

COUNTRY NOTE

ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION IN KOSOVO (2023)



1. ABOUT THIS COUNTRY NOTE

This country note presents a snapshot of findings on adult education in the Republic of Kosovo: on access to and prospective demand for adult education, on adult skills and competences, and on the extent to which opportunities for lifelong learning benefit specific groups of adult learners (women and adults at risk of socio-economic disadvantage).

The country note is based on evidence collected each year for monitoring purposes through KIESE¹ and the Torino Process² – two annual ETF initiatives which track developments in the domains of education, skills, and employment in countries - partners of the ETF. In the context of these initiatives, adult education is an element of the broader concept of lifelong learning and may refer to any formal, non-formal, or informal learning activity, both general and vocational, undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training.

The findings in this note focus on policy and system performance in support of adult education in Kosovo, as well as on the learners. The note does not provide a description of adult education arrangements in the country. Where necessary and appropriate, the note may draw on information from third-party reports.

2. ADULT EDUCATION IN KOSOVO

2.1 Gauging demand for adult education

Understanding demand for adult education is an important prerequisite for crafting relevant educational programmes and policies. It allows to identify which adult populations need learning opportunities, helping policymakers and practitioners create and provide courses that fill specific skills gaps and meet personal and career aspirations.

So far, there is no uniform, internationally agreed-upon metric for measuring demand for adult education. To gauge the educational needs and expectations of prospective adult learners, one can leverage existing data sources for a blend of indirect indicators instead. Which indirect indicators, however?

Assuming that education and training in a country can be judged by how it treats those most in need, focusing on indicators related to vulnerable adults – the long-term unemployed, the economically inactive, and those with low or no educational attainment – can be a promising strategy to understand the broader demand for adult education. Giving attention to these groups can serve as a useful proxy of wider educational and training needs across the workforce. The extent to which countries succeed in providing these groups with access to training and meeting their educational needs can significantly influence both the demand for and the supply of skills in the labour market.

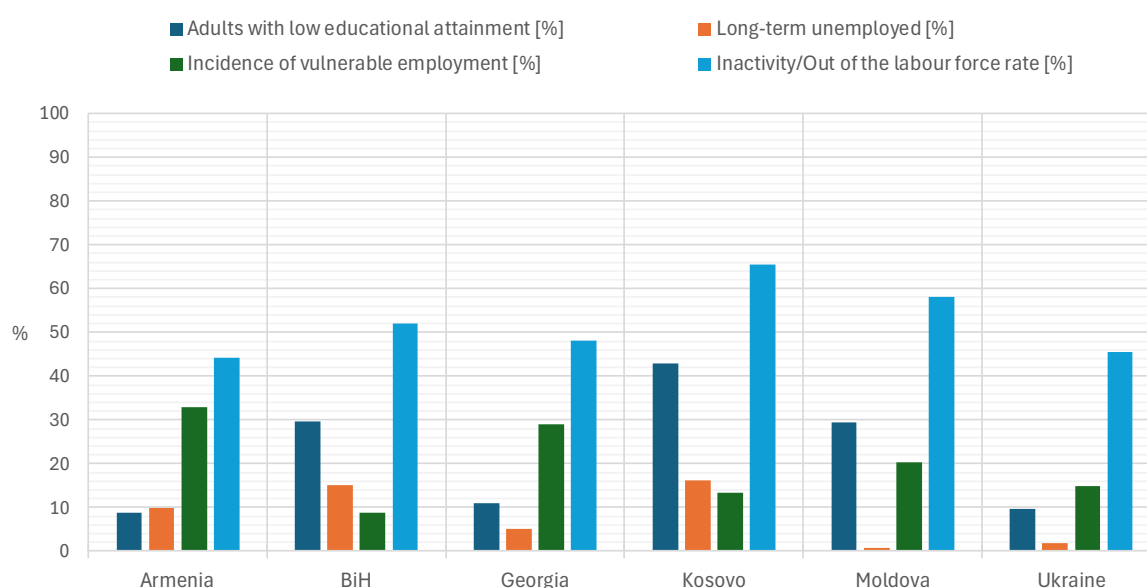
¹ The Key Indicators on Education, Skills and Employment (KIESE) are a collection of statistics that form part of a broader set of information proposed by the ETF to enable a review of developments in the field of education, skills and employment in the partner countries.

