

Review of Policies for Lifelong Learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Work based learning in IVET – research evidence

- IVET students in BiH with experience of in-company placements perform better than students who have only received practical training in school workshops (Schmid & Gruber, 2018)
- Yet, IVET is relatively weakly developed (OECD, 2021) as relatively few small and micro enterprises are willing to provide the training places required (European Commission, 2022a)
- A recent survey showed that companies view a lack of support from public institutions as the greatest challenge in implementing WBL along with the excessively complex regulations involved (Schmid & Gruber, 2018)
- Despite that, employer interest is increasing due to emerging shortages of skilled labour

Governance of work-based learning in IVET

- Chambers of Commerce are closely involved in the organisation of WBL activities, but Trade Unions and Tripartite Councils are not sufficiently involved
 - The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Republika Srpska provides training for company mentors, monitors suitability for practical training, and maintains a register of WBL contracts
 - In FBiH, the Chamber of Commerce check if employers meet the criteria to provide training to students. The Chamber assesses the mentors and offers a 5-year contract to the selected employers to provide training
 - In Brčko District, the Chamber of Commerce coordinates with the Association of Employers but is not involved in planning education and training
- Partnerships and cooperation between policymakers, learning providers and employers is crucial to the success of structured WBL programmes (Sweet, 2018).
 - In Republika Srpska, the *Strategy for the Development of Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education of Republika Srpska for the period 2022-2030* with its action plans, focuses on enhancing partnerships between the education sector and the business sector
 - Development strategies at cantonal levels for 2021-2027 and the Development Strategy of Brčko District 2021-2027 prioritise better partnership and coordination between VET schools and the business sector through increased use of practical training placements in companies and the adjustment of curricula to labour market needs

Dual education reforms in IVET

- In dual education, practical training is carried out in a participating company under the supervision of a licensed instructor (mentor), while the theoretical component of education is carried out at school
- Unlike traditional practical training, it follows a full learning cycle for a registered occupation governed by a contract between the school and the company
- It requires measures to develop the capacity of in-company trainers, cost-sharing arrangements between schools and businesses, and social protection and insurance arrangements for students
- A main advantage for students is that a dual education contract with a company may lead directly to a job with that company after graduation from VET school
- In BiH, dual education initiatives are “school-based” rather than “company-based”
 - WBL that takes place at a company should take up 25% of a students’ time
 - It should involve a payment to the students and full insurance while carrying out their WBL placements
- In FBiH it is being implemented in some cantons through the adoption of by-laws (e.g. Gorazde)
- In Republika Srpska, the law on secondary education was amended in June 2022 and in 2023, separating practical training from dual education

Encouraging employer involvement in WBL

- Requests from VET schools to companies to take their students for a period of practical training are sometimes turned down because host companies think they are being used to make up for inadequate teaching in schools
- Although schools expect employers to provide a mentor for their WBL students, when a school sends their students to a private company they often find that the students do not have a mentor or receive any pay or insurance
- Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), in particular, often find it difficult to cover the practical training curriculum or provide protection at work.
- It has been argued that in order to increase employers interest in providing WBL opportunities to IVET students:
 - Employers should be provided with incentives to share the cost of training students on their premises
 - In-company trainers should be supported with improved training
 - Students should receive payment to encourage them to participate in WBL opportunities.

Financing practical training

- In 2018, Bosnia and Herzegovina allocated 4.4% of its GDP to education, close to EU average (4.7%)
 - However, most funds are allocated to the administrative costs and less than 1% of school budgets are spent on quality improvements.
- Ministries of education cover teachers' salaries; local authorities cover the material costs of infrastructure and equipment.
 - Public expenditure on education therefore tends to neglect school infrastructure investment, especially in the smaller cantons.
 - Almost half of students attend schools whose principals reported that inadequate or poor physical infrastructure hinders a school's capacity to provide instruction (OECD, 2019).
- In Zenica-Doboj Canton, cost-sharing for WBL has been introduced through a pilot programme for two occupational profiles
 - Employers offering WBL opportunities are rewarded with higher scores in public calls for grants, and with tax exemptions for meals provided to trainees.
- A school in Travnik a school has set up its own mechanism for financing WBL
 - It provides a bonus of 200 BAM for second graders of 3-year VET programmes rising in the second semester to 300 BAM and provide lunch and transport on which the company pays taxes.

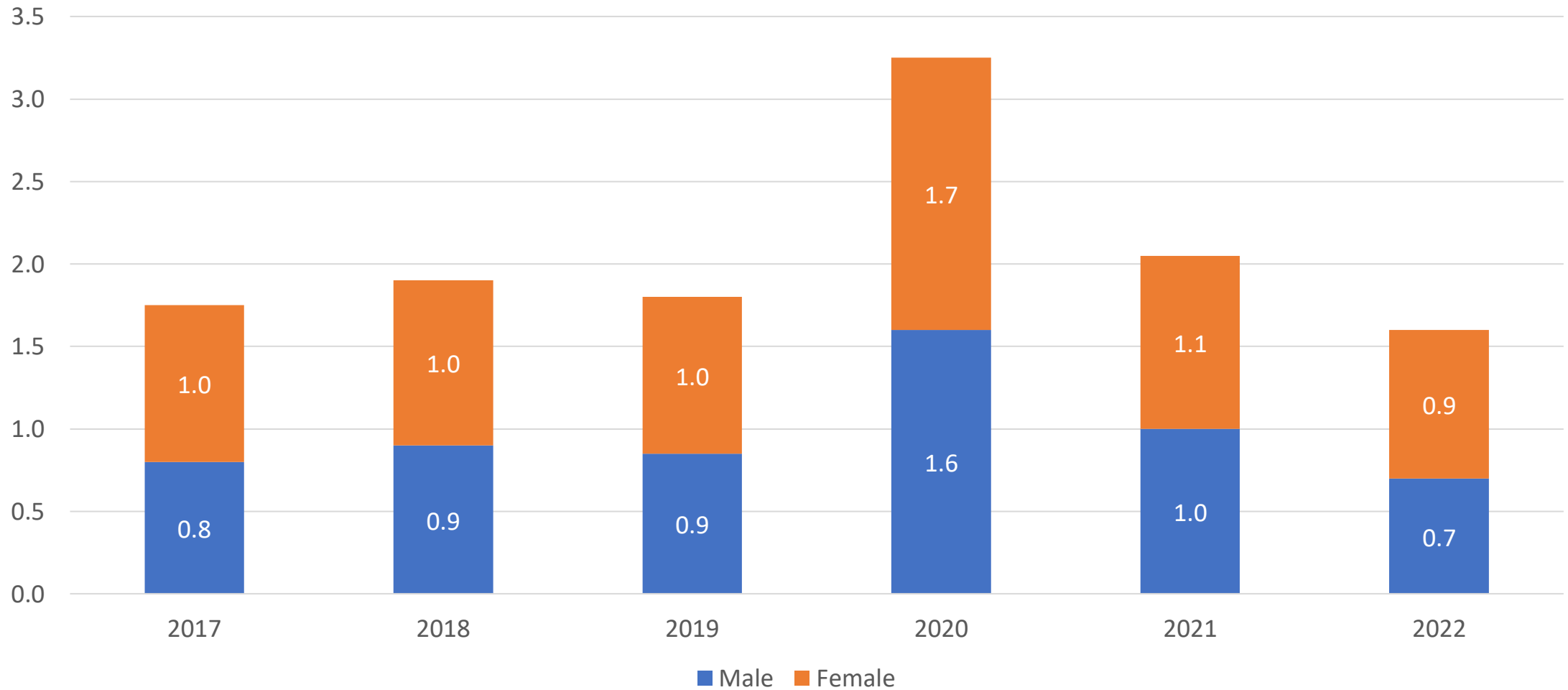
Work-based learning in CVET

- Forms of work-based learning in CVET
- The extent of CVET in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Financing adult education
- Quality assurance
- Validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning

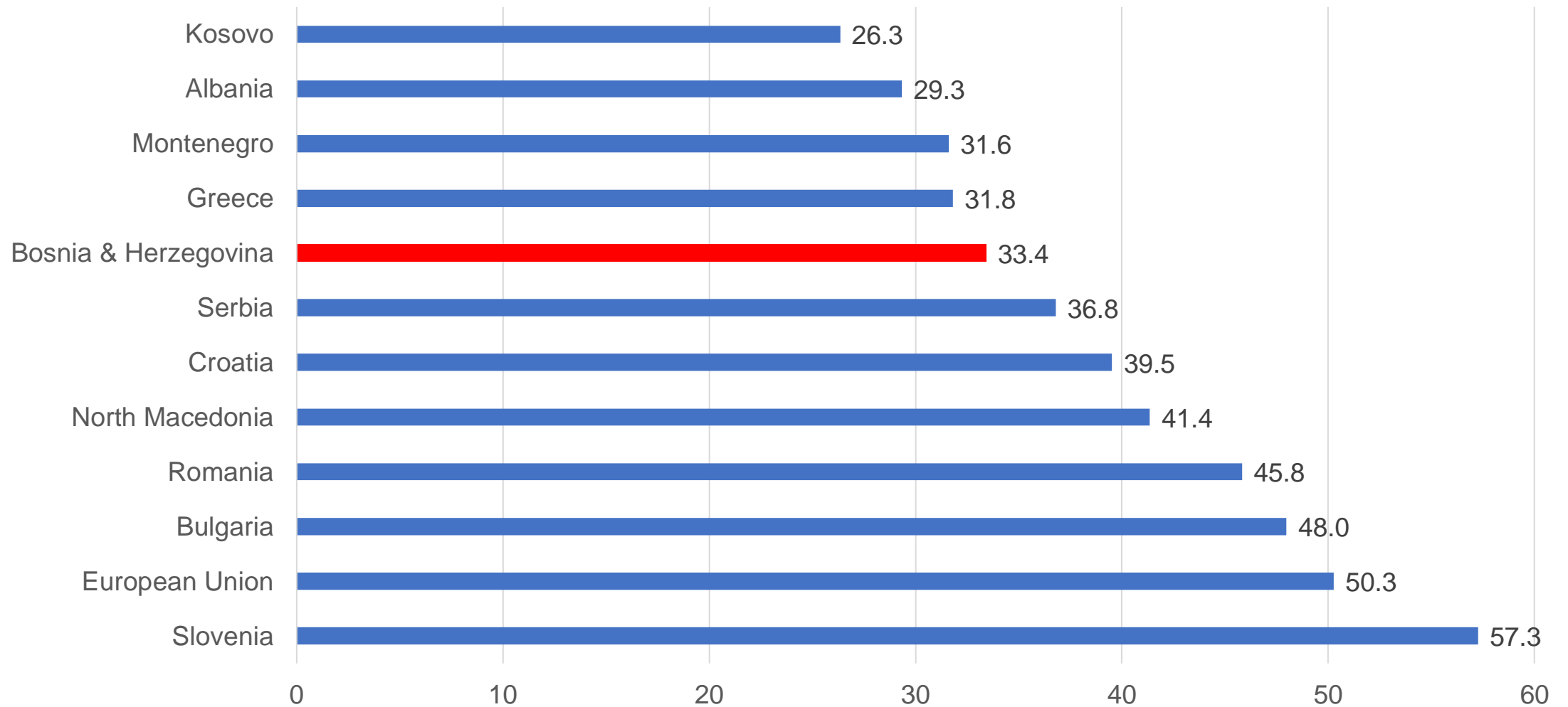
Work based Learning in CVET

- Continuing vocational education (CVET) comprises internships, traineeships, apprenticeships, and company-based training and re-training, as well as non-vocational adult education.
 - These can be delivered through formal, non-formal and informal learning processes
- **An internship** is a relatively unstructured period of unpaid work experience in a company, typically undertaken by graduates seeking to gain work experience, or unemployed young people registered under active employment measures.
- **A traineeship** is a period of more guided work experience in a company that may complement a formal educational course. Trainees typically do not have a formal employment status, and may be paid but are often unpaid (European Commission, 2018).
- **An apprenticeship** is a more intense and more structured work-based learning experience with regular pay, a defined employment status, a longer duration, and leading to a formal educational or professional qualification (Cedefop, 2021).
- In addition, work-based learning in CVET can be offered by companies to **upgrade the skills** of their own workforce within a company either through on-the-job training or at designated training centres.

