

TORINO PROCESS SYSTEM MONITORING REPORT: NORTH MACEDONIA (2023)



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Torino Process monitoring was carried out in partnership with national authorities, experts, and stakeholders in North Macedonia under the coordination of Ms Nadica Kostoska, Deputy Head of Department for European Union, Ministry of Education and Science of North Macedonia, who is also the national coordinator of North Macedonia for the current round of the Torino Process.

The European Training Foundation (ETF) wishes to thank the national authorities of North Macedonia, Ms Nadica Kostoska, and all national stakeholders for their invaluable contribution and the provision of the accurate and extensive information in support of this monitoring exercise.

This monitoring report was prepared by a team led by Mihaylo Milovanovitch, Senior Human Capital Development Expert and Coordinator for System Change and Lifelong Learning at the ETF. The report follows a proprietary monitoring methodology developed by the same team and is based on evidence collected, processed, analysed, and verified by the ETF and by national stakeholders in North Macedonia under the overall coordination of Ms Nadica Kostoska, as the national Torino Process coordinator for North Macedonia and with contributions by Mr. Radmil Polenakovikj as national Torino Process expert for North Macedonia.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Scope of system performance monitoring:** The Torino Process monitoring covers three major areas of commitment to lifelong learners: access to learning (Area A), quality of learning (Area B), and system organisation (Area C). These areas are divided into eight monitoring dimensions: access and participation in Area A; quality, relevance, excellence, and innovation in Area B; and system management/administration and resources in Area C.
- **Access and attractiveness:** Despite a robust legal framework, learners in North Macedonia often find alternatives to initial VET and CVET more attractive due to issues such as limited awareness and socio-economic constraints. However, efforts by authorities to address these challenges have led to consistent increases in VET enrolment, which reached 69% in secondary schools in 2022/2023. Dual education classes have also seen significant growth, from less than 1% in 2020/2021 to over 24% in 2022/2023. Furthermore, VET effectively aids learners transitioning between education and training tracks, with most students successfully graduating due to supportive measures like mentoring, completion-promoting programs, and initiatives for those with incomplete secondary studies.
- **Quality and relevance:** Young VET learners show satisfactory proficiency in basic skills against national benchmarks, though international assessments reveal moderate to low learning quality. Adult learners' proficiency in basic skills is also low internationally, likely due to less tailored curricula and challenges faced by specific adult groups. While VET graduates have high employability, weak program-to-work links suggest a gap between education and practical needs. Limited work exposure hinders practical training and career choices. To address this, authorities are expanding work-based learning and practical training in VET curricula, an improvement on the previous model where these were restricted to specific years.
- **Excellence and innovation:** While excellence in pedagogy and professional development, as well as excellence in program implementation, receive moderate attention and fall below the level of importance other countries in the Torino Process assign to them, on average, there is significant progress in the identification and promotion of high-quality solutions in the area of VET governance and provider management. North Macedonia performs above average also in promoting excellence in social inclusion and equity. The VET system is less open to innovation, except in the domain of quality of learning and training outcomes, which is an area of priority for decision-makers and practitioners alike.
- **System management and organisation:** North Macedonia is working to improve data use in vocational education and training (VET), with an open, accountable system that involves external stakeholders. Despite gaps in leadership capacity, the VET system shows promise the degree to which it is open to in internationalization, in the area of financing, and the management of human resources. However, resource allocation and infrastructure, particularly in school labs, need enhancing. The country's involvement in the Regional Challenge Fund, which supports infrastructure development and teacher training, marks a significant step towards improving these areas and introducing accredited training programs.
- **Quality and reliability of monitoring evidence:** The monitoring results of North Macedonia are more internationally comparable than those of other countries, on average, and they are also less susceptible to bias in international comparison. North Macedonia, however, tends to self-assess the performance of its VET system somewhat more critically than other countries, on average.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Focus and scope of monitoring

This report summarises the results of monitoring VET system performance in North Macedonia, initiated in the context of the Torino Process in 2022 and completed in 2023.¹ “Performance” describes the extent to which the VET system delivers against a targeted selection of national and international obligations (commitments) to learners and other stakeholders in support of learning through life (lifelong learning - LLL). “VET system”² refers to the network of institutions, people, policies, practices, resources, and methodologies in a country and the way in which they are organised to provide individuals of any age with the practical skills, knowledge, and competencies needed for specific occupations, trades, or professions.

The focus of monitoring is on the contribution of initial and continuing VET (IVET and CVET) to the learning activities of youth and adults in any learning setting (formal and non-formal), undertaken to improve their knowledge, skills, competences, and qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons. The purpose of the Torino Process monitoring exercise is to provide decision-makers, practitioners, and stakeholders with a reliable basis for informed decisions about policy improvement, resource allocation, strategy design, and follow-up analysis in support of lifelong learning.

The monitoring framework which underpins this report covers three major areas of commitment to lifelong learners: access to learning (Area A), quality of learning (Area B), and system organisation (Area C). These areas are divided into eight monitoring dimensions: access and participation in Area A; quality, relevance, excellence, and innovation in Area B; and system management/administration and resources in Area C. Within these areas and their dimensions, the Torino Process tracks a total of 30 system deliverables (outcomes)³ - the extent to which they are being delivered and how equitably they are distributed to thirteen groups of learners according to age, gender, socio-economic background, labour market and migration status, and typical learning setting.

The monitoring provides information in the form of a system performance index (SPI) for each of these outcomes and learner groups they serve, to a total of 82 indices per country.⁴ The SPIs are a quantified measure of performance against national and international obligations and commitments, and range from 0 to 100, where 100 indicates maximum or best performance. The indices describe VET system performance in formal and non-formal learning settings for youth and adults, females and males, disadvantaged learners, long-term unemployed jobseekers, economically inactive populations, and first-generation migrants.

This report showcases a selection of key monitoring results based on those indices, as follows: overall performance by broad monitoring dimension (Section 2.1), performance by specific area and system deliverable (Section 2.2 and subsections), and performance in support of specific groups of learners (Section 2.3). The report also provides an international average score⁵ for these results for

¹ The Torino Process is a multiannual review of vocational education and training (VET) in countries in East and South-East Europe (including Turkey), Central Asia, and the South and East Mediterranean region, which the ETF is carrying out in partnership with countries in these regions on a regular basis since 2010. For more information see <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/what-we-do/torino-process-policy-analysis-and-progress-monitoring>

² This report may use “VET”, “VET system”, and “system” interchangeably.

³ Further in the report “outcomes” and “deliverables” are used interchangeably.

⁴ In rare cases where evidence is missing, the number of SPIs for a country can be lower.

⁵ “International average” refers to the average for countries participating in the Torino Process. At the time of preparation of this monitoring report, the evidence collection for some countries was still ongoing. As additional countries complete the monitoring exercise, the international averages shown in this report may change.

reference purposes, and, where relevant, it showcases some of the disaggregated data used to calculate the system performance indices. Links to the full dataset for North Macedonia and the Torino Process monitoring framework and methodology can be found in this document's third and final section.

1.2 Comparability and reliability of monitoring data

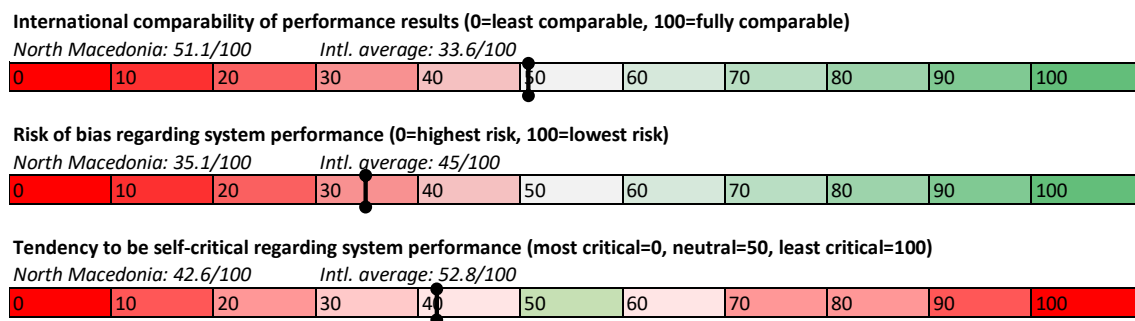
The evidence for this monitoring report was collected and analysed in several steps from September 2022 until April 2023. After an initial round of collecting internationally comparable indicators for each of the system outcomes and learner groups covered by the monitoring framework, the ETF compiled a supplementary questionnaire for national authorities and stakeholders in North Macedonia to gather information about outcomes and groups of learners for which such indicators were missing. The responses to the questionnaire were quantified and integrated with the rest of the monitoring data into a repository of mixed evidence, which was then used to calculate the system performance indices presented in this report.

In addition to messages about system performance, the monitoring delivers information also about the international comparability of results of each country, the extent to which these results may be susceptible to bias, and how self-critical a country is when it reports about its policy and system performance for external monitoring purposes. This is possible because the monitoring methodology foresees keeping accurate records about the availability, origin and type of evidence used to calculate the 82 performance indices and corresponding results for each country, including North Macedonia.

