

EVENT REPORT

TITLE:

International Workshop

SUBJECT:

Human Capital Development – building evidence on skills and employment

Stockholm (Solna), Sweden, 22-23 May 2024

Event agenda, presentations and report available at [event web page](#):

[International workshop on Human Capital Development – building evidence on skills and employment | ETF \(europa.eu\)](#)

Participating ETF partner countries:

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo¹, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Setting the scene

The European Training Foundation (ETF) organised in Stockholm (Solna), on 22 and 23 May 2024, the international workshop on *human capital development – building evidence on skills and employment*, with the support of the European Commission (DG NEAR, Eastern Partnership programme) and in collaboration with the Swedish Employment Agency and Statistics Sweden.

The event gathered representatives of relevant institutions from 22 ETF Partner Countries (including 11 participants from the Eastern Partnership countries, 19 representatives of South-Eastern Europe and Türkiye region, 6 participants from Central Asia and 10 from the South-East Mediterranean region), also specialists from the EU Member States (Sweden, Poland), OECD, and Economics Data & Research (external data contractor of the ETF). The event was opened to ETF partner countries, in particular representatives of statistical offices and experts from public employment services or ministries of labour in charge with data management and analysis.

For more than one decade, the ETF has pursued the Torino Process as regular monitoring and progress assessment of policies related to vocational education and training in the lifelong learning context. Also, ETF provides support and enables exchanges for the European neighbouring countries to consolidate their evidence systems for active labour market, upskilling and reskilling policies.

The event focused on updates and exchanges concerning latest developments in the areas of education, skills and employment evidence, new data collection methods and priorities for evidence generation, interpretation and dissemination in the EU neighbouring countries, as well as sharing the experience of Swedish hosts in the areas of statistics, data management, sharing and policy use. Participants shared novelties in datasets generation on active labour market policies and employment services, types of data, collection methods, storage and policy usage. They also discussed challenges and successes with national collection of data on education and training in the context of international data cooperation, including those collected by the ETF. They also heard about forthcoming developments such as the next round of Torino Process monitoring and the new PISA for VET project of the OECD. Participants expressed a desire for further sharing and learning on improving evidence collection and a willingness to continue similar practices.

Field visits and focused discussions enabled hands-on exchanges and learning facilitated by the Public Employment Service and Statistical Office of Sweden, and resulted in identification of further opportunities and needs for exchanges between the Swedish authorities and employment and statistical institutions from the EU neighbourhood and Central Asia countries.

Introducing key concepts / topics; Objective and aims

In 2022, in the framework of the Torino Process, the ETF also initiated a new generation of comprehensive annual monitoring of policy and system performance in support of education, skills, and employment in its partner countries. In line with the EU and SDG commitments of these countries, this includes a stronger focus on education and training, and on the expansion of the evidence collection and analysis to include more education and training-related data to complement the information we have on skills in the context of employment and labour markets.

This event is part of regular exchanges with the Public Employment Services and National Statistical Offices of ETF Partner Countries, as well as their Ministries of Labour and Ministries of Education. The purpose is to foster exchanges of experience, methodological updates including knowledge sharing with the EU Member States; its objective is to stimulate common reflection and discussion on how active labour market policies and education and training policies depend on adequate evidence and data.

During the opening, Hugues Moussy, Head of Systems Performance and Assessment Unit, welcomed participants and expressed gratitude to the Swedish Public Employment Service and Statistics Sweden for their partnership. He emphasised the purpose of workshop: to provide updates and facilitate exchanges on education, skills, and employment evidence. Moussy reminded of the two main strands of the workshop: employment statistics and education and training statistics. And highlighted the importance of expanding evidence collection to include more data on education and training (VET) to complement skills and labour market information. For conclusion, he encouraged participants to actively discuss good practices and remedies for the challenges they will identify in the course of the meeting and confirmed that the ETF is committed to collaboration towards improving education and training systems through better data and evidence.

