

MAPPING

COVID 19

MAPPING

COVID 19 THE OVERVIEW

1.5 billion students across 160 countries worldwide have been forced to study at home during the global coronavirus pandemic.

The European Training Foundation (ETF) carried out a closer examination of the situation across its 29 partner countries. A regular **Coping with Covid-19 mapping** exercise was a major part of this work, which looks at the education and training responses to the health crisis in the ETF's partner countries*.



In parallel, through its **#LearningConnects** campaign the ETF has collected stories, interviewed key individuals on Facebook Live and organised webinars for its main stakeholders to help people deal with this unprecedented challenge and ensure that learning continues to connect individuals and institutions.

The focus is on how education and training systems, businesses, schools, teachers, students and their families can adapt to the challenges presented by the crisis, often using unfamiliar and untried technology and imperfect systems and infrastructure.

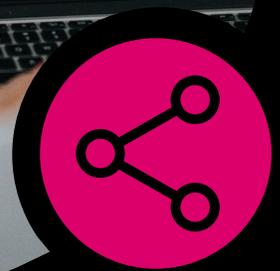
Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine*, Tunisia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

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"The key takeaway from the remarkable reaction to the COVID-19 crisis," the exercise finds, "is the realisation that the transformation is not about 'moving online' but about switching to **learning throughout life and ensuring that learning is accessible to all.**"



3 critical points emerge to ensure positive outcomes in the future:



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1 FROM CRISIS TO LONG-TERM SYSTEM CHANGE

It is essential to build on lessons learned through collecting evidence to inform policy choices for the development of education and training in the future.

2 INNOVATIVE BLENDED LEARNING IS KEY

The importance of focusing on the sustainability of adopted measures, including maintaining equipment and updating portals and teaching materials produced, and ensuring continued access for all.

3 GOING ONLINE INCREASED INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION...AGAIN

Shortcomings, particularly in equity, access and competence-based learning, must be addressed.

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Meeting the challenges raised by the COVID-19 crisis - finding a way to take forward positive lessons learned - will require collaboration.

"Most countries are lagging behind in this area," the ETF mapping exercise says, "and will need to cooperate closely with the private sector, social partners and international bodies, to address the demand for skills development, upskilling and changes in the world of work."

Re-establishing international cooperation, including crowd sourcing and sharing of resources could "speed up and support this transformation."

Key highlights from the report, which draws on evidence from the four regions (South Eastern Europe and Turkey; Eastern Partnership and Russia; Southern and Eastern Mediterranean; and Central Asia), include:



Most countries have focused strongly on managing end of year exams, with some switching partially or fully to **online assessment**, and others postponing or waiving exams, or extending or varying the school year to provide for flexibility.

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Many countries are collecting **evidence on digital and online learning** to help inform future decisions to improve education, understanding that "**facts are the most important ingredient in an effective response to emergencies.**"



The crisis has promoted the use of a "**large number of platforms**" employing an "**impressive quantity of digital resources**" across countries. Effort is needed to **ensure sustainability and integration** into education systems post-crisis. Regional and transnational sharing of digital tools remains an issue to be explored.



Although student emotional and social proximity is a concern for many countries, some of which have adopted programmes to address the negative impact of lockdowns on learners, most countries remain focused on ensuring the continuity of teaching. However, **addressing the needs of the most vulnerable students** - and those most at risk of dropping out - will demand greater attention as the new school year gets closer.

The integration of digital and online solutions could be transformative, but only if we focus on the real target: the potential for individual learning processes and the achievement of defined learning outcomes.

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Practical training, particularly in the more hands-on vocational education and training courses, is under the spotlight in many countries. Various solutions, including partnerships with the private sector, are being developed to "open up opportunities to expand work-based learning" and introduce "virtual and augmented reality solutions."



Cooperation between educational institutions and the private sector and civil society has expanded during the pandemic as stakeholders and community partners have "explored opportunities to ensure coverage,

access and innovative solutions to education and training provision."

As **Georgios Zisimos**, ETF Senior Specialist, EU Education and Training Policies, notes, the mapping exercise reveals the "strengths and weaknesses" of VET systems in ETF partner countries outside the EU. "Countries are often more comfortable talking about their strengths," he says. "We have a very sincere dialogue with our countries and that is the strength of our mapping. These countries can tell us not only what they achieved but also the difficulties."

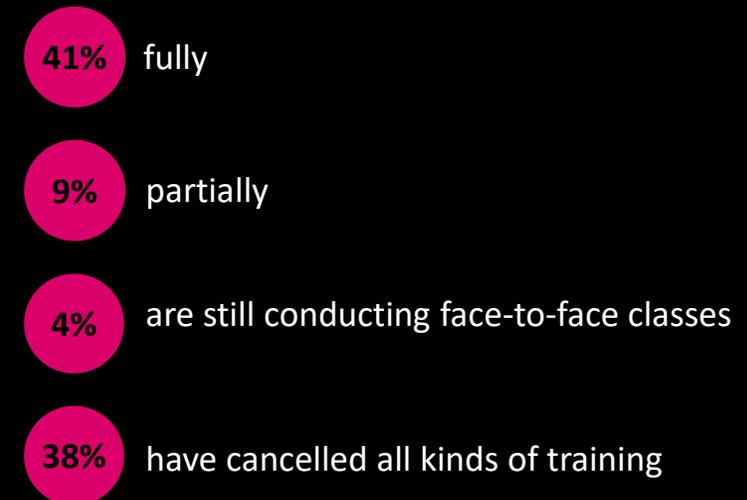
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An international study commissioned by UNESCO-UNEVOC and the ILO (International Labour Organisation) shows a major shift to online and distance learning in general and vocational education and training during the pandemic.

Before the pandemic, online learning use by education providers was as follows:



The pandemic has transformed the situation.



"You can tell there is a big difference between countries that could move to online training quickly and others that have struggled," says **Jens Liebe**, Senior Programme Expert at UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre.

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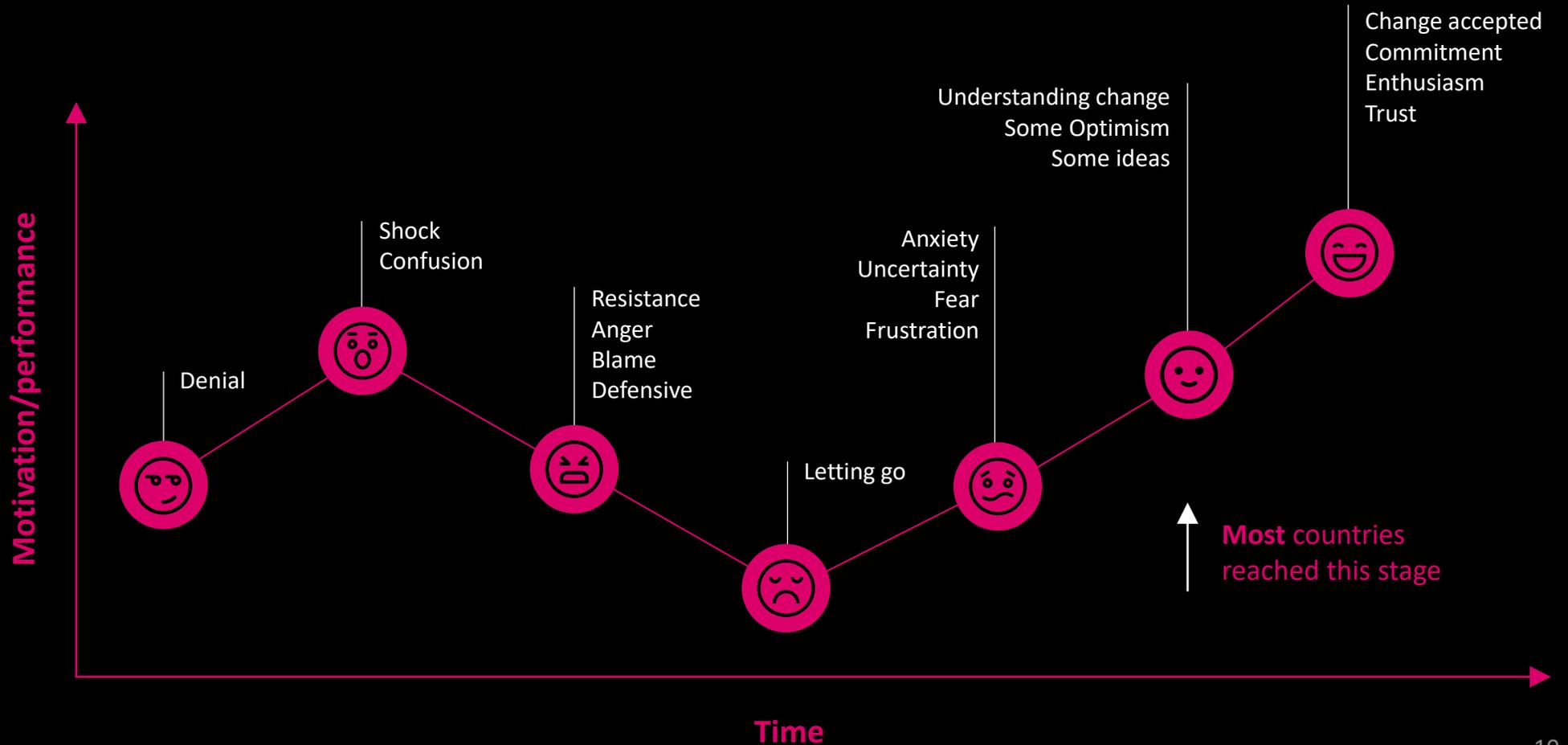
What has become clear is that all countries have typically gone through a double learning curve: flowing in more or less predictable stages from initial denial about the impact of the pandemic on learning, through a dawning realisation of the urgent change needed - accompanied by shock and confusion - on to denial, anger and sometimes blame to an eventual surrender to the inevitable and the emergence of strategies to search for the best options to maintain some kind of continuity in education.

