

HORECA (Labour market integration of young people in the Hospitality industry)- Kosovo

Implementation: International Labour Organisation

Funding: Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)

Budget: 4 million Euros (2025-2027)



Introduction

The overall objective of Project HO(SPITABLE) RE(SILIENT) CA(PABLE) Support to the labour market integration of young people in the Hospitality and Tourism sector to contribute the inclusion of women, minorities, persons with disabilities, and young people at risk of exclusion and to reducing incentives to out-migration. The specific objective of the Project is to generate more, better, and resilient sector. The outcomes of the Project are that (i) vocational education schools and vocational training centres are better equipped with infrastructure (laboratories and materials), training materials and curricula to deliver labour market-responsive skills training for the HoReCa sector; (ii) young women and men aspiring to work in the HoReCa sector benefit from workbased learning opportunities, career guidance and other employability-enhancing services, as well as from better protection of their rights at work, particularly with respect to inclusion of minorities and other vulnerable individuals; (iii) start-ups and small/medium-size enterprises in the HoReCa sector have access to tailored financial and non-financial business development services that support productivity improvements, quality of jobs, and resilience of enterprises. These objectives shall be reached by working with relevant institutions across all levels of governance, as well as by institutional exchanges, twinning and peer learning in collaboration with Progetto Made in Italy. A market-responsive diversification and quality-improvement of the HoReCa sector will contribute to the overall competitiveness and attractiveness of the tourism industry in Kosovo. Sector growth will translate into job creation, which, in turn, needs to be supported by a skilled and motivated workforce and innovative, productive and resilient small

businesses and medium-size enterprises, capable of extracting value from local and niche products.

Objectives and inception phase

The Project aims to achieve three outcomes:

1. Vocational education schools and vocational training centers are better equipped with infrastructure (laboratories and materials), training materials and curricula to deliver labor market responsive skills training for the HoReCa sector;
2. Young women and men aspiring to work in the HoReCa sector benefit from work-based learning opportunities, career guidance and other employability-enhancing services, as well as from better protection of their rights at work, particularly with respect to inclusion of minorities and other vulnerable individuals; and
3. Start-ups and small/medium-size enterprises in the HoReCa sector have access to tailored financial and non-financial business development services that support productivity improvements, quality of jobs, and resilience of enterprises.

Project launch

At the official launch event, representatives from government institutions, training providers, private sector stakeholders, and development partners gathered to discuss the project's objectives and its potential to make lasting impact.

Italian Ambassador Maurizio Antonini highlighted that “the project aims to train and professionally integrate hundreds of young people, building bridges between market demand and the new generations. In a young and dynamic country like Kosovo, this means building the future, which is the main objective of our partnership with Kosovo”.

AICS Tirana Head of Office Ms. Stefania Vizzaccaro welcomed the “participatory approach that characterizes HoReCa: the involvement of public institutions, training centers, businesses and local communities in co-design - from the definition of curricula to business development - as a guarantee of effectiveness and sustainability”.



Market systems analysis hotels, restaurants and catering, as to identify project intervention areas

In March 2025 field research was conducted to identify the key constraints to the creation of more, better, and resilient jobs for youth and excluded groups in the HoReCa market system. Research was conducted in Pristina, Gracanica, Brezovica and Peja between March 1st - 25th 2025. 35 businesses and organizations were interviewed. The interviews were conducted with government officials, tourism and HoReCa associations, formal and informal business owners (employers), community groups, non-governmental organizations, and key industry informants such as trade union representatives.

The following suggested intervention areas were identified for the project:



1. Support HoReCa businesses to navigate input and service price volatility (e.g., food, electricity, waste collection)

- Facilitate partnerships between HoReCa businesses and wholesale suppliers to establish bulk purchasing agreements
- Support BDS providers to deliver on a commercially sustainable basis, financial literacy and cost management training
- Promote the adoption of energy efficiency solutions through advisory services and access to green financing
- Partner with BDS providers that train businesses on circular economy practices such as energy and water efficiency, food waste reduction
- Facilitate partnerships with waste management and recycling firms to improve waste separation

2. Strengthen public and private TVET and career guidance services to equip youth with relevant skills and raise awareness about employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in the HoReCa sector

- Support Employment Centers to offer targeted HoReCa-related courses (e.g., in pastry, catering, rural tourism) with affirmative outreach to young women and non-majority youth

- Raise awareness about career opportunities, including entrepreneurship, through enhanced public and private career guidance services.
- Promote stronger linkages between public and private training institutions and employers to ensure workforce skills align with industry needs.

3. Support BDS providers to manage market fragmentation and develop affordable, demand-driven products for HoReCa

- Conduct and disseminate market research to help BDS providers identify viable segments and service offerings within the HoReCa sector.
- Introduce incentive schemes for BDS providers to bundle services (e.g., digital marketing + financial management) to increase affordability and uptake, with a focus on women and minority-owned family businesses.
- Promote peer-learning models and group-based BDS delivery to reduce costs for small businesses (particularly for women or minority-owned micro and small businesses).

4. Shift mindsets on marketing as an investment and strengthen destination promotion for Kosovo

- Support industry associations in launching joint marketing campaigns that pool resources from multiple businesses to increase visibility while reducing individual costs.
- Engage municipalities to activate their competencies in destination promotion, supporting them in developing localized tourism branding and promotional strategies.
- Promote links between HoReCa businesses and digital marketing firms that do not currently focus on HoReCa introducing incentives for them to do so, as well as with influencers, to showcase Kosovo as an emerging tourism destination, highlighting unique local experiences.
- Promote public-private partnerships for coordinated destination marketing efforts, ensuring alignment between businesses, municipalities, and national tourism bodies –

The project team is now launching a series of intervention and exploring key institutional and private sector partners in Italy that could support the above interventions on the ground.