This was followed by words of welcome from Shawn Mendes, representing the Swedish Public Employment Service and the World Association of Public Employment Services, and Cecilia Stenbjörn, Department Director at the Statistics Agency of Sweden. They confirmed their openness to cooperation with the ETF and its Partner Countries, and both expressed that their respective institutions are looking forward to engaging in the exchange of good practices and exploring opportunities for collaboration.

In the scene-setting session, representatives of statistical offices of **Georgia** and **Serbia**, as well as Public Employment Services of **North Macedonia** and **Türkiye** shared their efforts to explore and consolidate new data sources, integrated database and information systems as well as full comparability at international level, as well as to consolidate the evidence basis for faster registration, profiling and support to jobseekers, analysis of labour market trends and job demand and matching, monitoring and impact measurement of active labour market programmes (ALMPs). Potential of enabling technologies based on artificial intelligences was discussed as well.

A quick consultation of event participants revealed the following priorities for evidence generation and challenges.

Figure 1. Most important priorities for Statistics Offices with focus on education and training statistics

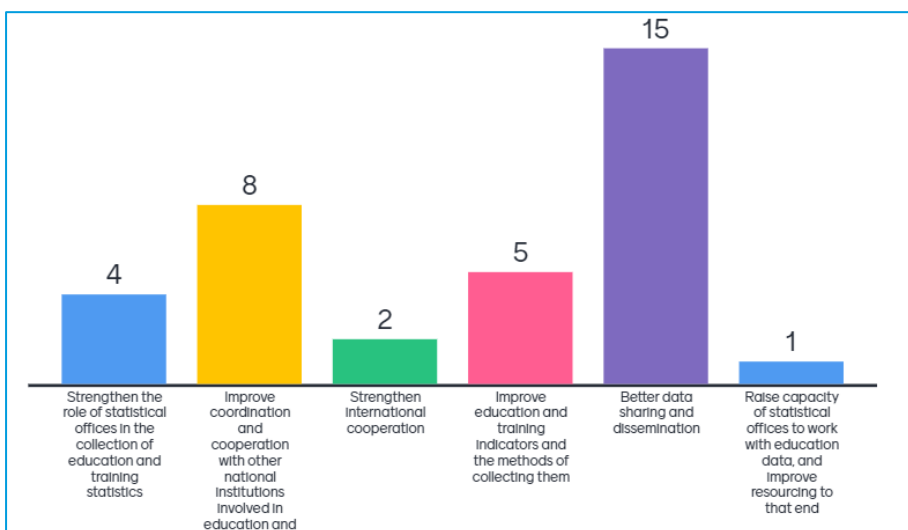
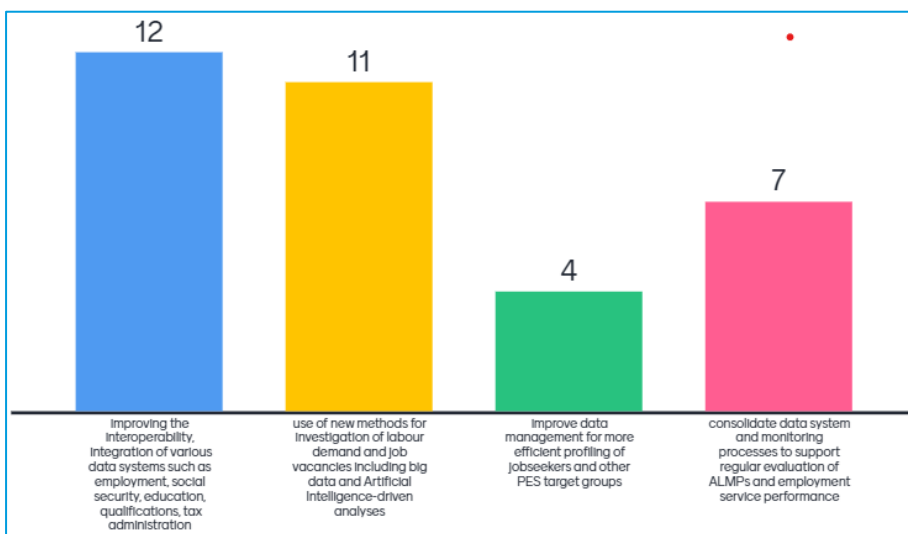


