



# THE NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF YOUNG LAWYERS IN NORTHERN KOSOVO

– CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS –

**DISCLAIMER:** The views and opinions expressed in this analysis are the sole responsibility of the Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Embassy of Switzerland.



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

**Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA**

January 2021.

## Introduction

As part of the project *"Support to the Integration of Young Lawyers from Minority Communities in Northern Kosovo"*, the Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC) conducted a research on awareness, level of knowledge and information offer of young lawyers about potential opportunities for professional practice after graduation.

The research was conducted on the territory of northern Kosovo, in four majority Serb municipalities (North Mitrovica, Zvecan, Zubin Potok and Leposavic). This research provides a closer picture of how much young lawyers are informed about practical work, whether the Faculty of Law in North Mitrovica offers certain internship programs, which institutions can help them acquire future professional legal skills and how important it is that the professional practice has a remuneration.

Special obstacles to the acquisition of practical knowledge are the fact that the Faculty of Law in North Mitrovica establishes its curriculum based on the legislation of the Republic of Serbia, while most lawyers try to find their first professional engagement in one of the cities in Kosovo within the integrated judicial system which implementation started in November 2017.

Cooperation and communication between the Faculty of Law in North Mitrovica and the Kosovo judiciary institutions has not been established yet. The question of the relationship between these institutions is of a political nature which is why it is characterized by mutual challenges and avoidance of any form of dialogue. Initiatives of civil society organizations (CSO) in Kosovo to create internship programs for law graduates in integrated justice, require far stronger and broader support. However, a number of programs have been implemented that have successfully provided young lawyers with the necessary skills.

After completing their studies, young lawyers often do not know who to turn to for additional practical legal skills because there is currently no specialized organization/body to direct them to specific institutions in terms of a quality internship program.

The first agreement on the principles governing the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, better known as the Brussels Agreement, after extensive

negotiations, was signed in April 2013. The agreement contains 15 articles of which Article 10 refers to the judiciary:

*"The judicial authorities will be integrated and will function within the legal system of Kosovo. The Court of Appeal in Pristina will establish a committee composed of a majority of judges Kosovo Serbs which will be in charge of all Serb-majority municipalities. The Division of the Court of Appeal composed of administrative staff and judges will have a permanent office in northern Mitrovica (District Court in Mitrovica). Each committee of the mentioned Division shall be composed of a majority of Kosovo Serb judges. Depending on the nature of the case in question, the committee will consist of appropriate judges."<sup>1</sup>*

Most law graduates in northern Kosovo face a complete lack of professional practice because it is neither institutionally supported nor systematically planned. It should be emphasized that law offices in northern municipalities face limited capacity to receive interns and the decision to hire is now partially entrusted to the Kosovo Bar Association. A program of the Basic Court in Mitrovica which annually announces internship calls for interns with equal ethnic representation of interested candidates can serve as a positive example of the development of legal practice for young lawyers.

A special problem, although not the subject of our research, is that none of the four municipalities in the North of Kosovo hasn't an office that performs public notaries acts so that almost none of the young lawyers have practical experience with the notary profession. By the way, in order to take the notary exam, in addition to other legally stated conditions, three years of internship experience is necessary, so that residents of municipalities in northern Kosovo will not be able to certify their concluded contracts for another 3 years at best. Until now, in terms of the initiative of the internship program, the leading word has been given to non-governmental sector organizations that enter into professional relations with the integrated judicial system more informally, unlike the Faculty of Law and other Serbian institutions.

UNMIK, USAID, GIZ, ACDC are a few of the organizations that have led successful internship programs for young lawyers and thus significantly bridge the gap between

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.srbija.gov.rs/specijal/283757>, 3.12.2020.



Advocacy Center For Democratic Culture

passivity of Faculty of Law and student self-organization in order to acquire practical knowledge and skills after graduation.

## Research Methodology - Quantitative Research -

**Method of Research:** F2F Research fieldwork, combined with Internet Survey

**Place of Research:** North Mitrovica, Zvečan, Zubin Potok, Leposavic

**Research Period:** October 1<sup>st</sup> – October 25<sup>th</sup> 2020

**Sample volume:** 17 respondents in the fieldwork and 45 Internet Survey

**Sample Description:** Out of total number of respondents 62 – **46.8%** were male, **53.2%** were female

*North Mitrovica:* 49.2% of respondents;

*Zvečan:* 23.7% of respondents;

*Zubin Potok:* 16.9% of respondents;

*Leposavic:* 10.2% of respondents;

**Sample type:** Stratified representative random sample, based on municipality of residence, profession

**Post stratification:** Age, Level of Education, Completed Internship and Employment Status

## Key Results of Research

- **58.1%** of respondent law graduates declared themselves unemployed
- **80.6%** of the respondents had never done a professional internship before
- **41.9%** of respondents are informed about opportunities for practice through social networks
- **64.5%** of law graduates are partially informed about internship opportunities
- **88.7%** of respondents believe that it is important for lawyers to have quality practice
- **75.8%** of respondents answered that their faculty does not offer a professional internship program
- **88.7%** of respondents think that creating a single website with calls for practice would be very useful
- **79%** of law graduates stated that it is extremely important to get a job opportunity after completing an internship program

## Research Summary - Perception of Key Issues

### Research results:

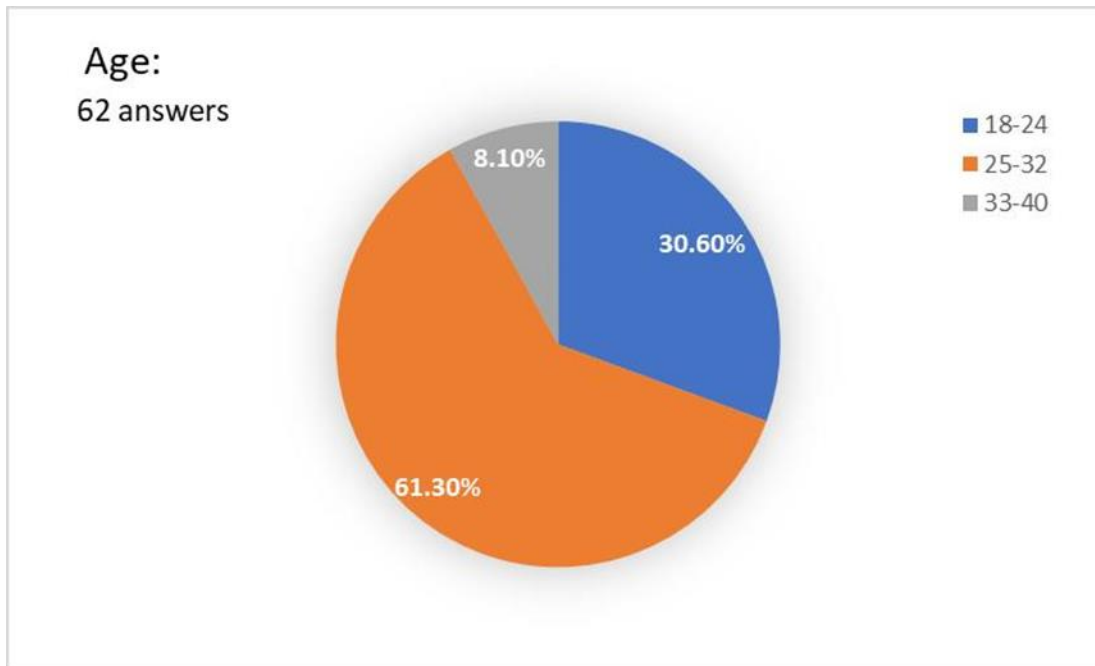
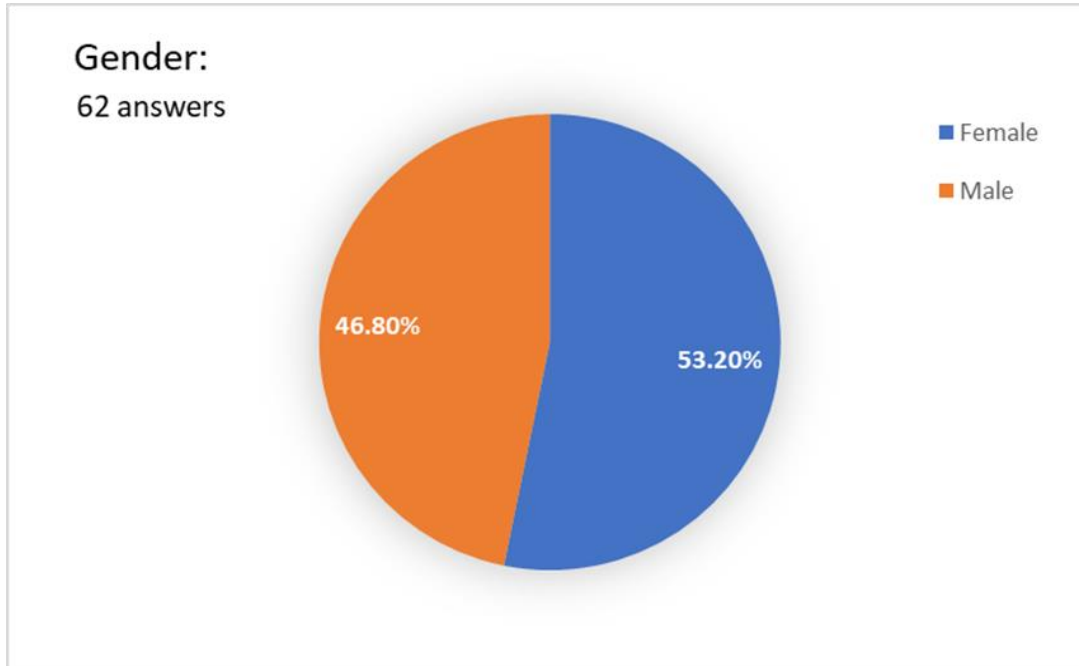
**Awareness** - The research showed that the level of awareness of law graduates is at a relatively low level because 24.2% were not informed at all about the possibilities for performing professional practice, while 64.5% rated themselves as partially informed. Most responds with “*moderately informed*” or “*I’m not sure*”, which indicates insecurity and thus poor awareness about information, which is unusual for this age group of respondents.

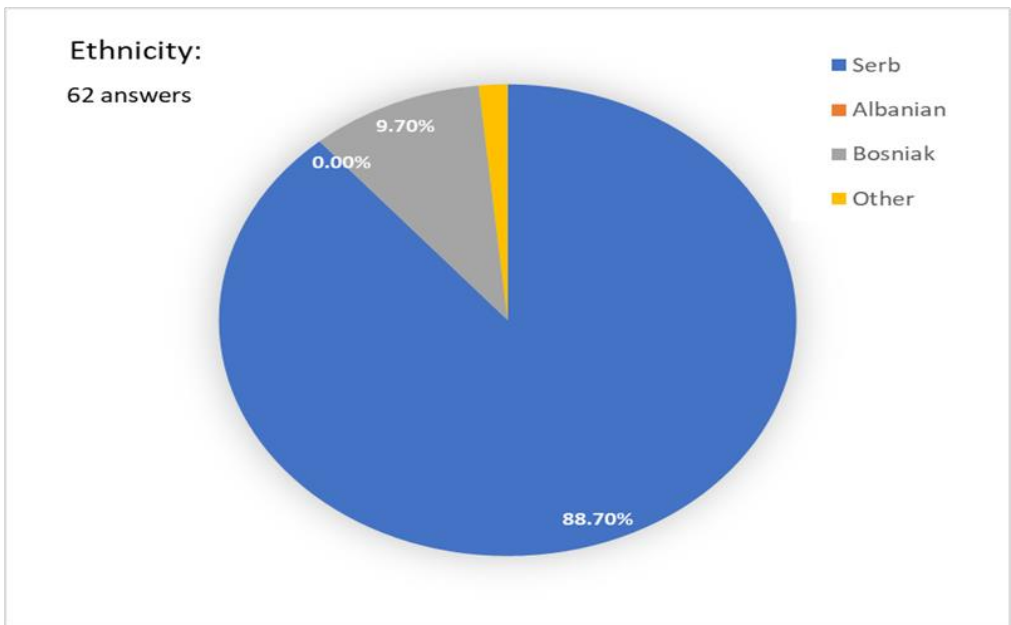
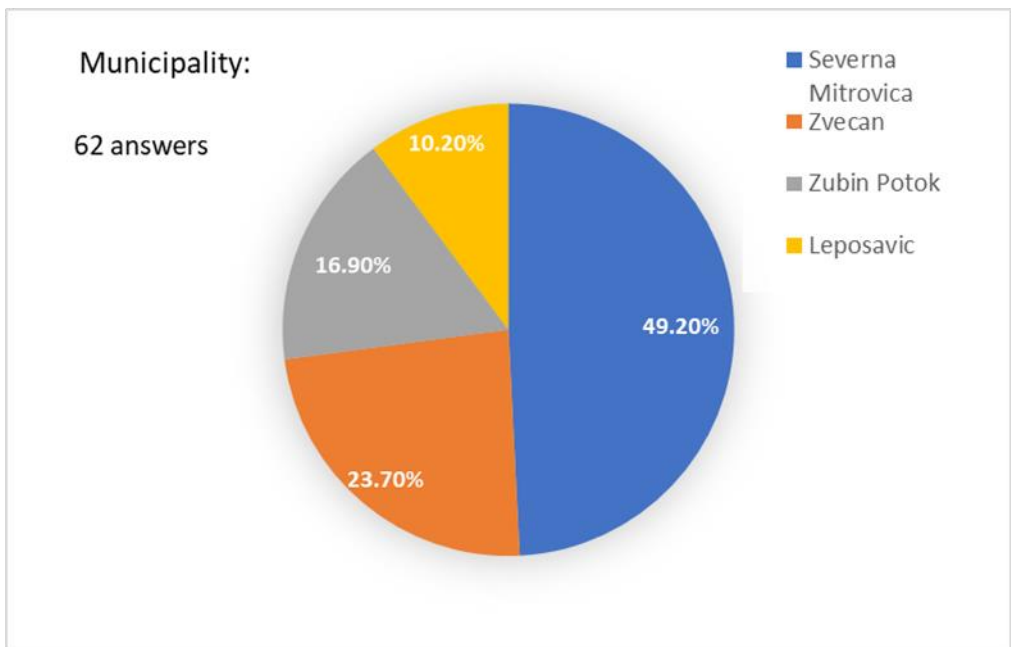
Also, the research showed that the participation of young lawyers in the decision-making process and the creation of potential opportunities for practice is insufficient and that it should definitely be improved. Most respondents are not sure who to turn to in order to find a professional practice that would suit their needs.

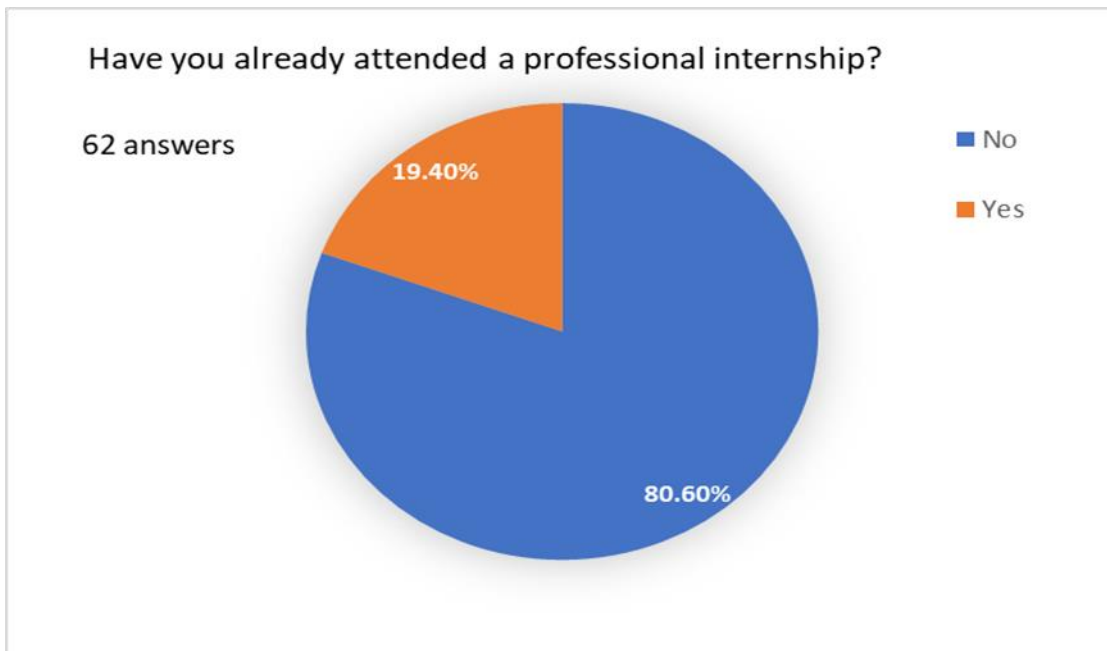
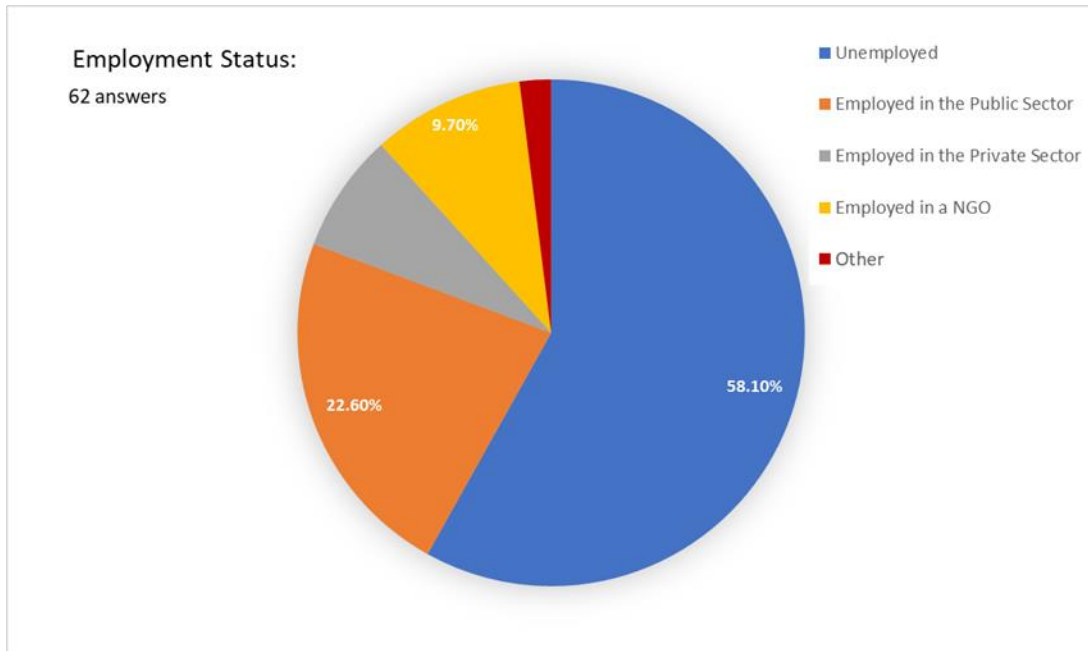
**Supply of professional practice** - As it can be concluded from the obtained answers, as many as 75.8% of respondents answered that the Faculty of Law in North Mitrovica does not provide any practice to law graduates after graduation. Young lawyers are forced to organize themselves in search of a practice whose offer is very limited.

The perception of young lawyers and attorneys about potential opportunities and competitions for professional practice after graduation is not at an enviable level.



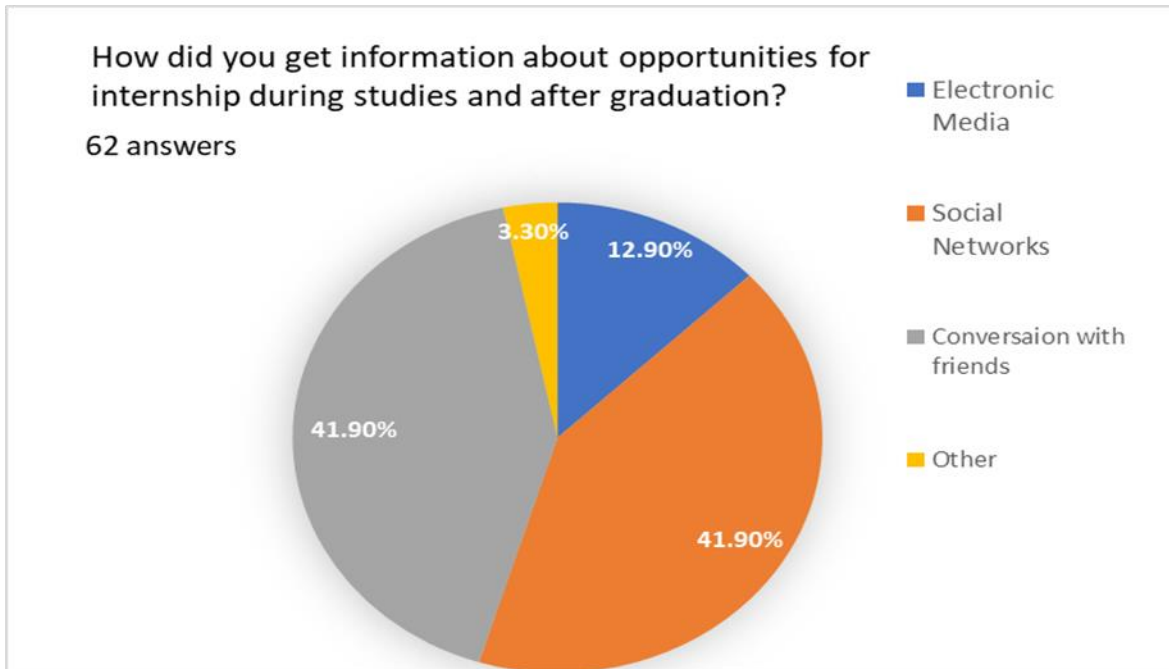






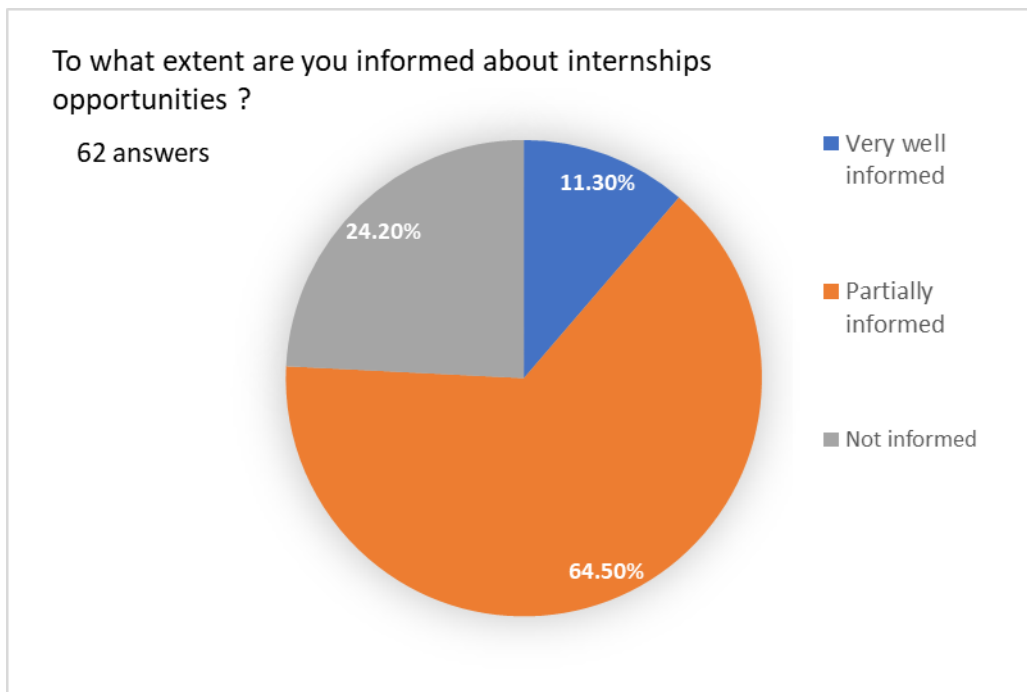
As we can see from the graphic above, 80.6% of respondents stated that they did not do an internship before starting this project. On the other hand, only 19.4% of law graduates completed professional practice after undergraduate studies. Based on their answers we learned that it is mostly the Basic Court in Mitrovica, Faculty of Law in North Mitrovica, the Municipality of North Mitrovica, PIO Fund and two CSOs - ACDC and Aktiv.

Based on the obtained results, we believe that the offer of professional practice for young lawyers in the municipalities in the North of Kosovo should be diversified and strengthened. It is obvious that young lawyers are aware of the lack of professional practice and the lack of skills in writing legal acts.

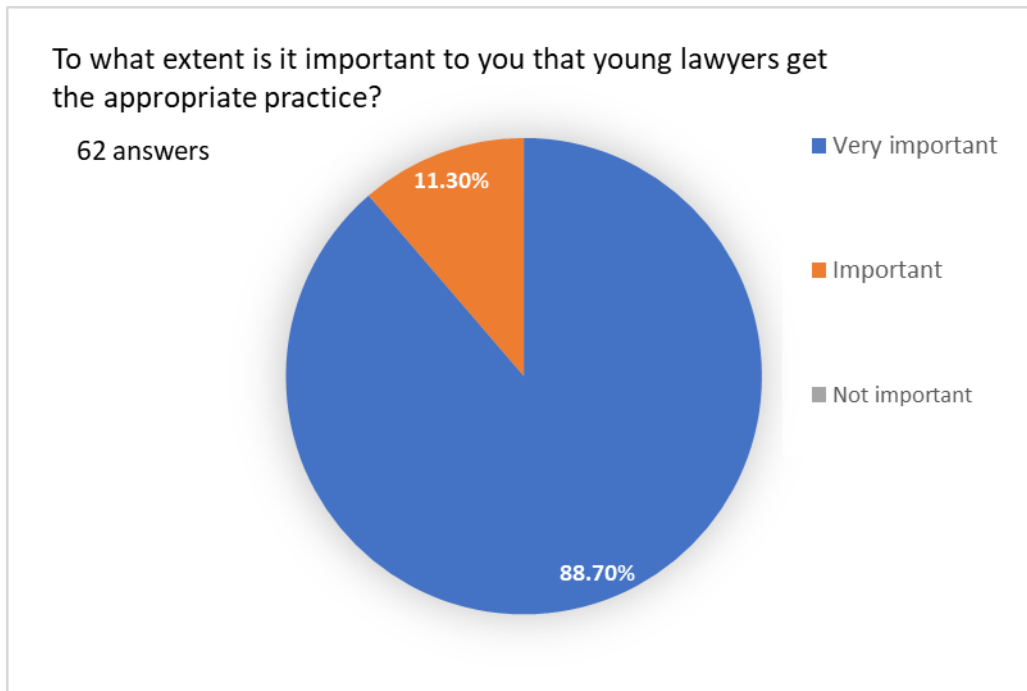


The answers to this question come down to partially expected. At the time of digitalization and mass use of modern mobile applications and computers, 41.9% of respondents are informed through social networks. However, it is interesting that the same percentage of respondents, 41.9%, are informed through conversation with friends about potential internship opportunities during their studies or after graduation.

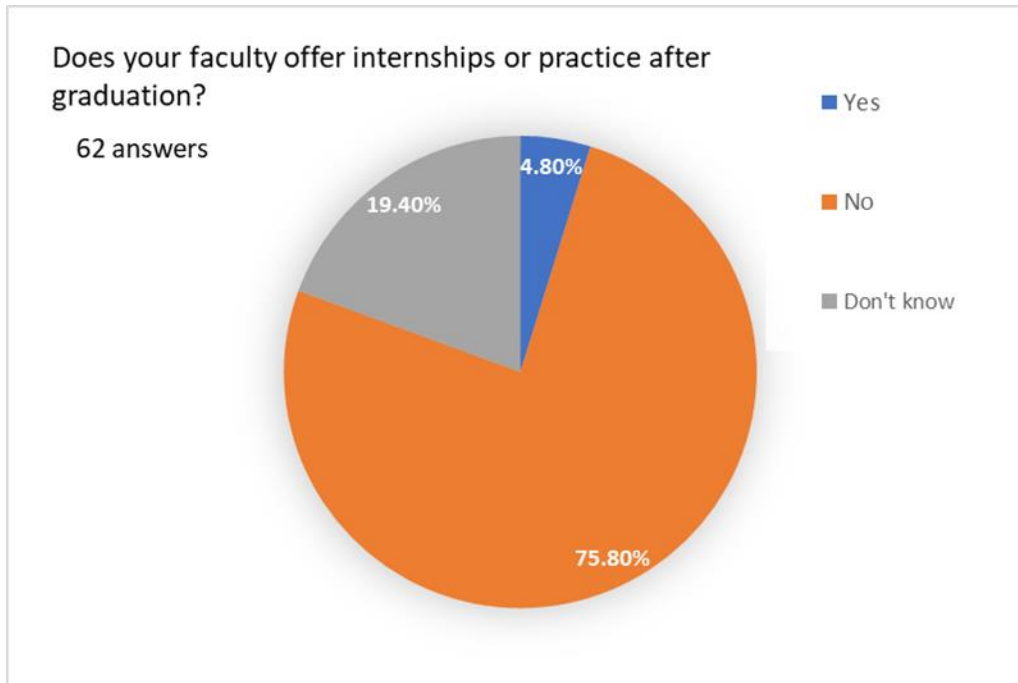
Only 12.9% of law graduates answered that they reach information through electronic/print media and this indicates the fact that a significant number of young lawyers need to be informed through social networks that gradually replace and take over the content of electronic/print media.



To this question, over half of the respondents, more precisely 64.5%, answered that they are partially informed, which indicates the fact that young lawyers are not satisfied with the current level of information in this regard and that there is room for significant improvement. Almost a quarter of respondents 24.2% believe that they are not informed about offers for legal practice, and only 11.3% are very informed. The percentage of respondents who see themselves as uninformed is related to the transparency of publishing calls for practice, which is also not at an enviable level.



In this question, young lawyers almost unanimously answered that appropriate professional practice is very important - 88.7% of respondents. Only 11.3% answered only important, it is a small qualitative difference, while none of the respondents chose the option that professional practice is irrelevant. These answers are motivating and encouraging for future work with young lawyers who obviously want more practical knowledge.

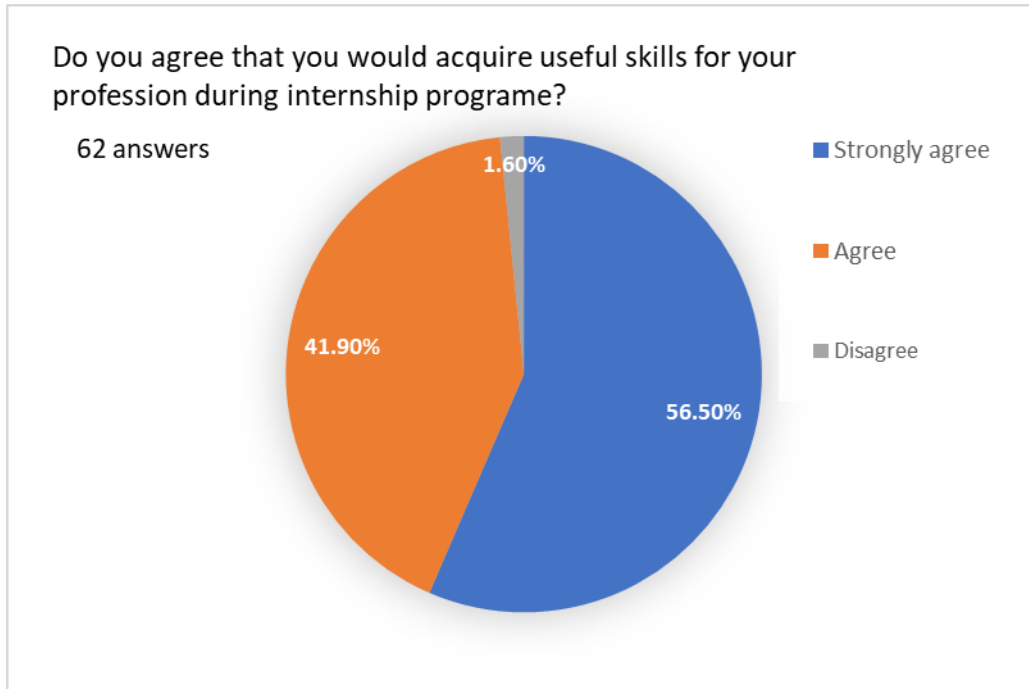


The issue of practice after graduation significantly shows the attitude of the University education towards the professional practice of young lawyers. The fact that 75.8% answered that the faculty does not provide any professional practice after graduation is worrying. This means that young lawyers are left to themselves in search of their first internship, although their position would be significantly better if the Faculty of Law initiated a certain internship program.

One fifth of the respondents, 19.4%, answered that they do not know, and only 4.8% stated that the Faculty of Law in North Mitrovica offers professional practice to graduates.

When asked *"What skills would you like to master during practical work"*, close to 90% of respondents chose to write legal acts: **lawsuits in civil proceedings, indictments and criminal charges in criminal proceedings, drafting verdicts and appeals**, wills and Public notary documents. The rest of the respondents stated that they would like to acquire skills

in drafting contracts in international trade, public speaking skills and business communication with clients.

