

# MONITORING VET RECOMMENDATION AND OSNABRÜCK DECLARATION

Montenegro 2023

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# COUNTRY BRIEF

## Introduction

The first integrated monitoring exercise on the EU [Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience \(2020\)](#) and the [Osnabrück Declaration on VET as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies \(2020\)](#) was carried out in 2023. It was guided by an integrated framework connecting priorities of both policy documents and it focused on five EU priorities<sup>1</sup>: agile and resilient VET, adaptive to labour market needs; flexible VET and inclusive, providing progression and lifelong learning opportunities; innovative and excellent VET; attractive VET, based on modern and digitalised provision; VET underpinned by quality assurance.

Aiming to align its reporting and monitoring activities with those of EU Member States, Montenegro joined this process in early 2022, seeing it as an enabler for recovery and a just transition to a digital and green economy. This report summarises the main policy developments in Montenegro in 2021 and 2022, in relation to the thematic priorities identified in the country's [National Implementation Plan](#).

Montenegro's main strategic documents are in line with the country's EU accession aspirations. These are reflected in the latest Strategy for the Development of VET 2020-2024 which, among other things, addresses the reform of vocational education and training (VET). During the 2021-2022 reporting period covered by this integrated monitoring, the national government remained committed to and made progress in a number of areas, including further developing digital skills, promoting structures to support of lifelong learning, aligning qualifications with labour market needs, improving the transition from school to work through work-based learning, enhancing the provision of skills information and establishing the structures to pilot the Youth Guarantee. These remain high on the Montenegrin government's agenda, as reflected in its economic reform programmes for the periods 2022-2024 and 2023-2025. Most reform measures within the scope of the monitoring exercise fall under the mandate of the Ministry of Education and are often implemented in cooperation with other public institutions, agencies and stakeholders.

During the period, the overall political situation remained largely unstable. A no-confidence vote in 2022 led to the collapse of the Montenegrin government after only three and a half months in office, and the government has been operating in a 'technical' capacity for more than a year and this has slowed down the implementation of various activities. The latest general election was held in June 2023 but a new government has not yet been formed.

The brief was prepared by Rajko Kosović in cooperation with key VET stakeholders in the country. More information about the country's policy developments (PDs) covered by this report can be found in the PD fiches published on [ETF OpenSpace](#).

A detailed description of the national VET context, challenges and national VET priorities for Montenegro can be found in the [2022 Country Brief – Montenegro](#) compiled by Rajko Kosović.

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<sup>1</sup> Those selected by each country in their NIP.

## Main policy developments in 2021 and 2022

### EU priority 1. Agile and resilient VET, adaptive to labour market needs

Montenegro has made some progress in EU priority 1 which focuses on the relevance and responsiveness of the country's VET system.

#### 1.1 Modernisation of VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Montenegro is strongly committed to aligning the outcomes of its education system with labour market needs, and has been continuously working on this through the implementation of various measures. More specifically, these include the development of new and the update of existing Occupational Standards (OS), and the development of the accompanying VET educational profiles/curricula based on the OS. This commitment is clearly stated in the country's Strategy for VET 2020-2024, where further development of qualifications is recognised as a national priority. The enrolment of students in education profiles based on the modernised occupational standards has been steadily increasing, with the expectation that all students starting school in 2024/2025 will be educated in secondary VET curricula based on modernised OS.

Involving employers in the development of OS and strengthening the Council for Qualifications – the main actors in this process – are some of the activities directly related to the development of OS. As a result, in 2021, as a part of the continuous process of developing and updating OS, a total of 31 occupational standards (OS) were developed/revised across 5 industries/economic sectors in cooperation with the Council for Qualifications: construction and spatial planning – 5; engineering and production technologies – 9; health and social protection – 7; agriculture, food processing and veterinary medicine – 6; and tourism and hospitality. A further 47 new/revised OS will be developed in 2022 in 6 sectors: engineering and production technologies – mechanical engineering – 11; transport – 7; health and social protection – 5; mining, metallurgy and chemical industry – 10; tourism and hospitality – 7; agriculture, food processing and veterinary medicine – 7.

In 2021, 12 qualification standards (QS) were developed, with an additional 12 training programmes in 5 sectors, and in 2022, an additional 10 qualification standards (QS) were developed, along with 10 training programmes in three industries/economic sectors.

The implementation of the following activities was launched in Q4 2022 and continued in 2023: development of 28 occupational standards, 5 qualification standards and 3 training programmes.

##### 1.1.1. Integrating digital skills and competences into VET curricula and programmes

Digital skills are at the heart of the current VET reform and all new VET curricula emphasise the importance of these skills<sup>2</sup>. The Strategy for Digitalisation of the Education System 2022-2027 adopted by the Ministry of Education in 2021, states in its Objective 3.2 'Raising the level of digital skills and competences of students, with a special focus on children and young people from vulnerable groups', that the implementation of the framework for digital competences (of students), on which the National Education Council gave a positive opinion, will be a priority in the coming period. This entails the development of skills within the relevant courses but more importantly, teaching and learning by means of digital technologies. However, little progress was made in implementation in 2021 and 2022.

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<sup>2</sup> Among other things, VET curricula clearly specify for each module the competences to be developed in students, for example: the use of information and communication technologies for the purpose of searching, collecting and using data related to the specific field dealt with in the module, the recognition of relevant professional texts and videos; the use of software tools for the creation of presentations on different topics and in various professional fields, respect for safety and ethical rules when using the internet, etc.).

In 2022, a cooperation memorandum was signed with the private company ICT Cortex which will provide work placements to VET students attending schools where the educational programme Mobile and Web Applications is used. A national ICT competition in programming was held in 2022 with the participation of 16 students.

The lack of specialised equipment (see 3.2.1.) and teachers' digital skills which require further improvement (see 4.3.2.) are major obstacles to the development of students' digital skills.

### **1.1.2. Integration of the green transition and sustainability into VET curricula and programmes**

At the time of the monitoring exercise, there was no comprehensive tracking of green skills coverage across VET curricula to allow a more detailed assessment. However, green skills are being integrated in modernised and modularised VET curricula, either in a cross-curricular way or as stand-alone subjects.

Several educational programmes in the field of renewable energy and environmental protection have been developed in recent years. In 2021, the following curricula were developed: Mechanics of renewable energy systems (level III); Mechanics of hydropower plants (level III); and Mechanics of thermal energy plants (level III).

In 2023, Montenegro developed the following new curricula which are now available to VET students: Installer of renewable energy systems, level III (based on the following occupational and qualification standards: Installer of photovoltaic power plants; Installer of electric power equipment in wind farms; Installer of electric power equipment in small hydroelectric power plants; and Assistant installer of RES electrical systems).

The Bureau of Educational Services promotes green skills through projects involving both primary and secondary schools, e.g. the competition 'Energy highlighted in green' in the field of environmental protection organised in cooperation with CEDIS; the campaign for the protection of global biodiversity; the 'Circular economy — less waste' project (E-SPACE), etc.

Montenegro is part of the regional EU4Green project which aims to improve the quality and relevance of formal education and promote the acquisition of additional competences. The project invests in initiatives to raise teaching standards, enrich teacher training and promote continuous professional development. The Bureau for Education (see 3.2.2) has been involved in the Eco-school Initiative as an overarching framework for green schools.

## **1.2. Development and updating of learning resources and materials**

In 2021, the training programme Creating Teaching and Learning Materials was designed and a group of teachers was trained. The aim was to train teachers to create teaching and learning materials, especially when there are no appropriate textbooks for the modules they are implementing – something which is very common in vocational education. Teachers had the opportunity to get acquainted with ways of creating teaching and learning materials for students, YouTube channels as a repository for the materials created and generating and using QR codes in the process.

In 2022, one of the most important activities was the creation of an independent learning platform within the Digital School concept ([www.digitalnaskola.edu.me](http://www.digitalnaskola.edu.me)). The platform is aimed at students, teachers and parents and the target groups register on edu.me (which is used by all educational institutions) with an e-mail address. The lessons in all the subjects and sectors (electrical engineering, traffic, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, construction, health, agriculture, tourism, catering, etc.) that have been recorded are uploaded to the 'Learning at home' platform and are available at all times to both teachers and students.

In one year, around 1 000 professionals from educational institutions were trained, and 1 033 courses, 11 788 lessons and 498 quizzes in 54 categories have been created on the independent online learning platform. Links have also been provided to all previously

developed online learning platforms which in turn offer material developed by individual vocational schools in all economic sectors.

In addition, quality standards for digital textbooks and digital instruction materials were published in 2023.

In 2022, the Catalogue of Training Programmes of the Bureau for Educational Services was adopted, while the new Catalogue of Training Programmes of the VET Centre will be adopted by the end of 2023. Both catalogues include programmes dealing with the development of learning resources and materials.

### **1.3. Establishment and development of skills intelligence systems, including graduate tracking**

In 2021, the International Labour Organization (ILO), at the request of the Ministry of Education, provided assistance with the development of a national graduate tracking system based on a combination of various administrative and statistical sources. The report entitled 'TVET graduate tracking in Montenegro: Developing a system based on administrative data', drafted by ILO experts, aimed to provide the Ministry of Education of Montenegro with relevant background information for the development of a TVET graduate tracking system and propose a simple set-up and roadmap to achieve this task. The system is expected to be established in the near future.

### **1.4. Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET**

Montenegro has continued to develop and strengthen the existing partnerships in VET with social partners. During the reporting period, the Chamber of Commerce was a regular participant in ACVT discussions on the Osnabrück Declaration and VET reforms in general, were the trade unions. In 2021, the Chamber of Commerce of Montenegro (PKCG), in cooperation with the Centre for Vocational Education, organised a presentation on the experience of employers participating in the dual education system of the implementation of this process in Montenegro.

In June 2022, the fourth National Council for Education was established as the previous council had not functioned effectively for almost a year (since September 2021). One third of the Council is made up of representatives of the association of employers, the Montenegrin Chamber of Commerce, the VET Centre, the Employment Agency, the representative trade union of educators, professional associations of teachers and the student parliament.

The conference 'Public-private partnership for quality vocational education' which was organised jointly by the Ministry of Education, the Chamber of Commerce, the Agency for Education and Internationalisation of Austria (OEAD) and the Centre for Vocational Education, was held in December 2022.

One example of partnership is with Elektroprivreda Crne Gore (EPCG), a State-owned company involved in generation and transmission/supply of electricity which signed a cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Education in 2023. The aim was to create a system that gives individuals the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills for employment and an avenue for personal and professional development, and to ensure that education is able to respond quickly and efficiently to the changing needs of the labour market.

Through joint work, experts from the EPCG and CEDIS, the Centre for Vocational Education and schoolteachers will develop modern programmes that support digital technologies, the green economy and sustainable development at the level of secondary vocational education. This will become possible by creating conditions for the development of programmes for retraining and additional training, specialised programmes and post-secondary vocational education curricula.

## 1.5. Acquisition of key competences

In its NIP, Montenegro had committed to promoting key competences as part of the qualification and curriculum requirements for the acquisition of VET qualifications. Despite some initiatives, progress in this area is yet to be achieved.

The large-scale project 'Integration of key competences in the education sector of Montenegro' was implemented in the period December 2019 – December 2021. The main achievements of the project are the development of the National Curriculum Framework for Key Competences which is fully aligned with the European Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. Unfortunately, the framework has not yet been officially approved.

## 1.6. Strengthening work-based learning, including apprenticeships

The greatest progress in this area has been the increase in participation in three-year dual vocational education and training programmes. These were introduced in 2017, with all practical training taking place in a company setting, with the students being jointly assessed by the schools and the employers.

In 2020 and 2021, 655 students were enrolled in dual education at 26 vocational schools and around 300 participating employers. In 2021 and 2022, 538 students were enrolled in 20 vocational schools, with 223 participating in the dual education programme. In 2022 and 2023, 500 students were enrolled in the same number of vocational schools, with the same number of employers participating as in the previous year.

The Ministry of Education has continued to organise the annual campaign 'Vocational Education is the Key' which also promotes dual education, with the Chamber of Commerce and the Employers Association participating as important partners to give the campaign a much needed boost.

During the reporting period, dual education continued to be delivered country wide. Nearly all VET schools in Montenegro received permission from the Ministry of Education to employ a practical training organiser whose main job is to coordinate all activities related to practical training, both at school and in a company-based setting.

Montenegro is currently participating in the regional project 'Increasing the quality of work-based learning by strengthening the role of vocational practice coordinators (VPCs)', funded by Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OEaD-GmbH). The following activities will be completed by the end of 2023: Standardising the procedures, processes and supporting tools used by vocational placement coordinators (VPCs); Updating the training course for VPCs; and Updating the manual for VPCs.

## EU priority 2: Flexible VET and inclusive, providing progression and lifelong learning opportunities

Montenegro has made some progress in achieving the objectives of EU priority 2.

### 2.1. Diversifying learning modes: face-to-face, digital and/or blended learning; adaptable/flexible training formats

Despite school staff quick adaptation to online training delivery imposed by the pandemic, Montenegro's progress in 2021 and 2022 in policy development related to the diversification of learning modes was slow.

According to the Strategy for the Development of VET 2020-2024, the teaching process will be improved through use of digital technologies so that students can acquire digital competences and teachers have opportunities to improve their digital competences and motivation to use



digital technologies in the classroom. However, there are still some elements that hinder the full implementation of the strategy, including the reluctance of some teachers to adapt to changes and engage in additional professional training for digital literacy, and the preference of the administration for face-to-face teaching in the classroom over online or blended teaching and learning.

Despite these barriers, the Digital School, a platform for learning, teaching and cooperation, was launched in December 2021 (see also point 1.2 above). It is based on the Learning Passport, jointly developed by UNICEF, Microsoft and the University of Cambridge and is currently used in 17 countries around the world. The Digital School platform is aligned with face-to-face teaching and learning and aims to strengthen the quality and inclusivity of education during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. It is available via smartphone, tablet and log-in accounts on [www.digitalnaskola.edu.me](http://www.digitalnaskola.edu.me) and all students, teachers and parents can access it through their edu.me email address. It offers a range of quality digital content, including 400 courses with a total of 8 000 lessons. The content is currently focused on supporting early learning during the first three years of primary education, but digital materials for other levels of education are also available. The plan is to expand the platform to cover all grades up to the end of secondary school.

## **2.2 Development and use of partial qualifications**

There was very little progress in this area during the reporting period.

Two VET schools from Montenegro – Vukadin Vudakinovic in Berane and Spasoje Raspopovic in Podgorica – are participating in the BEM (Beyond Europe with micro-credentials) project which is concerned with the transfer of experience from ECVET to the development of micro-credentials. The aim is for these to be replicated in non-EU countries and adapted to the local situation. The implementation of the three-year project which is funded by the Erasmus Plus Programme was launched on 1 January 2023. The BEM project partnership includes EU Member States, associated countries, candidate countries and third countries (Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Norway, and Germany).

## **2.3. Opportunities for learners to accumulate, validate and recognise non-formally and informally acquired learning outcomes**

Despite the fact that Montenegro has well-established procedures for the validation and recognition of non-formally and informally acquired learning outcomes, there has been little progress in this area during the reporting period. The downward trend in participation in lifelong learning (LLL) is worrying. According to the report on the implementation of planned activities in adult education in 2022, the percentage of adult participation in LLL activities in 2020 was 9.48 %<sup>3</sup>, while in 2021 it was 7.35 %, with the decline continuing in 2022 when this figure dropped to 5.5 % – far below the projected 50 % to be achieved in 2025 and 60 % in 2030.

In an effort to address high youth unemployment, in July 2021 the government committed to launching and promoting the Youth Guarantee scheme. In July 2022, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW) submitted the draft Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan – the main EU programme in education, training and employment for the coming years. The Youth

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<sup>3</sup> This percentage is in line with the Montenegrin methodology. It is important to point out that reported data does not include all stakeholders because some institutions did not submit the requested data.

Guarantee scheme is expected to increase adult participation in learning in the coming years. The implementation of pilot initiatives will commence in 2025.

An enabling legal framework has been put in place at the level of both secondary and higher education which needs to be followed by steps to ensure its practical implementation.

## **2.4. Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training**

Inclusive education is governed by the Law on Education of Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and detailed strategies developed in partnership and consultation with all stakeholders. The current Strategy for Inclusive Education covers the period 2019-2025.

Schools employ teaching assistants to provide technical support to children with special educational needs (SEN) during the school year. The number of teaching assistants in the school year 2022/2023 increased to 537 compared to 177 in the school year 2020/2021. The number of children with SEN also increased to 1 405 of in the school year 2022/2023 compared to 1 233 in the school year 2020/2021. Ensuring an adequate number of appropriately-qualified teaching assistants will require further attention in the future.

The number of children with SEN in mainstream primary schools is steadily increasing year on year but this trend is not fully reflected in secondary education. It should be a strategic priority to ensure that the inclusive trend in primary education is mirrored at the level of secondary education and that appropriate measures are taken to achieve this goal.

The inclusiveness of vocational education has improved through the adaptation and modularisation of certain educational programmes. Children with SEN are most often enrolled in secondary VET programmes that have little value from a labour market perspective and consequently do not lead to employment. This indicates that further efforts are needed to fully establish the policy on inclusive education in secondary education including more consistent implementation of the individual transition plan, development of additional, high-quality, modularised vocational training programmes and awareness raising among employers.

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## **EU priority 3: Innovative and excellent VET**

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Montenegro has made limited progress in achieving the objectives of EU priority 3 and challenges remain in all related thematic priorities.

### **3.2 Modernisation of vocational training infrastructure**

Due to the unfavourable financial situation in Montenegro, the infrastructure for vocational education and training has been modernised mainly through international projects. In order to compensate for the lack of equipment needed for the teaching process, vocational schools are encouraged to seek out and foster partnerships with employers.

The two most successful projects from Montenegro were proposed and funded in 2021 through an investment, by the Regional Challenge Fund (RCF), in infrastructure and equipment for VET institutions, as well as training and advanced courses for those involved in the implementation of the cooperative education programme. The consortium consisting of the Vaso Aligrudic Secondary School of Electrical Engineering in Podgorica and its partners – Bild Studio, Alicorn, Data Design, Amplitudo and Mont-inženjering received a grant in the amount of EUR 511 509, and the consortium consisting of the Danilo Kiš Secondary Mixed School in

Budva and its partners – Hotelska Grupa Montenegro Stars, Budva, Gospoština Lux, Budva and Spencer & Hill Team, Bečići, received a grant in the amount of EUR 425 740.

The same fund has allocated the resources available for the second call conducted in 2023 which resulted in 2 highly successful projects from Montenegro being proposed for funding, with approximately EUR 693 000 allocated for investment in equipment, infrastructure and training at the VET institutions implementing cooperative training. The grants were awarded to two consortia. One is led by the Faculty of International Management in Tourism and Hospitality and includes Karisma Hotels Adriatic Montenegro, Blue Kotor Bay, and One & Only Portonovi. The other is led by the Danilovgrad Police Academy and includes MMK Control, Titan Security, Guardian World and Sab Security.

Beyond these developments, the country's progress in modernising infrastructure for VET has been slow.

### **3.2.1 Improving the digital infrastructure of VET provision**

According to UNICEF's Education Sector Analysis<sup>4</sup>, there is a serious lack of ICT and other specialised teaching equipment in schools. Compared to other countries, upper secondary schools in Montenegro are seriously lagging behind in the availability of ICT equipment. They have fewer ICT devices overall, fewer devices that can be used for teaching, the devices are not sufficiently powerful, and there is a lack of available software and learning platforms. In addition, there no comprehensive strategy for the development of digital education has been developed. The lack of specialised teaching equipment (including hardware, software and consumables) is a pronounced problem in vocational education which can hinder the implementation of new curricula and practical modules. In secondary vocational schools, with the exception of the Secondary School for Electrotechnical Studies, there is a problem related to infrastructure capacities, computers and equipment which are not sufficiently powerful to support all programmes studied as part of the curriculum (AutoCAD, ArchiCAD, software for 3D modelling, video production, etc.).

In 2018, Montenegro was among the five worst performing countries in PISA in terms of ICT equipment. The most recent data from June 2021 shows an average ratio of one computer per 16 students in primary, lower and upper secondary education.

Recognising this problem, Montenegro has launched an open call for the supply of computer equipment for primary and secondary schools (including VET schools) and a contractor will shortly be selected (the value of the procurement contract is approximately EUR 6 250 000). Under the procurement contract, computers, laptops, televisions, projectors and printers will be purchased to upgrade computer classrooms, including two-thirds of the classrooms in primary schools and three classrooms per secondary school, ultimately providing 50 % of the necessary computer equipment for educational institutions in Montenegro. The link between equipment procurement and teacher training will need to be carefully planned.

### **3.2.2 Making VET institutions sustainable and green**

There were no major development in this area during the reporting period.

In 2016, Montenegro joined the Eco-Schools, one of the largest global programmes for sustainable schools, and was awarded the first green flags in 2018. The Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) is one of the world's largest environmental education

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/media/22591/file/ESA%20-%20ENG.pdf>

organisations, empowering young people to create an environmentally conscious world through a solutions-based approach through a solutions-based approach.

Typically, after two years of implementing the programme and achieving a high level of compliance against seven steps (sometimes also including mandatory national criteria), schools can apply for and be awarded the Green Flag.

To date, 41 educational institutions have been awarded the Green Flag, out of which only 5 are VET schools. The following VET schools that could play an important role in further rollout have been awarded the Green Flag: the Niksic Vocational School for Economics and Hospitality in 2018; the Pluzine Educational Centre in 2018; the 17 September Vocational School, Zabljak, in 2018; the Spasoje Raspopovic Vocational School, Podgorica, in 2018; and the Ivan Goran Kovacic School, Herceg Novi, in 2019.

However, only one VET school (the Secondary School of Economics in Podgorica) was awarded a green flag in 2021.

#### **EU priority 4. Attractive VET, based on modern and digitalised provision**

Montenegro has made uneven progress in achieving the objectives of EU priority 4, with some challenges remaining in all related thematic priorities.

##### **4.1. Permeability between initial and continuing vocational education and training, general and vocational pathways, academic and vocational higher education**

There has been no major progress in this area during the reporting period.

According to data received from the Ministry of Education, the number of people who have completed IVET and enrolled in CVET programmes was 2 376 in 2021 and 3 176 in 2022<sup>5</sup>.

