

MONITORING OSNABRÜCK DECLARATION

Türkiye 2023

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COUNTRY BRIEF

Introduction

Following the outcome of the elections held in May 2023, Professor Yusuf Tekin became the new Minister of National Education (MoNE). Under the new government, Türkiye is finalising its 12th Development Plan and the new Ministry of National Education Strategic Plan, both of which will set the country's macro and education policy vision and strategy for 2024-2028.

Meanwhile, Türkiye recently published its [medium-term economic programme \(MTP\) for 2024-2026](#). The document reveals that Türkiye's economy showed resilience in 2022, growing by 5.5 % despite global challenges. Disruptions in supply chains due to geopolitical conflicts and rising global energy and food prices negatively impacted the economy, affecting the current account deficit and inflation. Despite these challenges, the economy is expected to grow by 4.4 % in 2023, especially in the service sector, thus aligning with the MTP target.

Concerning employment, Türkiye saw strong job growth in 2022, adding 1 955 000 positions across most sectors (notably in industry and services) except agriculture. This resulted in the industrial sector's highest share of employment since the global financial crisis at 21.7 %. The labour force expanded by 1 618 000, with a substantial increase in women in employment, driving employment and female labour force participation rates to highs not seen since 2005. This robust economic performance lowered the unemployment rate to 10.4 %, surpassing the 2023-2025 target of 10.8 %. Türkiye is planning a comprehensive set of policies and measures to move towards an unemployment rate of 9.3 % by 2026.

According to the [National Education Statistics Format Education 2022/2023](#) published by the Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education (DGVTE), the Directorate provided vocational education and training (VET) to 1 523 652 students, with 125 364 teachers in a total of 3 452 schools⁽¹⁾. These schools consist of 2 405 Vocational and Technical Anatolian High Schools, 672 Multi-Curriculum Anatolian High Schools and 375 Vocational Training Centres. Türkiye has focused on strengthening VET by collaborating with industry, establishing model schools and centres of vocational excellence and fostering innovation through R&D centres. Initiatives aimed to convert student and teacher projects into valuable products saw over 20 000 patent applications. Vocational schools also contributed to economic growth, with their revenue increasing significantly. Efforts to make vocational education more international were evident with international schools being set up. Students earned higher wages and received social protection under dual education programmes offered by VET training centres (MEMs), a policy development that has made it easier for them to access VET.

During [the next MTP period \(2024-2026\)](#), Türkiye plans to continue VET initiatives through collaboration with industry to design specialised vocational training programs; updates to vocational education curricula in partnership with the private sector; early workforce entry opportunities for vocational high school graduates; and strategic partnerships to cultivate skilled labour (continuing VET-CVET) in key sectors. Additionally, work is underway to empower individuals with income-generating skills and promote lifelong learning for greater adaptability. The focus also includes expanding young people's career awareness of future professions and addressing skills gaps in green and digital transition areas.

⁽¹⁾ In Türkiye, the MoNE governs VET along with its sub-government bodies – the Board of Education (Board of Education and Discipline), the Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education, the Directorate General of Lifelong Learning, the General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance Services, the General Directorate of Private Education Institutions and the Strategy Development Department are all involved in the majority of governance functions.

Türkiye consistently aligns its VET policy with the European Union Skills Agenda and the Osnabrück Declaration (2020) while concurrently leveraging European Union technical and financial support to enhance VET provision. The ‘Improving the Quality of Vocational Education and Training Through Establishment of Sectoral Centres of Excellence Operation’ (IQVETIII) has played an important role in the DGVT’s progress towards achieving national policy goals. Also, Türkiye’s ongoing collaboration with the European Training Foundation (ETF), most recently through the ETF’s Network for Excellence (ENE), is instrumental in advancing VET excellence, in line with EU initiatives. This collaboration also promotes cooperation with partner countries to deliver pertinent skills in the labour market, fostering an active approach to VET and lifelong learning while drawing on the ETF’s experience and self-assessment tools.

This country brief presents the results of the monitoring exercise on the [Osnabrück Declaration on VET as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies \(2020\)](#) carried out for the ETF by Batuhan Aydagul. It includes a summary of the main policy developments (PDs) in 2021 and 2022 with regard to the thematic priorities identified in the [national implementation plan](#). Türkiye selected two priorities (1 and 2²) from the Osnabrück Declaration.

Reference is made in brackets to the fiches describing the aforementioned policy developments (e.g. TR_1_1), which are published on [ETF OpenSpace](#). Readers can use PD fiches to gain a deeper understanding of the strategies, partnerships and activities driving Türkiye’s progress towards VET excellence and innovation, as carried out within the Osnabrück Declaration process. There is also a selection of the latest VET-related statistics.

The aim of this country brief is to inform ETF monitoring and analysis on the implementation of the Osnabrück Declaration, relevant EU monitoring and reporting (e.g., European Commission Education and Training Monitor and the European Semester) and be an information source on recent VET-related policy developments.

For a description of the national VET context, challenges and VET priorities, please refer to the [2022 country brief](#).

² Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive, and flexible VET; Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation.

Main policy developments in 2021 and 2022

Part I: Osnabrück Objective 1

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive, and flexible VET

Supporting Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) by engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

The Sectoral Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) by the Ministry of National Education (TR_1_1) and the social and private partners' initiative to establish CoVEs (TR_1_2) embody Türkiye's strategic approach to fostering VET excellence and innovation, which is through dynamic partnerships, strategic allocation of resources, and comprehensive training initiatives.

CoVEs within VET schools will not only serve as hubs for professional development, coordinate training, promote work-based learning and enhance IVET-CVET permeability, they will also include a specialised centre focusing on professional language, mathematics, and science in collaboration with industry-owned CoVEs. These 'sibling organisations' will enhance VET excellence and innovation with a focus on preparing VET teachers for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

CoVEs also engage VET stakeholders and strengthen partnerships in VET by incorporating partnerships with social partners and sector associations into the design and establishment of CoVEs. CoVEs are expected to contribute to bridging the gap between education and labour markets and – once operational – they will aim to create, facilitate and support work-based learning opportunities for both IVET and CVET participants.

Finally, CoVEs have participated in a self-assessment tool (ENESAT) to help CoVEs network members self-evaluate excellence in order to develop, improve and/or pass on excellence to other parts of the VET system.

Nevertheless, the monitoring exercise did not reveal sufficient evidence of awareness of the National Implementation Plan (NIP) among DGs other than the DGVT and social and private partners. Enhancing coordination between these actors and others actively engaged in IQVET III is crucial, particularly with regards to VET teachers' participation in training.

Box 1: Establishment of Sectoral Centres of Vocation Excellence (CoVEs) by the Ministry of National Education (2021 and 2022) – excerpt from PD fiche TR_1_1⁽³⁾

This initiative, under the umbrella of IQVET III program, is dedicated to creating specialised CoVEs in VET schools. These CoVEs, housed within 14 TVET upper secondary schools across different cities, cover a broad spectrum of 25 VET fields. The work encompasses comprehensive workshops, study visits to CoVEs in Spain and Germany and a legislative framework to ensure sustainable and impactful implementation. By procuring the necessary resources, recruiting personnel, and emphasising teacher training, the project aims to disseminate innovative practices and ensure high quality vocational education.

Box 2: Social and Private Partners' Initiative to Establish CoVEs (2021 and 2022) – excerpt from PD fiche TR_1_2

Anchored within IQVET III program, the project allocates substantial funding to 18 projects spanning various sectors, such as energy, machine technologies, and more. Diverse institutions, including industry associations and chambers of commerce, have received grants to establish CoVEs. The projects include management and implementation training, specialised workshops and training programs run by grant recipients. These initiatives target skill development, innovative teaching approaches and knowledge enhancement through collaborative work with social and private partners. Examples of projects are cyber-security training, technical skill development and the exchange of knowledge through study visits.

⁽³⁾ The policy development (PD) fiches are published on [ETF Open Space](#).

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

CoVEs also support the objective of reinforcing work-based learning by aiming to create, facilitate, and support work-based learning opportunities for both IVET and CVET participants. In particular, ‘Social and private partners’ initiative to establish CoVEs’ (TR_1_2) leverage their know-how, technology, and innovation through work-placed training in specific VET fields. The DGVT expects sector-owned CoVEs to work in tandem with CoVEs in TVET secondary schools as ‘sibling organisations’, a critical factor that would make these collaborations sustainable in the long-term to coordinate and facilitate stakeholder engagement in improving the quality and relevance of VET. Furthermore, teacher training organised by the DGVT (TR_1_3) also incorporates work-based learning through collaborations with social and private partners.

Box 3: Example activities that support work-based learning (2022) – excerpt from PD fiche TR_1_3

Training in machinery, electronics and information technologies run by the Ermetal Technological Education Foundation (ERTEV), including on-the-job observation, hands-on training and learning opportunities, with the involvement of leading companies and industrial organisations in Bursa.

Training in information technologies and cyber security run by Başkent University Vocational School, OSTIM Technical University and various companies in Ankara, with emphasis on practical and theoretical aspects. The workshop involved practical applications related to cybersecurity attacks and defence strategies through simulations.

Improving teachers’ special field skills with on-the-job training

Complementing the systematic teacher development initiatives linked to the CoVEs, the DGVT aims to enhance special field skills for vocational teachers, elevating their skills through immersive on-the-job training, in tandem with private sector, industry, and university collaborations. Furthermore, it sets its sights on elevating applied mathematics and science education skills among vocational foreign language, mathematics and science teachers.

Box 4: TR_1_3 Skills development in VET teachers

This initiative entails providing on-the-job training in 25 sector-specific fields to 3000 TVET upper secondary school teachers between 2021 and 2024. Additionally, 1300 branch teachers working in 150 pilot vocational and technical high schools will receive sector-relevant vocational foreign language, mathematics and science training. The DGVT is responsible for running these activities and outside partners are also involved.

The DGVT utilises the MoNE’s digital platform for web-based teacher training programs. These platforms include Eğitim Bilişim Ağı (EBA)⁽⁴⁾ and, more recently, Öğretmen Bilişim Ağı (ÖBA)⁽⁵⁾. Currently, there are 211 training courses on ÖBA, accessed in total by 10 992 018 teachers. As a result of these courses, the MoNE has issued 13 916 648 certificates.

In 2021 and 2022, the DGVT ran both face-to-face and web-based training courses for teachers. Supporting teachers for and through digital transition continues to be a priority for the DGVT. In addition, there is an increasing emphasis on running in-service teacher training courses through work-based learning. The latter illustrates that the DGVT has begun mainstreaming work-based learning to its systemic teacher training approach following the success of training run as part of the IQVET III project.

⁽⁴⁾ EBA caters for both teachers and students.

⁽⁵⁾ ÖBA caters for teachers.

Table 1: In-Service Training Statistics

	Distance		Work-based		Face-to-face		Total	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
In-Service Training for Professional Development (# of training courses)	88	38	58	150	5	80	151	268
In-Service Training for Professional Development (# of hours)	2 204	605	2 072	4 046	338	1 330	4 614	5 981
In-Service Training for Professional Development (# of participants)	34 591	32 988	926	3 728	1 143	4 550	36 660	41 266

Developing and updating learning resources and materials

The DGVT consistently updates TVET secondary education curricula in response to sector developments and National Occupational Standards. As a result, the same course may undergo multiple updates within a year, contingent on the prevailing circumstances. In this regard, vocational and technical secondary education curricula are very flexible.

The DGVT has made the following updates to TVET courses:

- In 2021, 60 fields in 282 branches
- In 2022, 39 fields and 210 branches.

Additionally, the DGVT regularly develops and revises instructional TVET materials. Within this framework, the DGVT released 91 textbooks in 2021, and in 2022, a total of 205 textbooks were published. These materials are produced and distributed free of charge to students nationwide.

Further developing national quality assurance systems

Fostering an effective and comprehensive quality assurance framework promises to propel Türkiye's vocational education towards excellence and innovation (TR_1_4).

Box 5: Improving and strengthening the VET quality assurance system – excerpt from PD fiche TR_1_4

This initiative involves a Core Working Group for Quality Assurance, composed of representatives from the Ministry and social partners. The PD also involves setting up Provincial Quality Assurance Boards, reviewing the Monitoring, Evaluation and Quality Development Department's self-assessment portal and training on quality monitoring tools in pilot provinces selected for the IQVET III project. Beneficiaries will be schools that will pilot newly revised quality assurance tools as well as the whole TVET system once a sustainable system with robust digital support mechanism is operational. The DGVT is responsible for this PD and various stakeholders, including representatives from other relevant DGs, pilot provinces, teachers, social partners, and international partners have been involved.

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

Among the initiatives the MoNE implemented for inclusive VET addressing inequalities, the Social and Economic Adaptation Through VET Project (SEUP) funded by the European Union aims to revive vocational school workshops, enhance social integration among Turkish students and young Syrians under temporary protection and improve employability and skills. This project contributed to equipment upgrades in 57 schools, benefiting 65 358 students and increasing enrolment rates by 15 %. Additionally, disadvantaged students received support packages, home visits and food assistance. Another project, the Vocational Training Programme for Employment (VET4JOB), backed by the EU, focuses on skill development through apprenticeships, easing access to employment for both host communities and Syrian refugees.

Strengthening flexible VET provision

A relevant policy development for flexible VET is linked to the legislative changes the government adopted in 2019, which aimed at increasing access, permeability and progression to LLL opportunities in Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) in Türkiye. Additional amendments in 2021-2022 fuelled the demand for and access to VTCs. These centres offer apprenticeships and vocational training programs to students from the age of 14, including early school-leavers. Since 2016, VTC students can also earn an upper secondary diploma. VTCs are included in the scope of compulsory education and are registered with the DGVET to provide assistant craftsperson and master craftsperson training courses. Additionally, VTCs offer work-based learning opportunities that can ease entry into the labour market for adults.

Box 6: Policy development concerning VTCs

Vocational training centres (VTCs) in Türkiye, requiring middle school completion for enrollment, have been offering a four-year program that combines theoretical education at the centres with practical training in companies since 2016. Successful students earn the titles of 'kalfa' (assistant craftsperson) and 'usta' (master craftsperson).

Previously, students needed to take open education programs to complete high school subjects, but VTCs began offering these required subjects face-to-face in 2016. During practical training, students work alongside 'usta öğretici' (a master craftsperson trainer) four days a week. The Ministry of National Education has increased the number of 'usta öğretici' to generate more capacity in VTCs.

The DGVET has made progress towards assessing the feasibility of a scaled modular flexible system in VET, eventually aiming to reshape the learning landscape through modular flexible learning pathways.

Box 7: Piloting the modular flexible system – excerpt from PD fiche TR_1_5

This PD aims to assess the feasibility of scaling a modular system for VET in Türkiye by the end of 2024. In 2021 and 2022, the DGVET pursued this PD by coordinating the development of and piloting a flexible modules concept in 15 programs. Contractors, which work within the IQVET III framework, will then provide a policy report, including issues related to legislation, infrastructure, human resources and materials. The DGVET is responsible for running the activities and overseeing teachers and administrators from pilot provinces and schools, as well as the experts involved.

Osnabrück Objective 2

Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation

Increasing access to lifelong learning

The Directorate General for Lifelong Learning (DG-LLL) embarked on a proactive journey to expand lifelong learning opportunities, leading to a remarkable increase in both LLL courses and participants (TR_2_1). The participation rate in LLL rose from 6.5 % to 6.7 % between 2021 and 2022. This progress could be seen as a combined result of available funding, new public education centres and maturation institutes ⁽⁶⁾ across various provinces, augmented numbers of teachers' and trainers and collaborative projects between DG-LLL and both national and international partners to reach out to groups that have previously not had access to lifelong learning. Aligned with the spirit of [Torino Process 2022-2024](#) ⁽⁷⁾, policy developments simultaneously sustained Türkiye's commitments to skills

⁽⁶⁾ Maturation institutes (olgunlaşma enstitüleri) are schools that research, preserve and promote cultural values and traditional arts. They have various units for research, design, promotion and marketing and they offer artistic-focused education and output. Courses are aligned with vertical and horizontal permeability opportunities.

⁽⁷⁾ The Torino Process framework is a tool for collecting, interpreting and contextualising data and information on policy developments and progress in ETF partner countries. Its most recent emphasis has been on monitoring and supporting national VET policies on a) access to, participation in, and opportunities for LLL; b) quality of learning outcomes; and c) system organisation.

development and social cohesion. In view of supporting individual choices in their lifelong learning, the DGVT has made progress and achieved initial results towards enriching vocational pathways with personalised guidance and counselling services.

Box 8: Improving career guidance and counselling services – excerpt from PD fiche TR_2_2

This PD aims to improve vocational guidance and career counselling services by the end of 2024. So far, policy developments have entailed revising the existing vocational guidance and career counselling and piloting it. This process includes a desk study by the technical team funded by the IQVET III project in collaboration with DGVT officials, workshops conducted by the DGVT with stakeholders (school counsellors, teachers, school administrators, and representatives from social partners) to discuss improvement opportunities, and a needs analysis for vocational guidance training. The DGVT is responsible for running and coordinating the activities, and more than 1 200 individuals (teachers and administrators) will be trained on the revised system in pilot schools.

Performance in relation to EU targets

Of the three indicators included in the VET recommendation, only the employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20 to 34-year-olds) is available, which was 47.9 % in 2020, compared to an EU average of 75.7 % in 2020 and 79.7 % in 2022.