² The Torino Process is a multiannual review of policy and system performance in support of lifelong learning through vocational education and training (VET) in countries in East and South-East Europe (including Turkey), Central Asia, and the South and East Mediterranean region. The Torino Process is carried out in partnership with countries in these regions on a regular basis since 2010.

This is particularly relevant for ETF partner countries, where the proportion of adults exposed to vulnerability can be significant. In Kosovo for instance, the data reveals that close to 43% of the adult population has low educational attainment, which is the highest proportion in comparison to other countries in the sample of six presented in Figure 1. The group of lower skilled and lesser educated adults is also the group most at risk of unemployment, in any country.

Another group of adults in vulnerable positions, who may benefit from training to escape their predicament, includes those who are long-term unemployed. The share of adults fitting this category in Kosovo is high as well, at 16.2%. This significant share, however, may not solely reflect challenges within the local labour market. Other factors, such as registration for benefits by those working abroad and reliance on remittances which reduce incentives to seek local employment, could be inflating these figures as well.

Figure 1. Demand for adult education: vulnerable and at-risk population in working age (2022 or latest available year)



Source: ETF KIESE database

Notes: Reference year before 2022 for Armenia is 2017 (long-term unemployment). Reference years before 2022 for Bosnia and Herzegovina are 2018 (long-term unemployment) and 2021 (educational attainment and inactivity). Reference year before 2022 for Georgia is 2018 (long-term unemployed). Reference years before 2022 for Kosovo are 2019 (long-term unemployment) and 2020 (educational attainment). Reference year before 2022 for Ukraine are 2018 (long-term unemployment for age group 15-70), 2021 (vulnerable employment for age group 15-70) and 2021 (educational attainment and inactivity).

In terms of vulnerable employment, a relatively modest share of 13.3% of the population is at risk, which falls well below the average for the sample. However, the proportion of economically inactive individuals ranks as the highest within the sample. Here too, given the high rate of emigration, where individuals working abroad are still counted within the working-age population despite not seeking jobs locally, this leads to an overestimation of economic inactivity. Therefore, the effectiveness of this indicator in informing adult education policy in Kosovo is also constrained, as it might not fully capture the local demand for education and training.

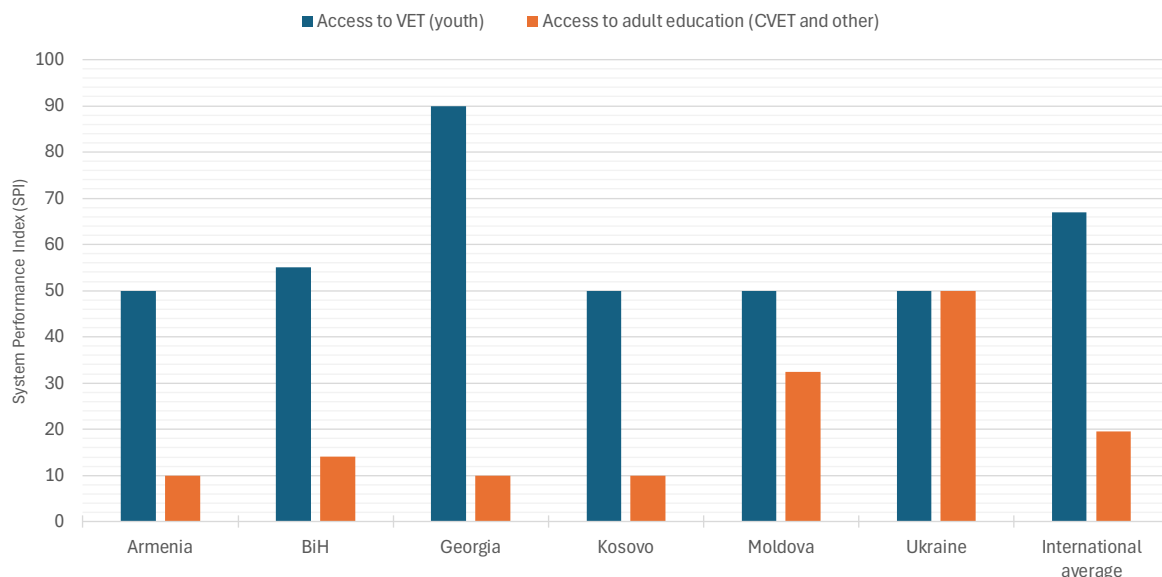
2.2 Access to and participation in adult learning

In Kosovo, access to continuing vocational education and training (CVET) and other adult learning opportunities presents a significant challenge. Despite the VET system offering both formal education provided by licensed institutions and non-formal opportunities, engagement in CVET remains low.