In Montenegro, IVET is often seen as one of the pathways to higher education. Many young people transition from VET to higher education or other programmes with less labour market relevance, contributing to a vertical mismatch. This is particularly evident among workers with tertiary education. Around 15 % of these workers are employed in jobs that require qualifications below their level of education, while the same type of mismatch affects just over 8 % of workers with a medium level of education (ETF, 2022). However, there is a lack of precise data on how many vocational school graduates continue their education at university. Until the administrative monitoring of the movement of students after the end of their secondary education is established, exact data cannot be obtained.

The prospects of VET learners progressing to and succeeding within the VET system remain below the international average of 71. The completion rates (by grade) for secondary education, especially for three-year secondary education which are lower than those for primary education, are particularly worrying. This suggests that more than one tenth of the students enrolled do not complete this stage. However, the situation is slightly better for four-year secondary education for which completion rates (by grade) have been between 93 % and 94 % in recent years (ETF, 2023).

It is possible to follow parallel education pathways. In practice, there are students who attend general education and music schools (which are part of the VET system) in parallel.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.skolskostatistika.edu.me/>

### **4.3. Systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuing professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers**

All projects in the field of VET in Montenegro include a teacher training component and the VET Centre provides extensive training, particularly when new/revised curricula or other novel features are introduced in the VET system.

In 2021, a large number of training events were organised for school principals and school management teams, and almost 2 000 teachers from all schools, including vocational teachers, were trained as part of the project 'Integration of key competences in the education system of Montenegro'.

A functional website with all lesson plans developed in the context of teacher training has been set up and the handbook for teachers on how to integrate key competences into their teaching has also been developed and distributed countrywide. Within the framework of the IPA project 'Development of VET qualifications in accordance with the needs of the labour market, around 150 VET teachers were trained in the first half of 2021 on the following topics: characteristics of education based on learning outcomes, role of the teacher in the implementation of modularised educational programmes, key competences, active teaching methods, principles of assessment of learning outcomes, teacher teamwork, continuous professional development, case method and project method. The workshops were delivered in hybrid format: face-to-face and online. Within the framework of the same IPA project, the teacher training course 'Training for the development of teaching materials' was organised for 25 teachers and approximately 150 teachers participated in teacher training on internal and external evaluation. The same project also trained around 80 in-company trainers throughout Montenegro.

In 2021, more than 250 VET teachers were trained by the VET Centre on the implementation of new curricula, and 92 teachers of general subjects in VET were trained by the Bureau for Educational Services on the same topic. In 2022, more than 160 VET teachers were trained by the VET Centre on how to implement the new modularised curricula, in addition to 43 curriculum coordinators, 14 pedagogues/psychologists and 115 teachers of general subjects in VET.

Public policies have focused mainly on the competences, roles and professional development of teachers and trainers in IVET and to a much lesser extent in CVET.

#### **4.3.1. Support for teachers and trainers for the green transition and sustainability**

There were no major developments in this area during the reporting period.

Montenegro has adopted a general approach within its VET system to include skills for green jobs as a cross-cutting theme in all skills development programmes. While this raises awareness of climate change and sustainable development, concrete skills for concrete green jobs tend to be developed sporadically. The country lacks specific policies or programmes on skills for green jobs. Only recently has an agreement been signed with the State energy company. This will lead to the development of new green curricula and consequently to the training of teachers and trainers on topics relating to the green transition and sustainability.

#### **4.3.2. Support for teachers and trainers for and through digital tools**

The strategy for the digitalisation of the education system 2022-2027 was adopted in 2021. It sets out the following activities:

- Creation and accreditation of training programmes for all education professionals;
- Creation and accreditation of training programmes for IT teachers;
- Creation and accreditation of training programmes for professional support services; (pedagogues and psychologists);
- Creation and accreditation of training programmes for the managers of educational institutions;
- Creation and accreditation of training programmes for ICT coordinators;
- Implementation of the above-mentioned training programmes for the entire duration of the strategy;
- Development of the above-mentioned training programmes as self-learning courses, available not only to education professionals but also to parents.

It is widely recognised that teachers need a lot of support and training in order to fully exploit the potential of digital tools in the teaching and learning process.

One of the most important activities in 2022 was the establishment of an independent learning platform within the Digital School concept ([www.digitalnaskola.edu.me](http://www.digitalnaskola.edu.me)) which is aimed at students, teachers and parents. In one year, about 1 000 employees of educational institutions were trained to apply the concept.

At the same time, the Bureau of Educational Services, in cooperation with UNICEF, continued to work on the implementation of teacher training for the application of key digital skills in the classroom. In 2022, 1 229 teachers attended six-day training sessions.

The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Oracle Academy, continued to provide training in digital literacy, with 57 teachers trained in Java programming and databases in 2022.

In cooperation with Montenegro Makers, 42 teachers were trained to work with talented students in the field of robotics. At the same time, a self-guided online course was developed and is available from Digionica to support teachers and students.

