

COPING WITH COVID-19

Mapping education and training
responses to the health crisis in ETF
partner countries

15 April 2020

OVERVIEW

Highlights

The lockdown continues in most countries of the EU neighbourhood and Central Asia. Schools remain open in only three countries: Belarus, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. With the prospect of longer-term closures, new measures are being taken to deal with the need to care for all learners, teachers and trainers, and impossibility of proceeding with end-of-year assessments.

Over time, there is an increasing focus on vocational education and training, and more actions are being taken to address practice-based training, online assessments, career guidance and emotional support. In most countries general education is being provided via multiple media, including TV and radio broadcasts, social media and dedicated platforms. A growing number of countries are organising dedicated support to teachers and trainers through online learning and guidance, as well as peer support and tutoring.

As school closures enter their second month (and more in some countries), emergency measures are giving way to more structured responses. Governments are collecting data and feedback and preparing to close the school year under exceptional circumstances. Guidance and support on final examinations and practice is under preparation, and targeted measures are being taken for vocational and practical training, including a number of bottom-up initiatives involving civil society and the private sector in cooperation with governments. Action is being taken to address issues of coverage and access to connectivity and digital content, and there is a renewed interest in the future of learning. Thoughts are turning to the opportunities to integrate digital technology more fully into the learning process and improve the digital competences of teachers and trainers to shape the 'post emergency school'.

There are many examples of good practice, and cooperation among actors and with donors is forging ahead in most countries. The coming weeks will be crucial, not only for decision-making on how to close the current school year, but also for the future. This will require strong cooperation among all actors involved in shaping education and training policies.

Highlights include:

- **Increased attention** to support for and delivery of vocational education and training, including practical training, in most countries. Some countries are yet to address vocational and professional training. The diversity of programmes and requirements make it difficult to standardise provision or build on economies of scale.
- **Most countries are advancing their reflections** on final examinations and certification, including starting training for online assessments and rolling out systems for online evaluation.
- **Research and evidence collection** is gathering momentum, both through the activity of donors (several surveys and data collection exercises are under way either on general measures and responses, or on specific subjects) and at national level (in particular surveys targeting teachers and trainers, families and students), as well as through the research community.

- **Support to teachers and trainers** is provided through dedicated platforms and through peer support at provider level, as well as through tutoring programmes delivered centrally by national authorities.
- **Bottom-up initiatives are multiplying**, including cooperation with the private sector to boost connectivity and access to equipment for teachers, trainers and learners and civil society organisations. Providers are sharing good practice and organising peer learning and support and upscaling models and approaches.

Information is available for the 27 countries listed here:

South Eastern Europe and Turkey	Eastern Partnership and Russia	Southern and Eastern Mediterranean	Central Asia
Albania Bosnia & Herzegovina Kosovo ¹ Montenegro North Macedonia Serbia Turkey	Armenia Azerbaijan Belarus Georgia Moldova Ukraine Russia	Algeria Egypt Israel Lebanon Palestine ² Jordan Morocco Tunisia	Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan Tajikistan Turkmenistan Uzbekistan

South Eastern Europe and Turkey

Schools are closed in all countries in the region until further notice. Countries have rapidly organised delivery of general education classes mainly through TV and e-learning, either by creating ad-hoc websites, building on existing platforms and social media. Provision is being organised centrally for general education, while in most countries except Montenegro and Turkey, vocational training is left up to the providers. In North Macedonia, having given initial priority to general education, the government will focus on providing centralised support to vocational training in the coming weeks. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, some pilot initiatives in place before the COVID-19 emergency are paving the way for peer learning and support among providers.

An overview of actions involving teachers' and trainers' actions in the region is available on the [#LearningConnects](#) page of the ETF website. In Montenegro, the government has launched an initiative called [#ucidoma](#), which follows up on actions already planned under the Western Balkans Digital Agenda. In Turkey, the government is building on the Turkey Education 2023 strategy and accelerating access to and use of e-platforms, namely '[Turkish VET map](#)', '[E-graduates website](#)', as well as platforms for [teacher training](#) and ICT based curricula. The Turkish private sector is working closely with vocational schools, many of which have [switched to designing and producing materials](#) such as surgical masks and disinfectants to cope with the pandemic. In Montenegro, an online platform was developed through cooperation with the private sector as well as volunteer contributions and sharing of digital material and video lessons by teachers and trainers. In Turkey, mobile service providers are providing free connectivity to facilitate access to online platforms for students and teachers. With the prolonged closure of education and training providers, greater attention is also being given to practice-based training, career guidance and emotional support. Turkey released [three](#)