The extent of CVET: Share of adults aged 25-64 participating in lifelong learning, 2017-2022 (%). (Source: BiH Agency for Statistics)



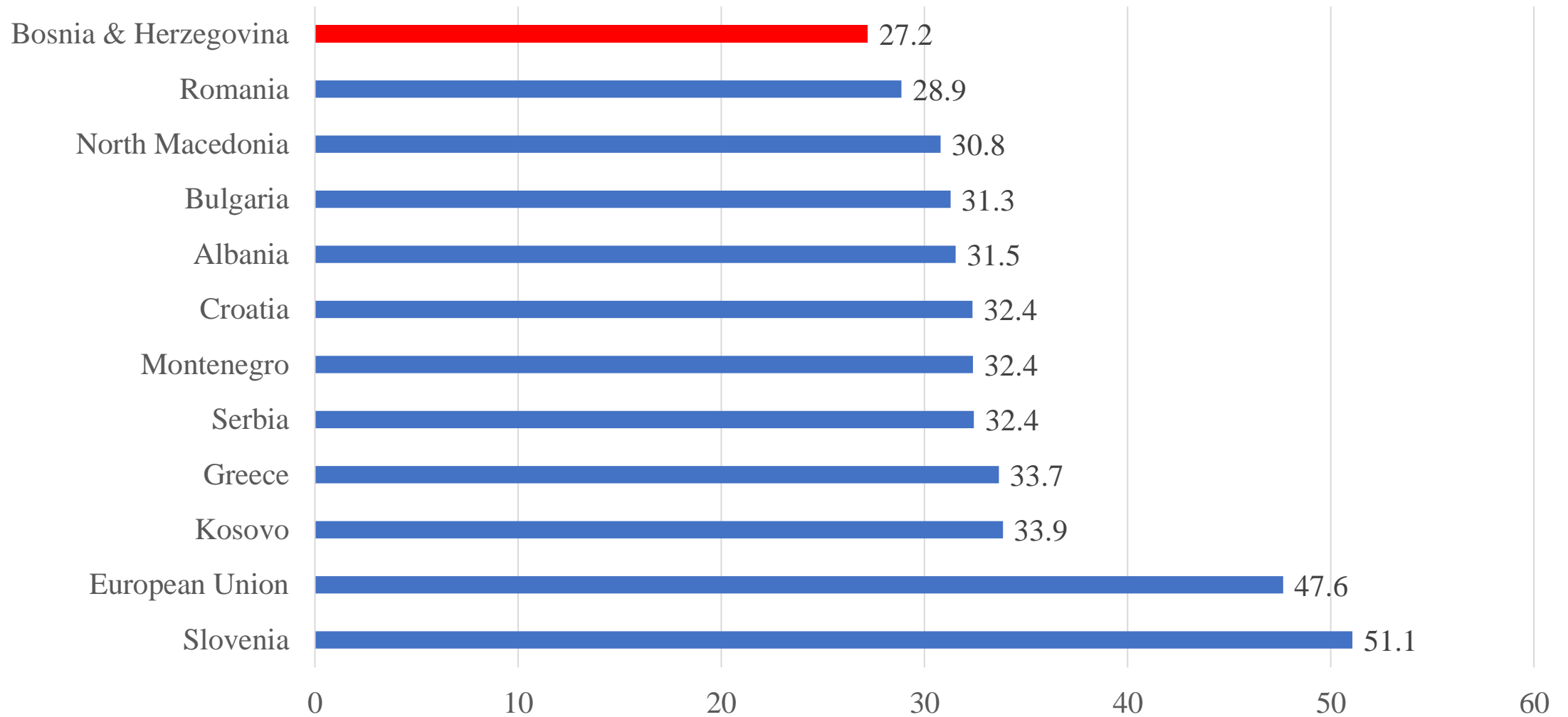
On-the-job training (% of respondents) (Source: Eurofound “European Working Conditions Survey” for 2021, which covered 70,000 workers in 36 European countries)



