



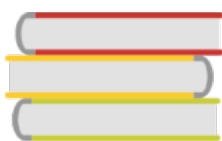
VICTORUPESI

Unity in diversity

Vocational Innovation using Creative new Technologies resulting in Upskilling Pathways for

Social Integration

National Report



EDUFONS

Centar za mlade i celoživotno učenje

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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

1. Desk Research

EDUFONS used secondary resources and literature to explore the topic of rural women and their social inclusion, including the needs of social media to aid inclusivity.



EDUFONS also developed connections with relevant stakeholders which enabled two other methods of research to be conducted for this study.

The desk research was conducted to look at aspects such as National legislation, policies, funding, initiatives supporting rural women in Serbia. The second part of the desk research referred to statistical data related to the profile of the target group - women in rural areas, their position and needs, with special reference to the use of vocational training. Finally,

Target group profile: Rural women are exposed to multiple discrimination. They are at a disadvantage from both urban women and men from urban and rural areas. Additionally, we should keep in mind that rural women are not a unique or homogenous group and that there are large differences

conclusions were drawn, summarized in the sections on opportunities and main challenges for rural women.

Results of desk research:

1. National legislation / strategies / policies / funding / initiatives supporting rural women in Serbia

The Government of the Republic of Serbia has identified the vulnerable groups in strategic documents and current policies, who are at higher risk of social exclusion and poverty, among them are women and the population living in rural areas. Hence, women living in rural areas are recognized as a vulnerable group and classified into several vulnerable groups, but rural women are not singled out as a separate vulnerable category. The only national strategic document within which, among other things, the category - women in the countryside is recognized is the National Strategy for Gender Equality period 2016 - 2020 with the Action Plan. So, there is no specific national strategy that deals exclusively with improving the position and inclusion of women from rural areas.

The same can be said about valid legal regulations.

Generally speaking, in the Republic of Serbia, there is no legislation that strictly and directly refers to the social inclusion of women in rural areas, as well as to the implementation of vocational training specifically targeted at women in rural areas. Laws that directly apply to the target group of rural women are laws that apply to a wider group of beneficiaries, including women in rural areas, and these laws thus help to improve the position of rural women at least to some extent.

I. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The protection of women from discrimination and respect for gender equality are the basis for the realization of human rights established by international documents confirmed by the Republic of Serbia. The process of including our country in European integration requires that the highest international standards resulting from these documents are respected in the realization and protection of basic human rights.

Constitution of the Republic of Serbia - the highest legal act of the Republic of Serbia guarantees human rights established by ratified international treaties, generally accepted rules of international law and laws, as well as equality of women and men and the development of equal opportunities policy. It proclaims the principle of equality before the Constitution and the law and prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on any grounds, including discrimination on the grounds of sex. The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia stipulates that the Republic of Serbia may introduce special measures "to achieve full equality of persons or groups of persons who are essentially in an unequal position with other citizens." This constitutional provision opens space for developing gender equality policy and improving legislation, and the implementation measures aimed at eliminating discrimination against women. The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia guarantees a set of economic rights that guarantee the right to employment, the right to work and the right of free choice of profession, for women and men under equal conditions.

Law on Prevention of Discrimination regulates the general prohibition of discrimination, forms and cases of discrimination and protection mechanisms. Among other things, this Law:

- obliges the state to implement comprehensive measures to prevent and protect against multiple discrimination, which is described as a severe form of discrimination;

- envisages the application of special measures introduced in order to achieve full equality, protection and progress of persons, i.e. groups of persons who are in an unequal position. This law also contains provisions relating to non-discrimination in the field of labor, in the sense of the prohibition of determining equal opportunities for employment or enjoyment under equal conditions of all rights in the field of labor. It also guarantees everyone equal conditions and rights in terms of education and vocational training.

Law on Gender Equality regulates the creation of equal opportunities for the exercise of rights and obligations, the undertaking of special measures for the prevention and elimination of discrimination based on sex and the procedure for the legal protection of persons exposed to discrimination. Among other things, this Law:

- obliges all public authorities to pursue an active policy of equal opportunities, to monitor the implementation of the principle of gender equality in all areas of public life and the application of international standards and constitutionally guaranteed rights in this area;
- envisages taking special measures in order to eliminate and prevent the unequal position of women and men and to achieve equal opportunities for all sexes.

Anti-discrimination provisions and special measures envisaged to improve the position of members of vulnerable groups are covered by several laws. Specifically, related to the support of social inclusion of the target group - women in rural areas, as well as related to issues related to how to provide better training for this vulnerable group, professional skills and competencies (especially related to increasing social capital of this group), so that they can use them in the future to increase their economic capital, we single out the following laws:

Law on Adult Education provides the right to lifelong learning and training, and among other things, regulates areas such as access to and equal education opportunities.

The law recognizes 12 principles of adult education, including:

- Principle of accessibility - equal conditions for acquiring general and vocational education and inclusion in all levels, types and forms of education and learning;
- The principle of integrity - equal rights and opportunities to acquire education for personal development, social capacities and roles, employability, professional development and advancement;
- The principle of equal opportunities - inclusion and acquisition of education regardless of age, gender, difficulties and obstacles in development, disability, racial, national, social, cultural, ethnic and religious affiliation, language, sexual orientation, place of residence, material or health status and other personal characteristics

Law on Employment and Unemployment Insurance is based on the principles: prohibition of discrimination in accordance with the law, impartiality in performing employment activities, gender equality, affirmative actions aimed at hard-to-employ unemployed persons, freedom in choosing occupations and jobs, free performance of employment activities for unemployed persons.

Labor Law prohibits direct and indirect discrimination against job seekers as well as employees.

Other laws: Law on Prevention of Harassment at the Workplace, Law on Social Welfare, Law on Health Care

Law on Youth guarantees that all young people are equal; that any discrimination or unequal treatment of young people, directly or indirectly, on any grounds is prohibited.

II. OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL STRATEGIES

Regarding the existing strategies in the Republic of Serbia, there is no specific national strategy that deals exclusively with improving the position and inclusion of women from rural areas.

National Strategy for Gender Equality period 2016 - 2020 with the Action Plan - is the basic strategic document of the Republic of Serbia, which was adopted with the aim of improving gender equality. The strategy is particularly concerned with eliminating multiple discrimination and improving the position of multiple discriminated women (within which, among other things, it recognizes the category - rural women).

This strategy is complementary to the **Strategy for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination period 2014 - 2018**, which identifies women as one of the nine vulnerable social groups that are particularly exposed to the risk of discrimination and discriminatory treatment.

Among other national strategies, that in part deal with the promotion of gender equality and the position of women in this area, especially in terms of social inclusion of our target group - women in rural areas (as well as issues of how to provide better training for this vulnerable group and professional skills and competencies especially related to the increase of social capital of this group, so that in the future they can use them to increase their economic capital), we highlight the following:

- *The Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development of the Republic of Serbia* period 2014–2024;
- Strategy for Education Development in Serbia until 2020;
- Strategy for the Development of Adult Education in the Republic of Serbia;
- Strategy for the Development of the Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Serbia;
- Strategy of Career Guidance and Counseling in the Republic of Serbia;
- National Employment Strategy period 2011–2020;
- Strategy for the Support to Development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness for the period from 2015 to 2020 and the accompanying Action Plan;
- National Strategy for Youth for period 2015 - 2025;
- Strategy for Development of the Information Society in the Republic of Serbia until 2020;
- National Program for Agriculture for the period 2018-2020
- National Rural Development Program from 2018 to 2020

Within the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, the general improvement of rural areas is mentioned.

List of all strategies in the Republic of Serbia and access to them [here](#)

Also important are the First and Second National Reports on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction, as well as the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 - Women, Peace and Security in the Republic of Serbia (2010-2015).

III. NATIONAL ACTORS IN THE INCLUSION OF THE POPULATION from vulnerable groups (including women from rural areas) and existing initiatives

GOVERNMENT SECTOR

In terms of institutions, it is evident that there are many institutions, but none of them specifically deals with the inclusion of rural women, but they are providing programs/projects/initiatives that refer to a wider range of beneficiaries from vulnerable groups, including rural women.

There are also several concrete programs/projects/initiatives focused on women from rural areas.

National Employment Service is a government body with employment assistance services to all citizens of the Republic of Serbia, including women from rural areas. There is no specific body intended only for women from rural areas.

The advantage of this institution is the large distribution of branches where women in rural areas can turn for help. Also, the National Employment Service offers several different programs for inclusion in the labor market, which are free for the unemployed, and are also important for rural women:

- Professional practice
- Trainee program
- Program for acquiring practical knowledge for unqualified persons, surplus employees and long-term unemployed persons
- Clubs for active job search
- Training to start your own business
- Training for active job search
- Training for the labor market
- Training at the employer's request - for the unemployed
- Training for the employer's need for an employee
- Functional basic adult education
- Specialist IT training

Unemployed persons from the records of the National Employment Service have the opportunity to be included in the programs of additional education and training to acquire new knowledge, skills, competences, as well as acquire first work experience and get acquainted with the actual work environment. Additional education and training programs are created based on an annual survey of employers' needs for personnel.

The National Employment Service, through its network of branches, aims to provide assistance and support to unemployed persons in the form of services, programs and measures of active employment policy for a more competitive position on the labor market, to promote employment of persons from the categories of people who are more difficult to employ and offer quality support to employers in meeting specified employment requirements.

The National Employment Service enables an overview of vacancies based on online applications, the need for employment, as well as overview of public calls and competitions, information of relevance for applying to the register of unemployed persons and exercising rights in case of unemployment, and more. Employment advisors in the National Employment Service direct and guide unemployed persons through the entire job search process. They also organize job fairs which enable the establishment of direct contact between job-seekers and employers.

Subsidized Employment Programs - Support for the employment of persons from the category of persons more difficult to be employed is provided through subsidized employment programs with an employer belonging to the private sector, while training for entrepreneurship development, self-employment subsidy program and mentoring program are available for unemployed persons with a quality entrepreneurial idea.

IT retraining program was conceived to contribute to the talent offer on the labor market fast. The previous pilot program was developed in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The project consists of two phases – 100 participants and 4 organizers of training participated in the first pilot phase. The second phase involves another 700 participants.

During 2019, National Employment Service supported programs such as the conference **Economic Empowerment of Women in Rural Areas**.

Institute for Gender Equality - For several years now, the Institute for Gender Equality has been organizing the **"Skills Academy"** program, which brings together women and men who are interested in improving their knowledge in the field of entrepreneurship or starting their own business. So far, a total of 76 students (59 women and 17 men) have gone through this type of training and education. In the past, the Institute has implemented the project **Business Connection of Women Living in Rural Areas**.

The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit (SIPRU) actively participates in the creation of policies aimed at improving the position of vulnerable groups and respect for human rights through activities such as support for the development of the strategic and normative framework, analysis of mechanisms and systemic measures at the national and local level, development of project ideas of partner institutions and organizations. They implemented a number of projects involving women from rural areas.

In 2020, the **Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications of the Republic of Serbia** approved 27 projects on **digital skills training for women in rural areas** (raising the level of digital literacy and digital competencies of women from rural areas and capacity building of micro, small and medium enterprises, entrepreneurs and agricultural holdings in the field of e-commerce and e-business).

In 2020, the **Government of the Republic of Serbia**, in cooperation with Switzerland, implemented the project **"Sustainable Inclusion of Socially Marginalized Groups in Rural Areas"**. The project program aimed to contribute to the social inclusion of vulnerable social groups, especially those living in rural areas, through the improvement of existing and the establishment of innovative services in local communities.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR

When it comes to examples of good practices and initiatives for the inclusion of rural women, a number of them are present in the non-governmental sector. As well as examples of support for a wider group of marginalized users.

Serbian project management association – IPMA Serbia, with the support of the National Academy of Public Administration and the Chamber of Commerce of Serbia, in 2020 organized free online training for women entrepreneurs and those who want to become - **"Digital Women's Project Entrepreneurship"**.

National Alliance for Local Economic Development (NALED) - the initiative "Let's employ 1,000 women in rural areas". More than 350 women have found jobs within a year, with the aim of reaching the number of 1,000 employed women in villages. The initiative "Let's employ 1,000 women in rural areas" can be a good model to start new projects that will aim for the employment and self-employment of women and their economic independence and empowerment.

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung foundation has so far supported a number of projects to empower women from rural areas:

- *Consultative workshop Women as actors of rural development* - opportunities and challenges (Center for Democracy, 2018)
- Publication - *The Position of Women in the Labor Market* (Center for Democracy, 2017)

- *Analysis of Women in the Countryside - from invisibility to development potential* (Center for Democracy, 2018)

Kolping Society of Serbia implemented the project **Empowerment of Women in Rural Areas**, through which women received training in the following areas: hairdresser, home care, tailoring and sewing, decoupage.

Also, Kolping Society of Serbia offers the possibility of attending free accredited training for home care and assistance, intended for all motivated participants.

German Cooperation in Serbia is a foundation of the German government that has supported several projects aimed at marginalized groups:

- *Modernization of communal services* - a chance for seasonal workers in rural areas
- *Modernization of municipal services* - training for people from rural areas, from vulnerable groups
- *Initiative for inclusion* - support for the employment of returnees and hard-to-employ groups in the labor market

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) implements activities in more than 170 countries and territories, including the Republic of Serbia. The focus is, among other things, on women's empowerment and gender equality.

Women's Rural Network of Vojvodina (Ženska ruralna mreža Vojvodine) was formed voluntarily by several civil society organizations and associations from Vojvodina, in accordance with the needs of civil society participation in decision-making processes and influence on improving the living conditions of women and youth in rural areas in the northern region of Serbia.

TRAG Foundation, among other things, supports projects that address the inclusion of women from rural areas.

There are initiatives **Women's Platform for Development of Serbia 2014 -2020**, **Platform for Development of Women's Entrepreneurship in Serbia**, and others.

IV. CENTERS FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING OF ADULTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

There are not many centers for vocational training of adults in the Republic of Serbia, and the low geographical distribution of the same is also a big problem. Except for the already mentioned National Employment Service, which offers the opportunity for professional development, in the form of mediation between candidates and the training centers, the location of the headquarters of the mentioned centers is often not in rural areas. The novelty, however, is the following: with the advancement of Internet availability, as well as with the overall digitalization of services, and especially with the new situation caused by the coronavirus, some of these centers offer the option of online learning.

V. FUNDING OF THE SUPPORT, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT MEASURES

Revenues of the National Employment Service mainly come from:

- a) The budget of the Republic of Serbia;
- b) The contributions for compulsory unemployment insurance - at the rate of 0.75%, at the expense of the employee (from salary), while the employer is exempt from paying part of the contribution that is calculated and paid at the expense of the employer (0% from the company and 0.75% from the employee);
- c) Donations.

These revenues are further allocated for the implementation of active employment measures (additional education and training, IT retraining, professional practice, training at the request of the employer, employment programs through financial support to employers for the employment of unemployed persons, subsidies for self-employment and similar)

a) Training programs of National Employment Service for unemployed in Serbia are free with no limited hours.

b) IT retraining - training program of the National Employment Service under the auspices of the Government of the Republic of Serbia

The program is cost-effective because a newly employed programmer will return the amount invested in training through taxes and contributions. It is anticipated that the investment will return to the state budget in less than a year (in about 6 months) through taxes and contributions, while the overall effect on Serbia's economy is much higher.

c) Training at the request of the employer to acquire additional knowledge and skills of the employee needed to perform jobs and work tasks to maintain employment with the employer (as special training or general training of the employee)

- is financed by the employer, while under special conditions and with additional approvals National Employment Service may subsidize

d) Training designed for commercial purposes and conducted by a publicly recognized provider of adult education activities and which a person attends on his own initiative for further training or retraining

- is financed by a person who attends training according to the established price list of the education provider

Women from rural areas also have access to other forms of support, including free training, through various projects funded by the government budget (local, provincial or state), governments of other countries or European Union funds.

2. Statistical data related to the target group - women in rural areas in Serbia

- position and needs, with special reference to the use of vocational training

STATISTICS DATA

Age: Participation of women in the total population and by age groups - in rural settlements in Serbia, according to the last census from 2011: 15-39 (**28.2%**), 40-64 (**35.3%**), 65 and more (**22.9%**), 80 and more (**5.5%**). The average age is **44.9 years**.

Major nationalities: Serbian; in rural areas in Vojvodina (north region of Serbia) there is also a large population of Hungarian women, as well Roma (Roma women are also present throughout all parts of Serbia), Slovakian women and Romanian women. Also many other minorities.

Unemployment: In rural areas, 34% of women confirmed that they had never been officially employed. A percentage of 33% of women confirmed that they had not been employed for more than 5 years. A percentage of 22% of women confirmed that they do not seek employment at all¹.

On the question related to employment, even 34% of respondents said that they had never been employed, while 33% had not been employed for over five years. The majority looking for work did that through the national employment service, while 22% of women said they were not seeking employment at all.

34%

NEVER BEEN
EMPLOYED

33%

NOT BEEN
EMPLOYED FOR
OVER FIVE YEARS

22%

NOT SEEKING FOR
EMPLOYMENT

More than half of the unemployed people in rural areas are women (55%). Half of this percentage are young women 15-34. Third of the unemployed women, around 30%, are low skilled. Therefore, gender, age and level of education significantly determine the chances to participate in labor market.

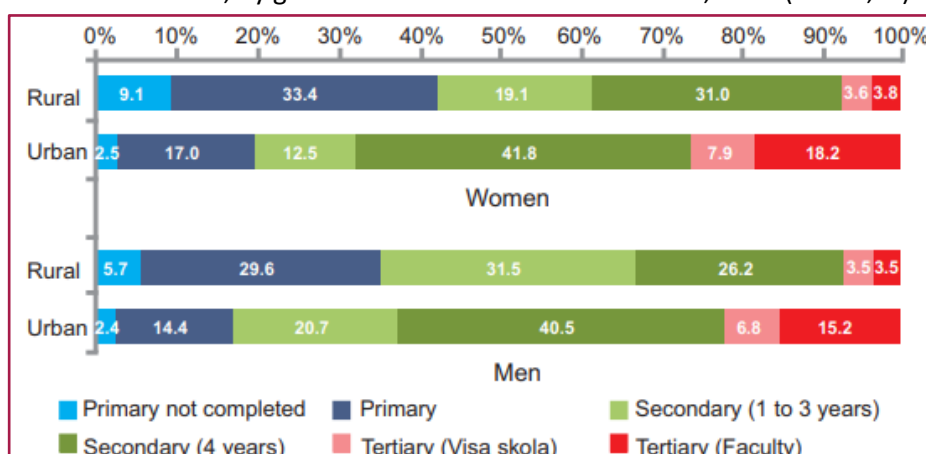
This information indicates that the economic participation of rural women in Serbia is characterized by difficulties. Difficulties are reflected mostly in very low chances for employment in the non-agricultural sector, also in employment in low-productive activities within overall agricultural production, mostly on the family farms.

There is a variety of factors that creates problems and exclusion from the labor market of a large number of rural women. Lack of development of non-agricultural activities in rural areas, unfavorable infrastructural equipment of rural communities, distance from urban, and thus industrial and service centers are just some systemic factors that create small chances for their inclusion in non-agricultural sectors of the economy. Therefore, the availability of employment, training and education services is extremely important for employability, because the bearers of agricultural development and diversification of the rural economy should be primarily by the residents of rural communities, which means women. However, in the current environment, employment programs are usually not available to rural women. The results of the research show that the policy of encouraging employment significantly bypasses rural areas. As many as 76% of unemployed women have not heard of any active labor market measures, and only 13% have participated in one of the National Employment Service programs and assessed that these programs have not increased their opportunities for employment

Level of Education²: Illiterate 5.48% women, without primary school 30.4%, with incomplete secondary school 18.5%, with completed secondary school 36%, with higher education 6%.

	Urban settlements		Rural areas	
	M	F	M	F
No primary school	3.8%	9.9%	16.6%	30.4%
High school education	58.0%	50.0%	50.0%	36.0%
Higher education	23.0%	23.0%	6.2%	6.0%

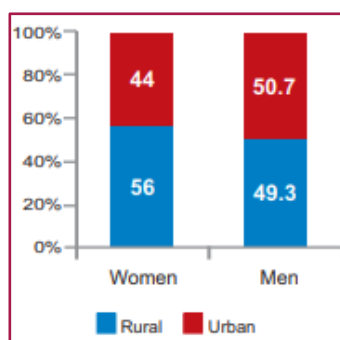
Educational attainment, by gender and urban or rural residence, 2013 (15–64, %)



Source: Based on 2013 SILC data

² The 2011 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Serbia, Population, Census book no. 3, Educational Attainment, Literacy and Computer Literacy: data by municipalities and cities, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2013, p. 32–33.

Early school leavers



- by gender, and urban or rural residence
2013 (15–24 %)

Source: Based on 2013 SILC data

Knowledge of Languages: In a survey conducted in 2011, it is stated that 32% of rural women know a foreign language.

THE USE OF VOCATIONAL TRAININGS

According to a survey conducted among 794 rural women³, the results are the following:

- More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of rural women said that never attend any of courses or training, after completing regular education
- The most educated respondents have already received additional training in over half of the cases
- The most uneducated respondents most often state that they are not interested in additional training, in almost 60%.
- More than half of the respondents with secondary education, although they have not attended the courses so far, would like to do so in the future 54.9%

In another study of the position of rural women⁴, we can find the following data:

- Only 2.8% of unemployed women attended some additional form of education (and those who did not attend additional education as the most common reason stated lack of money 40%, lack of interest 26%, distance 6%, and lack of supply of appropriate courses 9%)
- Among the additional skills possessed by women from the sample, skills that are not adequate to changes in the labor market predominate: 44% of women stated the skills of traditional crafts and handicrafts, 32% to know foreign languages, 39% to know how to use a computer, 31% to have technical skills, and 15% to know how to operate agricultural machinery.

The conclusion is that the educational capital of rural women is low, and opportunities for acquiring additional knowledge and skills are extremely scarce. Since the environment is not stimulating, the motivation for additional education is weak, so women are more inclined to adopt skills that they can learn by inertia through their immediate social networks (mostly skills that have immediate practical significance).

Under the pressure of jobs and obligations, rural women are poorly motivated to be more active in the labor market. Most of them are not on the National Employment Service records or are not looking for a job in any other way, and they are generally not ready to get involved in training for acquiring additional skills and knowledge. When asked about their readiness to unite and connect in order to diversify their economic activities and improve

³ Blagojević, Marina, Rural Women in Vojvodina: Everyday Life and Rural Development (survey results), Provincial Gender Equality Institute, Novi Sad, 2010. Available from: <http://skr.rs/zaiX>

⁴ Bogdanov, Natalija,... [et al.]; Access for women and children to services in rural areas of Serbia and proposed measures to improve their situation; UNICEF Srbija, Beograd; 2011. (from Cvejić et al, 2010) p. 17–18. Available from: <http://skr.rs/zaiw>

their income, they reacted positively, accepting the idea, but realistically assessing that finding a market for products and services is a big problem, which reduces their motivation for this activity.

CONCLUSIONS

Opportunities for rural women

Regarding the level of literacy/illiteracy and all other above-mentioned information about the status of rural women, it is a necessity to create special measures for rural women empowerment, in order to improve their position and help them become more competitive for labor market challenges.

Some of the measures can be:

- To organize computer, language and/or other types of courses, depending on specific needs of concrete rural women group
- To inform them about possible computer/language/other courses that are available for them (nearby educational centers, online)
- To educate them about using online opportunities for self-education and networking
- Provide retraining and/or additional training, and other types of programs
- To inform and educate them about the possibility of being retrained
- To encourage them to unite in networks and associations of rural women and use of benefits that practice can bring them
- To support them in education about good practices regarding their interest
- To inform them about their social rights, gender equality, and other legislations that can help their social inclusion
- To inform them about institutions/initiatives that support rural woman programs
- To educate them about entrepreneurship and funding opportunities
- To educate them to apply to funding opportunities

By listing these measures, it is obvious that rural women lack opportunities to become more included in society, even they are officially recognized as a vulnerable social group that should be in focus. Reality is that government is not paying enough attention and that non-governmental sector, therefore, can be of huge help in empowering rural women in the Republic of Serbia.

Main challenges for rural women

Regarding the situation of woman in rural areas in Serbia, presented by project researches so far, main challenges can be:

- Lack of time caused by huge occupation considering rural women households: agricultural and animal farming jobs, house maintenance (cooking, washing, cleaning, etc.), food supply, that are mostly women jobs in rural areas (considering the cultural context)
- Lack of time caused by occupation with children and elderly members of families. Rural women often live with elderly members of their or their husband family. Also considering cultural context, it is expected for rural women to take care of children and elderly at the same time, 24 hours per day
- Lack of motivation for additional education/training caused by lack of free time and energy after a hard working day
- Analyses are also showing a low level of participation of rural women in local polices, that can concern them
- Economical situation of rural women is poor, often they do not have any personal income
- Access to services that can support their economical participation, or finding jobs out of their mostly agricultural/household context, is also low

- Educational programs that can support rural woman inclusion are usually not available in rural areas
- Rural women are poorly informed about educational possibilities
- They usually refer to government financial support
- They do not have full trust in the non-government sector, because of lack of understanding of it

It is also important to notice that women have big potential in creating new jobs opportunities on their own, since they have, for example, traditional craft skills, which can be used for tourism purposes.

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SECOND PHASE OF THE RESEARCH

- Conducted in Serbia during February 2021

EDUFONS conducted the next phase of research through focus groups and in-depth interviews by using a customized questionnaire for the target group - rural women.

EDUFONS used the same type of questionnaire for focus groups and in-depth interviews - with different questions for women from rural areas compared to questions for education providers/employers (companies).

Table 1 presents the dynamics of this phase of the research with the number of respondents involved.

Date	Research activity	Target group	Number of participants / respondents
05.02.2021.	FG	TG_4	4
05.02.2021.	FG	TG_3	4
08.02.2021.	I	TG_4	1
09.02.2021.	I	TG_4	1
09.02.2021.	I	TG_1	1
10.02.2021.	I	TG_1	1
10.02.2021.	I	TG_1	1
12.02.2021.	I	TG_1	1
12.02.2021.	I	TG_4	1

12.02.2021.	I	TG_1	1
17.02.2021.	I	TG_3	1
17.02.2021.	I	TG_1	1
17.02.2021.	FG	TG_1	4
19.02.2021.	I	TG_3	1
19.02.2021.	I	TG_3	1
19.02.2021.	I	TG_3	1
19.02.2021.	I	TG_3	1
26.02.2021.	FG	TG_3	5
Total:			31

Research activity:

FG – Focus Group

I – In-depth interview

Target group:

TG_1 – Women from rural areas

TG_3 – Practitioners/Lecturers -

Adult Education Providers

TG_4 – Employers/Companies

2. Focus Groups



The second part of this research consisted of focus groups. The aim of these discussions was to understand the training needs of rural women. The same set of questions, adapted to each organization realities, were asked by all partners to allow the partnership to compare results and prepare materials to suit the needs of all countries

involved.

In total, **the number of target groups (TG): Rural women (TG1) with 4 participants; two Focus Groups of adult education providers (TG3) – one with 4 participants and second with 5 participants; and employers (TG4) with 4 participants** took part in these discussions and it should be noted that some of these **target groups** also took part in the in-depth interviews which are detailed below.

Number of participants and general characteristics:

Target group:	TG_1	TG_3	TG_3	TG_4
Number of participants/respondents:	4	4	5	4
Total participants/respondents:	17			

1st Focus Group

The target group of women from rural areas (TG1) included women living in rural areas, and the age structure is 35, 37, 38 and 60 years. So the average age is around 42 years.

Two participants are employed, while the other two participants belong to the NEET category.

2nd Focus Group

The target group of Practitioners / Lecturers - Adult Education Providers (TG3)

Participants had an average work experience of about 30 years.

Areas: teaching foreign languages, training adults in the program "Second Chance", preparation of educational TV reports on rural areas, quality management in food production

3rd Focus Group

The target group of Practitioners / Lecturers - Adult Education Providers (TG3)

Participants had an average work experience of about 15 years.

Areas: employees of the National Employment Service, Zrenjanin branch

4th Focus Group

The target group of employers (TG4) - a local family company located in a rural area

Areas: diversified activities – catering (confectionery and hostel) and production of plastic bags

They employ 7 people and have been working for about 20 years.

The jobs they do are mostly suitable for women, so they generally employ women.

3. In-depth Interviews

The recruitment process for these in-depth interviews:

- Field work and mapping (for TG1 and TG4)
- Research of relevant institutions dealing with adult education (for TG3, where the most competent lecturer selected by that institution took part in the interview)

All participants were previously contacted and gave their written consent to participate in the research.

Number of participants and general characteristics:

Target group:	TG_1	TG_3	TG_4
Number of participants/respondents:	6	5	3
Total participants/respondents:	14		

The target group of women from rural areas (TG1) included women living in rural areas, and the age structure is 18, 22, 27, 31, 35 and 53 years. So the average age is around 31years.

Two participants are employed, while the other four participants belong to the NEET category.

The target group of Practitioners / Lecturers - Adult Education Providers (TG3)

Participants had an average work experience of about 16 years.

Areas:

Public Library in Novi Becej

Center for Education and Culture Božidarac (organizer of the adult vocational education program)

University for the Third Age Đuro Salaj (expert associate in education for the third age)

The target group of employers (TG4) - local companies located in a rural area

The jobs they do are mostly suitable for women, so they generally employ women.

Areas:

Entrepreneur, working for more than 25 years – catering (cafe); 4 employees

Entrepreneur, working for more than 30 years – trade and agriculture (orchard); 1 employee and several seasonal workers

Entrepreneur, working for more than 30 years – catering and agriculture (vineyard); 6

employees and several seasonal workers

A diverse range of people belonging to vulnerable groups, vocational centers and companies were interviewed, with all ages involved in the process. This allowed the partnership to collect detailed data which included all ages, countries and situations.

FINDINGS

The main findings from this research are as follows:

- **The training should take into consideration**

Existing laws and strategies do not enough recognize rural women as a separate vulnerable category, so there are no specific programs to facilitate their employment, further education and greater social inclusion.

In terms of experience and problems faced in rural areas, rural women referred mainly to the situation related to job search, exercising the right to work and finding decent employment, exclusion from society due to different interests, bureaucratic difficulties, lack of free legal aid, lack of certain health services (eg speech therapist for a child, psychological counselling).

Considering how they try to solve the problems listed above, which they face, the respondents stated that they do so mainly through conversations with friends and family. However, this type of support is advisory in nature and often does not end with them essentially finding a solution to their problem. It turned out that women from rural areas generally do not turn to institutions for help, so in most cases, they remain denied help. As the main reason for that, they stated that they do not really know who to turn to.

Women from rural areas are mostly informed in the circle of their family or by friends/acquaintances, and less often in local competent institutions. Only in some cases do they find out new information through the media, but mostly superficially or with a delay. From this, it can be concluded that women from rural areas mostly use unreliable sources of information and that the information that reaches them is incomplete and untimely.

Regarding the information about the vacancy, the respondents stated that they usually find it through advertisements and social networks, but also that they go directly to the employers on their own initiative. Also, they mentioned that the information related to the job offer was mostly not updated so that even though the job is already filled, the ad is still open.

Rural areas often offer fewer opportunities compared to urban ones

Infrastructure - lack of adequate infrastructural equipment of rural communities and poor traffic connections. In many rural areas, the internet connection is poor (often interrupted, weak or slow flow). Also, the mobile signal is weak or missing.

Education - characteristics of rural areas are the lack of educational possibilities, there is a small offer of programs for vocational education and retraining. The state does not recognize adult education (especially in rural areas) as a priority. As a consequence, retraining centres, which used to be much more present in smaller communities, are closing.

Employment - there are few chances for employment (especially the employment opportunities for people with higher education). The lack of perception of non-agricultural activities is typical, so often the potentials for the development of other activities are not used in rural areas.

The rural environment is often not stimulating for women - obstacles and fewer opportunities

Participation and Inclusion - women in rural areas have fewer opportunities to participate in social life and local policies. Due to a lack of dedicated organizations, there are no organized ways to include vulnerable groups in many areas.

Exercise of rights - rural women are often unaware of the laws and rights they have, thus they are often denied and face obstacles that cannot overcome, which they would easily cope with if they know their rights.

Information - women from rural areas are often unaware of the opportunities offered to them. Information provided through institutions usually does not reach them, and they are also poorly informed about educational possibilities. Current national regulations (legislative/systemic) provide for certain measures to include women from rural areas in vocational education or retraining, but often information about this does not reach them.

Additional education for rural women - limitations, needs and obstacles

Availability and access - educational services are usually not available because centers that offer vocational training for adults and retraining are located in larger cities. So, for women from rural areas, attending various accredited training/courses requires additional effort. The distance of training centers often discourages women from rural areas from further training or retraining. Also, women in rural areas are in charge of household chores and often of agricultural work, so this greatly affects their motivation and their choice regarding the day and time of the training or workshop.

Economic situation - rural women are often poor and/or have no personal income. So, it is essential for them to receive information about free programs since they are usually not ready or unable to pay for them.

Lack of motivation - Women from rural areas are often not motivated enough to receive additional training.

It is very important for women from rural areas that the course they attend offers them new knowledge and skills that would be useful for them and that would have a practical application. They like to see on someone's example that he succeeded, that some additional effort paid off, so that, they can go that way as well. Certainly, it is important to intensify the promotion of activities that can bring them concrete benefits, so that they recognize the chance for themselves.

Online education - There is a noticeable increase in the number of training offers that are organized over the Internet. But, women from rural areas prefer live education. Most women from rural areas are not digitally literate, especially those of older age or with lower education. Also, obstacles are the lack of money and adequate equipment and infrastructure for consuming online training (quality internet and computer equipment).

In order to be able to educate themselves online, most rural women must first overcome the basic use of digital tools and then learn through their use.

Digitization and new opportunities for women in rural areas.

The increasing use of ICT tools and social media/networks have a significant impact on the future education and employment of women in rural areas. The aforementioned is particularly interesting because it opens up more opportunities for women to engage in non-agricultural work and open up multiple opportunities for them to do better-paid jobs (including working from home).

Main difficulties:

- Lack of knowledge related to computer use and/or access to and use of different applications/user interfaces
- Less-educated women and older women continue to face problems in the application and use of ICT tools and social networks. They are dependent on younger family members who could help or guide them.

- Partners should provide participants with **clear instructions** on

- Purpose of the training, goals and expected general outcomes
- Specific training outcomes (learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes)
- Time frame and course duration
- Training plan and program (by modules)
- Methods of the work and learning
- Manner of conducting training and technical requirements
- The importance of training for the well-being of the participants
- Opportunities for participants after attending training

- **Flexible training is essential** - many of the target group may have

1. Problem with **technical possibilities**: Adapt training in an online format so that they are easy to understand, and to be accessible for women from rural areas, as well as not set high demands in terms of internet speed, technical equipment of users or level of handling the required technique. It is important to keep in mind certain limitations in rural areas: poor or bad infrastructure, low quality of internet connection, as well as barriers in terms of skills and knowledge of using ICT tools and social networks by women from rural areas (especially those who are older and/or of lower education).

2. Problem with the **organization of free time**: It should be kept in mind that women from rural areas have specific daily activities. When planning support measures and educational activities for rural women, it should be anticipated that the huge pressure of duties, household chores and agricultural work could make it difficult for them to be actively involved in the programs.

3. Problem with **motivation to get involved in education**: Lack of motivation for additional education/training caused by lack of free time and energy after full-time working day, dedication to household chores and care for other household members.

4. The need for **additional mentoring support**: women from rural areas often have difficulty using computers and/or applications in an online environment, therefore, for the training to give good results, support is needed both before and after the training, which can significantly improve the expected outcomes.

Flexible (customized) training should be interesting for women by offering them concrete, tangible solutions for their situation.

- **From the focus groups and interviews, it can be noted that the participants are keen to**

⇒ Improve **soft skills**: 3 top soft skills that rural women think they lack, and which would help them improve their economic and sociological status and overcome the problems they face are Leadership, Communication skills, Decision making.

Mostly, rural women believe that they need these skills in order to communicate more efficiently, more argumentative and show greater determination and self-confidence.

⇒ Regarding the **need for training**, the following areas have been identified (classified into four categories: social inclusion, digital skills, increasing employability, and other)

1) Social inclusion	
Topic	Subtopic
Self-empowerment	- interpretation of the law and rights of women from rural areas

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improving the position and participation in society - communication with people - self-efficacy training
2) Digital skills	
Topic	Subtopic
Basic training in the ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - using computers and digital tools
Communication via Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - using e-mail - official address to institutions and asking for help/solutions/answers - using online tools such as different platforms (Zoom, Discord, Skype)
Access to information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - obtaining the right information - finding and reaching the desired information - finding and accessing up-to-date information directly from institutions - finding free courses on the Internet (foreign languages, ICT, etc.) - locating information about opportunities and support funds for women from rural areas
Learning to use digital tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - content creation (text, tables, files, etc.) / use of Word and Excel - basic knowledge of social networks - how they work, how they can be used for personal presentation or for marketing products and services (how to design an advertising campaign) - using platforms/applications for online learning - digital marketing - using a mobile phone for photography - handling simple photo processing applications - building customer relationships (loyalty & advocacy) - choosing of platforms / social networks for profile creation - social media and social networks management - applying for free courses on the Internet (foreign languages, ICT, etc.) - applying for support funds for rural women's training and/or easier access to online networking
Learning through the use of digital tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - using free courses (foreign languages, ICT, etc.) - realizing and achieving self-learning
3) Increasing employability	
Topic	Subtopic
Self-employment/entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - starting your own business (start-up, entrepreneurship) - training aimed to improve the skills and competencies for starting and running your own business
Employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - compiling a CV, cover letter - creating profiles on platforms that are visible to employers - job search and job application, interview for a job
4) Other	
Topic	
Assistance to victims of violence (children, women, domestic violence)	
Creative workshops – do it yourself (DIY)	

⇒ Regarding the **learning process**, the conclusion is that it is the most appropriate to organize:

→ considering face-to-face format, and depending on the topic, learning can be designed as combination of online and face-to-face learning (but in such a way that lessons are realized "in presence", while the further course of lectures can

take place online in the form of discussions);

- on weekdays (Monday to Friday) in the evening (after 5 pm) - when participants finish their daily duties;
- lasting from 45 minutes to 2 hours (with breaks) for an individual workshop or training session;
- in the total duration of training, up to 3 months, with one or two workshops weekly.

When it comes to the duration of a complete training/course, it has been shown that women from rural areas are generally willing to set aside as much time for additional training as needed, if it would bring them useful knowledge and practical skills applicable to improve their status and employability.

⇒ **Other aspects** related to conducting a successful training/workshop are:

- to make the topic interesting and useful, as well as to offer something new and innovative
- to be based on experience and actual practice, so that a significant emphasis is placed on the presentation of examples from practice (real, convincing, achievable examples)
- to have sessions with debates so that everyone can express their opinion and argue their views
- that the work is organized in smaller groups
- ensure interactivity and equal participation of all participants
- short instructions and/or brochures with prominent parts and understandable illustrations (visual presentation is important)
- that the atmosphere/ambience is pleasant (that it is calm and quiet)

The training/workshop should be interactive, detailed, simplified and contain a practical part.

⇒ **Method of communication and communication tools**

Regarding way of communication with family and friends, it is obvious that women from rural areas prefer face-to-face conversation. In addition, they equally communicate by phone (mostly mobile phone), but also use social networks.

In terms of communication tools that enable free exchange of messages and calls, such as social networks and applications, the most popular among women from rural areas is Facebook, followed by Viber and Instagram.

- Partners should be aware that **training needs are different for each participant** and training should be planned accordingly.

It should be borne in mind that there are vast differences between rural women – they are not a unique or homogenous group.

It is extremely important that the workshop/training is tailored to the needs of women from rural areas, taking into account the characteristics of the area and the mentality of participants (some women in rural areas are shy, modest, slower to react and all this should be taken into account)

In terms of social networks, experience in working with women from rural areas shows that some of them are in modern trends and regularly use social media, while there are a large number of them who are not in contact with social networks, and even shy away from them. This is especially true for older rural women. You should keep in mind that such participants need a tailored approach and additional mentoring support.

- **Other relevant findings**

Individual online training that a rural woman would access from her home is difficult to implement. The solution could be to organize online training in a group with a mentor/instructor to help them use computers and access different applications (for example, to gather a number of rural women in a local community/library/school or similar institution that has access to computer equipment - the appropriate number of computers equal to the number of participants).

Having in mind the expansion of online sales and business (in terms of services, products, but also offering yourself as an expert), the emphasis should be placed on:

- accessible, free and easy to use social networks that make it easier to reach customers or employers
- increasing the motivation and awareness of women in rural areas to increase their ability to work independently by improving their digital literacy (use of email, creating a CV, creating a profile on the LinkedIn platform) and order to improve their position and help them become more competitive for labor market challenges.

Given that rural women are largely engaged in agricultural production for the market, the emphasis should be placed on online tools that enable greater visibility, promotion, marketing and sales. Women from rural areas need skills and knowledge that will enable them to better present their brand, to better position themselves on the market.

- creating profiles and using the LinkedIn platform to improve visibility and recognizability
- using social networks to promote and market products and services (Instagram is very practical for promoting services and/or products because its configuration provides the ability to create "own shop window open to the whole world"), options on Facebook such as online sales or the formation of pages and/or groups are very suitable for offering and selling services/products)
- digital marketing and acquisition of knowledge/skills for own business presentation, promotion of products/services, research of market position concerning the competition, finding the necessary information

The increasing use of ICT tools has a great impact since some new opportunities are opening up, new jobs and ways of doing business are being created. In that sense, the opportunity to work from home can be very suitable for women from rural areas. On the other hand, since rural women are otherwise less socially active, this can negatively affect their socialization. So, this can lead to them being even more limited to the home environment - that is, to functioning in a very narrow circle of people. Hence, it is necessary to find a balance in that, due to the danger that they will be additionally overwhelmed with everyday household chores. Also, it is noticeable that the use of ICT tools leads to the loss of interpersonal relationships.



How are we going to use these

When developing the training materials, the partners will ensure that the content is **clear and easy to understand**, consisted of all the relevant information needed to use **different social media platforms**, and also included information on **safety and security** when using the platforms. With regards to language barriers, all partners **translated the materials into English, Swedish, Italian, Serbian, Slovenian, Romanian and Spanish** to aid the training in the different countries.

When training started, each partner organization ensured that **flexible training options were given** to suit those involved, and the **online learning platform** was also used to supplement the training, in case any information needed reiterating.

Other ways of using the findings

To develop:

- ⇒ Learning material and literature (references or database of useful sites, tutorials...)
- ⇒ Theoretical part + practical work and mentoring
 - Explanation of the theoretical background in a user-friendly way
 - Presentation of various examples of good and bad practice
 - Show "best used scenario"
 - Assignment of tasks - so that participants can use the theoretically acquired knowledge and experience, as well as apply their knowledge
 - Question and answer sections; discussion development
 - Adequate accompanying brochures / manuals - visually designed to highlight important segments, as well as displays through graphics, bubbles, "comic illustrations" and similar

In general, it is desirable to emphasize as much live contact, practice, practical demonstration or, if it is online - that the training is in real time, not recorded.

It is important to carefully create desirable measures for supporting rural women

social inclusion, so they can clearly see potential benefits for themselves, and try to find time and energy to fully engage themselves in order to make better future, by participating in modern job market possibilities, that can bring them easier and better-paid jobs.

The importance of diversity management!

VICTORUPESI consortium consists out of very divers partners serving very divers beneficiaries. This represents a micro mirror of the societies each of our beneficiaries is living in and is really important to build the ground for holistic approaches.

Reasons for having holistic approaches in Serbia:

- The Internet opens the global labor market for everyone, regardless their place of residence
- Employers in Serbia, as well as in the European labor market, ask/expect the same or similar competencies, skills and knowledge from candidates in accordance with the type of job
- Raising awareness of the possibilities of equal participation in the European labor market and that they can be more actively involved and better positioned thanks to the developed digital competencies
- There is a noticeable increase in the popularity of teleworking and freelance options
- There are equal dangers in terms of safety and security when using online platforms, applications, social networks, etc.

The importance of digital skills!

The world is changing significantly, hence the need to keep up to date with technology. With technology advancing at an incredible speed, it is important that we are not lagging behind these changes.

Reasons for having good digital skills in Serbia:

- To help you showcase your **personal brand** online. This enables employers to explore your digital competences.
- Many employers now require you to have some basic online skills, such as being able to use certain applications and software, in order to get a job.
- Whether you are an employer or an employee, businesses use digital skills to **promote and market** their brand, service and/or ethos so having these skills is hugely beneficial
- Digital skills can also be advantageous in unpredictable times, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, where working from home became the new, temporary

norm.

- Being digitally active can also increase your **networks**. This could be for social purposes or employment seeking purposes. Build yourself a profile online to engage with people and make new connections.

Also:

- To encourage rural women to unite in networks and associations and use benefits that practice can bring them (especially in establishing networks/associations that are informal like Facebook groups, or dedicated networking platforms for the exchange of experience and knowledge). There is an obvious need for women from rural areas to connect, associate and develop production activities on the basis of cooperatives (especially in terms of agriculture)
- To use online opportunities for self-education (computer, language and/or other types of courses)
- The use of ICT tools and social networks has a significant impact on the future of education and employment of women from rural areas – opportunities for inclusion in additional training (in rural areas there are often limited opportunities to attend courses/training), as well as work from home, finding more profitable jobs outside the rural community in which they live (especially important for rural areas where employment opportunities are limited), reorientation to work in non-agricultural activities.
- A job position that requires digital skills can involve different activities and is open in different companies and almost indispensable for the functioning
- The expansion of digital tools is evident in all spheres of life. Digital literacy has become a part of the general culture and an indispensable part of a quality CV of a person who is looking for a job.
- We live in a world of digital communication, so using email professionally correctly is very important - the way a person communicates by email is often an indicator of literacy in general and it is necessary to demonstrate basic communication and digital skills in this regard.
- Finding and using the information on the Internet, access to up-to-date information directly from institutions, as well as various open-source tools and resources open up countless opportunities for personal and professional advancement.
- Using the phone as a tool for digital marketing purposes. Phone photography - using a mobile phone as a useful tool in creating and placing content
- Simplified photo processing techniques, as well as applications that can help create content for social networks – to promote services or products
- Digital literacy provides a quality basis for upgrading more complex skills such as web development, digital marketing, SEO, and similar.

The overviews of the political context in each of the partners

countries

General social objectives of adult education in Serbia are the enhancement of the educational structure, an increase of employability, reduction of poverty, formation of the basis for economic development, better flexibility of the labour force and general improvement of life quality. The need for re-entering the education system arises from a fairly low educational structure of the general population, high unemployment rates, the low educational structure of the working population and stagnating population growth ([the Republic of Serbia, Strategy for the Development of Adult Education](#)).

According to the [Law on Adult Education](#), adult education is part of the Serbian education system and its purpose is to provide adults with continuous acquisition of competences and qualifications that are crucial for their employment, professional development and socially responsible behaviour.

Adults participating in vocational training programmes, at the secondary education level, are persons aged 17 and over.

Adult education is realized as formal education, informal education and informal learning.

As an organized and systematic activity of learning intended for people above a certain age, adult education can be formal or non-formal. There are two types of programmes:

- general formal education, which aims to raise achievement in basic skills
- vocational formal education, aiming to acquire a recognized qualification during adulthood and directed towards acquiring or improving vocational competences required for participation in the labour market.

Vocational formal Adult education is based on the approved national curricula within the secondary education systems, as regulated by the law. Although based on the mainstream secondary education concept, achievement standards for these programmes are adjusted to the adult population.

There are **legislative and systemic measures regarding additional vocational education and retraining**, but women from rural areas are not sufficiently recognized (not singled out as a special vulnerable category). Besides, this type of information does not reach women from rural areas, so they do not use what could help them. Taking this into account, the existing regulations and solutions do not sufficiently include women from rural areas. Additional stimulant measures are always desirable. It is necessary to create a stimulating environment tailored to the needs of women from rural areas, both in terms of financial support and designed measures, but also the educational programs themselves.

Adult education centers fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, but there are no subsidies or adequate support aimed at strengthening this field of education and increasing the availability of the services they offer. Thus, although adult education and lifelong learning are recognized in national strategies and laws, in practice they are not adequately stimulated.

As women from rural areas are particularly disadvantaged in **the labor market**, they need more comprehensive and long-term support. Government measures to increase employability exist to some extent, but they are not sufficient, especially for a category such as women from rural areas. In terms of employability and the labor market, the category of women from rural areas does not have a special priority status (there is no form of positive incentives through which employers would be stimulated to give priority to rural women in employment). Given that women in rural areas face many difficulties, it would be desirable to introduce incentives that would apply specifically to this group. Depending on the obstacles they face, it makes sense to combine several programs and synchronize the provision of additional services in the field of social protection.

In terms of digitalization, it is noticeable that this area is one of the priorities for the Serbian government. In accordance with that, numerous activities for the development of e-services

are being carried out, as well as actions to raise awareness of the importance of digital literacy and stimulate projects on this topic.

The overviews of the funding of vocational education in each of the partners countries

Adult Education and Training Funding in Serbia⁵

Main funding principles

Adult vocational education is primarily implemented in public secondary schools, but can also be organized in other institutions licensed for the implementation of adult education study programmes. Other institutions may include public agencies, public companies, employment agencies, business and other organizations.

Adult education vocational programmes are implemented:

- in secondary schools as a regular part of their practice
- within other organizations established to provide additional training and retraining.

According to the [Law on Adult Education](#), adults do not pay the fees for participation in the education programmes for the first occupation training.

Fees Paid by Learners

Vocational adult education programmes leading to the learners' first vocation are free of charge for the participants (financed from the state and/or local authorities' budgets, in compliance with the annual plan which is issued by the Government each year, prior to the start of the school year).

For all other levels and programmes, fees are determined by respective schools and organizations.

Other programmes may be financed from other sources, either individually or jointly by different financiers.

These sources include the following:

- Government;
- Local authorities;
- Learners;
- Private employers;
- NGOs;
- International organisations and funds.

Additional training and retraining are predominantly financed by companies, employers, employees and other clients.

Financial Support for Adult Learners

While for formal adult education there are no special support programmes in the form of loans, scholarships or other state measures, fees paid by adult learners pay are significantly below economic calculations.

⁵ EURYDICE: National Policies - Adult Education and Training Funding (Serbia).

Available from: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-funding-66_en

Some schemes of financial support are available for some adults who are involved in some non-compulsory programmes. Namely, adults who are participants of labour market training created by the [National Employment Service \(NES\)](#) can receive financial support. During the training, under the contract, the NES pays some costs for the training provider (costs of realization of the training programme) and some for the trainee/eligible adult (the amount of up to 7,000.00 RSD monthly as financial support, covering the transport costs and insurance contributions in case of injuries at work).

The other scheme of financial support is available at the request of the employer in case the unemployed adults perform the specific job. The National Employment Service pays:

- to the employer (participation in financing the training costs)
- to the unemployed adult (monthly financial support and the transportation costs)

Private Education

The fees are determined by the institutions and vary depending on the training staff and types of programmes.

The overviews of the local companies and industries available to hire our beneficiaries in each of the partners countries

Local employers point out that they currently do not need new workers (which is especially caused by the Covid-19 situation). Notwithstanding, all interviewed employers pointed out that their employment policy is sensitive. They pay attention to providing opportunities to people from disadvantaged categories, so when choosing candidates, they try to hire people who are vulnerable or feel excluded.

Regarding the selection of candidates, in addition to the qualifications required for the job, employers, among others, emphasize criteria such as readiness and willingness to work, fair and responsible approach to the job.

As for digital skills, employers stated that it is always commendable and desirable for employees to have the skills to create and share content on social networks to present the company in a good light and thus make additional advertising. Also, the importance of these skills is reflected in better communication with customers and stakeholders.

Finally, the common view is that it would be helpful to create and establish local employment policies, taking into account the needs of employers. Accordingly, incentive measures for rural women could be adopted.

In modern times, employers often expect their employees to have solid management of ICT tools and social networks, and such expectations will increase further in the future. Areas and industries in which rural women with improved digital competencies could be employed are:

- Agriculture
- Tourism and catering
- IT sector
- Public institutions (health, education...)
- Creative work/industry

Appendix

Some Centres for Adult Vocational Training in Serbia:

1. Center for Education and Culture “Božidarac”, Belgrade (www.bozidarac.rs)
2. Center for Education “Đuro Salaj”, Belgrade (www.djurosalaj.co.rs)
3. Center for Education “Braća Stamenković”, Belgrade (www.bracastamenkovic.edu.rs)
4. People’s University in Niš (www.nunis.edu.rs)
5. People’s University “Svetozar Marković”, Belgrade (www.nusvetozarmarkovic.edu.rs)
6. People's Universities in Šabac (www.univerzitetsabac.com)
7. People’s University in Vranje (www.narodniuniverzitetvranje.edu.rs)
8. People’s University in Trstenik (www.narodnits.rs)
9. Open University “Znanje”, Zemun (www.ouznanje.co.rs)
10. Open University in Subotica (www.openunsubotica.rs)
11. Education Center “Academy”, Čačak (www.akademija.edu.rs)
12. Academy “Oxford” – number of places in Serbia (www.akademijaoxford.com)

There are also online platforms (such as The Campster www.thecampster.com, Tailor's School www.krojacevaskola.com) that mainly offer IT-related courses

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