

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN TURKEY

ETF Forum Member Institution:
Ministry of National Education, Directorate General
of Vocational and Technical Education, Quality
Improvement Department

April 2020



Quality Assurance Forum

THE ETF FORUM FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE
IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING



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1. INTRODUCTION¹

1.1 National context

Turkey has a population of 81 million inhabitants (see Table 1) and positive population growth. In recent years, it has also experienced positive economic growth and the level of gross domestic product (GDP) at purchasing power parity per capita was international \$28 816 in 2018. Turkey can be classified as an upper-middle-income country and is the top performer in the South-Eastern Europe and Turkey region².

The Turkish economy is based primarily on the service and industry sectors, which contributed 54.3% and 29.4% to the country's GDP, respectively. This is also reflected in the structure of the employed population, where the majority of employed people work in the service sector (55.1% in 2018). However, one-fifth of the employed population work in the labour-intensive sector of agriculture, which contributed only 5.8% of GDP in 2018³.

The employment rates of both women and men have been growing in recent years, although the share of employed women (29.4% in 2018) is significantly lower than the share of employed men (65.7% in 2018). The unemployment rate has decreased among men but not among women (in 2018, the unemployment rate was 9.6% among men and 13.8% among women). Moreover, unemployment is also high among the young population aged 15 to 24, having reached 20.2% in 2018⁴.

The Turkish Economic Reform Programme 2020–2022 covers measures relevant for technical and vocational education and training (VET), such as the preparation of digital content and skills-based programmes; updating of curricula in vocational and technical education; support for applications for inventions, patents and utility models; and the establishment of a private sector cooperation protocol for vocational training and skills development: Strengthening the VET System in Turkey project (SVET project).

1.2 Statistics

TABLE 1. POPULATION

	Size of population	Relative size of youth population (15–24, %)
2010	72 561 312	22.9
2015	77 695 904	21.3
2018	80 810 525	20.3

Source: Eurostat

¹ This paper is based on the Torino Process 2018–20 Turkey report. Last accessed July 2020 at: <https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/trp/torino-process-2018-2020-turkey-national-report>

² ETF database

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

TABLE 2. EMPLOYMENT

	Employment rate (15+, %)	Employment rate of young people (15–24, %)
2010	43.0	30.0
2015	46.0	34.1
2018	47.4	35.0

Source: Eurostat

TABLE 3. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF ACTIVE POPULATION (% AGED 15–74)

	Low	Medium	High
2010	63.7	20.4	15.9
2015	58.3	20.4	21.3
2018	55.0	21.2	23.8

Note: Low – International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 0–2; Medium – ISCED 3–4; High – ISCED 5–8

Source: Eurostat

TABLE 4. PARTICIPATION IN VET (STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL UPPER SECONDARY STUDENTS)

	Upper secondary (ISCED 3) VET
2010	40.5
2014	46.4
2017	46.4

Source: UNESCO (2010) and Eurostat

TABLE 5. SPENDING ON GENERAL EDUCATION AND VET

	Spending on ISCED 3–4 all education (including VET) as % of GDP	Spending on ISCED 3–4 VET only as % of GDP
2010	N/A	N/A
2014	0.0011	0.0005
2016	0.0012	0.0006

Note: Data refers to total spending on secondary-level education.

Source: ETF calculations based on Turkish Statistical Institute data

1.3 The VET system

Governance and management

VET has a centralised multi-level governance structure. The Ministry of National Education, which is responsible for planning and implementing education policies, comprises numerous directorates, councils and boards. Formal VET is administered by the Directorate General of Vocational and

Technical Education and non-formal VET by the Directorate General of Lifelong Learning. Post-secondary VET is then under the responsibility of the Council for Higher Education.

At the regional level, provincial and sub-provincial National Education Directorates in the 81 provinces are responsible for implementing VET regionally and locally. Moreover, they are also engaged in the monitoring and evaluation of providers on behalf of the ministry.

In addition, the Vocational Education Board has been established to take decisions related to the planning, development and evaluation of VET. The board meets once a year and consists of multiple stakeholders from the ministries, professional organisations and trade unions. Provincial employment and vocational education boards (PEVEB) have been set up to support the monitoring and decision-making relevant to the development of education and labour market policies at the provincial level.