Financing adult education

- In most cases, formal adult education is publicly financed, while the costs of non-formal adult education are borne by the participants
 - Most trainings of this type are carried out and financed by the public employment services (PES) as part of their active labour market measures (ALMPs)
- However, BiH only allocates 4% of ALMP funds to training programmes
- A more effective financing system is needed, which would allow individuals to access learning programmes, skilling and re-skilling to find decent work and build careers
- The financing of education is generally directed towards initial and university education, while WBL in CVET is under-resourced
- Better funding options would align government-led training programmes with industry demands and guide training programmes toward more effective outcomes

Training paid for or provided by employers (%) (Source: Eurofound European Working Conditions Telephone Survey)



Quality Assurance

- A common issue that characterises work-based learning in CVET, despite employers' needs to boost the competencies of their workers, is a lack of confidence in the quality of adult education institutions.
- Without proper accreditation it is difficult for employers to trust the learning outcomes acquired through these programmes, leading to low interest among potential participants.
- Additionally, employers find it challenging to assess the skills and competencies of employees who have undergone CVET.
- The Institute for Adult Education in Republika Srpska and the VET Department of APOS0 are the only institutions responsible for the professional supervision of adult learning providers.
- In FBiH, the general lack of accreditation and certification of CVET programmes raises concerns about the quality and relevance of the training provided

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

- WBL in CVET mainly takes place outside the formal education and training system, through non-formal or informal learning, in the workplace or elsewhere.
- Research has shown that in BiH participation in non-formal learning through internships, volunteering, on-the-job learning, and short courses significantly reduces the probability of an individual experiencing unemployment (Pilav-Velić et al., 2019).
- Informal learning can provide a range of important practical skills, which are often under-valued.
 - However, non-formal work-based learning in CVET does not systematically lead to a recognised qualification.
 - Most often, participants merely get a certificate of completion, which can be a hurdle to learners' motivation to participate in work-based learning in CVET.
- The laws on adult education allow for the validation of knowledge, skills and competencies through appropriate exams, regardless of the way they were previously acquired. However, education authorities have not yet developed appropriate models to enable these provisions to be implemented.