Figure 2. Most important priorities for the Ministries of Labour and/or Public Employment Services in the field of labour market policy statistics



Evidence on education and training: international and country experiences, challenges, solutions

The education and training strand of workshop discussions commenced with introductory remarks by the ETF, which focused on the need for monitoring that focuses on education and training systems by going beyond the data delivered through Labour Force Surveys (LFS). Important as they are, LFS are limited to the labour market implications of education and do not track developments in education and training itself. Education and training statistics, in contrast, provide current and direct measures of educational processes, system characteristics, performance, and quality. These statistics enable ongoing tracking and assessment of education policy and practice.

Further on, the discussion during the workshop revolved around the fact that the collection and use of data on education and training comes with distinct challenges. Unlike labour market data, which tends to be more internationally standardised, education and training statistics vary significantly between countries due to differing policies, values, priorities, and conventions. Additionally, education data often involves multiple stakeholders and is collected in contexts in which there may be fragmentation of responsibilities for collection and management at the national level. Other typical challenges may include difficulties in defining and collecting indicators for certain themes and populations of learners, limited resources and capacity, and issues with standardisation and quality control.

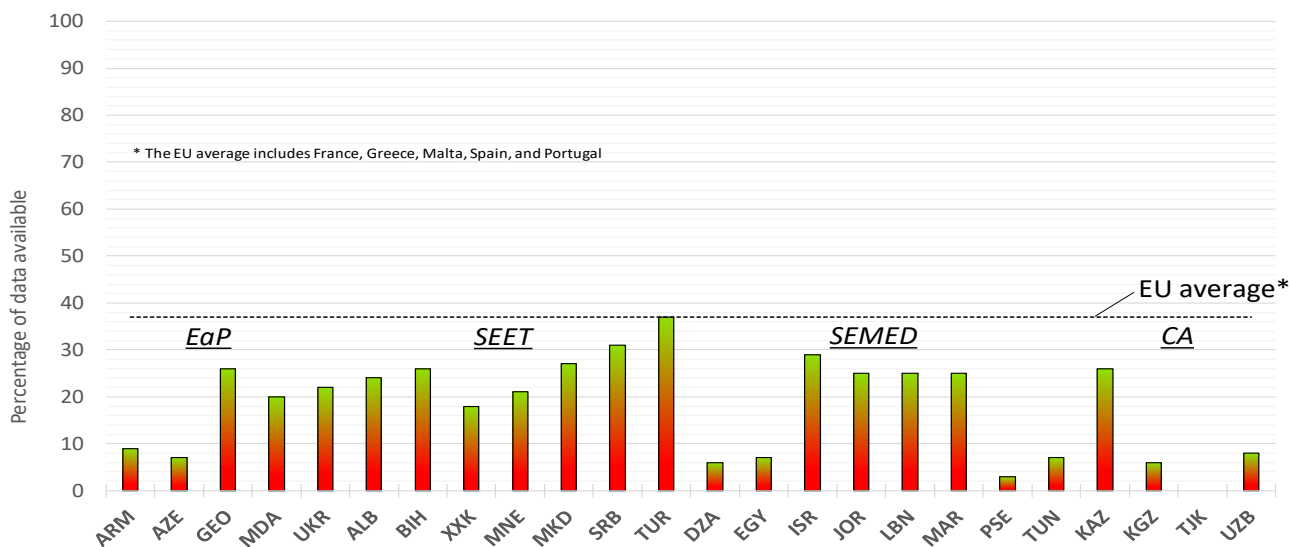
In more specific terms, in the first part of the workshop participants started by focusing on important international experiences and practices in addressing the challenge of collecting internationally comparable data on education, such as those employed by the OECD INES working party (Education at a Glance). Michael Ward from the **OECD** discussed international data conventions and standards and cooperation between countries through the lens of Education at a Glance and described the “backstage” process, the demand and success of this evidence collection, but also some of the challenges such as limited human resources, the difficulty to agree on joint definitions, and the challenge of missing data.