As the curve ticks up for a second time, optimism enters the picture as the understanding for change evolves into an appreciation of the opportunities created for the future. This is where most countries

are now. The aim for policy makers and those that support reform in vocational education and training, such as the ETF and other international agencies, must now be to support and maintain this acceptance of change, and contribute to commitment, enthusiasm and trust for a future that embeds learning opportunities for all throughout their lifetimes.

A key area for action in skills training is how to compensate for practical, hands-on learning when circumstances such as the pandemic prevents that. Seeking for ways to use virtual reality and other AI applications, or for physically distanced versions of hands-on learning, are among the options educators must now pursue.

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SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE AND TURKEY

Populous, industrially developed Turkey is the demographic and geopolitical exception in this regional grouping of mainly small Balkan ETF partner countries, but only Albania has reopened (early May) some of its schools after recording fewer than 1,200 cases of COVID-19 and just 33 deaths. Schools in all other countries will remain closed until the end of the school year.

Education and training providers across the region have responded to quarantine lockdown with a range of online and distance learning programmes, augmented by central government measures that include televised education content.

A focus on the future - to what extent online learning will be retained - and decisions on how to manage assets acquired during the crisis, including tracking and maintaining ownership of devices purchased, and managing digital resources developed, is evident across the region. More investment in the digitalisation of education content and infrastructure is planned throughout the region, with the potential, according to Montenegro's education minister to fundamentally modernise education in the region.

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ALBANIA

Rapid transfer to teaching online has been responsive, but hampered by incomplete broadband coverage, leaving areas that cannot access fast internet services.

Television has delivered a lot of general education content, although the passive nature of TV means that it is only partially effective, unless it is accompanied by interactive learning tasks via other platforms.



Telecoms operators have donated equipment and made some content free to access. However, they have also faced criticism for using the crisis as an opportunity to increase their client base.

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Some schools and vocational colleges reopened in early May, but face social distancing challenges. Practical and Work-Based Learning are yet to resume.

Schools are focused on helping students from the 12th and 13th grades prepare to take their Matura (matriculation) exam.

A survey by the national VET and qualifications agency (NAVETQ) says poor Internet access, a confusing "**multiplicity of communication channels,**" and a lack of teacher training are key challenges. Distance learning is seen to exacerbate inequalities.

However, blended learning is likely to be used to cope with an anticipated second wave of the virus in September.



#LearningConnects:

For **Adriana Prenga**, a teacher of hospitality and tourism from Albania, flexibility in scheduling with students, working on their motivation and time management as well as technical issues are needed. Practical subjects are assessed via students' self-videos which are then shared with teachers and workplace mentors. **With guidance, students are rising to the challenge**, says Adriana, **showing responsibility and commitment to their learning**. As always, communicating with parents enhances student motivation.

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BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Digital poverty particularly in rural and outlying areas has prompted concern about education exclusion at a time when schools had to shift to remote learning.

Teachers were largely unprepared for remote learning when school closures began. Schools already with on-line learning experience (e.g. Sarajevo Canton's on-line week) were better able to adapt to on-line provision while others established hybrid learning models (emails, social media tools)

Apprenticeship placements in business have been suspended. It is also unclear as to how the range of education authorities are addressing public examinations.

Individual responses of schools, teachers, students and parents suggest agility in facing the challenges of the crisis. A COVIDjea (Covid ideas) initiative aims to scout for "game-changing ideas" to address the challenges of the crisis.

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Regional television stations in some cantons (Una-Sana, Tuzla) support distance learning. BH Telecom provides free internet to families without access.

Implications of COVID for business point to the de-registration of workers, while the loss of markets has led to business closures and with that, unemployment. An SME survey highlights the need for mentoring to help businesses stay afloat.





KOSOVO*

Schools have been closed since early March, and although television stations have been providing daily general school lessons there is no evidence of any genuine shift to online learning.

Distance learning announced by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation March 23 was for grades 1-5 only, initially in Albanian language and mathematics.

Lessons are produced with support from the Swiss Development Cooperation Agency and aired by two television stations.

There is no national provision for vocational education and training institutes and, despite donor support from Germany's GIZ for "open hours" where vocational teachers can consult on online working, no evidence of online lessons.

The University for Business and Technology and EONReality have, however, launched a partnership to create an AVR (Augmented and Virtual Reality) hub focused on education and training applications.

* 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

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MONTENEGRO

Schools, vocational colleges and universities closed March 16 and won't reopen until the autumn.

Enrolment for vocational schools for next academic year was done online, and the government has announced the start of a 'digital classroom' project with major investment to digitalise textbooks and educational content, as well as infrastructure development throughout the country.

Distance learning is being provided via two national TV channels and the Ministry of Education has set up a website (www.ucidoma.me) for learners and teachers that includes examples of dual education and tips for online education.

The platform cooperates with the private sector and includes voluntary contributions and shared digital materials and video lessons from teachers and trainers.



Digital skills was already a government focus under the Western Balkans Digital Agenda as part of the EU enlargement process; a regional working group for the development of digital skills strategies, including the ETF, was launched on April 27.

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**NORTH MACEDONIA**

A rapid response to an early rash of cases of COVID-19 led to school and college closures from 6 March. Tough curfew measures were put in place and mobility timetables to avoid contact between old and young people were implemented.

Online and distance learning for all school and university students began on 23 March, with a rolling digital training scheme for key teachers to create a training cascade.

Daily distance learning lessons broadcast by two national TV channels and donors are also providing support for online learning. Education ministry

and national telecom company are providing free Internet to 30,000 students from social risk families.

Work-Based Learning is suspended, but students of practical courses are asked to report step-by-step plans for how they would tackle tasks for year-end projects.

Final exams (state Matura) have been scrapped, but marks for students in primary and secondary schools will be based on cumulative scores and online assessments. University exams have gone online and new enrolments will be based on secondary school certificates.



#LearningConnects:

Goce Nedelkoski from North Macedonia highlights the difficulties of some teachers in adapting to the new teaching delivery methods, whereas others "are exploiting new platforms to their maximum potential". Teaching is not about simply putting lessons online; teachers have to use all resources available to connect to their students. "These times have changed the mindset of teachers" says Goce, adding "they develop their digital skills... to do their jobs".



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SERBIA

Schools and colleges were closed within a couple of days of an announcement of a national state of emergency, on 15 March. Education institutions remain closed with no definite date set for reopening, though an autumn return is likely following a significant easing of restrictions (including opening pre-school and kindergarten facilities), and the reopening of the country's borders early June.