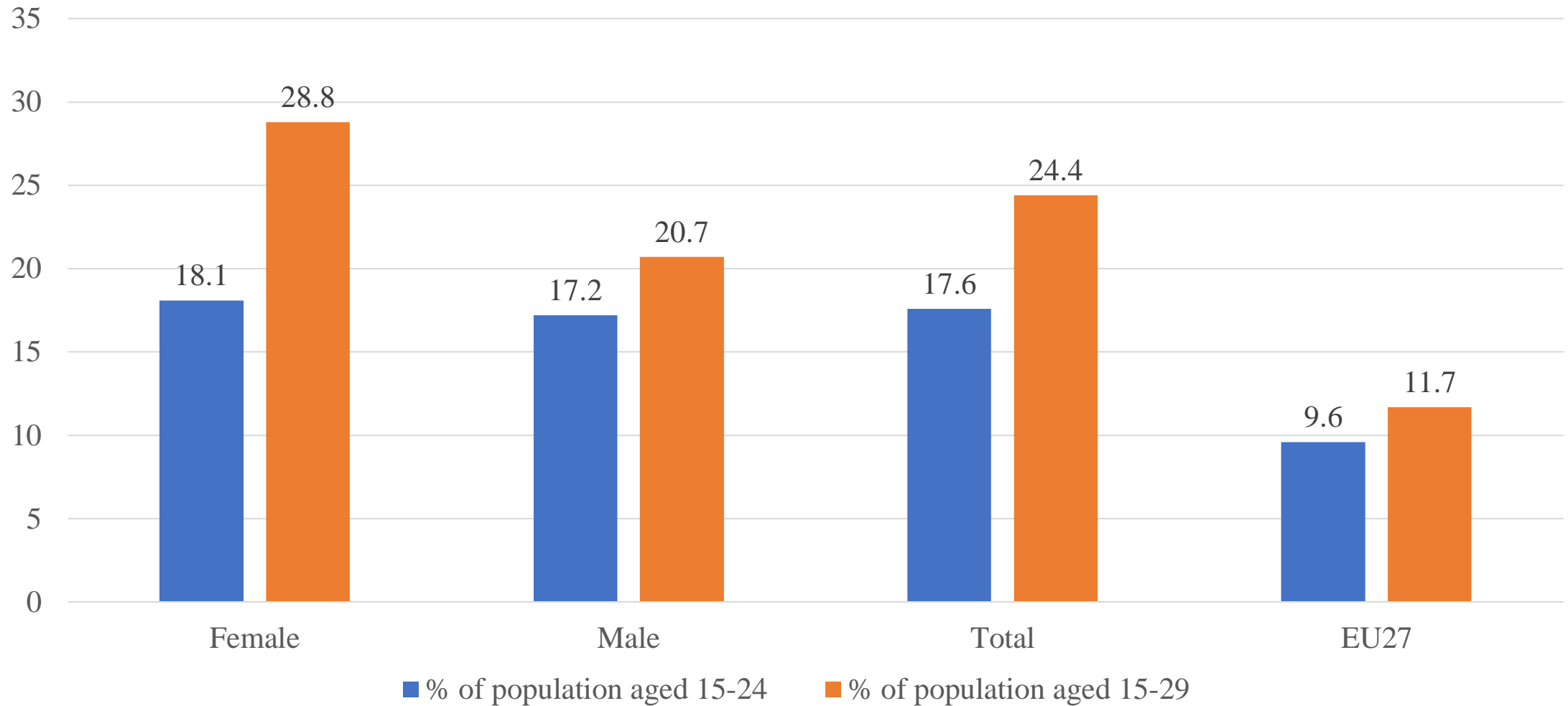
Youth Guarantee programme

- Policy towards the Youth Guarantee in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Fitness of learning providers to deliver commitments under the Youth Guarantee

Youth Guarantee Programme

- The Youth Guarantee that was launched by the European Commission in 2013 and further reinforced in 2020 with a renewed emphasis on apprenticeships.
- It aims to give all young people under the age of 30 who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET), a good quality offer of employment, a traineeship or an apprenticeship within four months of either leaving formal education or becoming unemployed (European Commission, 2020a).
- The European Commission has requested that Bosnia and Herzegovina should finalise and “swiftly” adopt its own Youth Guarantee implementation plan in line with the EU model and guidance (European Commission, 2023).
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, almost one quarter of the 15 to 29 age group are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET), more than twice the rate in the EU
- In 2022 there were 71,064 NEETS aged 15-24 and 94,720 NEETS aged 15-29

NEET rates, 2022, by age group and gender (%) (Source: ILOSTAT for ages 15-24; ESAP online for Bosnia and Herzegovina for ages 15-29)



Youth Guarantee in BiH

- The Ministry of Civil Affairs has a limited coordinating role for the Youth Guarantee, while all practical initiatives are the responsibility of the Entities and Brčko District.
- The Employment Strategy 2021-2027 of Republika Srpska includes proposals for a Youth Guarantee
- In FBiH, the Youth Guarantee was initiated in 2020, and in 2022 a Working Group for the Youth Guarantee Action Plan was established to manage its development and implementation
 - The Employment Strategy in FBiH (2023–2030) recognises the Youth Guarantee as a new model of employment for young NEETs
- Three separate Implementation Plans will be drawn up in each Entity and in Brčko District and these will then be compiled into a single document for BiH
 - The Implementation Plans are intended to set out three separate Action Plans, one for each Entity and one for the Brčko District
 - The Action Plans for RS and Brcko District were adopted in autumn 2023, and in FBiH then or early 2024

Fitness of learning providers

- In 2023, 613 private entrepreneurs were providing educational activities, most of whom were running micro-enterprises with between 0-9 employees. Only four learning providers had a greater capacity with 20-49 employees.
- We estimate that capacity of the private learning provider sector, would be to provide training to about 60,000 learners annually. There are 95,000 NEETS aged 15-29 which would require an increase of 150% in the capacity of the system assuming that all outstanding NEETs were trained in one year
- Given the limited capacity of the system, it would be feasible to gradually reduce the number of NEETs over a period of time, considering that each year new NEETs will be added to the total as young people graduate from the education system.
- If just 10% of the stock of NEETs were offered training each year, then an additional 9,500 places would be required implying a capacity expansion of the private learning provider sector of about 15% per annum.
- This expansion should be support by state guaranteed loans and tax breaks.
- Over time, as the stock of NEETs diminishes, the required rate of expansion would diminish to an equilibrium new, higher, capacity level.

Thank you for your attention!