



European Training Foundation

# COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER 2020 UPDATE: TURKEY



# A BRIEF SUMMARY OF KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN VET AND SKILLS AND EU AND DONOR COOPERATION DURING 2018–19

Turkey is the eighth-largest economy in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Despite robust growth in recent years, Turkey has been fighting double-digit inflation and a falling currency. The influx of over three million Syrian refugees has intensified the strain on education and training reform and on labour market and socio-economic inclusion. Progress towards the EU 2020 targets for education and adult participation in lifelong learning can be observed in improved access to VET and tertiary education, better links between educational levels and the labour market and updated qualifications for better transition from secondary education. Despite rising activity and employment rates in the 20–64 age group, Turkey lags behind EU averages. Turkey faces challenges in making productive use of its human capital (European Commission, 2018). Although various policies support students in an array of disadvantaged groups, large gaps remain vis-a-vis EU and OECD benchmarks. Providing educational facilities and services to Syrians under temporary protection is another key goal. While higher labour force participation is associated with lower levels of productivity (as those with lower productivity enter the labour market), the unemployment rate remains persistently high among more highly educated people. Enhancing competitiveness through a more inclusive and better-skilled labour force will be key to achieving sustainable and inclusive growth. Turkey should give a higher priority to enacting active labour market policies (ALMPs) to introduce structural reforms, alongside improving the synergy among its social, education and labour market policies (European Commission, 2018).

Political and policy attention to the importance of investing in people has taken priority in Turkey. This was particularly evident in 2019 when the Turkish government presented its Education Vision 2023, providing for a comprehensive roadmap that covers the whole Turkish education system. The strategy aims to bring the education system in line with EU and international standards so that learners can be equipped with the skills they need in the 21st century. It addresses the challenge of skills shortages and the lack of basic skills, which contrasts with the forecasted demand for more medium- and higher-level skills in Turkey. Given the understanding of the specific impact of changes within sectors and occupations and using this information to update curricula accordingly, more public and private investment is planned for the development of skills anticipation mechanisms, including those at sector and technology level. The ETF has been one of the key partners involved in rolling out the TVET part of the strategy.

The world of work is evolving in Turkey. Changing and increasing skills demands, coupled with economic, demographic and technological developments, are posing considerable challenges as well as providing opportunities for innovative responses from the VET system. Structural changes caused by rapid technological development in a few sectors in Turkey, such as digitalisation, automation, robotisation or artificial intelligence, and evolving consumer demands will continue to speed up the process of job creation. At the same time, other jobs will disappear and technological development will trigger dynamic changes in skills requirements. Furthermore, mitigation of the effects of climate change, the country's rapid economic development and population increase have aggravated environmental pressures. All of these require appropriate technological development (such as new environmentally friendly technologies, sustainable energy consumption and production) and policy responses – including relevant green vocational skills. This comes on top of economic cycles which always have an impact on skills needs.

The ETF works closely with the directorate of the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, the Ministry of Development and Technology, Turkey's small and

medium-sized enterprise (SME) agency (KOSGEB) and their associated agencies or bodies to address the education, training and skills agenda for employment and social policy sectors.

These entities receive support through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II 2014–20) and the post-2020 EU programmes, including the EU Facility for Refugees. The ETF has signed a strategic partnership agreement with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which has resulted in involvement in a high-level public-private steering group that focuses on skills for young people, especially young women and refugees. International and donor institutions include the European Investment Fund, European Investment Bank, UN agencies, World Bank and GIZ.

## AN ASSESSMENT OF MID-TERM PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ETF'S 2020 OBJECTIVES

The EU's Education and Training 2020 priorities, the Bruges and Riga medium-term deliverables (MTDs) and the new EU Skills Agenda inform the Turkish skills agenda. Turkey has benefited from the IPA II funds and the national contribution to implement the policy options for each Riga MTD. Applications for the ERASMUS+ programme have increased in quantity and quality and also focus on implementing the Riga MDTs.

In 2019, Turkey's Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services prioritised the importance of the skills needed for the future. The ministry plans to establish a labour market and training observatory that operates within its institutional settings. It aims to establish a sustained and dedicated analytical function and coherent approaches to produce and disseminate readable information. The ministry also intends to establish an overarching institution under its own umbrella to cover various sectors and domains, e.g. foresight; sustainable development and technology; economy; society, labour market and employment.

National and international reports show progress in building labour market information systems that cover short- to long-term skills projection, continuously refined and expanded ALMPs and refugee inclusion. Career guidance services are offered in schools and universities and to jobseekers and other target groups. The ETF continues to work with public and private authorities to integrate refugees into the labour market.

Through its analysis of and reporting on Turkey's progress on the human capital pillars of entrepreneurial learning, women's entrepreneurship and SME skills (Small Business Act 2018–19), the ETF worked very closely with Turkey's education and training institutions. All of this was led by KOSGEB. The findings are used for wider policy tracking arrangements (e.g. entrepreneurship key competence as part of the Riga monitoring) as well as inputs to Turkish-driven reforms. Turkey has made major efforts to overcome the school-industry mismatch, tackling the failure of schools to provide the complex competences needed to be employable in Turkey's high-knowledge, high-tech economy. Employers are involved as key actors in shaping skills policies for the future. Turkey has made significant efforts to accelerate the transition towards a low-carbon, greener and more inclusive economy, in particular by investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy to mitigate its climate change impact.

