TORINO PROCESS SYSTEM MONITORING REPORT: ARMENIA (2023)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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:** Like in other countries, IVET appears to be more accessible and attractive than CVET by a large margin, but access to both VET sub-systems in Armenia is well below the international average. Issues with accessibility aren't confined solely to VET but also pervade other opportunities for adult learning as well. A major factor which perpetuates the challenge is the absence of policies to support the implementation of an otherwise sound legislative framework, which is already in place to promote access and attractiveness of CVET.

- **Quality and participation:** The VET system in Armenia offers only modest quality to its beneficiaries, with stark discrepancies in the quality of skills and competencies between youth and adults. Regardless of age, VET learners in Armenia can anticipate successful participation and graduation, with transitioning between parallel VET and general education pathways seemingly easier than in most other countries. Nevertheless, VET students face a significantly higher drop-out risk compared to their counterparts in general education.

- **Labour market outcomes of learners:** Many VET programs in Armenia lack adequate ties to the labour market, negatively affecting the employability of their graduates. Enhancing career guidance could significantly fortify this connection. Interestingly, Armenia's VET programs are somewhat more attuned to labour market needs than those in other countries on average, possibly due to the presence of continuous mechanisms that scrutinize labour market needs and socio-economic developments for refining VET programs, as reported by national authorities.

- **Innovation:** Authorities in Armenia have only recently started to make excellence and innovation a priority in their strategic planning, a proven approach in other countries involved in the Torino Process and EU. Actions are being launched along these lines, which include the reorganization of institutions, expansion of dual education, enhancement of work-based learning opportunities, updating VET standards, and implementing a quality assurance system aligned with international norms. These efforts are still in the nascent stages of influencing ground-level change and their impact is yet to be seen.

- **System management and organisation:** Armenia's VET system grapples with issues surrounding data reliability, stakeholder participation, and quality assurance, influencing overall accountability. Despite proactive measures to bridge these gaps, challenges persist, particularly due to inadequate financial resources, which in turn contributes to infrastructure shortcomings and substandard educational and training materials. On a positive note, the VET system displays a relatively high level of staff professionalism and openness to international cooperation and peer learning.

- **Quality and reliability of monitoring evidence:** The monitoring results of Armenia are less internationally comparable than those of other countries, on average, and they are also more susceptible to bias in international comparison. Armenia, however, tends to self-assess the performance of its VET system 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 Armenia, 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 can 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 score[5] for these results for reference purposes, and, where relevant, it showcases some of the disaggregated data used to

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[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.

calculate the system performance indices. Links to the full dataset for Armenia 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 Armenia 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 Armenia.

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

International comparability of performance results (0=least comparable, 100=fully comparable)
ARMENIA: 22.6/100   Intl. average: 33.6/100

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
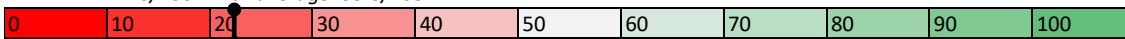
Risk of bias regarding system performance (0=highest risk, 100=lowest risk)
ARMENIA: 25.5/100   Intl. average: 45/100

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
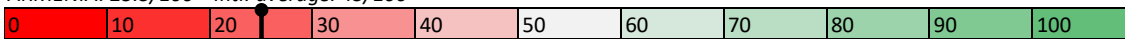
Tendency to be self-critical regarding system performance (most critical=0, neutral=50, least critical=100)
ARMENIA: 35.9/100   Intl. average: 52.8/100

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
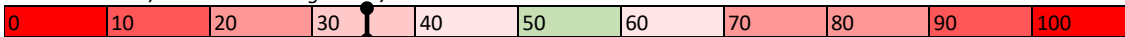
On a scale from 0 (least internationally comparable) to 100 (fully internationally comparable), the overall comparability of monitoring results for Armenia is 22.6 out of 100, which is low when benchmarked against the average of other countries participating in the Torino Process monitoring. The results of Armenia are also more susceptible to bias in international comparison, which manifests itself as a tendency to be 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 Armenia is 35.9 out of 100, against an international average of 52.8.

2. MONITORING RESULTS: ARMENIA

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 presents the system performance of Armenia in these eight dimensions of monitoring and system performance.

