

EXPERT STUDY

Young Cell Scheme Round X – Assessment



YOUNG CELL IS AN EU SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME.

AN EU FUNDED PROJECT MANAGED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION OFFICE TO KOSOVO AND IMPLEMENTED BY THE BRITISH COUNCIL



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Through a wide range of participatory approaches and methodologies, ISIG achieves the integration of stakeholders, starting with an analysis and comparison of mediated social variables (i.e. the integrative function of the community, the role of symbolic spaces, the projection into the future and the actions needed to achieve it). This ultimately enables the integrated development of the local context, analysing the factors (internal and external) that may favour or not policy implementation, allowing for ex-ante assessment and project feasibility testing.

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ACRONYMS

ERA	European Reform Agenda
EU	European Union
EUO	European Union Office in Kosovo
GMAT	Graduate Management Admission Test
GoK	Government of Kosovo
MEI	Ministry for European Integration
PA	Public Administration
PAR	Public Administration Reform (in Kosovo)
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement
YCS	Young Cell Scheme

1. RATIONALE

1.1 THE EXPERT STUDY

The current Expert Study stems from a previous assessment exercise, developed in 2015 by ISIG - Institute of International Sociology of Gorizia, upon commission of the British Council – the Young Cell Scheme Programme implementing partner.

The 2015 Expert Study¹ aimed to assess the impact of the 10 years of activity of the YCS Programme on the overall Public Administration (*hereinafter PA*) environment, in the context of the Public Administration Reform in Kosovo (*hereinafter PAR*).

For the 2015 study, ISIG gathered both quantitative and qualitative data from a wide range of stakeholders, focusing on their overall experience with the YCS Scheme (from 2005 to 2015).

The present Expert Study continues, to some extents, the line of research set in 2015. In fact, part of the research activities is focused on the investigation of the perceptions of senior civil servants who had, in recent years, a direct experience with the YCS Programme and with colleagues/civil servants with a YCS background (i.e. YCS Alumni employed in the PA).

However, the study brings a new input to the previous research efforts, by adding a specific focus - the Assessment of the YCS Round X.

To this end the current study assesses the satisfaction with the overall YCS Programme of:

- Grantees from Round X (i.e. 2016-2017 academic year);
- On-site tutors and supervisors of the grantees, during their studies at the participating European Universities.

The research design sets the basis for a Monitoring and Evaluation System, which could be replicated for each future Round of the Program. The implementation of such a system would allow for the development of prompt adaptation strategies, that could strengthen the YCS Programme in achieving a greater systemic efficiency and, ultimately, more effective services delivery from the PA.

In fact, the Public Administration Reform in Kosovo remains a key priority on the country policy agenda. Improving the performance of PA and achieving greater overall efficiency is of paramount importance in aligning the country to international standards, and allowing it to fully enjoy the opportunities stemming from European integration.

¹ “Higher Education for Public Administration Reform in Kosovo – Expert Study”, 2015 - developed by the Institute of International Sociology of Gorizia – ISIG and commissioned by the British Council – implementing partner of the YCS Programme.

2. NEW CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES FOR THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

2.1 THE STABILISATION AND ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT

In April 2016, the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the European Union and the Republic of Kosovo entered into force, marking an important step in the stabilisation and association process that the European Union (EU) had fostered in Kosovo and across the region for the past years (SWD (2016) 363 final).

The SAA establishes rights and obligations (i.e. both for Kosovo and the EU) in a wide range of sectors, focusing, however, on the democratic principles that are at the core of the EU. The SAA aims to support the achievement of the European standards in Kosovo, mostly by fostering reforms as well as political dialogue and cooperation (European Council, 2015²).

Ultimately, this milestone constitutes a first contractual relationship between the EU and Kosovo, and sets the basis of a broad framework for a “closer political dialogue and economic relations” (SWD (2016) 363 final, p.4).

To fully benefit from the opportunities given by the SAA, and by the overall Enlargement policies, Kosovo needs to face several pending challenges in a variety of sectors.

The 2016 “Report on Kosovo” of the European Commission³, stresses the fact that the overcoming of the challenges concerning the Public Administration Reform is a fundamental aspect for the achievement of improved governance and accountability. The report stresses several important steps already achieved by the PAR in previous cycles of programming and implementation, among which the Public Financial Management Strategy and the Law on General Administrative Procedures.

However, the report highlights several pending challenges, which need to be addressed with immediate actions (i.e. by the end of 2017), such as:

- Weak capacity to ensure accountability in the PA;
- Difficulties in addressing the high levels of politicisation within the PA;
“However, Kosovo did not address the Commission’s recommendations in the area of accountability. Non-merit-based recruitment continues to adversely affect effectiveness, efficiency and professional independence of public administration.” (SWD (2016) 363 final, p. 10)
- Fragmentation of PA;
- Overlapping responsibilities of independent bodies (i.e. state/governmental agencies).

2.2 EUROPEAN REFORM AGENDA

Following the entry into force of the Agreement, the Kosovar Prime Minister Mustafa and the EU Commissioner Hahn, agreed upon the development of the European Reform Agenda (ERA), as an instrument that could support the implementation of the SAA.

² Link: </en/press/press-releases/2015/10/27-kosovo-eu-stabilisation-association-agreement/>. Last visited: 14.10.17

³ SWD (2016) 363 final. The report analyses the period from October 2015 to September 2016 and is based on several resources, ranging from country reports to external expert studies.

The ERA sets several short-term priorities for the following policy areas:

1. Good governance and the rule of law;
2. Competitiveness and investment climate;
3. Education and employment.

The priorities related to the first policy area stress the challenges identified as well by the 2016 Report for Kosovo, as follows:

- **PRIORITY 4** - *“Carrying out an independent review of the accountability mechanisms of all independent institutions, agencies and regulatory bodies, following up on its recommendations, and adopting legislative measures that clearly define the roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability of these institutions.”* (European Reform Agenda – 2016, p.6)
- **PRIORITY 5** - *“Ensuring that the planned legislative package covering civil service, salaries and organisation of state administration is prepared in a coordinated way in an inclusive and evidence-based process on the basis of concept notes agreed at the government level.”* (European Reform Agenda – 2016, p.6)

2.3 PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS ON THE ROLE OF YCS FOR THE NEW CHALLENGES OF PAR

The main directives and frameworks currently guiding the PAR in Kosovo are aiming to ensure, first, a friendly environment for the respect and adoption of EU democratic principles, such as good governance and the rule of law.

Setting such an environment depends equally i) on the existence of solid macro-policies frameworks and ii) on the individual contribution of each member (i.e. individual) of the system (i.e. PA).

Phenomena such as corruption, lack of transparency, lack of accountability and politicisation are simultaneously a systemic and an individual burden. Consequently, overcoming such challenges lies equally in the hands and choices of the ‘system’ and of the ‘individual’.

The current Expert Study uncovers the fundamental role of the Young Cell Scheme (YCS) Programme in the achievement of the set priorities for the Public Administration:

- **First** - by forging individual capacities that support future civil servants in overcoming the above-mentioned challenges (e.g. YCS civil servants are perceived as a-political actors in the PA environment);
- **Second** – strengthening the overall system, by capitalising on a shared vision of a PA guided by EU principles and values that might inspire transversally all the segments of the PA (i.e. relying on the ten rounds/generations of YCS civil servants).

3. THE RESEARCH

3.1 RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

PAR success is unavoidably linked to the citizens' and civil servants' degree of awareness of its importance and of the challenges it implies. Training young generations on such issues is, therefore, indisputable not only targeting potential civil servants but also future professionals in the private sector.

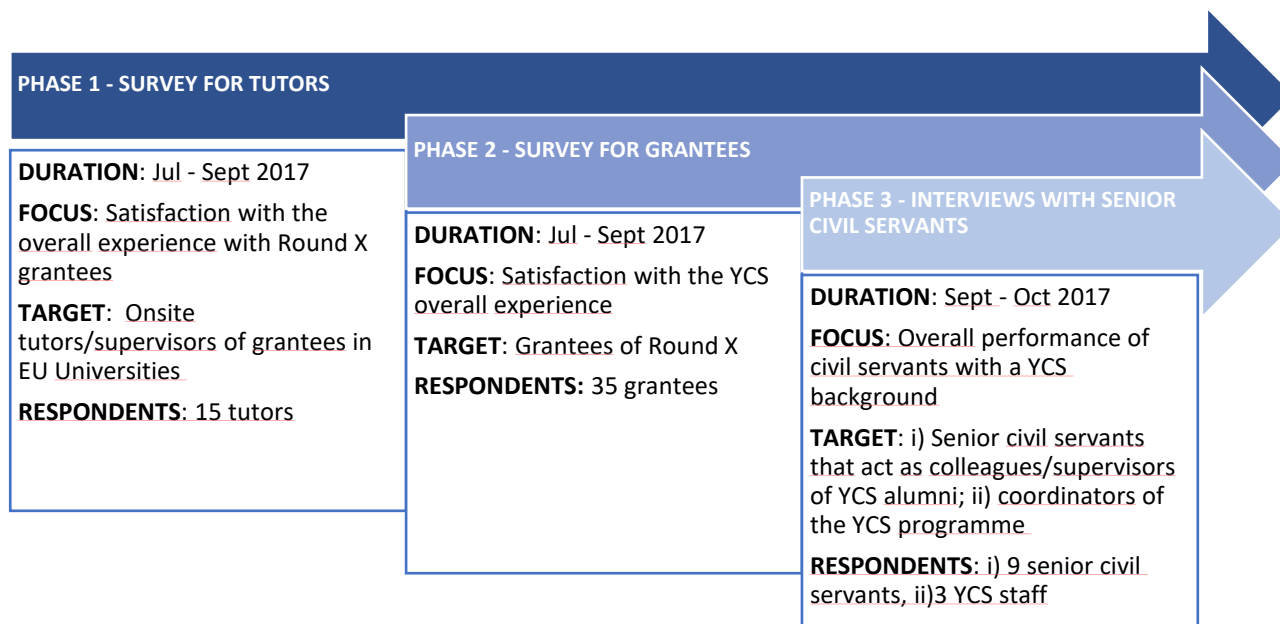
The systematic assessment of training needs is, moreover, important to identify, at national level, the real need for training within the PA, differentiating between training wishes and training needs. This implies, in turn, to investigate systematically, upon the main constraints in PA work and to identify what type of training can be more useful. New generations supposedly have new skills, which bring systemic changes and shift perspectives on both constraints and training needs.

To investigate upon the needs of the full range of beneficiaries of the YCS Programme, the research focuses on the following target groups:

- YCS tutors for Round X grantees at the receiving European Universities, where they attended the Master Course;
- Grantees of the YCS Round X (i.e. 35 students from the 2016-2017 academic year);
- Senior civil servants that supervise the activity of/work with colleagues with a YCS background.

The following figure summarises the 3 phases of the research, as follows:

Figure 1 – The phases of the research



As shown in the above figure, the three samples of the research have a limited dimension that is given by their own nature (e.g. the entire sample referring to the Round X grantees is composed by 35 students). Furthermore, each of the samples has a different contribution of ideas to propose, and thus follows a different research path. Therefore, the overall research deployed a mix of techniques for data collection (i.e. questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews) and for data analysis (i.e. quantitative and

qualitative analysis of collected answers and statements). University tutors and YCS grantees have been requested to fill in an on-line questionnaire, while PA senior supervisors were interviewed by telephone.

Finally, the availability of the data collected in 2015 allowed for a comparative analysis which aims to search possible trends in the impact of YCS Programme in PA environment.

3.2 SURVEY FOR TUTORS

3.2.1 Aim of the research and structure of the questionnaire

The YCS tutor is the onsite supervisor of one or more YCS grantees during studies undertaken at a receiving University, within the YCS scholarship programme.

The YCS tutors may cover different positions within the universities and may undertake different responsibilities towards the YCS grantees, depending on the internal regulations of each university.

The survey aimed to collecting the appraisal of YCS tutors on the overall Programme, with a specific focus on:

- Programme management
- Grantees' performance

The respondents were requested to complete a questionnaire, made available on line⁴, which investigated upon the following aspects:

- YCS tutors – current position and experience with grantees' supervision
- YCS Programme – experience, knowledge and responsibilities of the tutors
- YCS management – tutors direct experience with the Programme in terms of management
- YCS grantees – tutors appraisal on the aspects related to the overall experience with the grantees at the university.

The YCS tutor is not an institutionalised figure, thus no official list/registry of such positions is available; for this research, tutors have been identified by means of the YCS grantees themselves, who reported to the YCS coordinators the email addresses of their onsite tutors.

A total of 29 tutors from a total of 15 Universities receiving YCS grantees in 2016-2017 have been identified and contacted by the YCS coordinators.