The monitoring results of North Macedonia are less internationally comparable than those of other countries, on average. They are also more susceptible to bias in international comparison. North Macedonia tends to be more self-critical when they self-assess the performance of its VET system, as shown in Figure 1.

The monitoring results for North Macedonia are more internationally comparable than the results of other countries, on average. On a scale from 0 (least internationally comparable) to 100 (fully internationally comparable), the overall comparability for North Macedonia is 51 out of 100, which is high when benchmarked against the average of other countries participating in the Torino Process monitoring (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. COMPARABILITY AND CONSISTENCY OF MONITORING RESULTS: NORTH MACEDONIA (2023)



The results of North Macedonia are also considerably less susceptible to bias in international comparison. This manifests itself as a tendency to be somewhat more self-critical about the performance of the VET system than other countries on average. As shown in Figure 1, on a scale from 0 (most critical) through 50 (neutral) to 100 (least critical), the score of North Macedonia is 42.6 out of 100, against an international average of 52.8.

2. MONITORING RESULTS: NORTH MACEDONIA

2.1 Policy and system performance in 2023: overall results

The Torino Process monitoring draws on multiple, often disparate, information sources and data. To facilitate a quick, efficient, and focused communication of key messages despite the diversity of information collected, the reporting of monitoring results aggregates the evidence in ways which facilitate a quick overview of system performance without sacrificing too much detail.

The eight monitoring dimensions mentioned in the previous section are the top layer of reporting in this respect. They capture VET system performance in various domains, the selection of which is aligned with national and international country commitments and reform and development priorities concerning learning. These eight dimensions are described as follows:

TABLE 1. DIMENSIONS OF POLICY AND SYSTEM PERFORMANCE MONITORING THROUGH THE TORINO PROCESS

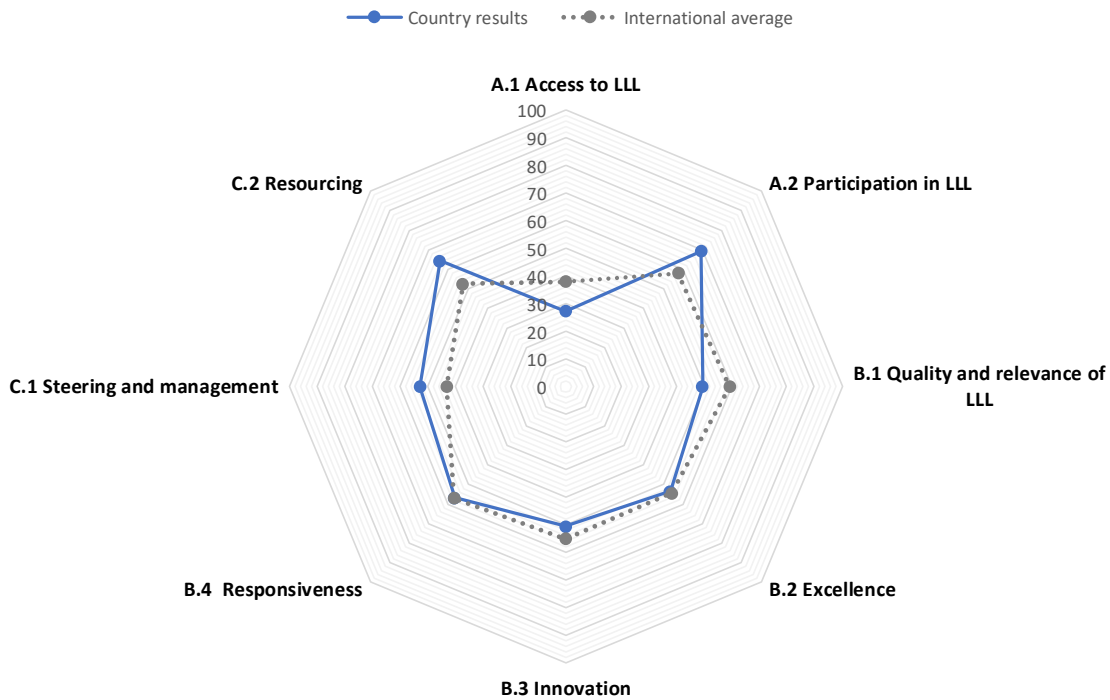
No.	Dimension	Description
1	Access to learning	This dimension captures the degree to which initial VET (IVET), continuing VET (CVET), and other adult learning opportunities to which VET could contribute, are accessible and attractive for learners irrespective of who they are and why they wish to engage in learning.
2	Participation in learning	This dimension captures the likelihood of VET learners to survive and thrive in the education and training system by looking at its vertical and horizontal permeability, that is whether learners can switch between general and vocational pathways and between formal and non-formal learning, as well as whether they complete their learning.
3	Quality and relevance	This dimension captures the extent to which learners in IVET and CVET are provided with basic skills and key competences, whether their learning has exposure to, and is relevant for, employment, and also whether they are provided with adequate career guidance.
4	Excellence	This dimension captures the presence of system-wide policies and measures to promote highest quality practices and results in teaching and training, content design and provision, governance and VET provider management, and equity and social inclusion.
5	Innovation	This dimension captures the presence of innovative practices and priorities on system level in the areas of access to learning, support for successful completion of learning, and quality of learning and training outcomes.
6	VET system responsiveness	This dimension captures the extent to which curricula for youth and adults consider themes of significance for sustainability, climate change awareness, and digitalisation, as well as whether the IVET and CVET systems are responsive to labour market needs, demographic changes, and socio-economic developments.
7	Steering and management	This dimension captures the availability of evidence for informed decision-making, the degree to which governance of VET is participatory, the presence and transparency of quality assurance arrangements, the quality and capacity of staff in leadership positions, and the degree of internationalisation of IVET and CVET.
8	Resourcing	This dimension captures the adequacy and efficiency of human and financial resources in IVET and CVET, and the extent to which the material base for learning and training is adequate, that is – conducive to effective teaching, training, and learning.

This section of the monitoring report examines the performance of VET in North Macedonia in these eight dimensions of monitoring. Performance varies across these dimensions, indicating a combination of successful practices and areas in need of development or enhancement (Figure 1).

Specifically, VET in North Macedonia is highly supportive of the successful participation and graduation of its learners (Dimension A.2), but the relatively strong performance in this respect contrasts with a weaker result regarding access and attractiveness (Dimension A.1). This suggests that although individuals who enter the VET system tend to complete their learning, certain obstacles might exist at the entry level that could be addressed to broaden VET participation.

Participants in VET can also expect to receive a decent level of basic skills and key competences (Dimension B.1), in a VET system whose providers are as open to innovation (Dimension B.3) and the promotion of excellence (Dimension B.2) as the providers in most of the other countries participating in the Torino Process (Dimension B.2). Furthermore, the VET system maintains a satisfactory level of responsiveness to external developments and demands, such as those emerging from the labour market (Dimension B.4). The results suggest that there are potential areas of enhancement too. For instance, innovation being a domain of somewhat weaker results, integrating more innovative practices into VET could further strengthen the overall quality and system responsiveness.

FIGURE 2. INDEX OF SYSTEM PERFORMANCE BY MONITORING DIMENSION, NORTH MACEDONIA AND INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE (2023)



Theoretical⁶ index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

The monitoring evidence further suggests that the VET system of North Macedonia is managed and overseen more efficiently and effectively compared to other countries (Dimension C.1), on average.

⁶ The Torino Process makes a distinction between theoretical index range and index range used for reporting purposes. For reporting purposes, rare instances of extreme values on the low end (SPI < 10) and on the high end (SPI > 90) of the index scale are truncated at the upper (10) and lower (90) decile end. This means that the reporting does not discriminate SPI values below 10 and above 90.

Despite this relatively stronger performance, North Macedonia, along with the rest of the countries participating in the Torino Process, still has room for improvement in this area as the overall performance of all countries in this domain is not particularly strong. There is a common need across countries to enhance management and oversight practices within their respective VET systems.

The performance in ensuring adequacy and efficiency of human and financial resources for VET (Dimension C.2), ranks high as well, which indicates a solid basis for the delivery of VET. The next sections, however, will deliver a more nuanced understanding of this finding and help identify specific areas in need of attention.

2.2 Policy and system performance in specific areas of monitoring and against specific outcomes

VET performance in North Macedonia in the eight monitoring dimensions presented above is driven by 30 policy and system outcomes. It is through these outcomes that the IVET and CVET subsystems work to meet the needs and expectations of stakeholders, particularly youth and adult learners. This section of the monitoring report presents findings about system performance on the level of these deliverables.

To facilitate reading and the navigation of content, the section groups the presentation of the 30 outcomes by the three major areas of commitment to learners, which were introduced in the first section of this report: access to learning (Area A), quality of learning (Area B), and system organisation (Area C). Reporting in Area B, the largest by the number of outcomes, is divided into B (1) and B (2).