In general, the following institutions and their representatives are considered key stakeholders in vocational and technical education: the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, the Business Council of Turkey, the Vocational Qualification Institute, KOSGEB (the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organisation of Turkey), the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), trade unions and employers, trade and craftspeople associations, education unions and sector representatives. All policies related to vocational and technical education are determined in cooperation with these stakeholders.

Financing

VET is mainly state financed but additional funding can be obtained from employers, international donors, non-governmental organisations and individuals. In addition, schools can generate their own income by selling goods and services.

Furthermore, financial incentives for public-private VET financing are provided and such public-private partnerships exist. Under the Private Teaching Institutions Law (January 2013, No 5 580), government funds have been given to private vocational and technical schools in organised industrial zones. In addition to this direct education support, there are also VAT exemptions for all school expenses, customs tax exemptions from imports, and payment of insurance premiums for employers.

Resources are distributed according to a formula which takes into account the number of students and staff as well as school type and infrastructure.

Regulatory frameworks

The most important regulation relevant for VET education is the Regulation on Secondary Education revised in 2017. Such a regulation, for example, introduced the concept of mastership (apprenticeship) education within the scope of compulsory education.

The main relevant strategy is the 2023 Education Vision for a Strong Future, which defines the key goals in the field of education. For VET, the main aims are to improve the perception of VET, to update the VET content as well as infrastructure and equipment, to increase the training opportunities for teachers, and to strengthen education-business cooperation.

To support the education-business cooperation, the Ministry of National Education has established integrated online e-platforms, such as the Turkish VET Map (meslekiegitimharitasi.meb.gov.tr) and the My Job My Life platform (meslegimhayatim.meb.gov.tr). These platforms, among many others, aim to

bring all stakeholders together, including students, teachers, graduates, public institutions and the private sector.

Turkey has also achieved substantial progress in supporting lifelong learning strategies, improving the VET system and developing structures in line with the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework and the European Quality Charter for Mobility.

Main provider institution types

Almost half of students at the upper secondary level of education attend vocational education⁵. Formal VET (ISCED level 3) is delivered in vocational and technical high schools, vocational education centres, multi-programme high schools and private vocational schools. Entry to tertiary education is possible after the successful passing of exams at the end of the studies and obtaining the Vocational and Technical High School Diploma. Access to these types of schools is not limited by age and is therefore also accessible for adults.

Higher-level VET (ISCED level 5B) takes place in public and private tertiary-level vocational schools. Interestingly, the number of private providers has been growing in recent years.

The Ministry of National Education, with assistance from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) II, aims to establish sectoral centres of vocational excellence. The current plan is to set up 25 centres.

Main provision/programme types

VET programmes at the upper secondary level last four years and conclude with the Vocational and Technical High School Diploma or Mastery Certificate for those on an apprenticeship programme.

The programmes use an achievement-based modular education system, which puts the students in the centre and allows transitions between different programmes. The system further promotes the focus on learning outcomes and is jointly prepared/updated with representatives of specific sectors, universities and field experts.

The work-based component is an important part of the programmes. In general, students attend both theoretical and practical lessons at school and practical training in enterprises. Within the Anatolian Vocational Programme, students in the 12th grade receive theoretical training at school for three days a week and skills training in the enterprises for two days a week. The students at vocational education centres spend four to five days a week in enterprises from the 9th grade.

The final exams are organised together with the employer representatives, and the certificates are in line with the Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF) as well as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

Formal and non-formal ISCED level 3 for VET for workers, jobseekers and disadvantaged adults take place in a range of public training institutions. Responsibility for the organisation of the training modules is within the Directorate General of Lifelong Learning or universities.

⁵ ETF database

Main qualifications according to ISCED levels

The secondary VET programmes are provided at ISCED level 3. Higher-level VET is provided at the ISCED 5B level.

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 Overview

The quality assurance system aims to ensure the provision of relevant and high-quality VET. The components include a quality assurance guide, self-evaluation, external feedback, review, quality indices and quality award.