VET in Armenia is particularly successful in ensuring that learners – young and adult alike – have strong prospects for persevering in the system and graduating successfully (Dimension A.2). Responsiveness of the system to external developments and needs (Dimension B.4) like those emerging from the labour market, for example, is also above average compared to other countries (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2. INDEX OF SYSTEM PERFORMANCE BY MONITORING DIMENSION, ARMENIA AND INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE (2023)
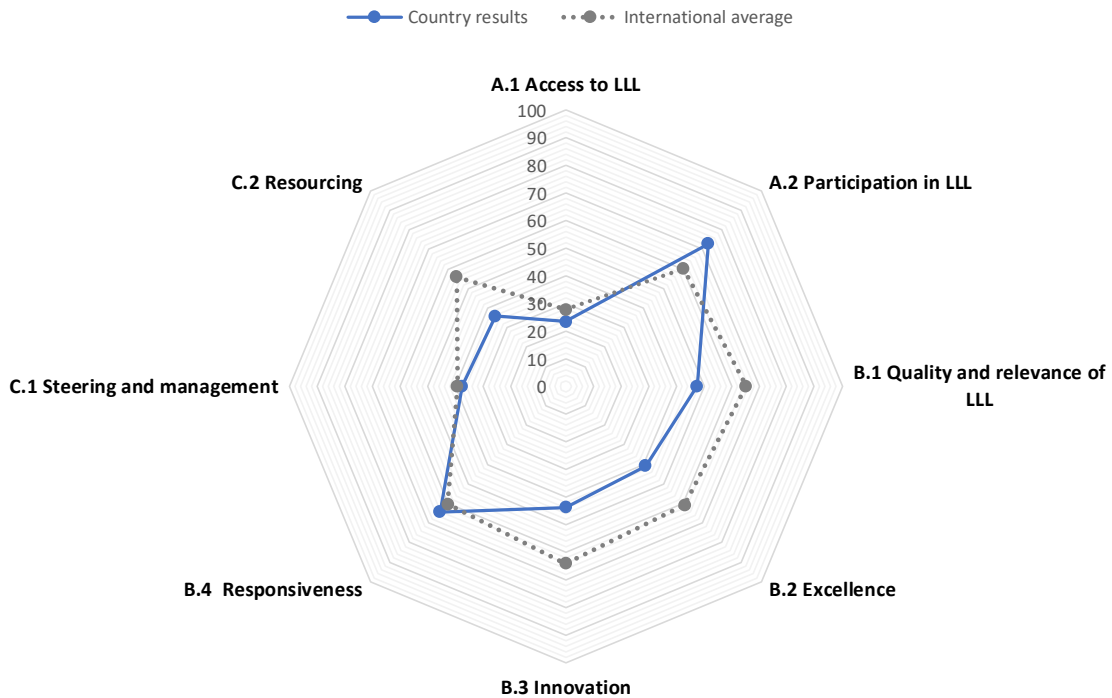
Theoretical[6] index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

Despite such promise of success, Armenia like other countries operates a VET system which remains a less attractive option for prospective learners compared to other educational and training pathways. In fact, with an SPI of only 23, access and attractiveness (Dimension A.1) is by far the weakest domain of policy and system performance in the country. The VET system is also poorly supplied in terms of financial and human resources (Dimension C2). Although many other countries grapple with this challenge, in Armenia the issue appears to be of more acute concern, just like the sub-optimal quality and relevance of learning provided through VET and other venues of learning for adults (Dimension B.1).

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[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.

The evidence collected in preparation of this report suggests that authorities and stakeholders in Armenia are aware of these challenges and are actively addressing them.[7] While doing so, however, they do not seem to prioritise policies and practices that specifically target highest quality (excellence) and novel or better ways of doing things (innovation) (Dimensions B.2 and B.3). Experience of other countries in the Torino Process but also of EU countries shows that the consolidation and prioritisation of efforts to promote excellence and innovation can help improve system performance in key areas such as access and quality.

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

VET performance in Armenia 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 of 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 listed in Table 2.

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

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[7] Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire of Armenia.

The previous section of this report discussed that access and attractiveness are dimensions of weaker performance for the VET system of Armenia. A look into performance by specific outcome within that dimension (Figure 3) provides more details which could explain the results within this area.

The evidence shows a considerable discrepancy between IVET and CET in the degree to which learners are willing to access them (Outcomes A.1.1 and A.1.2). Like in other countries, IVET appears to be more accessible and attractive than CVET by a large margin, but access to both VET sub-systems in Armenia is well below the international average. Access and attractiveness of VET is also the lowest-performing area of monitoring in Armenia overall.

The monitoring findings indicate that issues with accessibility aren't confined solely to VET but also pervade other opportunities for adult learning (Outcome A.1.3), like those provided in the context of active labour market policies. This implies that the shortcomings in accessing adult education in Armenia isn't a challenge exclusive to VET programs, but rather, it's a broader issue affecting a range of learning opportunities available to adults in the country.

FIGURE 3. PROMOTING ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN OPPORTUNITIES FOR LLL - INDEX OF SYSTEM PERFORMANCE, ARMENIA AND INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE (2023)
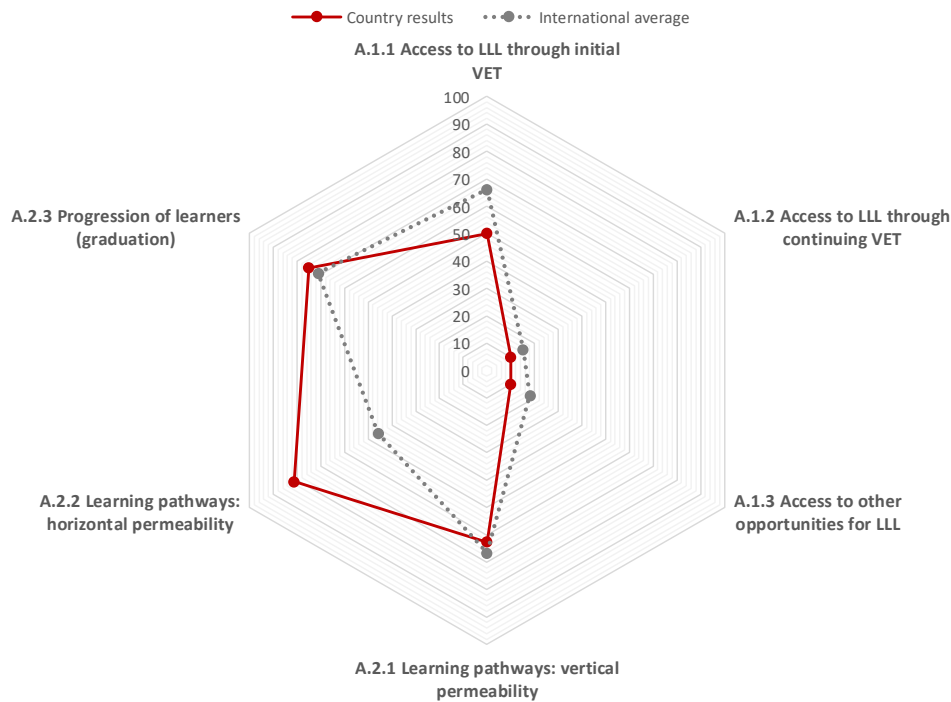
Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

A major factor which perpetuates the challenge especially for CVET in this context is the absence of policies to support the implementation of an otherwise sound legislative framework, which is already in place to promote access and attractiveness of CVET. Provisions include the modularisation of programmes, the targeting of specific groups of learners, and the introduction of mechanisms to validate

non-formal and informal learning.[8] At the time of monitoring, the latter was not yet operational due to the lack of capacity and due to resource limitations.

Those learners who nevertheless opt to enrol in a VET programme can expect to benefit from a VET system which will provide them with an opportunity to participate and graduate successfully. Performance in support of VET learners who wish to continue their education on subsequent levels of general education is only slightly below the international average (Outcome A.2.1) and a switch between parallel VET and general education pathways appears to a much easier undertaking than in other countries, on average (Outcome A.2.2). Still, better functioning of the national credit system would be essential for more flexibility regarding the pathways of learners.[9]

Young and adult learners who enrol in a VET programme are also less likely to fail or drop-out (Outcome A.2.3). With rates of repetition of less than 2% in 2021/2022[10] (the latest year for which there is data) and with an SPI of 75, progression of learners is one of the strongest areas of VET system performance. However, students in VET are still at higher risk of drop-out than their peers in general education: in 2021/2022 the drop-out rate in VET stood at 4.7%, while in general education a mere 0.05% of students discontinued their studies.

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 on the other hand, the monitoring records the responsiveness of the VET programme offering to demographic, labour market, and socio-economic developments, as well as the inclusion in VET curricula of themes pertaining to the green and digital transition. The outcomes included under Area B (1) are described in Table 3.

Section 2.1 noted that VET in Armenia offers only a moderate level of quality and relevance to its beneficiaries. There are, however, sizeable differences in the degree to which two broad groups of learners - youth and adults – dispose of the basic skills and competences required for successful participation in the economy. With a reported SPI of only 10, the quality and relevance of learning by youth is acutely low (Outcome B.1.1) – a challenge which is further compounded by the fact that assessment of learning quality in VET is limited to academic achievement and compliance with educational standards.

On the other hand, the quality and relevance of skills and competences of adults in Armenia (Outcome B.1.2) is among the domains of highest performance of education and training, both compared to other domains and to other countries, on average. This implies that adults in Armenia, whether educated through the national system or abroad, possess a greater set of basic skills and competencies than their peers from other countries in the Torino Process sample, on average: skills considered essential for success in information-rich societies.

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[8] Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for Armenia.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.

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

Like in other countries participating in the Torino Process, the learning opportunities provided through VET often include programmes with weak connections to the labour market, as measured by the extent of work-based learning components in these programmes (Outcome B.1.3). This factor contributes to the underwhelming employability of young and adult learners within Vocational Education and Training (VET) and lifelong learning more broadly (Outcome B.1.4).

Career guidance in Armenian VET appears structured and accessible with various sources providing a wealth of information about vocational education and training options, though there might be areas for improvement, especially in providing detailed insights into teaching methods and learning resources (Outcome B.1.5).[11] The availability and effective application of such services—aimed at identifying and exploring optimal careers and vocations – can significantly strengthen the link between VET and the labour market while directing learners towards good opportunities to obtain relevant work experiences. Continuing to advance this aspect of the VET system would be crucial.

The Torino Process monitoring framework assesses the relevance of learning content not just in immediate terms but also from a long-term perspective. It scrutinizes the extent to which curricula integrate forward-thinking, emerging trends such as digital and green transitions. Concurrently, it evaluates how well curricula respond to more immediate needs, like those arising from the labour market.

Armenia's VET system offers a somewhat mixed but generally positive performance in terms of relevance and responsiveness in this respect. It demonstrates moderate success in integrating the theme of greening into the curricula (Outcome B.4.1) and performs even better in incorporating aspects related to digital transition (Outcome B.4.2). While the focus on the green transition in the learning

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[11] Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for Armenia.

outcome trails behind the international average, Armenia's emphasis on digitalization in VET substantially exceeds the norm among countries participating in the Torino Process.

FIGURE 4. SUPPORTING QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF LLL - INDEX OF SYSTEM PERFORMANCE, ARMENIA AND INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE (2023)
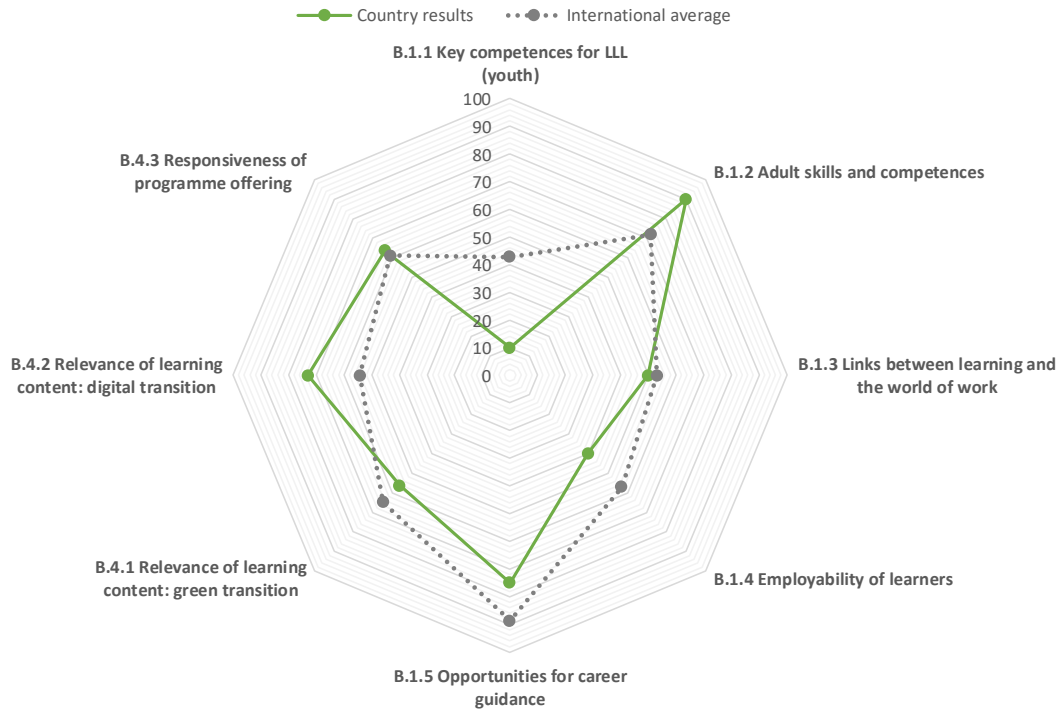
Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

VET system responsiveness to current and emerging labour market demands (Outcome B.4.3) in Armenia matches the performance of VET in other countries, on average. When it comes to tailoring program offerings to meet imminent expectations, it scores a 64 on the System Performance Index (SPI), slightly higher than the international average SPI of 61. This outcome may be attributed to the existence of several institutional mechanisms that continuously scrutinize labour market needs and socioeconomic developments to refine VET programs, as reported by national authorities.[12]

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 defined as follows:

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[12] Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for Armenia.

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

This report defines excellence as the presence of system-wide policies and measures to promote highest quality practices and results in various domains of policy and system delivery. The first domain under consideration for excellence is pedagogy and the professional development of teachers and trainers (Outcome B.2.1). Somewhat in contrast to its commitment and performance in other areas, Armenia scores particularly low in this area, not only in comparison to the international average but also relative to other aspects of system monitoring and performance.

A detailed examination of the data reveals that lacklustre performance largely stems from insufficient attention to the quality of teachers and teaching in VET and specifically in CVET. At the time of monitoring, the evaluation and categorization of professional competency, along with opportunities for professional development, seemed largely overlooked. Concurrently, Armenia's performance with the promotion of excellence in the content and execution of VET programs (Outcome B.2.2), while somewhat better, remained modest as well, both compared to other domains of monitoring and in international comparison.

Armenian national authorities are aware of these shortcomings and plan to adopt a procedure in 2023 under the 2021-2026 Government programme. This initiative aims to establish a certification system to enhance teacher qualifications and incentivize salary increases in primary and secondary vocational education institutions.

An area of excellence promotion in which Armenian VET performs high, is the area of equity and social inclusion (Outcome B.2.4). Based on monitoring evidence, there is a substantial commitment to inclusive education across all sectors of the education and training system. This is also reflected in state policies, including one strategy for a universally inclusive, learner-centred educational environment by 2030. Drawing on past experiences and with multiple support centres in place, it aims to meet the needs of all learners with the help of legislation that ensures equal opportunity in VET for all, with a particular focus on special educational needs and through modular VET programmes which provide flexibility.

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

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

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

Another area of high performance with respect to excellence concerns governance and provide management (Outcome B.2.3). According to the information provided, the country is actively working to improve the governance and management of its VET system with a focus on modernization, digital transformation, international-standard quality assurance, teacher development, and funding revisions. However, there remain also acknowledged challenges such as updating educational offerings, enhancing infrastructure, reforming funding procedures, and rectifying structural issues within the system, which signal an ongoing, significant transformation to raise the quality and efficiency of Armenia's VET sector.

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 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 innovation priorities in Armenian VET align with those promoting excellence and are chiefly aimed at enhancing access to lifelong learning (Outcome B.3.1) and sustaining the successful progression and graduation of learners (Outcome B.3.2). At the time of monitoring, Armenia was beginning to lay the groundwork for innovative actions to improve the quality and relevance of learning (Outcomes B.3.3. and B.3.4). The expectation is that these initiatives will progress in the coming years, potentially improving the results in these domains of currently low system performance. Examples of

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actions in this context include reorganizing institutions by 2026, expanding dual education and entrepreneurial activities, fostering work-based learning opportunities, updating VET standards, and implementing an internationally aligned quality assurance system.

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 described in Table 5.

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

In Armenia, system performance in this area of VET monitoring is uneven and unfortunately, the best outcomes barely achieve mid-range results. The Armenian VET system grapples with a lack of reliable, comparable data for planning, policy analysis, and decision-making, an issue prevalent among many Torino Process countries (Outcome C.1.1). Capacity in VET to engage stakeholders in decisions about the governance and steering of providers (Outcome C.1.2) is somewhat more limited than in other countries, on average.

Despite policies from the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA), notable gaps exist in the quality assurance mechanisms in place in VET (Outcome C.1.3), yielding an SPI of 23, considerably below the average performance of other countries. VET institutions have weak capacity for setting-up and developing internal quality assurance system, and the public and other stakeholders do not seem to be involved and aware of what and how VET delivers to learners, which in turn affects the accountability of VET.

Armenia has put several new monitoring and quality assurance processes in place to address these shortcomings, and the VET system will likely experience the positive impact of these interventions and policies soon.[13]

Although showing only average performance in terms of the professional capacity of staff in leadership positions (Outcome C.1.4) and the internationalisation of IVET and CVET (Outcome C.1.5), Armenia is significantly ahead of other countries in these areas. This suggests that, while there is room for improvement, Armenia's efforts in these domains are relatively more effective and successful compared to the efforts of many other countries participating in the Torino Process.

For instance, evidence provided by national authorities shows that Armenia has joined various projects, such as the Erasmus+ programme Capacity Building in the field of VET. It allows students to participate in exchange programs and staff from VET to participate in capacity building activities. However, language barriers remain a challenge which limits a greater degree of internationalisation of staff in VET.