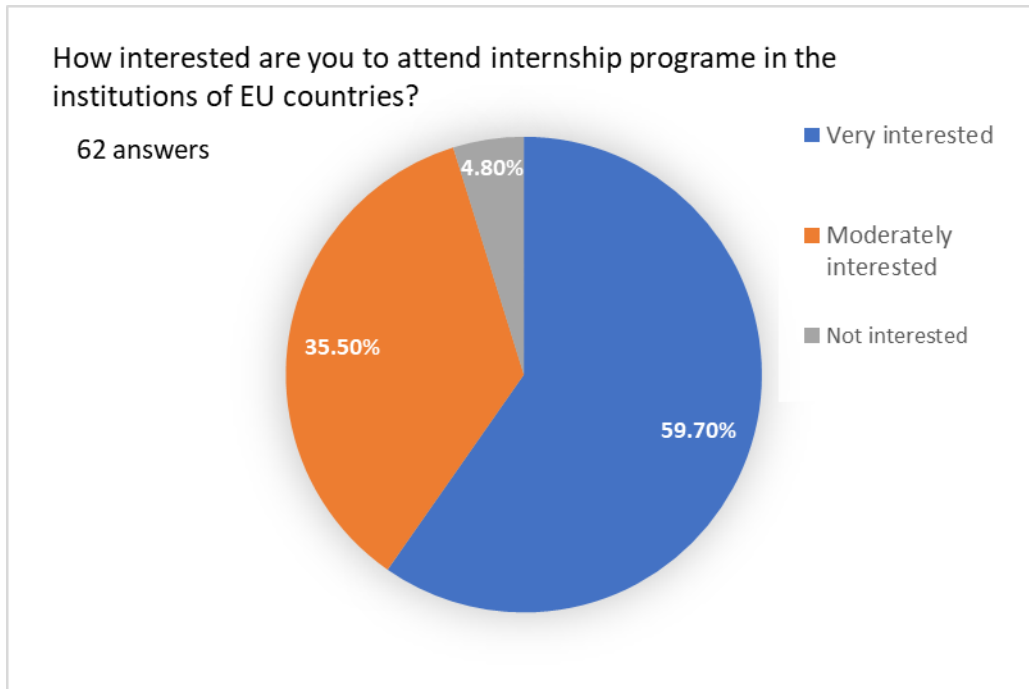


This question and answers of the respondents describe a certain dose of optimism because over half of them - 56.5% of young lawyers - participants in the research believe that they would largely acquire useful skills for the profession they chose during the internship program. The option “agree” that differs minimally qualitatively compared to the previous answer was chosen by 41.9% of respondents.

Only 1.60% respondents expressed disagreement that they would find useful skills during the internship program.

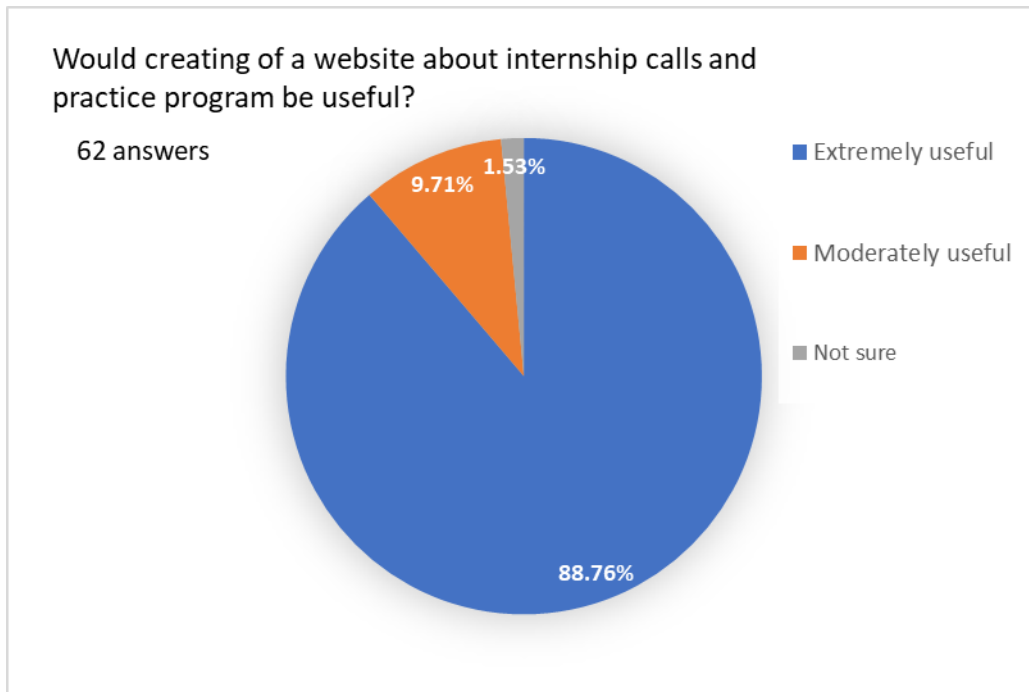
This points us to the fact that lawyers and law graduates are motivated to attend internship programs as well as to acquire useful professional skills.





Although the opinion of young lawyers on this issue is partially divided, it is important to point out that 59.7% of respondents are very interested in doing professional practice in the institutions in the European Union countries. The second answer, that the respondents are moderately interested, was chosen by 35.5% of young lawyers, while only 4.8% stated that they were not interested in such a possibility.

The current supply of legal practice in the institutions of some of the EU countries for young lawyers from Kosovo is almost non-existent, and visits to similar programs are very rare.

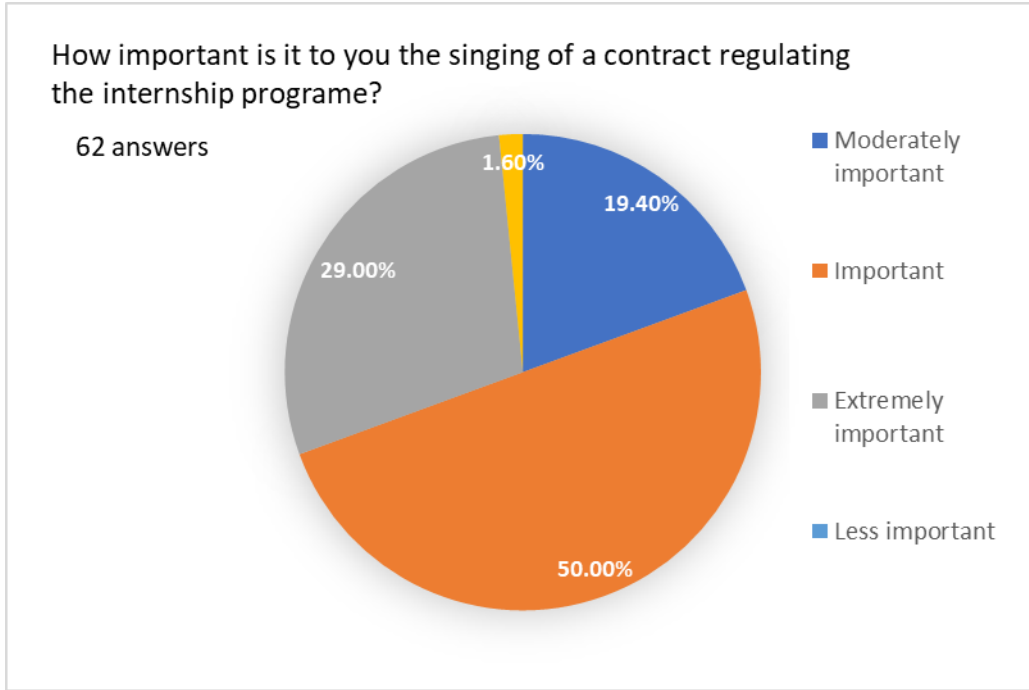


Based on this question and the answers received from the respondents, we can conclude that the creation of a single website on calls for legal practice would be very useful and this was confirmed by 88.7% of respondents.