Distance learning for pre-university students at schools and colleges began from 18 March via the national broadcaster and other TV stations initially focused on primary and secondary education.

Lessons are also available for downloading via a free mobile phone and tablet application "RTS My School".



All materials have also been made available via a range of online platforms in areas that include student assessment, training for Microsoft Teams, inclusive education, distance learning for national minorities (including translation into minority languages) and distance learning for dual education.



The Serbian Teachers' Union reports that education institutions and staff were quick to adapt to distance teaching and learning, making effective use of digital tools and the material provided. A government digital solidarity portal offers guidance and psychological support as well as coaching.

An innovative project to tackle the needs of dual-education students is being backed by Swiss and German agencies (SDC, GIZ). Videos of 150 hours of theory and 80 of practical training lessons are being recorded in classrooms and real working environments with licensed instructors.

#LearningConnects:

In Serbia, the government's efforts to integrate ICT into teaching since 2013 has provided the foundation for many teachers to make the transition during this lockdown period. "I am highly motivated, because I have been engaged in online learning more than 10 years, and I'm thrilled to be able to share all that I do and all that I know." says **Snežana Marković**, a computer science teacher, who recognises nonetheless that it can mean a greater workload and heightened pressure on teachers, especially those who hadn't yet 'gone digital'.



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TURKEY

Turkey was able to react swiftly to the educational demands of the pandemic thanks to an established national digital strategy and clear guidelines. Schools and colleges closed within days of the first declared case of coronavirus on March 11 and by March 23 - after a one-week holiday that staff used to prepare for a new online learning system - distance education was introduced.

The country's highly centralised education system relies upon two state TV channels and a new TV platform, EBA alongside online platforms to deliver lessons tailored to most subjects.

Senior officials at the Ministry of National Education say that groundwork on Turkey's 2023 education vision statement- where social inclusion, equity and quality are key objectives - helped ensure that the response to the needs of more than 18 million students across the general and vocational sectors, and the million teachers involved in education, were swiftly met.

By mid-April more than 650,000 live lessons had been conducted on the EBA platform and, via artificial intelligence, personalised learning online for 11th and 12th grade students was facilitated to ensure effective learning feedback.

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For most students, telephone, digital interviews and webchats with teachers have become the preferred tools for interaction to supplement the one-way provision of televised daily lessons. The crisis has, education leaders say, highlighted the need for long-term professional integration and citizen empowerment in the use of digital technologies.



To support the population, the Ministry of National Education has published three booklets (available online) aimed at providing information to parents, advice on how to talk about feelings for adults and how to cope during the crisis for young people.

No dual education or workplace learning – normally a strength of Turkey's vocational education system - had been allowed during the crisis, but a number of employers and private sector providers have opened up online resources free of charge to students.

Vocational students have, however, been allowed with appropriate safety measures in place, to support national output of surgical gowns, masks and hand-sanitisers, using college facilities to design and produce millions of items of urgently needed supplies during the crisis.

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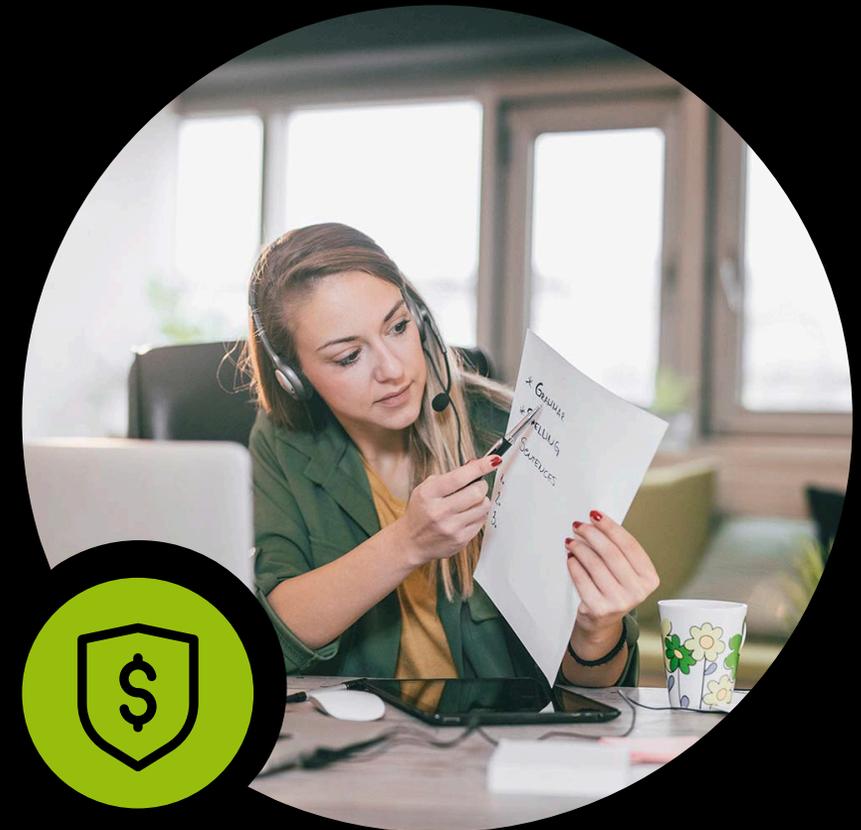
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Researchers studying the role of vocational education during the crisis say there are important lessons for strengthening its socio-economic role in the future.

Mahmut Ozer, deputy minister of National Education, Vocational Education and Training, says "a strengthened VET system...can play a major role in meeting society needs during a crisis"

Schools are not due to reopen until September but distance learning programs were due to continue until June 19 in line with government plans to gradually reopen the country.



#LearningConnects:

No more excuses. **Melike**, a land and water programme coordinator at a Turkish nature conservation centre, says the pandemic meant she had finally run out of excuses to learn Spanish.

"I had been planning to learn Spanish for years but always had an excuse not to start a course," she says.

The pandemic shutdown - which in Turkey started within days of the first reported case on 11 March - has prompted the emergence of an

amazing array of free online learning opportunities. For Melike this came in the form of an offer from a friend to set up a small online group to learn Spanish.

"A close friend started giving Spanish lessons via Zoom to a small group, free of charge."

The lessons - five times a week for up to 90 minutes - allows her friend to practice her online teaching skills, while her friends learn Spanish, Melike says.



#LearningConnects:

"Frankly speaking, I had an issue with this kind of technology and online learning and didn't believe in its efficiency before. However, it is working perfectly."

She adds: "As a person brought up in face-to-face learning settings in schools, I was not very familiar and interested in distance learning. The curfew and quarantine due to the pandemic forced not only a paradigm shift in formal education, but also a behavioural change in me in terms of learning."

In a country with a population of 80 million, tough lockdown restrictions have kept confirmed Covid-19 cases to around 130,000 and deaths to 3,500 or so.

In normal times Melike's course would have meant attending a college setting, but as she observes: "Another advantage of online learning is I am not losing time in traffic trying to reach a course place and back home."



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EASTERN PARTNERSHIP & RUSSIA

Schools and colleges are closed in all countries of the region, except Belarus. However, institutions have adopted some social distancing measures and Ministry of Education figures suggest as many as 60-70% of students are studying at home.

Online learning is being developed across the region with specific platforms and training programmes in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova.

Work-based learning is suspended in all countries, except for some professions where practical training can be organised remotely.



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2



ARMENIA

National emergency and school and public lockdowns were announced on 16 March, with a shift to online learning expected. Challenges included widespread lack of experience among teachers - nearly half of whom had no experience of using digital tools at all. A quarter of all students lack computers at home as do 23% of teachers. A national appeal to help low-income students led to a donation of 5,000 digital devices.

Schools and colleges have developed and implemented online training programmes via Zoom, YouTube, Moodle and other platforms; a database of 2,500 mentor teachers experienced in distance learning has been set up. Indeed, most processes have been digitalised including developing resources, programmes, teaching platforms, as well as online applications and enrolment.

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Public TV is airing training courses and providing professional orientation and career guidance.

There will be no end of year exams for vocational students - final assessment will be based on previous marks. Students continuing in September will be offered catch up classes.

An EU project has provided 370 vulnerable children with equipment and internet connections to support social inclusion in the country.



