

COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER 2019 UPDATE

BELARUS



1. A brief summary of key developments in VET and skills and EU and donor cooperation during 2017-20

Belarus joined the Bologna Process in 2015, with a commitment to implement a roadmap of reforms by 2018. However, the Bologna Follow-up Group produced a highly critical report on Belarusian higher education reforms. The report was discussed at the European Higher Education Area Paris 2018 Ministerial Conference, where ministers acknowledged the country's commitment. They agreed to support Belarus with a reform strategy for 2018–20 to adhere to the Bologna principles.

Belarus worked on conceptualising and clarifying the national qualifications framework (NQF) and updating the qualifications system. Its gradual approach resulted in a draft strategy for the qualifications system, which is currently awaiting Council of Ministers approval. The strategy will guide actions to update the qualifications system, including NQF adoption.

The EU funded a technical assistance project on employment and VET that was launched in 2017. A government decision a year later in April 2018 meant that project activities could be fully implemented. The project will contribute to the qualifications system, VET quality assurance, lifelong learning and the labour market information system.

2. An assessment of mid-term progress towards the ETF's 2020 objectives

Specific objective: support and advise the EU Delegation and Belarusian partners to maximise the effectiveness of the EU employment and VET project and its contribution to VET system modernisation

In response to an EU Delegation request in 2017, the ETF supported formulation of a Learning Regions action, as considered in the draft action programme 2018. After consultations with the Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy (DG NEAR) and the EU Delegation, the proposed approach was to include Belarus in the Smart Specialisation Strategy, with a strong human capital development component. However, the proposal was eventually dropped from the 2018 action plan due to a reduction in overall funding and a lack of agreement on partnership priorities between the EU and Belarus.

Owing to this exercise and consultations, the Government of Belarus became interested in the Smart Specialisation Strategy. Their application to participate was accepted by DG NEAR and the Joint Research Centre, so they can now begin the process. It remains to be seen whether ETF expertise will be required in 2019 to formulate human capital development actions, on request of DG NEAR and the EU Delegation.

In 2018, the ETF provided content advice on technical assistance project planning and implementation, on request of the EU Delegation. It participated in the project's kick-off meeting in May 2018 and in a joint seminar on qualifications in June, with representatives from the technical assistance project and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation.

In early 2018, the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus provided the ETF with official labour force survey data for 2016 and 2017. As a result, the key indicators on education, skills and employment (KIESE) database could be updated and labour market indicators could be compared with those of ETF partner countries. The ETF completed the youth transitions mapping analysis, which was reviewed and shared with Belarusian partners.

Belarus also participates in the ETF-led teachers' and school principals' continuing professional development survey, scheduled for completion by the end of 2018. Survey results will be validated and disseminated in early 2019.

3. Actions planned for 2019

The ETF will launch the Torino Process analysis on the progress of VET policy implementation in a lifelong learning context. It will advise national stakeholders and inform the EU on priority areas such as progress in updating the qualifications system, enhancing lifelong learning and improving the labour market information system. Moreover, the Small Business Act assessment will be conducted in Belarus to review progress in entrepreneurial learning and enterprise skills.

Specific objective: support and advise the EU Delegation and Belarusian partners to maximise the effectiveness of the EU employment and VET project and its contribution to VET system modernisation

The ETF will continue to support the EU Delegation in 2019. It will provide content and methodological advice for the EU-funded technical assistance project on employment and VET, particularly in the areas of qualifications, the labour market information system and skills matching surveys. It will participate in project steering committee meetings as an observer. The ETF is prepared to advise on the formulation of a new action in 2019, if requested by DG NEAR and the EU Delegation.

The ETF will provide input for the Mobility Partnership dialogue and monitoring on request of the European Commission and will produce an update of the country fiche for 2019.