The discussion then moved on to examples from **Statistics Sweden** on how these challenges manifested at the national level and how they were being addressed. The examples included the net counting enrolment in ISCED 4 and 5 programmes across segments of education, and also the challenge of tracking the number of teaching staff in pre-school education. The presentations and discussion illustrated to participants how even long-standing participants in international data collections such as Sweden, have ongoing challenges to resolve and that challenges can be resolved.

The **ETF** then shared observations about missing evidence from its annual collection of monitoring data through KIESE and the Torino Process. The findings on data gaps were based on the availability of **134 indicators** used as proxies, derived from open-source repositories and internationally comparable data. These indicators covered various themes such as access to initial VET, access to CVET and other adult education, participation and graduation rates, quality and relevance of learning for both youth and adults, responsiveness to external developments, openness to innovation, promotion of excellence, and management of education and training, including human and financial resources. The data also covered specific groups of learners: youth and adults, disadvantaged youth, adults at risk, migrants, and females.

A detailed analysis revealed data gaps by country and theme, illustrating the disparities in evidence collection across ETF partner countries (Figure 3).

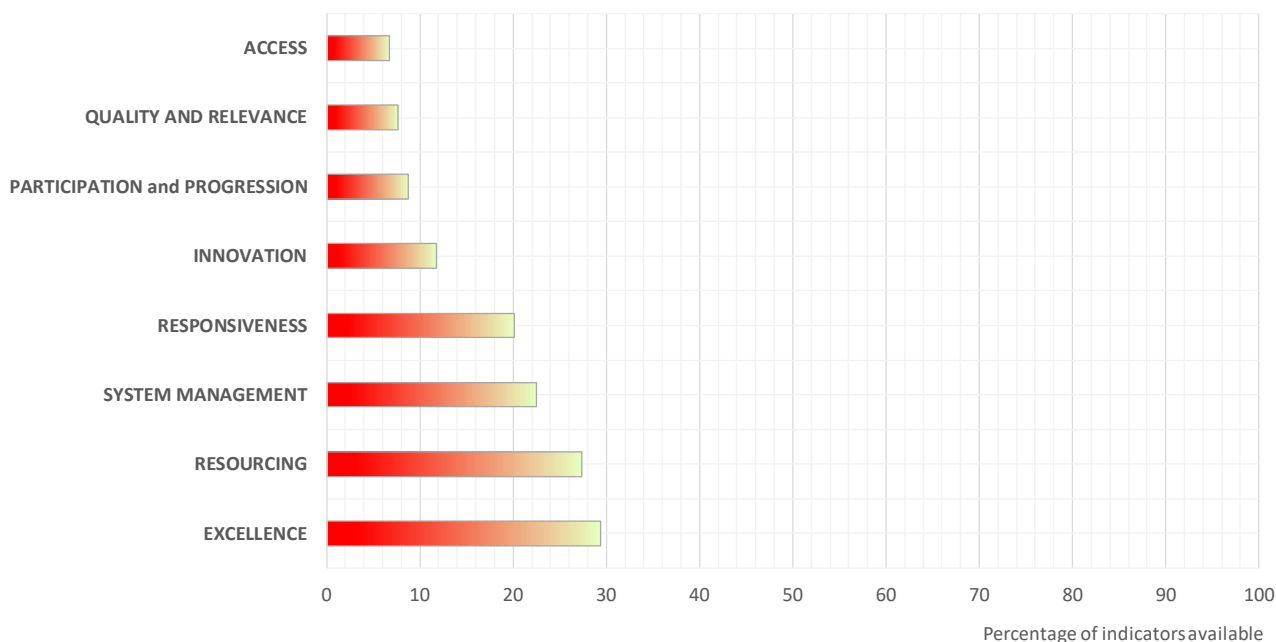
Figure 3: Availability of internationally comparable data on access/participation, quality, and system organisation, ETF partner countries and EU average (2023)



Source: ETF Torino Process database

Some topics were thereby more affected than others in terms of evidence availability. For instance, high priority areas of commitment, such as access, quality and relevance were also among the most affected by missing evidence (Figure 4) Furthermore, the presentation identified gaps in data collection by learner group, including economically inactive individuals, first-generation migrants, long-term unemployed, disadvantaged youth, adults with low or no education, females, and males.

