willing to commit to this approach. Indeed, three municipalities of Elbasan, Berat and Lushnja have followed suit, further expanding access to career guidance and support.

Another key innovation was the launch of the private online career advice platform Expert Lane, which enabled young jobseekers to access and use internationally recognised career guidance tools. The commercialisation of this model in 2020, coupled with its demonstrated profitability marked a significant development in Albania's career services landscape.

A particularly impactful element was the close collaboration between Albanian and Swiss institutions. Multiple learning visits to Switzerland allowed Albanian partners to gain insights from the Swiss career guidance system and establish long-term collaborations. The staff from the Tirana Municipality's career centre benefited from a one-week practical training exchange in Ticino, Switzerland. This tailor-made training laid the foundation for developing systems and procedures for the newly established centre in Tirana. Through a long-term partnership with the University of Lausanne, the Master's programme in Career Orientation - the only academic programme for career counsellors in Albania - was substantially improved. This partnership allowed the Faculty of Social Sciences to make a meaningful contribution to the professionalisation and quality of career guidance services. Cooperation among universities expanded to include joint research such as the 2021 [paper](#)



The exchange with the university of Lausanne is simply great: we improved the curricula, we validated three tools and have started with the fourth, we conduct joint research and currently push forwards the idea to set-up a similar model to the one in Lausanne: a lab that not only allows students to acquire practical skills, but a space through which we collaborate more with schools and help the municipality in counselling challenging cases.

Nada Kallciu, lecturer and researcher at the Faculty of Social Sciences

"If I won the lottery...": Work orientations of low-qualified young adults in Albania and Switzerland, positioning the Faculty of Social Sciences as a central and pioneering institution for developments in the career guidance field in the country. Additionally, Swiss-Albanian collaboration in Lausanne, Switzerland, and Tirana, Albania

In addition to career guidance at municipal and university level and paid services through private providers, hands-on supporting documents for teachers at schools (compulsory education, general high education) and their training to deliver career orientation services to the pupils at the different levels play a crucial role in advising kids at the transition moments (cf. Figure 1).

Summarizing, RisiAlbania designed and adopted a holistic approach to activate and support all the necessary market system pillars in career guidance: institutional and organizational capacities of providers, development of content, and development of career counsellors.



Improved Career Decision-Making Among Young People

Career guidance is a cornerstone for youth employment, as young people develop the ability to make more sound career decisions and placement happens faster and more effective. From 2019 to 2025, a total of 29,003 young people (16,447 women) benefited from career guidance services supported by RisiAlbania.

Table 1: Number of young people benefitting from career guidance services (2013-2025)

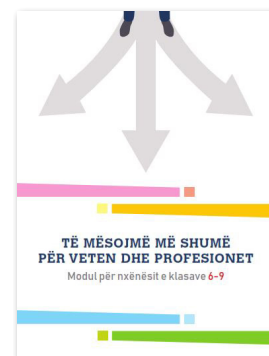
	Use of career guidance services
Private Intermediaries	3,460 (1826 Female)
University	18,463 (10,714 Female)
Municipalities	7,080 (3,907 Female)
Total	29,003 (16,447 Female)

While these services contribute to improved employability, the link between career guidance and actual employment outcomes is not immediate. Career service takes medium to long term to produce measurable results concerning employment. Career decisions are shaped by a range of factors and often involve multiple transitions such as (further) education, vocational training, internships, university studies or temporary disengagement from the labour market before resulting in employment. This is particularly evident at the municipal level, where users of career services may enter the labour market only after a longer period (cf. Figure 1).

At the university level, career centres tend to facilitate more direct pathways into employment. Their proximity to graduation and stronger links with employers can support a faster transition into more adequate jobs, especially as student and alumni networks form active jobseeker communities. More than 500 students (310 female) got placed during phase 2 and 3.

During Phase 3 of RisiAlbania, around 20,000 young people out of which 50% women accessed career guidance services. Recent user feedback indicates high level of satisfaction with the services provided by the institutions.

• Polytechnic University of Tirana (PUT)	89%
• University of Tirana (UT)	92%
• Agriculture University of Tirana	80%
• University Aleksandr Moisiu of Durrës (UAMD)	71%
• Municipality of Tirana	85%



Lessons Learned and Future Directions

Vision: A functional system of career guidance where the necessary functions are in place and functional and young people and parents seek for the service continuously.

