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TORINO PROCESS SYSTEM MONITORING REPORT: AZERBAIJAN (2023)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Torino Process monitoring was carried out in partnership with national authorities, experts, and stakeholders in Azerbaijan under the coordination of Ms. Nigar Ismayilzada-Asgarova, Acting Head, Deputy Head of the Department for Employer's Engagement and Innovative Projects, State Agency for Vocational Education, who is also the national coordinator of Azerbaijan for the current round of the Torino Process.

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This monitoring report was prepared by a team led by Mihaylo Milovanovitch, Senior Human Capital Development Expert and Coordinator for System Change and Lifelong Learning at the ETF. The report follows a proprietary monitoring methodology developed by the same team and is based on evidence collected, processed, analysed, and verified by the ETF and by national stakeholders in Azerbaijan under the overall coordination of Ms. Nigar Ismayilzada-Asgarova and with the support of Mr Amin Charkazov, national Torino Process expert.

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:** Azerbaijan demonstrates a strong performance in VET accessibility and participation, with notable disparities, especially regarding age. The country excels in IVET access but has deficiencies in CVET participation, contrasting with its success in offering other lifelong learning opportunities, particularly through labour market measures. Regardless of background, age, or gender, VET learners in Azerbaijan experience ease in vertical and horizontal transitions within the education system. However, the area of learner course completion in VET, while reasonable, suggests potential for further improvement, with performance slightly below the international average.
- **Quality and relevance:** VET in Azerbaijan is seen as delivering foundational skills and competences to both youth and adults, with the aim of aligning with contemporary economic trends and labour market needs. Official sources suggest the system is effective in teaching key competences to young learners and in skill provision to adults, demonstrating a focus on lifelong learning and upskilling. The VET programmes in Azerbaijan include elements of digital and green transitions, with a notable emphasis on the digital transition. VET also has firm bridges between education and the labour market, reflecting an effort to integrate labour market needs into vocational training. This is supported by reports of high employability among VET graduates, indicating their readiness for the workforce. Moreover, career guidance the VET programme offer are receptive towards adaptations in response to changing market and learner needs.
- **Excellence and innovation:** The Torino Process identifies excellence in VET as encompassing system-wide policies that promote high-quality practices in key policy and delivery domains, focusing on pedagogy, professional development, programme content, governance, and social inclusion. Azerbaijan reports of achievements in the domain of excellence in pedagogy and development, aligned with modern themes like digitalisation. It also prioritises excellence in programme content, indicating effective curriculum delivery. However, improvements are needed in social inclusion and equity for more equitable learner access. Apart from that, VET in Azerbaijan is relatively open to innovation, especially in adult lifelong learning and learner support in VET, and it is proactive in enhancing learning quality and relevance.
- **System management and organisation:** Stakeholder are quite involved in the steering and management of VET governance, but challenges remain in their capacity to take informed decisions due to lack of reliable and relevant data. Improvements are needed also in public accountability and quality assurance to maintain trust and consistency in VET. VET leadership shows strong professional capacity, but more can be done in support of the internationalisation of the system. Human resources in VET are available and managed well, but levels of spending on education may require attention. Despite broader financial challenges, targeted investments in infrastructure have been made and the material base for teaching and learning is of reported to be of high quality. This suggests that focused financial solutions can and do lead to improvements.
- **Quality and reliability of monitoring evidence:** The monitoring results of Azerbaijan are somewhat less comparable internationally than the results of other countries in the Torino Process sample, on average. These results are also the most susceptible to bias of all countries in the sample. Azerbaijan also tends to self-appraise the performance of its VET system in rather positive terms.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Focus and scope of monitoring

This report summarises the results of monitoring VET system performance in Azerbaijan, 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

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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.

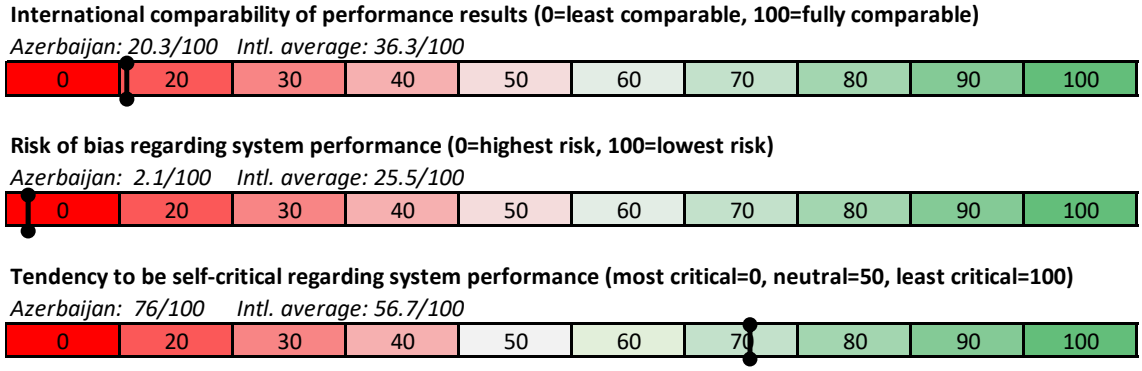
reference purposes, and, where relevant, it showcases disaggregated data used to calculate the system performance indices and information provided by national authorities through the monitoring questionnaire. Links to the full dataset for Azerbaijan, the monitoring questionnaire, the Torino Process monitoring framework and methodology can be found in the third and final section of this document.

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 Azerbaijan 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 Azerbaijan.

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



The monitoring results of Azerbaijan are somewhat less comparable internationally than the results of other countries in the Torino Process sample, on average. They are also the most susceptible to bias of all countries in the sample. Azerbaijan also tends to self-appraise the performance of its VET system rather positively, as shown in Figure 1.