Figure 4: Availability of internationally comparable data on education and training by theme, ETF partner countries (2023)

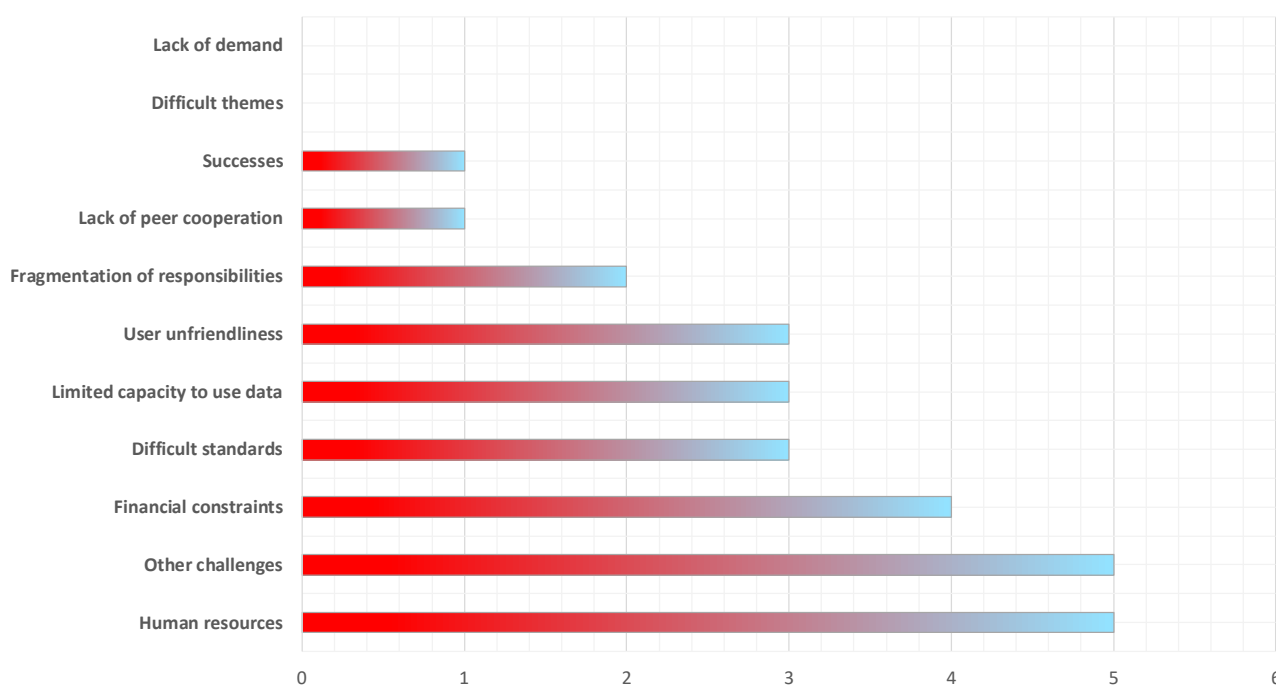


Source: ETF Torino Process database

The discussion then turned to the **reasons behind these evidence gaps**. Challenges were categorized into **three main dimensions**: international, structural (domestic), and user related. International challenges included difficulties in implementing international standards and limited peer learning opportunities. Structural challenges involved fragmentation in responsibilities for data on education and training at the national level, human resource constraints, and financial limitations. User-related challenges highlighted a weak culture of monitoring and evidence-based decision-making, insufficient capacity to use collected data, and inadequate efforts in visualizing and disseminating data and analysis.

Countries highlighted **several of these challenges as critical**. Human resources constraints emerged as a significant factor, reflecting a shortage of skilled personnel dedicated to data collection and analysis. Financial constraints further compounded these issues, limiting the capacity to engage in comprehensive and consistent evidence-gathering activities (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Tentative reasons for gaps in the availability of data on education and training, ETF partner countries (2023)



Source: ETF - matrix-based inputs by participants

Another major challenge identified was the **difficulty in adhering to complex international standards**. These standards often require extensive training and resources to implement effectively, which can be a barrier for many countries. Additionally, the limited capacity to utilize collected data effectively was highlighted, emphasizing the need for enhanced training and support to enable stakeholders to make the most of available data.

Participants also noted **user unfriendliness and fragmentation of responsibilities** as barriers to efficient data collection and usage. The lack of a coordinated approach to managing education and training data within countries leads to inconsistencies and gaps. Moreover, the absence of robust peer cooperation further exacerbated these challenges, as countries struggled to share best practices and learn from one another's experiences.

Successes in addressing data gaps were also acknowledged, albeit fewer in number. These successes often stemmed from targeted efforts to address specific challenges, such as improving the user-friendliness of data systems and fostering better international cooperation. However, difficult themes and a lack of demand for certain types of data persisted as obstacles, indicating areas where future efforts could be concentrated to improve the overall landscape of education and training statistics in ETF partner countries.

Countries indicated the **need to explore the context of data collection further** and understand better **what policies and framework conditions** are conducive or an impediment to the proper and effective gathering and handling of data on education and training. The ETF announced that it may follow up with a **cross-country study on policies in support of evidence and monitoring of education and training**.

Building evidence on Active Labour Market Policies and Public Employment Services

In the ALMP/PES stream of the event, participating countries, OECD and ETF shared new angles of data research to inform policies and programmes aimed at supporting transition from joblessness to employment and up/re-skilling. In particular, **Sweden, Poland, Egypt and Kazakhstan** showcased their practices for data integration, monitoring and impact measurement of active labour market programmes (ALMPs), identification of profile and support needs of particular groups, in particular inactive and vulnerable, as well as use of information technologies and artificial intelligence to analyse jobseekers' profile and vacancies, provide faster matching services and information regarding activation and skills development opportunities.

Lars Lindvall, **PES Sweden**, introduced the overall organisation and key data collections/registers, both internal and external sources such as jobseekers/people registered with PES, suppliers, employers, job vacancies and notices of termination. PES datasets are shared with Statistics Sweden, researchers and other governmental organisations. PES processing of data result in forecasts, analyses and statistics for internal and external use. Three main national classifications are reflected in PES data: Swedish Standard Classification of Occupations, Industrial Classification and Education Classification. As regards PES specific taxonomy, efforts have been made to improve the granularity of occupational data and skills; and most concepts are connected to the **European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO)**. PES Sweden works on transition towards **using skills as entry point for matching and analysis**.

In the afternoon of Day 1, participants had the opportunity to visit the **headquarter of PES Sweden** and see the re-organisation of working spaces by activity as well as considerable strengthening of capacities to communicate online with PES staff and other employment specialists (e.g. over 80 webinars a year), jobseekers and other categories of clients. Petter Helgesson, PES Sweden, introduced the **statistical model used by PES Sweden to profile jobseekers**, which is a central part and support tool for recommending the activation and matching services for individual jobseekers. Profiling tool estimates **job finding probability** and classifies jobseekers on five main groups (from 0 to 100% probability) going from 'far from labour market' up to 'close to labour market'. The tool helps PES and private providers to estimate how much support is needed and given to those who are in need the most. The model is based primarily on registration data using a series of explanatory variables (unemployment spell, country of origin, previous work experience and education, disability, municipality, gender, age etc). Among the recommendations for further developments in this area, the speaker underlined the need to compare historical outcomes to potential predictions, choose carefully from a wealth of metrics, compare results of model with caseworkers' predictions and look carefully at how results are communicated. Discussion and questions from participants revealed in general a **similarity in terms of groups exposed to long term unemployment and vulnerability**.