One of the applications for children with special educational needs is C-Board and training on how to use this application to work with children was provided to 80 professionals from education and training institutions.

The digital infrastructure of Montenegro's government was hit by an 'unprecedented' cyberattack in 2022. The agreement on the establishment of the Western Balkans Cyber Capacity Centre (VB3C) which will be based in Podgorica was recently signed. The programmes to be implemented at the Centre are primarily aimed at the owners of critical infrastructure, and are designed to train the professionals concerned to transfer the acquired knowledge to other employees in their organisations in the future. Funding has been provided for the training of 750 teachers according to the ECDL (basic computer literacy) standard. Funding has also been provided for the training of 1 000 professions at educational institutions to apply the Digital School concept. The training should start in August 2023.

#### **4.4. Lifelong guidance**

Montenegro has to some extent established the necessary legal framework and strategic directions for career guidance and counselling (CGC). The Law on Vocational Education and Training explicitly states that the objectives of vocational education and training include the provision of career guidance. The overarching strategy is the Lifelong Career Guidance Strategy (2011-2015 and 2016-2020), followed by the Lifelong Career Guidance and Counselling Programme 2021-2023. The Strategy for the development of VET in Montenegro

(2020-2024) explicitly promotes: (a) the strengthening of the capacity of CGC teams in schools; and (b) the organisation of lectures, workshops, round tables and media presentations on the importance of CGC for students and parents.

The ETF has carried out a study National Career Development Support System Review – Montenegro<sup>6</sup> in 2022, together with its Montenegrin partners and has given appropriate recommendations.

The ILO is supporting the design of a portal containing all necessary information on occupations in Montenegro. The initial focus will be on occupations in high demand, with new occupations to be added in the future, along with a description of each occupation, current salaries, vacancies, etc. (similar to the portal developed in North Macedonia – <https://zanimanja.mk/>).

The Centre for Vocational Education, together with the Ministry of Education, has prepared a flyer and a video to promote vocational education during the enrolment campaign for the school year 2022/2023. The flyer contains a QR code that directs users to a folder where students, parents and other interested parties can find useful information about the educational programmes offered by secondary vocational schools in all sectors. The folder to which the QR code is linked will be supplemented with useful information over time so the flyer should be kept.

With support from UNICEF and the TUI Care Foundation, career guidance and on-the-job training will be introduced in seven secondary schools between 2023 and 2026.

## EU priority 5. VET underpinned by quality assurance

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Montenegro has made progress in achieving the objectives in EU priority 5.

### 1. Methodology for assessing and improving the quality of educational work in institutions (thematic priority ‘Further developing national quality assurance systems’)

Quality assurance and quality improvement activities in pre-school, primary and secondary education are carried out in accordance with the General Education Act and secondary legislation which define the scope of assessment and the methodology for its implementation. These have been a government priority for several years.

National assessment of quality of educational work, including VET, in Montenegro is carried out both externally (by a panel of independent evaluators appointed by the VET Centre and the BES) and internally (internal or self-evaluation of an institution, e.g. a VET school).

A new methodology for assessing the quality of educational work in institutions, developed in cooperation by the National VET Centre and the Bureau for Educational Services – BES (responsible for general education), was adopted by the Ministry of Education in December 2021. The main change is that the assessment of VET and so-called ‘mixed’ schools (offering both VET and general education programmes) will be carried out by joint teams of evaluators from the VET Centre and the BES, whereas previously these were subject to independent school evaluation by either the VET Centre or the BES. The quality framework is the same for all the primary and secondary schools but there are 13 quality indicators that are specific to VET schools and which are based on the EQAVET framework. In 2021, due to the COVID

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-07/Career%20Guidance%20Review\\_Montenegro\\_EN.pdf](https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-07/Career%20Guidance%20Review_Montenegro_EN.pdf)

pandemic, the VET Centre carried out an external assessment of three VET schools and one adult education provider. The assessments were part of a pilot project for the assessment of a regular school and an adult education provider, and the whole process was carried out according to the new methodology. The findings have been published on the website of the VET Centre.

In 2022, the VET Centre carried out an external assessment of seven VET schools and one CVET provider (the Police Academy in Danilovgrad). All assessments carried out in 2022 were based on the new methodology for determining and ensuring the quality of educational work in teaching institutions and the overarching Rulebook on the content, forms and methods of determining the quality of educational work at teaching institutions. Corresponding reports were prepared by the VET Centre and recommendations have been made.

In addition to the methodology, the VET Centre and the BES are working together to improve the quality of the rulebook on the content, forms and methods for determining the quality of educational work at teaching institutions. At the same time, both the VET centre and the BES are developing protocols for quality assurance of evaluation work as defined by the methodology.