2. MONITORING RESULTS: AZERBAIJAN

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:

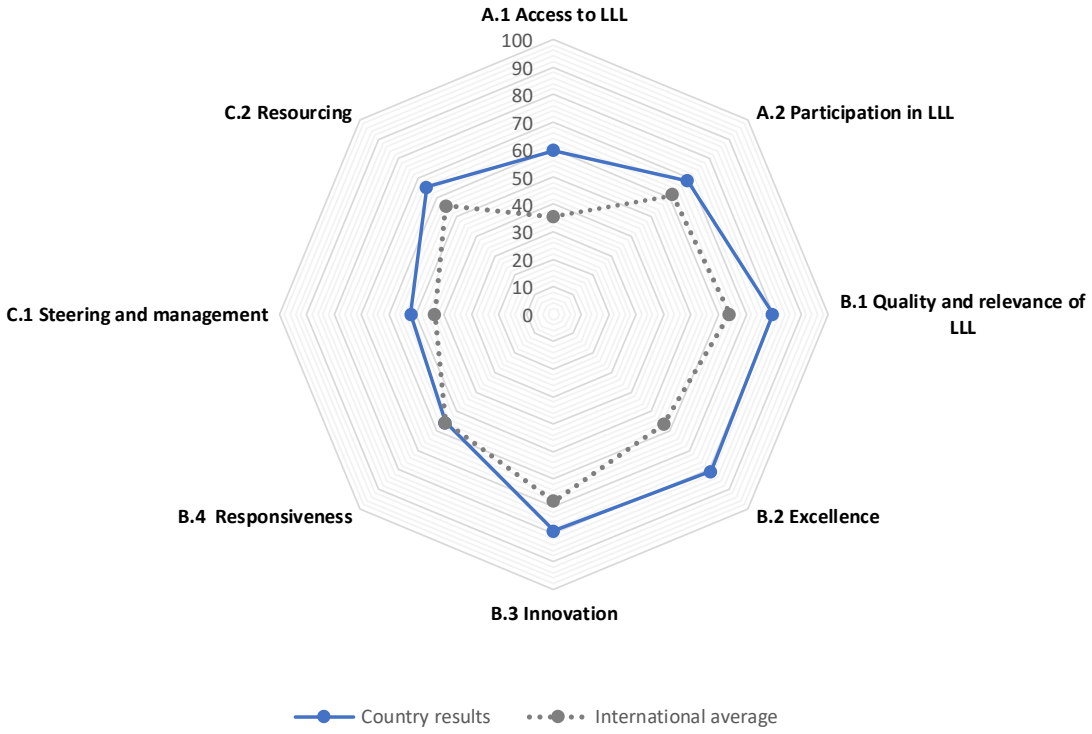
TABLE 1. DIMENSIONS OF POLICY AND SYSTEM PERFORMANCE MONITORING THROUGH THE TORINO PROCESS

No.	Dimension	Description
A.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.
A.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.
B.1	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.
B.2	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.
B.3	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.
B.4	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.
C.1	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.
C.2	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 chapter of the monitoring report presents the performance of the VET system in Azerbaijan across the eight dimensions of Torino Process monitoring. The findings indicate that, in terms of

overall performance, lifelong learners in Azerbaijan are well-placed to benefit from education and training which is reported to be highly attuned to quality and relevance (Dimension B.1, SPI of 80) and is committed to promoting excellence in VET (Dimension B.2, SPI of 81). The system is seen as having commendable capacity to foster participation in lifelong learning and to offer a permeability between various learning opportunities (Dimension A.2, SPI of 69).

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



Theoretical[6] index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

The VET system in Azerbaijan also demonstrates a substantial aptitude for innovation (Dimension B.3, SPI of 79), although this is somewhat below the international average. Responsiveness to external developments (Dimension B.4, SPI of 56) is mid-range, indicating a balanced performance in adapting to changing circumstances, but also ample scope for improvement.

Steering and management (Dimension C.1, SPI of 52) present the VET system with some challenges, suggesting that this is an area in which policy improvements are needed and could pay off. While the system appears more capable than most in securing financial, human, and physical resources (Dimension C.2, SPI of 65), continued attention to resourcing is necessary to maintain and build upon this advantage. The accessibility of VET (Dimension A.1, with an SPI of 60), as reported

[6] The Torino Process makes a distinction between theoretical (full) 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 international average, on the other hand, is calculated using the full range of the index.

by the country, stands out in terms of performance in international comparison, indicating, from a national perspective, a strong policy performance in enabling access to lifelong learning.

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

VET performance in Azerbaijan 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 (Table 2).

These outcomes include access to IVET, CVET, and other opportunities for lifelong learning, the vertical and horizontal permeability of the VET system, as well as the prospects of learners in IVET and CVET to graduate and - where relevant – progress to subsequent levels of education and training. The outcomes included under Area A are defined as follows:

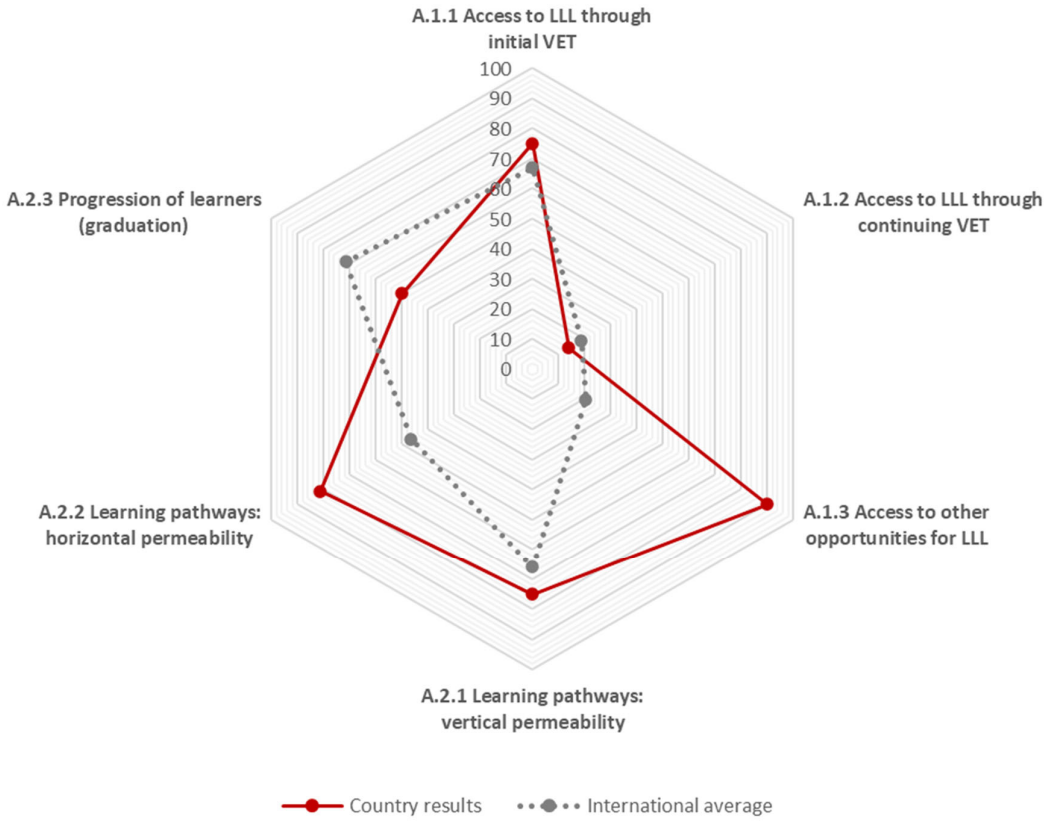
TABLE 2. POLICY AND SYSTEM OUTCOMES INCLUDED UNDER MONITORING AREA A: ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

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

The preceding section emphasises the strong performance of Azerbaijan in the domain of accessibility and participation in VET. However, important disparities exist, potentially putting some learners at an age-related disadvantage. Access to IVET programmes is relatively favourable, surpassing the average for other countries in the Torino Process sample (Outcome A.1.1, SPI of 75).

However, the existing network of IVET institutions faces challenges in accommodating all applicants, as evidenced by the significant gap between applications received and students admitted. These challenges in capacity mean that only a portion of those applying gaining admission. As a remedy, the State Agency for VET has implemented measures such as electronic admission processes and state-funded scholarships, which are reported to have led to an increase in student admissions over the years.

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



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

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

While IVET in Azerbaijan is growing more accessible, especially with state-funded education and scholarships, the challenge remains in ensuring that the system can accommodate the growing demand and address issues related to social inclusion and equity. Additionally, while there are initiatives to enhance the material base of VET institutions, ensuring the effectiveness of these investments in improving overall educational outcomes remains a key focus.

Participation in CVET on the other hand is notably deficient (Outcome A.1.2, SPI of 14), even when considered against the international average. The government offers vocational training to unemployed citizens free of charge, and there are initiatives to make formal CVET more accessible through evening courses and online programs, although overall attractiveness remains an issue.

Conversely, Azerbaijan reports of excellent performance in providing access to other opportunities for lifelong learning beyond VET (Outcome A.1.3, SPI of 90), especially through active labour market measures.

In Azerbaijan, learners within VET navigate with ease between different levels of education, reflecting a system with a high degree of vertical permeability (Outcome A.2.1, SPI of 75). Similarly, horizontal permeability within learning pathways is a domain of strong results (Outcome A.2.2, SPI of 81), suggesting that transitions between different tracks in VET and general education are notably smooth. However, the progression through and the successful graduation of courses show mid-range performance (Outcome A.2.3, SPI of 50), indicating areas for improvement in the VET system's effectiveness in supporting learners to successfully finish their education.

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

In the first part of Area B (Quality and relevance of LLL outcomes), the Torino Process follows another two of the dimensions presented in Section 2.1, namely quality/relevance and responsiveness of VET, with a total of eight policy and system outcomes.

These outcomes cover the quality of learning of youth and adults in VET in terms of key skills and competences, the exposure of learners in VET to the world of work, the employability of graduates from IVET and CVET, the availability of career guidance for them, as well as the relevance of learning and training content in VET. Under relevance, the monitoring records the responsiveness of the VET programme offering to demographic, labour market, and socio-economic developments, as well as the inclusion in VET curricula of themes pertaining to the green and digital transition. The outcomes included under Area B (1) are defined in Table 3.

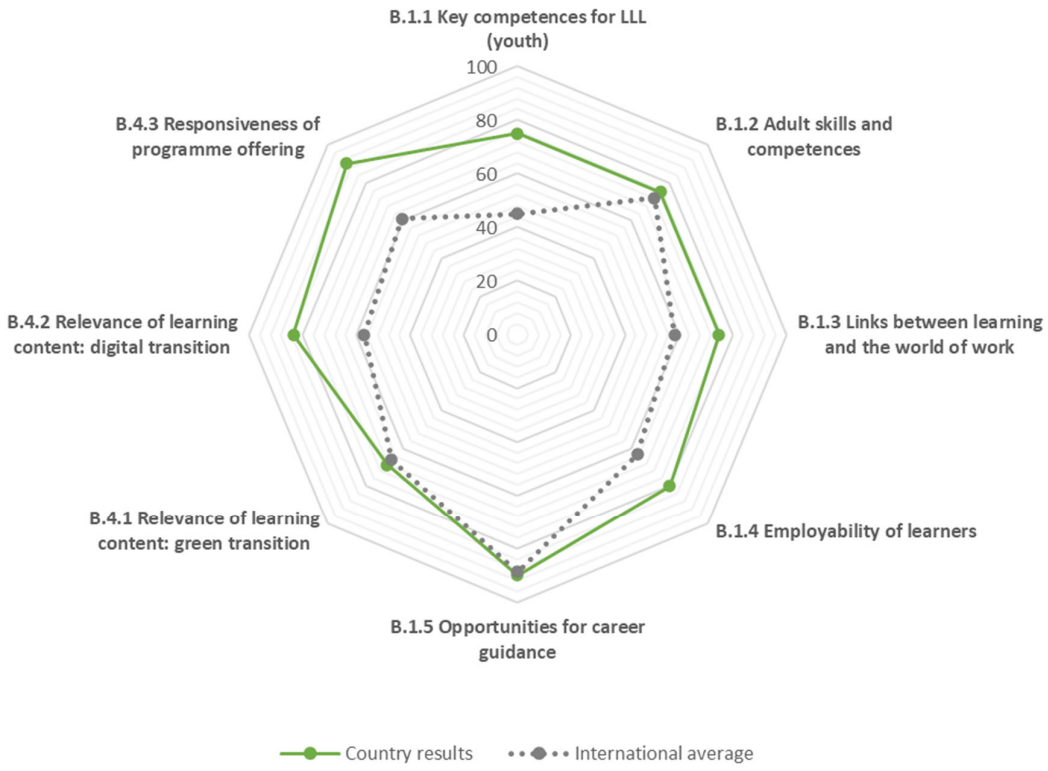
TABLE 3. POLICY AND SYSTEM OUTCOMES INCLUDED UNDER MONITORING AREA B (1): QUALITY AND RELEVANCE