Day two continued with a series of **illustrative practices of measuring impact and profiling jobseekers and other PES clients** as well as **use of new technologies** for matching, vacancy collection and dissemination/outreach jobseekers and other potential users of PES information.

The first session focused on **identification and profiling of inactive categories to inform specific design of PES measures** for this type of clients. Lars Ludolph, **OECD**, and Adam Biernat, Regional Labour Office in Krakow, **Poland** introduced the way PES Poland (regional office of Malopolska) addresses the challenges for labour market inclusion of economically inactive people. In light of accelerated demographic shrinking of working age population, Polish employment authorities try to improve age management and prevention of early retirement, upgrade skills of the working population. A new law for professionally inactive people will make this category a client of PES, posing a series of challenges: who are the economically inactive, what is their profile and what kind of services and programmes are most effective. With the methodological support of OECD, Poland is testing new comprehensive methodological approach and exploration of various data sources to understand the size and characteristics of economically inactive as well as their readability to engage in training and employment. A mixed approach has been employed through a machine learning approach based to SILC, map results onto LFS, Census, and combining with organisation of focus groups organised with main categories of potential clients from inactive groups. Key conclusions so far show that combining different data sources and methods produces reliable results, effective targeting goes hand in hand with willingness to work and there is a need to consider intra-regional and local differences.

Bakhtiyar B. Zhazykpayev, Workforce Development Center of **Kazakhstan**, presented the functionalities of the National Qualifications System Platform (**career.enbek.kz**) covering both skills and employment opportunities and services, as well as registration, expertise provision and information and analytics. Skills component of the platform constitutes in fact an online learning platform for new skills, including search and choice of courses from certified providers. While the employment component gathers together data from 18 information systems of public bodies, ease registration as jobseeker or

unemployed, registration and matching with available vacancies, as well as provision of services such as career services, social benefits or subsidized jobs. **AI model is employed for matching recommendations on the platform**, future priorities for development being improving the quality of recommendations by educating the model based on additional data, based on CVs content, occupations and labour resources.

Dr Reham Rizk, **Egypt Impact Lab (EIL)**, showcased **novel policy evaluation approaches covering both Egypt and other MENA countries** and the value of randomized evaluations to tackling poverty and employment challenges. An important feature is the governance aspect. EIL is a governmental initiative to embed evidence-based policy labs to support effective policy-making and to institutionalize evidence creation and use through studies, capacity building for using evidence and strengthening the overall knowledge system. EIL policy assessment priorities go beyond classical ALMP effectiveness measurement and cover social protection and poverty alleviation, employment and MSME development, gender empowerment and family development as well as sustainable development, climate change etc. Depending on local and country conditions, including emerging challenges such as irregular migration, the effectiveness of certain programmes differ. Issues such as stigmatised jobs, quality of training and prospects for decent jobs, access to financial resources, informality and mismatch influence ALMP effectiveness. Overall studies so far have shown that if well designed and implemented, ALMPs can have important impact on labour market.

Feedback and questions received from participants underlined **long standing challenges with activation and support to certain categories of jobseekers and inactive people**, in particular people with disabilities, those with care responsibilities, undeclared workers. Key would be to **consolidate the link between employment and education information systems, to find more effective ways for outsourcing certain services to secure quality provision, pursue more tailored approaches to ALMPs and strengthen evaluations**.

As future priorities for development, exchanges and learning, participants representing labour and employment institutions identified:

- Further exchange on skills, occupations and other types of classifications and taxonomies to ensure integrated analysis of labour market, vacancies, jobseekers education profile etc.
- Innovative modalities to monitor and evaluate ALMPs, track jobseekers participation in services and programmes and their progress in career;
- Improve modalities to outreach and tailor programmes using more granular evidence particularly regarding vulnerable groups and inactive.
- potential of AI, big data analytics to matching services and use of digital means for sharing of information, outreach, delivery of services.