

COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER 2019 UPDATE

SERBIA



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

The European Commission's Strategy for the Western Balkans sets out the steps to complete EU accession by 2025 and talks with Serbia are now underway. Education, employment, social policies, governance, the digital agenda and youth are focuses of reform. Serbia joined the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education on 1 January 2018, facilitating cooperation and providing access to good inclusive practices in education and training.

Under the Economic Reform Programme 2018–20, Serbia is committed to education reforms to meet labour-market needs, improve school-to-work transitions through work-based learning (WBL) and enhance skills information intelligence. The ETF works closely with Serbian authorities to put vocational education high on the policy agenda and to tackle structural challenges. The EU gives financial help through its Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA).

Education, employment and social policy sectors receive large EU/bilateral and international donor assistance, including from the UNDP, World Bank, ILO, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, Austrian Development Agency and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

The ETF cooperates closely with the EU Delegation to Serbia and donors on education and labour-market reforms to increase WBL, provide skills for priority sectors, boost education through a National Qualifications Framework, strengthen key competencies including entrepreneurial learning and digital skills and foster continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers and trainers.

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

Serbia has launched an ambitious skills agenda, looking at future skills and how to prepare the education system, businesses and workers. As a candidate country, Serbia's vocational education and training cooperation with EU member states and other candidates is framed by the Copenhagen Process and 2015 Riga Conclusions.

In 2017, Serbia passed legislation on Dual Education, which provides a model for the rollout of vocational education within the formal secondary vocational education system. Entrepreneurship is defined as a key competency. The new law also supports the establishment of an institutional structure to implement lifelong entrepreneurial learning.

In 2018, the ETF collaborated on high priorities for Serbia's education and training/skills agenda, such as implementation of the Riga medium-term deliverables, the Torino Process bi-annual monitoring/reporting and skills mismatch intelligence. The ETF assisted with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), WBL and CDP.

Given the national model of dual and entrepreneurship education, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD) has launched an institutional network involving local governments, employers and VET schools and requested the ETF to review WBL quality in initial VET.

In 2018, MoESTD launched nationwide training in outcome-oriented teaching. For 2020, CPD for education professionals is focused on digital skills and competencies, inclusive education, outcome-oriented teaching and anti-discrimination. In-service teacher training addresses entrepreneurship and active learning methods.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) legislation of 2017 set an institutional agenda aimed at building a knowledge-based society with more relevant qualifications and competencies within a context of lifelong learning. While momentum slowed in early 2018, it picked up in late 2018 and now focuses on creating an efficient institutional setting (NQF Council, NQF Agency and sector skills councils). The validation system for non-formal and informal learning remains to be developed.

Reform has turned to modernising general and VET secondary and higher education, digitalisation, entrepreneurship and the coverage and quality of pre-school education. Adult participation in lifelong learning lags significantly behind EU and national targets, with a comprehensive approach yet to be devised.

The MoESTD has expanded its capacities to meet national priorities, establishing departments of Dual Education and Entrepreneurship and of Digitisation in Education and Science. New legislation establishes the National Council for Higher Education and the National Accreditation Body to reinforce

quality assurance in higher education. The Institute for Improvement of Education and the Institute for Evaluation of the Quality of Education will shortly introduce final exams in secondary education.

3. Actions planned for 2019

The ETF's portfolio of activities includes implementation of the Riga medium-term deliverables, Riga reporting, skills intelligence and employability. Priorities are: the National Qualifications Framework, WBL development, CPD for teachers, the governance structure of select sector councils, monitoring of labour-market developments and evidence of skills relevance. In 2019, the objective will be to support the reform of Serbia's skills policies, EU accession and Economic Reform Programme targets. The Sector Reform Performance Contract (SRPC) supports the implementation of national strategic documents, with EUR 30 million allocated overall and EUR 3.4 million for complementary measures.

With regard to the Torino Process, the ETF launched the fifth year in 2018–19 and Serbia responded positively, confirming a national coordinator. Discussion with national authorities and international actors will focus on the Torino Process in relation to on-going strategic reforms.

In 2019, the ETF will provide analysis/studies to the governmental commission on dual education as well as content and methodological advice and policy dialogue for the SRPC to improve the VET system. Three key structures define the ETF's primary counterparts:

- A high-level policy dialogue reform structure, featuring public and private institutional representatives steered by ministers or secretaries on the Serbian side and the EU Delegation's Head of Cooperation for the European Commission;
- Operational-strategic national coordination structures, engaging the MoESTD, National Education Council and VET Council; Ministry of Finance (MoF); Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy (MoLEVSP); Ministry of European Integration (MEI); Institute for Standardisation of Serbia (SROS); Pedagogical Council of Vojvodina, and the EU Delegation to coordinate and manage the action plan of the National Education Development Strategy and the SRPC;
- Technical working groups, enlisting individuals from the MoESTD, MoF, MoLEVSP, MEI, civil society, academia, EU Delegation and other stakeholders to work on measures in the SRPC and provide budget input.

The ETF cooperates closely with the EU Delegation to Serbia on all the above.

Regarding budget support, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations has asked the ETF to assess the continued relevance, credibility and progress of the sector strategy.