VET Recommendation Indicator	TR	EU-27	EU target (year)
Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20 to 34-year-olds) (%)	47.9 % (2020)	79.7 % (2022)	82 % (2025)
Recent IVET graduates (20–34-year-olds) with a work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%)		60.1 % (2022)	60 % (2025)
Learners in IVET who benefitted from a learning opportunity abroad (%)		2.1 % (2021)	8 % (2025)

Source: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/key-indicators-on-vet/countries?country=TR#24>

Conclusions

The Osnabrück Declaration monitoring process has demonstrated Türkiye's progress towards the Osnabrück objectives it selected. Noteworthy policy progress also emerged beyond this scope, indicating a more comprehensive stride towards a VET system that is agile, resilient, flexible and inclusive. Monitoring showed that Türkiye showcased its commitment to empowering individuals of all walks of life with lifelong learning opportunities.

Several key insights have arisen from monitoring.

1. First and foremost, the policy progress outlined thus far offers further proof of Türkiye's resolute commitment and alignment to enhance VET quality, concurrently emphasising inclusivity and equal access. The National Education Strategy 2019-2023 for Türkiye served as a comprehensive framework that various national agencies, including the DGVT, DG LLL and VQA, translated into tangible policies, schemes and projects under ministerial guidance. Sustaining this momentum should be a primary aim of the forthcoming strategy.

Türkiye's collaboration with the EU and other global partners, including UNICEF, has bolstered VET advancements. Notably, the EU-funded IQVET III project has been instrumental in igniting the nation's essential pursuit of improved quality through investments in CoVEs, teacher skills across professional and VET-specific STEM domains and the quality assurance framework. It is imperative to expand these investments to amplify promising practices, enhance teacher training and ensure that quality assurance permeates the various VET providers, culminating in seamless integration with lifelong learning.

A final observation concerning Türkiye's alignment with EU VET policies revolves around the significant role played by the ETF in mediating national policies via the Torino Process and Osnabrück Declaration monitoring mechanisms. When combined with Türkiye's recent self-assessment of the Torino Process, the evidence illustrates that the country has adeptly achieved a vital equilibrium between access, equity and quality.

2. Secondly, monitoring has shone a light on a robust, logical framework that reinforces policy formulation and progress. Insights gleaned from interviews with DGVT officials and representatives from social partners underscore that government readily embraces and leverages the involvement of social and private partners at all levels of policy development. In return, these partners contribute innovation, technology and resources to bolster governmental strategies and objectives. Setting up CoVEs within VET secondary schools and partner organisations builds upon this foundation and promises to elevate multisectoral coordination and collaboration. Current evidence showcases incremental progress in fulfilling this promise, making it imperative to sustain their viability, particularly from the partners' perspective.
3. Thirdly, monitoring highlights the pivotal role projects play in generating momentum and synchronisation. The IQVET III project serves as a prime example, as do initiatives such as the Social and Economic Adaptation Through VET Project (SEUP) and the Vocational Training Programme for Employment (VET4JOB), as revealed in Türkiye's self-assessment of the Torino Process. Furthermore, the DGVT utilises the experience accumulated through these projects and the subsequent insights to shape policy on a larger scale. The DGVT's ongoing efforts to mainstream work-based learning to in-service teacher training is a good example. Türkiye's MoNE could further champion project-driven policy implementation, even when international partners are not involved.

To be positively commended is the participation of Türkiye in the European Training Foundation's (ETF) Network for Excellence (ENE). Türkiye Ministry of National Education/DGVET and ACVT have joined since it was kickstarted at the end of 2020. This approach fits within both the new EU Skills Agenda and the Osnabrück Declaration (2020). As of 2023, 57 Turkish VET and higher education centres were actively participating in, contributing in and benefiting from this participation in the (ETF) Network for Excellence (ENE) and the Erasmus+ scheme. Türkiye policy and public and private institutions have responded very positively to ETF experience in working together with Partner Countries (PCs) to further VET Excellence as a key driver in support of VET and Lifelong Learning (LLL) and providing relevant skills in the labour market.

Lastly, there are areas that may deserve further development. While numerous national agencies have undertaken policies aligned with the Osnabrück Declaration, there is room for enhancing NIP ownership beyond DGVT. VET teachers' willingness and readiness for training is another area that deserves attention for further improvement, as evidenced by the discussions with social and private partners.

While Türkiye has made considerable strides in its pursuit of enhanced quality, there is still a substantial need for qualitative and formative evaluations of policy developments and the social and private partners to be involved. [Independent think-tanks caution that ensuring quality alongside quantity is crucial and suggest establishing comprehensive monitoring mechanisms.](#) Current national policy documents and monitoring reports predominantly rely on input and output indicators. Although our monitoring has highlighted Türkiye's progress with respect to these indicators, evaluating the actual impact of these policies remains an unfulfilled goal.

References

Detailed references are provided as hyperlinks in the text and in the policy development fiches on [ETF OpenSpace](#).