As regards skills development opportunities for the jobseekers, the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo provided, through its Vocational Training Centres (VTCs), training, retraining and opportunities for validation of non-formal and informal learning for jobseekers and other workforce categories. Participation remains rather low due to staffing and funding limitations, with only 2,800 beneficiaries in 2022 (out of a total of 80,775 registered unemployed). This indicates a critical gap in the availability and accessibility of adult learning options for jobseekers.

Other opportunities for lifelong learning beyond VET face similar access issues.

Figure 2. Access to learning for youth and adults (2023): index of policy and system performance



Source: ETF Torino Process database

Notes: The System Performance Index SPI is a metric of performance calculated on the basis of quantitative and qualitative data collected annually through the Torino Process. It ranges from 0 (min/low performance), to 100 (max/high performance). International average refers to the average of countries which participate in the 2023 round of Torino Process policy and system performance monitoring. These countries are Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Kosovo, Montenegro, Morocco, North Macedonia, Palestine, Serbia, Tunisia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

The performance of the VET system in supporting access for adult learners varies significantly by demographic. Adult females, for instance, enjoy better access to learning opportunities compared to their younger counterparts. While 35.4% of students at VTCs are adult females, the participation of this demographic is slightly below average, indicating potential barriers to fully engaging with and completing learning programs.

The disparity in access to learning is further underscored by the challenges faced by specific groups of vulnerable individuals within the adult population. The 2021 labour force survey data illustrates the high unemployment rate, with a marked difficulty among the long-term unemployed in accessing CVET

programs. Within this group, a mere fraction has managed to enrol in CVET, perpetuating the unemployment or economic inactivity and highlighting a significant disconnect between the needs of adult learners and the offerings of the VET system.

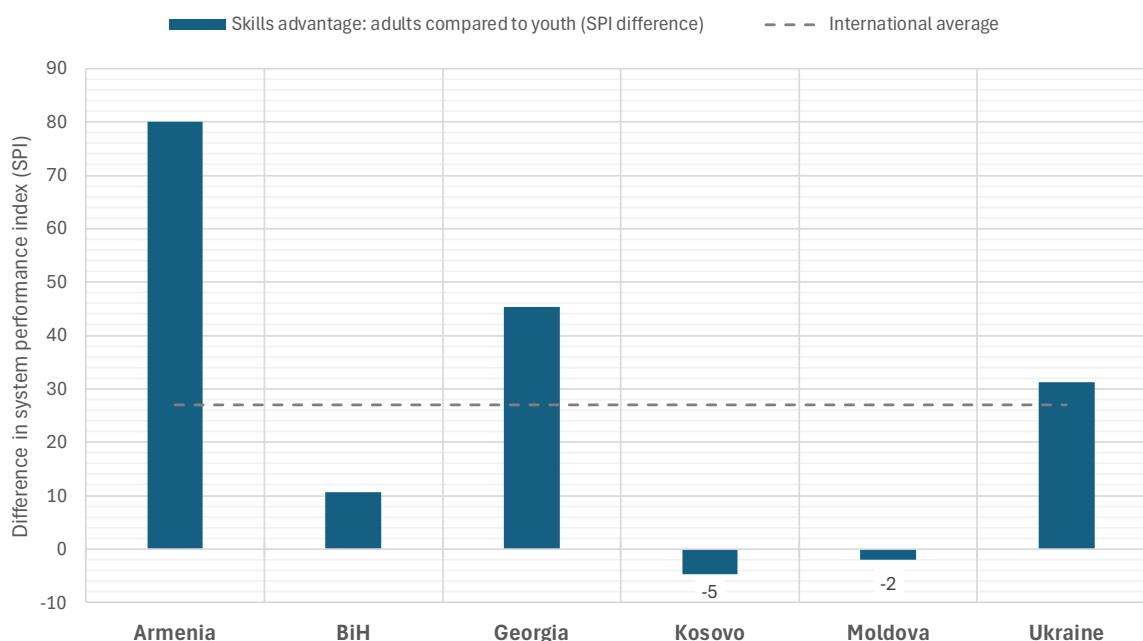
Access to continuous education and training can be enhanced through career guidance. Kosovo has strategies and laws in place for providing career guidance services to all users, including students, jobseekers, and youth. However, there are challenges in implementing these provisions effectively. Worth noting is the absence of secondary legislation to ensure the sustainability of school-based career centres, particularly in VET and to enhance the reach of career guidance and counselling within the public employment service.

