

1st place: Miranda G.

My mother was born and raised in a traditional family in Skopje. Being the oldest of 10 children and responsible for taking care of her younger siblings, her hopes and dreams didn't have much significance for her parents. They didn't allow her to go to school beyond high school or get a job. Today, she is 60 years old and one of her biggest wishes is to see her only daughter achieve what she wasn't allowed to dream of-get an education and be independent. As a fourth-year student today, I still remember clearly why I chose to study English Language and Literature at the University of Prishtina. Sadly, it wasn't because I had had the opportunity to browse study fields and then decide for the faculty of Philology. Instead, it was a case of pressure from many friends and family who insisted that I study in such a field as it would be easier to get a job as a teacher. When it comes to a country like Kosovo, where unemployment rates are high, by the time you reach the age to study, fear of unemployment after graduation is inevitable and it pushes students to take jobs in any field possible despite their study field. Before starting university, I began volunteering at local NGO's and managed to become a project assistant on a project by the time I finished my first year of University. Working in civil society was not something connected to the "teaching" job everyone had convinced me I would find, but it was an excellent opportunity to learn and grow professionally. That is why I consider it crucial for students to network and volunteer in activities outside of their schools. Opportunities may not be plenty, but they do exist, and they are there for people who know how to use them. "Tomorrow" my dream job would be to find something challenging which would allow me to contribute in my community. However, taking into consideration that the high levels of corruption and nepotism in institutions are like a modern-day plague in our society, individuals need to be equipped with exceptional skills to fight an unjust system back. I believe that it is pivotal for me to strive for a graduate degree abroad in order to be able to return and contribute here with skills and knowledge gained in a much more developed country than Kosovo.

2nd place (tied): Alba A.

Being a college student has been the most exciting, but also the scariest part of my life. I say exciting because university is the very first big step towards success in your chosen career, but scary for it is possible that you will never get your dream job. Being a young adult in this century keeps getting more and more difficult with every year. Finding a job you like and that will also support you enough to have an enjoyable life is immensely difficult and thus it can be nerve-racking. Dealing with the inevitable stress of getting your college degree, and at the same time dealing with the disappointment you will most probably face when you go out and search for a dream job has a way of bringing you down and make you unmotivated. I live in a small country, we just got our independence and we are still recovering from the war. You'd think that in a developing country there would be countless opportunities for employment and getting a chance to help it grow and recover, but me together with my whole generation have found the exact opposite to be true. Being good at your field won't guarantee you a stable job and a career in Kosovo, mostly caused from the overwhelming corruption. It is upsetting to feel like your own country won't value you and that to have an enjoyable life you need to go abroad. However, I prefer to think of it this way: I can either run and leave my country in the hands of the people keeping it down or stay and try my hardest to help create the safe place that our fathers died fighting for. So, we stay, and keeping all that in mind and being realistic about our expectations we go out, we volunteer, we get internships, we get any job and do anything we can to make the working experience we need to get a fulfilling job. It is stressful, it is unfair, and it is difficult, but we are strong, hardworking and every day we try and built ourselves up to be the reliable and professional people this country needs. This is the state I found my country in when I was born, but this will not be the state I will be leaving it in, because now I have a choice, and I choose to be brave.

2nd place (tied): Bleron Q.

Ever since I was a kid, I was told that the key to living a decent life is pursuing education, and that has held true to this day. Due to the field that I have chosen, I believe that I will be able to find a job, although nepotism worries me to a great extent. I personally believe that technology is the key to economic development, and every year the number of software engineers grows. I want to be an advocate of pursuing software technology. I am not afraid of transitioning from university to work, due to the fact that I believe that this is the first step to achieving my ambitions, and lastly, my current education has been providing strong fundamentals for further development, but it depends solely on one's motivation to achieve greater heights. Young people in Kosovo need to be fast, agile and have 'open eyes' to get a job, and even accept lower tier jobs in some instances. Due to the shortages in certain fields, there may not be jobs available at the moment and they have to cope with that. Furthermore, due to worrying levels of nepotism, young people are the victim of undeserved advancements of certain individuals, and this has been discouraging for many young people, including myself. Everything matters when finding a job, it is highly crucial to have the contacts, which are mostly achieved from the common circles of interest and high social-media interconnection, communication skills, personality traits, and patience, lots of patience. Good grades are a minor criterion for hiring. I am looking for a job that will allow me to achieve financial stability while steadily progressing further, and eventually open my own business. A steady salary that grows with one's progress, a chance to become bigger and the possibility to make the difference in the long run is what is important to me. What matters at a company is the vision and ambitions of it, the number of employed people is of little importance, small teams can achieve great things. While the undeniable reality that the public sector is short at jobs is at hand, the best opportunity for young people is the private sector. When confronted between choosing a job in Kosovo or a job abroad, I would take in consideration the salary, the location and the experience that can be achieved by taking the job. Money is not everything.

Honorable mention: Enkelena H.

The world is now facing an exponential rise in technology; its flow has affected each and every one of us in our daily lives, this includes academic studies, jobs, entertainment, casual needs, in a scale that we cannot imagine life without it. Computer has first been developed in 1977, but now we have Artificial Intelligence, Space Stations, Robots, smart phones, quantum computers, the whole banking system is done via Internet and many more incredible inventions in these 42 years only! Think about the exponential function, its growth and link it with tech growth, you'd be amazed and exited of what the future holds. Seeing and analyzing these facts I decided to study Computerized Automatics and Robotics, an engineering field that is being developed day by day as I write this essay and requires lots of science studies like Mathematics, Basis of electronics laws, Signals and Systems, also many more practical courses i.e. Digital control systems, Programmable logic controllers, Modeling and Simulation etc. So, I begun this journey to be an engineer, a woman in STEM, who will contribute in a better distribution of engineering in my country, so that we can be closer to the first world high development. But, making a great career is not as easy as saying you want it! The studies I am getting at my University are satisfactory as the first steps on understanding engineering and preparing you for real world applied science, at least at the beginning of it. What I would love to have, would be an environment where we get to do more practical stuff by our hands in labs at faculty, with nowadays technology like in Massachusetts Institute of Technology for example. This would prepare us more for our real job; it would be a compound with theoretical science and applied science. My desire has always been on making a change in the environment around me and I think that the opportunity is on my hands, so that together with my colleges, we can build the industry of robotics in Kosovo too. By starting with small steps and making them continuous, we can at least open the doors for the industry and get more people to be engineers so that it grows, and it gets real. What matters in finding a great job on this field, is the knowledge you have and how much you are prepared for making experience and grow on your career. And of the times you get what you give, so working hard is a part of my plan, so that it pays off at the end!

Honorable mention: Erëza Z.

Graduation opens the door to many unknown paths of the future. What's next? Continue your studies or start working? Can you even find a job? It's something many people struggle with, unfortunately I do too. Taking that first step from the educational phase to employment is especially hard for graduates in Kosova, since finding a job is tough whether you are experienced or a novice. Considering how others have struggled, I'm not optimistic about finding a good job. A teacher's job is as important as a doctor's who holds a patient's life in their hands, for a teacher holds one's future. So how can I be a good teacher if I don't feel prepared? Sure, we've learned a lot of modern methods of teaching that seem effective in theory, but we haven't actually practiced them. I've never taught students before, so I don't know whether I am good at it. It would be a disaster to find I'm unsuited to be a teacher after dedicating four years of my life to it. My university should've offered more teaching practice over the years; unfortunately, this is a common issue in the University of Prishtina. Additionally, good job offers in Kosova are rare. One must either have a demanded profession or have connections to the right people. Also, Kosova has a high number of youth so every job offer receives hundreds of applicants. A quality that helps you find a job is having low standards. If you're willing to do labor work for long hours with minimal payment, then you're definitely getting the job. I want to have a job that I love, unfortunately that's almost impossible because many professions aren't developed in Kosova. Moreover, I don't know exactly what I love to do. When I was five, I wanted to be a princess, at ten a pilot, at fourteen an astronaut, and at twenty a writer. Now, I would love either of those choices, but I also know they are pipe dreams more than a possibility. So, what do I want? A job that offers me security, one that makes a difference, that helps guide others to their future. With a job abroad I would have the chance to travel, which I would love, but I'm also an introvert so working from home would be perfect. I want a job with good salary, insurance and home based. Unfortunately, the probability to find the perfect job in Kosova is low.

Honorable mention: Viola A.

Graduating. Finally putting an end to the endless nights of studying filled with stress and panic, just to begin thinking about another challenge: employment. Although it should be something to look forward to, I find myself feeling anxious about finding a job. The possibility that I might end up unemployed, especially after having worked so hard during four years of university, is a thought that leaves me feeling restless and uncertain. As a student of the University of Prishtina, I consider myself privileged for receiving a serious education, one that renders a priority the preparation of today's students in becoming tomorrow's employees. Such preparations are usually reflected through practical work and internship, especially in elective courses we take in our last year of studies. However, from a student's perspective, courses that help prepare students to become future workers should be included earlier in the education process. When finding a good job and career young people in Kosova need to have good grades and skills. Nevertheless, in many cases that is not enough, and people possessing all the requirements needed to occupy a working position end up unemployed. Part of it is because of the mentality that praises connections with employers and nepotism. As such, many young people, myself included, feel helpless in finding a job based on our skills only without knowing someone who can intervene and make sure we get the job. Therefore, the process of job-finding appears to be impossible for those of us who want to assume a working position based on our qualifications and skills only. After I graduate, I would like to teach. I see educating young generations as a contribution to the society and it is something I love and am passionate about. I find students' success, guided by the teacher rewarding. High salary doesn't impress me, although one does need a stable wage to cover life expenses. In choosing between the public and private sector, I would choose the public one because I would feel financially more secure, even if I was paid less in comparison to the other sector. If I had the choice between taking a job in Kosova and a job abroad, I would first consider how it would affect me emotionally being away from my homeland and getting adapted to a whole new environment, then the professional prospect- what I could achieve elsewhere that I cannot in Kosova, and finally the financial aspect.

Honorable mention: Flamur S.

Por rrugës së shkollës një ditë më ra ndërmend se dikur këtij procesi të “mbledhurit mend” e të “mësimit të një zanati” do ti vije fundi. Dhe thash me vete mbas gjithë këtij mudi e mbas krejt kësaj sakrifice fizike, psikike e ekonomike vjen shpërblimi, dhe jeta jote është më e lehtë edhe ti do të “jeshë dikush” me një punë të mirë dhe me një rrogë që nuk do ta kesh brengën se fillimi i mujit a do ta zbardhë fundin e mujit me ndonjë euro në gjep. Edhe rastësisht mu kujtua se qfar isha duke menduar me veten. E i thashë vetës sa për kurajo “Po zotëri ashtu është, shkollimi yt ka me të shpërbly një ditë”, e vetja si me ironi më tha “po zotëri po ka me të shpërbly sikur Blertën e cila është magjistre e shkencave ekonomike dhe punon në një market si arkatare. U bëra sikur nuk e dëgjova mendimi, se mu duk sikur “vetja” tashë veq kishte marrë pakë copeza nga besimi im, se pas shkollës ti e ke një jetë të sigurtë me punën të sigurt. E kishte filluar të mbjell fara të realiteti pesimistë, se vërtet pas gjithë këtij procesi ideali im është në pikë pyetje. Ky lloj debati është në kokat e po thuajse secilit student Kosovar. Sepse tash e një kohë te gjatë, shihet kuartë se janë lënduar shpresat, se pas përfundimit të universitetit ju keni një punë të garantuar. Punë e cila i përket profesionit tëndë. E problemi tjetër madhor është edhe pse studenët e rinjë kanë ambicje që gjithmonë para punës në sektorin privat, të anojnë në atë publik. Ani pse në kushte normale nuk do të kishte rëndësi nëse ju punoni në sektorin publik apo privat, tashë për tash kjo duket se është krejt ndryshe, të qenurit punëtorë i sektorit publik të garanton benefitet të lloj-llojshme për të cilat në sektorin privat as që bëhet fjalë. E krejt kjo është faji i disbalancit të madhë të pagave mes dy sektorëve e kushtëve të punës, orarit, pushimeve e shumë arsye të tjera. Për të cilat ne duhet të punojmë, që këto dallime në mes të sektorit publik edhe atij privat të mos egzistojnë. Sepse vtëm kështu sipas mendimit timë do të stabilizohet tregu i punës. Dhe si rrjedhojë do të kontribonte në ngjalljen e shpresave të secilit student për punësim.

Honorable mention: Raba M.

<https://youtu.be/laXNgvHS2y0>