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

The system performance data for Azerbaijan, as self-reported by the country, indicates a robust delivery of foundational skills and competences to youth and adults, aligned with emerging economic trends. According to official information, the VET system in Azerbaijan effectively imparts key competences to young learners (Outcome B.1.1, SPI of 75). The provision of skills and competences to adults is also a domain of strong policy and system performance (Outcome B.1.2, SPI of 75), reflecting a nationwide commitment to lifelong learning and upskilling. However, it is also noted that the proficiency of adult learners, particularly in areas such as ICT and problem-solving, can be variable, despite the fact that formal vocational education curricula include key competences.

The Torino Process monitoring framework considers relevance of learning content also in longer-term perspective by looking at the extent to which curricula consider forward-looking, emerging themes such as the digital and green transitions. At the time of monitoring, VET programmes in Azerbaijan were already incorporating forward-looking themes, with a commendable emphasis on the digital transition (Outcome B.4.2, SPI of 83), and to a somewhat lesser extent on themes foundational for the green transition (Outcome B.4.1, SPI of 69).

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



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

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

National authorities indicate that education programs generally include key competences such as literacy, math competency, multilingual competency, and digital competency, all crucial for navigating the technologically-driven and globally interconnected job markets of today. The inclusion of 'Information Technologies' as a key module across all IVET specializations further underscores this

focus. Although almost all IVET and CVET programmes cover ICT subjects, however, authorities report that the level of digital skills among many graduates remains basic.

As to themes pertaining to the green transition, a package of subjects called “HSE” for “Health, Safety, and Environment” is taught in all IVET and CVET programs, incorporating elements of environmental protection. Still, there is an acknowledged need for more focus on climate change awareness and “green skills”, particularly in areas outside of specific environmentally focused programs.

In the same vein, VET in Azerbaijan demonstrates notable strength in bridging education with the labour market (Outcome B.1.3, SPI of 75), which suggests the implementation of effective strategies that integrate labour market needs into vocational training. The high employability of VET learners (Outcome B.1.4, SPI of 80) indicates that graduates are in demand, likely due to their perceived readiness for the workforce. National authorities underline that the implementation of work-based learning and dual education models play a role as well, though there are also challenges in industry-college cooperation. Challenges remain, however, in terms of regulatory flexibility to facilitate work-based learning and the pilot nature of dual education programs.

The positive efforts are reinforced by the ongoing shift towards competence-based training in the IVET and CVET systems, aiming to improve responsiveness to the qualitative needs of the labour market. Additionally, national authorities indicate efforts to align VET with labour market demands through labour market analysis, identifying priority professions and specialties. This approach aims to enhance the relevance of VET offerings to the current economic landscape of Azerbaijan, despite the acknowledged limitations in capacity to fill all job vacancies available.

Azerbaijan reports of a well-operating system of career guidance (Outcome B.1.5, SPI of 90), which is crucial for directing learners towards suitable career paths. This is supported by initiatives such as career centres and the avando.az platform, which enhance the awareness of students about career options, and their access to such options. Azerbaijan assesses also the responsiveness of its VET programme offerings as very strong (Outcome B.4.3, SPI of 90), indicative of a prevailing perception that the VET system is adaptive to labour market and learner needs, in line with ongoing efforts to boost the relevance of skills and competences in response to demand from different industries.

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 in Table 4.

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

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

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

Azerbaijan reports of high performance in the domain of excellence in pedagogy and professional development (Outcome B.2.1, SPI of 90) an in promoting highest quality practices in programme content and implementation (Outcome B.2.2, SPI of 90). These results could be reflective of the broader orientation of VET in the country towards modern, future-oriented themes like digitalisation and the green transition, as previously discussed. Tangible examples of results in these domains include the establishment of modernized VET centres of excellence, which offer training in high-demand occupations and feature modern infrastructure and training methods. However, progress in establishing such centres has been slower than planned, with only 4 of the 10 envisaged centres completed so far.