2.2 General information on quality assurance at VET system level

According to the published and adopted Regulation on the Quality Assurance of Qualifications to be Included in the TQF from 2018, the Ministry of National Education, the Turkish Quality Association, the Board of Inspection, the Internal Audit Unit, Strategy Development Department and provincial organisations have mandates in relation to quality assurance of initial VET. Furthermore, the Ministry of National Education is responsible for the development of curricula, textbooks and monitoring.

The Vocational Qualifications Authority has the responsibility for quality assurance of continuing VET. In addition, the Council for Higher Education and the Higher Education Supervision Board are responsible for the quality assurance of higher education.

Quality assurance-related legislation includes the Vocational Qualifications Authority Act (from 2006); the Law on the Organisation and Duties of the Ministry of National Education (from 2011); Law No 6 528 on the Appointment Criteria for School Principals and Performance Ratings for Teacher Candidates; and the Vocational Education Law on Diplomas/Certificates for Formal VET (from 2016). In addition, there is legislation referring to 'total quality management' and the Regulation on the Quality Assurance of Qualifications to be Included in the TQF (from 2018).

Regulatory mechanisms for post-secondary VET include Vocational Qualifications Authority standards/procedures for continuing VET quality assurance and certification of institutions; and the university evaluation criteria defined by the Higher Education Supervision Board.

2.3 Quality assurance related to key VET areas

Evidence – statistics, and research and development

The key monitoring system in the field of education is the e-school, a publicly funded and web-based data management system which collects, analyses, reports and disseminates data on student enrolment, grades, information related to workplace/work-based learning and completion. E-school is widely used by different stakeholders.

The e-graduate system⁶ (managed by the Ministry of National Education) monitors the transition from VET to work and includes data on the graduates' year of graduation; achievements in terms of grades by different subjects; graduates who attend higher education; characteristics of graduate jobs, such as sectors of employment, the relationship between studied specialisations and the employment field; and remuneration. It also allows comparison of regions, schools and programmes and informs policy development and international surveys.

In 2016–17, the Turkish Statistical Institute launched the Official Statistical Programme to integrate VET work-based learning data in the monitoring framework.

Data related to the labour market is rich and includes labour force and employers' surveys; a vacancy monitor; data on jobseekers and employment insurance claimants managed by the Turkish Employment Agency İŞKUR and the Turkish Statistical Institute; and the labour-related information from provincial employment and vocational education boards in all provinces.

Quality assurance and the qualifications cycle

The Vocational Qualifications Authority is responsible for the preparation, development and updating of the TQF. Together with the Ministry of National Education and the Council of Higher Education, the Vocational Qualifications Authority supervises and awards qualifications.

Within the Vocational Qualifications Authority, the TQF Department is responsible for studies and research as well as the coordination between different responsible bodies and TQF councils. The latter consists of stakeholders representing relevant ministries and agencies, employers, students or employees and is responsible, for example, for assessments and decisions related to quality assurance criteria, the qualifications database and EQF referencing.

In 2018, the Regulation on the Quality Assurance of Qualifications to be Included in the TQF was adopted. This regulation specifies the quality assurance criteria that need to be satisfied by the qualifications, such as the need to have created and approved a qualification form; to have valid, reliable and transparent measurement and evaluation processes in place; to ensure transparency during the certification process; to implement external evaluation and self-assessment; to ensure participation of stakeholders; and to implement feedback mechanisms.

Quality assurance and VET provision/provider institutions

The Ministry of National Education is responsible for the quality assurance of upper secondary VET as well as for the monitoring and evaluation of schools. The established Quality Monitoring and Evaluation System consists of two stages that are complementary to each other: school inspections and self-evaluation.

The school inspections (or quality audits) are done every three years by school inspectors. The focus of such evaluations is on compliance with existing regulations, prescribed financial processes and management activities. The school inspections consist of document reviews, interviews with school staff, parents and students, and classroom observations. The results are summarised in a report and discussed with school management. Based on the conclusions, the school management is then responsible for the preparation of a school development plan.

⁶ <http://emezun.meb.gov.tr>

Self-evaluation is undertaken annually by teams consisting of principals, school administrators, teachers, students, parents and other relevant stakeholders. The data collected through the self-evaluation process is then submitted to the Education Quality Management System under the Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education. The self-assessments follow the European Foundation for Quality Management Excellence model, which includes the following building blocks: leadership; people, policy and strategy; partnership; and resources and processes. In addition, schools can consult manuals and guidelines on self-assessment that are published online.

The results of both types of assessment feed the quality index and quality map of educational institutions established in 2019.

To motivate schools to engage in quality improvement, the Ministry of National Education provides awards to formal/non-formal VET providers on the basis of specific quality criteria for management as well as performance and stakeholder satisfaction ratings. The ministry also promotes the use of the ISO 9001 certification.

Quality assurance and VET teacher/trainer qualifications standards and continuing professional development

Teachers must have at least a Bachelor's degree. The Ministry of National Education places teachers in schools, mainly based on their Public Staff Selection Examination scores, which is a compulsory requirement for employment in a public school.

Master trainers, on the other hand, are required to obtain mastership certificates in specific vocational fields. In addition, those who attend and pass pedagogy courses obtain a Master Trainer Certificate. Such a certificate is a prerequisite for trainers responsible for practical training in enterprises.

There is a mentoring programme provided for first-year teachers at each school. School leaders are also responsible, under guidance from local inspectors, for teacher appraisals, using nationally set and locally adapted competence standards.

The Directorate General for Teacher Training and Development together with local governments plan continuing professional development for approximately 10 000 VET teachers each year. The central directorate together with the provincial directorates directly manage the training plan and are responsible for the final selection of training organised at central level and/or provincial level. Teachers' applications for training are then made through the information system managed by the ministry.

Recently, efforts have been made to integrate technology into all schools through a Fatih project. E-training of teachers is part of these efforts. In addition, the SELFIE tool (self-reflection on effective learning by fostering the use of innovative educational technologies) is used to help schools to integrate digital technologies into teaching, learning and student assessment. This tool is implemented at different levels, including primary, secondary and vocational education.

3. STRENGTHS, DEVELOPMENTS, NEEDS

New developments – in progress/in the pipeline

A new breakthrough has taken place in vocational education which has a special place in the 2023 Education Vision. Plans are underway to establish an integrated structure aiming to change the existing social perception of vocational and technical education, identifying students' professional interests and abilities, and directing children and their families accordingly.

As part of the 2023 Education Vision, a school development model will be established to enable all people involved in children's learning to take part in school improvement activities.

The quality assurance system has started to be implemented in all vocational and technical secondary education institutions. In order to periodically monitor the quality processes of vocational secondary education, there is an external evaluation system based on themes such as the institutions' educational setting and infrastructure, the success, attendance and discipline of the students at school, guidance work carried out by the school, projects at the school and school-sector collaborations, social activities carried out by the school, and school healthcare activities.

Needs and challenges

Challenges in relation to improving quality assurance in VET include the need to:

- provide a comprehensive framework to enable the engagement of non-state actors in all stages of VET governance;
- address the skills supply/demand mismatch;
- introduce systematic approaches/opportunities for initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors in both school and work-based settings.

4. GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

The Regulation to Ensure the Quality Assurance of Qualifications to be Included in the TQF, prepared by the Vocational Qualifications Authority, was published on the *Official Gazette* of 25 March 2018, issue No 30 371, and entered into force. The regulation establishes the quality criteria that must be satisfied by all diplomas, certificates and vocational qualification certificates designed in compliance with the quality assurance principles defined in the EQF and issued in the country; it is also the first national legislation for the quality assurance of qualifications. Many qualifications such as diplomas, certificates or professional qualification documents are issued in the country's education, training and qualification systems. However, among these qualifications, only those with quality assurance will be included in the TQF and will have a reference to the EQF as well.

The quality assurance system has been established by the Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education in order to contribute to the training of the qualified labour force needed by the business world. Forming the steps of the quality assurance system, the self-assessment, external evaluation and feedback mechanisms are being implemented in this context in vocational and technical education schools/institutions.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
TQF	Turkish Qualifications Framework
VAT	Value-added tax
VET	Vocational education and training

Where to find out more

Website

www.etf.europa.eu

ETF Open Space

<https://openspace.etf.europa.eu>

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