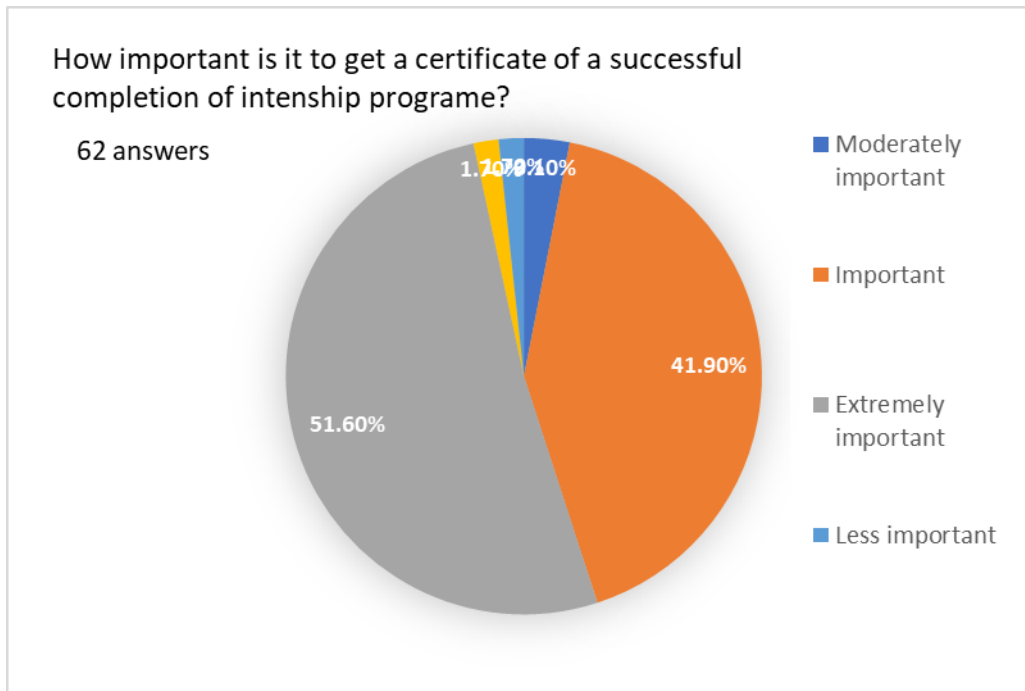
At the time of our research, there is no similar website. The idea of creating a single website on calls for practice was assessed as moderately useful by only 9.7% of surveyed young lawyers. Based on these data, we believe that creating a unique website with calls for internships would be desirable.

In the next question, we asked the respondents to list the institutions or organizations that they think would provide them with appropriate professional practice. A number of respondents cited only one organization while others cited three as the maximum allowed. Based on the answers, the institution to which lawyers have placed the greatest trust when it comes to gaining practice is the **Basic Court, Law Offices, the Municipality and the Basic Prosecutor's Office**. After these institutions, they mentioned the **Privatization**

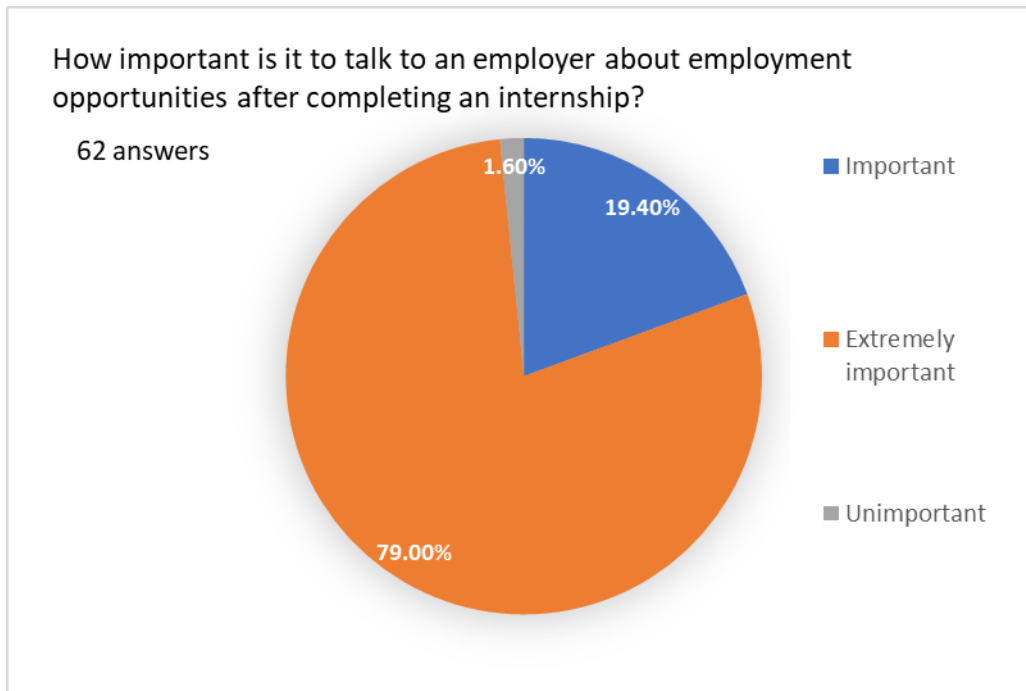
Agency of Kosovo (PAK), the Central Bank, the Ministry of Administration and Local Government and various international organizations - EULEX, UNMIK, USAID, OSCE.



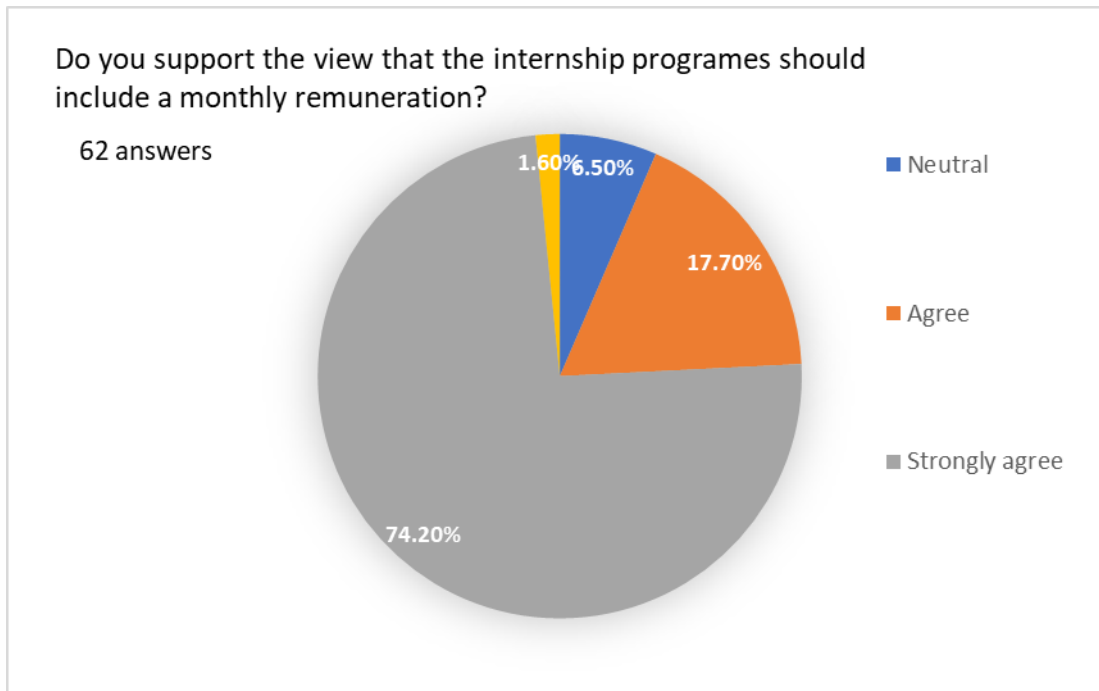
The answers to this question are slightly surprising because less than a third of the respondents, about 29%, think that signing a written agreement regulating the practice is extremely important. Exactly half of the respondents think that signing the agreement is important, it is a qualitative difference, but the impression would be better if a higher percentage of lawyers for whom the internship contract is extremely important because it regulates all rights and obligations of the contracting parties. 19.4% of respondents answered that the internship contract is moderately important.