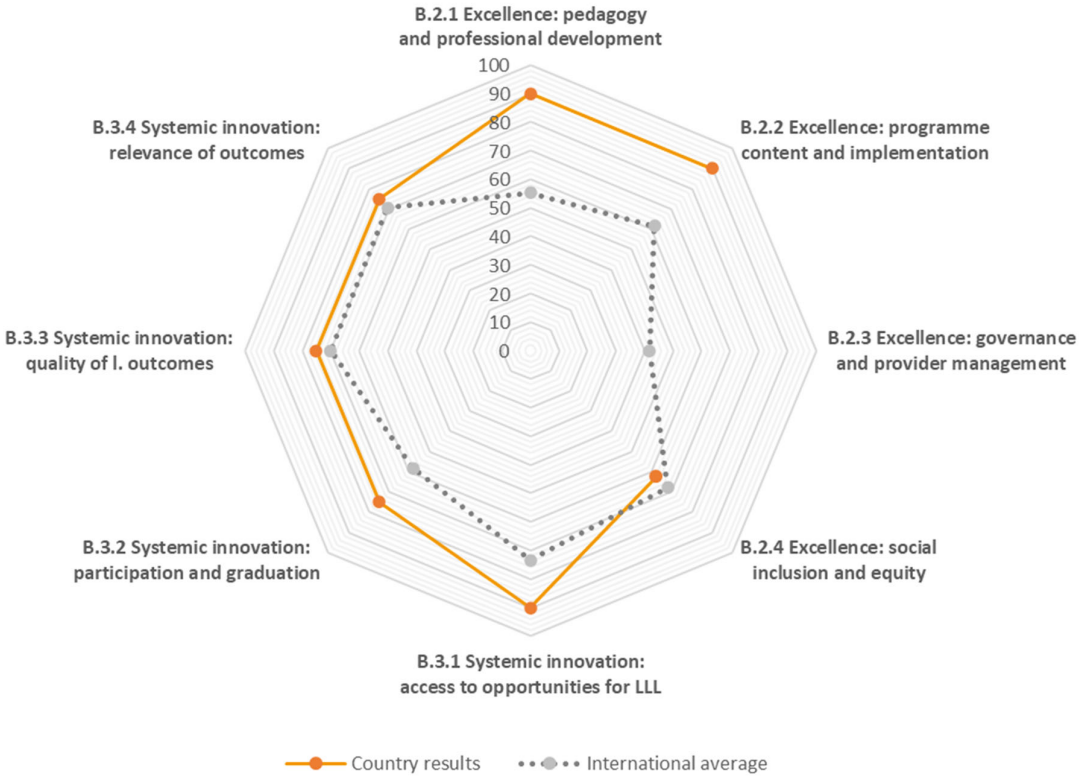
However, in terms of social inclusion and equity (Outcome B.2.4, SPI of 63), VET in Azerbaijan may have scope for further development in ensuring equitable access and inclusion for all learners irrespective of their background. While there are efforts like the EU-funded project on Promotion of Inclusive Education, challenges remain in ensuring sustainable and widespread inclusive education in VET centres, also in those established with the purpose of promoting excellence.

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

VET in Azerbaijan is quite open to innovative practices and solutions, especially in areas in need of attention, such as access to lifelong learning for adults and participation and completion of learning. VET is supportive of innovative, proactive approaches to facilitating entry into LLL (Outcome B.3.1), as well as to supporting learners to engage and succeed in VET (Outcome B.3.2). There is also a

high degree of openness to novel solutions in supporting better quality and relevance of learning and training outcomes (Outcomes B.3.3 and B.3.4) to enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities learners gain.

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



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

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

This includes initiatives like the "Youth Business Workshop" project, which aims to develop business skills among vocational education students, and the use of digital technologies for career development skills. However, challenges remain in fully integrating these innovations across the VET system, particularly at the higher and secondary specialized education level where systemic innovations are still lacking.

2.2.4 Area C. System organisation

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

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

Azerbaijan demonstrates high involvement and participation of stakeholders in VET governance and management (Outcome C.1.2, SPI of 90), with efforts to engage a range of stakeholders from various sectors, for instance through Boards of Trustees in VET providers. However, the effectiveness of these consultative processes and their evidence-informed nature remains less clear. The country faces significant challenges in data collection and utilisation (Outcome C.1.1, SPI of 10), with data mainly covering administrative records and lacking in tracer studies and surveys. This limitation raises questions about the effectiveness of policies and interventions in VET.

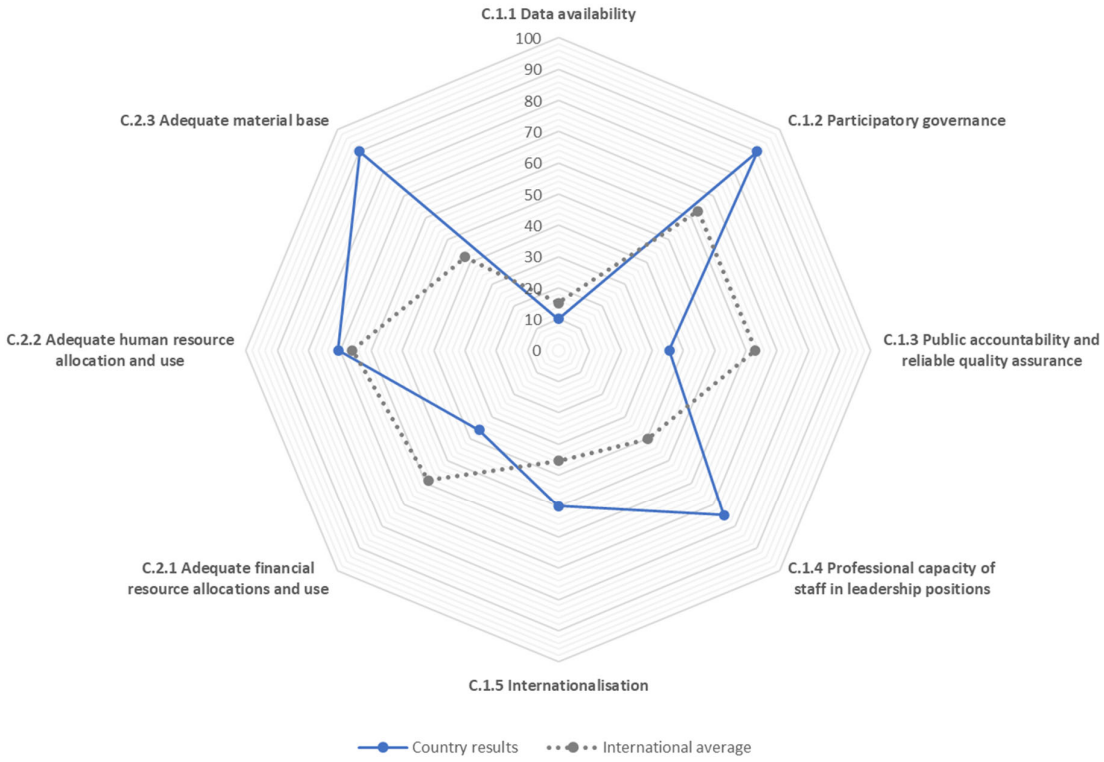
The capacity for public accountability and reliable quality assurance in VET require attention (Outcome C.1.3, SPI of 36). Azerbaijan has recently started piloting internal quality assurance mechanisms and accreditation processes in VET institutions, marking a shift from outdated quality assurance systems to those more fitting for a market economy. However, despite such initiatives, quality assurance is still in development, transitioning from outdated systems to ones more suitable for a market economy. The professional capacity of leadership in VET institutions is reported to be strong (Outcome C.1.4, SPI of 75), supported by centralized recruitment processes and competency evaluations. However, there are difficulties in attracting highly qualified leaders, particularly in IVET institutions, due to low remuneration and reputational challenges.

Azerbaijan's performance in supporting internationalisation is average (Outcome C.1.5, SPI of 50). While there are efforts to engage in international collaborations and exchanges, such as participation in "WorldSkills International" and Erasmus+ programs, the overall approach to internationalisation remains in the developing stage, especially at the higher and secondary specialized education level.

When it comes to monitoring performance in the domain of resources in VET and education more broadly, it is important to note that the term 'resources' within that context encompasses both the financial means to support teaching and learning, as well as the human capital required to deliver quality education.

Policy and system performance in the domain of human resources in VET in Azerbaijan is above average (Outcome C.2.2, SPI of 71), pointing to a successful strategy in placing and developing the VET workforce to meet the demands of the system. However, financial resource allocation requires significant improvement (Outcome C.2.1, SPI of 36).

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



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

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

The effective utilisation of funds is as crucial as the volume of investment in educational systems; it is not just about how much is spent, but also how wisely and efficiently the funds are allocated. While the overall financial resource allocation may require attention, the information provided by authorities suggests that funds that are available have been effectively invested in certain areas, particularly in establishing a robust material base for teaching and learning (Outcome C.2.3, SPI of 90). The creation of modern VET centres in various cities, like Jalilabad and Fuzuli, indicates progress in addressing infrastructural needs, despite broader financial challenges. Additionally, initiatives such as the "Youth Business Workshop" project aim to develop business skills among vocational education students, highlighting efforts to align VET with labour market demands.

This finding indicates a strategic prioritisation of resources that successfully addresses key infrastructural needs, despite a context of broader challenges in financial resource allocation and

usage. The high performance in developing the material base also implies that when investments are targeted effectively, they can yield substantial results in specific areas of the VET system.

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

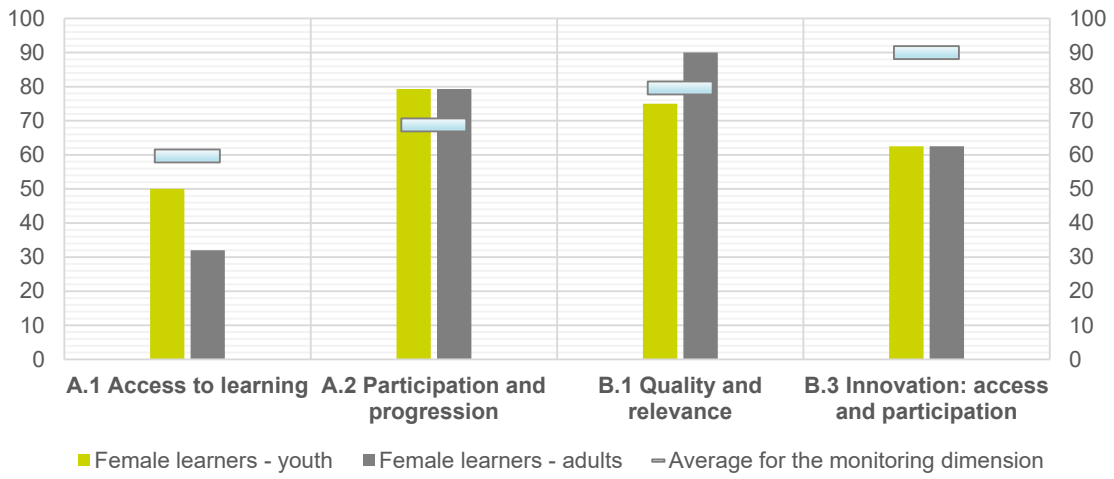
In this round, the Torino Process monitoring looks not only into the deliverables of national VET policies and systems in general but also into the degree to which they address the needs and expectations of present and prospective lifelong learners. The monitoring framework traces how well and equitably 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 Azerbaijan 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 Azerbaijan.

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



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

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

In Azerbaijan, the VET system shows a notable difference in how it appeals to female learners based on their age group. Young female learners (youth) show a lower rate of opting for VET than any other group of learners (Dimension A.1, SPI of 50). This gap widens even further for adult female

learners, suggesting that the VET system may need to implement targeted strategies to improve accessibility for women, particularly as they progress from youth to adulthood.

Information provided by authorities reveals further detail about gender-related challenges in access to VET. Families in some regions restrict the access of girls to certain specialties (i.e., tourism), and industrial or agricultural machinery-related specialties generally attract boys. Gender equality is considered in developing VET programs and during admissions, yet traditional factors still impact access and attractiveness of lifelong learning opportunities.

The VET system also demonstrates a lower performance in fostering innovation to support better access and participation of females (Dimension B.3), with results somewhat below what is seen across the VET system as a whole, indicating potential unexplored opportunities for Azerbaijan's VET system to incorporate more innovative practices to improve access and participation for female learners at all stages.

Once in education and training, however, both young and adult female learners enjoy an environment which is conducive of high levels of engagement and progression through the VET system (Dimension A.2, SPI of 79), highlighting a strong performance in a domain in which many countries struggle – retaining learners and helping them to progress. This, however, is not the case for males. According to national authorities, men, particularly those in military service, face disadvantages in completing IVET and CVET programs, leading to dropout and lost employment opportunities.

At the higher and secondary specialized education level, gender-based employment disparities are not significant, although some specialties tend to have a higher number of male or female graduates. Initiatives like the training program for women – victims of trafficking by the Baku VET Centre – highlight efforts to support gender-based access to lifelong learning.