The training 'External evaluation of VET providers' organised by the VET Centre was attended by almost 80 participants in 2021 and 71 participants in 2022 and external evaluations of five VET schools were performed by September 2023.

Montenegro participates in the ETF Quality Assurance Platform and hosted a study visit in 2022 to share and discuss the above developments with a wider group of economies from the Western Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa. Montenegro also continued to actively participate in regional ERI SEE activities on quality assurance (Enhancements in the Quality of Education and Training in South Eastern Europe – EQET SEE) which covered two themes: increasing the labour market relevance of VET provision (VET strand of the project) and enhancing quality assurance in pre-tertiary education – aspects of external evaluation of institutions (QA strand of the project).

Quality assurance indicators for work-based learning are currently being designed through project 'Increasing the quality of work-based learning by strengthening the role of vocational practice coordinators (VPCs)' which is funded by the Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OEaD-GmbH).

## Performance against EU targets

Montenegro is currently able to report on one of the three quantitative indicators set out in the European Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience 2020/C 417/01.

As shown in the table below, in the year 2020 (the most recent available data) the employment rate for the country's recent graduates was 51 % for the age group 20 to 34 years. This is significantly lower than the EU-27 average.



VET Recommendation Indicator	Last available year	ME	EU-27	EU target (year)
Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (age group 20-34 years) (%)	2020	51%	76.4%	82% (2025)
Recent IVET graduates (age group 20-34 years) with work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%)	/	/	60.7%	60% (2025)
Learners in IVET who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad (%)	/	/	/	8% (2025)

Source: The Key Indicators on Education, Skills and Employment (KIESE) 2022, ETF<sup>7</sup>

As regards the indicator on recent IVET graduates (age group 20-34 years) with work-based learning experience as part of their IVET (%), it is difficult to calculate the percentage of the total cohort of VET students. This is because VET students following three-year VET curricula have the possibility to choose the dual mode of VET and do all their practical training at a company. At the same time, VET students in three-year programmes who are enrolled in the school-based model have to spend certain part of their work-based training (50-70 %) in an enterprise so that it could be argued that all the students in three-year programmes fall into this category. The amount of time spent in an enterprise for work-linked training is much lower for IVET students in four-year programmes.

Data on IVET students benefiting from a learning mobility abroad is not regularly reported by public institutions. Montenegro has only recently started to participate in exchange programmes for students and teachers.

## Conclusions

Overall, Montenegro has taken some steps towards achieving its NIP objectives, with some delays in implementation due to the political context and post-COVID-19 recovery. In the education sector, some progress has been made in advancing the legislative and institutional framework related to the defined priorities, along with several targeted activities relating to the reform of VET. Montenegro has signed the Osnabrück Declaration and committed itself to the implementation of EU recommendations on VET in 2020, as reflected in the following strategic documents: the latest national Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education 2020-2024 and the ERP – Montenegro Priorities. The government is also committed to the implementation of the EU Youth Guarantee Scheme and its links with VET reforms.

The main policy developments in 2021 and 2022 were largely in line with the country's planned activities, with some delays in implementation. They focused on the EU areas prioritised in the NIP: (1) agile and resilient VET, adaptive to labour market needs; (2) flexible VET and inclusive, providing progression and lifelong learning opportunities; (3) innovative and excellent VET (4) attractive VET, based on modern and digitalised provision, and (5) VET underpinned by quality assurance. Similarly, although most of the reform measures within the scope of the monitoring exercise fall under the mandate of the Ministry of Education, they are usually implemented in cooperation with other public institutions and agencies, as well as with other non-governmental stakeholders, as required by thematic priority 'Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET'.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-11/KIESE%202022%20Final.pdf>

In general, while the legislative and institutional framework in the different thematic areas is gradually being completed, there is a lack of data on implementation results and measurable progress. Similarly, country data on the ongoing and past activities and planned outcomes is not always available. A key weakness of the current tracking system is the lack of data on learning and employment outcomes. The cyberattack has exacerbated the situation.

Some of the specific challenges to be addressed in the future include the need to establish monitoring practices that allow for the tracking of both school-based and work-based learning practices in secondary VET schools. This is linked to the need to increase the involvement of enterprises in WBL for students in secondary education to enable them to acquire the necessary digital and green skills and competences for socio-economic growth.

There is a clear need to accelerate activities in the field of adult non-formal education by providing more quality training programmes and establishing more sustainable systems to finance these, while ensuring that they are linked to labour market needs. The process of recognition of prior learning must be given due attention and be widely publicised.

## References

Detailed lists of references are available in the policy development fiches that are published on [ETF OpenSpace](#).