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AZERBAIJAN

Education policy is centralised in Azerbaijan, but the huge variety of vocational training programmes has made it difficult to provide a homogenous approach to distance learning during the pandemic following lockdown announced on 10 March.

Recorded lessons aired on state television from 11 March for general school and 30 March for vocational schools are regarded as a success - with wide subject coverage by highly qualified teachers.

The adoption in December 2016 of a national Roadmap for Development of Telecommunication

and Information Technologies had helped provide a foundation for digital learning strategies:



AzEDUNET, established in 2008, is among a number of leading actors helping develop ICT and facilitate efficient responses to educational needs during the crisis. AzEDUNET links over 2,500 institutions, covering 85% of students and 75% of teachers in the country.

Support for schools and online learning, including investing in equipment, is being provided by South Korea and the EU, which is the biggest donor in this sector in the country.

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2

Although a historical lack of investment in technical VET means that the quality of skills training varies across the country, a new law on TVET adopted in April 2018 and a €10 million injection to improve digital infrastructure in vocational schools paved the way to a successful shift to online education during the COVID crisis.

Highlights in the response to the pandemic include the launch, early April, of a "Virtual School" project offered by the Ministry of Education in association with Microsoft. Students who register are assigned to an appropriate class where they are offered homework linked to topics taught on weekly TV lessons.

Baku State Vocational Training Centre for Industry and Innovation, is among those using the system to provide tailored content for VET students, including teaching materials and video tutorial delivered via Microsoft Teams.



Moves to monitor online provision during the crisis are being taken, for example by Baku Higher Oil School, which is organizing online exams to evaluate the results of distance learning.

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#LearningConnects:

Azerbaijan is fortunate because parents play an important role in education. Many are committed to working with teachers to monitor the online learning of their children. The online courses - which were launched on the Culture TV channel and other platforms - include 26 lessons across eight VET specialisations including electrical engineer, construction, mechanics, automobile and ICT.

The videos are 7-15 minutes long and try to divide teaching between theory and practice, showing how things work or how they look. This is difficult, because no one is sure that students are watching the videos. It falls to parents to ensure that students work on the videos or upload the lessons to the particular platforms they use.

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#LearningConnects:

The online courses are a quick fix and probably not sustainable in the current form. We don't know how long this pandemic situation will last, but for now this is the only practicable solution.

Firdovsi Mutallimov is a vocational education and training consultant and specialist in sector skills and national occupational standards from Azerbaijan. He has been working on improving and developing occupational standards since 2010.



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BELARUS

Belarus is the outlier not only in the region, but in Europe as a whole, where its president has denied the dangers posed by COVID-19, suggesting it can be treated by vodka, playing ice-hockey or hard physical work. That has not prevented it recording nearly 63,000 cases and over 400 deaths.

Schools officially remain open although Ministry of Education figures and media reports suggest that up to 60% of students are studying from home. The National Institute of Education has published a guidance note on platforms and resources for distance and online education.

An ambiguous official position of distance and online learning means that most current provision is being offered on an ad hoc basis by schools and colleges themselves. Information is scant, but there is evidence that at least 16 Initial vocational schools are implementing pilot distance and online learning projects.



Students that choose not to attend final exams will be graded on an average of their first three quarters this year.

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#LearningConnects:

- 1 Give a lot of support to your team-members: provide them with information, feedback, useful resources, guidelines, materials, positive emotions, etc. share everything you can.
- 2 Involve parents – you should become partners (if not yet).
- 3 Think about every minute of a kid in front of the screen: what he/she is doing right now? Is it value-adding and developing? Ensure they are not losing their time – otherwise you'll lose them.
- 4 Create additional possibilities for kids to communicate and interact: they are missing each other and real communication.
- 5 Take all this not as temporary solution but as your new way of living. The world will never be the same again, nor will you.

Natalia Iskortseva is Principal and co-founder of Stembridge School in Minsk, Belarus.

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Natalia Iskortseva is Principal and co-founder of Stembridge School in Minsk, Belarus. A private school with 150 students aged 6-15, it was founded in 2008 and teaches a range of academic disciplines according to national educational standards for secondary schools with a focus on 21st century skills.



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GEORGIA

Following the declaration of a state of emergency March 21, education institutions were shut down for the duration of the crisis. General education and schools switched to using online teaching methods, supported by "TV School" lessons aired by a national public broadcaster.

Training provision was suspended in all public vocational schools to allow the ministry of education to do a mapping and analysis of distance and online teaching needs of staff. The Ministry stresses analysis is needed to ensure the system is prepared for the future.



Enrolment for the next school year has been shifted one month later to early May, though numbers will be reduced to facilitate catch up classes in the autumn for existing students.

Some work-based learning initially continued in agricultural beekeeping, and in one region under complete quarantine 40 students in a private nursing college were mobilised to support doctors and medical staff, resulting in real work-based learning experiences.

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MOLDOVA

All schools and training providers closed on 23 March following the declaration of a state of emergency; dual education including company training placements have been specifically forbidden - sector ministries are trying to arrange practical training at home supported by online advice from teachers.

Under a devolved system recently introduced, vocational schools have autonomy and all distance and online teaching is being organised by individual institutions, though government is providing advice on platforms and developing digital content.

Parents are being encouraged to play an active role in motivating their children to attend online lessons and communicate with teachers.

Initial plans for online graduation exams and assessment have been modified with the aim of regular tests during the summer. The Ministry of Education believes online exams could undermine confidence in diplomas both in Moldova and abroad, where many Moldovans work.

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UKRAINE

Regional and institutional autonomy has given vocational education and training schools much flexibility in responding to a national lockdown that started on 12 March, although the Ministry of Education wasted no time in offering instructions and support to help schools switch to online and distance learning.

Support for general secondary education includes the initiative "All-Ukrainian School Online" - broadcasting lessons for all grades of primary and secondary education by Ukrainian TV channels and the Ministry of Education and Science's YouTube channel launched on 6 April.

For all levels of education, the heads of education institutions are expected to ensure the delivery of courses using distance learning technologies.

Support and training to vocational teachers and trainers has been provided by the Training-Methodological Centres of VET in each region, and by the VET Directorate which provided guidance on how to organise distance learning and shared resources. Vocational school teachers are being encouraged to share courses they have developed; the Ministry is assessing and ensuring quality control.

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Support includes an online training operator, "Prometeus", officially recognised by the ministry, that provides educational services for continuous professional development; and educational portal "Na Urok" (To the Lesson) that enables peer learning through online tests, webinars and Internet conferences; and EdCamp, which organised a five-day online teacher support workshop.

The national VET Directorate reports that distance learning in all types of theoretical training is available, but there are major challenges with practical and work-based training, with insufficient video tutorial and online resources. Fears are growing that discontinuity of training, particularly for disadvantaged students, could lead to vocational school dropout rates increasing and a knock-on effect of increasing economically harmful skills shortages.

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The Ministry of Education and Science advised postponing work-based learning until quarantine measures were lifted. Professions for which online practical training was an option (such as tour operators, computer operators, ICT, accounting, secretaries etc,) were exempt from this.

As the country gradually emerges from strict lockdown measures, from 1 June training institutions can begin to return to regular teaching for students of practical courses where distance education is impossible. Reopening is subject to local ordinances and VET schools are responsible for all safety measures.

Courses include those involving laboratory work, driving and industrial skills.

State qualification exams have not been cancelled and the Ministry of Education is drawing up guidelines for the completion of the school year.



Monitoring of distance and online learning measures adopted are likely to lead to a clearer policy in the future on blended and flexible learning solutions.

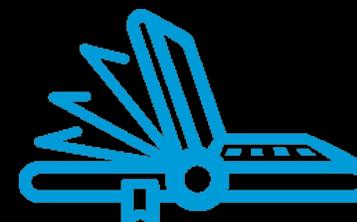
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#LearningConnects:

As we can see, distance education is a rather interesting and unusual form of education. Today, it is common in many countries of the world. In Ukraine, the system of distance education is only just making confident steps, and every year it will be improved and expanded because there is a consumer and legal framework. We hope that the successful experience of distance learning will be used in the future, and students will be able to receive education in the most convenient way for them. The education system will definitely be different after the coronavirus.



Lyudmila Kravtsiv is Deputy Director for Production Training Work at the Kvasyliv Professional Lyceum, near Rivne, western Ukraine. She has worked in the field of vocational education for nearly 20 years.

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RUSSIA

Russia's COVID-19 curve came later than many countries in Europe, but by early June it had recorded among the highest global infection rates in the world.

Schools, colleges and universities were advised to switch to distance learning in mid-March; strict lockdown measures introduced in Moscow (including a system of electronic passes to control people's movements) and across the country from 28 March were extended through the end of May when gradual easing began.

All practical lessons in vocational training schools have been suspended; distance and online learning has been introduced where possible. The education ministry has supplied a list of online resources including that of World Skills Russia; leading Internet platforms such as Yandex have also made material available.

Summer exams have been postponed until the epidemiological situation has eased. In higher education, 60% of institutions report online learning working well, but 14% face problems or cannot provide it at all.

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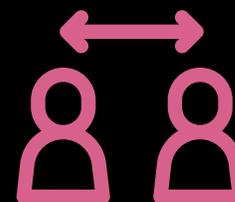
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3

**SOUTHERN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

Egypt and Israel were the first countries to react, having more organised plans and measures to ensure alternative delivery of education and speedier implementation. Other countries in the region followed, and by April all countries had put in place some measures to ensure the continuity of delivery. Vocational education and training is the sector that suffered most from the lockdown, partly due to the difficulty of continuing practical training classes and work based learning programmes.

Thanks to the rapid imposition of containment measures, rates of infection and deaths from COVID-19 remained relatively low compared with Europe. Countries in the region are now preparing for Phase 2 of the crisis response, with plans for implementing final exams and preparations for the new school year are underway.



COVID 19 REGIONAL OVERVIEW

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ALGERIA

Strict curfews combined with restrictions on movements between provinces has helped control the spread of COVID-19 with a total of 15,000+ cases and just over 950 deaths. Providing continuity of education, particularly for vocational training schools, has been more challenging: some lessons switched to distance and online learning on different platforms.

Schools are closed until October, with final exams either cancelled or moved to September. Distance learning provision for general school students is provided via television and YouTube,

although it has not been possible for vocational students to participate in virtual classes or practical lessons.

Apprenticeships in enterprises have no longer been possible due to the closure of many workplaces. One of the country's two main parents' associations said: "Access to the Internet and its tools, such as a PC, tablet or Smartphone, is not democratized. Television remains a solution, provided that children have the right environment to concentrate."

COVID 19 REGIONAL OVERVIEW

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EGYPT

The Ministry of Education and Technical Education spearheads a coordinated national response to the country's educational needs during the crisis, with the launch of distance learning via the EDMODO platform.

Officially all of the country's 25 million pre-university students are using EDMODO, a number boosted by last year's government programme to provide Internet-connected tablets to all 1st year students in general education. Latest figures show that in practice by the end of April, at least 10 million had signed up on EDMODO,

allowing direct interaction between teachers and students.

An additional one million teachers and around 500,000 parents are also using EDMODO, which includes content for general and vocational students.

Following school closures in mid-March, teachers and trainers were given two weeks to prepare for the switch to distance and online learning, with peer training a key part of the period.

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Exams for final year students are taking place physically with the army mobilised to assist with deep cleaning and disinfection of schools and providing masks and other safety equipment. Students in transitional years will have a score calculated on prior results and will undergo assessments through applied research projects to replace exams. In April, such project assignments were sent out covering as many as 1,200 topics including elements of theory, practical work and occupational health and safety.

A network of 11 leading Applied Technology Schools showcased some best practice in delivering online education at vocational schools. The network -

regarded as a group of centres of excellence - is well connected with private sector companies and experienced in delivering focused online skills. Examples of online practical skills training includes targeted lessons for hospitality students, who are asked to send video clips in of their cooking assignments at home, and the network's partnership with IBM to provide comprehensive coursework online.

Government investment in the Egyptian Knowledge Bank library in recent years means that a wide variety of online resources, including for vocational training, are now extensively used.

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The Ministry of Education has taken a long-term view from the onset of the crisis, in addition to dealing with immediate needs. A taskforce on exit strategies and future educational needs has been established that works closely with international partners. The deputy minister for ICT and digitalization is taking a key role preparing for mainstream blended learning after the crisis, as it involved negotiations with top ICT providers, such as Microsoft and others.

To address the needs of vocational students on work-based learning courses, preparations are underway for an early entry in the next school year to catch up on practical work.



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ISRAEL

As the most advanced economy in the region, Israel was well positioned to adapt to the educational needs of the crisis. Centralised control of education via the Ministries of Education and of Labour, combined with local flexibility in delivery created an effective approach.

All schools closed on 12 March and the practical part of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) was suspended; adult education - which mainly took place inside enterprises - was also effectively suspended.

A combined system of distance education using online teaching and TV lessons was introduced to

ensure inclusive coverage for all Israelis, including marginal and minority or disadvantaged groups such as Ultra-Orthodox, Arabs and Bedouin.

Subject inspectors of the Ministry of Education and education networks have provided digital training for teachers. Zoom, GoToMeeting and other platforms are being used. The ministry monitors teachers; giving students emotional support on top of subject teaching is at their discretion.

Schools and colleges began to gradually reopen from May 3, using blended learning techniques, smaller class sizes and teaching on alternate days/periods.

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Institutions are using all available space for teaching and the school year has been extended by a month to ease workloads and facilitate catching up.

Vocational networks such as ORT and AMAL are providing support to teachers and trainers. A study of teachers and learners finds that distance learning is rated as only 20% as effective as traditional face-to-face education. Many students have spent less than an hour a day engaged in education during the crisis.

School leaving exams - the Bagruth - is being slimmed down to around 70% of topics; students will be advised of topics before tests to avoid revision of non-examined topics.

Assessments of practical aspects of TVET courses will be done online and one-to-one, rather than face-to-face in front of two or three examiners. Despite some anxieties over distance learning, blended learning is likely to increasingly become a feature of the education and training system. "Home learning" - encompassing online and distance tools - is now becoming an accepted term to define the range of practices employed via home study.

Increases in autonomy at the local level prompted by the pandemic are likely to allow more flexibility in teaching settings in the future. New pedagogical methods, approaches and tools including curricula design, class calendars and

COVID 19 REGIONAL OVERVIEW

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including curricula design, class calendars and the use of learning spaces are here to stay.

The pandemic has increased teacher and parent engagement in students' learning; openness of schools to real life experience and informal learning has increased.

A presidential initiative to reduce the "digital gap" between students aims to provide PCs to all students, with the support of companies, institutions and NGOs.

Key challenges include effective monitoring and measuring of home learning; motivation and best methods of technological support for students, including emotional wellbeing.



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**#LearningConnects:**

Ronit Ashkenazy, deputy director-general, head of pedagogical administration of Amal Israel, suggests starting with teacher training.

Our pedagogical department, together with volunteers for Microsoft and Google, gave teach-the-teacher sessions. Corporate volunteers also worked with teachers individually as needed. Similar efforts took place at ORT. What we did in the first two weeks, was mainly to empower the teachers who didn't have the self-confidence with [key tools].

Teachers also needed to adapt their pedagogical styles to the new reality. For instance, online classes often needed to be shorter than those in live settings. Apps, smartphones, WhatsApp, student-created presentations and videos, and computer games became essential educational tools. Teachers were encouraged to think of themselves as mentors, facilitating "self-learning" by the students.

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JORDAN

For a country of 9.5 million inhabitants - including more than a million refugees and nearly 2 million other non-citizens including legal and illegal immigrants, Jordan has been successful in keeping the pandemic under control with 845 cases of COVID-19 and just 9 deaths.

Its response to the crisis was fast in terms of closing down schools, but lacked coordination nationwide - lessons for general school students have been delivered via TV and through an online learning platform (a survey suggests that 78% were following daily broadcasts).



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At the beginning of the lockdown, online teaching, particularly in vocational schools was rudimentary, with many teachers lacking digital skills. At the time, private providers and donors were the most active in addressing distance-learning needs. In May, a dedicated platform for eLearning for VET was launched officially and teachers were trained, also with the support of the ongoing EU programme.

Provision is better in higher education: a poll by the University of Jordan found that 83% of university students were using online education, but satisfaction rates were only 42%. A series of summer webinars on "Providing education to all during the pandemic" has been launched by the Ministry of Education, with GIZ backing.

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#LearningConnects:

When the Jordanian government imposed its lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic on March 14, the Business Development Center (BDC) waited a week.

"The first week, we didn't want to do anything, because people were panicking and not happy," said Nayef Stetieh, BDC Founder & CEO. "People didn't want to do anything."

Not that Stetieh and his staff were just sitting around. Three weeks before the lockdown, the BDC began to prepare an emergency plan. This included ensuring that everyone had unlimited WiFi and all the prepaid mobile bundles they needed to guarantee seamless internal communication. They made sure that everyone had access to all the necessary communications tools, platforms and applications.

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#LearningConnects:

A week into the lockdown, the BDC shifted its focus to its beneficiaries. This included a novel online train-the-trainers programme.

A non-profit that promotes economic development, with emphasis on youth, women and SMEs, BDC has provided vocational and entrepreneurial training for over 150,000 young people through its Maharat & Sanad Employment and Training Programmes.



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LEBANON

The pandemic has exacerbated the country's economic and political crisis that last October brought hundreds of thousands of Lebanese out onto the streets in protests at proposed tax increases on basic products. Even before the coronavirus outbreak, the World Bank had projected that by the end of 2020 as many as 40% of the population would be in poverty. That figure is now likely to be higher.

Relative success in containing cases of COVID-19 through an early lockdown that began mid-March

and strict curfews have limited cases to 1,350 and deaths to 30. However, measures to ensure education for all have been less successful.

The Ministry of Education launched distance learning via TV and various e-learning platforms have sprung up, but this has done little to prevent a major crisis in education, with 1.2 million children affected by school closures and only 37% of those taking part to VET having access to the Internet.

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Although some forms of online learning already existed before the crisis, including in vocational training schools, much of this was experimental and most teachers are not prepared for distance learning.

Structural problems in delivering online learning - including a lack of equipment, training and pay cuts associated with reduced teaching hours has hampered the development of digital education during the crisis.

Most successes in delivering online solutions have been implemented by aid agencies, including the UN and ILO.



A Learning Readiness Rapid Assessment have been completed with UN support for 10,000 Syrian refugee families, and the ILO has explored options for distance learning in their vocational training programme and are piloting one occupation. The Ministry of Agriculture, with support from the UN's FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation) has introduced distance learning in technical agricultural education, via TV, WhatsApp, email and other means.



#LearningConnects:

Talal Hijazi, General Manager, Association of Lebanese Industrialists, says a return to business as normal will be impossible until a vaccine is found. In the meantime, a gradual re-opening of the economy must be carefully managed. The Lebanese government was beginning to introduce sector-by-sector re-opening for business, but with rules that include 30% occupancy rates in factories, social distancing and the provision of

protective gear, the economic cost of the pandemic lockdown measures would not be over any time soon.

"The government has a good business continuity contingency plan and our association is participating in implementing this, but our dilemma is that we do not know the timeline. Without a vaccine there is no definite solution."



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**PALESTINE***

Grassroots initiatives in cooperation with international donors, civil society organisations and the private sector characterise the territory's successful response to educational needs during the pandemic, although the Ministry of Education has issued a five-page guideline on teaching during the crisis that included tips on how vocational teachers could use distance learning.

All schools and colleges were closed on 5 March and, although there was little prior experience of online and distance learning, stakeholders swung into action. Although vocational schools will not

open this school year, a wide range of initiatives are helping students maintain learning.

German and French international aid agencies, GIZ and ACTED are supporting teacher training in digital learning, and Belgium's ENABEL is looking at ways to reorganise learning and teaching to move to a blended model for the future. In Jericho, the YMCA Vocational School is using online methods to teach a course in sustainable agriculture, with students using home gardens and video reports to complete assignments.

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

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In the public sector, the Ministry of Education and UNESCO are leading a Taskforce for Distance Learning designed to establish partnerships, mobilise funds, and coordinate the actions of stakeholders.



Although apprenticeships and work-based learning has been cancelled during the crisis, the Ministry of Labour, in association with chambers of commerce and the German Chamber of Commerce, is running

training courses in Hybrid Automobile Technology. The training covers theory (70%) and practice, which will take place as soon as vocational training centres can reopen. A certificate for this short upgrading course will be issued.

School graduation exams, the Tawjihi, have been shifted to June and are taking place in schools with appropriate safety measures in place. VET practical exams for 12th grade students due late April have been shifted to the end of June. The loss of around a month of practical training will be taken into account.

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#LearningConnects:

Nirmin Abukhairan, a nursing student at the Arab American University in the West Bank, says that the experience of switching to online learning has been a positive one for her. "I see a lot of benefits. It has provided us with the opportunity to get higher grades by giving us more space and time to do our assignments. My university made sure to provide us with the best websites to guide us.

In order to achieve your assignment you need to dig deeper to extract the information. For medical specialists it gave us the impetus to look further to collect as much information as we can in order to help people. The Internet has no limits... you can find a lot of information and resources. It has given me passion to know more. I am glad that I am going through this experience."



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MOROCCO

Schools and colleges have been closed since 16 March and there are no plans to reopen before the new school year.



For general school students, distance learning via TV channels that include Arrabia, Attaqafia and Laâyoune, addresses the needs of most students. The Ministry of Education says 70% of school programmes are covered, with nearly 9,000 virtual classes and over 83,000 online classes delivered.

To facilitate direct online learning all three telecom operators in the country have granted free Internet access, although many poorer students can only gain access via expensive pre-paid phone plans.

Although online education has been part of the national plan for vocational education and training since 2006, most institutions have not been sufficiently prepared for the switch to distance learning, citing lack of staff training among other factors, although authorities claim 85,000 VET training sessions had been conducted by the end of April, involving 4,000 trainers.

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TUNISIA

The Ministry of Education has responded to the needs of general school students, using TV and radio broadcasts for distance learning and elements of online provision following national closures of schools and colleges from 12 March.

For general education the focus of distance learning is final year students, 6th grade primary and 9th grade secondary, although following intervention from education unions, the Ministry of Education announced that the school year was considered complete for all levels of education from the first basic year to the third year of secondary school.

Special arrangements were made for 220,000 baccalauréat students, who resumed classes late May and will take exams before mid-July.

Although officially vocational training centres remained open, VET provision was entirely suspended. With the complexities around providing practical training under the lockdown, vocational schools could not function. It is feared that the lack of action could severely damage the prospects of vocational school students (9% of all pre university students) and create a negative perception of VET in the future.

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The Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment is putting in place measures to help vocational school students catch up on their training (9% of all pre university students) at the beginning of the next school year.

However, in an economy that significantly relies upon the tourism sector, contributing some 14% of GDP, interruption to studies for key future workers could have disastrous consequences. The sector employs 100,000 people directly and another 400,000 indirectly, impacting 4 million Tunisians, leading to demands from industry federations and union for government support.

Meanwhile other economic sectors have gradually begun to reopen after lockdown measures began to be eased early May. Commercial and artisan activities resumed, although footwear, clothing, weekly markets, hairdressers, cafes and other sectors remain closed.

On a more positive note, Tunisia in common with some other countries in the region, avoided the worse excesses of COVID-19 with fewer than 1,100 cases and just 49 deaths.

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CENTRAL ASIA

Reported cases of COVID-19 across the region suggest that to date, Central Asia has escaped the worst excesses of a pandemic that has claimed more than 400,000 lives worldwide, although there are fears that returning migrant workers and weak medical services in some of the countries could yet increase the contagion.

Official figures showing deaths from COVID-19 in double figures - with Kazakhstan's the highest at 67 and Turkmenistan still officially claiming no cases at all - may reflect underreporting by officials, but early border closures and lockdowns in most countries appear to have worked to contain the pandemic.

Responses to educational needs fall into two different approaches: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan closed schools and colleges late March/early April immediately after the spring break, using the vacation to prepare distance learning via TV and online. In Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, normal classes resumed, with medical checks and other health precautions implemented. In Tajikistan, schools closed mid-May and classes started to shift to TV delivery.

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**KAZAKHSTAN**

Schools and colleges all moved to distance education from early March, and the scheduled spring holidays were used by teachers and institutions to prepare material for the shift to distance learning.