The quality and relevance of skills and competences which prospective female learners can expect to receive (Dimension B.1), is also dependent on their age. Adults benefit from higher quality skills than their younger counterparts, which suggests that improvements could be made within the VET system to better cater to the educational needs of young female learners.

2.3.2 Disadvantaged learners

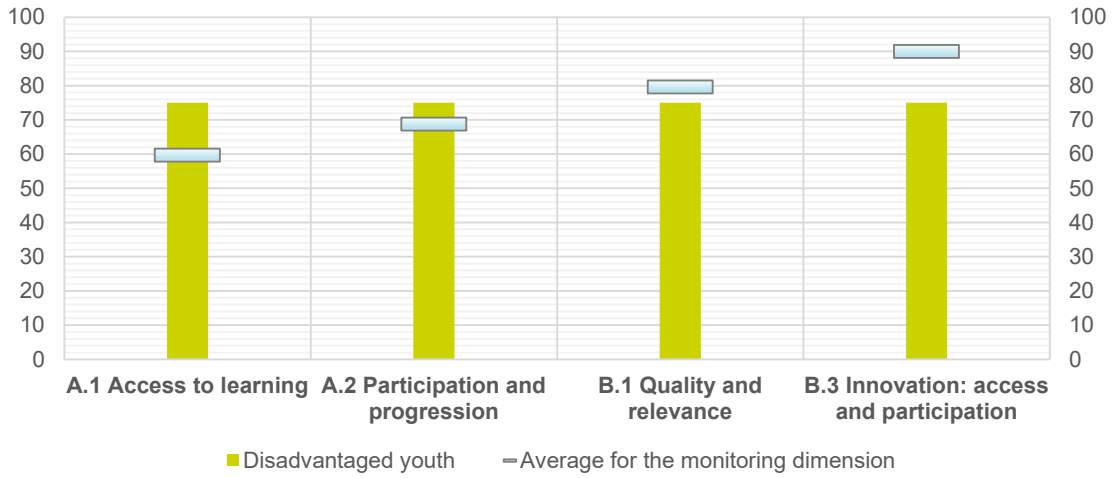
This section describes how well the VET system caters for the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged youth when it comes to access, participation, and quality/relevance of opportunities for lifelong learning through VET. The section also examines whether efforts to promote innovation in VET access and participation benefit this specific group of learners in Azerbaijan.

In Azerbaijan, the VET system appears to have established effective measures to support disadvantaged youth, ensuring better access to learning (Dimension A.1) compared to the broader learner population. There has been a notable increase in the number of students admitted to VET institutions, many from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. This increase, however, poses challenges as these students often balance work with study. To mitigate dropout risks, legal provisions consider socioeconomic factors, offering state-funded tuition to specific vulnerable groups.

In higher and secondary specialized education, while tuition fees are generally paid, the state covers the costs for certain socially vulnerable groups. The government has also incentivized VET student participation by increasing scholarships based on academic achievement and offering concessions on tuition fees for vulnerable groups.

This emphasis on accessibility indicates a concerted effort to remove barriers for disadvantaged youth, enabling them to embark on their training journey within the VET landscape. Innovation in facilitating access and encouraging participation (B.3) for disadvantaged youth seems to be in place as well (Dimension B.3).

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



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

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

Nevertheless, socioeconomic factors continue to impact access to initial VET programs for some youth at risk. Many VET institutions lack student dormitories, which, combined with the small stipends for VET students, influences the choice of VET programs, especially for those unable to study away from home due to financial constraints.

Apart from that, the VET system provides a conducive environment for the participation and progression of most learners who are at a disadvantage (Dimension A.2), indicating that once disadvantaged youth enter the VET system, they find opportunities to engage and advance at levels similar to their counterparts. On the other hand, while the quality and relevance of the learning experience for disadvantaged youth are commendable (Dimension B.1), the data suggests that there could be further enhancements to align the skills and training they receive more closely with what is relevant and needed in the labour market.

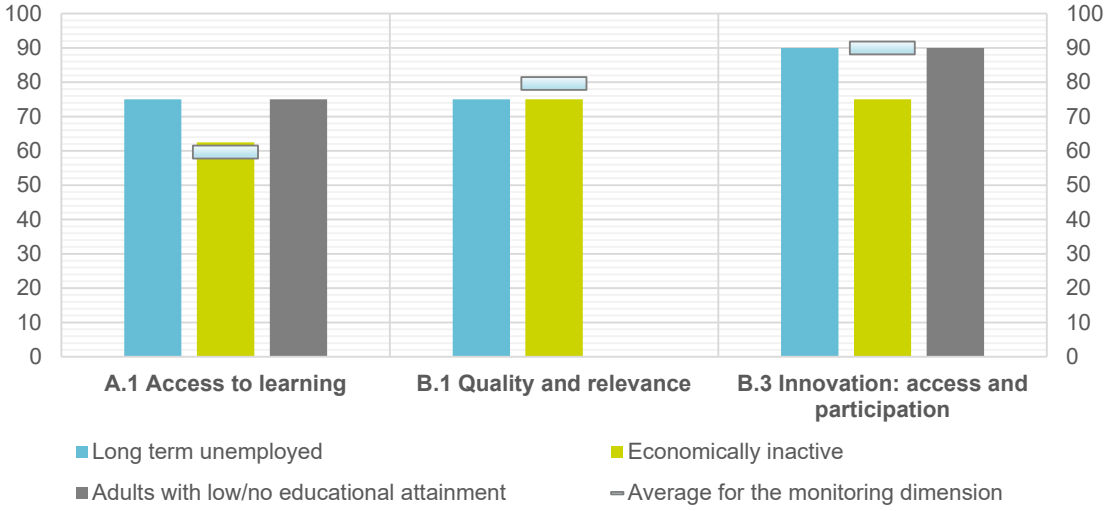
2.3.3 Populations who are long-term unemployed, economically inactive, and have low educational attainment

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 monitoring evidence suggests that VET in Azerbaijan is on a positive trajectory in terms of providing access and maintaining quality and relevance for adults at risk of disadvantage, yet it also highlights opportunities for policy improvement. The VET system offers the long-term unemployed

and adults with low or no educational attainment substantial access to learning opportunities (Dimension A.1). Access for these groups is notably higher than the average for adults of working age, underscoring the system's effectiveness in engaging these strategically important learner groups.

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



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

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

Indeed, according to official information many of the 138 thousand people involved in ALMPs are long-term unemployed. Access to WBL programmes is not legally restricted for the long-term unemployed, but some employers may require specific skills and work experience. People with low educational attainment are not impeded from participating in ALMPs and often choose such programs. Long-term unemployed adults on the other hand often have less developed problem-solving and digital skills, affecting employment. They are involved in short-term CVET programs, with costs borne by the state, and receive benefits to support their participation.

Although all groups of adults at risk can expect a similar level of quality and relevance in training (Dimension B.1), it appears that economically inactive adults may not benefit from it as consistently. There is a need for more tailored strategies that better facilitate the engagement of this difficult-to-reach group in learning. While VET is instrumental in supporting active labour market policies overall, this segment of the population requires additional effort to fully benefit from the available opportunities.

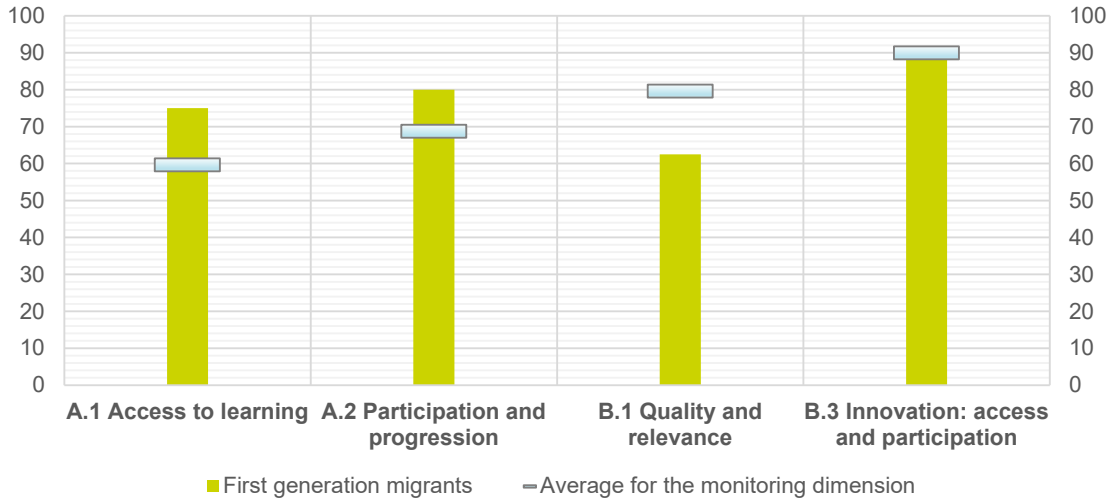
In terms of innovation, economically inactive adults are less exposed to innovative solutions compared to other at-risk groups, even though the overall system performance in the innovation domain (Dimension B.3) is reported as being rather high. Nonetheless, systemic innovation in access and participation is a standout feature for the long-term unemployed and those with low or no educational attainment within the VET system of Azerbaijan.

2.3.4 Learners by country of origin

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

The VET system in Azerbaijan is effectively inclusive of first-generation migrants in terms of access and innovation. Still, there is a noteworthy potential for enhancement in ensuring the quality and relevance of learning outcomes for this demographic to match the high standards experienced by the wider learner base.

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



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

Source: Torino Process monitoring database

Specifically, first-generation migrants have access to learning (Dimension A.1) at a level that exceeds the broader population average, indicating that the VET system is providing effective entry points for this group. However, it is important to note that while first-generation migrants have access to VET, the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) system, which could further facilitate their integration into the workforce, currently presents challenges. RPL is primarily accessible only to Azerbaijani citizens, leaving migrants at a disadvantage in having their existing skills and qualifications recognised. This limitation affects their employment prospects and their ability to fully benefit from the VET system.

The current approach to supporting migrants could be further strengthened by addressing the limitations in the RPL system, particularly by making it more accessible to non-citizens and expanding its scope beyond IVET (NQF levels 2 and 3). Additionally, the high cost associated with RPL, which involves fees for multiple modules, can be a barrier for migrants seeking to have their qualifications recognised. Therefore, while the VET system shows effectiveness in engaging first-generation migrants, enhancements in policies, particularly in RPL, could amplify its impact on this important learner group.

Despite these challenges in skill recognition, system support for the participation and progression of first-generation migrants (Dimension A.2) is high, suggesting that once enrolled, first-generation migrants are likely to continue and succeed within the VET pathway. The monitoring results suggest, however, that the quality and relevance of learning for students with migrant background (Dimension B.1) is a domain in which the VET system has scope for improvement to ensure that the skills and knowledge provided are closely aligned with the needs of all learners, including migrants.

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

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

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1QYjsqoAZER9zCib-lQtDNh8yKsuXhDPq/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=110154518834912853011&rtpof=true&sd=true

The full collection of qualitative responses to the country-specific questionnaire for Azerbaijan can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QoG8eMgaJPTqrpAW2nrd9SYPKKQCRWZK/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:[7] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FNwIKtlhp4y-Hx02AiFtwJLM8ubQQ7PK/view

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.[8]

3.2 Definitions, terminological clarifications, methodological limitations

3.2.1 Definitions and terminological clarifications

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

- **Youth:** Population in the official age of entrance and participation in initial VET programmes.
- **Adults:** Population of working age (15+ years of age) not enrolled in initial VET programmes.
- **Disadvantaged youth:** This refers to socio-economic disadvantage and describes youth with access to below-average levels of financial, social, cultural, and human capital resources.

[7] Release date for the report is January 2024 upon completion of monitoring for all participating countries.

[8] 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.

- **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.