FIGURE 6. GOVERNANCE, PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND RESOURCES - INDEX OF SYSTEM PERFORMANCE, ARMENIA AND INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE (2023)
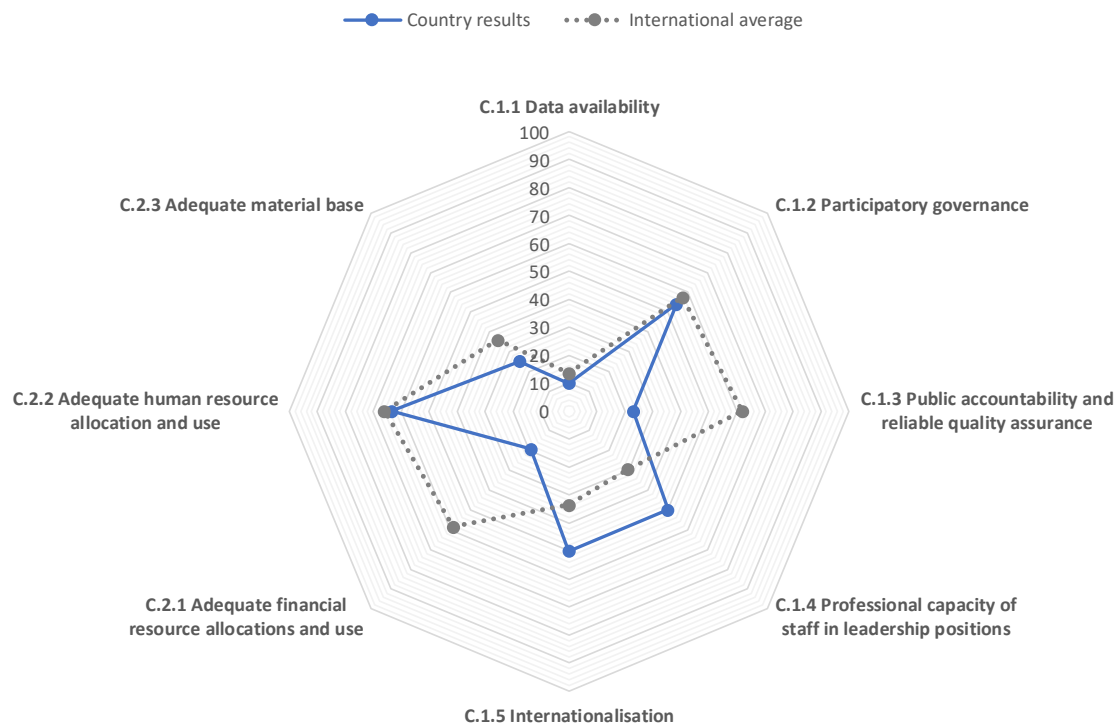
Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

When it comes to funding, the VET system in Armenia is grappling with inadequate financial resources (Outcome C.2.1), which notably hinders its functionality. The scarcity of investments is

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[13] Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for Armenia.

notable, resulting in significant difficulties in allocating resources, which in turn marks the lowest performing outcome in this dimension, substantially below international norms.

In contrast, Armenia manages and deploys its human resources within the VET system more efficiently (Outcome C.2.2), performing in line with international averages. Yet, the sufficiency of its material base (Outcome C.2.3) presents a significant challenge, likely tied to the financial constraints. The evidence provided by national authorities underlines these issues, citing inherited, outdated infrastructure, low-quality textbooks, and other related material deficits.[14]

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 Armenia 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 Armenia.

Section 2.1.1 of this monitoring report highlighted certain challenges in the overall performance of the VET system, particularly in terms of accessibility to IVET, CVET, and other lifelong learning opportunities. Despite this, young women exhibit a higher rate of success in accessing the VET system compared to adult women and the average learners (Dimension A.1 – Access). This disproportionate advantage, however, indicates untapped potential among other categories of learners in terms of opportunities for learning. Also, women in Armenia overall display a preference for higher education over VET.[15]

Once enrolled in VET, adult women participate and graduate less successfully than their younger counterparts, and both groups of female learners are less successful in this respect than their male counterparts (Dimension A.2). In terms of flexibility of choice to switch within and between educational pathways, the available data suggests no gender bias. However, there is notable evidence of a lower drop-out rate among females compared to males.

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[14] Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for Armenia
[15] Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for Armenia.
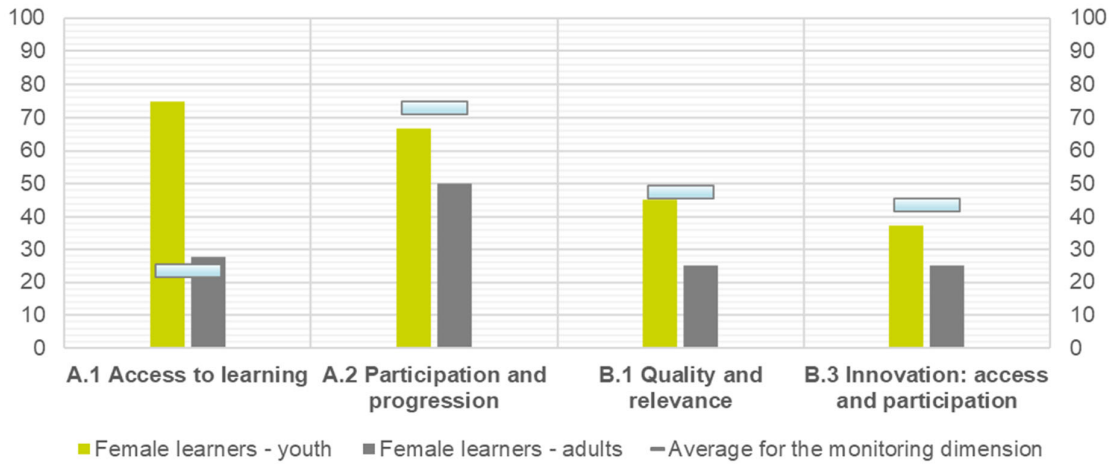
Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

Despite these findings, there are still areas in which female learners fall behind the average performance, particularly adult women. One example is quality and relevance of learning (Dimension B.1) where adult women are more disadvantaged in terms of key skills and competences. Another domain in need of attention is innovation in support of successful participation in learning Dimension B.3), in which domain adult female learners are underprivileged as well.
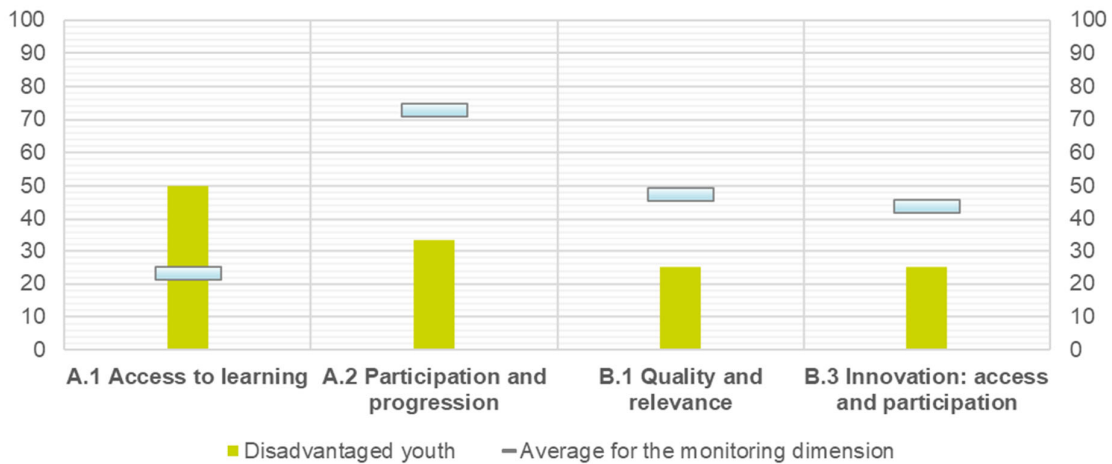
2.3.2 Disadvantaged learners

This section describes how well the VET system caters to the needs of socio-economically disadvantaged learners when it comes to 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 this specific group of learners in Armenia.

The VET system of Armenia appears more accessible to disadvantaged learners than to other learner groups, as their likelihood of accessing VET is twice as high as that of other learners, on average (Dimension A.1). However, upon enrolment the VET system delivers only average results for these students, indicating that there is room for advancement.

In stark contrast, in all other aspects of performance shown in Figure 8, VET delivers less for this group of learners than for others. Participation and progression (Dimension A.2) of disadvantaged learners falls significantly below the national average, for instance. Although there are measures that target disadvantaged groups, such as the creation of universal inclusive learner-centred education environments,[16] they remain very limited.

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[16] Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for Armenia.

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

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

According to the evidence provided by national authorities, the cost of participation in VET poses a major barrier for disadvantaged youth, often leading to withdrawal even after enrolment. Strengthening the high school credit system, which is designed to facilitate the transition from secondary to VET and higher education, is a crucial step towards improving this situation, but it requires further reinforcement.

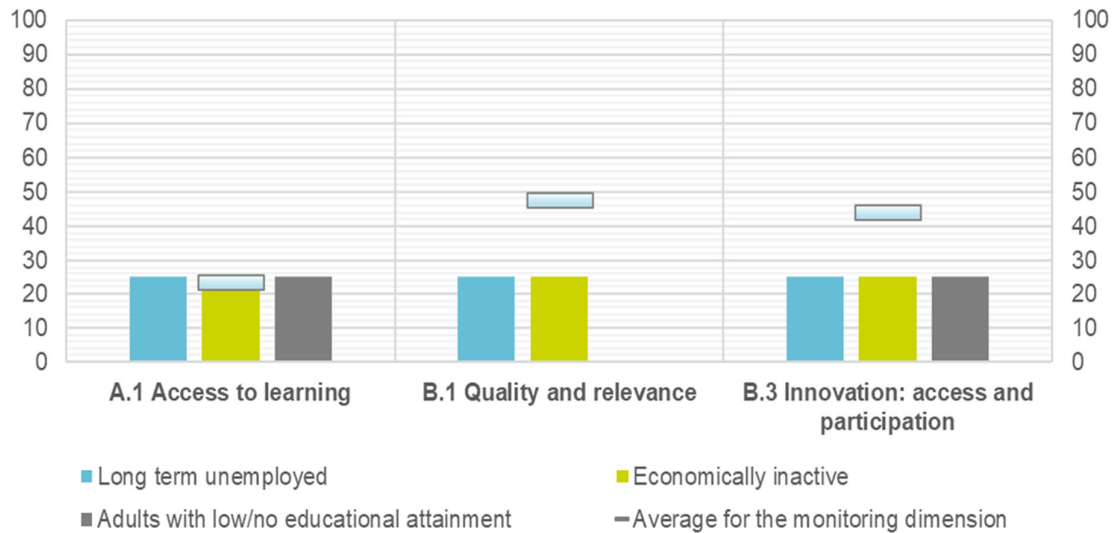## 2.3.3 Populations who are long-term unemployed, economically inactive, and have low educational attainment