Despite these hurdles, there has been a notable increase in the number of jobseekers receiving career counselling services, rising to over 26,000 participants in 2022, up from approximately 19,000 in 2019.

2.3 Quality and relevance of skills and competences

Adult learners in Kosovo also encounter significant barriers in acquiring key skills and competencies. According to the World Bank STEP Employer and Household Surveys, about 14% of respondents failed the core literacy test, only 32% demonstrated numeracy proficiency, and just 12% were proficient in problem-solving. These findings are reflected in a low level of VET system performance in meeting the needs of adult learners, as captured by the Torino Process monitoring.

Figure 3. Skills gap between youth and adults (2023): difference in system performance



Source: Torino Process database

Note: The "Skills Gap between Youth and Adults (SPI difference)" represents the difference in the System Performance Index (SPI) scores between two key Torino Process monitoring targets (MTs): the skills and competences of youth in VET (MT35) and those of adults (MT39). This measure is calculated by subtracting the SPI score for MT35 (youth) from the SPI score for MT39 (adults). Positive values indicate areas where the skills and competences of adults surpass those of youth, while negative values indicate the opposite.

Moreover, the employability of VET graduates, including adults, is compromised by a skills mismatch between their qualifications and labour market demands. This mismatch arises partly because many vocational schools offer programmes with limited market demand, suggesting weak links between VET offerings and labour market needs. Efforts to improve the attractiveness and effectiveness of VET programmes and work-based learning opportunities are underway, but with only 7% of VET students participating in company internships, progress in aligning VET with labour market demands and enhancing the quality of adult education needs acceleration

While VET programmes slightly exceed average expectations for young females, suggesting a relative adequacy in basic skill acquisition and employment relevance, adult females encounter significant challenges in this respect. The World Bank's STEP Employer and Household Surveys confirms too that women in Kosovo generally possess lower literacy and numeracy levels than men. This disparity underscores potential obstacles to successful participation in societal and economic activities, highlighting a gender gap in education outcomes that CVET programmes must address more effectively.

For individuals seeking to address their long-term unemployment or economic inactivity through learning, the quality of skills and competencies provided by the VET system is below average as well. This inadequacy in providing relevant skills poses additional barriers to employability, suggesting that the VET system may not be fully aligned with learner expectations and labour market demands.

With significant outmigration and dependence on remittances, inactivity or employment in the grey economy, investment in human capital is crucial. The European Economic and Social Council (EESC) has underlined the importance of a government action to reinforce social dialogue and civil dialogue mechanisms, as well as the will of all parties to cooperate to address key challenges. Notably, the intergenerational transmission of low education attainments that is observed in poor families with low education levels and in rural, disadvantaged areas. To this end, the EESC has advised strengthening social partner organisations and revitalising social dialogue in Kosovo, as well as engaging in regular dialogue with CSOs that act as a bridge to those young people and adults who are vulnerable and often hard to reach.

3. FURTHER READING

For more information on the monitoring results of Kosovo, see the Torino Process policy and system performance report for 2023 at:

<https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/trp-assessment-reports/kosovo-2023>

For more information on key developments in education, skills and employment in ETF partner countries in 2023, see the cross-country monitoring report at:

<https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/education-skills-and-employment-trends-and-developments>

For information on key developments in education, skills and employment specifically in Kosovo, see the 2023 ETF Country Fiche for Kosovo at: