

CASE THREE

Labour Market Information and Services

Example of RisiAlbania's media intervention¹



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ALBANIA



PARTNERSALBANIA
FOR CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

¹ This short case study illustrates an intervention in progress; a detailed, independent case study will be published in late 2016.

1. Analysis – understanding the media market system

Started in 2013, RisiAlbania is a youth employment project in Albania, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Using a systemic approach, it aims to improve access to employment opportunities for young women and men. It is implemented by a consortium of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and PartnersAlbania. The first phase is from November 2013 – October 2017.

The project addresses youth unemployment in Albania, which is one of the country’s most pressing issues that has risen to the top of the political agenda in the last years. While official statistics place youth unemployment at around 30%, double the average population’s rate, actual rates are much higher.

There are three main issues related to youth unemployment in Albania: insufficient job creation by the private sector; inadequate skills of young people to meet private sector needs; and inadequate information and intermediation services that help bring together employers and job seekers. The project’s analysis of the labour market services in intermediation showed that one of the main constraints identified² was **young people’s (and their parents) access to labour market information (LMI)**.

Young people and their parents needed easy access to labour market information: they wanted to know what were in-demand skills and professions and what were realistic education and career choices. ‘Entry into the labour market’ was not about only getting a first job, but also the whole process of getting access to gainful jobs (from the time young people have to choose a field of study up to the time they find a stable, gainful job they really aspire). Availability of relevant and adequate labour market information was critical for employers to find qualified personnel.

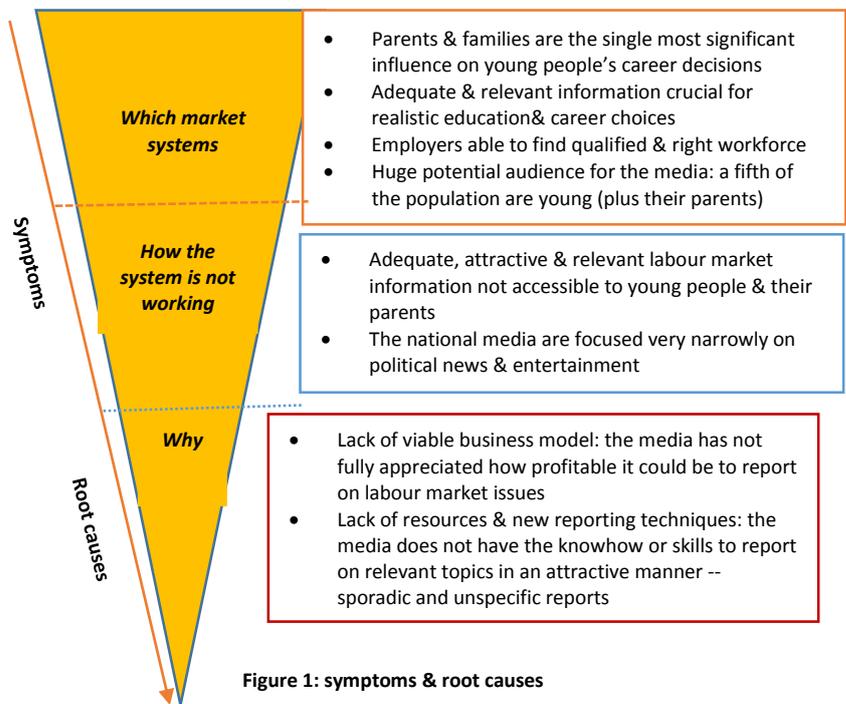


Figure 1: symptoms & root causes

The labour market information was certainly not easily accessible. While in other countries the mainstream media may provide this type of information, until recently this was not happening in Albania. The national media were focused on political news and entertainment.

RisiAlbania commissioned an in-depth research on the role of the media regarding the dissemination of labour market information. This research identified best practices in other European/regional countries and analysed the needs and interests of the media, the needs of young people for information about the labour and the interest of businesses as potential sponsors of media reporting on labour market information (LMI).

² The other constraints identified and tackled by the project though other interventions relate to private job matching services (online portals and recruitment service for low and middle skills), performance of the public employment services, and favorable youth employment policies.

The media also did not fully appreciate **how profitable it could be to report on labour market issues**. The business had a huge potential audience, since a fifth of the population are young people between 19 and 29 (plus their parents), whose primary concern was finding a decent job. Another barrier to labour market reporting was **the media did not have the knowhow or skills to report on LMI in an attractive manner**. Basic data about youth unemployment was to some extent available, but developing an interesting radio or TV programme about young professionals required resources and new reporting techniques.

2. Strategy and vision

Based on the analysis of the LMI system, RisiAlbania aimed to change the way mainstream media report for young people: **from sporadic and unspecific reports to regular and attractive formats**.

Young Albanians, and their parents, were the intended audience of labour market programmes. The media 'sells' this audience to advertisers and sponsors, who would pay for advertisements (or other kinds of sponsorship) that would reach this audience. While young people were eager to receive LMI, sponsors expected young people to buy their products.

To make this **new business model work**, the project analysed further the media market. The main constraints to be tackled were:

- Awareness of media on marketing the potential audience and profitability of LMI (to potential sponsors);
- Human resource (HR) capacities, in particular of journalists; and
- Development of attractive and relevant programmes.

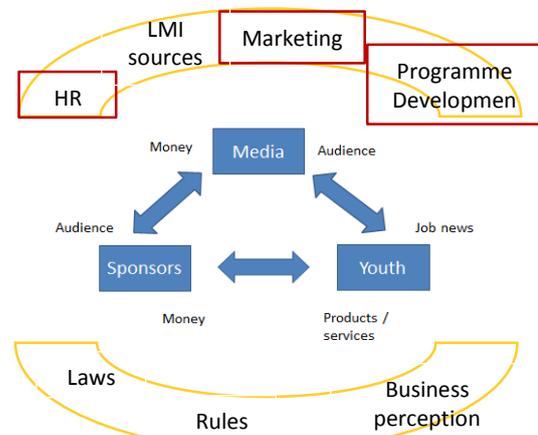


Figure 2: new business model for labour market information

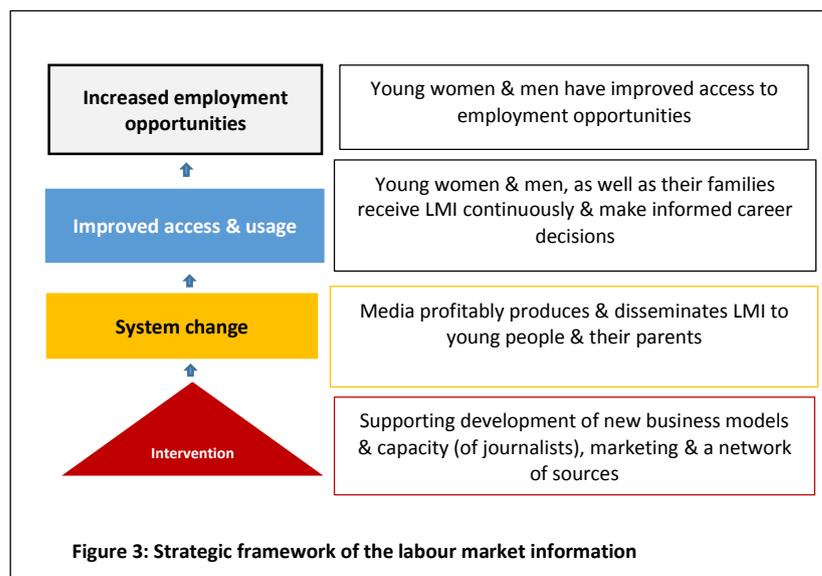


Figure 3: Strategic framework of the labour market information

The project tried to take stock of the current picture and develop a realistic picture of how the system would work after the intervention. It was expected that the media and sponsors would fully take over development and marketing of LMI products. Media, Universities (public/private) would support trainings of journalists on LMI.

3. Action

Based on the analysis done, Risi designed the following intervention:

Raising awareness on the profitability of reporting on labour market issues

- This was done through a national conference aimed not only at the media, but also at potential sponsors and advertisers. By producing and disseminating attractive formats about the labour

market, the media would take up an important and profitable role as information provider for a large audience of young people who required relevant and accurate information about the job market.

- At the same time, private companies would become aware of the commercial potential of these new media formats and decide to sponsor the programmes, turning the new formats into a profitable model for the media.

Identifying and engaging partners

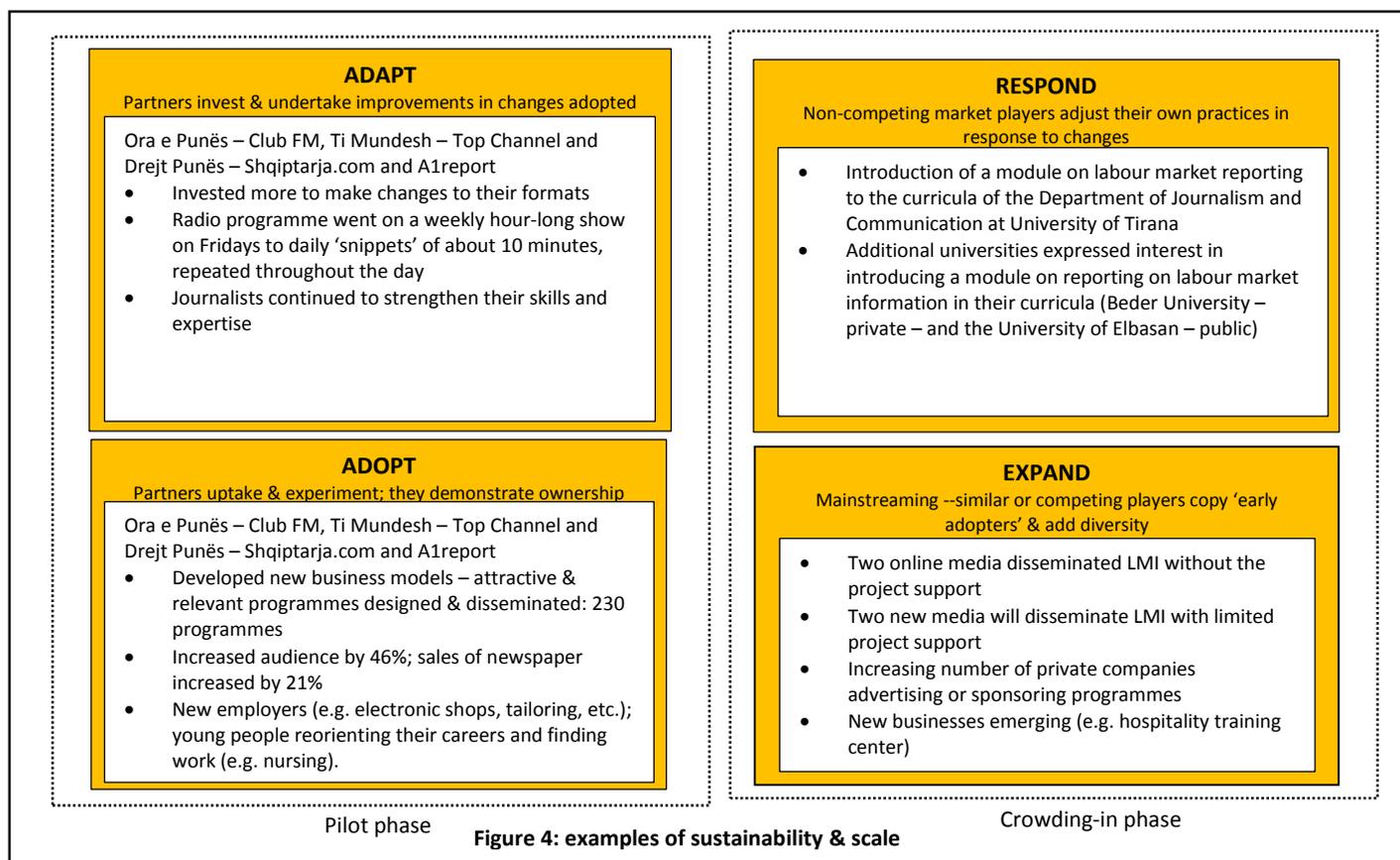
- Through an open call for proposals, RisiAlbania identified **three mainstream media, covering TV, radio, print and online**. These media presented the most interesting proposals in terms of attractiveness of the content, audience outreach and own investment in the development of programme. Specifically, the project supported:
 - a) Through suitable consultants, the capacity building for selected staff of Top Channel, Shqiptarja.com and Club FM on how to gather and tailor LMI for young men and women and analyse sex-disaggregated data;
 - b) Attracting sponsors to sell the programmes through development of marketing strategies;
 - c) Media product developments to ensure their quality and attractiveness (including financial support, facilitating the media to LMI sources and exchanging information and ideas about different thematic and programme formats);
 - d) Monitoring the programme quality and audience satisfaction of labour market media programmes; and
 - e) Institutionalising the capacity building of journalists through cooperation with educational institutions.

The key to the success of the labour market media programmes was **ensuring the formats would be attractive to young people**. It was important that journalists continue to strengthen their skills and expertise. RisiAlbania started by training the existing journalists that would work on the programmes, but targeted future journalists in a subsequent step. An important dimension of the intervention was the introduction of a module on labour market reporting to the curricula of the Department of Journalism and Communication at University of Tirana, with two other universities following suit by end of 2016.

4. Results

All programmes have been very successful. By December 2014, 227 media products have been aired/published. The two TV programmes saw an increase of their audience by 34-42% during the first season, while the audience of the radio programme increased by 56%³. Newspaper sales increased by 21% and their web traffic increased by 32%. Through Facebook, over 750,000 people accessed LMI.

³ In Albania, there is no system to measure actual audience numbers. The project has commissioned a study to look into this – data will be available in late 2016.



With such promising growth figures, an increasing number of private companies are willing to advertise or sponsor the programmes. This has motivated the media companies to continue with the formats and to launch the second season.

A good sign of ownership and sustainability is the fact that the three pioneering media have all made significant changes to their formats for the second season, assuming that these changes will make the programmes even more attractive to young people. For example, the radio programme went on a weekly hour-long show on Fridays to daily ‘snippets’ of about 10 minutes, repeated throughout the day. Moreover, two other media channels (TV and online) have expressed interest in developing programmes on the topic and are expected to start collaborating with RisiAlbania in the coming year; like the first media, specific capacities are lacking, such as expertise on entrepreneurship, a topic that the new TV channel wants to tackle. This time round, the project is no longer co-financing product development, only supporting capacity building of the media. Two other media (online) have also independently started.

With the introduction of a module on reporting on LMI in the curricula of the Faculty of Journalism of Tirana University, other universities in the country are also approaching the project (Beder University – private – and the University of Elbasan – public). The project will support them as they did for Tirana University, by providing the curricula and training the lecturers for the first time.

The project is at this stage of gathering data on the impact of this intervention on young people’s choices, which will be made available in an in-depth case study in late 2016. First signs of impact for the young people are already visible, with cases of new employers (e.g. electronic shops, tailoring, etc.) and young people reorienting their careers and finding work (e.g. nursing). There is already evidence that the impact has not only been with young people and their parents, but also with service providers. For example, after listening to a supported radio programme, a woman opened a training centre for the hospitality industry and within months had almost 50 graduates who had all found jobs!

Ora e Punës – Club FM

- Radio Club FM, the second biggest radio program in Albania with an almost exclusive young audience;
- Weekly broadcasting of “Ora e Punës” (Working Hour), based on interviews with human resources managers from companies in Albania or experts from the labour market who provide information about vacant positions and tips on how to become a successful entrepreneur and succeed in job interviews.



Ti Mundesh – Top Channel

- “Ti Mundesh” (You Can do it) is a monthly TV program on youth education, career advice and employment opportunities broadcasted in “Top Channel” TV (the biggest national TV)
- Aims to give voice to vocational education experiences of young people. The purpose of the show is to deliver a clear picture on “what it is like to have a certain profession and what are the markets requirements for this profession”.

Drejt Punës – Shqiptarja.com and A1report

- “Drejt Punës” (Towards Work) is an initiative carried out by Shqiptarja.com (newspaper) and A1 Report (TV).
- It provides labour market information through weekly TV documentaries concerning successful stories of young people working in less popular professions (e.g. cooking, tour guide, plumbing, etc.).
- It is the first ever weekly newspaper supplement in Albania that discusses labour market issues. A Facebook and website complement the weekly supplement.



5. Key lessons

This intervention of RisiAlbania has shown that the media can be an excellent partner to reach scale – in this case, potentially the entire target population! In working with the media, however, there are key points to keep in mind:

- **Focus on the business message:** The media do not choose to start reporting on labour market issues because youth unemployment is one of the top social problems in the country, but because it's profitable. Convincing the media and potential sponsors goes hand in hand.
- **Make it attractive:** This may require some new skills and therefore training that should be available not just for working journalists but also for future journalists.
- **Include gender:** the media can be an excellent means to change gender stereotypes and can be encouraged to do so, for example, by portraying women in 'non-typical' professions. Finding such examples can be difficult, and the media should be encouraged to do so.
- **Impact measurement is possible** but it is resource-intensive. While documenting changes at the media level is relatively straightforward, tracing their impact requires significant efforts that should be factored in from the very beginning.