However, the TVET system in Turkey needs to be based on effective governance at all levels. Good governance involves all the relevant stakeholders, particularly the social partners, and ensures

effective and equitable social dialogue between the trade unions and employers and consideration for national industrial relations systems and education and training practices.

The ETF works very closely with the working groups associated with the Directors General for VET (DGVT), the Advisory committee for VET (ACVT), Education and Training 2020 (ET2020) and all the related institutions on the Riga MTDs and the Torino Process assessment. Key findings and key policy issues to be addressed in 2020 include: skills that can be adapted to the rapidly evolving socio-economic environment; a more demand-driven environment, which can also be achieved through internationalisation; more transnational mobility experience; new forms of digital learning; qualifications (including partial or double/hybrid); availability of modules for reskilling and upskilling; diversity of providers underpinned by transparency instruments; effective feedback loops and quality assurance mechanisms that enable the timely adaptation of curricula to evolving labour market needs.

Turkey participates in the ETF's Forum for Quality Assurance in VET and the ETF's virtual platforms for work-based learning (WBL), continuing professional development of teachers and trainers in VET and digital skills and online learning. It also participates in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Advisory Group by sharing its developments, experience and lessons learned with the EU Member States and other ETF partner countries.

The ETF has cooperated closely with public and private institutions working on the skills agenda in Turkey. It has worked on the following areas: the National Qualifications Framework (NQF); the development of WBL; continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers; skills for inclusive growth sectors; monitoring of labour market developments and evidence of skills relevance. In 2018 and 2019, the ETF worked closely with the Ministry of National Education on a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for traineeships, which was received very positively by the ministry and related public and private institutions. The QIP will feed into the Education Vision 2023 actions and help to achieve the goals set by the national strategy. The ETF and the Ministry of National Education's fruitful cooperation in the area of WBL will continue in 2020, as initially agreed between the ministry and the ETF in 2016 to support the government's ongoing efforts to implement the EU's MTD for WBL by 2020. The MTD for WBL and other areas were endorsed by all EU ministers of education in charge of VET, including Turkey, in the Riga Conclusions in 2015.

The main and agreed support is focused on (i) a review of the current funding system of traineeships in initial VET in Turkey, which could help to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public investment for WBL; (ii) a cost-benefit analysis of apprenticeships to help private sector companies obtain a better picture of the costs and benefits of apprenticeships, which could motivate them to provide more training places (the ETF has a practical model of cost-benefit analysis that could be adapted to the Turkish context); (iii) an analysis of career guidance provision in relation to VET and WBL, with a view to improving and better targeting career guidance services for young people.

All of these policies and practical work feed into EU programming and Turkey's national agenda. The EBRD supports the private sector in responding to its needs for skills and inclusion. The ETF participates in and supports a number of Turkish high-level policy dialogue platforms. All of this is done through studies and workshops and by exchanging information on development.

## ACTIONS PLANNED FOR 2020

As per the ETF's Torino Process assessment report for 2019, most of the issues point to the necessity of a better-skilled, more flexible and continuously educated and trained workforce. However, while

some current policies in Turkish VET seem to support human capacity development, other trends indicate the opposite: the recent decline in initial VET participation, the stagnating and comparatively limited opportunities for adult learning, the high and increasing youth unemployment (skills mismatch, particularly in the case of higher education graduates) and the integration of a large share of migrants, mainly operating in the informal economy, are just a few examples.

The above topics point to issues relating to the attractiveness of VET and the efficiency of VET funding and VET provision. Analysing the real potential and setting clear targets for apprenticeships could help policymakers to achieve a better balance in VET provision and make related decisions on VET financing. Current processes that monitor the quality of VET (including self-assessment, quality audits and quality indexes of schools) do not yet fully include the WBL taking place in companies, specifically apprenticeships. The Ministry of National Education is aware of this and more efforts are needed to close the gap in quality assurance through innovative projects and other initiatives.

Recent government measures to increase demand for VET (e.g. awarding the title of technician to all graduates of vocational and technical education institutions) and the body of initiatives announced in Education Vision 2023 to increase the attractiveness of VET are promising developments. Within policies to improve VET access and participation, special attention needs to be paid to career guidance at an early stage of education (career education in the curriculum, better synergies with the Turkish Employment Agency's (ISKUR) services). There is also a need to provide better support to VET students in their transition from school to work, as a relatively high and increasing share aims to continue in higher education and are not joining the labour market.

In 2020, the ETF will work with its Turkish counterparts on a policy and thematic exchange to roll out an implementation plan to tackle some or all of the prioritised policy areas. Given the understanding of the specific impact of changes within sectors and occupations and using this information to update curricula accordingly, enhanced institutional capacity, tool development and investment are needed to develop skills anticipation mechanisms including those at sector and technology level.