2.2.1 Area A. Opportunities for lifelong learning: access and participation

In Area A (Access and participation in opportunities for LLL), the Torino Process tracks the first two monitoring dimensions presented in Section 2.1 – access/attractiveness and participation, with six system outcomes. These outcomes include access to IVET, CVET, and other opportunities for lifelong learning, the vertical and horizontal permeability of the VET system, as well as the prospects of learners in IVET and CVET to graduate and - where relevant – progress to subsequent levels of education and training. The outcomes included under Area A are defined as follows:

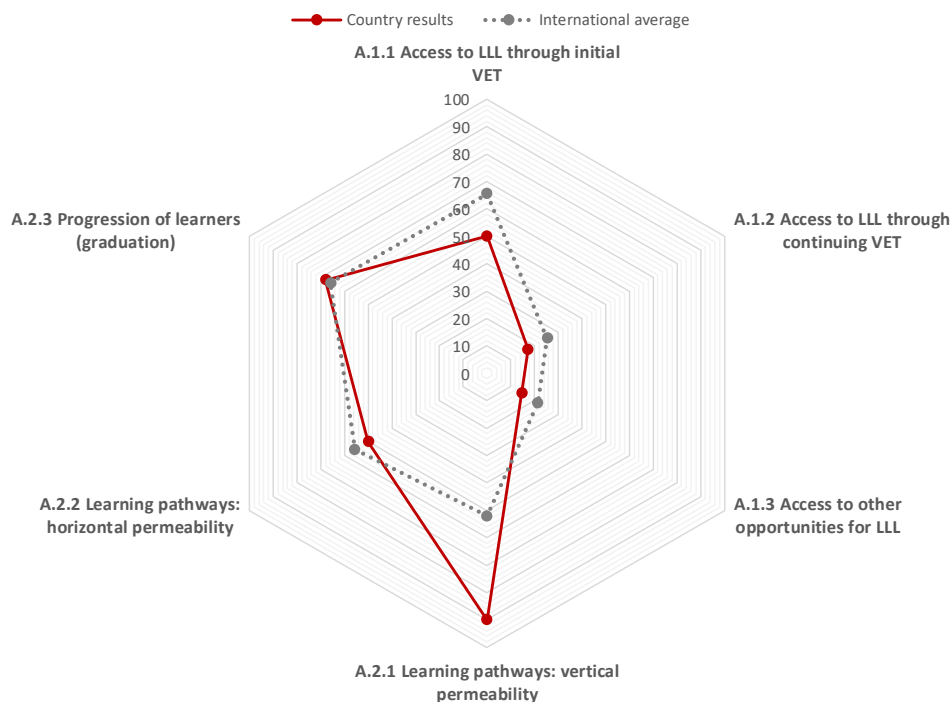
TABLE 2. POLICY AND SYSTEM OUTCOMES INCLUDED UNDER MONITORING AREA A: ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

Code	Deliverable (outcome)	Description
A.1.1	Access and attractiveness: initial VET	This outcome captures the degree to which initial VET is an attractive educational choice in comparison with other learning alternatives, and whether that choice is accessible to various target groups of learners.
A.1.2	Access and attractiveness: continuing VET	This outcome captures the degree to which continuing VET is an attractive choice in comparison with other skills development alternatives, as well as whether that choice is accessible to various target groups
A.1.3	Access to other opportunities for LLL	This outcome captures access to other opportunities for lifelong learning not covered by outcomes A.1.1 and A.1.2 and VET, such as active labour market policies (ALMPs)
A.2.1	Flexible pathways: vertical permeability	This outcome strives to capture the vertical permeability of the education and training system vis-à-vis initial and continuing VET, understood as possibility for transition between consecutive tracks of education and training (general and vocational).
A.2.2	Flexible pathways: horizontal permeability	This outcome strives to capture the horizontal permeability of the education and training system vis-à-vis initial and continuing VET, understood as the possibility for transition between parallel tracks of education and training (general and vocational), and between formal and non-formal learning settings
A.2.3	Progression and graduation of learners	This outcome refers to the degree of success (graduation, progression) of learners in VET, for instance in comparison with other education and training alternatives

The assessment of initial VET in North Macedonia (Outcome A.1.1) indicates challenges, despite the country's robust legal framework ensuring equal access and growing enrolment trends (Figure 3). The results for this outcome are notably below the international average, which suggests learners might still favour other educational paths over VET. As national authorities point out through the monitoring evidence they provided, a significant shift towards strengthening IVET in recent years has been the introduction of a dual education system in secondary VET schools. This is expected to lead to increased student enrolment and industry participation in VET.⁷ While the attractiveness of VET is gradually improving due to such interventions and also due to changing labour market demand, at the time of monitoring the reforms were yet to gain traction.

Continuing VET (Outcome A.1.2) also faces significant challenges in terms of access and attractiveness. While there are no formal restrictions for enrolment in continuing VET for learners of working-age, obstacles might exist due to the working hours of providers. Despite that, the range of topics provided is diverse and there are courses of interest for the learners in both public and private institutions.⁸ Although higher than that of initial VET, here too, system performance remains significantly below the international average.

FIGURE 3. PROMOTING ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN OPPORTUNITIES FOR LLL - INDEX OF SYSTEM PERFORMANCE, NORTH MACEDONIA AND INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE (2023)



Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

The issue of attracting adults to learning in North Macedonia is not limited to the VET system. Learning opportunities beyond VET, such as those offered in the framework of active labour market

⁷ Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for North Macedonia.

⁸ Ibid.

policies (Outcome A.1.3), are also marked by subpar levels of access. It's worth noting that there are various CVET opportunities available in the country, including both accredited and non-accredited programs and some of them are supported by yearly programs from the Ministry of Economy tailored to the current needs of the industry.⁹ Still, availability is just the first step. Other factors may be contributing to the low system performance in this area as well, like for instance limited awareness, socio-economic constraints, a potential mismatch between programs and learner interests, and concerns about program relevance.

National authorities in North Macedonia report that they have been actively addressing these challenges and implementing measures to enhance the attractiveness and accessibility of VET. According to official information, the percentage of students participating in the secondary VET system has been steadily rising: from 61% in 2019 to 62.1% in 2020, and further to 64% in 2021. In the subsequent school years of 2021/2022 and 2022/2023, the enrolment in secondary VET held steady at 67% and 69% respectively. During the 2021/2022 school year, 400 students joined the first year of all VET programmes across the three Regional Vocational Education and Training Centers (RVETCs). This number grew to 476 students in the 2022/2023 school year. A consistent increase in the number of students participating in dual education classes has also been recorded. In the 2020/2021 school year, these students constituted less than 1% of all students in VET. However, by the 2022/2023 school year, the percentage rose to over 24%.

VET in North Macedonia also offers strong support for transitions between consecutive tracks of education and training (Outcome A.2.1). The national authorities confirm that there are no formal obstacles for learners from initial and continuing VET to progress to the next stages of education, although financial and geographic challenges might exist.¹⁰ Learners who wish to transition horizontally, that is between parallel tracks in VET and general education (Outcome A.2.2), are in a less favourable situation. The performance of VET in North Macedonia in that respect is only average.

The vast majority of learners who opt to stay in VET, on the other hand, are likely to progress and graduate successfully (Outcome A.2.3), this being a domain of relatively strong monitoring results. This level of system performance reflects measures taken by the country to support learners, including providing mentors and tutors to students who may struggle, implementing specific programs to promote successful completion, and introducing measures specifically for students who have only completed 2 or 3 years of secondary studies.¹¹

2.2.2 Area B (1). Lifelong learning outcomes: quality and relevance

Monitoring Area B (Quality and relevance of LLL outcomes) includes two more of the dimensions presented in Section 2.1: quality (including relevance) and responsiveness of VET. Combined, these two dimensions comprise a total of eight policy and system outcomes.

These outcomes cover the quality of learning of youth and adults in VET in terms of key skills and competences, the exposure of learners in VET to the world of work, the employability of graduates from IVET and CVET, the availability of career guidance for them, as well as the relevance of learning and training content in VET. Under relevance, the monitoring records the responsiveness of the VET programme offering to demographic, labour market, and socio-economic developments, as well as the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for North Macedonia.

¹¹ Ibid.

inclusion in VET curricula of themes on the green and digital transition. The outcomes included under Area B (1) are described in Table 3.

VET policy and system performance in North Macedonia, as monitored by the Torino Process, showcases a nuanced landscape with varying degrees of effectiveness in different areas of quality and relevance of learning outcomes.

The proficiency of young learners in North Macedonia's Vocational Education and Training (VET) system with regard to basic skills and key competencies (Outcome B.1.1) aligns with the average performance observed in countries participating in the Torino Process. This suggests a commendable quality of learning provided to the younger demographic. However, when this performance is gauged against a broader, more diverse collection of countries participating in global student learning assessments which sample students in general education and VET, such as OECD's PISA,¹² quality of learning in North Macedonia appears to be moderate to low standing. National authorities report that various projects and trainings in the formal educational system have been conducted in response to develop problem-solving, reading, math, and STEM skills among students.¹³

TABLE 3. POLICY AND SYSTEM OUTCOMES INCLUDED UNDER MONITORING AREA B (1): QUALITY AND RELEVANCE

Code	Deliverable (outcome)	Description
B.1.1	Key competences for LLL, quality of learning outcomes	This outcome captures the extent to which the education and training system succeeds in the provision of basic skills and key competences for learners in formal education (including IVET), as defined in regular international surveys and international assessments
B.1.2	Adult skills and competences	This outcome captures the extent to which adults in working age dispose of basic skills and key competences, as captured by regular international surveys.
B.1.3	Links between learning and the world of work	This outcome reflects the pragmatic relevance of IVET and CVET programmes through the lens of participation in work-based learning (WBL) and the share of programmes with outcomes/objectives that include a WBL component
B.1.4	Employability of learners	This outcome refers to the labour market relevance of opportunities for LLL as captured through evidence of labour market outcomes of graduates from IVET, CVET, and other forms of LLL with a VET component
B.1.5	Opportunities for career guidance	This outcome strives to capture the timely availability of up-to-date information about professions and education programmes, which information allows prospective and current students in VET to take informed decisions concerning their education and employment paths
B.4.1	Relevance of learning content: green transition	This outcome captures the extent to which curricula for youth and adults consider themes of significance for sustainability and climate change awareness, including "green skills" for sustainable economies
B.4.2	Relevance of learning content: digital transition	This outcome tracks the extent to which curricula for youth and adults incorporate themes concerning digitalisation, and the extent to which learners are provided with basic digital skills as a result
B.4.3	Responsiveness of programme offering	This outcome captures the degree and speed of responsiveness of initial and continuing VET systems to the needs of the labour market and to other changes concerning demography and socio-economic developments

As to the skills and competences of adults (Outcome B.1.2), the country's score lags behind the international average (Figure 3). This indicates not only a disparity in the level of basic skills and key competences between young learners and adults, but also that the VET system might be less effective in delivering quality education and training to the adult population, compared to younger learners. The reasons for this disparity are beyond the scope of this report, but experience from other countries and also findings from previous Torino Process rounds suggest that they may include less tailored curricula

¹² Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

¹³ Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for North Macedonia.

for adults, as well as challenges which specific groups of adults, such as those with low or no education, face in reskilling or upskilling.

The VET system in North Macedonia displays a significant disparity also between the degree to which learners are employable (Outcome B.1.4) and the strength of links to the world of work of the VET programmes they attend (Outcome B.1.3). While the metric for the employability of VET graduates in North Macedonia is close to the international average, reflecting a degree of labour market relevance, the considerably lower score for links of programmes to the world of work points to a disconnect between educational programmes and the practical demands of the labour market.

Taken together, these seemingly contradictory findings – high degree of employability of VET graduates on one side and limited connection to the world of work of VET programmes on the other – imply that the basic skills and theoretical knowledge acquired in VET in North Macedonia are still being valued by local employers. However, the low degree of exposure to work suggests a lack of practical, experiential training, which may affect learners' understanding of the labour market and their ability to make informed career choices, despite the very good performance of the VET system in providing up-to-date career guidance opportunities (Outcome B.1.5). The theory-to-practice gap could also present a steep learning curve once in the workforce, potentially leading to slower career progression, job dissatisfaction, or a mismatch between skills and job requirements. In the long run, this is likely to affect the competitiveness of VET graduates in North Macedonia, especially in sectors where hands-on skills are essential.

Efforts have been made to address this gap, for instance through the establishment of three Regional VET Centres aiming to orient VET towards the needs of regional markets and supporting the transition to employment through various services. Furthermore, the national authorities point to the increasing involvement of companies in the VET system, which they see as a necessary response to the lack of qualified workforce. For instance, a new secondary education law, currently being considered by the Macedonian parliament, aims to increase the scope and quality of practical education, particularly with employers.¹⁴ Also, in the curricula for VET qualifications classes that have an increased number of practical teaching hours, the Work-Based Learning (WBL) hours have been adjusted to 4, 8, and 10 hours for the second, third, and fourth year respectively. The number of days allotted for practical training, also known as ferial practice, has likewise been increased to 10, 15, and 20 days respectively. According to official information, this marks a significant change from the previous setup where WBL was only implemented in the third and fourth years with 4 and 6 hours respectively, and ferial practice was offered in the first, second, and third years, for 10 days per year.

In addition to a focus on immediate labour market needs, the Torino Process underscores the importance of monitoring how much curricula for youth and adults incorporate themes of long-term relevance as well – themes which help address societal challenges, such as digital skills, sustainability, green skills, and climate change awareness (Outcomes B.4.1 and B.4.2).

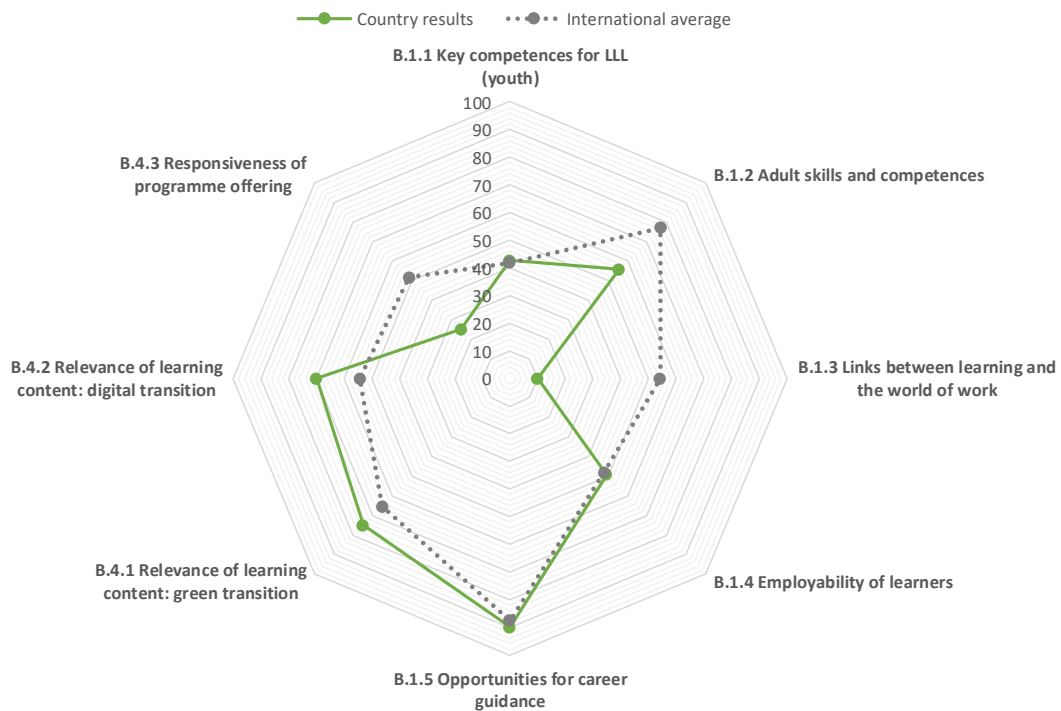
Outcomes for the relevance of learning content for the green transition (Outcome B.4.1) and the digital transition (Outcome B.4.2) both exceed the international average. This reflects an acknowledgment of the importance of these themes in the country's curricula and a proactive approach in preparing learners for evolving demands.

At the same time, the evidence provided by national authorities shows that much remains to be done. For instance, the distribution of climate change-related content across separate subjects in the

¹⁴ Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for North Macedonia.

education system could potentially limit a comprehensive understanding of this complex issue. Consequently, recommendations have been put forth for a more holistic inclusion of climate change content, thereby enhancing climate literacy among the younger generation and fostering active participation in mitigating the ramifications of global warming. Positive steps towards the green transition, such as the 2021 establishment of the Centre for VET Excellence in green innovation, and the endorsement of green investments by businesses, further substantiate these efforts.¹⁵

FIGURE 4. SUPPORTING QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF LLL - INDEX OF SYSTEM PERFORMANCE, NORTH MACEDONIA AND INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE (2023)



Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

However, an examination of the responsiveness of the programme offering (Outcome B.4.3) uncovers lower than average performance, both in international comparison and compared to other domains of monitoring. The national authorities indicate that despite the introduction of active labour market measures since 2008/2009 aimed at retraining and upskilling unemployed persons to align with employers' requirements, changes in formal education occur in relatively longer cycles of 4 to 6 years or more. While non-formal training providers encounter no administrative hurdles in incorporating market-relevant courses, it appears that formal education institutions infrequently conduct skills gap analyses prior to the introduction or overhaul of their study programs.¹⁶

¹⁵ Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for North Macedonia.

¹⁶ Ibid.

This situation potentially contributes to the observed discrepancy between the high scoring in green and digital transitions and the lower scoring in responsiveness, hinting that despite the forward-thinking content of the curricula, the system might be slower in adapting its offerings to immediate labour market changes and socio-economic developments.

2.2.3 Area B (2). Lifelong learning outcomes: excellence and innovation

In the second part of Area B (Excellence and innovation in support of lifelong learning), the Torino Process monitors two performance dimensions – excellence and innovation, which accommodate a total of eight system outcomes. These outcomes include excellence in pedagogy, learning content, governance, and inclusion into learning, as well as systemic innovation supporting access, participation, quality, and relevance of learning and training. The outcomes included under Area B (2) are described in Table 4.

The Torino Process defines excellence as the presence of system-wide policies and measures that promote highest quality practices and results in a selection of key domains of policy and system delivery in VET. The focus is on the measures of excellence in pedagogy and professional development, excellence in programme content and implementation, excellence in governance and provider management, and excellence in social inclusion and equity.

TABLE 4. POLICY AND SYSTEM OUTCOMES INCLUDED UNDER MONITORING AREA B (2): EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

Code	Deliverable (outcome)	Description
B.2.1	Excellence in pedagogy and professional development	This outcome captures the extent to which excellence in teaching and training is an acknowledged policy priority, as well as the extent to which its implementation is bearing fruit across the education and training system, including in the domain of professional development of teachers
B.2.2	Excellence in programme content and implementation	This outcome captures the results of efforts to promote excellence in the content and implementation of VET programmes, with a specific focus on bringing them closer to the world of work (i.e. through work-based learning), on prioritising greening in curricula and teaching, as well as on promoting excellence in learning.
B.2.3	Excellence in governance and provider management	This outcome captures the results of efforts to promote excellence in the domains of financing, leadership, and governance, as well as the extent to which these examples are systemic or not
B.2.4	Excellence in social inclusion and equity	This outcome captures the results of efforts to promote excellence in the domain of equity and social inclusion in education and training, as well as the extent to which these examples are systemic or not
B.3.1	Systemic innovation: access to opportunities for LLL	This outcome captures the presence of innovative practices and policy solutions in the domain of access to opportunities for lifelong learning.
B.3.2	Systemic innovation: participation and graduation	This outcome captures the presence of innovative practices and policy solutions in the provision of support for participation in (and graduation from) opportunities for lifelong learning, and the extent to which they are systemic (or not)
B.3.3	Systemic innovation: quality of learning and training outcomes	This outcome captures the presence of innovative practices and policy solutions for raising the quality of learning and training in terms of the knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired by learners
B.3.4	Systemic innovation: relevance of learning and training	This outcome captures the presence of innovative practices and policy solutions for raising the labour market relevance of knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired by learners

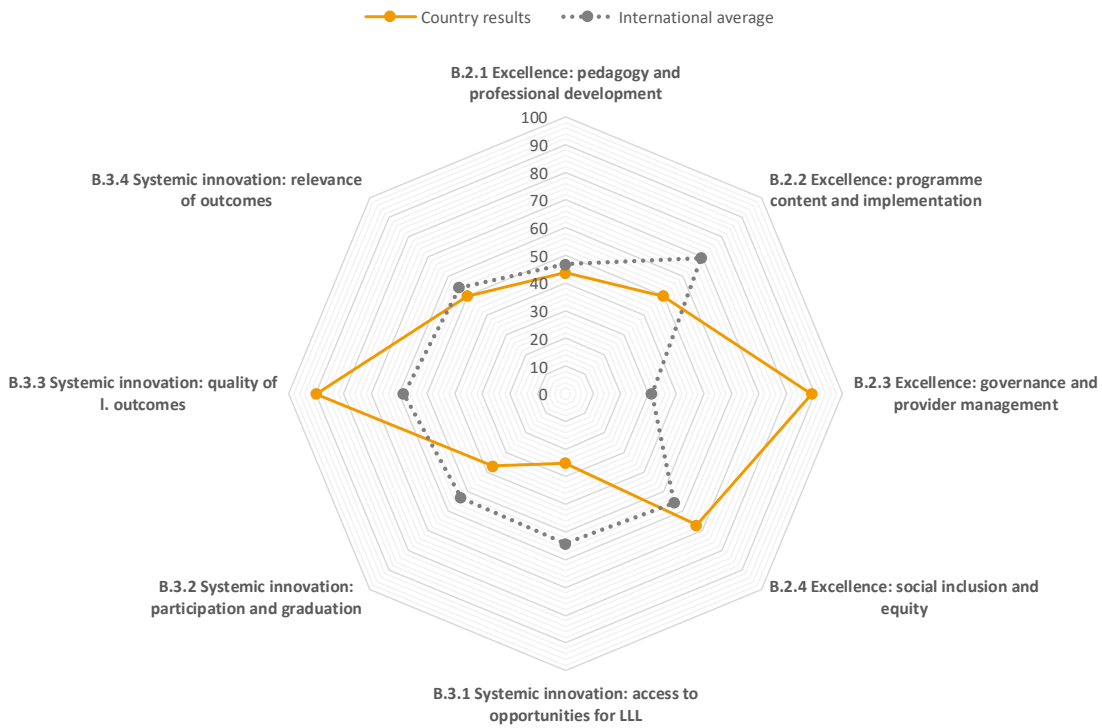
Performance regarding excellence in pedagogy and professional development of teachers and trainers in VET (Outcome B.2.1) is moderate (Figure 5). Although there may be policies in place aimed at improving the excellence of teaching and training in the VET sector, at the time of monitoring their impact was not as extensive and fruitful as to benefit a critical mass of teachers, trainers, and providers in the VET system.

This observation aligns with a broader trend of assigning a lower priority to recognizing and promoting instances of excellence in VET programme implementation (Outcome B.2.2). This domain

includes elements such as curriculum design, programme scheduling, assessments, and the coordination of these aspects with key stakeholders. The level of focus which North Macedonia is giving to this outcome is only average and falls notably below the average attention paid to by other countries participating in the Torino Process.

On a more positive note, excellence in VET governance and provider management is an area of much better monitoring results (Outcome B.2.3), suggesting a significant progress in the implementation of policies aimed at improving leadership, financing, and governance in the VET system. The proactive commitment of national authorities in this domain is evident in the planned transformation of the Center for Vocational Education and Training into a Center for the Development of Vocational Education, equipped to respond to new tasks.¹⁷

FIGURE 5. EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION FOR BETTER LLL - INDEX OF SYSTEM PERFORMANCE, NORTH MACEDONIA AND INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE (2023)



Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

Furthermore, the monitoring results indicate that there is an ample degree of commitment to social inclusion and equity throughout the VET system. North Macedonia performs above average in promoting excellence in social inclusion and equity (Outcome B.2.4), with an SPI of 67 against an average of 56 for other countries in the Torino Process monitoring sample. Authorities report of

¹⁷ Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for North Macedonia.

additional measures along these lines, such as the planned incorporation of educational assistants into the teaching process, aiding students with atypical development.¹⁸

In the context of system performance monitoring within the Torino Process, excellence and innovation represent distinct yet interconnected domains. While excellence refers to the pursuit of highest quality practices and outcomes in various, mainstream domains of vocational education and training policy and delivery, innovation focuses on the presence of pioneering practices and policy solutions within these and related domains. Innovation in the context of monitoring is a proxy for the adaptability, creativity, and forward-thinking approach in the VET system in responding to the evolving needs of learners and labour markets.

The Torino Process monitoring gauges systemic innovation regarding access to lifelong learning opportunities (Outcome B.3.1), participation and graduation (Outcome B.3.2), quality of learning and training outcomes (Outcome B.3.3), and relevance of learning and training (Outcome B.3.4). The emphasis North Macedonia places on innovation varies significantly between these different outcomes.

With an SPI of 25 for innovation in support of access to lifelong learning opportunities, and an SPI of 37 for innovation in support of participation and graduation, North Macedonia falls considerably behind the international averages of 54 and 53 respectively in these domains of monitoring. The modest performance in the domain of access and attractiveness to VET (see Section 2.1.1) despite this being a long-standing policy priority suggests that North Macedonia may need to open up to more innovative policy solutions to address the persistent challenges in this area.

In contrast, North Macedonia excelled in promoting systemic innovation in the quality of learning and training. This achievement demonstrates a commitment to adopting innovative practices to enhance the quality of learning and training outcomes. A new Law on NQF, currently in public consultation, aims to improve qualification standards in line with labour market needs and develop a system for validating non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL).

Finally, the SPI for systemic innovation in the relevance of learning and training was exactly in line with the international average of 54. This suggests a balanced alignment of vocational education and training with the demands of the labour market, but it also indicates room for innovative solutions to further improve the labour market relevance of learning outcomes. The National Implementation Plan highlights government's main goals in this regard, including harmonizing VET with labour market needs and improving learning environment and quality assurance in VET.

2.2.4 Area C. System organisation

In Area C (System organisation), the monitoring framework accommodates the last two dimensions presented in Section 2.1 – steering/management and resourcing, in which the Torino Process tracks a total of eight system outcomes. These outcomes include the availability and use of data for informed decision-making, the involvement of stakeholders in VET policy, provider management, and resourcing, quality assurance and accountability, the internationalisation of VET providers, as well as the availability and use of human and financial resources in VET.

The outcomes included under Area C are defined as follows:

¹⁸ Ibid., and draft Law on Secondary Education.

**TABLE 5. POLICY AND SYSTEM OUTCOMES INCLUDED UNDER MONITORING AREA C:
SYSTEM ORGANISATION**

Code	Deliverable (outcome)	Description
C.1.1	Data availability and use	This outcome refers to the availability of administrative and big data as covered by Level 1 of the monitoring framework, participation in large scale international assessments, as well as technical capacity to generate/manage evidence to support monitoring and improvement
C.1.2	Participatory governance	This outcome captures the degree of involvement of the private sector and other external stakeholders in consultations and decisions concerning opportunities for LLL through initial and continuing VET
C.1.3	Public accountability and reliable quality assurance	This outcome tracks the extent to which reliable and trustworthy quality assurance (QA) mechanisms and accountability arrangements are in place which cover learners, teachers, and providers, as well as the extent to which the QA results are publicly available
C.1.4	Professional capacity of staff in leadership positions	This outcome monitors the availability and professional capacity of qualified staff in leadership roles and in other key administrative roles on provider level
C.1.5	Internationalisation	This outcome monitors the degree of internationalisation in IVET and CVET, such as internationalisation of QA arrangements, curricular content, qualifications (i.e. recognition of international credentials, awarding bodies being active beyond their country of origin, etc.)
C.2.1	Adequate financial resource allocations and use	This outcome captures the adequacy of financial resources invested in IVET and CVET in terms of level of investment and allocation, as well as the degree of diversification of funding between public and private sources
C.2.2	Adequate human resource allocation and use	This outcome captures the efficiency of human resource management in terms of availability of teachers and trainers, and the adequacy of their deployment and career management
C.2.3	Adequate material base	This outcome captures the extent to which the material base for learning and training is adequate, including learning and training materials which are supportive of and promote effective teaching, training, and learning

Like other countries participating in the Torino Process, North Macedonia faces challenges in terms of data availability and use (Outcome C.1.1)(Figure 6), albeit to a much lesser extent than other countries participating in the Torino Process. While this result points to potential areas for further improvement, it also indicates that efforts are being made to improve the accessibility and utility of administrative and big data.

On a related note, participatory governance in VET (Outcome C.1.2) is marked by considerable openness to external stakeholders, as demonstrated by the higher-than-average performance of the VET system against this outcome. According to information provided by national authorities, dialogue with these stakeholders has been a key part of the development of strategic documents for over 20 years. Recent examples include the 2022 National Implementation Plan for VET Education and the National Development Strategy 2022-2042,¹⁹ and the National Smart Specialisation Strategy.²⁰

VET in North Macedonia performs above-average also in terms of public accountability and reliable quality assurance (Outcome C.1.3). According to information by national authorities, this reflects a commitment to the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) standards, as well as to clarity, consistency, and reliability of policies, procedures, and decision-making processes related to the VET system, as captured in framework documents such as the National Implementation Plan and the Education Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2025.²¹

While the monitoring results confirm a successful commitment to improving quality assurance, the VET system may still not have the capacity to effectively implement the quality assurance arrangements

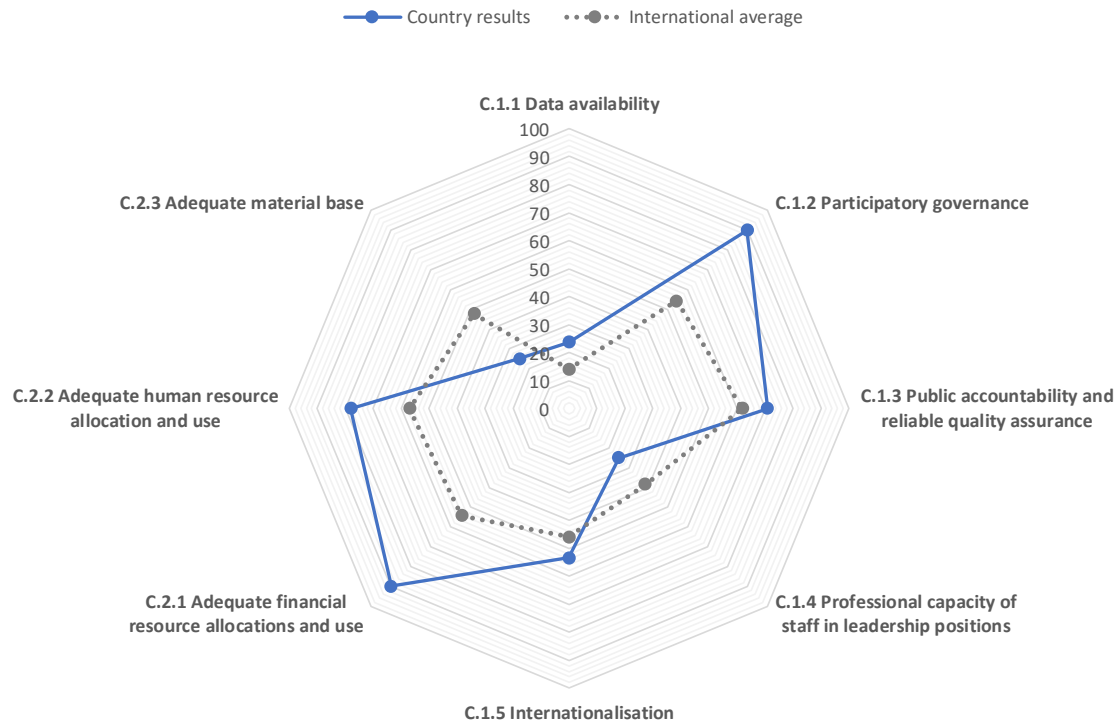
¹⁹ At the time of monitoring, this document was still under development.

²⁰ Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for North Macedonia.

²¹ Ibid.

and practices across all areas of VET system operation, such as curricula and programmes, teacher training and professional development, student assessment, and administrative compliance.²²

FIGURE 6. GOVERNANCE, PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND RESOURCES - INDEX OF SYSTEM PERFORMANCE, NORTH MACEDONIA AND INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE (2023)



Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

One aspect of the challenge with capacity are gaps in the skills, knowledge, and abilities that staff in leadership positions in VET need to effectively guide and manage their respective institutions or programs (Outcome C.1.4). North Macedonia falls well below the average in that domain of system performance, which suggests that the competence of those in key administrative roles should be a priority moving forward. Despite a fairly structured selection process for school directors, as pointed out in the information provided by national authorities and as outlined in Article 91 of the Law on Secondary Education, this group of professionals in VET seem to face difficulties in effectively guiding and managing their institutions.²³ Although the recruitment process usually functions correctly and those who end up in leadership positions are usually of high quality, a notable gap is the lack of continuous professional development and lifelong learning opportunities for the management of providers, which is a likely cause for the underperformance of North Macedonia in this domain.

VET in North Macedonia shows a promising degree of internationalisation (Outcome C.1.5), perhaps as a consequence of the active participation of the country in Erasmus+ projects, with significant funding

²² Source: Quality assurance in Vocational Education and Training in North Macedonia, ETF 2021.

²³ Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for North Macedonia.

dedicated to VET schools and training providers for youth and adults.²⁴ In the same vein, North Macedonia scores well above the international average also in terms of adequate financial resources (Outcome C.2.1) and adequate human resources (Outcome C.2.2) with SPI scores of 90 and 78, respectively.

Although these outcomes underscore a commitment to investing in and efficiently managing the VET system, the results for the adequacy of the material base (Outcome C.2.3) are considerably lower, which may be an indication of problems with the efficiency of resource allocation and use regarding infrastructure and the creation of conducive learning environment, including the provision of effective teaching, training, and learning materials.

Finally, the SPI for adequate material base (Outcome C.2.3) is significantly lower at 25, lagging behind the international average of 48. This indicates an area of concern where improvements are needed to ensure the creation of conducive learning environment, including the provision of effective teaching, training, and learning materials.

Information provided by national authorities shows that national authorities are proactively trying to address these deficiencies. The state provides free textbooks for primary and secondary education, which can be downloaded online. Despite minor challenges with the lack of textbooks for certain specific occupations in VET schools, the Ministry is actively supporting authors to develop the necessary teaching materials. Moreover, a significant stride towards enhancing the current capacities of school laboratories and introducing new accredited training programs is the participation of North Macedonia in the Regional Challenge Fund (RCF). This program supports projects that boost infrastructure, offer training for teachers and trainers, and provide advisory support.²⁵

2.3 HOW DID POLICIES AND SYSTEMS BENEFIT SPECIFIC GROUPS OF LEARNERS?

In this round, the Torino Process monitoring looks not only into the deliverables of national VET policies and systems in general but also into the degree to which they address the needs and expectations of present and prospective lifelong learners. The monitoring framework traces how well and equitably system outcomes are distributed to these learners depending on their age and gender and by features which can be influenced by policy, such as socio-economic disadvantage, labour market status, migration status and learning setting/pathway.

The next sections provide an overview of how the IVET and CVET subsystems in North Macedonia perform in a key selection of monitoring dimensions for the following key selection of learner groups: female learners (Section 2.3.1), disadvantaged learners (Section 2.3.2), populations who are long term unemployed, economically inactive, and have a low level of educational attainment (Section 2.3.3), as well as by their country of origin (Section 2.3.4).

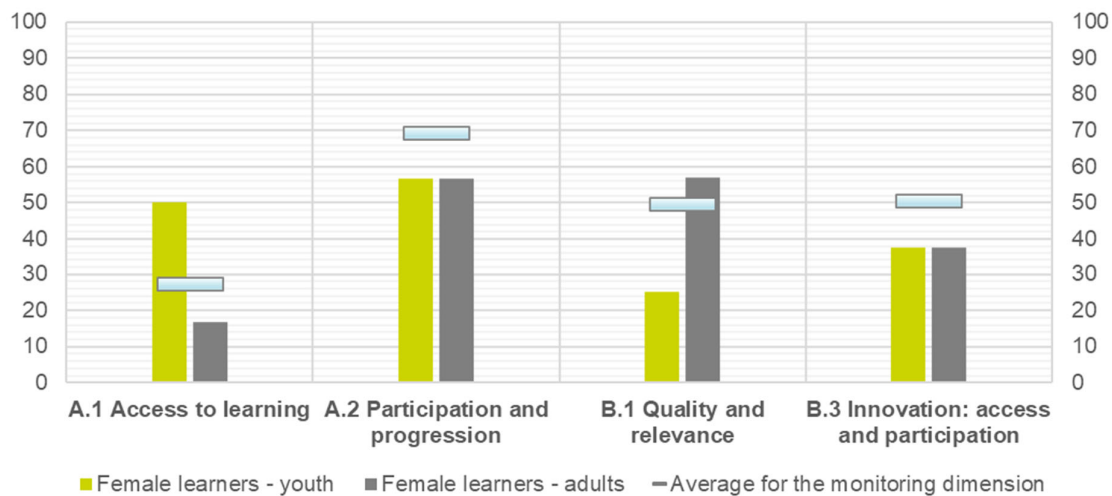
2.3.1 Female learners

This section describes findings about VET system performance regarding access, participation, quality and relevance, and innovation to the benefit of female youth and adult learners in VET in North Macedonia (Figure 7).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for North Macedonia

FIGURE 7. SYSTEM PERFORMANCE IN SUPPORT OF FEMALE LEARNERS IN SELECTED MONITORING DIMENSIONS, NORTH MACEDONIA (2023)



Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

In North Macedonia, no formal obstacles prevent women's access to initial VET programmes, as stated in the laws and regulations. Yet, accessibility to initial and continuing vocational education and training (VET) varies for young and adult women (Dimension A.1 - Access). While young women have better access to learning opportunities than the average, adult women face challenges. For both groups of learners, the attractiveness of VET relies heavily on personal interest and familial influence, despite career counselling efforts.²⁶

Both young and adult women face systemic obstacles to completion and progression (Dimension A.2 - Participation) within the VET system. These obstacles are equally challenging for both groups, highlighting that there is no interplay between gender and age bias. National authorities report of efforts to prevent dropouts and stimulate students, including female students, to complete their education, but discrepancies still persist.

Regarding the provision of basic skills and key competences, and relevance to employment (Dimension B.1 - Quality and relevance), young female graduates from VET generally fare worse than men and much worse than their adult peers. This situation negatively impacts their employment prospects and later on, their outlook to engage successfully in programmes that address labour market needs and promote employment. In addition, innovative practices promoting access and successful completion of learning (Dimension B.3 - Innovation) do not seem to favour women. A recent initiative to establish a national platform for women entrepreneurship highlights the country's commitment to address this gap by promoting gender equality in VET.²⁷ This is in line with practices in other countries participating in the Torino Process, which put an emphasis on the role of innovation in fostering inclusivity in VET.

²⁶ Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for North Macedonia.

²⁷ Ibid.

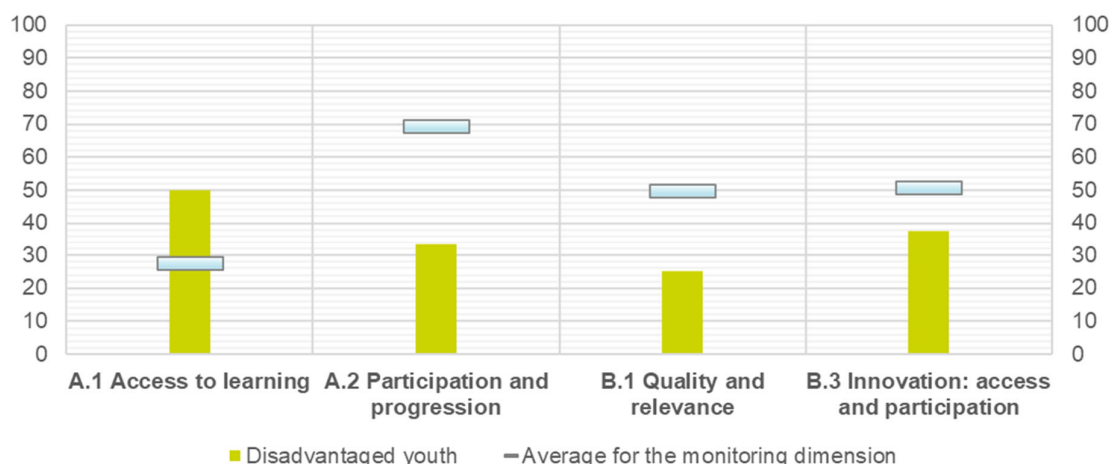
2.3.2 Disadvantaged learners

This section describes how well the VET system caters to the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged youth regarding access, participation, and quality/relevance of opportunities for lifelong learning through VET. The section also examines whether efforts to promote innovation in VET access and participation benefit North Macedonia’s specific group of learners (Figure 8).

IVET in North Macedonia presents a mixed performance in catering to learners with below-average access to financial, social, cultural, and human capital resources. While accessibility to learning (Dimension A.1) is commendably high, showing a robust commitment towards disadvantaged youth, issues arise in other areas, such as participation in learning (Dimension A.2), the quality and relevance of education (Dimension B.1), and innovation (Dimension B.3).

The monitoring results suggest a robust commitment to ensuring access to learning (Dimension A.1) for this demographic – a clear evidence of substantial efforts to ensure that VET is accessible and appealing to disadvantaged youth. Free primary and secondary education, including vocational programs, ensures equal access regardless of socio-economic background. In addition, authorities report of state scholarships which support disadvantaged students in secondary vocational schools and undergraduate studies.²⁸

FIGURE 8. SYSTEM PERFORMANCE IN SUPPORT OF SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED YOUTH IN SELECTED MONITORING DIMENSIONS, NORTH MACEDONIA (2023)



Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

Participation in learning (Dimension A.2), however, may be hindered due to socio-economic constraints, as suggested by the below average performance score in that domain. Although disadvantaged students have the benefit of enrolling in dormitories if they come from rural areas or cities without universities, there are instances of these students leaving the educational and training process prematurely to start work. This diversion towards employment, driven by low family income and

²⁸ Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for North Macedonia.

less favourable circumstances, might distract students from their learning, potentially leading to academic failure or repetition of a year.

The quality and relevance of learning, though ensured by state policies and scholarships, raises concerns as well (Dimension B.1). While it's encouraging to see the general perception shifting towards favouring VET studies because of the ease of employment immediately after the end of VET secondary education, the performance in this dimension indicates potential shortcomings in equipping disadvantaged youth with adequate basic skills and key competences. There is a substantial variance in the level of basic skills possessed by advantaged and disadvantaged students and in the academic resilience of both groups, with those from less privileged backgrounds often at a disadvantage.²⁹

On a positive note, the system exhibits promising tendencies towards innovation in access and participation (Dimension B.3). This propensity suggests a focus on innovative practices to enhance the learning experience and outcomes for disadvantaged youth, such as the "Second Chance" program. Introduced in December 2022, it offers a valuable opportunity for disadvantaged young people to requalify and obtain a certificate of acquired knowledge and skills within the formal education system.³⁰

2.3.3 Populations who are long-term unemployed, economically inactive, and have low educational attainment

Section 2.3.3 presents findings about VET system performance from the perspective of three strategically important groups of adults: the long-term unemployed, the economically inactive adults, and those with low or no educational attainment (Figure 9).

