

OPEN REGIONAL FUND FOR SOUTH EAST EUROPE – MODERNISATION OF MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Sub-project: „Municipal services for the creation of employment opportunities for vulnerable groups”

Component: Dissemination of the Competencies Passport to Serbia

ABOUT THE COMPONENT:

The Sub-Project „Municipal services for the creation of employment opportunities for vulnerable groups” is aiming to build up capacities at local level, to create economic start-ups for vulnerable groups, to integrate people from vulnerable groups (including returnees) into qualification and employment programs, and to offer them employment opportunities through the local labour market.

One of the instruments which is used for achieving our goals is the Competencies Passport. The Instrument was developed and is used in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the last 5 years, therefore there are lessons learned and capacities developed, which is now used for the dissemination of this instrument to Serbia and will also be disseminated to Kosovo and Albania. Since all SEE countries have similar tradition and are facing similar problems on the labour market (such as a very high unemployment rate), the instrument for identification of informal and non-formal gained competencies, developed and used in Bosnia-Herzegovina, is very applicable in other SEE countries, as well. The core problem currently is the non existing recognition of the informal learning, which is one of the reasons for the observed poverty migration characteristic for the SEE countries. One of the approaches to tackling the poverty and social exclusion of the migrants and other vulnerable groups is to give them possibility to identify their own competencies and to find the way to use them in order to ensure a better life. This possibility is gained through counselling process with the instrument Competencies Passport, which helps in identifying skills and competencies that can also be used on the labour market or that ensure better competitiveness on the labour market.

The Competencies Passport is a biographical system of counselling through which an auto-reflexive evaluation of one's own achievements are shown and their skills, knowledges and competencies, gained through informal and non-formal learning, are identified. In the everyday working environment, all of us need more than just our professional knowledge – we need the competency to properly use the professional knowledge we have. The, so called, transferable skills – like the ability to function within a team of people or the ability to learn out of our own mistakes or the examples of others, creativity, the ability to adapt or to be resistant to stress – we often gain unintentionally in our work environment or during our free time. The Competencies Passport, along with professional counselling, helps the user to systematically realize and show the skills gained. That way, a personal profile of the user becomes whole and can be of help with professional orientation, the following change of vocation, field of work or the working environment, the preparation to talk with the co-workers or to talk about their own performance, but also with formulating their own personal goals or searching for an adequate working place. Hence, this is a tool equally effective for working with vulnerable and disadvantage people which are to be strengthened economically and socially and achieve greater involvement into society, as well as for the advanced processes of the improvement of employability, meaning adequate searching for a proper working place or processes within a company that concern the most important part of every enterprise – developing and sustaining the qualities of human resources.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS ABOUT THE COMPETENCIES PASSPORT:

One of the main activities in this component is building capacities of individuals and organisations, which target vulnerable groups. These are all hardworking people which have already made great plans on how to use this instrument, and here are their stories:

OPEN REGIONAL FUND FOR SOUTH EAST EUROPE – MODERNISATION OF MUNICIPAL SERVICES



“Zvezda” from Belgrad is an organisation which aim is to provide support to young people which leave the public Social Protection System. Their users are young people between 18 to 20 years. One of the programs of this organisation is the “Home giving opportunities”. For these young people it is often difficult to find their way in life. Therefore, they have the possibility to stay up to 2 years in this program. Counsellors which are engaged in this program are providing counselling and psychosocial support as well as support in finding a job. **Sanja Polić**, one of the social workers, says that she noticed that the young people often have difficulties to present themselves in the best way to the employer, because of lack of self-confidence. Therefore, it is difficult for them to find work. The Competencies Passport will be used to provide support for building a higher level of self-confidence, and to improve their competitiveness on the labor market. The organisation **“Let’s do it**

together” from **Kragujevac**, has the same mission as Zvezda, they are also working with young people dropping out of the Social Protection System. **Ivana Rakić**, the future counsellor for the Competencies Passport, says that she noticed that young man and young women have different perceptions of themselves. Contrary to young man, young women which are dropping out of the system are under greater pressure. Their self-esteem is often lower and they are mostly worried about how they will manage to live on their own. Therefore, the organisation pays a bit more attention to young women. Ivana Rakić says that the Competencies Passport is a great instrument to work with these young people, because it will help them to gain self-esteem and get rid of their fears.



The **“Know How Centre”** from **Novi Sad** is implementing various programs for inclusion of Roma into the society, one of them is “The Early Childhood Development Program”. This program focuses on working with schools to prevent the abolition of Roma children from the education system. Girls are more affected by this problem. Therefore, the workers in the Know How Centre do their best to establish a communication channel and to educate the parents about the importance of education for their children. **Tanja Lazor, Ivana Koprivica, Vinka Žunjić and Dragana Rajić** are the future counsellors for the Competencies Passport in the Know How Centre. Within various programs with Roma women they became aware about their capabilities but also about their limitations set by their family and society in general. The Competencies Passport will be used to work with, among others, Roma women to improve their self-

confidence and make them aware about their capabilities and skills. The four future counsellors say that the Competencies Passport will make small revolutions in the families which will be part of this process.