The ETF's portfolio of thematic input will include: the NQF; WBL development; CPD for teachers; skills for inclusive growth sectors; monitoring of labour market developments; and evidence of skills relevance. The ETF will respond to requests involving annual and multi-annual action plans and provide input through discussion platforms in Turkey or at ETF headquarters in Turin. The ETF will provide expertise and collaborate closely with public and private institutions to assess the future of skills for young Turkish people and refugees, the latter to be integrated into the education and training and labour market. In 2019 and 2020, the EU-funded IPA II project, which supports the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) and the strengthening of the Accredited Vocational Testing Centres Workshop/ACBs, will become operational. The ETF is the key EU partner tasked with providing support through its analysis, thematic expertise and input to the national conferences, workshops and technical work driven by Turkey and the EU. Turkey is very active in utilising ERASMUS+ and TAIEX. The ETF will be invited to a number of workshops and conferences to provide expert input.

The ETF's work in Turkey will continue to be complemented by the ETF/EBRD/Turkish authorities' Action Plan 2017–20, which includes priorities stated in the Riga MTDs: developing technical and vocational education, training skills standards and geographically expanded facilities; increasing the availability of high-quality WBL, including apprenticeships; and supporting youth employment through career guidance and the Youth Guarantee.

The ETF has launched a Skills for the Future initiative in three ETF partner countries: Israel, Morocco and Turkey. The aim is to obtain 'new evidence' that documents the change process in specific

sectors and identifies the new skills demanded and/or used as a result. The Turkish case study will focus on car manufacturing in Turkey. Empirical case studies will be used as an instrument to gather insights about innovation in selected sectors brought about by the introduction of new technologies, the greening of the economy, climate change and other factors.

**The ETF's work in 2020 will focus on:**

- the provision of its thematic expertise (within the ETF's thematic and strategic remit) through desk and country work and in the form of analyses, reports and thematic expertise;
- participation in workshops, events, policy and practice platforms organised by the EU, Turkey or the EBRD; this entails providing thematic expertise and participating in the policy, operational and expert platform discussions

### Specific objective 1: Support EU external assistance

The ETF will monitor progress in VET, employment and social inclusion, and support sector policy dialogue and donor coordination. The ETF will help the EU Delegation to monitor EU-financed projects for the employment and skills sector and plan follow-up IPA III actions to support education, training and employment among vulnerable groups and/or disadvantaged regions.

Upon request by the European Commission or EU Delegation (EUD), the ETF will provide support for the EUD Ankara bilateral policy dialogue. This will involve mainly the following:

- inputs and progress reporting at bilateral subcommittee meetings
- an annual assessment of Turkey's Economic Reform Programme
- inputs into relevant sections of the Commission's progress report
- thematic input within the framework of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT II) if requested by the EUD Ankara or Ministry of National Education
- expert input to the EUD Ankara on the EU programme on skills for the future, launched in a couple of economic sectors in conjunction with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services
- expert input to the EUD Ankara on the EU Programme launched with the Ministry of National Education on the establishment of VET teacher training excellence centres and Institute for Quality in VET (IQVET-III) projects, VQA and the strengthening of Accredited Vocational Testing Centres Workshop/ACBs
- expert input to public and private workshops, events and policy, operational and/or expert platforms and discussions organised by the EU, EBRD or Turkey

### Specific objective 2: Support Turkish institutions

**Action 1** – Rolling out of Turkey's Education Vision 2023 for the TVET and lifelong learning sectors

**Action 2** – Employment: Building of institutional capacity to develop and monitor skills anticipation mechanisms, including those at sector and technology level, in view of the understanding of the specific impact of changes within sectors and occupations

**Action 3** – WBL quality assurance framework – cost-benefit analysis of apprenticeships

**Action 4** – VQA and the related stakeholders in terms of the Turkish Qualifications Framework and the validation of non-formal learning

**Action 5** – Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services and skills for the future in a couple of economic sectors

The ETF cooperates with key institutions in the area of human resource development: the Ministry of National Education; the Higher Education Council (YOK); universities; the Turkish lifelong learning network; the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services; the Ministry of Development and Technology; the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK); ISKUR; VQA; a large network of vocational testing centres, and the Vocational Testing Centres Association; economic sector employers' and employees' organisations or federations; civil society organisations; think tanks; and research institutions.

The ETF's three key interinstitutional structures are:

1. **a high-level public-private steering group of public and private institutional representatives** (150 to 200 members facilitated by the EBRD, ETF or Turkish authorities): the Ministry of National Education; the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services; ISKUR; KOSGEB; the Turkish Statistical Institute; the Union of Municipalities of Turkey; employers' organisations and unions; EUD; EBRD; UN; EU Member States' bilateral organisations; international financial organisations (e.g. World Bank); civil society organisations; academics; public and private education and training providers; Turkish skills platforms
2. **operationally strategic national coordination structures** involving the Ministry of National Education; working groups associated with the DGVT, ACVT, ET2020; the skills expert working group within the Ministry of Development and Technology; the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services; KOSGEB; employers' organisations and unions; professional bodies and sectors; civil society organisations
3. **technical working groups** involving public and private professional bodies; stakeholders; academia; schools; employers' organisations and unions; professional bodies and sectors; civil society organisations