

WORK-BASED LEARNING IN ALBANIA



Work-based learning in the Albanian VET system

Work-based learning takes place mainly during formal secondary vocational education and training (VET). For each vocational qualification, the National Agency for Vocational Education, Training and Qualification (NAVETQ) has developed a framework curriculum (2+1+1, 2+2 or 4 years) that consists of vocational theory and vocational practice.

The national law allows for the provision of internships in companies and this form of vocational practice has become increasingly common in recent years. However, work-based learning is not compulsory for Albanian students in initial vocational education.

When VET schools are not able to find suitable companies, vocational practice takes place in the VET schools' own workshops.

It is common practice that students rotate between various companies during their programmes (two to four years).

For a country with a population of around 2.8 million, Albania's (upper) secondary VET system is relatively small in terms of enrolment (compared with those of other countries in the region).

The role of the social partners

At national level, social partners are represented on the Integrated Policy Management Group (IPMG) and its subgroup on employment and skills policies, which takes a wider sector perspective. The IPMG discusses progress made against the objectives and targets of the National Employment and Skills Strategy and its Action Plan 2019–2022.

Representatives from enterprises and business associations are also involved in the development of occupational and qualification standards as well as in the development and validation of framework curricula.

At the VET school level, the local business community is represented on the school governing board. In some cases, business representatives are also assessors in final examinations and assist in the implementation of the practice modules.

The roles and responsibilities at the local level are not yet clearly defined and it is basically left to VET schools to coordinate and to secure sufficient places for work-based learning.

How does cooperation between learning venues work?

Usually, the VET school, student and interested enterprise sign a contract at the beginning of each academic year.

The VET school is usually the main initiator and coordinating body. However, during the Erasmus+ project, employers' organisations (Biznes Albania, Albanian Tourism Association) mobilised their business members. Many VET schools have school-business coordinators who play a key role in coordination and cooperation between schools and companies.

In general, companies supervise learners during their internships, very often in close collaboration with the school.

A regulation that stipulates the rights and obligations of companies providing work-based learning, for example, is being drafted but is not yet in place. The Ministry of Finance and Economy is currently working on validating and adopting the regulation.

KEY FIGURES

- **18 192 students were enrolled in (upper) secondary VET programmes in 2019/20.**
- **This accounted for nearly 18% of total enrolment in (upper) secondary education.**
- **17% of VET students were women.**
- **VET programmes are currently delivered in 35 schools.**

The process of learning and instructing

Many of the Albanian companies involved in work-based learning activities do not offer the full range of services and products that would be needed to ensure broader learning.

In some sectors, such as food technology, information technology and commerce, this problem has been addressed by the school–business coordinators who organise students' rotations.

Organisation of work-based learning

In general, placements need to be aligned with the overarching structures (2+1+1, 2+2 or 4 years), but the organisation is left to VET schools.

Some VET schools apply flexible or different approaches with respect to work-based learning, depending on the size of the cooperating company and the occupational field.

It is a common occurrence in most VET schools that not all students can be placed in companies and that some students complete their practice modules in school workshops.

For some vocational qualifications, the overall work-based learning process is very well organised and documented, while for others there is less information available.

The latest developments

In 2020, school development units became operational in Albanian VET schools. These units were created to improve the efficiency of VET school management through seven functions¹.

¹ Business and partner relations, Continuing professional development, Curricula development, Institutional marketing, Project development and implementation, Career orientation and guidance, Tracer studies.

SCHOOL–COMPANY COOPERATION

With the support of the Skills for Jobs project, cooperation between nine vocational schools (in the regions of Vlora, Berat, Elbasan, Tirana, Lezha and Shkodra) and more than 500 enterprises has been established and strengthened.

The vocational schools have established processes that enable:

- identification of companies that are willing to offer work-based learning opportunities according to predefined quality criteria;
- training of learners on how to write CVs and motivation letters, and on how to prepare for interviews with employers;
- development of individual in-company training plans for learners;
- supervision of learners during work-based learning by teachers and mentors;
- use of technology to document processes in video format, and to cooperate through virtual learning and communication platforms.

The project also supports companies in the information technology sector to design remote work-based learning schemes.

The development units are expected to play a key role in better linking VET schools with the labour market.

Business and partner relations is one of the seven functions. School–business coordinators are in charge of establishing links with companies and other partners. Twenty-one coordinators were trained in 2019 and 2020 through a national programme developed by NAVETQ with the support of the School Meets Business regional project.

A Training of Trainers programme for in-company mentors was implemented by the Skills for Jobs

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2020 update

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project in cooperation with the Swiss Federal Institute for VET. The first series of training was delivered in 2019.

Biznes Albania, an independent organisation of employers and business associations, has taken the lead in establishing the Chamber of Crafts, which will play a crucial role in work-based learning programmes in the crafts sector. The corresponding new Law on Craftsmanship was adopted in June 2016.

