

FEBRUARY 25, 2025

GENDER ALLIANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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NEWSLETTER

Empowerment through Social Mentoring Pathways to Employment



In Tirana, on February 25, 2025, the Discussion Roundtable "Empowerment through Social Mentoring – Pathways to Employment" was held, organized by the Gender Alliance for Development Center (GADC) as part of the project "Boosting Employability through Social Mentoring in Albania." The event was supported by GIZ through the Regional Project "Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups in the Western Balkans."

The event aimed to present the impact of the social mentoring model in improving employability for marginalized groups, discuss Albanian government programs in the field of employment, and explore opportunities for integrating social mentoring into national employment strategies.

The event, held in a hybrid format with both in-person and online participation, brought together representatives from public institutions, the private sector, civil society, and international organizations, including government officials, labor market actors, and field experts.

In the opening session, the panelists emphasized the importance of social mentoring as a tool for empowering disadvantaged individuals and improving employability, as well as the need for interinstitutional cooperation to ensure the sustainability of this model.



[Event Registration](#)

[Overview Video of the Program](#)

The Journey of Social Mentoring in Albania: Background, Objectives, and Impact.

The Social Mentoring Project, an initiative implemented through a fruitful collaboration between the Gender Alliance for Development Center (GADC) and the PUBLIC organization from North Macedonia, with the support of GIZ, aims to build a strong community of dedicated mentors committed to supporting and empowering vulnerable individuals in our society.

At a time when economic and social challenges are significant, this project has emerged as a concrete response to unemployment, drawing on the methodology of our partners from North Macedonia. Social mentoring is not merely a knowledge exchange but a process that fosters strong human connections and supports mentees in developing their skills and self-confidence.

The life and professional experiences of mentors have demonstrated that every individual can play an important role in this process, helping others realize their full potential. Through this project, a sustainable network of mentors and mentees has been built, working closely together. By focusing on developing new skills, mentees have been empowered to overcome challenges and build a more secure professional future. The project has also promoted the values of solidarity and cooperation, contributing to reducing social divisions and creating an inclusive environment.

Through the support of mentors, the target group has experienced increased self-confidence and professional skills. In this way, the Social Mentoring Project has built new bridges of communication and created a new culture of collaboration, which extends beyond the boundaries of this program and positively impacts the entire society.



Mrs. Mirela Arqimandriti
Executive Director
Gender Alliance for Development Center



Mr. Bledar Taushani
Director of Employment and Migration
Policies, MECI

Employment and Migration Policies of the Albanian Government.

The Ministry of Economy aims to support a more inclusive labor market by ensuring that young people, women, persons with disabilities, and the Roma and Egyptian communities have greater opportunities to integrate into the labor market. One concrete measure in this regard is subsidizing the costs of kindergartens and nurseries for women with dependent children, facilitating their participation in the labor market. Another important step is expanding access to vocational training, which is being implemented in cooperation with civil society organizations to enhance skills and improve employment opportunities for individuals. Furthermore, in 2024, the Ministry approved the National Migration Strategy, which focuses on the sustainable reintegration of returnees, particularly female heads of households, into the labor market.

This strategy includes measures to facilitate the recognition of skills, qualifications, and competencies acquired abroad, as well as ensure access to social benefits for returnees, with the aim of making returning to Albania a sustainable and viable option for all those seeking to rebuild their lives in the country.

Social Mentoring – A Method to Reduce Long-Term Unemployment.

Social mentoring is a transformative employment promotion approach developed to address the needs and challenges of vulnerable groups seeking to (re)integrated into the labour market. This approach has been implemented in five Western Balkan countries.

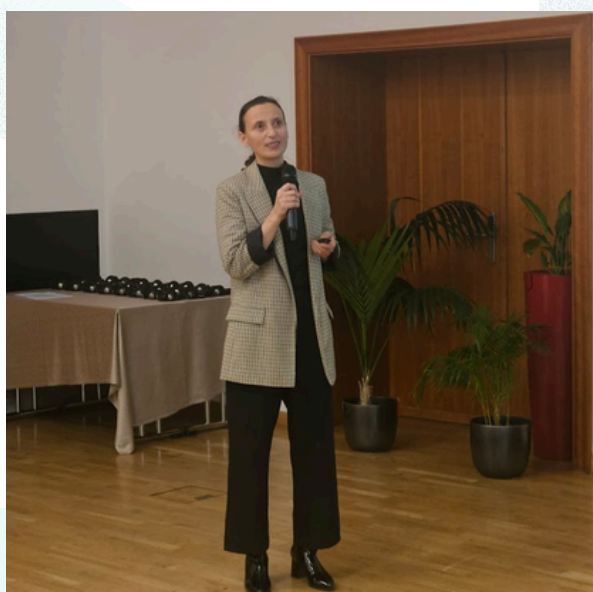
Disadvantaged groups often face challenges such as low self-confidence and limited access to opportunities, which require encouragement and support to develop essential communication and employability skills. Social mentors provide tailored counselling and coaching to help individuals prepare for the labour market, secure jobs, and, most importantly, retain them. The impact of this initiative extends beyond the supported individuals, positively affecting their families and communities.