These three groups of learners in North Macedonia have varying degrees of access to VET (Dimension A.1) and are thus affected by unique challenges in their learning journeys. Long-term unemployed learners score significantly higher than the dimension's average, suggesting a greater accessibility to VET opportunities. Information provided by national authorities suggests that the active engagement of the state Employment Service Agency (ESA) plays a role in that. Its career counsellors who work individually with job seekers and help create personal profiles to identify potential occupations and necessary trainings to improve their skills.³¹

Conversely, the economically inactive and adults with low or no education score considerably lower, indicating that this group may find accessing VET programs more challenging, for instance because of a lack of awareness, lack of prerequisite skills, financial constraints, inadequate programs catering to their specific needs, as well as socio-cultural factors beyond the scope of this report. Further, economically inactive adults often have low qualification jobs with correspondingly low salaries, while many work in the grey economy, unrecorded and unregulated, which further compounds their challenges with accessing opportunities for learning.

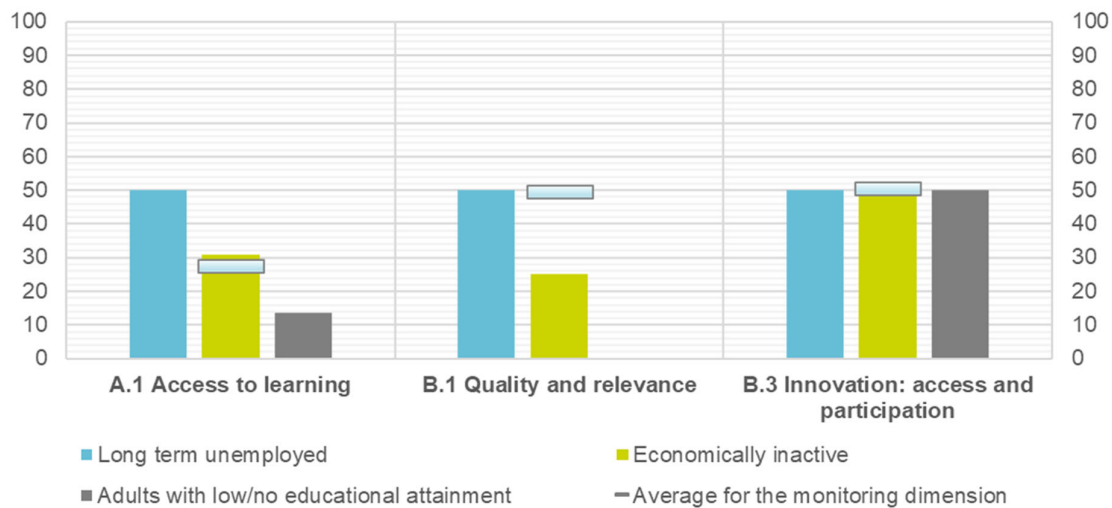
Concerning the quality and relevance of learning (Dimension B.1), the situation is more nuanced. While data is lacking for adults with low or no education, VET delivers average results for the long-term unemployed in terms of quality and relevance. However, economically inactive learners receive an inferior experience in terms of acquiring basic skills and competencies relevant to employment. They also benefit from subpar career guidance.

²⁹ Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for North Macedonia and OECD PISA 2018 database.

³⁰ Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for North Macedonia.

³¹ Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for North Macedonia.

FIGURE 9. SYSTEM PERFORMANCE IN SUPPORT OF ADULTS WHO ARE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED, ECONOMICALLY INACTIVE, OR HAVE LOW EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, NORTH MACEDONIA (2023)



Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

Innovation in access and participation (Dimension B.3), shows a more promising outlook. Both the long-term unemployed and economically inactive learners benefit from innovative practices at the system level, scoring on par with the average for the dimension. The presence of these innovative practices suggests that North Macedonia is making strides in its commitment to inclusivity and equal opportunities in VET for these specific learner groups.

2.3.4 Learners by country of origin

The final section with monitoring findings discusses performance in the domains of access, participation, quality and relevance, and innovation in North Macedonia for learners who are first-generation migrants (Figure 10).

The legislation of North Macedonia ensures migrants can access all levels of education under the same conditions as native-born citizens, removing any official obstacles to entering initial VET programmes based on their migrant status. Nevertheless, the monitoring results suggest that learners who are first-generation migrants might find it somewhat more challenging to access learning opportunities through VET compared to other learners (Dimension A.1). The propensity of VET providers to innovate in support of access and participation for this group of learners is also low (Dimension B.3), despite a continuous growth in immigration and the significant increase in foreigners with temporary residence for education in North Macedonia.³²

Students with migrant background who manage to overcome the barriers and hurdles at entry tend to demonstrate remarkable resilience. Once they manage to navigate the initial barriers, their likelihood

³² Ibid.

to remain within the system and successfully navigate it to graduation, is noteworthy and much higher than that of the average learner in VET (Dimension A.2).

FIGURE 10. SYSTEM PERFORMANCE IN SUPPORT OF FIRST-GENERATION MIGRANTS IN SELECTED MONITORING DIMENSIONS, NORTH MACEDONIA (2023)



Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

The measures in place, such as tests to assess competences for enrolment in the formal education system and special training programs for easier adaptation to the local curriculum, alongside basic and advanced courses in the Macedonian language, support these learners in overcoming initial barriers.³³ However, the quality of their learning outcomes is likely to lag behind the average (Dimension B.1). This might be due to language barriers or the challenges in adjusting to local school conditions.

3. SUPPLEMENTARY SOURCES AND INFORMATION

3.1 Links to background information and data

The system performance indices presented in this report were calculated based on a selection of international quantitative indicators for North Macedonia and the qualitative responses of stakeholders where such indicators were missing.

The full quantitative indicators collected for North Macedonia for this 2023 round of monitoring can be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ISOLxRgMNneDVilG2lqpJ0oM0YtpTlf/edit?usp=sharing&oid=110154518834912853011&rtpof=true&sd=true>

The full collection of qualitative responses to the country-specific questionnaire for North Macedonia can be found here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/111iToxBgD98->

³³ Ibid.

A full technical report about the monitoring framework and process in 2023 can be found here:³⁴
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1F9wIKtIhp4y-Hx02AiFtwJLM8ubQQ7PK/view?usp=sharing>

General information for the Torino Process as well as the reports and data of other participating countries, can be found here: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/what-we-do/torino-process-policy-analysis-and-progress-monitoring>.³⁵

3.2 Definitions, terminological clarifications, methodological limitations

3.2.1 Definitions and terminological clarifications

This section provides an overview and definition of key terms in the Torino Process monitoring framework.

- **Youth:** Population in the official age of entrance and participation in initial VET programmes.
- **Adults:** Population of working age (15+ years of age) not enrolled in initial VET programmes.
- **Disadvantaged youth:** This refers to socio-economic disadvantage and describes youth with access to below-average levels of financial, social, cultural, and human capital resources.
- **Long-term unemployed:** Long-term unemployment refers to the number of people who are out of work and have been actively seeking employment for at least one year.
- **Inactive populations:** Adults of working age who are outside of the labour force, meaning that they are neither employed nor registered as unemployed (that is, seeking employment)
- **Lifelong learning:** any learning activity undertaken throughout life, to improve knowledge, skills/competences and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons.
- **System performance:** describes the extent to which the VET system delivers against a targeted selection of national and international obligations (commitments) to learners and other stakeholders in support of learning through life (lifelong learning - LLL).
- **Initial VET:** Vocational education and training carried out in the formal system of initial education (usually upper or post-secondary) before entering working life.
- **Continuing VET:** Formal or non-formal vocational education and training carried out after initial VET and usually after the beginning of working life.
- **Adult education:** Adult education or learning may refer to any formal, non-formal, or informal learning activity, both general and vocational, undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training.

3.2.2 Methodological limitations

The system performance indices developed in the framework of the Torino Process, are based on a rich methodological framework. This framework relies on various principles and theoretical underpinnings to ensure that the design, implementation, and evaluation of the indices is plausible in terms of theoretical foundations, technical reproducibility, and statistical fitness. The primary aim of

³⁴ Release date for the report is 1 July 2023 upon completion of monitoring for all participating countries.

³⁵ The Torino Process monitoring reports and data will be released gradually in the period March-May 2023 in the order in which countries submit their evidence and the reports are being finalised with them.

these indices is to offer insights that can guide the monitoring of countries and inform their policy planning, not to promote their comparative ranking.

While various options were available during the different phases of the construction of the indices, the final choices represent a series of decisions which were deemed adequate and appropriate to promote reliability and avoid bias, in full awareness that by their very nature, indices like those require constant refinement. Therefore, the construction and calculation of the performance indices will remain an ongoing process to address the following limitations:

1. Refinement of aggregations and analysis: the current version of the indices represents a sub-set of the national systems under analysis. While these are sufficient for the formulation of initial findings, future cross-country analysis will include a larger number of countries with possible alternative (dis)aggregations i.e., at regional or development level, which may also affect the formulas using in the calculation of the indices as well as their values. The methodological framework of the Torino Process monitoring allows for such extensions and refinement without jeopardizing the validity of results which have been released already.

2. Choice of evidence: while the goal of this exercise is to monitor equally the different areas of interest, their dimensions and related outcomes, different countries may rely on a different, country-specific mix of qualitative and quantitative indicators from a predefined list for all countries. This also applies to the last available (reference) year for the quantitative indicators, which may vary between indicators and countries within a five-year limit.