



1. GENERAL GOVERNANCE

Belarus is a presidential republic. The president is head of state, and legislative power rests with the two-chamber parliament. The prime minister is appointed by the president and heads a council of ministers, which has executive power. There are 1,328 councils of deputies at regional, district, village, town and city levels.

2. VET GOVERNANCE

Key roles and functions

VET governance is centralised to a large extent, but with signs of decentralisation. The Ministry of Education (MoE) is involved in five out of seven governance functions, and has a strategic role. The executive and administrative authorities for vocational education and training of the six regions also have a strategic role, and are involved in all governance functions. Social partners have no decision-making role. Representatives of the academic community, employers and users of education services are involved in assessing educational quality. Representatives of different economic sectors help define the structure of staff training in professional education institutions, and training quality requirements, through their engagement in the State Council for Labour and Social Affairs. Individual entrepreneurs help finance VET. The most important VET providers are the professional education institutions (VET colleges and higher education institutions), which are involved in all governance functions.

Financing

The state is the main source of VET finance. Others include founders' funds, profit-making activities, and donations, as well government scholarship funds. The regions are responsible for funding professional education and training, and they manage financial resources, and finance educational institutions. Professional education and training institutions manage their allocated funds and are operationally independent. People with special

needs have various guarantees of help including free professional education and training, favourable conditions for entering college or higher education, and employment quotas.

Coordination mechanisms for VET policymaking

Legislative or normative-orientated mechanisms include the Education Code adopted in 2010, which defines the function of the education system. Targets and objectives for professional education are set by the National Strategy for the Sustainable Socio-economic Development of the Republic of Belarus until 2020 (the National Strategy) and the Programme of Socio-economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2011-15 (the Programme). The National Strategy's main target for education is a system developed in line with the needs of people, society and the state. According to the Programme, the priorities for professional education and training are to enhance its quality and availability, and develop a flexible system for training and retraining.

State development programmes for vocational, college and higher education focus on improving the scope and structure of training to meet the demands of hi-tech manufacturing; updating and improving the content of professional education and training; making training more practical; improving support and staffing; bringing new technology into education; and exporting more educational services. The main medium-term priorities for professional education and training are to: improve quality to link people's skills with social and technological needs; promote social partnerships to strengthen the link between labour markets and education, and help graduates find employment; further improve the NQF; and integrate professional education with education in general.

The government has adopted programme documents to help develop young people's innovative potential, linked to an overall strategy to modernise the economy and society.

Institutionalised policy advice-orientated mechanisms include public bodies implementing



VET policy at national and regional level. The Republican Institute of Vocational Education (RIPO) does methodological and guidance work with VET providers and develops national VET standards. The State Council for Labour and Social Affairs, as already mentioned, brings different sectors of the economy together to define the professional and qualification structure of staff training. And the Department of Education Quality Monitoring (DoEQM) coordinates the quality assurance activities of organisations including committees, local departments of education and youth affairs. DoEQM also uses international experience to study and implement improvements in controlling quality assurance.

Public-private structure-orientated mechanisms include a partnership between academics, employers and consumers focusing on quality assurance. Educational institutions also form partnerships with companies and regional and local labour markets.

In knowledge creation-orientated mechanisms, an automated information system helps to make sure there is enough training to cover businesses' needs. Professional education institutions and government bodies are both registered on the system, which among other things provides statistical analysis of changes in professional education and training, and calculates demand for training.

The state divides monitoring of quality assurance into sectoral, internal and external control. They are carried out, respectively, by ministries, educational institutions themselves and third parties from outside the given sector. There is an attestation system to appraise teaching staff's skills and the results of their work. And a 'network principle' sees resources targeted at colleges working in specialised networks. The resulting resource centres are a key way of linking professional education and training qualifications with industry needs. Organisations which request labour resources cooperate with educational institutions, including through internships.

In 2013 the Concept of Computerisation of the Education System of the Republic of Belarus until 2020 was adopted. Its main targets are to create equal opportunities for everyone to receive quality education services through modern ICT, in line with national and international standards; and to educate

and train people for life in the 'information society'.

A quality management system (QMS) helps to monitor quality and embed the methods, principles and approaches that characterise market economies. The QMS enables analysis of management including heads of institutions (strategic); deputies (tactical); and educators, trainers and tutors (process). The results help teaching councils decide what they need to improve.