7.1 Key takeaways for future initiatives

One of the core lessons from RisiAlbania's work in career guidance is the importance of connecting actors across the ecosystem. Sustained efforts to facilitate exchange and collaboration among universities, municipalities, and other stakeholders led to joint initiatives and mutual learning, particularly around newly developed tools, staff training, and institutional partnerships.

Universities increasingly recognised the value of career services, and management support played a crucial role in strengthening career offices. However, structural constraints persisted. The career offices lacked dedicated staff, operated without independent budgets, and experienced staff turnover. Despite these limitations, several universities expanded the scope and quality of their services and new universities replicated the career services provided by the first partner universities.

The shortage of skilled career counsellors remains a significant bottleneck in Albania's career guidance system. RisiAlbania addressed this by supporting the Faculty of Social Sciences to revise and improve its Master's programme in Career Orientation. However, building institutional capacity takes time. While the programme produced Albania's first cohort of specialised counsellors, uptake by universities, municipalities, and private providers was slower than expected. This underlined the importance of promoting new

academic programmes and advocating for updated recruitment practices. Sustained investment in professional development is essential - not only to replace outgoing staff but to ensure continuous upskilling for long-standing personnel.

Career guidance is a field where Swiss expertise proved highly relevant, and the strong collaborative spirit between partners in Switzerland and Albania led to ongoing joint efforts. The shift from career guidance as a primarily media-driven service in Phase 1 to a public good embedded in universities and municipalities and to the emergence of private providers in Phase 2, reflects a maturing and diversifying ecosystem. The appearance of fee-based counselling services shows that a niche market exists for specialised support, complementing public services.

Career guidance played a critical role in improving labour market transparency and aligning individual aspirations with market demand. By supporting both the supply side (through skilled counsellors and institutional capacity) and the demand side (by building awareness among students and youth), RisiAlbania contributed to more sustainable and responsive career services.

Student feedback highlighted a strong and growing interest in career services. The most valued support included information on study opportunities, internships, and employment—underscoring the economic pressures many students face. Services



such as CV writing, motivation letter drafting, and interview preparation were particularly appreciated. This demonstrates the importance of maintaining close collaboration with university staff and businesses, and of using online platforms for broader outreach and accessibility.

Finally, cross-institutional networking, joint events, and public promotion proved to be powerful tools to strengthen the ecosystem.

7.2 Operational recommendations

Student feedback and service evaluations provide practical recommendations for future career guidance initiatives.

- Enhancing promotion and public awareness is crucial. This involves utilizing diverse communication channels such as social media, email newsletters, and collaboration with educational institutions and businesses. Consistent updates on events, internships, and job opportunities will help increase visibility and maintain student engagement.
- Expanding and optimizing physical spaces dedicated to career counselling is also essential. Providing quiet, private environments both at the central office and within faculty buildings can significantly improve the quality of advising sessions and accommodate a growing number of students seeking support.
- Strengthening outreach efforts through regular collaboration with high schools, universities, and other educational entities will help reach a broader audience. Organizing seminars, workshops, and informational events will support students in making well-informed career choices and extend the impact of the services beyond the current student population.
- Clear, transparent communication about the range of available services, opportunities, and resources is necessary for building trust and ensuring students can make informed decisions. This includes creating easy access to information and publicly sharing schedules for counselling and events.
- Improving internal collaboration between career services staff, academic faculty, and administrative personnel can enhance coordination and the overall quality of services. Defining staff roles more precisely and minimizing unrelated duties allows staff to focus more directly on student support and career development.
- Additional staffing and improved financial resources are vital for meeting service demands and ensuring quality. Providing sufficient budget independence and fair compensation supports the ability to plan and implement impactful activities.
- Finally, diversifying and increasing career-related activities can further strengthen the connection between students and the services offered. Organizing more practical training sessions, including workshops on soft skills, personal branding, and professional networking platforms, can better prepare students for real-world opportunities. Stronger partnerships with businesses and industries are key to increasing access to internships and job placements, offering students the hands-on experience they value most.



RisiAlbania is a project of the
Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

REVEALING POTENTIAL

CAREER GUIDANCE
BOOSTING ALBANIAN
YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY



In partnership with:



Implemented by:



HELVETAS



PARTNERSALBANIA
FOR CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT