

COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER 2019 UPDATE

KOSOVO*

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence – hereinafter 'Kosovo'.

1. A brief summary of key developments in VET and skills and EU and donor cooperation during 2017–18

In employment and vocational education, Kosovo continues to face significant challenges in the short and medium term, but many of the policy initiatives needed to address the country's problems are now in place or under preparation.

Labour-market performance remains problematic, despite positive economic trends. An increase in the youth workforce challenges the absorption capacity of the labour market. Higher take-up of tertiary education may trigger oversupply and related problems in achieving efficient matching in the labour market. Shortages in medium-skilled workers are evident and employers complain about the level and quality of training received by young graduates.

Kosovo is the recipient of an extensive package of assistance from international donors. In 2018, the EU began to identify a pipeline of projects targeted at employment programmes and policies. This is complemented by vocational education assistance projects primed to start in 2019 and 2020. Also involved are GIZ, DVV, LuxDev from Luxembourg and the Austrian Development Cooperation.

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

The challenging skills and labour-market issues identified in the country strategy paper for 2017 remain relevant.

The ETF's support is driving progress by deepening stakeholder engagement and providing detailed advice in three overlapping thematic areas that were emphasised in the country strategy paper: employment, qualifications and governance.

The ETF has supported Kosovo in the development and implementation of its National Qualifications Framework. Although many processes and policies are in place, implementation must accelerate to gain maximum benefit from the work to date. This will involve supporting the development of effective institutional processes, e.g., between the national qualifications authority and relevant ministries.

The Employment Agency of Kosovo is prioritising its capacity to deliver, monitor and evaluate the effects of active labour market measures.

ETF support to the European Union office in Pristina has strengthened the relevance of IPA assistance projects by making the actions more specific, while the ETF's support to the development of tracer studies has created a technical framework that can be complemented by further IPA projects. Likewise, the ETF's interventions in the work of the National Qualifications Authority have increased the agency's capacities. New EU support will develop previous work on qualifications, recognition of prior learning and tracer studies.

Initial VET provision, however, remains fragmented and there appears to be no substantial improvement in the overall quality of education. The network of adult training providers is insufficiently developed to match the potential need for retraining and upskilling among large proportions of the long-term unemployed and inactive population (particularly women).

Similarly, the availability and reliability of key information and data in the field of human capital development (education, training skills, employability etc) remain problematic. Data is missing and indicators are not calculated for key EU benchmarks in education and training.

3. Actions planned for 2019

There is no major change in the priorities of the ETF country strategy except that the implementation of new EU interventions reduces the need for specific ETF support in areas linked to qualifications, recognition of prior learning and tracer studies. The ETF will work with the EU, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and relevant donors to ensure a smooth transition in the EU's intervention and provide continuity with pilot work on the recognition of prior learning and tracer studies conducted in previous years.

Specific objective 1: support EU external assistance.

The ETF will continue supporting IPA actions at the request of the EU Delegation to Kosovo, providing input, content and methodological advice to ALLED II (Aligning education and training with labour market needs) (IPA 2017 to start at the beginning of 2019). This includes undertaking specific activities related to the National Qualifications Framework, recognition of prior learning and tracer studies, such as:

- Advising the EU Delegation and cooperating with projects' implementing bodies on the sequencing of activities between ALLED II and the IPA 2018 project to ensure continuity and complementarity;
- Advising the EU Delegation on project developments and quality, the relevance of processes and outputs and the intervention's contribution to national systemic reforms;
- Commenting and advising on the Project Inception Report and Progress Reports;
- Commenting and advising on the quality of content-related written deliverables;
- Being an observer on the steering committee.

The ETF remains available to provide technical support upon request from the EU Delegation. This includes the IPA 2018 (employment), which is set to start in 2020.

Upon request from the European Commission or EU Delegation, the ETF will also provide support to the EU-Kosovo bilateral policy dialogue:

- Inputs and progress reporting at bilateral sub-committee meetings;
- Yearly assessment of the Economic Reform Programme.

Specific objective 2: reinforce the role and capacities of relevant bodies for the proper governance of VET policy, strengthening participation in and ownership of the process among key stakeholders and building greater capacity for VET policy monitoring: support the Torino process rollout.

Kosovo will participate in the 5th round of the Torino Process, which is valuable in promoting interinstitutional cooperation on education and training policy and can also provide information to monitor progress in policy dialogue with the EU.

National statistics authorities will take part in the collection and use of labour-market data. Building on the results of the ETF's data collection in 2018, the Torino Process will further explore the available information and relevant indicators in education, skills and employability.