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

² This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual position of the Member States on this issue

[booklets](#) to target specific needs of young people, adults and parents. In Turkey, as well as in Serbia, Albania and North Macedonia, actions are being implemented to address practice-based training, including producing dedicated video and digital material to ensure continuity of this important component of curricula. In [Kosovo](#), with the support of GIZ, the government has started training for in-company trainers. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the [COVIDjea](#) (Covid ideas) initiative, supported by local organisations and international donors and hosted by a business accelerator, has been launched. It aims to scout for entrepreneurial, game-changing ideas to address challenges presented by COVID19, suggestions for counteracting informal employment during lockdown and ways of re-framing remote working due to mobility restrictions.

In these countries also training for online assessment has started, in view of taking decisions on how to organise the final examinations and certification of learning achievements. In Serbia, the challenge of the emergency is being transformed into an opportunity to reinforce future forms of learning and prepare content that will be integrated into programmes in the next academic year. Governments, as well as researchers, in the region are focusing on data collection through surveys. In Albania, for example, the results of a [survey](#) of 500 teachers has been published, collecting information on the delivery and the sustainability of measures. In Turkey researchers are sharing ideas on the impact of COVID-19 and its relation to the progress of reforms in the country. An [article](#) by Mahmut Ozer, Deputy Minister of National Education, Vocational Education and Training entitled “A Friend in Need During the Coronavirus Pandemic in Turkey” focuses on the major initiatives and challenges that vocational training is facing in the country.

Eastern partnership and Russia

Schools are closed in all countries, except Belarus, where the education and training system continues to operate with some measures to ensure social distancing and avoid mass gatherings at universities. Countries in the region have quickly organised their response to the emergency, issuing state orders with clear measures, and actions are under way to prepare and provide guidance for final examinations and certification. In all countries, there are specific platforms and services focusing on vocational training, building on existing strategies and pilot projects. [Armenia](#), [Azerbaijan](#) and [Georgia](#) are providing specific e-platforms and e-learning for teachers and trainers and developing digital content, which is growing as the closure of schools is prolonged.

A specific focus on the COVID-19 response in Azerbaijan is available through the [#learningconnects](#) page of the ETF website. In Georgia, the huge variety of vocational training programmes has made it difficult to provide homogeneous support across the country. Following the stabilisation of the provision of general education and general subjects in VET, the Ministry of Education is now addressing the specific needs of vocational training providers and designing specific measures. In Moldova, the government is preparing an online examination system to enable final examinations and certification online. In [Ukraine](#), the government has made digital content available and is counting on regional authorities and providers to define details of how to deliver it. It has called upon teaching staff to use this time for their professional learning and development.

In the whole region, peer learning is being promoted amongst providers. In addition, Ukraine has issued specific guidance on work-based learning and apprenticeships to ensure continuity, wherever possible, in practice-based training for specific professions. Georgia has launched a voluntary tutoring scheme for schools. In Armenia, the National Centre for Educational Technology Development is providing online training for teachers. In cooperation with the NGO National Network for Distance Learning, an online introduction to e-learning has been delivered covering 158 teachers from technical colleges and craftsmanship schools. In Russia, following the order of 14 March recommending online

education, regional authorities issued specific orders to organise online provision. Various resources are being used, including online [platforms](#), [simulations](#) and a number of platforms providing guidance to teachers and learners.

Southern and Eastern Mediterranean

Schools are closed in all countries in the region. General education is being provided on TV and online platforms. Some countries, such as Egypt, Morocco and Israel, are focusing increasingly on vocational training provision, while others have very limited information on it. In Tunisia, vocational training programmes are suspended until further notice, while general education provision is continuing online. In all countries in the region, the main tool for ensuring coverage for general education and general subjects in vocational training is TV broadcasting, which serves as a primary tool for ensuring continuity as well as mitigating risks of exclusion due to lack of equipment, or connectivity. In Lebanon, for example, it is reported that only 37% of vocational students have internet access.