However, the success of this approach depends not only on the civil society organisations that implement it but also on the understanding and active support of the relevant state institutions and business community. We already have some good examples at the local level in Serbia, the central level in North Macedonia and from various businesses across the Western Balkan that have adopted inclusive employment policies. However, much work still needs to be done. The lessons learned and best practices will be taken up in an upcoming project that GIZ is preparing in cooperation with our public and civil sector partners in the Western Balkan.

Creating an enabling and inclusive environment requires collaboration and partnerships among all relevant stakeholders. International organisations such as UN Women and the World Bank have also recognised and implemented this approach in North Macedonia. This has proven to be a successful, as continuous collaboration is essential to develop new projects, scale up best practices of the approach, and increase the positive impact.



Mrs. Svetlana Zdravkovska
Project Manager of the Regional Project
“Social Inclusion of Disadvantaged Groups in
the Western Balkans” GIZ



Mrs. Esmeralda Hoxha
Project Coordinator
Gender Alliance for Development Center

The Impact of Social Mentoring on Employment and Personal Development.

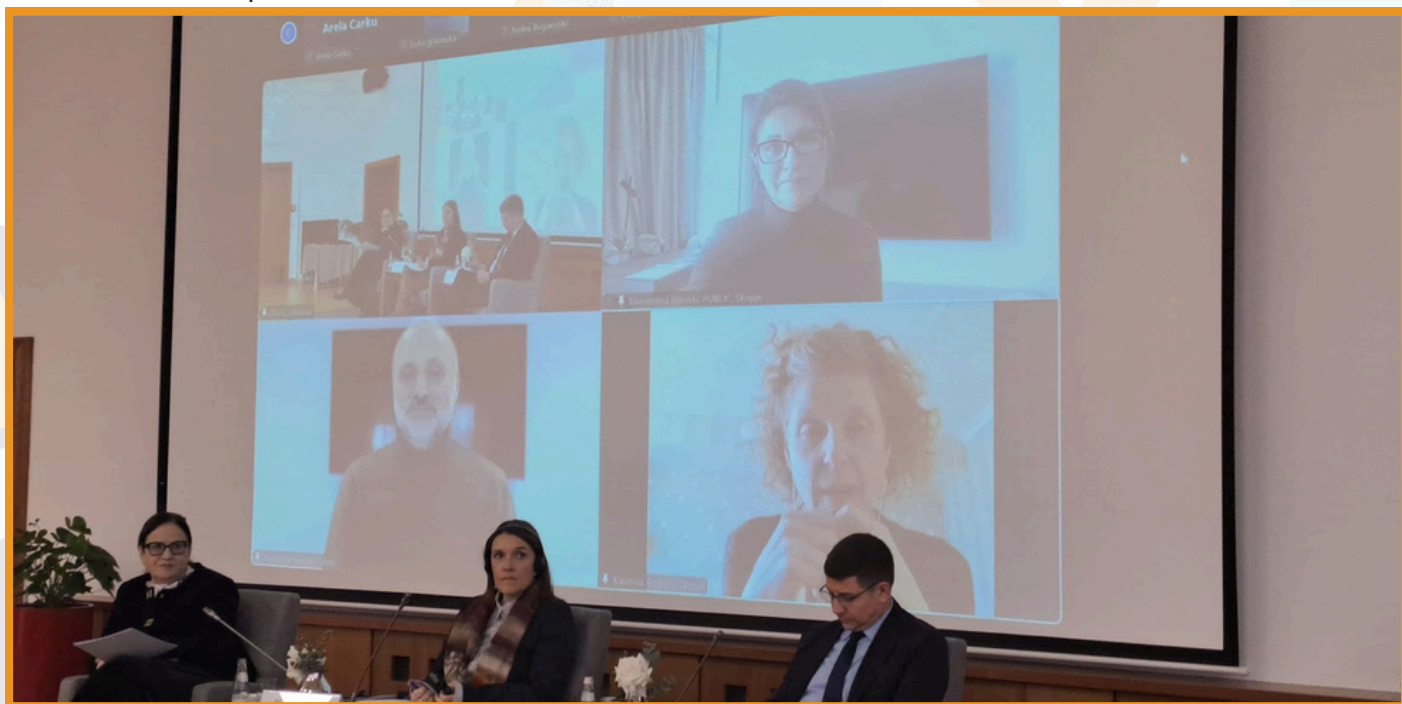
The Social Mentoring Project, implemented by the Gender Alliance for Development Center (GADC) with the support of GIZ, has assisted 45 individuals from vulnerable groups through a six-month mentoring program, supported by 10 certified mentors in Albania.