With the support of the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools, more than 200 top teachers engaged in the preparation of over 2000 film lessons for general and secondary education. Some of them were also relevant for the VET curriculum. Lessons were aired on the public TV network.

Central government support for distance learning included a detailed survey of the level of

preparation, equipment and platforms vocational colleges had in place for distance and online learning. The survey, which was conducted by national VET research and support agency, Talap (previously known as Kasipkor). Given the strong role that the regions play in VET, but also regional differences in wealth and access to internet, the mapping exercise revealed major differences.

In two out of 17 regions, vocational colleges were all using one online platform and in four other regions most vocational colleges (77%-96%) mainly relied on one. In the other 11 regions, it was up to providers to choose platforms. Out of all 800

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vocational colleges across the country, only 6% did not use online tools. These are mostly institutions in the prison system or colleges working with the special needs students which require face to face interaction. Only 1.5% of vocational colleges lacked the necessary equipment, including Smartphones to implement distance and online learning.

Free access to 20 education platforms has been available since the end of March for all schools and colleges, thanks to an agreement reached between Internet providers and platforms and the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry for Digital Development.

Schools and colleges are set to remain closed until the next school year. End of year and graduation exams have also been shifted online following the adoption of a decree on exams, which has provided vocational colleges with considerable autonomy on student assessment. Similarly, enrolment for vocational colleges has moved online.

Given wide regional variations in digital access, schools are using various methods of communication with students and families, including WhatsApp, Telegram and other mobile platforms. Online learning platforms among the 20 approved by the Ministry of Education, include SMART Community, SMARTNATION, BilimLand and Daryn Online.

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In areas of need, regional authorities are purchasing laptops and other Internet-linked devices for loan to students and teachers. Regional education departments also play an important part in liaising between schools, vocational colleges and IT companies. Methodological associations are also exchanging good practice and teaching materials in both Kazakh and Russian. Several thematic and sectoral repositories of teaching materials and filmed lessons have been set up.

Interaction with parents is being emphasised as it is understood they play a key role in student engagement during the pandemic. Online parent-teacher sessions have been organised and advice given on supporting learning at this time.

Although online learning was first introduced around two years ago, take-up varied; theoretically all vocational schools should have introduced learning platforms with some digital content by the 2019/20 school year. The use of blended learning is expected to increase post-pandemic.

For VET providers, staff are allowed back in colleges but teaching and final exams take place online. Final exams, which will involve about 145,000 students, have started as of the first week of June and will be finalised by 28 June. By monitoring the student situation, the Ministry has clarified that only about 500 of these students may have no internet access. For these cases, regional and local administrations have been asked to provide specific support.

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#LearningConnects:

Technology supports knowledge. **Shaboz Abdulkhayov**, a student on a German Hof University affiliated course at Kazakhstan's KazGUU University in Almaty, sees the positive side of distance learning from a technological point of view.

"As a result of the pandemic, all of us are in lockdown, with no classes at schools and universities. Still, technology proved one more time that no matter what the situation, we can get the needed knowledge.

The key point is that distance learning decreases the spread of COVID-19."

It does not mean that it is plain sailing, he adds.

"You need really high motivation; you have to push yourself to do something. You don't feel the sense of being a student, because people events build up in your memory."





#LearningConnects:

Some specific courses are not ideal for online, such as "taking language courses - because they need practice and conversation with others."

The ergonomics of sitting in front of a computer screen too long are also a source of concern.

"It is impossible to solve all problems online," he adds.



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**KYRGYZSTAN**

Following the closure of schools in mid-March, distance learning was officially launched on 8 April. To support access for all students two national education portals have been set up and lessons in Kyrgyz and Russian were produced and broadcast on national and regional TV. An agreement was struck between the Ministry of Education and the Megacom telecoms company for the provision of free SIM cards to all students and teachers.

Central government emphasis is on general and secondary education, leaving vocational education and training schools less well served.

Six Bishkek-based competence centres, established on the basis of vocational schools before the pandemic as sectoral focus points, play a key support role for VET. They are taking a lead in developing distance learning materials for vocational schools. The Republican Scientific Methodological Centre is also due to set up a site for video lessons.

A major challenge for vocational schools was that the spring term is usually dedicated to enterprise-based practice.

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This is an important time for students to acquire practical skills. Strict lockdown provisions led to the cancellation of all practice in enterprises and distance learning has not been able to provide an alternative, although students on one call-centre training course have managed to move online.

During the crisis some special events have been organised, such as a competition for the best filmed lesson or a one week on-line marathon on distance education which also included some guidance activities. Career guidance activities for grade 9 students were moved on-line and an on-line career fair took place from 10-15 June.



[Click here](#)



COVID 19 REGIONAL OVERVIEW

4



TAJKISTAN

Urgent measures to combat COVID-19 began late April after the first official cases were identified. although some general public hygiene measures had already been put in place. Schools and colleges were given an unscheduled holiday April 27-May 10, after which there were plans to switch to distance learning via TV. However, central government chose to close schools until mid-August, when the new school year will start three weeks early to allow students to catch up on missed classes.

State exams for 9th and 11th grade students are due to go ahead late June; schools and colleges will be deep cleaned and disinfected.

There are no plans for online learning, although some private providers and NGOs are implementing some measures. The government has made all Tajik language textbooks for grades 1-11 available as e-books. The high cost of Internet and poor penetration among the population (33%) presents a big challenge to digital learning.



No national lockdown measures are in place, although civil servants are engaged in a door-to-door campaign to advise people to self-isolate.

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The production of the first 56 TV lessons for grades 9 and 11, covering six subjects, with a specific focus on preparation for the exams is almost finished, just few subjects need to still be recorded. The remaining classes will be covered in the next phase of production in the coming months. Lessons are submitted to Ministry of Education and Science for revision and feedback. Broadcasting is still expected in June to cover topics and subjects not covered due to school closures.

The TV lessons are produced in Tajik, as there is a lack of Tajik digital and e-learning resources. There are resources available in Russian and these will be adapted for further use.

The final lessons need to be reviewed and cleared by the Ministry of Education and Science and the State TV/radio committee. The ministry will coordinate and facilitate further broadcasting of the lessons on national TV (2 channels).

All the materials available and developed by development partners in Tajikistan together with the Ministry of Education and Science will be used as resources for distance learning process.

COVID 19 REGIONAL OVERVIEW

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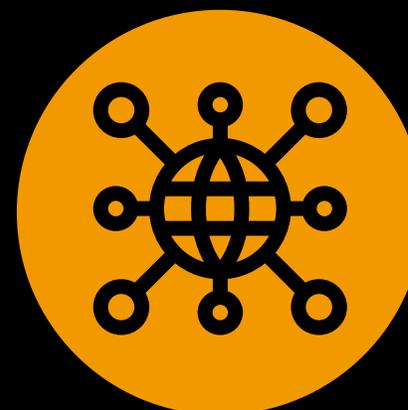


TURKMENISTAN

The country steadfastly maintains that it is COVID-19 free, claiming that border closures and strict quarantine measures for any returning citizens of up to 40 days have protected the population.

However, government measures including the closure of sports facilities and other public gathering places, strict restrictions on internal travel, closure of borders, and rumours of a big increase in pneumonia cases, suggests the country is not immune from the pandemic.

The Ministry of Education's Innovation Centre has established an information network for vocational schools to develop system of distance learning and online delivery.



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UZBEKISTAN

The country has been praised internationally for its early and effective response to the pandemic, resulting in fewer than 5,000 cases and just 19 deaths.

School closures, initially for three weeks from mid-March, were extended through mid-May before a decision to delay reopening until the autumn was taken.

The government announced a \$7 million fund to help ensure uninterrupted access to education for all, learning from other countries to improve distance learning in the short term and prepare for reopening schools in the next academic year.

Distance learning via lessons broadcast on national TV and radio channels began on 30 March with award-winning teachers and authors of text books drafted in to prepare lessons. Online access to the lessons is also available via various platforms and providers.

The Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education launched a Telegram channel EDU.UZ and also plans to develop online versions of more than 3,500 textbooks across a range of disciplines.

COVID 19

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Online platform Kundalik.uz has been set up to track and evaluate students' knowledge in general education schools; students are invited to submit completed tasks for review and receive appropriate ratings and comments in an electronic journal.



