

TORINO PROCESS REVIEW OF POLICIES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Disclaimer

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many vocational school graduates in Bosnia and Herzegovina lack appropriate practical training and struggle to find a job, resulting in high rates of youth unemployment. Among older age groups, three quarters of unemployed people are long-term unemployed and lack appropriate skills, while employers report problems of skill mismatch and shortages of skilled workers. More effective policies are needed to address these weaknesses, including improved lifelong learning opportunities for school leavers, unemployed youth, the long-term unemployed, and adult returners to the labour market. This report focuses on lifelong learning policies with a focus on work-based learning (WBL), including practical training in vocational schools, dual education models, traineeships and apprenticeships, training at work and retraining. Such policies aim to better prepare people of all ages for the world of work and to address skill gaps linked to technological advances that have left many older workers with outdated skills. In addition a many young people are outside the formal education system and also out of work or not in training. The proposed policy solution to this is the Youth Guarantee, which the paper also considers in detail and in relation to the fitness of the learning providers to meet the obligations under the Youth Guarantee.

WBL in initial VET

Vocational education and training (VET) lies at the intersection of education and the labour market and should meet the requirements of students and employers alike. In initial vocational education and training (IVET), WBL involves teaching practical skills in a work environment. If well organised, it can augment the knowledge, skills and competences of students, meeting the needs of employers and easing the transition from education to work. Yet, it is relatively weakly developed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Only two fifths of VET schools provide any practical training for their students, and the quality of WBL opportunities are insufficient to achieve adequate learning outcomes. A modified format of practical training known as dual education has been promoted for VET schools. This experimental system is “school-based” rather than “company-based” (as in Germany or Austria), and tripartite councils have not fully participated in designing it, so support from stakeholders (chambers, schools, companies) is relatively thin.

The key WBL learning providers for VET students, other than their schools, are private and, to a lesser extent, public companies that provide practical training placements. In a recent survey, more than two fifths of businesses expressed an interest in offering WBL opportunities to VET students. However, employers require greater incentives to take on VET students, in-company trainers need support, and trainees need remuneration. Despite this, the regulatory framework for WBL is inadequate and an appropriate financing mechanism for WBL has not been designed.

Education reforms which have been carried out for a number of years in Bosnia and Herzegovina provided certain results, particularly in fields which were the focus of those reforms: vocational education and training and higher education. Various laws have been adopted in the field of vocational education, both at the level of BiH and by competent education authorities. In addition, a significant number of strategic documents were adopted, while reform projects made progress in achieving the “Riga” objectives in the field of vocational education and training. There is also some progress in implementation of work-based learning but Bosnia and Herzegovina is still facing significant challenges in the IVET system in relation to work-based learning which are outlined in the report.

WBL in continuing VET

Continuing vocational education and training for adults (CVET) comprises internships, traineeships, apprenticeships, and company-based training and re-training, as well as non-vocational adult education; it can be delivered through formal, non-formal and informal learning activities. The Republika Srpska Public Employment Institute has implemented a trainee programme for young unemployed university

graduates. In the Federation of BiH a trainee is entitled to 70% of the salary of the respective job (80% in Brčko District). Programmes in Tuzla Canton and Canton Sarajevo support in-company placements of unemployed people without any work experience for six months to one year. Apprenticeships have been recognised in the Republika Srpska lasting up to one year followed by a proficiency exam to carry out work in the chosen profession. The apprenticeship is carried out under a paid employment contract and subject to the labour law. Apprenticeship programmes that provide work-based training opportunities over an extended period have not yet been widely recognised in the Federation of BiH or in Brčko District, even though it is recognised that they can produce greater benefits than short-exposure WBL programmes such as traineeships.

Studies have found that participation in non-formal learning significantly reduces the probability of an individual experiencing unemployment in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Learning providers for adult education include VET schools, universities, private companies and public institutions. They provide learning opportunities for adults and are utilised by individuals seeking to upgrade their skills, by companies seeking to train or retrain their labour force, by the public employment services (PES) in their active labour market programmes. However, the legal framework is not favourable to the creation of new adult education programmes or the registration of new independent learning providers. Consequently, some private companies train their employees in their own training centres (on-the-job learning). In some cases the costs of non-formal adult education are borne by the participants, in other cases trainings are financed by the PES as part of their active employment measures. While laws on adult education allow for the validation of non-formal knowledge, skills, and competencies, education authorities have not yet developed appropriate models to enable these provisions to be implemented. Further development of the Qualification Framework for credit accumulation and credit transfer, along with the formal recognition of prior learning (RPL), is important for workers, job seekers, and women returners to the labour market who may have valuable skills and competences but lack a qualification. While private learning institutions are leaders in RPL, public education institutions have not yet made much progress in this respect.

Youth Guarantee in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The EU Youth Guarantee was launched in 2013 and reinforced in 2020 with a renewed emphasis on apprenticeships. It aims to provide 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. According to BHAS data, the NEET rate for 15–29-year-olds in BiH in 2022 was 23.5%, more than twice the level in the EU for the same period at 11.7%. Many NEETs are low-skilled and need support in developing their skills needed on the labour market. Youth Guarantees and their implementation plans, and associated action plans have been adopted at the end of 2023 in Republika Srpska and Brčko District, while an implementation plan has been adopted in the Federation of BiH where pilot versions have been implemented in two municipalities. The Youth Guarantees will be implemented by the local PES. Currently the PES in Republika Srpska does not offer training programmes to its clients, while training programmes in the Federation of BiH and Brčko District have limited reach and capacity. The apprenticeship form of WBL is not well developed as yet, and will need to be introduced on a more substantial basis to meet the requirements of the Youth Guarantee.

Training will be provided by learning providers, including VET schools, universities, and private for-profit and not-for-profit providers. However, VET schools have limited interest in providing work-based learning in CVET programmes as they are unable to retain the income from such additional effort on their own account. Currently there are over 600 private entrepreneurs offering educational services, with an average of two employees each, with the capacity to provide training services to an estimated 60,000 learners annually. Managing the additional 95,000 NEETs who are potentially eligible for training under the Youth Guarantee would require a substantial expansion in the capacity of the learning providers. It is estimated that the capacity of the private training sector would need to increase by about 15% each year to cope with the requirements of the Youth Guarantee, at least in the initial years.

Recommendations

In conclusion, the report has made 37 specific and practical policy recommendations for the authorities at all the various levels of administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement in order to promote the development of lifelong learning for youth and adults. These cover, separately, the measures needed to promote work-based learning activities in initial VET including the development of dual education, in continuing VET to promote the development of opportunities for adult education, and in relation to the development of the Youth Guarantees in the different entities and cantons to provide effective training and apprenticeship opportunities for youth who are on the margins of the labour market.

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1. BACKGROUND

Bosnia and Herzegovina comprises four tiers of governance, at the state, entity, canton and municipal levels. It consists of two entities: the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Federation of BiH) as well as the separate Brčko District of BiH. The Republika Srpska has one level of local self-government with 57 municipalities, each with both exclusive and shared competences. The Federation of BiH consists of ten cantons, each of which has its own constitution, parliament, government and judicial powers. In total, there are eleven constitutions, governments and legislators in the Federation of BiH (10 cantonal and one entity). Cantons are further divided into 79 municipalities and cities, which constitute the local self-government units with their own executive and legislative powers. Brčko District of BiH is a condominium jointly owned by the entities but not managed by either. State legislation directly applies to the District and its fields of competence are nearly the same as the ones of the entities.

The education sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina is defined by the BiH Constitution, the constitutions of the entities, cantons, and the statute of Brčko District of BiH, which govern legal competencies in education. There are thus 12 responsible institutions of education including the Ministry of Education and Culture of Republika Srpska, 10 cantonal ministries of education in the Federation of BiH and the Department for Education of the Brčko District. Republika Srpska has a centralised government and one ministry of education. In the Federation of BiH each canton has their own ministry of education, while the Federal Ministry of Education and Science only has a coordinating role. The Brčko District of BiH has its own Department for Education. At the state level, the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA) coordinates activities of all education institutions in BiH. MoCA is responsible for carrying out activities related to the coordination of activities, the harmonisation of the plans of entity bodies, and defining strategies at the international level including education strategies. At the state level, there are also the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance, the Center for Information and Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education, and the Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been an EU candidate country since December 2022, and will aim to gradually improve its vocational education and training (VET) system towards EU standards. The responsible education authorities have committed the country to implementing the “Riga Conclusions” on VET which emphasise the promotion of work-based learning (WBL) in all its forms (Riga Declaration, 2015).¹ The Ministry of Civil Affairs has produced a strategic document (Council of Ministers, 2021) that provides a framework for embedding the Riga Conclusions concerning WBL into both initial and continuing VET (referred to below as “BiH Riga conclusions”). It provides an overview of various formats of WBL for Bosnia and Herzegovina with action plans for their implementation. The fields of priority action identified in the document are (i) promoting WBL and making it attractive for companies and students, (ii) involving social partners in WBL policymaking, (iii) support for WBL implementation, and (iv) arranging finance for WBL. Other sections of the document analyse the development of quality assurance mechanisms, the qualification systems for VET with reference to the European Qualification Framework, key competences in VET with reference to EU standards, and arrangements for the continuous professional training of teachers, trainers and mentors in VET.

The European Training Foundation launched its sixth round of the “Torino Process” for Bosnia and Herzegovina (2022-2024) (“Towards Lifelong Learning”) with a workshop held in Sarajevo in November 2022. The first part of the Torino Process (TRP Level 1) focused on monitoring system performance for lifelong learning, while this second part of the Torino Process (TRP Level 2) is related to reviewing policies towards lifelong learning and proposing recommendations. The results of TRP Level 1 were presented to the main stakeholders in a workshop in June 2023 in Sarajevo. The report highlighted that continuing vocational education and training (CVET) in Bosnia and Herzegovina faces numerous problems concerning access and attractiveness. The quality and relevance of CVET and work-based

¹ See also Osnabruck Declaration (2020).

learning (WBL) are strategic priorities for the country due to high levels of youth unemployment related to a lack of practical training and skills of VET graduates. The report also revealed that while VET education in BiH has adopted new teaching and learning methods with the support of the EU and other international organisations, such as curricula based on learning outcomes and the introduction of the concept of key competences, it still requires improvements in its organisation and financial management.

This Policy Review (carried out within TRP level 2) therefore focuses on work-based learning (WBL) policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina and identifies key challenges to developing education and training policies from a lifelong learning perspective.² It assesses how improvements in WBL policies can support lifelong learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The review covers these policies for youth and adults in all settings in which they learn, such as practical training in vocational schools, company-based traineeships and apprenticeships, and training at work and retraining. The focus on WBL policies is justified given the ample evidence that formal education in Bosnia and Herzegovina does not adequately prepare young people for the world of work. In addition, structural changes in the economy and technological advances have left many older workers with outdated skills, making it difficult for the long-term unemployed, women returners and others to take advantage of labour market opportunities. The skills, competences, and qualifications needed on the labour market are being transformed, requiring individuals to possess a mix of transferable skills including competences such as digital and entrepreneurial skills. Such skills will increasingly need to be upgraded throughout an individual's working life, and lifelong learning is therefore a necessity.³ This paper also focuses on the Youth Guarantee which aims to provide young people with practical experience and skills that are essential for entering the labour market. The Youth Guarantee foresees that young people under the age of 30 who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) will have access to good quality offers of continued education, traineeship, or apprenticeship within four months of registering as unemployed or leaving formal education.

The methodology used for this Policy Review is based on the findings of a prior literature survey and a site visit (carried out in November 2023) to analyse and assess policies at the intersection between WBL and Youth Guarantee, with the ultimate purpose of addressing two key questions:

- What is the situation concerning WBL opportunities in Bosnia and Herzegovina for youth in formal education and training including young graduates, for the adult workforce, and what can be improved?
- How “fit” is the network of learning providers in Bosnia and Herzegovina to deliver the commitments to youth not in employment, education, or training under the Youth Guarantee, and what can be improved?

The policy review unfolded in four phases.

1. Preparation: This initial phase focused on collecting and analysing previous reviews of WBL to note systemic strengths and weaknesses. It aimed to identify challenges and break down the guiding questions into sub-questions related to WBL and the Youth Guarantee, leading to the preparation of a thematic proposal for the review.
2. Desk Research: In this phase, the team conducted a comprehensive review of both primary and secondary data, producing a short issues paper that summarized preliminary findings. This paper highlighted problems, areas, and questions to guide the subsequent site visits.

² Work-based learning (WBL) refers to a form of education and training where learners acquire skills and knowledge through practical experience in a workplace environment. It involves a combination of classroom instruction and on-the-job training and encompasses both youth in initial VET and the reskilling and upskilling opportunities offered to adult jobseekers.

³ Lifelong learning refers to all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills/competences and/or qualifications for any reason of importance to individuals or their socio-economic contexts (ETF, 2022a).

3. **Site Visits:** Building on the desk research insights, the site visits aimed to validate or modify the initial findings through direct consultations with stakeholders. This phase involved selecting regions and counterparts for visits, organizing agendas, and conducting interviews and focus groups to gather additional information. The site visits covered various stakeholders including ministries (Civil Affairs, Labour, and Education), EU Delegation, public and private employment services, VET schools, private companies providing practical training, and agencies involved in lifelong learning and employment initiatives. The team met with assistant ministers, heads of departments, EU representatives, directors of public services, and company executives across Sarajevo, Banja Luka, and Brčko District, focusing on education policies, labour, and vocational training practices.
4. **Reporting:** Based on the site visits and the research in the previous phases, the review team prepared the present paper, which was discussed at a dissemination and validation meeting in Sarajevo in March 2024 to gather stakeholder feedback and ensure a final validation of findings and recommendations.

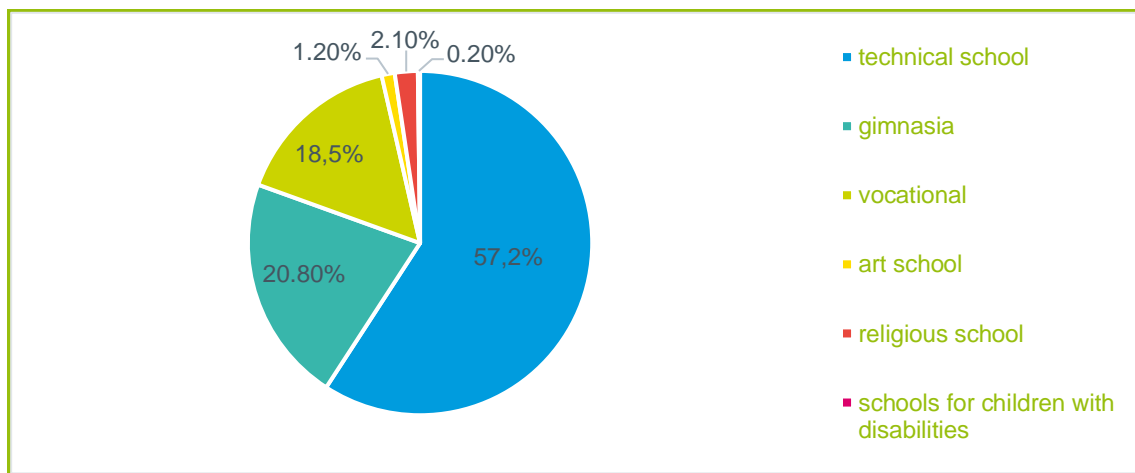
The paper identifies the key policy challenges in developing good quality, relevant and accessible WBL activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including for adults and vulnerable youth. In the next section we provide a brief account of the relationship between vocational education and training and labour market outcomes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Section 3 reviews policies towards WBL in initial vocational education and training (IVET) education and training settings, section 4 reviews policies for continuing vocational education and training (CVET), and section 5 reviews policies related to the proposed Youth Guarantee. Section 6 provides our conclusions and policy recommendations.

2. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a long tradition of providing vocational education and training through formal technical and vocational schools. In “technical” schools (ISCED 3A / EQF level IV) programmes lasts for four years and students become “technicians” and may continue to the academic educational level. “Vocational” school programmes (ISCED 3C / EQF level III) last three years and students are prepared for labour market integration, becoming “qualified workers”. Professional advancement is possible for vocational school graduates after two years of full-time work when these students are entitled to pass the “majstorski ispit” exam, and if successful they receive the title of “Majstor” (master-craftsman / EQF level V). Both of these types of schools are referred to below under the generic name “VET schools”, with distinctions made between technical schools and vocational schools as appropriate. In accordance with the Framework Law on Secondary VET, vocational programmes may last less than three years in duration if they are based on the needs of the local labour market (semi-skilled workers; EQF level 2). Certain cantons in the Federation of BiH have used this possibility (Sarajevo Canton, Canton Gorazde, Una Sana Canton), especially since the first two years of secondary education is obligatory. Secondary education less three years in duration is also available in Republika Srpska. Children with special educational needs can also follow a two-year secondary VET course.

In 2022, there were 312 secondary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina with 107,936 students, of whom 54,482 were girls and 53,454 were boys, taught by 13,068 teachers.⁴ More than half of students (57.2%), are enrolled in technical schools, gimnasia (20.8%), vocational schools (18.5%), religious schools (2.1%), art schools (1.2%), while 0.2% are enrolled in schools for children with disabilities.

Figure 1: Students enrolled in secondary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina (%)



Source: Agency for Statistics Bosnia and Herzegovina

The relatively low enrolment in gimnasia may be explained by the fact that general education is perceived by both employers and the public as fostering a lower level of practical skills than technical schools. Many VET profiles are outdated and/or poorly equipped to provide the skills needed by employers (GIZ, 2018). According an APOSO report on curricula development in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period 2010-2021 (APOSO, 2021) most students were interested in qualifications in the medical professions, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and metal processing. One of the most interesting areas for VET students is technical studies, and most VET schools have workshops

⁴ https://bhas.gov.ba/data/Publikacije/Saopštenja/2023/EDU_04_2022_Y2_1_BS.pdf

where they provide practical training in these profiles. This contrasts with previous times when the first choices were often economics, accounting and administration.

2.1 Labour market outcomes

Bosnia and Herzegovina lags other countries in the region in adopting and implementing WBL policies (OECD, 2018; OECD 2021),⁵ and since the Council of Ministers adopted the strategic document described above little further progress has been made in ensuring the relevance of technical and vocational education to the labour market. Consequently, technical and vocational school graduates often struggle to find a job, lack tailored programmes to acquire missing skills, and lack access to finance to start their own business. While vocational education and training lies at the intersection of education and the labour market and should meet the requirements of students and employers alike, there is a widespread opinion among employers that the school system is not flexible enough and too reliant on theoretical learning and not enough on practical experience. Employers often say the students who study VET courses at school are not properly prepared for work, while relatively few students receive adequate technical training on their WBL placements with employers either. Employer Associations frequently complain about the education system and the lack of VET graduates with specific profiles due to inadequate enrolment policies.

Partly due to the inadequacies of WBL practices, policies to assist the transition from school to work have had little effect. Although the Federation of BiH supports young people to find their first employment with measures to ease the school-to-work transition (European Commission, 2022a: 257), almost a quarter (23%) of secondary vocational students attend schools that do not provide any form of career guidance (OECD, 2019).⁶ All this has led to high rates of youth unemployment. Among the 15-24 age group, the unemployment rate was 35,1% in 2022, while almost one fifth (18%) of young people in this age group were neither in employment, education nor training.⁷ Considering the whole labour force, three quarters (75,8%) of unemployed people are long-term unemployed due at least in part to an absence of appropriate skills, while a large proportion of the working-age population is inactive including many low-skilled and workers more than 40 years of age. More effective policies to support the transition to the labour market are needed to address these weaknesses, including improved WBL policies for VET students and unemployed youth, as well as improved adult education for the long-term unemployed and adult returners to the labour market.

Skill shortages also pose significant hurdles for businesses. According to a survey carried out by the World Bank in 2019, 45.4% of employers in Bosnia and Herzegovina consider that an inadequately educated workforce was a moderate, major or very severe obstacle to their business activities, making this the fourth among the top ten business environment constraints.⁸ It is an especially severe constraint among medium sized businesses. This may be related to the finding from the OECD PISA survey that the education system fails to deliver an adequately trained workforce to the labour market, with more than half (54%) of 15-year-old pupils being underachievers in reading, as are 58% in mathematics and 57% in science (compared to 23%, 23% and 22% respectively in the EU) (ETF, 2022a). Employers report that foreign language skills, digital and IT skills, and soft skills needed in the business environment are especially weak (ETF, 2023). In response to these skill shortages and gaps, almost two fifths (38%) of employers in Bosnia and Herzegovina need to provide formal training to their employees (World Bank, 2019). Employers also report significant skill mismatches. For example, a 2018 survey showed that only one half (51%) of employed VET graduates were engaged in jobs that corresponded with their education (GIZ, 2018). Part of the reason for skill mismatches is the inadequate connection of the VET system to the business sector and the lack of WBL opportunities for students and out of work adults with obsolete

⁵ The chapter of the OECD Competitiveness report of education and training shows that Bosnia and Herzegovina scores lowest of the Western Balkan countries on a scale measuring the implementation of work-based learning with an index of 2.0 compared to an average for the region of 2.9 (on a scale of 1-5) (OECD, 2021: Table 10.5).

⁶ These data can be found online in OECD, PISA 2018 Database, Table II.B1.6.9.

⁷ Data are from the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁸ Calculated from the World Bank Enterprise Survey 2019.

skills (European Commission, 2022a). In consequence, over the period from 2011 to 2019 there was a high level of emigration of VET graduates in search of suitable jobs, contributing to skill shortages even in the context of high rates of unemployment (Efendić, 2021).

Due to all the above factors, reforming the VET system to make it more aligned with labour market needs is one of the medium-term objectives of the Economic Reform Programme 2022 for Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, according to the European Commission (2022a), progress with reforms to promote lifelong learning is disappointing.⁹ Other relevant initiatives include providing vocational counselling to students, developing local councils for education and employment, and developing internships schemes for students (European Commission, 2022a). The Economic Reform Programme for 2023 recognises a “need for programme activities with the aim of supporting adult education programmes” (DEP, 2023: 156). It recommends providing support to VET schools to offer training programmes, improving the professional training and development for adults with a focus on women, and developing guidelines in the field of adult education in the context of lifelong learning in accordance with EU standards.

⁹ The report notes that Republika Srpska has adopted legislation requiring employers to be represented on the management boards of public universities, creating an opportunity to influence WBL practices in the higher education sector European Commission (2022a).

3. WORK-BASED LEARNING IN INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (IVET)

Work-based learning (WBL) in initial vocational education and training (IVET) involves teaching practical skills in a work environment.¹⁰ If well organised, it can augment the knowledge, skills and competences of students, meeting the needs of employers and easing the transition from education to work.¹¹ In Bosnia and Herzegovina, IVET is an integral part of the education system. It provides skills and knowledge relevant to a wide variety of professions, a basis for the integration of IVET graduates into the labour market or further education. Survey data show that IVET students in Bosnia and Herzegovina with experience of in-company placements perform better than students who have only received practical training in school workshops (Schmid & Gruber, 2018). Yet, while WBL is integrated into IVET, it is relatively weakly developed (OECD, 2021) as relatively few small and micro enterprises are willing to provide the training places required (European Commission, 2022a). Furthermore, 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.

3.1 Governance of work-based learning in IVET

Institutional framework for WBL in IVET

Responsibilities for secondary VET education are devolved to Republika Srpska, the ten cantons of the Federation of BiH, and Brčko District.¹² Competence for WBL governance lies separately with the Republika Srpska, the cantons of the Federation of BiH and Brčko District.¹³ Nine pedagogical institutes in Republika Srpska, cantons in the Federation of BiH, and Brčko District are responsible for quality assurance in vocational education, curricula development, assessment and continuous professional development of teachers and for introducing new methods of teaching. The Agency for Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education (APOS0) is a state-level institution with its HQ in Mostar and two branches in Sarajevo and Banja Luka. APOS0 is responsible for setting learning standards, student achievements, evaluation of outcomes and the development of the common core curriculum (CCC) in preschool, primary and secondary education, and for other duties in the field of learning standards and quality assurance. The Banja Luka unit is responsible for lifelong learning and its VET Department has developed occupational and qualification standards at the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁴

On the employer side, the Chambers of Commerce and Chambers of Crafts are also found at the entity level and in most of the cantons; they represent the interests of their member companies and are engaged in advocacy, and in the drafting of laws, regulations and economic programmes, business counselling, support the development of entrepreneurship and advise on the management of SMEs, labour market analysis and education and training for their members. They are financed by the fees of their members who are mainly large and medium sized companies. Their role in participating in decision making policies in education and in WBL governance differs across the various administrative units of the country.

¹⁰ A discussion of the differences between the various forms of WBL is given by Poulsen and Eberhardt (2016), and an application to Bosnia and Herzegovina is given by Schmid (2018).

¹¹ The Torino Process Monitoring Report cites a positive example in Gorazde Canton, where a formal agreement between schools and companies ensures teaching consistent with labour market needs (ETF, 2023).

¹² For a detailed review of the institutional arrangements in the different education systems in Brčko District, Republika Srpska, Central Bosnia Canton, Sarajevo Canton and West Herzegovina Canton see Guthrie et al. (2022).

¹³ At the state level, a *Labour and Employment Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina* is an advisory body with competences to monitor international agreements concerning labour market issues.

¹⁴ The Sarajevo office deals with standards and measures of achievement.

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. The register records the number of companies involved, the occupations in which students are trained and the realisation of practical work placements.¹⁵ The Chamber is an active partner in WBL activities, supporting company mentors through a training programme with 24 hours of theoretical training and 16 hours of individual practical work (Pedagogic Institute of Republika Srpska, 2021). The training programme is designed to improve the quality of practical training for VET students. The Chamber has received support from GIZ for training and certifying mentors in the Dobož region (Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2022).

In the Federation of BiH, 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 most cantons students find an employer where they would like to do their practical training with the help of their school. In future, it is expected that the Chamber will be in charge of matchmaking between schools, students and employers and so direct contact between schools and employers may cease. The Chamber of Commerce in Zenica Dobož has been active in leading an intersectoral group for VET including ministries of education, ministries of economy and other actors organised on an inter-cantonal approach.

Other key social partners on the employer side are the Association of Employers of the Federation of BiH, the Union of Employers' Associations of Republika Srpska, and the Association of Employers of Brčko District. In Brčko District, the Chamber of Commerce coordinates with the Association of Employers but is not involved in planning education and training. It does however carry out a survey on labour market needs and makes the results available to education authorities.

Policy framework

The *Framework Law on Secondary Vocational Education and Training* gives autonomy VET schools to respond to local economic needs and corresponding changes to the curricula.¹⁶ Responsible education authorities are obliged to harmonise their own laws to the Framework Law. So far, seven cantons of the Federation of BiH, the Republika Srpska, and the Brčko District have harmonised their laws to the Framework Law. The strategic document "BiH Riga Conclusions" described in the introduction above (Council of Ministers, 2021) emphasises the importance of a well-structured, permanent, transparent and efficient dialogue between partners in the education sector and labour and employment sector as well as coordination and decision-making on WBL through Advisory Boards within schools and Tripartite Councils at the broader policy levels. It also supports the licensing of companies that offer WBL with qualified mentors; keeping registers of companies that offer training by the Chambers of Commerce; promoting student assessment and monitoring; and ensuring students' health and occupational safety insurance. With the support of GIZ, some of these priorities have been adopted by the education authorities in Republika Srpska, Zenica Dobož Canton, Bosnia-Podrinje Canton Gorazde.

Due to the complex governance arrangements in Bosnia and Herzegovina, efforts to coordinate policy at the state-level and to provide country-wide guidelines have not been very effective. While policymakers in Bosnia and Herzegovina aim to provide high quality education that meets the needs of the labour market (Council of Ministers, 2021) and ministries of education seek to implement WBL reforms, support from other ministries is not strong enough. While there are some positive examples of local communities participating in WBL governance, in programme and curriculum development, in securing financial incentives for employers and students, and in providing practical training opportunities for students (e.g., Bosanska Krupa, Sanski Most, Cazin and Bihać), the professional capacity of staff in leadership positions needs further development (ETF, 2023). Inter-agency coordination could also be improved, in a bottom-up manner, with participation of stakeholders at the local level. One interviewee

¹⁵ Law on Secondary Education, Official Gazette, 92/20

¹⁶ Framework Law on Vocational Education and Training, Official Gazette BiH, 63/08

proposed that Sector Skill Councils should be established to review existing curricula in line with the labour market needs of each sector.

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 plans¹⁷, focuses on improving practical training in companies, increasing the number of students in company work placement, adjusting the curricula to labour market needs, and enhancing partnerships between the education sector and the business sector. Additionally, development strategies at cantonal levels for the period 2021-2027 and the Development Strategy of Brčko District BiH (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 leading to a more competent and skilled workforce with a view to improving IVET graduates' employability.

Partnerships and cooperation between policymakers, learning providers and employers is crucial to the success of structured WBL programmes (Sweet, 2018). Planning for WBL is best organised as a joint activity of school coordinators and company mentors, but to achieve this school coordinators require greater understanding of modern technologies and the work processes used in companies. To raise their competencies in this respect, it has been proposed that school coordinators could benefit from company-based training, while company mentors may also require training through an accredited learning programme (Council of Ministers 2021). In addition, the inclusion of employers in WBL governance bodies could assist VET schools to provide students with the competencies required for effective work placements (Schmid & Gruber, 2018). Such collaboration would require the involvement of all stakeholders, including schools, employers and local communities. Many VET schools have Advisory Boards which include representatives of local employers. With the approval of the ministers, the Advisory Boards can propose changes in the curriculum of VET programmes of up to 30% of the content to take the needs of the local labour market into account.

Tripartite councils

The *Framework Law on Secondary Vocational Education and Training* includes an expanded role for social partners and provides for schools' Advisory Councils and Tripartite Councils to adapt the curriculum, depending on the commitment of school leaders and the requests of employers. It stipulates that Tripartite Councils should be established to forge links between vocational education and the labour market (OECD, 2018). Tripartite Councils include Employers Associations, Chambers of Commerce, Trade Unions, Ministries of Education and VET schools. Their purpose is to predict the needs of the labour market, which should influence schools' enrolment policy. Their role in shaping enrolment policy is critical, with a major impact on the employability of IVET graduates, especially since it is thought that some VET schools tend to shape their enrolment policy according to the needs of teachers rather than students (ETF, 2022). However, the Tripartite Councils have not yet participated actively in designing the rights and duties of companies and students or in the design of regulations concerning working conditions for students carrying out practical training assignments. The regulatory framework to define the status of students participating in WBL and their legal protection is inadequate, and students are seldom covered by appropriate insurance. Social dialogue is relatively weak (European Commission, 2022a) and should be strengthened so that the social partners could play a more active role in licensing in-company mentors, providing companies with guidance on WBL implementation, and in monitoring and evaluating WBL activities. While the Ministry of Civil Affairs is supposed to coordinate the Tripartite Council at the state level, a pre-requisite for this activity would be the existence of tripartite councils in all administrative units, which is not yet the case, despite support from GIZ.¹⁸

¹⁷ Adopted by the Government of Republika Srpska, 2021

¹⁸ The role of the Tripartite Council is regulated by the Framework Law on Secondary VET Education.

Trade unions are organised in Federation of BiH, Republika Srpska and Brčko District.¹⁹ They participate in the Economic Social Councils at each administrative level and participate in deliberations on educational reforms, including curricula reform. However, they do not have an important role in formulating VET policies, although representatives of the trade unions have participated in workshops and conferences dealing with VET. Their representatives have also played a role in the *Working Group for the Development of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Qualification Framework for Bosnia and Herzegovina 2014-2020* (Council of Ministers, 2014b). In the Federation of BiH, the better organised trade unions in the machine and trade sectors have a major impact on policy decisions related to the economic status of their workers.

3.2 Practical training for VET students

The most prevalent form of WBL in Bosnia and Herzegovina is known as “practical training” which can be carried out either entirely within the school, or partly within the school and partly on the premises of an employer.²⁰ Under the first format, students may undertake practical training either in school workshops, laboratories, school kitchens or in “virtual companies” set up within the school. Under the second format, while spending most of their time at school, students may also spend some time on work experience in a company, ranging from short visits of up to three days a week in a company.²¹ Short work experience placements of up to 15 days can take place during the summer and winter holidays. This latter format of WBL is often used in the tourism and catering sectors, and can also be found in administration and finance (e.g., in banks). The format of winter or summer work placement varies across Bosnia and Herzegovina, from being an obligatory placement to a voluntary choice of students and parents.

Practical training is regulated through local bylaws and is under the responsibility of each education authority. In recent years several international organisations have focused on improving the bylaws and procedures related to practical training, e.g., GIZ and the Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency. Examples can be found in Republika Srpska, in Zenica-Doboj Canton and in Bosnia-Podrinje Goražde Canton. In some cantons, the extent of practical training in companies is a voluntary choice of the students and their parents. Its actual application varies across entities and cantons, partly due to an insufficient involvement of the business community in the education system which is in turn due to the uneven dispersion of enterprises and a lack of coordination between these sectors.

In general there are two main types of WBL contracts: (i) between a school and a company setting out which occupations are taught and how many students will be received each year, and (ii) between parents and companies and the school (the tripartite system). The allocation of students to companies is typically made by the school leader (director/principal), either independently or in collaboration with companies. In some cases, the selection process is transferred to companies who wish to interview students themselves to ensure the students have a positive attitude to acquiring knowledge. Companies often wish to select the best students through these interviews, sometimes involving the parents. Some education authorities in Republika Srpska and in various cantons in the Federation of BiH (Sarajevo Canton, Tuzla Canton Herzegovina-Neretva Canton) support students with scholarships. This is done to increase number of students enrolled in 3-year programmes who tend to spend more hours of practical training in company and are most likely to obtain a job after graduation. These initiatives are also directed at preserving and promoting traditional craft industries organised as SMEs.

¹⁹ At the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in Republika Srpska, trade unions are registered in the register of associations and foundations maintained by the competent Ministry of Justice. In the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the trade union is registered in the register of associations maintained by the Basic Court of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina

²⁰ As it is referred to in legislation on secondary education

²¹ In the past, this was a part of the regular VET system associated with specific occupations, mostly “craft industries” (i.e., SMEs), and 3-year VET profiles involved obligatory practice at small firms or industrial enterprises (Hadziomerović, 2018). This system broke down with the privatisation of the socially owned companies that had previously held strong links with their local VET schools.

There is little information on the number of WBL placements provided in different localities, although it is known that in Zenica Dobož Canton about 2,000 students a year are benefit from WBL placements. With the technical assistance of the GIZ project, the Chamber of Commerce of Sarajevo Canton has developed an online database that gathers information on businesses that offer WBL placements to students; however, due to funding constraints and the closure of the GiZ project in July 2023, the database is no longer in use. Although ministries of education should possess that information, the data is not always collected and is often not publicly available. According to a survey by KulturKontakt Austria (OEAD) only about two fifths (40%) of VET schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina provide practical training for their students (Schmid, 2018). A study carried out several years ago found that the scope, depth and quality of WBL placements are often insufficient to achieve meaningful learning outcomes (Schmid & Gruber, 2018). However, the Torino Process Monitoring Report for 2023 states that the hours of practical training have been increasing in recent years (ETF, 2023). In Republika Srpska and in some cantons in the Federation of BiH it appears that there is relatively good coordination between Public Employment Services (PES), ministries of education and chambers of commerce. The PES in in these areas prepare analyses of labour market needs which they regularly provide to VET schools to assist in shaping their enrolment policies.²² Usually, in the second semester, the PES visit primary schools to inform students about the occupations that are in high demand. The chambers of commerce also gather information on labour market needs, but unfortunately no centralised information is available. Recently, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Republika Srpska has started to register companies that offer WBL contracts to IVET students (Unija poslodavaca, 2023), while the RS Chamber of Commerce and the Institute of Adult Education maintain lists of learning providers.

Based on the rulebooks on practical training, each student is assessed and evaluated by their mentor after a WBL placement. The practice of monitoring and evaluating practical training in companies differs in Republika Srpska and in the cantons of the Federation of BiH. In Zenica Dobož Canton, it is regulated by a rulebook on practical training outside school premises covering the role of school coordinators for practical training and of mentors in companies. In Gorazde Canton, the rulebook on practical training was improved with the support of GIZ, and mentors now actively participate in partnership with school coordinators in the evaluation of students' practice. For example, in Travnik, a town in Central Bosnia Canton, the mentors for students in 3- and 4-year programmes carry out pre-testing to check students' theoretical knowledge in subjects related to their work activities and assess students' achievement during practical work placements. However, site visits paid to companies revealed that negative evaluations of students' practice achievements by company mentors is not always well accepted by schools.

Some school leaders consider that students following 4-year programmes in technical VET schools should spend more time at school studying the general programmes that are needed to progress to university (for example, they consider that placements involving 2 days per week in a company would be more appropriate than those requiring 3 days per week in a company). During an interview at one technical school, the school director emphasised that parents were concerned about their children spending too much time in practical training. These examples show that more consideration should be given by school leaders and parents to assess the appropriate duration of WBL placements in companies. Most students who start secondary school are aged 15 and are not mature enough to decide about their future by themselves, and it is important that parents should be involved in decisions about their professional development.

In practice, students following a 4-year programme typically have less interest in WBL than those following a 3-year programme, apart from having an interest in having a summer job often without a mentor. But there is evidence revealed through enrolment choices that many students are interested in having at least some practical training, particularly in the profiles of electrical and mechanical engineering. Often there is more interest in those profiles than there are WBL places for students in companies. The Association of Secondary School Students carried out a participatory action research

²² Labour market Analysis 2021/2022 in Federation, Republika Srpska and Brčko District.

project led by groups of students and facilitated by an independent consultant. The findings of the research showed that many students are dissatisfied with their secondary VET education due to a lack of sufficient practical training options available to them (Association of Secondary School Students, 2021). The research also highlighted that the roles of responsibilities of the key players in practical training are not clearly defined in the existing laws on secondary education. In many vocational schools the school workshops are not equipped according to modern technological requirements therefore their knowledge and skills could not be improved. In general, students are in favour of practical training and advocate to improve it. Most students considered that WBL placements in companies made their study programmes more interesting and connected them more directly to the world of work. It provides relevant work skills, connecting them to employers who may offer them a job after they graduate. This can be an effective way to support their transition to the labour market. Another study (Youth Study in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2019) found that shows that a half of VET students had no practical training experience, a that a lack of practical training is a major factor underpinning high levels of youth unemployment.

Box 1: TVET School in Brčko District

The technical school in Brčko District enrolls 900 students per year, but the numbers have been falling. The school provides 4-year programmes with 49 classes; only one third of students follow 3-year programmes. Most practical training is provided at school workshops for groups of six to ten students. They have good equipment and machines, but they lack materials needed for practice (e.g., wood for profile of carpenter, pipes for the plumber profile, or metal for metal working programmes). In the final grade, students are required attend practical training at a company for two days per week. However, there are not enough employers who are willing to offer work placements. The Education Department of Brčko District told us that only a few companies offer WBL placements and “they see students more like employees than trainees.” Usually, students are not paid, with the exception that a few companies provide free transport and/or a “bonus” amounting to 20 BAM (10 EUR) for lunch if they stay after one o’clock. Brčko District provides scholarships for students that select enrolment profiles that are in high demanded on the labour market.

Box 2: Technical VET School Banja Luka

During the site visit of the team of experts, the school Principal highlighted that this is the largest school in Bosnia and Herzegovina and used to be the second biggest school in the former Yugoslavia. In 2023/24 school year about 1,500 students were enrolled. The school specialises in mechanical engineering, a subject taken by three quarters of the students, and transport, and has recently introduced a new profile in mining. The school has no problems attracting students, with more candidates for first year entry than they have places available. It provides both 3- and 4-year programmes. In the first grade, students are taught the theory of mechanical engineering or other subjects offered by the school. The school cannot provide adequate practical training itself due to the outdated machines and old technologies it possesses, and companies are not willing to support school directly by investing in new machines and equipment. This is a major concern of the school management as the school lacks funds for these expenditures and relies on outside donations. For example, the school recently signed a contract with a donor for 1.7 million BAM (870,000 EUR) for the purchase of CNC equipment. The director also stated that the school lacks financial autonomy and would be more independent if it had its own subaccount. This is a challenge for most VET schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina, although some schools have achieved this status (e.g., the School of Agriculture, the School of Tourism and some others).

About 500 students undertake practical training in a company each year. Last year 460 students were included in WBL placements in 186 (mostly large) companies. One such company, Elas Metal Export, has 300 employees and provides mentors during students’ WBL placements as well as allowances for the students. They take time to meet the parents at the first interview with the students, providing an example of good cooperation between school and a company. In addition to training in practical issues, the company also provides theoretical training which is somewhat rare. The students taking 3-year programmes have more hours of practical training than those on 4-year programmes, and in this way gain skills to use on the labour market after graduation. Almost all students find employment after graduation. Many find jobs in Croatia, Slovenia or other EU countries. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry tracks student outcomes and find that some specialities are more in demand, e.g., mechanical engineering and transportation and traffic occupations, often in a family business or elsewhere on the recommendation from friends or former students.

The school faces the challenge of a lack of cooperation between teacher coordinators and company mentors. The coordinators do not have time to check on students to ensure that they are doing well or verify what they are doing. This is a general challenge throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina related to WBL practice. In addition, such cooperation is not well regulated, and should be better supported by the Ministry of Education and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry through better training for school coordinators and company mentors. There is also some misunderstanding about whether the teaching practice at a company should follow the school curricula. Effective monitoring should be established as envisaged by the rulebook on practical training in Republika Srpska. The usual practice should be that employers take part in drafting and adjusting the curricula, due to the rapid changes in technologies and digitalisation.

The two examples of VET schools presented above reveal the common context of lack of adequate equipment and resources alongside wide differences in the modes of implementation of WBL related to the time that students spend in practical training, to the contexts of practical training, and to the financial contribution to students or other bonuses that companies provide. Despite these best practice examples, our interviews indicated that in-company training is often too narrow for 3-year IVET students. There is also a lack of regulation of the WBL learning activities, and a lack of monitoring of what has actually been learnt. One of the interviewees during the site visit suggested that a solution to this problem might be to establish multi-company training centres (i.e., training centres established by several companies in cooperation with one another), to widen the scope of training offered through existing WBL practices.

3.3 Dual education reforms

More recently a modified format of practical training known as “dual education” has been promoted for VET schools with the support of donor organisations and of strategic documents at different levels of government.²³ As with traditional practical training in VET schools, 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. However, unlike traditional practical training, 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.

Unlike dual education in Austria or Germany, however, in Bosnia and Herzegovina the student retains the status of student, rather than taking the status of an employee of the company at which training takes place (Schmid, 2018). The difference between the “dual organised” system in Bosnia and Herzegovina and German dual education was described by one interviewee as follows: “In Germany the student belongs to the company; in Bosnia and Herzegovina the student belongs to the school.” Dual education initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina are therefore “school-based” rather than “company-based”. The German aid agency GIZ has helped to establish what they call a “dual organised” system, rather than fully German-style dual education. It does not involve “internship” as in Germany, and the companies involved do not teach the curriculum as part of WBL placements. Thus, the form of dual education being introduced in Bosnia and Herzegovina has its own characteristics because the school remains the responsible actor. The education authorities are comfortable with this arrangement and are only prepared to take on board some elements of classical dual education. This approach is appropriate to local conditions and companies are becoming more interested in participating in dual education due to the emerging shortages of workers with the necessary skills. As a result, employers are becoming more interested in dual education than they used to be. Employers are beginning to advocate for “dual education” through their Employer Associations, as they consider that this could be the best way to obtain a skilled workforce needed for current labour market conditions.

²³ This type of arrangement is based upon the vocational education systems in Germany and Switzerland. Its application is rather more advanced in Montenegro (Thomas & Molz, 2020) and in Serbia (Grujić, 2021) than it is in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Under dual organised education, WBL that takes place at a company should take up 25% of a students' time, while students can undertake practical training placements at more than one company. Dual education involves a payment to the students while carrying out their WBL placements, but in the few initiatives for dual education that exist students rarely receive a payment for their work in a company (Branković, 2022).²⁴ A system of tax relief for employers has been proposed, but has not yet been taken up.

Although dual education is not yet recognised in the law in the Federation of BiH it is in an experimental phase, and is being implemented in various forms in some cantons through the adoption of by-laws.²⁵ For example a book of rules (bylaws) has been adopted in Una Sana Canton, Zenica Doboje Canton, and Bosnia-Podrinje Gorazde Canton and similar bylaws are expected to be soon adopted in Tuzla Canton. The bylaws enable the implementation of dual education within the existing set of laws. The first success was achieved in Gorazde and other cantons quickly followed, adopting most of the same rules. The rules regulate various aspects of dual education including the curricula and students' responsibility to keep a diary of practice in the company where they carry out their WBL. Before the adoption of the new bylaws there was no defined basis for dual education, only some vague stipulations in the laws on education. However, as one interviewee pointed out, while it is easy to adopt laws, it is more difficult to implement them due to the many challenges, not the least of which being the capacity of companies to support the dual education system.

In Sarajevo Canton, a law has been drafted but has not yet been adopted by Parliament Assembly and there is a need for further rounds of public discussion. The proposed law implies that WBL will take place for two days per week in the 2nd or 3rd year of study, and three days per week in the 3rd or 4th year. It is foreseen that these days will be paid, and that training will take place in line with the curriculum. The Ministry of Economy is involved in developing the dual education reforms, along with the Chamber of Commerce of Sarajevo. The first pilot school implementing "dual education" in Sarajevo Canton is the Economic School in Sarajevo.

Box 3: The Economic School, Sarajevo

The Economic School started implementing dual education in 2018 according to German model of dual education adjusted to the Bosnia and Herzegovina context. The school is a four-year technical school with 500 students and has a strong demand for places. In the school year 2022/23 the school had one class for bank technicians and five classes for economic technicians. The school started its dual education implementation with GIZ support in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the Raiffeisen Bank, and later on some other banks joined to offer students practical internships. There is a school coordinator, and mentors in the banks and their cooperation is on a high level. The students who choose the profile of bank technician, have two days of practice in a bank in the 2nd grade. In the 3rd and 4th grade they spend three days in banks. Due to current regulations in the Law on Secondary Education, the issue of the financial contribution to the students is not regulated. However, the banks often decide to give students a bonus, which at the start of their cooperation was 50 BAM (25 EUR) but has now increased to 150 BAM (76 EUR). Students can also work there during the holidays, usually summer when the banks offer 450 BAM (230 EUR).

The model has been implemented successfully and students are satisfied with the practice. Nevertheless, the school Director highlighted that there was more interest when dual education was first introduced than there is now. Some banks offer employment to students after their graduation. In general, students are satisfied with their work practice in the banks, but interest in the bank technician profile has decreasing more recently due to parents' dissatisfaction with the hours students spend at work. The Director highlighted the advantages to students who have practical experience in banks. They become more mature, ready to the world of work, have more knowledge and skills in the field of their interest. However, most graduates continue their education at higher education institutions (90%). Most of them choose the Faculty of Economics at the University of Sarajevo, while some of them choose the Law Faculty. Other graduates seek jobs on labour market, but only few of them succeed in getting a job at the level or in the profile they are educated for.

²⁴ It was reported that 342 high school students were paid under a dual education contract in Republika Srpska in 2022 ("System of dual education is becoming more popular in BiH", Sarajevo Times, 6/9/2022).

²⁵ A project called "DUALSCI" has developed a general model for the introduction of dual education in higher education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. See: <https://dualsci.unze.ba/project-info/objectives/>

In Republika Srpska, the law on secondary education was amended in June 2022 and in 2023,²⁶ separating practical training from dual education. The amendments introduce “apprenticeship” for students at companies, while it remains possible to do traditional practical training at a company. Dual education is implemented in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Republika Srpska in specific sectors. The next step will be to draft the bylaws and create a rule book on practical training/ dual education in secondary education. In the system being developed, a company must be certified, i.e. accredited to receive students.²⁷ These aspects are defined in bylaws, including the provision of insurance to students during their WBL placements, and formal contracts describing students’ rights and responsibilities.

A key issue concerns the selection of mentors for students within dual education. Initially, there was an attempt to remove employers from the process and focus everything on the Chamber of Commerce and Industry who was to provide the mentors. However, in the view of one interviewee, mentors should be provided by employers because the Chambers are not independent bodies with an ability to critically assess the relevant issues. It was claimed during the interview that the Chamber tends to protect the interests of the larger companies rather than the interests of the small and medium sized companies (SMEs) who are its most numerous members. The employers, who are independent participants in dual education, should therefore be more involved in providing mentors. Dual education should be open to as many companies as possible to ensure capacity within the system as well as competition to raise quality. The mentors should be certified, and if the Chamber is the only party doing this the quality of the mentors may be sub-optimal as they may be provided with a certificate to practice while lacking sufficient competences to perform their duties.

In Republika Srpska, some companies have their own training centres where they are implementing dual education. For example, a Slovenian company called Kolektor (a licensed provider of dual education) has its own training centre where it instructs students how to operate CNC machines. The programme is a joint venture of the company and the Ministry of Education which believes that this is the best way to implement dual education, even though it needs a lot of investment.

3.4 Encouraging employer involvement in work-based learning

The key learning providers for students, other than their schools, are the companies in which they undertake their practical training. Although different formats of practical training could support students in learning vocational skills, the best practical training takes place in the work environment. One interviewed employer commented that students cannot gain relevant skills if they do not experience real work processes. Yet employers often lack an interest in WBL, and school leaders often report that only a few companies are interested in training their students.

One disincentive facing employers offering WBL placements is the practice of “poaching” by other companies who recruit their trainees, so companies risk losing the benefit of their investment. Competition among employers is so intense that even IVET students on WBL practical training placements are sometimes poached by competitor companies. Moreover, many employers lack information about WBL and about their rights and obligations, highlighting the need to raise their awareness of the support that is available to them (Sweet, 2018). In addition, 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.

One interview with representatives from a company in Travnik in Central Bosnia Canton that offers practical training to IVET students in the mechanical engineering and metal processing sectors provides an insight into the challenges they face due to the outdated curricula in local VET schools. In response to these challenges, the company aims to establish its own primary and secondary VET school to

²⁶ Official Gazette of Republika Srpska, no 41718, 92/20, 55/23

²⁷ This is similar to the law adopted in Serbia.

educate students in modern approaches to metal processing in the era of the digital transformation. The company is interested in the development of WBL activities and participates in the Employers Association of the Central Bosnia Canton. The mentors in the company are willing to educate teachers at the local VET schools, but it seems that the teachers do not show much interest in it. Currently, the company has 60 WBL students, with some travelling to the company from another Canton.

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. Nor do many employers provide insurance, and schools are often unable to afford insurance for their students on a WBL placement. Zenica Dobož canton is one of the few that have regulated WBL safety issues and insurance on the basis of the “decent work” principles set out by ILO. Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), in particular, often find it difficult to cover the practical training curriculum or provide protection at work. At the same time, some schools worry that more hours of practical training in companies may diminish the status and job security of their teaching staff.²⁸ In addition, while technology is advancing faster than schools can adapt, schools cannot purchase the latest equipment on which to train the students, and employers rarely give students any training in these new technologies. It is widely thought that unless these problems are fixed, skill shortages in some professions will only get worse.

Moreover, in recent years, companies have begun to face retention challenges due to outmigration of labour from Bosnia and Herzegovina. They are therefore paying more attention to training and retraining and cooperating more than in the past with education institutions. In a recent survey, more than two fifths (44%) of employers expressed an interest in offering WBL opportunities to IVET students (ETF, 2020). Employer Associations are also becoming more aware of the need for appropriate skills among their new recruits to operate new technologies related to the green transition and emerging applications of artificial intelligence.

However, although employers must be willing to collaborate in order to enable WBL activities to take place, many are not yet ready to be involved in implementing dual education. A recent survey showed that almost two fifths (39%) of interviewed companies would be interested to participate in some form of dual education covering students in higher education institutions organised on a contract basis, while over two thirds (70%) had the capacity to do so (Kovacevic, 2021). It has been argued that in order to realise this potential, 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, and students should receive some form of payment to encourage them to participate in WBL opportunities.

3.5 Financing practical training and dual education

According to available data from BiH agency for statistics, public and private expenditures and subsidies from abroad for educational institutions in 2021 amounted to 1,776 billion BAM or 4.5% of the gross domestic product.²⁹ In 2018, Bosnia and Herzegovina allocated 4% of its GDP to education, close to EU average (4.7%) (World Bank, 2019). However, according to an analysis by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (2018)³⁰, a large part of these funds are allocated to the administrative costs of the responsible education authorities and less than 1% of school budgets are spent on quality improvements. The ministries of education cover teachers’ salaries, while local municipalities and city authorities cover the material costs of infrastructure and equipment. Public expenditure on education therefore tends to neglect school

²⁸ Comments received at the kick-off meeting for this project in June 2023.

²⁹

https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fbhas.gov.ba%2Fdata%2Fpublikacije%2FSaopstenja%2F2023%2FEDU_06_2021_Y1_1_BS.pdf&psig=AOvVaw1u0kYZHRgD3KHSWXTmANG1&ust=1710879584176000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CAGQrpoMahcKEwjgnOjA0f6EAxUAAAAAHQAAAAQBA

³⁰ <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/14788.pdf> (fes.de)

infrastructure investment, especially in the smaller cantons and while some schools continue to improve, others lack sufficient equipment to provide in-school practical learning. This is reflected in the finding of the OECD PISA survey for Bosnia and Herzegovina that almost half (45.6%) of students attend schools whose principals reported that inadequate or poor physical infrastructure hinders a school's capacity to provide instruction (OECD, 2019).³¹

The mode of financing WBL has not yet been resolved and is defined differently in the by-laws of each administrative unit (Association of Employers of Republika Srpska, 2023). Students are generally more interested in WBL in companies if they are paid for their work, and this could motivate the design of financial arrangements; in dual education the expected wage will be 15% of the average salary in the previous year. However, SMEs often find it difficult to provide financial remuneration to WBL students. Companies complain about the costs of providing practical training and tend to neglect the benefits of such training to them (Schmid & Gruber, 2018).

Priority area 4 of the "BiH Riga Conclusions" covers the financing WBL, which (it argues) should be defined jointly by employers' associations and the educational authorities, and Tripartite Councils can play an important role in this. Other financial mechanisms such as through centralised funds financed from contributions paid by companies are also possible (Council of Ministers, 2021). In Zenica-Doboj Canton, cost-sharing for WBL has been introduced through a pilot programme for two occupational profiles.³² In this programme, employers offering WBL opportunities are rewarded with higher scores in public calls for grants, and with tax exemptions for meals provided to trainees. In addition, employment injury benefits are provided for students during in-company training.

Due to the lack of regulation related to WBL, one company in Travnik has set up its own mechanism for financing WBL. In the second grade of 3-year VET programmes the company provides a bonus of 200 BAM (102 EUR), rising in the second semester to 300 BAM (153 EUR), and students also have winter and/or summer practices (*ferijalna praksa*). They also provide lunch and transport, on which the company pays taxes. The company has taken full financial responsibility for its WBL students. As companies react to the growing labour shortages by increasing their offers for WBL placements, this sort of arrangement is likely to be introduced more widely.

3.6 Assessment and quality assurance

All students regardless of their educational pathways have the right to receive quality instruction. The OECD PISA Assessment 2018 revealed that in Bosnia and Herzegovina too few students acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills, especially in 3-year VET programmes. The assessment showed that VET students' achievements do not increase as they progress through their school grades, unlike in general programmes. Students attending gymnasias outperformed students attending 3-year vocational and 4-year technical programme in reading, mathematics and science, and students attending 3-year vocational programme have the lowest score in these subjects (OECD, 2018). One interviewee during the site visit highlighted that IVET students have relatively low competences in maths, which is an obstacle during some types of practical training.

Quality assurance in WBL is assessed through evaluation of students' achievements during their practical work either at school workshop or in a company setting. The assessment system is regulated by various laws and bylaws for secondary schools in the entities, cantons, and Brčko District. The criteria for assessment during practical training varies across the different administrative units. The Pedagogical Institutes in Republika Srpska, cantons in the Federation of BiH, and Brčko District are responsible for establishing the external evaluation of students' achievements in VET schools. However, external

³¹ These data can be found online in OECD, PISA 2018 Database Table II.B1.5.18.

³² In this programme, new curricula were piloted for Carpenter and Technician for Wood Processing based on learning outcomes using a methodology developed to bridge the gap between modular and traditional curricula.

evaluation has only been introduced in Tuzla canton for VET graduates in 3- and 4-year programmes. It is an entry point for the Matura exam in technical VET schools and the final exam in VET schools.

If practical training is organised in a school setting, the assessment of students' achievements is done by a teacher, while the assessment of the students who have their practice in companies is done jointly by a coordinator of practical training and a mentor. Assessment is regulated by the respective rulebooks on practical training. There are some good examples in Zenica Dobož Canton and Gorazde Canton on developing a modern approach to practical training in companies. GIZ and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) have supported the development of a manual on Practical Training and Learning in Dual Education³³ (GIZ, 2023) to raise the quality of practical training in companies. This manual consists of six modules and includes key elements for organising dual education in a company: students' selection for WBL in companies; planning of practical training; students' portfolio of practical training, documenting practical work done and students' knowledge and skills acquired in a certain profile and their self-reflection on it. The portfolio also serves as the basis for students' assessment in the company and tracking students' presence during their practice. Separate modules cover methods applied in practical training by the mentor and the evaluation and assessment of students' achievements and final exam. The Manual requires the cooperation of competent mentors, chambers of commerce, local communities, and students.

A good practice example of assessment of practical training is found in Gorazde Canton, where a new rulebook on evaluation and assessment of students in VET schools has been used since the school year 2021/2022³⁴. In addition to applied knowledge, these assessments cover students' key competencies and practical assignments. Every student has their daily portfolio and progress portfolio and assessment is carried out by a school coordinator or a mentor in a company covering the application of theoretical knowledge in practice. The progress portfolio contains a collection of students' practical assignments, a self-evaluation, a record of experience, and an evaluation of practical skills.

³³ The Manual has been developed in cooperation with Chamber of Commerce of Zenica Dobož Canton with the project "TVET in Bosnia and Herzegovina

³⁴ Rulebook on development, evaluation and assessment of students in secondary schools, <http://mo.bpkq.gov.ba>

4. WORK-BASED LEARNING IN CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (CVET)

Continuing vocational education and training for adults (CVET) comprises internships, traineeships, apprenticeships, and company-based training and re-training, as well as non-vocational adult education.³⁵ These can be delivered through formal, non-formal and informal learning processes through which adults develop and enrich their capabilities for living and working (ETF 2022c). While there are no hard and fast definitions for these concepts applicable across countries, these can be considered as conceptually distinct forms of work-based learning in CVET. 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).³⁶ 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).³⁷ 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.³⁸

Apprenticeships are not widely used in Bosnia and Herzegovina but are likely to become of greater policy relevance following the introduction of the Youth Guarantees (see section 5 below). In apprenticeship programmes, training is provided over an extended period (e.g., of more than six months). This can produce more direct business benefits than short-exposure trainee programmes (Sweet, 2018). For example, apprentices who are trained by a company are more likely to understand the specific needs of a business and stay with it, compared to employees recruited directly from the labour market. In the EU, some countries have made apprenticeships more attractive for employers and learners by providing incentives to encourage enterprises to offer apprenticeships including financial subsidies or tax exemptions (European Commission, 2020c). Some countries give labels or certificates to companies in recognition of the quality of the apprenticeships they provide. Apprenticeships also provide benefits to learners with a higher proportion in the EU finding a job compared to graduates of dual education programmes in secondary VET education (European Commission, 2020c: 18).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina apprenticeship (*naukovanje* or *šegrtovanje*) as a format of WBL in CVET has been recognised by law in Republika Srpska. According to the Republika Srpska Law on Labour (Article 29), an apprenticeship can last up to one year, after which the apprentice takes a proficiency exam to carry out work in the chosen profession. The apprenticeship is carried out under a paid employment contract and subject to the labour law. Due to the promotion of apprenticeship across the EU, and since Bosnia and Herzegovina will join the EU Alliances for Apprenticeship, apprenticeship should also be taken into consideration for future planning of WBL policies in the Federation of BiH and Brčko District BiH. It should also be noted that the *European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships* sets out that apprenticeships should be organised within a regulatory framework based on a fair and equitable partnership approach, including a structured dialogue among relevant

³⁵ Cedefop defines “Continuing vocational education and training (CVET) is education or training after initial education or entry into working life, aimed at helping individuals to improve or update their knowledge and/or skills; acquire new skills for a career move or retraining; continue their personal or professional development [...] In that sense, CVET is basically a part of adult learning oriented towards professional development.” (Cedefop, 2015).

³⁶ European Commission (2018) lists four types of traineeships: Traineeships within educational curricula, traineeships as a mandatory part of professional training, traineeships as part of active labour market policies (ALMPs), and open-market traineeships.

³⁷ The concept of “adult apprenticeship” has become more accepted as the average working age has been extended in line with the increase in retirement ages to reflect improved health of the populations (Fuller et al., 2015).

³⁸ [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Continuing_Vocational_Training_Survey_\(CVTS\)_methodology#Basic_concepts](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Continuing_Vocational_Training_Survey_(CVTS)_methodology#Basic_concepts)

stakeholders and accreditation for companies that offer apprenticeships backed up by quality assurance measures (European Council, 2018).

Some insight into the challenges in implementing CVET can be found in the European Agenda for Adult Learning (European Council, 2021) which supports adult engagement in all learning forms but recognises that adult learning is often fragmented across sectors, policy areas and legal frameworks. In comparison with IVET, CVET is more varied in every way, including in its curriculum, in its work-based learning arrangements, its duration, the human resources required, the type of provider, and in its funding arrangements. CVET is based on the needs for upskilling and reskilling employees with redundant skills, and the needs of employers for a more skilled workforce. One conclusion that can be drawn from our interviews with employers and their professional associations is that there is lack of awareness and understanding of work-based learning in CVET and of the benefits that it has to offer. Work-based learning in CVET is typically viewed as an undefined form of learning with unclear outcomes, and sometimes has a negative connotation.

4.1 The policy framework for CVET

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, CVET is considered to be the vocational element of “adult education”, which also includes non-vocational education. The provision of adult education is lower than in many EU countries and in some other countries in the neighbouring region (McBride, 2019; OECD, 2021). According to the *Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2003) adult education includes professional training, new training, retraining and other activities that provide lifelong learning.³⁹ In addition, the *Framework Law on Vocational Education and Training in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2008) provides that schools may organise CVET for adults with the consent of the relevant educational authorities, for which they may charge fees (Eurydice, 2023a). The *Strategic Platform for Development of Adult Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning in BiH for the Period 2014 to 2020* was adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2014.⁴⁰

By 2019, laws on adult education were endorsed by all education authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (McBride, 2019; Council of Ministers, 2021). These laws made it possible to open private adult education centres and offer adult education in the form of CVET as an activity in centres and institutions from the business or public sphere (Hadziomerović, 2019). Republika Srpska has adopted an *Adult Education Strategy* for the period 2021-2031⁴¹ and an *Adult Education Plan* for 2022; it also has an *Institute for Adult Education*. In 2022, Herceg-Bosnia Canton adopted a set of regulations for the regulation of the field of adult education and the Zenica-Doboj Canton adopted an *Adult Education Plan* for the period 2022-2024 (Eurydice, 2023b). In Bosnia-Podrinje Canton Goražde, the *Strategy for Adult Education 2018-2022* has been adopted to integrate adult learning into the education system. In addition, adult education is one of the strategic goals of the *Development Strategy of the Brčko District for the period 2021-2027*. Although the legal framework for adult education exists in all administrative units of Bosnia and Herzegovina, most administrative units still do not have by-laws that specifically regulate registration, accreditation of CVET programmes, quality assurance, and financing of adult education.

Work-based CVET lacks country-wide policies. Although limited in number and to specific administrative locations, some guidelines regarding WBL in CVET (as opposed to work-based learning in IVET) can be found in Republika Srpska and in Goražde in Bosnia Podrinje Canton (BPC Goražde).⁴² The strategic

³⁹ However, the implementation of the Strategic Platform for the Development of Adult Education in 2014–2020 suffered from a lack of resources and the absence of a state-wide system of qualifications (McBride, 2019).

⁴⁰ Službeni glasnik BiH, no. 96/14

⁴¹ The Strategy for Adult Education of Republika Srpska for the period 2021-2031 has five strategic goals: improvement of the legal framework in which the adult education system is developed; development of a more flexible adult education system and greater accessibility of adult education; labor market support and cooperation with social partners; improving the quality of adult education; and modernization of adult education process.

⁴² Strategy of Adult Education in RS (2021-2031) and Adult Education Strategy of BPC Goražde "Education for the Next Age" for the period 2019-2023

goals of the *Strategy for Adult Education of Republika Srpska* are the improvement of the legal framework for adult education; development of a more flexible adult education system and improved access to adult education; labour market support and cooperation with social partners; improving the quality of adult education; and the modernisation of the adult education process. The *Adult Education Strategy of Goražde* for the period 2019-2023 contains proposals for investment in the development of new skills, as well as the development of a system of adult education and lifelong learning. The latter strategy aims to develop capacities for education and learning of all citizens through the full integration of the concept of adult learning into the education system of BPC Goražde.

Another relevant policy document is the *Employment Strategy in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2023–2030)*, which, through its four strategic goals, aims to contribute to increasing personal employability, developing and improving the alignment of skills with the requirements of the labour market, promoting the capacity of companies in the private sector to open formal jobs, ensuring inclusion of hard-to-employ categories in the labour market through more effective active labour market policies, and strengthening labour market management and increasing the capacity for policy implementation. However, despite all this legislative and planning activity, participation in CVET remains low.

The formats of the different modes of training for adults differ between entities and cantons. In general, work-based learning in CVET is regulated by the provisions of the *Labour Law* covering temporary and part-time jobs and temporary labour relations. Republika Srpska offers traineeship and volunteering in accordance with the *Labour Law*⁴³ and the *Law on Volunteering*.⁴⁴ The Public Employment Institute of Republika Srpska has implemented a *Programme to Support the Employment of Young People with a University Degree in the Status of Trainees in 2022*. It trains young unemployed people with a university degree who take a professional exam at the end of their training. Trainees are paid 600 KM per month by the Employment Institute and while the employer pays the cost of social contributions and taxes.⁴⁵ In Brčko District BiH, a trainee is a graduate of secondary or tertiary education who is employed for the first time, and who should pass a professional examination, or who needs to gain a work experience in his/her profession. The trainee is entitled to 80% of the salary of the respective job and receives training for a maximum of one year. In the Federation of BiH, a traineeship is defined in the same way but only pays 70% of the going rate for the job and does not require an employment contract.⁴⁶ Programmes in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina support the trainee placements of unemployed medium-to-high skilled people without any work experience for six months to one year (Ademi, 2018).

4.2 The institutional framework for work-based learning in CVET

Work-based CVET is practiced in various ways in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and different types of training take place in a range of locations (inside or outside the workplace), durations, timings (full-time or part-time), origins of trainers (internal or external), and numbers of participants per training. The provision of work-based learning in CVET leans to the formal education sector, but due to widespread skill shortages, difficulties in finding qualified labour and the emigration of skilled workers it is receiving increased attention by all stakeholders, especially among employers. The modalities of CVET are typically based on *ad hoc* practical considerations and individual company capacities. Some practices combine on- and off-the-job locations to prepare learners for on-the-job positions. In contrast to employers' training efforts, VET schools rarely engage in CVET for adults, despite a legal framework which allows them to do so, and despite the availability of capacity. This may be related to their inability to retain funds earned from the provision of adult education services (e.g., in a sub-account). Schools

⁴³ Official Gazette of the Republika Srpska No. 1/16 and

<https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/61872/119644/F133920980/BIH61872%20Eng.pdf>

⁴⁴ Official Gazette of Republika Srpska "No. 89/13

⁴⁵ See: <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/bosnia-and-herzegovina/35-traineeships-and-apprenticeships>

⁴⁶ Ibid.

are obliged to hand over any additional income generated through provision of adult education services to their respective local self-government.

Public employment services (PES) provide training for adults within their active labour market policies (ALMPs). Many employers complain that in a context of a shortage of skilled labour they are not satisfied with the skills of the workers who are sent to them from the PES. Interviewed employers consider that the PES at all levels of government require substantial reorganisation and improved capacity.⁴⁷ In the Federation of BiH, the PES provides a programme called “Training for the labour market 2023” which aims to involve 500 unemployed jobseekers in WBL in participating companies to acquire additional skills to increase their employability. This programme involves co-financing of training costs of up to 500 EUR per person per month. The duration of the training is a maximum of four months and can be implemented at the employers premises, in VET institutions, in training centres or in other organisations that are registered to provide adult education. Unemployed persons willing to participate in this programme must download an application form, fill it out and submit it to the PES by mail, along with the certificate of the competent bureau that they are registered as unemployed persons, a copy of the individual employment plan signed by their counsellor and both the unemployed person and the adviser's opinion on the justification of participation in the training. If the unemployed person met all the criteria, the PES delivers a signed and certified “Training Voucher” to the unemployed person. The “Training Voucher” is valid for 60 days and the unemployed person is responsible for finding an employer to provide the training, while the employer has to apply to a public call. Each employer can be granted co-financing of training for a maximum of 20 persons. In Brčko District, the PES do not provide reskilling or upskilling to jobseekers beyond a few courses for which they normally announce a public invitation. The selection of training providers goes through a public call. One of the issues mentioned by interlocutors was related to the weak response of job seekers to training courses, even though they were free of charge. On the territory of Brčko District there are only two private companies that provide adult education. VET schools can provide training for adults but only two schools are on the register of learning providers for adult education.

The Institute for Adult Education (IAE) of Republika Srpska is an administrative organisation within the Ministry of Education and Culture of Republika Srpska and is responsible for monitoring and improving adult education. The Law on Adult Education defines various competences of the IAE, such as approving and proposing adult education programmes, checking the knowledge, skills and abilities of adults in its Examination Centre, and issuing certificates on the completion adult education. One of the competences of the Institute is the implementation of the Republika Srpska adult education plan. The responsibility for the supervision of health and safety at work and insurance for trainees is held by the Ministry of Labour. Each of the aforementioned institutions bears accountability for ensuring that the content of the programmes created by the IAE meets the needs of employers and training participants. So, the quality assurance of CVET, including the work-based learning element, is fragmented between these three institutions. According to the IAE, there is little vision or clarity in the strategic development of the industrial sector in Republika Srpska, and so it is difficult to develop forward-looking programmes. Further, the education and training system shows rigidity, and there is a need for greater flexibility in terms of the length of programmes and especially the speed with which programmes are accredited. At the moment, after being submitted, the programme accreditation process lasts three months, which is too long for employers.

Since 2010, the IAE has partnered with the Chamber of Commerce of Republika Srpska and the Association of Employers of Republika Srpska to design CVET programmes for young people aged 15-25. To become involved in the programme, employers must register with the IAE. About four fifths of the available short courses are used by private businesses and are designed to meet the *ad hoc* demands of employers. Some of these employer-driven training programmes were initially created for the shoe

⁴⁷ It was claimed by several interviewees that there is a labour shortage in Bosnia and Herzegovina due to emigration, and that since employers need workers and should therefore be interested in the Youth Guarantee to provide young workers to the market.

and textile industries, but the emerging shortage of skilled labour has created a high demand for short courses for CNC operators in the metal and wood industries.

The Chambers of Commerce are involved in CVET by preparing and adopting adult education plans. Where such plans exist (Republika Srpska, Sarajevo Canton, Zenica Doboje Canton, Tuzla Canton) they play a crucial role in bridging the gap between education and employment. They provide counselling, upskilling, and reskilling for employees, ensuring that they have the necessary skills for the job market. Additionally, they contribute to the development of work-based learning in CVET programmes, ensuring that adult education is aligned with the needs of the economy. The chambers also propose standards of practical knowledge and strive to improve and enhance training programmes. Moreover, they maintain a comprehensive register of employers where work-based learning in CVET can be carried out, facilitating the work experience for learners.

In response to the shortage of skilled labour in the metal and wood industries, the Chamber of Commerce of Republika Srpska and the Employers' Association of Republika Srpska have established training centres for specialised skills. These centres are accredited by the IAE, which is responsible for tracking programme implementation and compliance. After compliance checks, these programmes are delivered to authorised adult learning providers. Since its establishment, the Employers Association training centre has retrained 130 unemployed individuals, with an additional 30 expected to be retrained. The training centre is an accredited adult education provider established with financial assistance of the USAID WHAM project. The Training Center has engaged 16 companies to provide high-quality, specialised professional trainings in the metal and wood processing sector. The Employer Association of the Federation of BiH has also established its own training centre (Employer Association, 2023).

Compared to Republika Srpska, where a functioning CVET system exists, the situation in Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina is limited and disconnected from the local labour market, both in terms of its offer and its set-up. One of the traits of the Brčko District BiH is the absence of an organised system of non-formal education and the lack of awareness of the importance of non-formal education. Brčko District BiH also suffers from an absence of cooperation and support for CVET providers and an absence of financial support for the development of CVET programmes in accordance with the needs of the labour market. Brčko District BiH adopted its Law on adult education in 2018⁴⁸. The lack of by-laws leaves CVET programmes without clear guidelines and standards to follow, leading to inconsistencies in the quality and accessibility of CVET across different regions. Additionally, the absence of by-laws hinders the establishment of funding mechanisms or support systems for adult learners.

DVV International has assisted in the tracking of learner progress by issuing public documents through the Information System for Adult Education Control and Monitoring (ISKOOM). The establishment of this platform is a significant step in the digitalisation of adult education in four administrative units of the Federation of BiH, namely Sarajevo Canton, Una-Sana Canton, Tuzla Canton, and Bosnian-Podrinje Canton Goražde, and Brčko District and (earlier) in Republika Srpska. The system is a result of exchange of experience and transferring the know-how of the IAE in the field of quality assurance, control and monitoring. Ministries of education in the above administrative units will have access to statistical data on all programmes of adult learning (formal and non-formal), which will allow them to make more informed decisions about the planning, budgeting, and delivery of adult education. DVV International also organises meetings at which education authorities exchange information on current trends in the field of adult education to identify needs and opportunities for mutual cooperation. An instrument for self-evaluation of adult learning providers was presented at the last meeting of this group held in December 2023.

The ILO has implemented projects to improve the quality of training programmes and ensure that participants have access to employment opportunities. These initiatives have involved educational authorities in the process of certification and accreditation of training programmes and mentors through

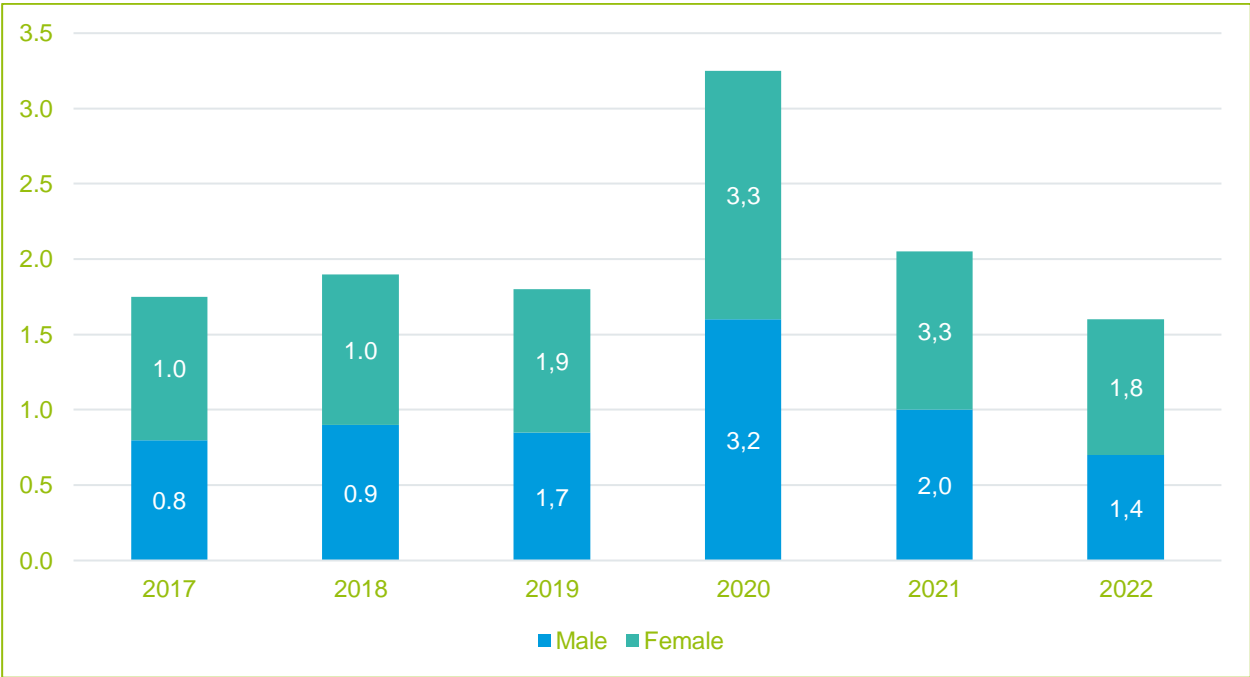
⁴⁸ "Official Gazette of BiH ", No 2/18

local employment partnerships in 20 municipalities. Through its programme, the ILO has certified over 60 different courses and secured employment for 250 out of 960 training participants. These reskilling and upskilling training programmes are intended for persons registered at PES as unemployed; they typically last 180 hours, and aim to provide learners with the necessary skills to secure immediate employment. The highest demand for the training programmes is found in the metal, plastic, wood processing, hospitality, agriculture, IT, and mining industries. Training providers include both private sector companies and secondary mixed schools. One of the requirements of the ILO project is that training providers must provide certificates for the students. By selecting places with established learning providers, the programme serves as a model for other regions in the country to replicate and adopt similar practices.

4.3 The extent of CVET in Bosnia and Herzegovina

An important source of data on participation in adult education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the Adult Education Survey, which was initiated in 2017. This is based on the Eurostat Adult Education Survey, which is repeated in five-year cycles. Following that, the next round of survey in BiH was planned to be conducted in 2022, but due to lack of financial resources, it was cancelled. In between these years the statistical agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina conducted Labour Force Survey under the auspices of the EU Pillar for Social Rights. This survey addressed a group of working-age people aged 25 to 64, and inquired about participation in formal, non-formal and informal learning in the twelve months prior to the survey. The survey shows that the share of adults participating in lifelong learning has not increased in recent years, and has even fallen from 3.3% in 2020 to 1.8% in 2022 (see Figure 2). This compares to a much higher proportion of adults in the EU at 10.4% in 2022, and is also lower than the 4.4% observed in neighbouring Serbia.

Figure 2: Share of adults aged 25-64 participating in lifelong learning, 2017-2022 (%).



Source: Council of Ministers, 2022; Sarajlić, 2023. Note: participants in adult education in the 4 weeks prior to the survey as a % of all adults. The Labour Force Survey is a survey covering persons aged 25 to 64 who live in private households. The survey collects data on the participation of respondents in all forms of lifelong learning - formal, non-formal and informal learning.

All adults engaged in formal, non-formal, and informal learning activities for their professional development are included within the category of CVET, which encompasses employed, unemployed

and inactive adults preparing to potentially re-join the workforce. Data on the involvement of adults in Bosnia and Herzegovina in formal, non-formal, and informal CVET, regardless of whether they are employed, unemployed, or inactive is limited and comprehensive statistical data covering WBL in CVET for people in employment is also scarce.⁴⁹ Some data can be found from the Bosnia and Herzegovina statistical agency, from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), from adult education surveys carried out by international organisations such as DVV International, and from the European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) surveys. CVET programmes are not monitored, prohibiting tracking participation in adult education programmes, and non-formal adult education providers are not required to gather student records or submit monitoring reports to statistical agencies.

Some companies provide training to their own employees through their own training centres, which provides another form of work-based learning in CVET provision. In 2019 it was reported that about two fifths (38%) of companies provide some formal training to their employees, and that the companies that provided training did so for about half (50%) of their employees (World Bank, 2019). The incidence of such adult training is highest among medium sized and large firms, of which about half provide formal training to their employees, while less than one third of small firms do so. Additional data on training at work can be found from the Eurofound “European Working Conditions Survey” for 2021, which covered 70,000 workers in 36 European countries.⁵⁰ The survey asked respondents whether they had undergone any on-the-job training (i.e. WBL) in the previous twelve months (whether paid for by the employer or not). Bosnia and Herzegovina ranks near middle place among Southeast European countries, with 33.4% of respondents replying that they had undergone some form of on-the-job training at work (a similar but slightly lower level as in the earlier World Bank survey), ahead of Kosovo, Albania, Montenegro and Greece (see Figure 3).⁵¹ Additional data is available from the ILO online database which shows that in 2022 there were a total of 29,780 people of all ages involved in WBL activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The largest group was those aged 15-24 years of age of which there were 16,088, while there were 12,942 aged 25-54 years of age, and the rest were 55 or older.⁵²

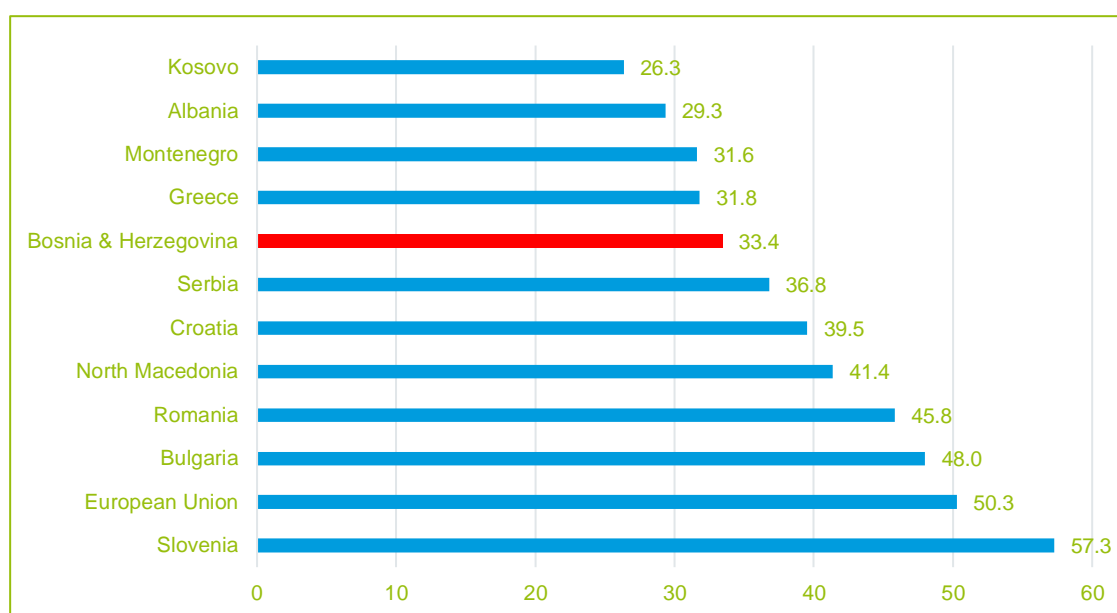
⁴⁹ The legal basis for collecting statistics on levels of education, as well as adult education, is the Law on Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Official Gazette of BiH, 37/04), and the Law on Statistics of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Official Gazette of BiH, No. 6/95) and the Law on Statistics of Republika Srpska (“RS Official Gazette”, No. 85/03), and the Multi-Annual Statistical Programme and Annual Plans of statistical institutions (Federal Institute for Statistics and Republika Srpska Institute of Statistics). BiH Agency on statistics is also obliged by the Regulation (EC) No 452/2008 of the European Parliament and the Council concerning the production and development of statistics on education and lifelong learning concerning statistics on education and training systems and the Regulation (EC) No 912/2013 concerning the collection of data for UOE (OECD, EUROSTAT, and UNESCO-UIS) questionnaires.

⁵⁰ See: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/surveys/european-working-conditions-surveys/european-working-conditions-telephone-survey-2021>

⁵¹ Note that the sample frame for this survey was companies not individuals. Therefore, the data refer to the proportion of employees within companies. This is different to the data reported in Figure 2 from the Adult Education Survey, which refers to the (obviously much lower) proportion of all adults aged 25-64 in the population as a whole.

⁵² For the ILO statistics, work-based learning refers to all forms of learning that take place in a real work environment. It may, but does not always, combine elements of learning in the workplace with off-the-job learning.

Figure 3: On-the-job training (% of respondents) (SEE countries)



Source: European Foundation for Working and Living Conditions (2021), Eurofound European Working Conditions Telephone Survey. Question: Over the past 12 months, have you undergone any on-the-job training to improve your skills?

Some positive examples of work-based learning in CVET can be found in the tourism sector. These training programmes are market-oriented and recognised by employers, and most trainees find a job in the tourism sector. Employers in the tourism sector realise that untrained workers provide a lower quality of service, and ultimately the limits tourist experience upon which the demand for tourism services depends.

4.4 Work-based CVET and labour market needs

Based on findings from interviews, many employers need to train their newly hired employees in specific procedures, processes and services, and in how to use new equipment and methods, and in soft skills relevant for specific job situations. Work-based CVET is less used as an incentive in retaining valued employees because employees have few opportunities to gain a recognised certificate through work-based learning in CVET. In addition, a professional training contract cannot be issued for on-the-job training as it does not lead to a recognised learning outcome due to the lack of a comprehensive Qualifications Framework. Often, the only way is for companies to provide their own certification related to learning outcomes. In general, commitment to on-the-job training is low; typically, only large companies have formal training plans for their employees and allocate a budget for training. It is paradoxical that while employers recognise that training is essential for productivity and professionalism, they make relatively little effort to implement in-house training programmes or to send employees on training courses (see Figure 4 below).

Every interviewee we spoke to, especially among large companies, agreed that CVET ought to take business and employee needs into account. They believe that a comprehensive understanding of the organisation's goals and objectives is crucial for designing effective CVET programmes. Additionally, interviewees emphasised the importance of aligning employee development with industry trends and technological advancements to ensure relevance and competitiveness in the market, but this is more common for large companies. Conversely, most employers and especially SMEs lack knowledge of the

areas in which they should invest with respect to training their personnel. Another challenge is the lack of understanding of the motivation and specific needs of the adult learners. SMEs struggle in identifying training needs of their workforce and in providing relevant training to meet those needs, and also lack knowledge about methods for integrating WBL into their companies.

Further, there are only a few methodological guidelines for work-based learning in CVET and limited good practice examples.⁵³ Some private companies, especially those that export their products to the EU market, provide continuing training to their employees through the own training centres. These training programmes include theoretical and practical training provided by internal instructors in topics such as training for welders, training for the operators on heavy machinery, and safety at work.

It is also evident that CVET trainers within companies lack formal qualifications and professional standards, and so companies often define their own requirements. CVET trainers can be independent self-employed trainers or employed by training firms and consultancies. They may be required to have a professional qualification such as a professional certificate. However, there is no requirement for expertise in areas such as pedagogy and approaches to teaching and learning. Thus, the training of the trainers is a matter for individuals and firms to take care of. The system is a voluntary one. Because there are no legal and uniform regulations for the qualification of CVET trainers, informal learning plays an important role in their development. There is a lack of accreditation schemes, and of programmes to enhance trainers' professional skills and competences.

SMEs face particular challenges in introducing work-based learning in CVET, with high workloads, limited time and organisational factors being major obstacles, and due to the small number of their staff employees who are absent for training cannot be substituted by colleagues. However, WBL can be advantageous because it can take place at the workplace, and so a release of employees from their working tasks might then not be needed. Even when public funds and similar forms of financial support for work-based learning in CVET are available, the procedures to access them are often lengthy, time-consuming and not well-suited to the needs of SMEs. Due to the administrative burden of the application process it is often too demanding for SMEs to apply for funding. On the other hand, larger companies have more room to organise training for their employees, either through their own resources or through outsourcing. SMEs concerns about being poached, lack of liquidity, and poor managerial and administrative ability also contribute to their unwillingness to offer retraining through work-based learning in CVET to their employees, or to training to unemployed workers through government programmes. In an important development, Employers' Associations have begun to create their own training centres for networking and knowledge exchange in the last few years. The goal is to support SMEs, particularly in the metal and woodworking industry, by offering work-based learning in CVET for retraining and training for new hires.

One of the remarks raised by private sector company learning providers was related to the contracts they sign with trainees, namely, that the professional training contracts cannot be used for on-the-job training as they do not lead to a recognised learning outcome due to the underdeveloped Qualification Framework. Very often, the only way out is for companies to provide their own certificate of attendance on training courses with a record of learning outcomes achieved. This is especially relevant in industries where professional development and continuous learning are highly valued. By offering a certificate of attendance, companies can showcase their commitment to employee development while also providing tangible evidence of the learning outcomes acquired through the learning experience.