The project has had a direct impact on employment, equipping participants with new skills through vocational training in areas such as foreign languages, financial management, artisan production, and beauty services. A significant number of mentees, including women survivors of domestic violence, persons with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQI+ community, have found employment in various sectors or started small businesses.

This project has demonstrated the power of mentoring in economic empowerment and social integration, providing a sustainable pathway to employment for those who have faced significant challenges in the labor market.

The Social Mentoring Model: Lessons Learned and the Potential for Replication.

Online, **Ms. Klimentina Ilijevski**, **Ms. Katerina Mojanchevska**, and **Mr. Nebojsa Ilijevski** from **PUBLIC** North Macedonia shared lessons learned and opportunities for replicating the social mentoring model in different contexts. The PUBLIC representatives from North Macedonia emphasized the importance of integrating social mentoring into companies' recruitment strategies. One of the major achievements of the project has been the engagement of businesses, which are now actively participating and seeking support to improve their recruitment processes. Furthermore, social mentors are evolving from individual supporters into career and employment consultants, playing a key role in facilitating professional integration and ensuring the sustainable development of mentees in the labor market.



The discussions continued with a panel featuring representatives from public institutions, who analyzed the impact of government programs and political commitment to the sustainability of employability initiatives. Representatives from Tirana Municipality and the National Employment and Skills Agency discussed programs, challenges, and opportunities for integrating social mentoring into national employment policies.



Collaboration – An Opportunity for the Empowerment of Women Survivors of Gender-Based Violence

Local institutions play a key role in empowering vulnerable groups by creating sustainable employment mechanisms. The municipality, through a dedicated directorate, focuses on supporting job seekers, particularly women and at-risk groups. As a result, in 2024 alone, 745 individuals were employed, including women who have experienced gender-based violence.

To ensure long-term impact, social mentoring must be integrated into employment policies and become part of sustainable strategies. A concrete opportunity is training municipal employees as social mentors to support citizens in the employment process. Additionally, integrating social mentoring into university programs could help develop field experts, ensuring a more structured and professional approach.

This collaboration between institutions and civil society is an important step towards a more inclusive labor market and a fairer society for all.



Mrs. Ketil Luarasi
Vice Mayor
Tirana Municipality



Mrs. Gertiola Cepani
Director of Labor Market Services,
The National Agency for Employment and Skills

Programs and Services of the National Employment and Skills Agency (AKPA) for Promoting Employment.

The National Employment and Skills Agency (AKPA) has played a key role in empowering job seekers through its innovative programs, creating new opportunities for youth, women, and vulnerable groups. Through successful collaboration with the Gender Alliance for Development Center (GADC), the implementation of the Social Mentoring model has been made possible, a transformative approach that has paved the way to employment for many individuals. This partnership has enabled not only direct assistance for the unemployed but also the creation of a sustainable support structure, where social mentors have helped mentees gain confidence and develop skills that make them more competitive in the labor market. Meanwhile, AKPA is implementing several programs, such as the Youth Guarantee, the Professional Internship Program, the Coding Program, and the On-the-Job Learning Program, among others.

Another important initiative is the Social Reintegration Program, which aims to support the most marginalized individuals through a combination of training and social support. The collaboration between AKPA and GADC has shown that social mentoring is a powerful tool for supporting integration into the labor market, especially for those facing significant economic and social barriers.

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THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE

- **From Pilot Program to Sustainable Model**

Social mentoring aims to evolve from a pilot program into a sustainable model for the empowerment and employment of marginalized groups.

- **Integration into National Policies**

To ensure long-term impact, social mentoring must be integrated into national employment strategies and social support policies.

- **Recognition and Certification of Social Mentoring**

The creation of a structured and certified profession for social mentors will help institutionalize and ensure the sustainability of this model.

- **Institutionalization at Local, National, and International Levels**

The goal is for social mentoring to become an integral part of social inclusion mechanisms and to be applied on a wider scale.

- **Incorporation into Education and Vocational Training Systems**

Collaboration with public and private actors will help create a more inclusive labor market, developing academic programs and certified training for social mentors.

- **Capacity Development and Formal Recognition of the Profession**

Incorporating social mentoring as a distinct profession will strengthen its impact and improve the quality of support for vulnerable groups.

- **Expansion and Standardization of Mentoring Practice**

Given the positive results, there is significant potential to extend this model at the national and international levels as a standard practice for social and economic inclusion.

For more information, please contact:

Mirela Arqimandriti

Executive Director

Gender Alliance for Development Center

E-mail: gadc@gadc.org.al

Mob: +355 682059301

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Disclaimer:

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