In Egypt, the government used the first two weeks of school closure to prepare teachers and trainers through online and onsite learning, in particular peer support. Online provision has been rolled out using the Edmodo platform. The Egyptian authorities are now working to prepare guidance as well as online tools for final assessments, including elaborating requirements to test and evaluate students. The network of Applied Technology Schools (ATS) is involved in supporting other schools and preparing for online delivery. These 11 Centres of Vocational Excellence seem better equipped to respond, with teachers preparing online schooling together with partner companies. In general, these ATS are able to deliver more focused provision in these challenging times. The ATS in hospitality is getting students to send in videoclips of their cooking assignments at home and the ATS partnering with IBM is organising comprehensive course work online. Investment over the past few years in the online library Egyptian Knowledge Bank, is bearing fruit in large-scale availability of online resources that are now being extensively used, also for VET.

In Tunisia and Palestine, there are bottom-up initiatives in cooperation with international donors, civil society organisations and the private sector. In Tunisia, a [Hackathon](#) has been organised, while in Palestine, the internet service provider, Mada, has launched a community initiative to provide free internet access for three months to schools and university students and teachers. Mada has also provided them with routers. The Palestinian telecommunications company, Paltel, has announced it will soon launch an initiative to increase internet speed for subscribers free of charge to support e-learning. In Morocco, all three telecom operators have granted free access to the internet to facilitate connectivity.

Israel, which is already technologically advanced, has been fast in implementing online and digital education solutions. Ministries and vocational education networks such as ORT and AMAL are providing support to teachers and trainers. In the region there is a great deal of focus on inclusion and equality of access. Efforts are made to provide education through multiple channels, to involve teachers in reaching out to students including emotional support. In Israel, the authorities are working to finalise guidelines for final examinations as well as for the matriculation examination, which will be lighter and reduced to fewer subjects. In Algeria, where the provision of distance learning has started covering all grades, both the teachers' Union, Satef, and the parents' association have raised concerns over inclusion and equality of provision through online and digital solutions. In Jordan, general education is provided through TV broadcasts, while online courses have been launched by schools, universities and community colleges. However, the service is not provided by all schools, and there are issues of coverage and accessibility for both teachers and students. In addition, the public sector has raised concerns over the effectiveness of measures and the [readiness of teachers](#).

Central Asia

In Central Asia, the outbreak of the emergency coincided with spring holidays, which ended on 6-8 April. The spring break allowed countries in the region to prepare their response. Schools have resumed normal operation in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, with medical checks and other health precautions in place. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan used the break to get ready to deliver distance and online learning. In Uzbekistan, the government has involved honourable teachers, state award winners and authors of textbooks to prepare video lessons. Mainly focused on general subjects, these are broadcast nationwide on TV and radio.

In Kyrgyzstan, The Ministry of Education has reached an agreement with one of the main telecommunication companies, Megacom, to provide free SIM cards to all pupils/students and teachers, to improve access. Megacom will make an online platform available. For Initial training, the Vocational Education and Training Agency has taken steps for its six Competence Centres (tsentry per dovovo opyta) to support on-line and distance education for other vocational schools in specific economic sectors. The Republican Scientific Methodological Centre (RNMC) under the Agency [will set up a site for video lessons](#). The six existing Competence Centres located in the capital, Bishkek, which already fulfilled an important methodological and dissemination function before the emergency, will play a key role in supporting initial (primary) vocational training. Each Competence Centre focuses on a specific economic sector, building on strong links to enterprises and employer associations.

In Kazakhstan, the government followed a preparation plan, including a survey of all VET providers to check on both equipment and preparation of teachers and trainers. Kasipkor (now renamed Talar) has, based on its mapping of vocational colleges, been able to identify the main platforms used. The mapping also showed considerable regional differences. In two regions out of a total of 17, a single dedicated platform is used. In four other regions, the vast majority of providers (ranging from 77%-96%) use one main platform. In the remaining 11 regions, it is mainly up to providers to select a platform. Among the 800 vocational training providers in the country, 3% do not yet use any platform, but will start doing so soon, while 6% of providers in view of their specific target groups and mission are not required to use online platforms (for example vocational training providers in penitentiary institutions or serving special needs students). The mapping of vocational teachers and students has shown that only 1.5% of them do not have access to equipment for distance and online learning, including mobile phones. Regional administrations are purchasing devices to be distributed for use on a temporary basis. Around 20 online platforms are available in the country and around 2000 VET lessons are under preparation for release starting next week when the holidays end. In Kazakhstan, the government has also encouraged cooperation with the private sector and telecom operators to facilitate connectivity, and procure and distribute equipment for teachers and trainers as well as students.

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