The government plans to capitalise on the digital learning opportunities presented by the emergency. This is a positive development for education providers, although the scarcity of access to the

internet, appropriate equipment and digitally-trained teachers pose challenges.

A presidential decree at the end of April that instructs education and training ministries to establish remote training of teachers, monitoring of online lessons and to minimise the human factor in assessing knowledge, has been described by senior officials as a "paradigm shift in the entire education system." Online learning, although still in its early days, is likely to become a mainstream feature of the national education system in the future.

COVID 19

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

4

**#LearningConnects:**

One world, together. For **Gyulsanem**, an English teacher from Nukus, Uzbekistan, the regional capital of Karakalpakstan famed for its Igor Savitsky Collection of Soviet dissident art at the regional state museum, one of the key lessons of the coronavirus pandemic has been to understand that **"we are one world, and we are together."**

Gyulsanem, who has been teaching for nearly 13 years, says the lockdown introduced in Uzbekistan mid-March, is challenging for

someone used to interacting with her students, noting **"we all miss our schools and children."**

Gyulsanem says: **"I had never used teaching online with my students but I had practiced it. We tried to use our telegram channel where we can record my voice and video lessons and presentations. Students had difficulties responding to their homework. At the beginning it was so difficult to sit and explain online but then we got used to online lessons."**

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REGIONAL OVERVIEW

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#LearningConnects:

"Thanks to our government they also support us: they give online scheduled lessons on TV."

But she adds: "The one thing I have learned from COVID-19 is the value of life, the value of family and the love of my place of work and children. To teach face-to-face is more effective and fun. You can feel see your pupils' emotions. I really miss my pupils, my room, everything that connected to my teaching."



MAPPING

COVID 19

THE CONCLUSION

As people emerge from unprecedented restrictions on their personal and social lives across the world following weeks and months of quarantine lockdowns, it is clear that the coronavirus pandemic will change how we live, learn, relax, travel and do business.

For teachers and learners, a massive, global experiment in distance education has been conducted. From wealthy, innovative economies - where sophisticated online learning has long been a feature of education - to less advanced countries, education ministries and professionals, vocational school chiefs and teachers, have responded to

urgent demands to maintain teaching and learning at a time when institutions have been closed.

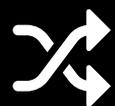
Not all countries, and not all education and training providers, have been equally able to rise to the challenge, but all have displayed ingenuity and flexibility in reaction to the educational needs of the pandemic.

Over these last few months, education and training systems have faced new opportunities and overcome many challenges, particularly the need to promote learning opportunities for all, aiming at inclusive and lifelong learning societies.

COVID 19

THE CONCLUSION

As the school year in most countries comes to an end, exams are being completed in different ways: online assessment in some countries, waived or postponed in others. Several countries have started to work on the future of education, investing in ensuring that the next school year will start with a renewed attention to learning, learning methods and technology integration.



This will be the turning point for education and training systems:



Being able to capitalise on innovation



Learning from this experience



Addressing vulnerabilities and challenges, particularly with regard to competence-based learning



Diversifying access to learning opportunities with flexible pathways and increased methods of recognition of learning and qualifications



Using technology to support the learning journey, across all ages and for all citizens

MAPPING

COVID 19 THE CONCLUSION

Online learning may never fully replace traditional face-to-face methods of teaching, particularly in those practical skills where nothing can beat a hands-on approach, but the ETF COVID Mapping exercise clearly shows that digital tools will increasingly become part of the array of methods used by educators around the globe. If issues of affordability and accessibility, inclusion and equality can be successfully addressed, the benefits distance and online learning can bring to people, young and old, around the world, could be immense.



COVID 19 THE CONCLUSION

#LearningConnects:

João Santos, Senior Expert, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission, has 30 years experience in working in the employment and education policy field. His unit is responsible for advising on policy making, working with member states and social partners in VET to "understand the current challenges and try to find a common thread on which we can all agree to work."

In early March his unit launched a survey to "take the pulse of VET in Europe," Joao says, noting, "countries that had already developed distance learning tools were better prepared than others, which had to find solutions overnight."

The pandemic crisis had "brought to the forefront something we all knew for many years - that distance learning in VET was not as developed as it is in higher education," he adds.

COVID 19 THE CONCLUSION

#LearningConnects:

"Even in the work we are doing on skills agenda and the future of VET policy for Europe, we are always emphasising this need to use digital technologies. It is not only the learners that lack digital skills, but the teachers too. If you ask from one day to the next for teachers who were not trained to use digital skills to do their job, it is extremely difficult." he concludes.



MAPPING

COVID 19 THE CONCLUSION

#LearningConnects:

"In the past, digital learning used to be the privilege of an inner circle of tech gurus. Now it can belong to everybody."

Alessandro Brolpito, ETF expert



COVID 19 THE CONCLUSION

The ETF has closely monitored the response of its 28 partner countries outside the EU during the COVID-19 pandemic, giving it an unparalleled opportunity to put educational policy making under the microscope during a brief, and intense, period.

The vast majority of the ETF countries have, since mid-March, taken "decisions impacting in an unprecedented way on the delivery of education and training services," notes Cesare Onestini, the ETF Director.

"We observed, through regular meetings with our key stakeholders as well as through the launch of a social media campaign #learningconnects that countries went through similar stages to ensure continuity of learning," Cesare says "The way

countries reacted could very well remind us of the curve of change."

"From denial 'this is not going to last long, just few days', to shock and confusion where countries made decisions on how to prevent chaos in their systems, to a state of 'letting go' in particular for teachers and parents and all those involved in the challenge of making this work for the better, and finally picking it up to 'searching for new ideas' and getting a very high number of solutions and innovative practices in quick acceleration and delivery."

"Usually, when people get to this phase in their change curve, the next phase is the new beginning".

COVID 19 THE CONCLUSION

"Will this happen also to education and training systems?"

"The answer depends on how, in the coming months, countries build on the experience gained and focus on factors that could trigger a move towards life-long competency based education and training," Cesare says.

The three critical factors are:

1 Ensuring that lessons learned from the crisis are applied in education – in particular collecting evidence in a transparent way and using it to inform policy choices and actions on future education and training.

2 Focusing on the sustainability of actions and measures adopted, including the maintenance of equipment and updating portals and materials produced, and the continued commitment to ensuring accessibility and coverage for all students and teachers.

3 Addressing shortcomings in education and training systems highlighted by the crisis, in particular the question of equity and access, the need to strengthen competence based learning, and the specificity of practice-based learning. We need to focus not only on how we learn, but also reflect on the content of learning. Only by doing this can we embrace a more sustainable, inclusive and greener future.

COVID 19 THE CONCLUSION

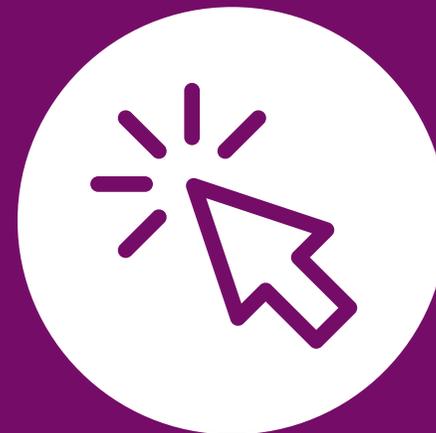
"Whether COVID-19 actually triggers transformation will depend on these three critical issues," Cesare concludes.

"Re-establishing international cooperation, including crowd-sourcing and sharing of resources could speed up and support this transformation. The key takeaway from the remarkable reaction to the COVID-19 crisis is the realisation that the transformation is not about 'moving online' but about switching to learning through life and ensuring that learning is accessible to all."

<http://www.etf.europa.eu>

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COVID 19 THE CONCLUSION

END NOTES

The ETF would like to thank everyone involved in the preparation of this document. The mapping exercise has been carried out between March and July 2020 (and it will continue until September).

Detailed information has been collected by ETF Country Coordinators through systematic contacts with key-country stakeholders from public authorities, international cooperation agencies, EU Delegations, social partners, and other civil society actors.

Monthly reports have been produced to capture the evolution of the responses and the country dynamics, and two thematic reports are also available: one on digital and distance online learning and another on the socio-economic challenges the countries are facing.