⁴ The questionnaire content was agreed upon with the YCS coordinators, in order to meet their information needs. The on-line questionnaire was distributed across the Survey Monkey Platform, via email invitation. E-mail addresses of the YCS Round X tutors were provided by the YCS staff.

3.2.2 Respondents' general information - the YCS tutors

3.2.2.1 Tutors' background

A total of 15 tutors from 11 Universities in 6 countries have agreed to reply to the survey, as follows:

Table 1 - Tutors answers - Frequencies

UNIVERSITY	COUNTRY	N° OF RESPONDENTS
Barcelona Graduate School of Economics / Universitat Pompeu Fabra	Spain	1
Cardiff Metropolitan	UK	1
Central European University	Hungary	1
ICD Academy for Cultural Diplomacy	Germany	1
Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals	Spain	2
Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam	Netherlands	1
KU Leuven	Belgium	1
Leiden University	Netherlands	1
Maastricht University	Netherlands	1
University of Sussex	UK	4
University of Westminster	UK	1
TOTAL		15

The respondent tutors cover several roles, which may vary from academic positions to administrative ones. The specific roles of the YCS tutors are the following:

Table 2 - Position/Role covered by the YCS tutor within the University

JOB POSITION	N° OF RESPONDENTS
Academic Staff	1
Associate professor	3
Educational developer	1
Head of Communications	1
International Relations MA Director	1
Lecturer	1
Master Admissions Officer	1
Principal Lecturer	1
Programme Coordinator	3
Programme director	1
Senior Lecturer/Convenor	1
Total	15

3.2.2.2 Grantees Supervision 2016-2017

During the academic year 2016-2017 (i.e. Round X of YCS), the respondent tutors have supervised a total of 15 YCS grantees. Most tutors (i.e. 9 cases out of a total of 15) have supervised only 1 grantee, whereas only 1 tutor has been responsible for 3 grantees. In 5 cases, the tutor has been responsible for the supervision of 2 grantees.

For what concerns the experience of the respondents with the supervision of YCS grantees, in most cases such experience is limited. In fact, out of the 12 tutors who responded to questions linked to 'Past experience in supervision of YCS grantees', 8 had previous experiences with up to a maximum of 2 YCS grantees, while in one case only with 1.

However, among the 12 respondents, there are as well 3 tutors that stand out with an extensive experience in supervising YCS grantees, since the beginning of their activity at the University:

- 1 tutor has supervised 20 YCS grantees
- 1 tutor has supervised 10 YCS grantees
- 1 tutor has supervised 7 YCS grantees.

3.2.2.3 Supervision of other (than YCS) students

In most of the cases at stake, the staff designated to coordinate - either formally or not - the experience of a YCS student at a given university, is often the coordinator of similar programmes (e.g. scholarships, exchange programs, etc). In fact, among the 15 respondents to the online survey, 10 tutors have declared to be responsible for the supervision of other students that are enrolled at or are visiting their university, within similar programmes as YCS.

Out of these 10 tutors, 7 have declared the numbers of the supervised students, which vary between 2 and 9 (i.e. students supervised by the same tutor). In one case only, the tutor is responsible for the supervision of a group of up to 60 students.

For what concerns the other programmes (i.e. similar with YCS), tutors have indicated mainly the Erasmus+ exchange program⁵ (i.e. 5 out of 7 cases), but also programmes such as Bard⁶, Mundus MAPP⁷, LDPD⁸, and scholarships of the Croatian Ministry of European Integration.

3.2.3 YCS Programme

3.2.3.1 Tutors' knowledge about the Scheme

When asked to assess their knowledge on the YCS overall Programme, on a scale from 1 to 10 (where 1 is the minimum score and 10 is the maximum score) tutors have registered an average score of 3.87.

The low scores to this question have been generally justified because of scarce previous experience with the project ("*I've not heard of it before this academic year*"). Low scores (i.e. below 5) were as well justified by the lack of direct and structured information available to the tutor ("*probably more information was given to the admissions office, but not to the department directly*", or "*have heard some things, but have no complete, structured info about it*"). The highest score to this question (i.e. 10) was assigned by an experienced tutor

⁵ Student exchange programme supported and funded by the EU Commission (link: https://ec.europa.eu/Programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities-for-individuals/students/studying-abroad_en)

⁶ Bard College study abroad programmes, located in regions undergoing rapid political and economic transformation (link: <http://www.bard.edu/bardabroad/bard/>)

⁷ Mundus MAPP is a two-year-long international joint Master programme in Public Policy, offered by four top-ranked European institutions: Central European University, Budapest (Hungary), International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam (the Netherlands), Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (Spain) and the University of York (UK). Established in 2007, the programme operates as an Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree Program funded by the European Commission.

⁸ The Indonesian Endowment Fund for Education (Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan / LPDP) finances higher education in Master and PhD programmes.

that has had the opportunity as well to take part to the selection process in Pristina (*“I have been a member of the interview panel in Pristina for several of the rounds”*).

3.2.3.2 Tutors’ responsibilities towards the YCS grantees

In 10 out of 15 cases, tutors had the responsibility to support the academic activity of the students. In 9 cases the role of tutors implied the support as well to administrative procedures, while only in 5 cases it implied the support to campus orientation. In one case the responsibilities of the tutor implied thesis supervision as well.

3.2.3.3 YCS Management

The respondents were asked to assess several items related to their experience with the YCS managers/management system.

The items were assessed by 8 out of 15 respondents, whereas 7 of the respondents declared that the items were not applicable for their case. The average scores range from 6 to 9 (on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is the minimum score and 10 is the maximum score). The lowest score (i.e. 6.67) was registered for the item ‘Frequency of communication with managers during the grantees’ permanence to the university’, and the highest score (i.e. 9.33) was allocated to the item ‘Responsiveness of the YCS managers’.

Table 3 - Mean evaluation, minimum and maximum expressed scores for the satisfaction regarding the experience with the YCS managers

ITEMS	MEAN	MIN	MAX
Frequency of communication between yourself and YCS managers during the permanence of the YCS grantees/students	6.67	1	10
Frequency of communication between yourself and YCS staff in the enrolment phase of the candidates	6.83	1	10
Clarity of the YCS organization chart (e.g. contact persons, tutors, etc)	7	1	10
Clarity of communication between yourself and YCS staff during the enrolment phase of the candidates	7.57	1	10
Clarity of communication between yourself and YCS staff during the permanence of the YCS grantees/students	7.57	1	10
Reliability and accountability of the YCS staff	8.67	1	10
Reactivity/responsiveness of YCS staff	9.33	1	10

It must be stressed that the respondent allocating the minimum score to all the above items, declared, in fact, that he/she had very little knowledge on the YCS Programme:

I had not heard about the Programme until this year.

The overall experience with the YCS managers has been evaluated by the respondents with an average score of 6.27 on a scale from 1 to 10 (i.e. where 1 is the minimum score and 10 is the maximum score).

However, it should be stressed that respondents that allocated low scores to the item have justified their choice based on the frequency and not the quality of interaction with managers and coordinators:

I did not know anything about the Programme until the end of the course.

Moreover, the highest scores (i.e. 10) were allocated by the tutors that had frequent communications with the managers of the Scheme:

Having had the personal interaction in Pristina really helped. Great people to work with.

3.2.4 Evaluation of the experience with the YCS grantees

The respondents have been asked to evaluate their experience with the YCS grantees during the last academic year (i.e. 2016-2017, Round X of YCS), taking in to account several items linked to grantees' preparation, performance, motivation, level of attendance etc.

The scores were relatively high, with averages ranging between 8.21 and 9.64 (on the evaluation scale from 1 to 10), **thus indicating a positive perception of the tutors on the overall experience with the grantees during their permanence at the University.**

The lowest minimum scores have been registered for items such as 'Performance during the Master course' as well as 'Preparation at the arrival'. Considering the high averages for items illustrating commitment (i.e. such as 'Motivation', 'Shown interest', 'Collaboration', etc.), it might be hypothesised that the low scores on performance are linked to the level of *ex ante* preparation, rather than to a low engagement of YCS grantees during the Master course.

Furthermore, it must be stressed that the 'Language proficiency/mastery' has scored as well rather low. It must be stressed that a rather low satisfaction of the tutors with the grantees' language skills, has been as well highlighted in other sections of the survey (Ref. Section 3.2.5): *"The 2 students I taught this year were strong academically but were let down a bit by the standard of their written English"*.

Table 4 - Mean evaluation, minimum and maximum expressed scores for the satisfaction regarding the experience with the YCS grantees

ITEMS	MEAN	MIN	MAX
Level of performance during the Master Course	8.21	5	10
Level of preparation at the arrival at your University	8.79	6	10
Language proficiency/mastery	8.79	6	10
Level of preparation at the end of the Master Course	9.08	6	10
Level of interest shown during the Master Course	9.29	7	10
Level of motivation at the arrival at the University	9.29	7	10
Level of compliance with deadlines	9.46	7	10
Level of compliance with the requests of teaching staff	9.46	7	10
Level of compliance with the requests of administrative staff	9.46	7	10
Level of collaboration with other fellow students	9.50	7	10
Level of attendance at the Master Course	9.62	7	10
Level of compliance with commonly expected behaviour codes	9.64	7	10

No criticalities, of any kind (e.g. academic performance, attendance, issues between YCS grantees and other fellow students/staff/etc), have been registered during the permanence of the YCS grantees at the universities.

YCS grantees' performance was evaluated as well against the performance of other students enrolled in the University under similar programmes.

Among the 12 respondents to this item, 8 considered YCS students to have a very good performance (*"Our YCS grantee was an outstanding student. He will graduate with a Distinction."*), while 4 evaluated the performance of the grantees as average (*"average", "they performed equally well"*).

The assessment was confirmed by the respondents also for what concerns the evaluation of the YCS grantees against the performance of home/EU students.

Tutors considered that the overall high/positive performance of the YCS grantees could be accounted for by the following aspects:

- Previous preparation;
- YCS selection procedures;
- Adequacy of the choice of the MA with respect to the profile of the grantee;
- Personal motivation of the grantee.

Furthermore, some tutors commented on the fact the YCS grantees have integrated very well into the course (*“YCS students fitted into the programme very well.”*), suggesting thus that YCS grantees have high capacities of adaptation, curiosity and flexibility to new environments.

3.2.5 Insights for further developments

Tutors did not indicate any recommendations for the improvement of the Programme. Some tutors motivated this choice because of the scarce knowledge of the overall Programme (*“Given my limited knowledge of the YCS process it is hard to answer this question. However, the performance of this year's students suggests that the procedures are working well.”*), **while most motivated it because of their satisfaction with the current state of the art** (*“Very happy with the students that I had this year.”*).

Two recommendations have been furthered by the tutors, for what concerns preliminary actions that could be developed prior to the enrolment:

- Support the improvement of language skills;
- Provide a preparatory bibliography of the Master course.

3.3 SURVEY FOR YCS ROUND X GRANTEES

3.3.1 Aim of the research and structure of the questionnaire

The aim is to investigate the grantees' perception and assessment of the different steps that characterise the overall YCS experience: from the initial 'discovery' of the Scheme's existence, to the willingness to stay in touch through the YCS Alumni association.

The respondents were requested to complete an online questionnaire⁹, which investigated upon the following aspects:

- background information and experiences before entering YCS;
- knowledge of the programme and appraisal of the selection procedure steps;
- assessment of the pre-departure procedures and assistance;
- evaluation of different aspects of the experience at the university abroad;
- assessment of the overall YCS Programme experience and proposals for improvement.

⁹ The questionnaire content has been structured on the basis of the 2015 research findings and was agreed upon with the YCS coordinators, in order to meet their information needs. The on-line questionnaire was distributed across the Survey Monkey Platform, via email invitation. E-mail addresses of the YCS Round X grantees were provided by the YCS staff.

All the grantees (i.e. 35) replied to the questionnaire.

3.3.2 Grantees background information

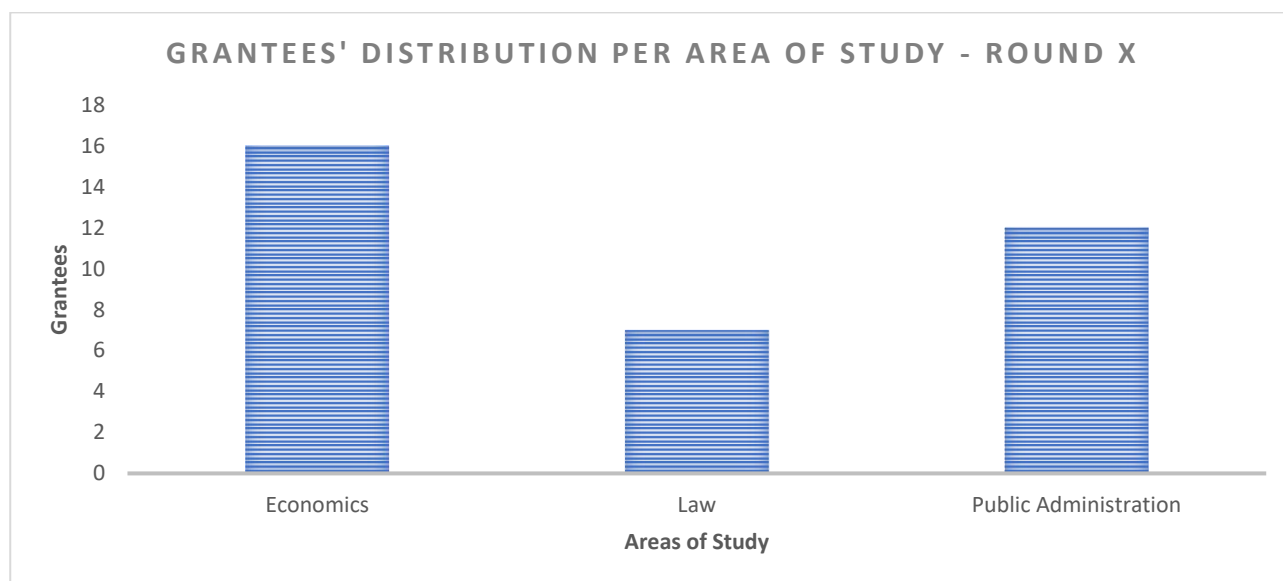
Out of the 35 grantees of the Round X of the Scheme, 10 already completed the Master Course by the end of August 2017, while 25 are still completing (as per September 2017) their final dissertation: 19 expect to graduate within 2017 and 6 within March 2018.

Among those who already graduated, 9 gave the final notification to the Ministry of European Integration, but up to the end of August 2017, just two declared to have been called for a job interview.

Among those who are still finishing their studies, 4 are already civil servants; the others foresee to receive the call, on average, within one month from the graduation and, in the less optimistic cases, not later than March 2018.

About half of the grantees (i.e. 16 out of 35) entered a Master Course in Economics, 12 in Public Administration and 7 in Law. About one third of the students (i.e. 13 out of 35) came to the United Kingdom for the Master Course: 10 in the area of Economics and 3 in Public Administration. German, French and Dutch Universities received 4 students each, Belgian and Spanish Universities 3 students each; two candidates went to Portugal and one to Hungary; one student followed a joint master programme with both a German and an Italian University.

Figure 2 - Distribution of grantees across Areas of Study



Students that followed the Master Course in Economics and Law have a Bachelor background whose content clusters around the concerned basic disciplines. Students that followed the Public Administration specialization come from more differentiated backgrounds (e.g. History, Constructions, Journalism, Media & Graphic Communication, etc.).

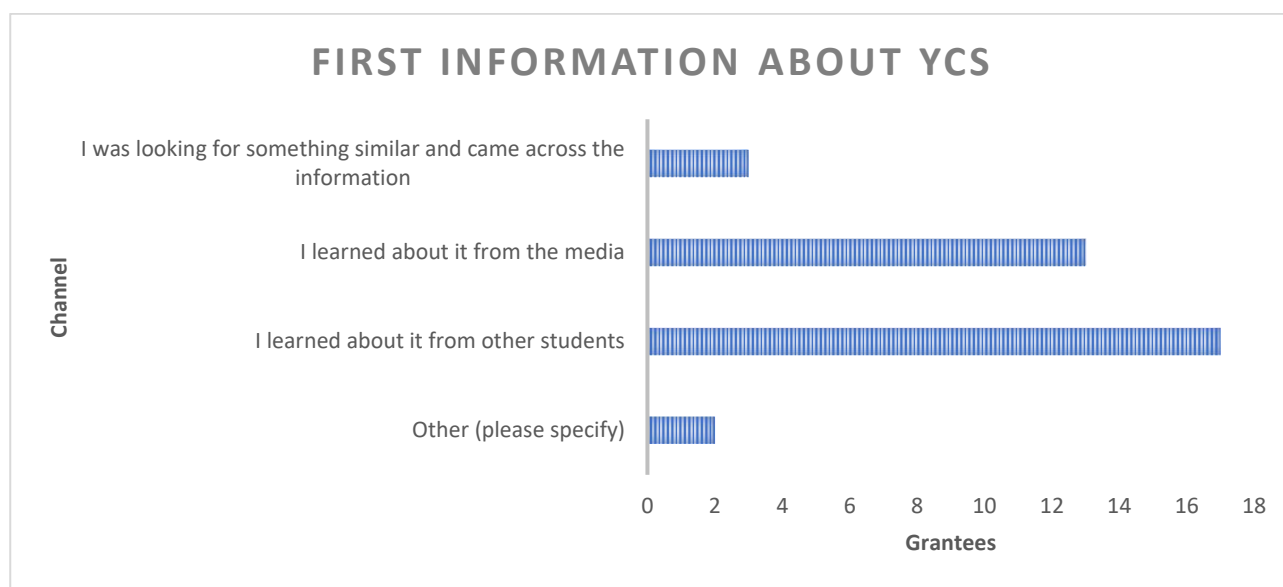
Moreover, 89% of the grantees (i.e. 28 out of 35) had one or more previous work experience: 11 in the private sector, 7 in NGOs and 10 in different sectors of the PA.

3.3.3 Selection procedures for entering the YCS

3.3.3.1 Getting introduced to YCS

The ‘word of mouth’ is still the most effective way to be introduced to the YCS opportunities: more than half of the participants learned about it from ‘other students’ (in 17 cases) or from ‘a friend’ (in 2 cases); about one third (13 out of 35 cases) got the information from the media and 3 learnt about it by chance, while looking for something similar; no one received the information through/at their university.

Figure 3 - First information about YCS



3.3.4 Assessment of the selection procedures

The grantees were requested to evaluate their experience regarding some aspects of the selection procedure, namely:

- visibility and publicity of the initiative;
- clarity and transparency of the ‘Call for application’;
- bureaucratic burden of application procedures;
- indications on advanced selection procedure;
- clarity and transparency of information on selection criteria;
- written tests coherence with previous studies;
- interviews coherence with previous studies;
- interviewers’ interests in personal motivation;
- adequacy of examination venues; total duration of the selection process; communication of results; respect of the principle of transparency;
- respect of the principle of non-discrimination;
- clarity of procedures for possible complaints about the selection.

For the assessment of the above aspects, a ten-points scale was provided to express the evaluations, where ‘1’ means ‘no satisfaction’ and ‘10’ means ‘maximum satisfaction’.

From Table 5, we can see that, in general, ratings are rather positive: the evaluation means range from 7,51 to 9,40. The features which were viewed less favourably are i) the total duration of the process – whose mean evaluation is 7,51, with a minimum of 2 - and ii) the bureaucratic burden – whose mean evaluation is 7,97, but with also a minimum of 1.

On the opposite side, the greatest appreciation goes to the communication of results (mean 9,26) and to the clarity and transparency of the call (mean 9,40); for both features, the minimum attributed score is 7.

It is worth noting that some candidates perceived 'a low interest from the interviewers toward their personal motivations', while other candidates considered that there was a lack of coherence between interviews contents and their previous studies (the minimum attributed score to both features is 2).

Table 5 - Mean evaluation, minimum and maximum expressed scores for the satisfaction regarding the steps of the selection process

	MEAN	MIN	MAX
Total duration of the selection process	7,51	2	10
Bureaucratic burden of application procedures	7,97	1	10
Interviewers interests in your personal motivation	8,00	2	10
Written tests coherence with your previous studies	8,00	5	10
Interviews coherence with your previous studies	8,09	2	10
Visibility and publicity of the initiative	8,43	5	10
Clarity of procedures for possible complaints about the selection	8,51	2	10
Adequacy of examination venues	8,69	3	10
Indications on advanced selection procedure	9,09	3	10
Respect of the principle of non-discrimination	9,14	2	10
Respect of the principle of transparency	9,17	2	10
Clarity and transparency of information on selection criteria	9,23	3	10
Communication of results	9,26	7	10
Clarity and transparency of the "Call for application"	9,40	7	10

The rather positive evaluation of all the steps of the selection process is confirmed by the grantees when required to evaluate the overall experience of the YCS selection procedure: the mean score reaches 8,89, the minimum attributed score is 6 and the maximum is 10. The frequencies of the different scores are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6 - Frequencies of the scores attributed to the overall experience of the selection procedure

	FREQUENCIES
Score 6	1
Score 7	3
Score 8	5
Score 9	16
Score 10	10

The reasons for the lower scores refer mainly to the length of the tests, the missing privacy in communicating the final results (although recognized as a positive transparency feature), the general time schedule, which caused problems to some grantees and the need to know in advance the overall timetable for the entire process.

Some 'representative' comments on these points are quoted from the online questionnaires' open questions:

I considered the written tests lengthier than necessary.

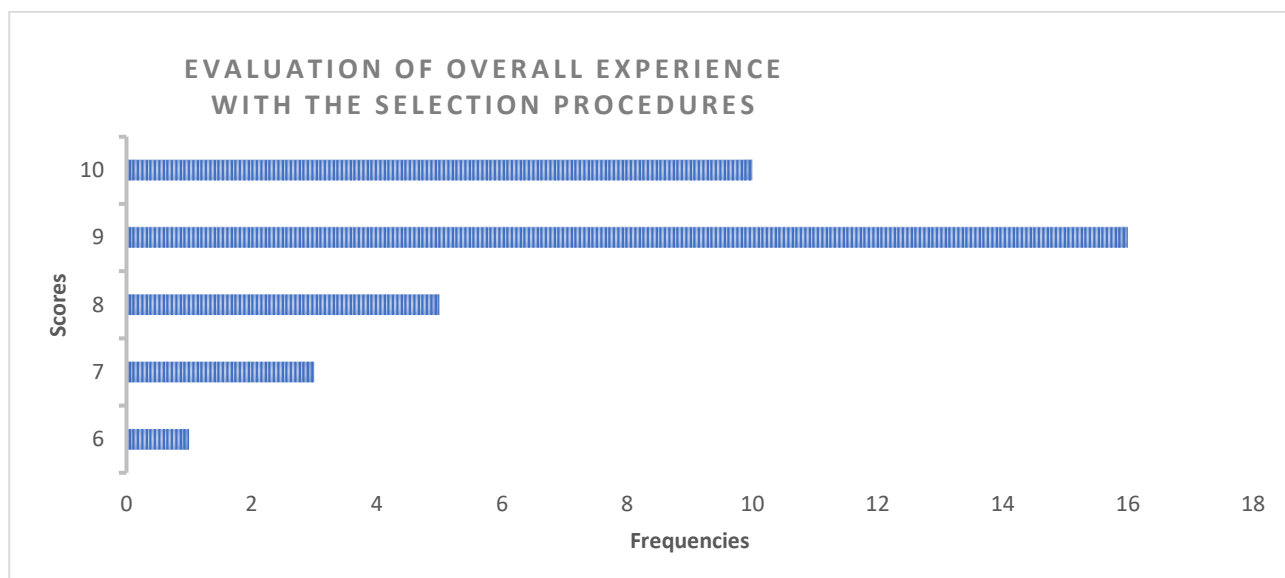
The interview was conducted in a rush and not according to the guidelines I was given beforehand.

The results could be published without names and surnames, in order to safeguard the privacy of applicants.

The entire process started late and, because of that, the deadline to apply in many universities had already expired.

The selection process was a short notice. Next rounds should give information on the overall timetable - that is the dates of exams, meetings, and anything else included in advance, not at last minute.

Figure 4 - Evaluation of the overall experience of selection procedures



3.3.5 Pre-departure procedures and internship

3.3.5.1 Procedures

The candidates that were successful at selection started the pre-departure procedures, which involved a few steps:

1. sending applications to Universities;
2. selecting the university where to enrol and carrying out the necessary enrolment administrative tasks; going through the GMAT¹⁰ and/or language trainings, if needed;
3. applying for visas.

Grantees were assisted through these steps by the YCS staff.

¹⁰ The Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT®) is a requirement for admission to most top MBAs and leading specialized Master's degree programmes and frequently for scholarship applications

As for the applications to Universities in European countries, the 35 grantees presented a total of 139 applications in different countries and different universities, that is an average of about four applications per candidate.

Table 7 presents the key findings about the students' evaluation on components of the YCS staff support. The evaluation was undertaken on a scale from 1 (minimum satisfaction) to 10 (maximum satisfaction). It must be stressed that not all the respondents gave their evaluation to all the components, either because they did not have a direct experience concerning the component (e.g. they did not need GMAT and/or English language training) or because they decided not to formulate a judgment on specific points.

In general, all the expressed judgments are, once more, positive, ranging from 7,77 to 9,03.

The most appreciated contribution to a positive pre-departure experience comes from the clarity of instructions on **'when to do what'**: the mean score is 9,03 and individual scores range from 7 to 10.

The most critical (relatively speaking) features seem to be the quality of GMAT training (mean score 7,77, minimum score 6); the support/advice for the selection of the university (mean score 7,91, minimum score 2) and the quality of English language training (mean score 7,93, minimum score 1).

It should be noted that, for the last item, just one grantee gave the '1' score, while the remaining scores start from 5; excluding the 'hyper-critical grantee', the mean score rises to 8,19.

Table 7 - Mean evaluation, minimum and maximum expressed scores for the satisfaction regarding the YCS support in pre-departure procedures

	VALID ANSWERS	MISSING ANSWERS	MEAN	MIN.	MAX.
Quality of GMAT training experience	13	22	7,77	6	10
Support and advice for the selection of the University	34	1	7,91	2	10
Quality of English language training	27	8	7,93	1	10
Support in University application procedures	30	5	8,40	5	10
Support in University enrolment procedures	30	5	8,73	5	10
Quality of support for the VISA procedures	33	2	8,85	5	10
Quality of advices and guidance received by YCS staff	34	1	8,94	5	10
Instructions on the steps and procedures to be followed	33	2	9,03	7	10

The participation into the YCS Scheme implies to accept contractual obligations toward the European Union Office in Kosovo - EUO and the Government of Kosovo - GoK. All participants felt duly informed about the content of the contract and about their obligations toward both institutions. Quoting a grantee:

Contractual obligations were very clearly explained, both in individual meetings and in drafting of the final contract.

Summing up, the scholarship holders give an overall positive evaluation of the YCS support: the mean overall score is 8,66 and the minimum score is 5. The frequencies of the different scores are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8 - Frequencies of the overall scores attributed to the YCS staff support in pre-departure procedures

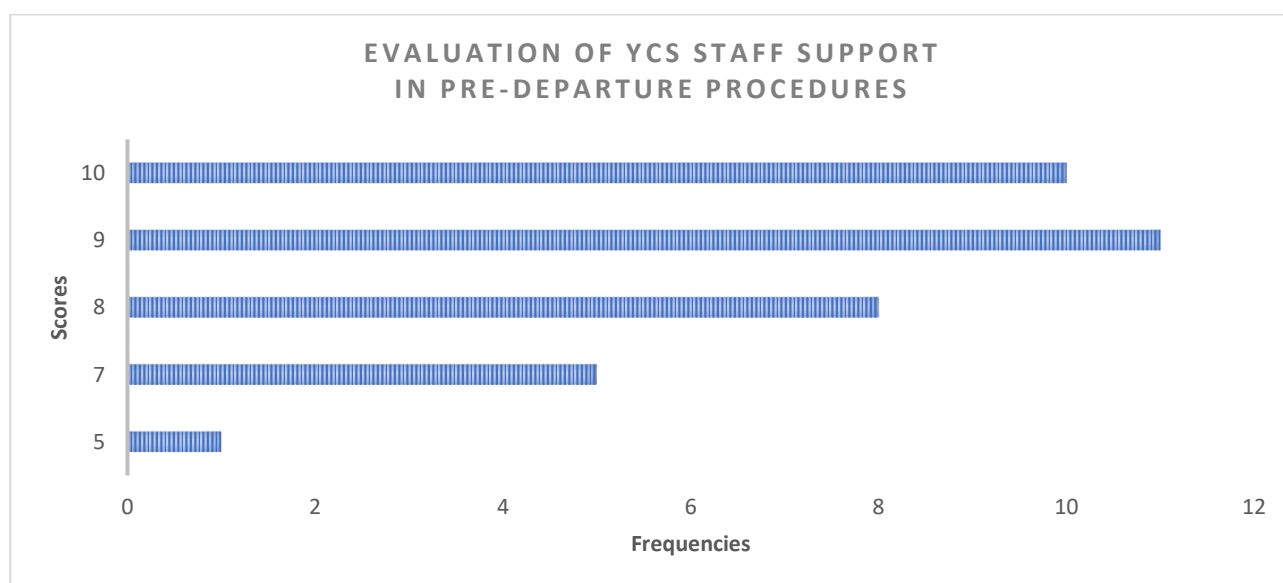
	FREQUENCIES
Score 5	1
Score 7	5
Score 8	8
Score 9	11
Score 10	10

The negative remarks refer to the handling of financial issues (two comments) and visa issues (two comments); some evocative quotes from the questionnaires on these points:

Everything was just correct, except for the funds. I think that grantees should receive them a bit earlier because they really do need them.

It was satisfactory besides the visa application procedure, which was barely completed at all. I felt that the programme could have been more helpful in that regard.

Figure 5 - Evaluation of YCS staff support in pre-departure procedures



3.3.5.2 Internship

Out of the 35 grantees, 19 declare to have had part in a YCS pre-departure internship, all of them inside the PA in Kosovo, at departments and offices of different Ministries or Agencies.

11 interns among the 19 give a positive appreciation of the internship experience, with statements such as:

Very good, friendly staff and willing to help.

It was an interesting experience which helped me slowly understand some of the aspects of working in a public-sector organization in Kosovo.

Relevant, awesome co-workers.

The other 8 interns express a rather negative evaluation, mainly due to an inadequate choice for their placement:

I think that the internship that I held was not related to my field, so I do not find it necessary.

Not related to my previous work experience and the field of interest.

The internship did not help anything in gaining experience and/or preparing us for the job in Public Administration.

However, some interns experienced a positive side effect during the internship, since:

I had the chance to meet a lot of previous YCS students who shared their experiences with me and that was helpful.

3.3.6 The experience at the universities

All the grantees are rather appreciative towards the different elements that characterise their experience at the universities abroad: evaluation means range between 7,63 and 8,94 and, with two exceptions, the minimum attributed score is 5.

Among these elements (see Table 9), the **most critical issue seems to have been the financial aspects of living abroad**: 6 students - 3 of them having their Master Course in France, 2 in UK and 1 in the Netherlands - gave scores of 2 or 4 to this item. It might be stressed that the destinations of the above-mentioned students (i.e. mostly capital cities) are, in fact, recognised as destinations with rather high living costs.

The second item receiving a minimum score of 2 is the practical support received at the hosting university, but this evaluation comes from just one student, while the others range between 5 and 10.

The most appreciated side of the experience is the assistance from YCS staff throughout the stay abroad: the mean evaluation is near 9 and 54% of the respondents score a 10.

Table 9 - Mean evaluation, minimum and maximum expressed scores for the satisfaction regarding the University experience

	MEAN	MIN	MAX
Adequacy of YCS living allowance with the living costs	7,63	2	10
Availability of teaching staff beyond lesson time	8,11	5	10
Quality of teaching	8,29	5	10
Equipment	8,37	5	10
Administrative and logistic support received on site	8,40	2	10
Materials	8,43	5	10
Quality of life on campus	8,43	5	10
Competence of teaching staff	8,43	6	10
Premises	8,51	5	10
Tutorship on site/at the receiving University	8,54	5	10
Transparency and clarity of enrolment procedures	8,60	5	10
Relevance of MA contents for your specialization	8,71	5	10
Assistance from YCS during your staying abroad	8,94	5	10

3.3.7 Master course appreciation

Grantees were requested to express their appreciation toward the Master course they attended, also in terms of the overall relevance for their personal and professional future.

Four criteria were proposed in the questionnaire:

- personal usefulness;
- networking experience with colleagues;

- usefulness for professional development;
- usefulness for job prospects in the PA sector.

Although all ratings are highly positive, with all mean scores over 8 and minimum scores starting from 5 (see Table 10), the relevance of the Master course for professional/job prospects is assessed at a level lower than the other aspects.

Networking with colleagues, personal growth and professional development are outcomes that tend to be more appreciated; maybe this depends on the fact that job prospects inside the PA are more or less ‘granted’ through the participation in the YCS Scheme, but a good professional network, personal growth and professional development are assets whose utility extends to the future and to other professional prospects.

Table 10 - Mean evaluation, minimum and maximum expressed scores for the satisfaction regarding the Master Course

	MEAN	MIN	MAX
Relevance for job prospects in the PA	8,74	5	10
Networking experience with colleagues	8,86	5	10
Usefulness for oneself personally	9,09	5	10
Usefulness for professional development	9,26	5	10

3.3.8 Overall YCS experience

When requested to compare their initial expectations with the real experience, more than 50% of the grantees (18 out of 35) say that the programme met their expectations and a further 40% (14 out of 35) assert that the programme went over their initial hopes.

The statement that best summarizes this opinion comes directly from a graduate:

The experience from the first day I applied for YCS scholarship until the time I had to come back in Kosovo (after finishing my classes) was as I expected. It was a good experience the overall process from the day I applied until the day I departed. Also, time abroad during my studies was an interesting period and experienced a new culture, met people from different backgrounds from many places. YCS provided everything necessary for my Master program, all the assistance I needed.

Some graduates also acknowledge their initial scepticism toward the YCS Scheme and their changed attitude in the end:

Honestly saying I was very sceptic about the program. I was afraid that it would not be that transparent and not professional. It totally proved my wrong.

Just one grantee states that the programme was not quite what expected, but this refers to the content of the Master course and not to the overall YCS Programme experience:

Mostly I was surprised with my master course, which did not meet some of my expectations regarding the modules taught and the quality of teaching.

Despite the limited number of graduates in each area of studies (16 in Economics, 7 in Law and 12 in PA), looking at the percentage distribution of ratings for the programme within each area (see Table 11), graduates in Law studies proportionally seem to have found their expectations met more than their colleagues in the other two areas.

Table 11 - Distribution of the appreciation for the YCS Programme within area of studies

		AREA OF STUDIES			TOTAL
		ECONOMICS	LAW	P. A.	
Programme experience met initial expectations	Not quite what expected	0,00	0,00	8,30	2,90
	Enough	12,50	0,00	0,00	5,70
	In good part	56,30	28,60	66,70	54,30
	It exceeded	31,30	71,40	25,00	37,10
Total (n.)		100,00 (16)	100,00 (7)	100,00 (12)	100,00 (35)

3.3.9 Recommendations coming from the grantees' experience

About a half of the respondents (16 out of 35) stress the importance to make some changes in the time schedule for the selection procedures. They suggest:

The application and selection procedures should start earlier and they should be finished at least by February so that students can have more choices. A lot of universities open for applications in January and a lot of them close in April.

Please have a clear set of dates for the entire year so that grantees are not informed last minute.

Also, regarding the selection procedure, some comments are made to the contents of written tests and interviews; for instance, as a grantee put it:

A general knowledge about the EU institutions and the EU would be more adequate rather than specific laws or treaties.

A further suggested improvement focuses on the offered range of universities and courses to be attended, either for the number of universities and countries

To improve and make more flexible the applications allowing to choose more Universities and programs.

Increase the importance of applying to countries like Hungary.

or for the applicants' disciplinary background and type of courses to be attended

Being even more open to supporting different backgrounds and sectors.

2-years programmes should be allowed as well.

and the "repute" of the proposed Universities

They should prioritize top universities not only those what are affordable – it is better to send 10 students at the very best universities than 30 at mediocre ones.

As we could expect from the evaluations previously presented, a recurrent concern has to do with financial issues, asking both for monthly allowances proportional to the real living costs of the places

Think about the monthly allowance for students living in the major capital cities of Europe.

and for a timely delivery of the money

Release the funds a bit earlier.

On the very practical side of the assistance provided by the YCS staff, some suggestions refer to more timely and extended help with visa procedures:

Whatever ways that allow for an easier process of obtaining a visa.

with the organization of travels:

Can improve on logistics for departure and arrival to Kosovo - choice of airlines, schedule of flight and allowed baggage.

and, finally, with detailed information and instructions on application procedures at the prospective hosting universities:

More assistance is needed regarding the application stage; since grantees are expected to do everything on their own during that stage, at least give them more time and advices.

3.4 INTERVIEWS WITH KEY RESPONDENTS

3.4.1 Aim of the research and main themes of the interviews

The interviews with key stakeholders aimed to collect first-hand information from senior civil servants and YCS Programme coordinators, on the overall integration and performance of civil servants with a YCS background/YCS Alumni.

For this research, 15 key stakeholders, identified by the YCS Programme Coordinators, were contacted for an in-depth semi-structured interview, implemented via telephone between September and October 2017.

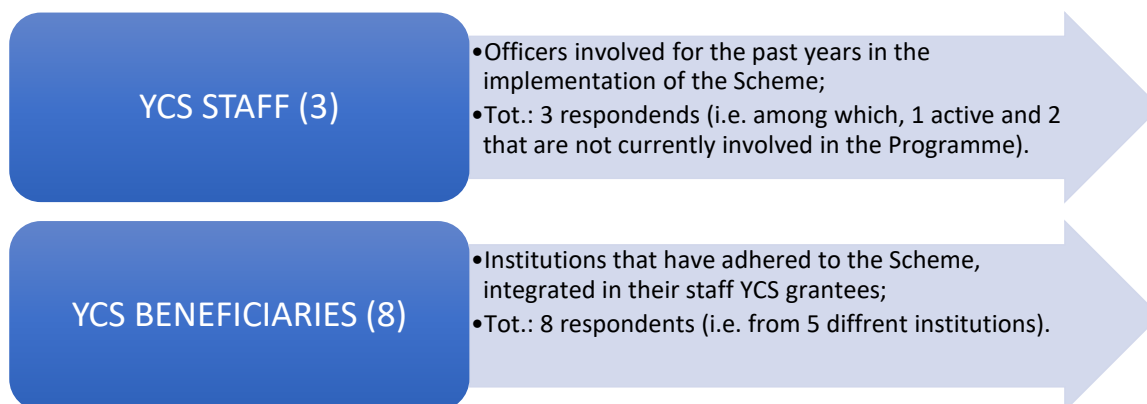
The interview focused on the following main topics:

- Main current challenges concerning the Public Administration Reform (PAR)
- Direct experience with the YCS Programme
- YCS grantees performance, with respect to other civil servants
- Challenges faced by YCS grantees once they join the PA
- Coherence between the studies and job positions available for YCS grantees
- Coherence between YCS areas of studies and PAR needs
- Distribution of YCS grantees across Ministries
- Relevance of the Scheme for PAR in particular
- Main strengths of the YCS Scheme for the PAR
- Main challenges faced by the YCS Scheme in the PAR
- Insights for the improvement of the YCS system

3.4.2 The respondents

Among the 15 identified stakeholders, 11 stakeholders have given their consent to be interviewed:

Figure 6 - Key Stakeholders



The institutions that responded to the interview are:

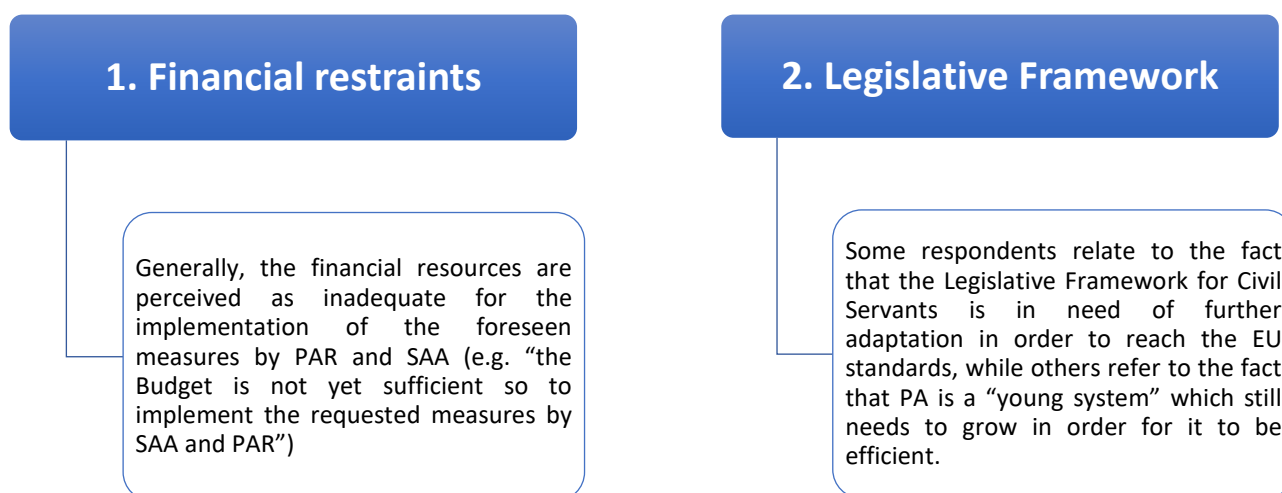
- Ministry of Justice -> 1 representative
- Kosovo Agency of protection from radiation and nuclear safety -> 1 representative
- Ministry of Trade and Industry -> 1 representative
- Ministry of European Integration -> 4 representatives
- Food and Veterinary Agency -> 1 representative

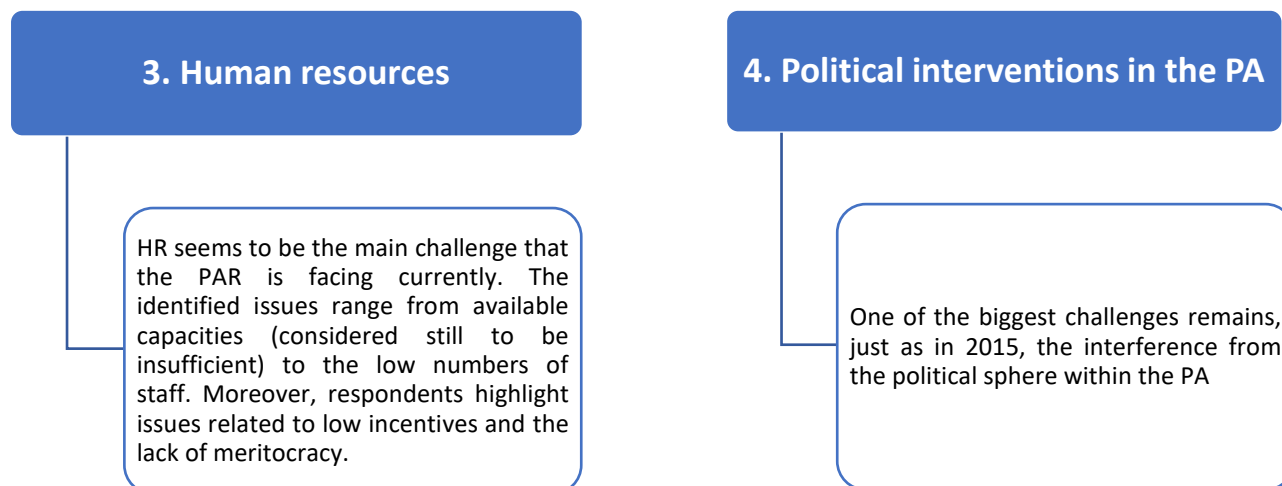
3.4.3 Respondents' perceptions of current challenges faced by the PAR

To grasp a wider picture of the context in which civil servants with a YCS background operate, respondents were asked to give an overview on their personal vision of current challenges faced by the PAR.

The analysis of the gathered insights allowed for the identification of 4 main areas of challenges, as follows:

Figure 7 - Current challenges for the PAR





3.4.4 Respondents' experience with the YCS Programme

All respondents belong to the category of end-users/beneficiary institutions and have a current supervision position within their departments and services (i.e. Heads of Departments, Directors, etc.).

Among the beneficiary institutions, the **Ministry for European Integration (MEI) is the one with the most extensive experience in employing civil servants with a YCS background** (one respondent highlights that *"More than 95% of the staff in this department are YCS Alumni"*). In fact, as highlighted during the interviews, the MEI, also in the light of its active role in the Scheme, has an internal recruitment policy, based on which only YCS graduates are called for interviews for vacant positions.

For what concerns the experience of the other 4 interviewed institutions, the employment of YCS grantees is fluctuant each year, based on the availability of financial resources. The earliest recruitment connected to the Scheme for what concerns these institutions was registered in 2009.

Furthermore, the analysis of the interviews allows to identify a sort of 'pulling-factor': a personal experience of senior civil servants with the YCS Programme seems to have stimulated them in searching for YCS grantees/alumni, whenever recruiting possibilities occurred in their departments. In fact, within 4 of the interviewed institutions/structures, the respondents with such a personal link to YCS (i.e. either in their capacity of YCS Alumni, or by knowing personally grantees or Alumni), were personally involved in the activation of the Scheme within their institutions, acting as a sort of internal 'lobbyists'.

Moreover, all the 5 respondents that are YCS Alumni, declared to be involved, either formally or not, in activities of supervision and tutoring of new YCS employees in their institutions/departments (e.g. one respondent declared himself to be the link with the programme, acting as an in-house tutor/supervisor - whenever a new YCS arrives to his institutions).

3.4.5 Becoming a civil servant – challenges of YCS Alumni when entering the PA

Respondents were asked to comment, based on their experience, upon possible challenges that YCS Alumni might encounter when entering the PA.

The indicated challenges may be grouped in the following categories:

a) The placement process

Two respondents stressed the fact that the overall placement process represents a first challenge that alumni face upon the end of the Scheme. Respondents focused on the lack of guarantees on vacant positions in the PA: *“Grantees don’t know where they will work”; “Grantees did not have answers from Ministries or didn’t receive any invitation”.*

However, a slight improvement of the overall process seems to have been registered for the past rounds: *“Until recently the process was a bit chaotic. It seems that now the Ministry for EU Integration is managing better, implementing a new approach (e.g. interview grantees).”*

b) Integration in the work environment

In some cases, respondents indicated challenges related to the integration in the new environment. For some respondents, such issues are related to the YCS background and profiles which, in some cases, may be perceived with defiance by the senior staff (*“Other civil servants are “jealous” and suspicious of YCS grantees”; “In fact, sometimes YCS grantees feel superior and there is jealousy, non-YCS staff thinks that there are differences”*).

In other cases, *“YCS are young without experience, so they have to adjust to communicate with different stakeholders. YCS are ambitious and sometimes they don’t understand the slow PA environment”.*

However, in most cases respondents conveyed that YCS graduates are highly adaptive and skilful, so the integration process generally has a positive outcome (*“In general, the integration is smooth and fine, they adapt very quickly”; “YCS grantees have strong communication skills. They communicate very well with the members of the staff”*).

Furthermore, it must be stressed that other respondents consider possible integration issues as part of a so-called **natural transition period**, from the academic environment towards a work environment:

Challenges are not specific for the YCS - the first period is anyhow difficult, but it depends on the individual approach.

Not specific challenges, it depends on the experience they had. Challenges are related to adapting to a new environment, new rules, etc.

Some respondents indicated possible solutions for overcoming integration challenges, as follows:

- **YCS overall training:** actions aimed at increasing ‘soft diplomacy’ skills of the grantees;
- **Mediation role of senior officers:** mediation and integration actions promoted by the supervisors/senior civil servants *“Senior officer can limit the differentiation by stimulating contacts”.*

3.4.6 Performance of civil servants with a YCS background

The respondents were asked to comment upon the performance of employees with a YCS background, in a comparative perspective: crossing their assessment of the YCSs performance against the performance of staff without a YCS background.

In most of the cases, respondents have stressed that there are significant differentiations in performance and overall approach to work, between YCS and non-YCS staff.

The analysis of the highlighted differentiations led to the identification of five main clusters, as follows:

a) **Professionalism**

YCS employees are perceived by respondents as highly professional, with 5 respondents indicating this trait as a defining one.

b) **Work culture**

Respondents indicated that generally, YCS employees have demonstrate a different work culture than other civil servants. YCS employees are perceived as performance-oriented (*“Hard workers”; “Highly performing”; “Work dedicated”, etc.*), demonstrating a proactive and problem-solving approach in delivering their ordinary tasks. In some cases, this different work culture is associated by respondents with an EU overall spirit/vision. In this case, YCS employees are perceived as the bearers and promoters of an EU (work) culture (*“YCS civil servants promote by example a culture of EU integration”, “YCS inspires EU culture and values”*).

c) **Skills and capacities**

Civil servants with a YCS background are also perceived as empowered by skills and capacities that other civil servants do not show. Among the highlighted skills that differentiate YCS civil servants from the others, communication and language skills are perceived as the most significant (*“YCS civil servants show generally very strong communication skills”; “YCS have the advantage of having as well very good language skills”*).

d) **Knowledge**

YCS Alumni have been assessed as equipped with knowledge on EU standards and work methodologies, that are highly needed in the context of the PAR (*“Good in project management of EU projects”, “Analytical skills: they are more reading/more references”*).

e) **Attitudes and behaviour**

All respondents stressed several differentiating aspects as well, between YCS and non-YCS civil servants, linked mostly to elements of “personal attitude and behaviour”, rather than skills and knowledge: *“Ambitious and enthusiastic”, “Fast learners”, “Open-minded”*. Moreover, two respondents have stressed that YCS civil servants are more confident in an international environment than others, indicating that: *“They have less inferiority complexes and they feel on the same level of experts coming from abroad”* or *“Confident with EC officers”*.

3.4.7 YCS distribution across Ministries

The distribution of the YCS grantees/civil servants within the PA, was assessed by 7 of the respondents as **not proportionate across the different Ministries and Institutions**:

The distribution is not proportionate.

The distribution process is not well done.

Three of the respondents stressed the fact that most of the YCS grantees/new alumni are employed by the Ministry for European Integration, whereas other Ministries are more hesitant towards the Programme. The reluctance towards the Programme is explained in general terms, linked mostly to the little knowledge of the Programme or specific needs:

There are difficulties for other ministries, while MEI always takes YCS. Other ministries hesitate because they think it is a grey area, they are a bit hesitant, but slowly (the situation) is improving.

Depends on the needs, maybe some departments need more YCS than other.

However, two respondents stress the political interference as well as a possible cause:

Ministries are not requesting, they are reluctant because they want to keep the position free for political reasons.

Generally, respondents tend to comment the different distribution rates of YCS civil servants by indicating the **absence of overall or internal policies/rules that bind PA Institutions** to the employment of YCS civil servants:

There are no strict enforcements, so for different reasons ministries do not request grantees.

[Recruitment process of YCS] should be prioritised.

Different Recruitment procedures – MEI has an approach that all vacant positions are covered by YCS.

3.4.8 Relevance of the Scheme for PAR

All respondents have indicated a high level of relevance of the YCS Scheme for the implementation of the Public Administration Reform in Kosovo:

Public Administration in Kosovo is new/young, and YCS has provided tremendous help.

Very important, very relevant, it is working very well.

The relevance of the Scheme lies in the single contributions brought by each YCS grantee/civil servant. The Scheme seems to bring its outmost contribution especially in the cases in which YCS civil servants cover key-managing positions:

YCS has a tremendous impact on the PAR, when you have YCS in management positions reforms are quicker and easier.

The skills and capacities that YCS civil servants provide to the PA system, are perceived as essential for successfully enacting the current reforms:

YCS graduates have the skills needed within the PAR process. The higher education sector in Kosovo is still not very advanced, in this sense the skills that students would acquire by only studying in Kosovo are not sufficient. YCS graduates have the capacity and the intellectual skills to face PAR.

YCS contributes very much to the achievement of the PAR objectives, and YCS employees are very important in this process.

[YCSs] skills and capacities bring the added value and “fresh blood” to the [PA] system.

Besides highlighting the impact that 9 rounds of YCS civil servants had on the overall PA sector:

YCS has a very high relevance in terms of capacity building of the PA

some respondents also stress the Programme potential to influence the larger private and civil society sectors as in the cases in which YCS Alumni enter the private sector, they still:

continue to contribute to setting a PAR friendly environment.

3.4.9 Coherence of study areas with PAR needs

All respondents acknowledge a general coherence between the PAR needs and the available areas of studies within the YCS Programme. However, most of the respondents comment that the Programme should undertake a new direction that could allow for a more targeted expertise of future YCS rounds.

Some respondents comment on the fact that the general areas of studies available in previous rounds (i.e. Public Administration, Law, Economics) were enough to satisfy the early needs of the PAR. However, the developments of the PAR over the past years require a more targeted approach. For example, one respondent commented on the fact that Law grantees could be directed towards specific sectors, currently or soon to be, relevant for the PAR, such as “environmental law”. Another argues that the Study Areas are:

not [coherent] anymore with the PAR needs. They are drafting general programs, but now we should shift to specialised fields such as energy transport – more technical and more targeted.

Moreover, some respondents see the natural evolution of a general approach, rather oriented towards a higher contextualisation, than oriented towards a higher specialization. One of the respondents, for example, stresses the need for further trainings that focus on the overall dynamics of the wider region:

In general, each round should have at least 1 or 2 additional subjects, on Western Balkans countries.

Another respondent suggested further training, beyond the studies abroad, that introduce YCS grantees to very practical aspects of the ordinary activities of the Public Administration (“*The subjects as such are related, they study PA, economics or law. Most of YCS grantees have general knowledge, but working for the PAR needs practical aspects as well*”).

3.4.10 Coherence of study areas with job position

The respondents assess rather scarcely the correspondence between the study areas (available under the YCS Scheme) and the available job positions in the PA. To some extent, such evaluation may be justified by the ‘general nature’ of the undertaken studies within the YCS Master: it is difficult to identify a specific/exactly corresponding position, for a rather general background/preparation.

3.4.11 YCS Strengths

The analysis of the gathered interviews allows for the identification of three main categories of strengths of the YCS Programme regarding the PAR, as follows:

- Contributing to the strengthening of the professional development in the PA;
- Contributing to promoting and/or reinforcing ‘EU knowledge’ (i.e. laws, frameworks, standards, etc.);
- Contributing to promote and inspire an overall EU spirit.

Among these, most of the respondents concentrate their insight around the “professional development”. Some respondents identify the strength of the Programme in its contribution to capacity-building, thus equipping the PA for the implementation of the PAR:

YCS grantees are good experts when they return, they are familiar with the public administration.

YCS brings new skills not present currently in the Public Administration.

HR, more prepared to support the transition.

Within the skills and capacities that the YCS Programme strengthens in grantees, respondents assess language skills as highly important for the PAR:

Foreign languages are very important. In the administration, we have deficiency in identifying civil servants with language skills.

The 'European dimension' is as well perceived as a very important contribution of the Scheme to the PAR. The respondents concentrate their insights in two main categories:

- **EU knowledge** – all respondents stress the importance of the knowledge of EU laws and frameworks, for the undergoing reform processes (*"Very practical knowledge, especially in EU affairs, the link is very direct", "Knowledge on EU Integration process, EU legislation"*).
- **EU principles and values** – some respondents concentrate on less practical aspects and define this EU-oriented added value of the Programme through concepts such as i) the applicability of EU principles in ordinary tasks (*"YCS grantees are more accountable and apply the principle of transparency"*) or ii) EU work/organisation culture (*"It promotes a different, EU-oriented cultural organization and expertise"; "EU-oriented work culture"*).

3.4.12 YCS implementation challenges in the PAR

For what concerns the challenges of the Scheme with regards to the PAR, respondents focused mainly on the transition process from the academic/University environment towards the Public Administration (i.e. entering in the PA).

Raised issues concerning this dimension relate to two main aspects, as follows:

- **Grantees preparedness to access the work environment** – especially for what concerns 'young' grantees, that did not have a previous work experience. Some respondents recommend that the Scheme should incorporate a further on-the-job internship/training, following the end of the Master studies (*"Not prepared for work. They could have more time to work in internships in EU institutions, before going in Ministries"*);
- **Placement of grantees in the PA** – while some respondents comment on the lack of proportion in the placement/redistribution of grantees across Ministries and other PA Institutions, other respondents comment on the legal essence of the placement itself, or rather the lack of a legal statute. Respondents recommend the institutionalisation of the placement of grantees upon graduation, so to ensure higher recruitment rates across the PA (*"The process is not regulated legally. After graduations, Ministries should be somehow bind to employ only YCS when they have vacancies"; "See how to embed legally YCS so that the Government has a binding in employing YCS"*).

Respondents addressed, with a similar weight, challenges related to **the planning of future Rounds according to the Institutions' and PAR's needs**

How to make a better recruitment process - better identifying the needs of PA at the beginning.

Thus, the challenge seems to be the lack of a certain level of overall strategic planning, in a context that is not yet fully stabilised (i.e. PA – *"There is always a gap: they (YCS Rounds) start and in the meanwhile needs change"*).

Furthermore, a strong challenge perceived by respondents is what could be called a **long-term incentives strategy**, that could prevent potential 'brain-drains' from the public sector towards the private and/or international one. The scarce incentives of the PA are perceived not only in financial terms, but also in career-advancement ones

Retain YCS graduates in the public sector after the 3 years.

After 2-3 years they are offered better contracts outside of the PA so it is a problem in retaining them in the PA.

However, it must be stressed that such a challenge is closely related to the overall PA system, and not entirely pertinent for the field of action of the YCS Programme.

Further challenges related to the YCS implementation are identified in what can be called the ‘political interference’ dimension, an aspect that is as well connected to the overall challenges of the PAR in Kosovo. YCS grantees/employees are perceived as a-political actors, which strive to maintain their distance from political interference across their careers (*“They have to fight to stay outside the political difference”*). Moreover, the political interference is connected as well to a dimension of uncertainty related to the future developments of the PAR and, consequently, of the Scheme itself.

3.4.13 Recommendations for improvement of YCS rounds

Most of respondents refer to the need for the availability of further specialisations among the areas of studies of the Programme. Most of the times, respondents mention *“more technical specialisations/fields”* (e.g. statistics, trade, industry, environment, etc). Also, some respondents consider that Law specialisations are highly relevant for the next steps of the reforms (i.e. specialisation in specific fields of Law, not general preparation). However, participants also stress that such areas of studies should be ‘made available’ by the Programme, only upon a thorough needs assessment among the PA institutions and ministries:

More technical fields, although it is not easy to employ very specific specialisations - so there is the need for a needs assessment.

The needs assessment and especially the Training Needs Assessment (i.e. both at Ministry/Institution level and at the overall PA sector level) represent the main priority for most of the participants:

Areas should correspond to the needs of the context. Maybe a study on priorities would be needed.

Training Need Assessment before designing the next round of the Program– in order to match the real needs of the government.

The ‘needs assessment’ priority is often linked in the interviews with the need to increase the cooperation/trans-sectoral communication among the Ministries/Institutions

There should be a better coordination between institutions: all the institutions should reflect upon their needs and communicate them to the YCS, so to better shape future rounds.

Also, several respondents have highlighted, across the interview sessions, that there is the need to increase the number of grantees, as well as the active YCS civil servants within the PA.

4. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERT STUDIES - TOWARDS A MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM OF YCS

Drawing on the comparative analysis of the results of the two Expert Studies developed by ISIG (2015 and 2017), the following section aims to identify the existence of trends and/or shifts of trends, related to the perception of the target groups (i.e. 2015 Expert Study – YCS Alumni from Round I to IX; 2017 Expert Study – YCS grantees of Round X).

The analysis has been developed as a first contribution to what could be a Monitoring and Evaluation System for the YCS Scheme (*see Ref. Section 1.1*), that could allow, in its turn, for the development of an in-depth impact analysis of the Programme for the PA.

To this end, the main topics upon which the research behind the two Expert Studies investigated, have been taken in to consideration, as follows:

- Communication strategy
- Selection procedures
- Experience at the universities abroad
- Overall satisfaction with and appreciation of the Master Course
- The process of transition from the Scholarship towards the Public Administration
- Relevance of the YCS Master for the overall processes concerning the Public Administration Reform.

The above-mentioned issues were commonly taken in consideration in both the Expert Studies (2015 and 2017), allowing thus for the comparison between the key findings, in the efforts of identifying changes in the perceptions of the target groups with regards to both the YCS experience and the overall PAR in Kosovo.

The following paragraphs illustrate the finding of the comparative analysis.

4.1 COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The 2015 respondents included grantees from Round I to Round IX. In terms of communication strategy and channels, there have been registered differences between early and later Rounds. The first round stressed that the Scheme was advertised mainly in the universities, while the latest rounds highlighted a greater role of the media and the presence of informal channels (i.e. YCS graduates promoted the initiative to fellow students).

Among the respondents of the 2017 study, informal channels seem to have become dominant and the ‘word of mouth’ looks as the most effective way to be introduced to the YCS opportunities: more than a half of the participants learned about it from other students or from a friend and just about one third got the information from the media. Of course, as far as the number of alumni increases, their chances to be ‘influencers’ also grow.

4.2 SELECTION PROCEDURES FOR ENTERING THE YCS SCHEME

Through both studies the accessibility to the Programme is mostly considered as being non-discriminatory; the selection procedures are generally considered as fair, correct and transparent.

The questionnaire submitted to the grantees of Round X (2017) was more articulated on the point, so respondents had the opportunity to qualify their evaluations. They complained of the total duration of the

process and the administrative burden; on the opposite side, the largest appreciation went to the communication of results and to the clarity and transparency of the call.

The total duration of the process is perceived as a problem, because it has an impact on the following steps of applications to the Universities and the overall possibilities to apply to a wide range of universities, since in many cases the application deadlines have already expired when the selection results are communicated.

As for the communication of results, a concern for privacy is presents among the most recent graduates, who would require non-identifiability of the candidates when the selection results are made public.

Some remarks are expressed also about the content of the written tests, which are considered “*unnecessarily long*” and whose content is sometimes deemed to be “*overly detailed*”.

4.3 THE EXPERIENCE AT THE UNIVERSITIES

The participants in the 2015 study expressed some criticisms regarding the possibility to enter the specific European University for which the candidate expressed an interest. Despite these objections, the overall perception is that the range of choices has been wide enough, and the quality of the chosen University programmes was excellent.

Some of the grantees of 2017 are slightly critical towards the overall availability of choices, but mainly because of the time span of the selection that, as already mentioned above, prevented some applications in due time.

All the grantees look rather appreciative toward the different elements of their experience at the Universities abroad. The most critical issue seems to have been the financial side of living abroad; the second critical item is the practical support received at the hosting University. The most appreciated side of the experience is the assistance from YCS staff all over the stay abroad.

4.4 MASTER COURSE APPRECIATION

In 2015 the evaluation of the courses was hugely positive, both with reference to the relevance of the curriculum and to the level and quality of the lecturers and speakers. All the students agreed on the judgment that the overall learning experience went well beyond their expectations.

In the 2017 study, four criteria for the appreciation were proposed in the questionnaire. The relevance of the Master Course for job prospects is assessed at a level lower than the other aspects. Networking with colleagues, personal growth and professional development are outcomes that tend to be a little more appreciated. When requested to compare their initial expectations with the real experience, more than 50% of the grantees say that the Programme met their anticipations and a further 40% assert that the Programme went over their initial hopes.

4.5 TRANSITION PROCESS FROM YCS TO PA

Opinions on this topic came, in the 2015 study, from the grantees of the previous rounds, while in the 2017 study come from the representatives of the PA.

In the past, it seemed that the process to achieve a placement into the PA was not homogeneous. In fact, not all YCS graduates had been able to work in the PA. For those who entered the PA, the areas and sectors where graduates were placed have not always been (or not totally) coherent with the University studies financed by the YCS scholarships. Supervisors and co-workers in the office have provided tutorship and assistance. An uneven distribution among Ministries was lamented.

As for the 2017 study, recognized challenges refer to:

- The placement process – respondents focused on the lack of guarantees on vacant positions in the PA, even though a slight improvement of the overall process seems to have been registered;
- Integration in the work environment – such issues can be related to the YCS background and profiles, which in some cases may be perceived with defiance by the senior staff, in other cases “*don’t understand the slow PA environment*”;
- YCS graduates’ distribution across ministries - assessed as not proportionate across the different Ministries and Institutions and attributed to the absence of overall or internal policies/rules that bind PA Institutions to the employment of YCS civil servants;
- Scarce correspondence between the study areas and the available job positions in the PA, due to the above-mentioned tardiness from Ministries, but also to the range of master specializations proposed by the YCS Scheme.

4.6 RELEVANCE OF THE MASTER TRAINING FOR THE PAR

In general, the 2015 interviewees stressed that the Master training has been widely relevant, due to the attitudes and commitment of the YCS trainees.

Interviewees considered YCS generally relevant for the PAR and highlighted positive results such as the presence of YCS Alumni in several key positions across the main sectors of the PA. However, some criticisms were raised toward the management of the placements inside the PA system, which can result in outcomes lower than the prospects.

Summing up, the main identified strengths of the YCS Scheme toward the PA referred to the human resources (i.e. the Scheme provides the PA with skilled human resources), coherence with the PA system (the Scheme answers – even if not totally – to the PAR needs) and organizational culture (the Scheme generates changes in the mentality and facilitates the ability to deal with changes).

Generally speaking, the same appreciations come from the 2017 study. Interviewees have stressed that there are significant differentiations in performance and overall approach to work, between YCS and non-YCS staff. Highlighted differentiations cluster around the same main concepts: professionalism, work culture, skills and abilities, personal attitudes and behaviour, European dimension (knowledge of EU laws and frameworks, absorption of EU principles and values).

All respondents have indicated a high level of relevance of the YCS Scheme for the implementation of the PAR in Kosovo; the relevance lies in the contributions brought by each YCS grantee/civil servant, especially in the cases in which YCS civil servants cover key-managing positions. The skills and capacities that YCS civil servants provide to the PA system, are perceived as essential for successfully enacting the current reforms.

On the opposite side, the weaknesses of the YCS Scheme were attributed, by the 2015 respondents, mainly to a lack of information about what “will happen”, both during the master course and for employment perspectives and placement; some criticisms were expressed also about the placement procedures, the disproportions among ministries, the appropriateness of the assigned job positions.

Having recognized the great importance, the YCS Scheme has both for the PA and the PAR, the 2017 respondents formulate also some constructive criticism.

Respondents addressed challenges related to the lack, in a context that is not yet fully stabilised, of a certain level of overall strategic planning in the Master specializations offered through the successive Rounds.

A further set of concerns focuses mainly on the role and status of the YCS graduates once inside the PA.

Critical areas are considered to be: i) the transition process towards the Public Administration (since in their opinion the Scheme does not incorporate an on-the-job internship/training to acquire “real” work experience) ; ii) the ‘legal’ placement of the grantees in the PA (since their legal status is somewhat unclear and Ministries are not legally bound to employ YCS graduates; iii) lack of a long-term incentives strategy for salaries and career-advancements (to prevent potential ‘brain-drains’ from the public sector towards the private and/or international one).

Further challenges are identified in what can be called the ‘political interference’: YCS grantees/ employees are perceived as a-political actors, which strive to maintain their distance from political interference, that is connected as well to a dimension of uncertainty related to the future developments of the PAR and, consequently, of the YCS Scheme itself.

5. PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the three main research strands of the Expert Study, show an overall high level of satisfaction of the main beneficiaries and stakeholders with the YCS Programme.

The following paragraphs illustrate, for each of the three-target group of the research, the main recommendations that were furthered, for improving the planning and implementation of future YCS rounds.

5.1 TUTORS' PERSPECTIVE

Figure 8 - Tutors' Recommendations

LANGUAGE SKILLS

- Increase/support the preparation of grantees prior to the enrolment

5.2 GRANTEES' PERSPECTIVE

Figure 9 - Grantees' recommendations

SCHEDULE OF SELECTION PROCEDURES

- Shorter or rescheduled selection procedures that comply with the application deadline of EU Universities.

SUPPORT IN PRE-DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

- Facilitate the process of obtaining a Visa
- Improve logistics concerning the travel arrangements

APPLICATION TO EU UNIVERSITIES

- Increase the number of possible applications in terms of n. of Universities and n. of countries
- Increase the support and advice in the application procedures

COURSES

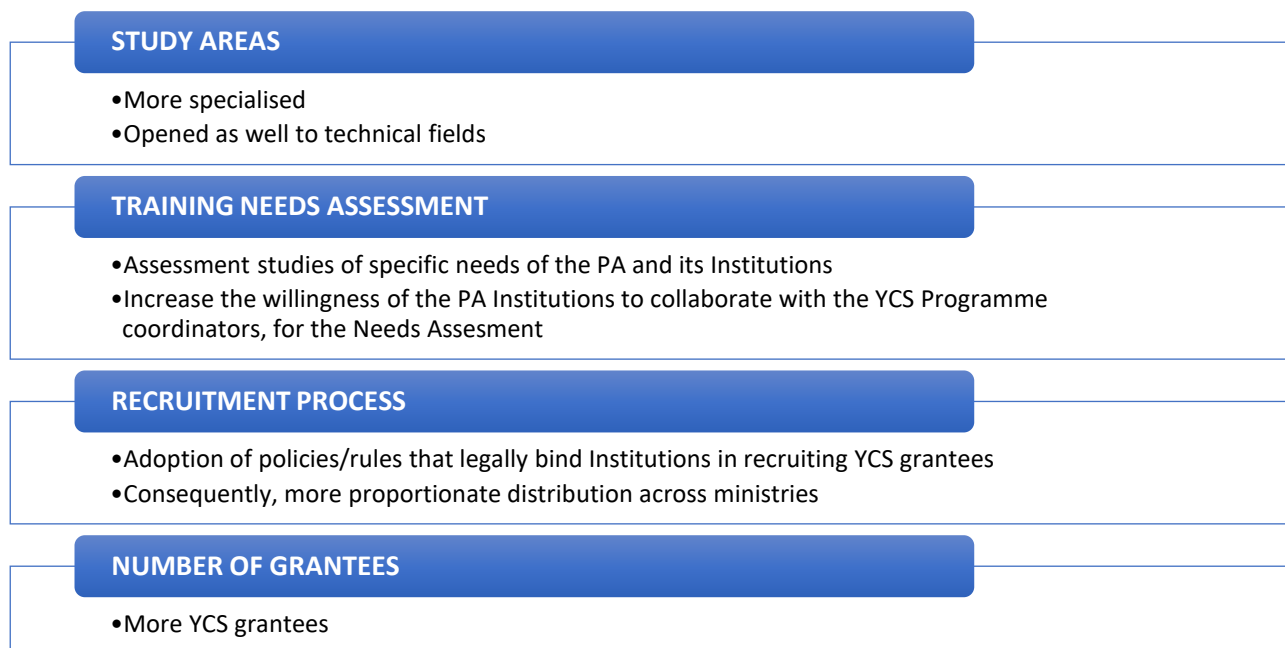
- Open the Scheme to other areas of studies
- Open the Scheme to other typologies of studies (e.g. 2 years MA)

FINANCIAL ISSUES

- More correspondence between the allowance and the "living costs" – mainly for grantees in capital/major EU cities

5.3 CIVIL SERVANTS' PERSPECTIVE

Figure 10 - Civil servants' recommendations



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ANNEX – STAKEHOLDERS WORKSHOP - RESULTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE BACKGROUND

1.1.1. Context

The Public Administration Reform (*hereinafter PAR*) in Kosovo is a key priority on the country policy agenda. Improving the performance of Public Administration and achieving greater overall efficiency is of paramount importance in aligning the country to international standards allowing it to fully enjoy opportunities stemming from European integration processes.

1.1.2. Programme

The “EU Scholarships Scheme” is an EU funded project for the implementation of the EU Scholarships Scheme for Kosovo. The Programme, named “Young Cell Scheme” aims to support development within the Kosovo Civil Service, bringing in newly trained specialists in different sectors of EU integration. The project is managed by the European Union Office (EUO) in Kosovo and implemented by the British Council.

1.1.3. Expert studies

In 2015, the Institute of International Sociology of Gorizia - ISIG, coordinated the preparation of an expert study on the 10 years of activity of the “YCS Programme”.

In this occasion, ISIG collected and analysed quantitative and qualitative data from relevant stakeholders of the YCS Programme, including the Programme Alumni and Programme coordinators.

Following this experience, ISIG developed a new study on the impact and overall perceptions on the Programme, among different groups of stakeholders. ISIG assessed the state of the art and the satisfaction with the YCS Programme Round X, aiming to contribute with inputs to potential future adaptations of the Programme.

1.2. THE WORKSHOP

1.2.1. Organisers

- The workshop was organised by the British Council – Kosovo and was attended by the representatives of the main operational stakeholders and coordinators of the Programme.
- The scientific organization of the workshop was provided by ISIG – Institute of International Sociology of Gorizia.

1.2.2. Objective

The YCS Stakeholders Workshop was designed as the closure phase of the Expert Assessment process of Round X of the Scheme (conducted by ISIG in the period July - September 2017).

The Workshop had a twofold objective:

- To disseminate the main highlights of the findings from the Expert Assessment Study (conducted by ISIG) among the main operational stakeholders of the Programme;
- To enact a participatory review of the results with the main operational stakeholders, so to establish a brief Action Plan for further developments of the YCS Programme.

1.2.3. Role of the British Council

- The British Council is one of the main stakeholders of the YCS Scheme, being the implementing partner of the programme.
- The British Council had a double role within the workshop: i) organiser and ii) primary stakeholder – taking part and contributing to all sessions of debates.

1.2.4. Workshop structure and methodology

The workshop was structured in three sessions, as follows:

- **Introductory session** - aimed to disseminate the research results among the operational stakeholders of the Programme. To this end, the ISIG researcher presented a thorough overview of the main highlights of the Expert Study on the Round X Assessments.
- **Session 1 – Challenges** - aimed at the identification of main challenges for the successful implementation of the YCS Scheme.
- **Session 2 – Solutions** - aimed at the identification of solutions (i.e. strategies and actions) needed for the overcoming of highlighted challenges.

The workshop was developed through group brainstorming and facilitated debates.

1.2.5. Stakeholders

The workshop was attended by the representatives of:

- The British Council – Kosovo
- European Union Office in Kosovo
- Ministry of European Integration of Kosovo
- Ministry of Public Administration of Kosovo
- YCS project management team

1.3. NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE REPORT¹¹

The report summarises the main highlights of the workshop as well as recommendations and conclusions emerging from the debates. The report is addressed to the YCS Programme coordinators and stakeholders, and represents an integration to the Expert Study drafted by ISIG, for the purpose of the Round X Assessment. Furthermore, the present report may be considered a result of a participatory review of the Expert Study as well, as stakeholders debated (and integrated) upon challenges and recommendations arising from the above-mentioned study. To this end, the present Report will be included among the Annexes of the Expert Study 2017.

The materials used for the drafting of the present report were: i) minutes of the meeting taken by the ISIG researcher, and ii) road map of the sessions developed during the workshop by the participants, under the facilitation of the researcher.

2. WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS

2.1. SESSION 1 - CHALLENGES

Stakeholders have identified several challenges that may be grouped in two macro categories according to the phases of the overall process, as follows:

- YCS Scholarship – planning and selection phases;
- YCS Placement in the Public Administration (*hereinafter PA*).

Moreover, stakeholders have identified challenges that might be considered as transversal to the overall YCS process (i.e. from the scholarship to placement in the PA).

The following paragraphs describe the identified main challenges for each of the clusters.

2.1.1. Challenges concerning the YCS Scholarship

2.1.1.1. *Planning phases*

Stakeholders have raised the point of planning issues, mainly relating to the need of a thorough Training Need Assessment that may reveal more specific priority areas of the PA, that could be tackled by the Scheme (i.e. opening the Scheme to new/different areas of specialization).

Stakeholders referred to study areas proposed by the Scheme as too broad/general for the current needs of the PA/GoK. In this respect, stakeholders highlighted the need of an increased collaboration and communication between all the Institutions of the PA/GoK, to properly assess their needs, that might translate into 'new', more specialized, study areas within the Scheme. Furthermore, an increased collaboration might account for increased synergies between the different processes currently ongoing in the PA. The lack of communication and collaboration between Institutions might be considered as a transversal challenge for the YCS – in fact, it is highly linked with the overall process of YCS placement.

Moreover, such analysis of Training needs, should be coupled, in the stakeholders' view, with a Human Resources availability assessment, that could give a more accurate overview of the actual capacity of uptake/absorption of the PA with regards to new employees.

Furthermore, stakeholders highlight the need to open the Scheme to a wider range of target groups, among which: i) already active/employed civil servants and ii) disadvantaged groups (e.g. members of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities).

2.1.1.2. *Selection procedures*

A number of 'logistic' challenges have been stressed, mainly by the implementing/technical stakeholders. Such challenges are mostly linked with the steps regarding the selection procedures for the Scholarship, as well as with the ones concerning the enrolment to the universities abroad.

The following points highlight the main expressed challenges, as follows:

- **Visa procedures** – currently the process for obtaining a Study Visa for most of the EU countries (especially for Germany and Belgium) appears to be sinuous and time-consuming, often resulting in the delay of the overall enrolment processes;

- **Schedule of pre-selection procedures vs Deadlines for enrolment** – some of the European Universities (that might be interesting for the Scheme) have deadlines for enrolment that are not compatible with the deadlines of the Selection procedure of the Scheme (i.e. the selection procedure ends after the deadline for enrolment to such Universities);
- **Use of codes in pre-selection phase** – such issue represents a possible forthcoming challenge of the next round of selection, as this method has not yet been implemented in previous years.

2.1.2. Challenges concerning the placement in the PA

Most of the stakeholders have raised the issue of an uneven recruiting process across the Ministries. Such issue seems to be generated by two main factors:

- **Lack of a standardized recruiting strategy/institutionalization of the process** – that currently seems to hinder the intake of YCS ‘employees’ in the PA. Stakeholders stressed the existence of cases where Ministries with vacant positions have hesitations in recruiting YCS ‘employees’, for different reasons. The standardization of placement/recruiting procedures concerning civil servants with an YCS background, would, in this case, foster the uptake of YCS ‘employees’ across the PA.
- **Lack of incentive strategies** – such challenge relates to the capacity for “retention” of YCS civil servants in the public sector.
- **Lack of monitoring processes of the YCS ‘civil servants’ (Round I – Round X)** - stakeholders stressed the need for structured information on the career developments of YCS Alumni. Such information could contribute, on one hand to a more thorough impact analysis of the Scheme for the PAR, and on the other hand, to gather data that could contribute to the elaboration of relevant incentives strategies (see above).
- **Political interference** – stakeholders defined this issue as a ‘permanent challenge’ of the overall PA Kosovar system, and it might be considered a transversal challenge for the overall YCS process as deeply linked with the PAR to which the Scheme directly contributes. Although progress has been registered for the past years and transparent procedures are often guaranteed, civil service seems to be affected still by an ‘indirect’ political interference. In the view of the stakeholders, such kind of interference affects the placement procedures for potential YCS ‘employees’ as well.

2.2. SESSION 2 - SOLUTIONS

During the second session of the workshop, stakeholders agreed upon a number of solutions for what concerns the challenges identified in the previous session.

Furthermore, during this session, stakeholders chose to address challenges as well that were identified within the Expert Study, drawing on the presentation of the preliminary results delivered during the introductory session of the workshop.

As highlighted above, stakeholders were guided into a facilitated debate towards the identification of solutions that could refer either to concrete actions or to comprehensive strategies. Furthermore, stakeholders were encouraged to indicate, for each of the identified solution (action and/or strategy), the ideal level of ‘responsibility’/decision-making, that could range from the local level to the European level.

The following paragraphs describe the main solutions identified through the above described methodology.

2.2.1. Proposed actions

The identified actions pertain mainly to the local level of implementation, targeting a level of decision within the technical management of the Scheme, concerning the following issues/items:

- **SELECTION PROCEDURES:**
 - **Overall duration reduction** that could address the challenge of “incompatible” deadlines for enrolment in several European Universities. To this end, the following measures have been hypothesised by technical stakeholders: a) Shorten inception day; b) Shorten the re-notice; c) Only 30 days for call for application, d) Pre-selection thus could be completed immediately after winter holidays and the entire process could be concluded by February.
 - **Introduction of a European Union Knowledge Test** – in addition to the current test on EU Institutions and Frameworks.
 - **Introduction of rules and procedures fostering an intra-sector competition** (within each of the considered study areas), rather than an inter-sectoral one (among study areas).
- **PRE-DEPARTURE PROCEDURES:**
(The actions identified within this cluster respond mainly to challenges stemming from the Expert Study, thus they are not directly linked with the challenges raised within the Session 1 of the workshop):
 - **(Re) introduction of the Training for academic writing prior to the departure** – the research developed within the Expert Study stressed the need for improvement of the written language skills, mainly for what concerns students enrolling into Universities in UK. Such training, would thus address the challenge.
 - **Policy change for what concerns the GMAT certification** – stakeholders debated on shifting the current policy (i.e. training and examination are fully covered by the Scheme), as a result of poor results in the latest Rounds. The two advanced possibilities are: either i) students cover the costs themselves, or ii) students should undertake a pre-examination in order to certify the level of probability of successful examination.
 - **Actions that foster the easing of VISA procedures** – among the examples identified by stakeholders: Elaboration of Supporting/Intent Letters on behalf of the Programme stakeholders, that endorse the grantees’ application.

Moreover, stakeholders agreed upon a strategic framework (that would require a concrete engagement for action) that would allow for frequent consultation between the stakeholders of the Scheme and the beneficiaries of the Scheme (i.e. PA and Gok Institutions). Fostering a closer communication and collaboration would, in turn, result in:

- The identification of more Specialised Study Areas;
- Elaboration of strategies/actions for further disseminating the Scheme to potential candidates (i.e. future grantees) and potential beneficiaries (i.e. PA and GoK Institutions). A possible action proposed by stakeholders was the (increased) organisation of Info Days dedicated to beneficiaries.

2.2.2. Proposed strategies

The identified strategies pertain mainly to the national sphere. For some of the registered instances, stakeholders have envisaged effects that might be registered at both transnational and local level, but the “responsibility” lies at a national level of decision- making.

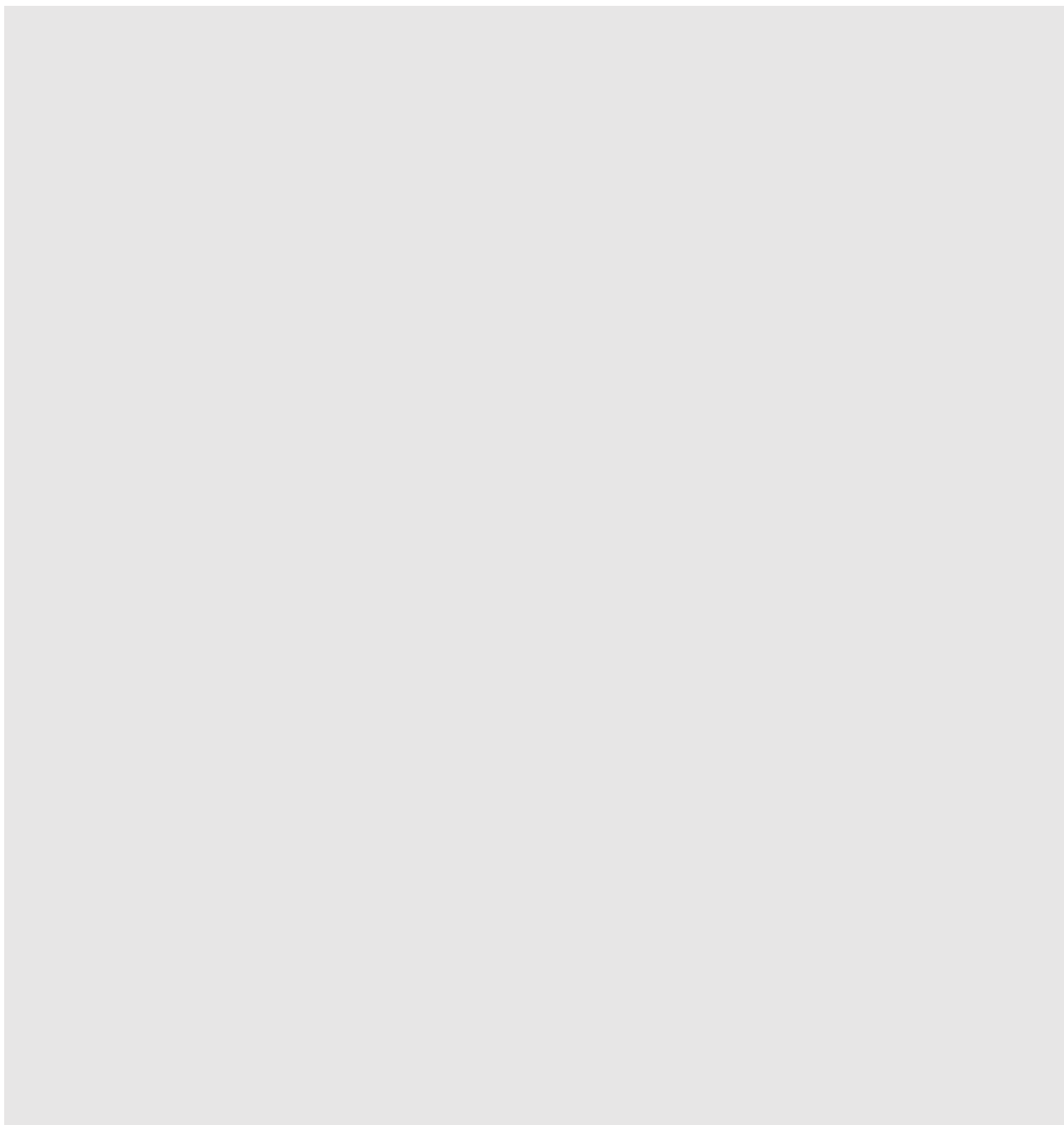
The following paragraphs illustrate the main strategies agreed upon during the debates:

- **New Law on Civil Service fostering the standardisation/institutionalisation of YCS placement process** – the Law is to be approved in the near future and envisages several measures that would address the identified challenges concerning the placement process of YCS civil servants within the PA/GoK.
- **Monitoring System for Civil Servants** – the proposal of such a strategy aimed to address the challenge concerning the lack of structured information on the carrier developments/ongoing of YCS alumni. Having a comprehensive and constantly updated picture of the “movements” of YCS alumni could, as well, feed relevant information for the elaboration of strategies aimed at boosting YCS civil servants to continue their careers in the public sector.
- **Communication and Dissemination Strategy towards European Universities** – stemming from the preliminary results of the Expert Study, stakeholders have identified the need for a framework of communication with European Universities, and especially with the tutors of the YCS grantees during their permanence abroad. Such a strategy would imply dissemination actions as well, aiming to better inform the Universities about the YCS Scheme (interested parties within the University structures may be relevant departments as well as administrative offices).

3. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the data gathered within the workshop allows for:

- The confirmation/validation of the overall considerations on challenges and recommendations that arise within the Expert Study research, and
- The integration of the overall assessment with further first-hand insights from the primary stakeholders of the Scheme.



EXPERT STUDY

Young Cell Scheme - Round X - Assessment

YOUNG CELL IS AN EU SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME.

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