Country typology

VET governance is centralised. The targets of VET policy making support wider state policy on vocational education and training. Despite several documents and strategies, there is no precise comprehensive vision and strategy for VET itself. And social partners are engaged only in a limited way in VET policy making. But public bodies like VET institutions develop partnerships with private organisations, while local authorities and educational institutions are taking on some MoE functions, including funding and property management.

Also, institutions are autonomous in managing their funds and property, and organising their activities. Yet there is no VET database providing data at all governance levels. Multi-level, multi-actor governance means promoting the engagement of social partners, NGOs and private sector stakeholders in VET policy making. And it means fostering public-private partnerships to meet the needs of regional labour markets.

Development assessment

VVET governance development is structured. Belarus has made significant progress in improving its VET system and professional education and training. VET governance remains centralised, there is a trend towards decentralisation as many functions of MoE have been transferred into the regions and educational institutions. The role of social partners seems to be limited, though private sector stakeholders cooperate with educational institutions and establish partnerships, signing agreements on all types of internships.

Although the key actors have adequate capabilities, there is a need for stronger social and policy dialogue among all key stakeholders at all

governance levels through involvement in all stages of VET policy making. Coordination mechanisms are also needed to link professional education and training with labour market needs. Belarus needs to deal with these challenges to shift from 'structured' to 'defined' multilevel VET governance.

Ongoing work in policy development

Professional education and training institutions' independence in budget allocation and management represent good practice towards multi-level, multi-actor governance. Also, they cooperate and develop partnerships with private sector stakeholders. The QMS is an example of enabling the review and evaluation of VET policies, and it could contribute towards multi-level, multi-actor governance. The automated information system strengthens the link between organisations and their skills needs on the one hand, and training on the other, helping to predict demand for skills and match it with supply. This makes it an example of the governance function of data and statistical provision.

3. POLICY POINTERS

Policy makers may wish to consider the following points for reflection, with a view to working towards their implementation in line with national priorities and in the context of national, regional, and local needs.

Overall planning and management

1. Define a framework of objectives, priorities and targets for VET, and adopt and implement a comprehensive strategy.
2. Help improve the quality of the VET system and the implementation of multi-level, multi-actor VET governance by engaging all key stakeholders in VET policy making to address labour market needs.
3. Promote the engagement of social partners, NGOs, and private sector stakeholders in VET policy making, especially decision making.
4. Make professional education more accessible for various groups, including disabled people and those with special needs.

Finance and funding

1. Define and develop a comprehensive legal framework for VET providers' financial autonomy at all governance levels.
2. Promote full financial autonomy for public and private VET providers.
3. Consult social partners and VET providers on financial incentives for public-private VET financing.
4. Provide financial incentives for VET financing, particularly for private sector actors.
5. Develop a framework of financial incentives (i.e. tax allowances, levy/grant) for VET financing by private stakeholders and social partners, and institutionalise it through legislation.

Coordination mechanisms for VET policy making

1. Design a framework and develop a coordination mechanism for engaging social partners, NGOs, and private sector stakeholders in the VET policy making process, especially decision making.
2. Further develop the National Qualifications Framework.
3. Get sectoral and regional/local stakeholders more engaged in developing public-private partnerships and initiatives to meet labour market skills needs and tackle the mismatch between supply and demand.
4. Further develop and implement all the systems for monitoring and evaluating VET, educators, and labour market supply and demand.
5. Develop a comprehensive and accessible database on VET for all levels of governance and develop a cooperation node among all stakeholders.
6. Develop a network for VET providers at all governance levels.



7. Enhance the network of VET providers and private sector stakeholders at all governance levels, especially local, to foster public-private partnerships focused mostly on apprenticeships and the mismatch between VET and labour market needs.
8. Develop new bilateral and/or tripartite partnerships at all governance levels, focused on labour market needs.
9. Promote social dialogue and cooperation with all public and private stakeholders, social partners and NGOs.
10. Enhance the system of quality assurance in professional education and training.
11. Improve the training of educators by strengthening their professional skills and social status.
12. Introduce more modern technologies and electronic tools in the VET system.