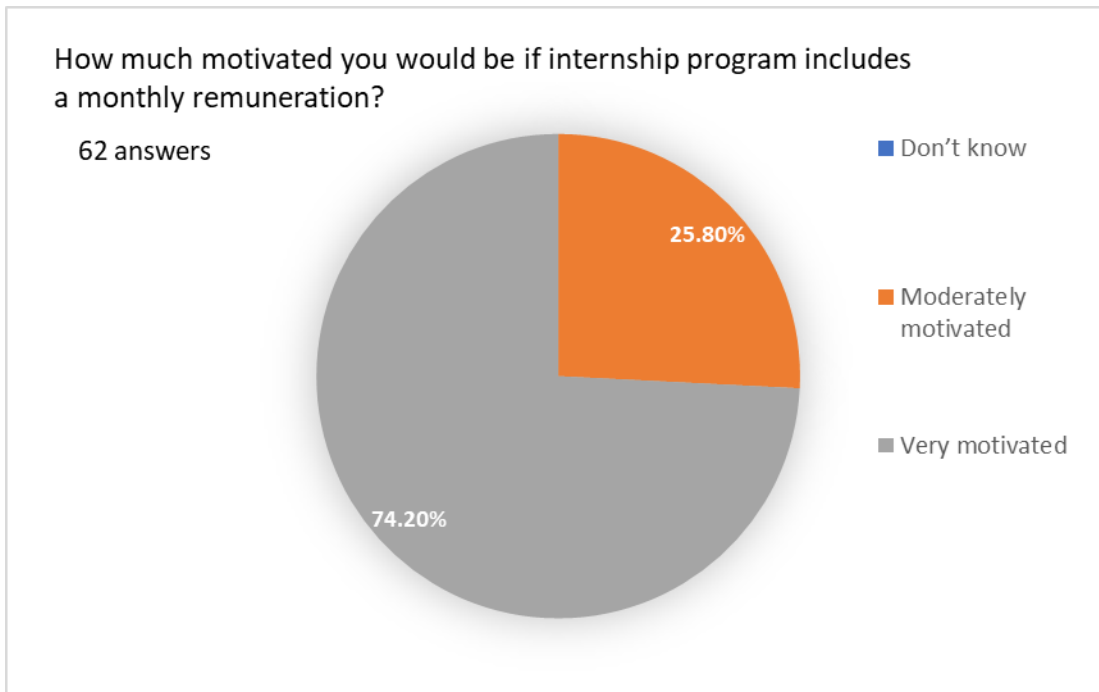
Based on the graphic, it is obvious that it is important for young lawyers as respondents of this research to obtain an appropriate certificate of successful completion of the internship program and therefore 51.6% answered that it is extremely important, while 41.9% chose the important option. Out of the entire sample, only 3.1% thought that it was moderately important, and one thought that obtaining a certificate of successful completion of the internship program was less important or completely unimportant.



In today's time of rising unemployment rate, young lawyers have rightly assessed that the opportunity to talk to an employer about potential employment after completing an internship is extremely important and this was confirmed by as many as 79%. Although there is a subjective and qualitative difference in the answers so 19.4% think that this question is important, only 1.6% of respondents chose the option unimportant.



Similar to the previous question, almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  respondents answered that professional practice should include a monthly fee as in most EU countries, this view was supported by 74.2% of young lawyers. With a certain qualitative difference of respondents, 17.7% answered that they agree with the view that each internship program includes a monthly fee. Only 4 respondents or 6.5% of the total sample answered that they would be neutral about supporting such attitude.



The issue of motivation is of special importance in every profession, as well as in law, but based on the answers of young lawyers, it is obvious that a significant number of them would be especially motivated to apply for an internship program if there was an appropriate monthly fee - 74.2% of them. Slightly more than a quarter of respondents, or 25.8% of them, stated that paid internships would moderately encourage their application. Respondents did not choose other options in this question, which shows their determination.

## Recommendations to Institutions at the Central Level

1. Provide continuous financial assistance to organizations in order to provide quality and diverse internship programs for young lawyers.
2. Create innovative support programs for graduates in order to overcome the difficulties caused by COVID-19 in search of practice and employment.
3. Create better coordination mechanisms between the Kosovo Judicial Council, Kosovo Bar Association and the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council, but also develop new partnerships in order to create new solutions in terms of professional legal practice.
4. Investigate the need for additional measures to support young lawyers and ensure the employment of the best participants through internship programs.

## Recommendations to Civil Society Organizations

1. Provide information on available internship programs for young lawyers and attorneys by governmental or non-governmental organizations as well as on enhancing cooperation with all stakeholders.
2. Support in the development of the necessary skills needed by young lawyers in the current health situation through capacity building in the field of Innovative Technologies in the Judiciary.
3. Advocate for transparent and responsible publication of public calls for internships by local authorities in order to create equal opportunities for all graduates.
4. Create project proposals and activities using research that reflects the real situation in judicial practice and which are respecting the current situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Enhance communication between companies and the Faculty of Law in North Mitrovica in order to promote the concept of practice for young lawyers in the business environment.



## Recommendations to Institutions at the Local Level

1. Create methods for effective assessment of the needs of law graduates in order to collect data on their needs and create a strategy that reflects the real needs of the legal profession.
2. Provide ongoing support to central level institutions in order to create a single website on calls for legal practice or internships.
3. Support various mechanisms to improve dialogue and communication between the Faculty of Law, graduates, Law Offices, Basic Courts and other relevant factors that can provide quality practice.

## Recommendations to International Organizations/Donors

1. Provide financial support for programs aimed at creating modern information systems that will contribute to better informing young lawyers about internship or employment opportunities.
2. Support local civil society organizations in their efforts to contribute, in addition to regular project activities, to increasing the flow of information between platforms that offer opportunities for young lawyers and beneficiaries.
3. Provide additional resources to improve existing mechanisms to monitor local authorities in terms of more transparent calls for internship programs.
4. Provide stronger support to NGOs in conducting a comprehensive survey on the real needs for the certain number of young lawyers in the labor market.