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. The selection of monitoring dimensions is narrower than the selection discussed in the previous sections, partly because some of these dimensions are not applicable and partly because of missing data for Armenia.

The monitoring data reveals that, like all other groups of learners, the populations shown in Figure 9 are struggling to gain access to learning within the VET system (Dimension A.1). This indicates a pressing need for more effective interventions to enhance the appeal of VET as an educational and training alternative for everyone, especially for vulnerable or otherwise marginalised groups of adult learners.

The State Employment Agency (SEA) supports registered unemployed individuals and other vulnerable demographics, although state funding for these efforts is notably limited.[17] Moreover, the number of planned vocational trainings for these learner groups is extremely small and the quality and relevance of training they are offered (Dimension B.1) falls below the average. Similarly, the prioritization of these learner groups within the scarce efforts to innovate for improved access and participation in VET (Dimension B.3) is also less than satisfactory.

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[17] Source: 2023 Torino Process self-assessment questionnaire for Armenia.
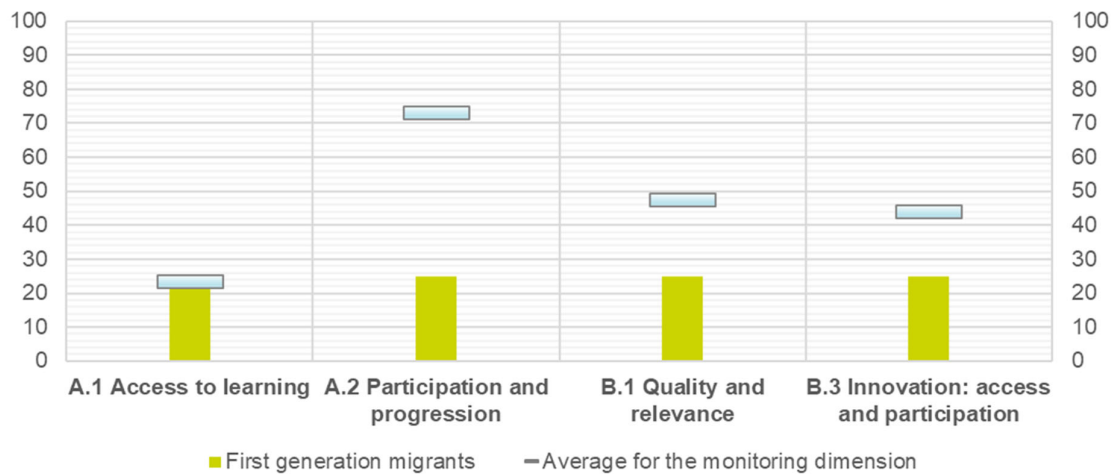
Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

2.3.4 Learners by country of origin

The final section with monitoring findings discusses the domains of access, participation, quality and relevance, and innovation in Armenia for learners who are first-generation migrants.

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

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

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

Migrants attempting to navigate the education and training process in the VET system face notable challenges. The evidence provided during the Torino Process monitoring reveals a lack of specific policies and initiatives targeting accessibility for those with immigrant status. While their performance in gaining access to learning parallels that of average learners, significant disparities arise in other dimensions, most notably in participation and progression (Dimension A.2), where migrants exhibit limited engagement and success within the VET system.

The data shown in Figure 10 must be interpreted with caution due to the lack of comprehensive evidence on migrant learners' performance within the VET system. Given the relatively small population of migrant learners, it is challenging for education authorities to gather extensive information about these individuals or accurately assess their competences for the labour market.

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 Armenia and the qualitative responses of stakeholders where such indicators were missing.

The full collection of quantitative indicators collected for Armenia for this 2023 round of monitoring can be found here:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1DeN5VHfRA1DQLkqS4c3aEaWpDwemaklr/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=110154518834912853011&rtpof=true&sd=true

The full collection of qualitative responses to the country-specific questionnaire for Armenia can be found here:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GavvywsCK4nJead3ErRQKVpAgbBtJERR/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=110154518834912853011&rtpof=true&sd=true

A full technical report about the monitoring framework and process in 2023 can be found here.[18]

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.[19]

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.

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[18] Release date for the report is 1 July 2023 upon completion of monitoring for all participating countries.
[19] 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.

- **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 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.