“Inventiva Centre” from **Belgrade** is a Team of experts and practitioners in the field of education, psychology, pedagogy and andragogy, experienced in career guidance and counseling, professional orientation, youth employment and employability as well as psychosocial support for young people from vulnerable groups. **Branislav Đorđević** says that the Comptencies Passport is an excellent tool for those young people for being aware of their skills. It is important for them to see from where they came from, where they are now and where they want to be in the future, and the Competencies Passport allows that. Given that everything is changing fast nowadays, it is necessary for those young people to know their skills, interests and capacities in order to achieve their goals in life.

OPEN REGIONAL FUND FOR SOUTH EAST EUROPE – MODERNISATION OF MUNICIPAL SERVICES



The organization “**The Little Prince**” from **Belgrad** is a non-profit organisation working with Roma children, focused on their education. Although, the organisation is working with all children but, as **Svetlana Vasić** says, they are paying a little more attention to girls. As she says Roma girls are becoming women with 6 or 7 years. In such young age, they are often forced to be housewives, take care of their brothers, etc. Therefore, it is more likely that girls will leave school in early age. The organisation is working with the parents in order to make them aware about the importance of education for their daughters. The Competencies Passport will help primarily the parents to see on one place, everything what they have done in their lives, how far did they come and what have they learned. This will help them to become aware of their skills and so they will pass that knowledge to their children and raise them to be more self-confident.



The “**Laris Association**” from **Čačak** identified women as the most vulnerable category in the labor market. Unemployed women over the age of 45 are particularly vulnerable, because they can not compete with current labor market demands. This is also the least visible category, as these women gradually abandon their active job search because they are pressed into prejudices and unfavorable labor market conditions. The findings of the Poor's Equality studies indicate that women are identified as the most distinctive category of population. **Liljana Popović** and **Vesna Kovačević** say that these women will benefit of the Competencies Passport of the following reasons: Through the counselling process and auto reflection, users would be able to understand and appreciate the value of their own knowledge, abilities and skills, which have been plagued during lifelong learning and experience. In this way, they will strengthen their self-confidence and become more active job seekers. At the same time, by recognizing strong sides and personal capacity, beneficiaries may be tempted to explore self-employment opportunities.

USERS ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH THE COMPETENCIES PASSPORT:

Some users of our partner organisations which completed their process with the Competencies Passport wanted also share their experience with us. These are their stories:



Mirjana Stambolić from Čačak says: "Very encouraging. Passport is an instrument by which you will become better acquainted with yourself, become aware of your abilities and potentials and which will show you the way." Mirjana was so impressed with the Competencies Passport that she motivated her daughters, friends and colleagues to also enter into this process. Mirjana's story is a tragic one with a happy ending. She was diagnosed with breast cancer when she was 44 years old. The most difficult thing during this tragic period was to psychologically deal with the disease. Although, she had support from her family, “female” diseases are still considered as a tabu in the area where she lives, so she often felt alone. Mirjana conquered the disease and she is healthy today. One of the goals that she has put in her Competencies Passport is to form an organisation in her living town, which will provide support for women who are dealing with cancer. She already has made some plans for accomplishing her goal.

OPEN REGIONAL FUND FOR SOUTH EAST EUROPE – MODERNISATION OF MUNICIPAL SERVICES



Aleksandra Aleksandrović from Novi Sad says: “The Competencies Passport gives me the possibility to see all my life in front of my eyes. I see what I have done in my life and how much I have learned and became aware how much I am worth”. Aleksandra has finished her studies in musicology but she couldn't find a job in her profession, so she had to accept a job in a store as a saleswoman. She said that during this period she felt unmotivated, depressed and worthless. She was contacted by the “Know How Centre” and was introduced with the Competencies Passport. She said that this process helped her to recover her self-confidence. The best thing, as she said, was to listen to herself speaking out loud her skills, so she became aware what she actually wants for herself and who she is. After completing the process with the Competencies Passport, Aleksandra quit her job and entered into Master studies. She also received a scholarship to study abroad.

Anđelka Matijević from Čačak says: “I was introduced with the Competencies Passport during a hard time in my life. This process helped me to set my goals in life, which I have all accomplished during this process”. Anđelka says that she struggled for a long time to find a job what never happened. Because of this situation, she often felt insecure about her capabilities. This process helped her to become aware about her strengths and weaknesses and how to use them in the best way. After this process, Anđelka found a job in her profession, she also received a fellowship and is currently working in improving her English skills.



Svetozar Vasić from Belgrade says: „Competencies Passport forces you to rewind movie of your life back. It encourages you to think about everything, and to put all the parts of your life together“. Svetozar is engaged in an organisation dealing with inclusion of Roma children into the education system. Considering that the Roma community is a patriarchal community, his task is to sensitize parents (mostly fathers) about the importance of education of their daughters.

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Interviewees: *Sanja Polić, Ivana Rakić, Tanja Lazor, Ivana Koprivica, Vinka Žunjić, Dragana Rajić, Branislav Đorđević, Svetlana Vasić, Ljiljana Popović, Vesna Kovačević, Mirjana Stambolić, Aleksandra Aleksandrović, Anđelka Matijević and Svetozar Vasić.*