4.5 Financing adult education

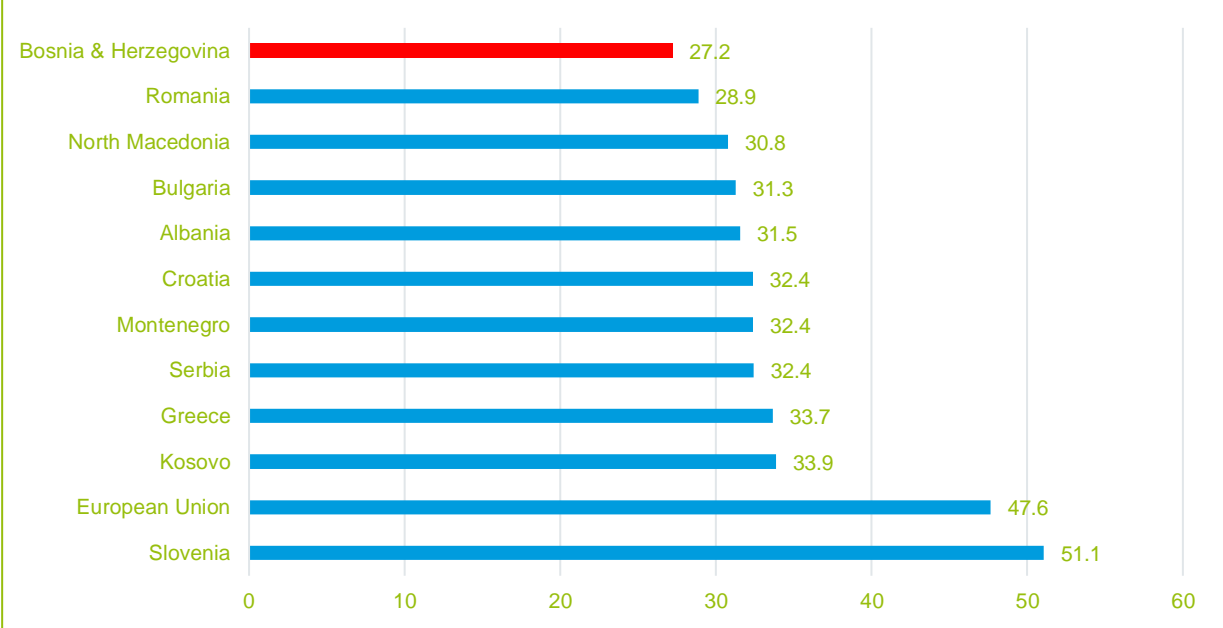
In most cases, formal adult education is publicly financed, while the costs of non-formal adult education are borne by the participants. Most trainings of this type are carried out and financed by the public

⁵³ See: Guidelines for companies' mentors, Employers Association of Republika Srpska, Banja Luka; February 2022

employment services (PES) as part of their active labour market measures (ALMPs). However, Bosnia and Herzegovina only allocates 4% of ALMP funds to training programmes. With the proliferation of private adult education centres, adult education risks being of low quality due to “the market race attracting participants ready to pay for certificates” (Hadziomerović, 2019). The country lacks a more effective financing of a lifelong learning system, which would allow individuals to access learning solutions, skilling and re-skilling to find decent work and build careers. The financing of education is generally directed towards initial and university education, while work-based learning in CVET is under-resourced. Although a legal framework for financing adult education exists, the regulations needed to put this framework into practice are missing, and NGOs active in adult education depend on co-financing by international donors and on fees charged to learners. Better funding options would align government-led training programmes with industry demands and guide training programmes toward more effective outcomes.

The Eurofound European Working Conditions Survey, 2021, shows that Bosnia and Herzegovina is at the bottom of the European league concerning employer-financed training at work. The survey shows that only 27.2% of employees (or self-employed persons) in Bosnia and Herzegovina had been involved in any form of training paid for by their employer (or self if self-employed). This compares to 47.6% in the EU and over 30% in most neighbouring countries in the region (see Figure 4). Among lower skilled employees the proportion who have undergone training paid for by their employer is as low as 14.9%.

Figure 4: Training paid for or provided by employers (%) (SEE countries)



Source: European Foundation for Working and Living Conditions (2021), Eurofound European Working Conditions Telephone Survey. Question: Over the last 12 months, have you undergone any training paid for by your employer (or self if self-employed) to improve your skills?

The prices and costs associated with training present one of the many difficulties for both participants and training providers. Private training providers are subject to programme accreditation requirements, which include paying 500 EUR for each new publicly valid training programme. At the same time, accredited training programmes in one canton or entity are not valid within another canton or entity. In addition, public training providers such as VET schools are not charged for programme accreditation, giving rise to unequal treatment even among public training providers, which are exempt from payment; for example, some higher education institutions that offer adult training must pay additionally for programme accreditation.

Prices for a training activity per employee range from 100 to 3,500 EUR per employee trained, with an average around 750 EUR. The most expensive training was for a course with more than 350 hours of training providing a certificate for welding engineer. For internal training organised by employers, the cost for supplies and hourly remuneration of trainers typically ranges from around 220 EUR for a 16-hour learning activity about the company and its safety and security risks, to 3,290 EUR per employee for a 140-hour training programme on the functioning of a new production line. The average costs of a typical training programme is about 1,150 EUR. Where internal and external training were combined, the joint costs ranged between 210 and 740 EUR per employee, with an average of 440 EUR. The relevant government authorities lack an understanding of effective financing of work-based learning in CVET and do not provide any tax reliefs or other incentive measures for employers to invest in adult education.

4.6 Quality Assurance

CVET learning providers are in an unfavourable position in comparison to IVET providers because they operate in difficult market conditions, and are unable to implement the sophisticated quality procedures that exist at the system level. They lack capable management staff to engage in quality assurance activities and need to hire external consultants to implement quality systems. This is especially so in SMEs.

The quality of work of adult education institutions is not systematically monitored. The IAE in Republika Srpska and the VET Department of APOSO are the only institutions responsible for the professional supervision of adult learning providers. The IAE monitors adult education in Republika Srpska, while adult learning providers must evaluate their own accredited training programmes. Inspections in the field of adult education are carried out by the Administration for Inspection Affairs of Republika Srpska. Formal and non-formal training programmes get certified if they last at least 120 hours.

In the Federation of BiH, the general lack of accreditation and certification of CVET programmes raises concerns about the quality and relevance of the training provided. 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, due to the lack of standardised qualifications and curriculum arrangements, employers find it challenging to assess the skills and competencies of employees who have undergone CVET.

An example is provided by the Law on Adult Education of the Canton of Sarajevo, according to which the Ministry should conduct an external evaluation of the quality of adult education providers work every five years. Yet by the end of 2020, only 23 occupational standards for VET and two for higher education had been included in this database along with 21 VET qualifications. The law foresees that the ministry, in cooperation with educational authorities and professional institutions, will develop criteria for evaluating the quality of CVET providers. Under the law, CVET providers are responsible for developing a system of internal quality evaluation. However, our interviews revealed that only a few providers have introduced systematic quality standards. Amendments to the law in September 2020 created new hurdles for accredited adult education providers who had submitted a request for re-accreditation, because there is no prescribed methodology nor an accreditation body to carry out the re-accreditation. To make the situation worse, the price of re-accreditation is about 1,500 EUR. This financial burden can potentially limit a learning provider's ability to update their programmes to meet the changing demands of the labour market.

The education authorities identified a danger of fragmentation in learning outcomes since the focus of the CVET learning providers is typically focused on narrow, specialised job requirements leading to difficulties in the development of qualification standards. Another 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. A final issue is the lack of a systematic

approach to evaluation, which makes it difficult to develop appropriate evidence-based policies to improve the CVET offer among companies, especially SMEs.

4.7 Validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning

To a large extent, work-based learning in CVET takes place outside the formal education and training system, through non-formal or informal learning, in the workplace or elsewhere. Recent research has shown that, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 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. For example, although there is a large pool of informal training provided by private sector companies, particularly in the ICT sector, the IAE in Republika Srpska does not recognise them because these training providers are not registered in their database, and consequently, training programmes are not recognised and accredited.

Interviewees emphasised the negative effects of the lack of an institutionalised system for the validation of knowledge, skills, and competences attained through work-based learning in CVET and the absence of means for validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) which has increased in importance due to the growth of digital and online learning. Validation of learning also benefits return migrants who bring back new knowledge, skills, and competences and job-specific skills which can be identified, documented, assessed and certified. The European Council (2012) provides a foundation for recognising learning outside formal settings, benefiting an individual's career and providing further learning prospects. However, Bosnia and Herzegovina lacks policies on the VNFIL (Council of Ministers, 2014a, 2021). 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. Although there is no established VNFIL system, there is a strategic commitment to its development and implementation in the report by the Council of Ministers (2021), Objective 3 of which entails implementing recognition procedures for non-formal, informal and self-directed learning, and defines the responsibilities of those involved in the recognition process up to 2030. Recently, these efforts have been recognised by the new EU IPA 2019 project, which puts its focus on this area through one of its project components.

An additional step forward has been made through the re-establishment of the working group for the further development of the qualifications framework and the further strengthening of the qualifications management structure and linking all parts of the qualifications' framework into a functional whole. Further development of a qualification framework for credit accumulation and credit transfer and the formal recognition of prior learning (RPL) is important for workers, job seekers, and women returners to the labour market who may have valuable skills and competences but lack a qualification. RPL can facilitate their reinsertion into the labour market as it offers a path to validate skills and facilitate access. The EU project "Education for Employment" developed a Model of the Rulebook on RPL in Higher Education⁵⁴ along with a guide for students at the University of Mostar (Boban, 2023). Although a set of common principles and standards for the development, implementation, and coordination of policies related to the validation of prior learning in adult education has been adopted,⁵⁵ public education institutions (in contrast to private learning institutions) have not made much progress in this respect

⁵⁴ http://web-admin.sum.ba/api/storage/Pravilnik%20o%20priznavanju%20neformalnog%20obrazovanja%20i%20informalnog%20u%C4%8Denja_1681900304_65.pdf

⁵⁵ This document was prepared within the Project Promotion of Competitiveness of Bosnia and Herzegovina through Increased Employment and Quality of Human Resources - IPA 2009.

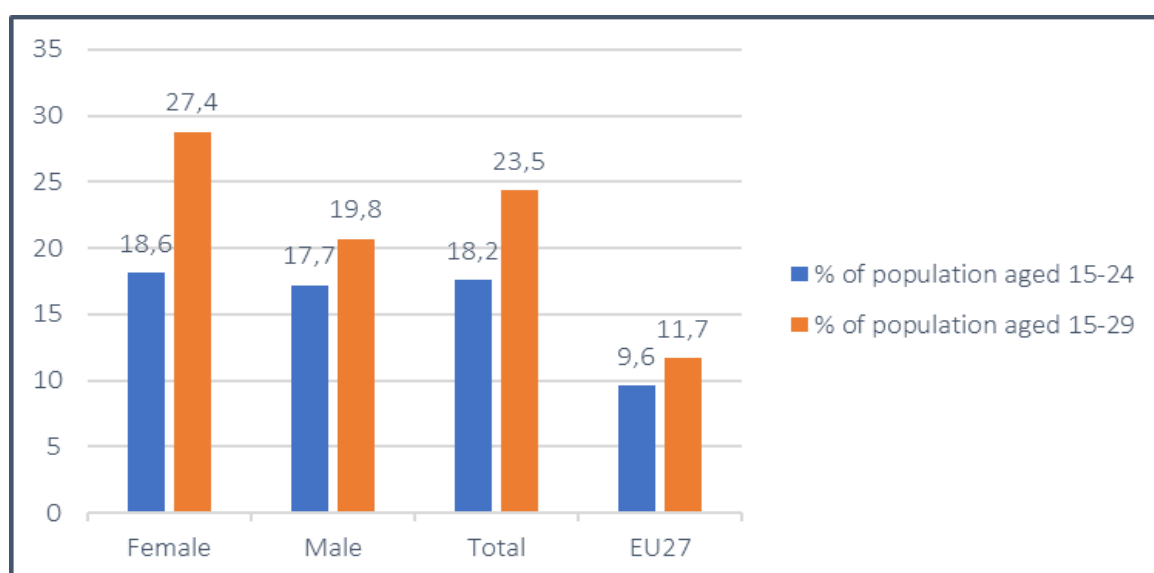
(Sarajlić, 2023). Education authorities ought to rethink their policies for RPL and private learning providers. The strategic role of employers and their participation in activities related to RPL are also of crucial importance.

5. THE 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).⁵⁶ 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 (see Figure 5).⁵⁷ The female NEET rate is higher than the male NEET rate. Many of these young people have received an education that has not prepared them for the world of work, and they lack work experience. Many are from disadvantaged social backgrounds, are low-skilled and need support in developing the skills needed on the labour market.

Figure 5: NEET rates, 2022, by age group and gender (%)



Source: BiH Agency for statistics for ages 15-24 and for ages 15-29; EU27 data EU27 data from Eurostat

The ILO database provides additional data on the actual numbers of NEETs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The number of NEETs has been falling in recent years. In 2022 there were 71,064 NEETS aged 15-24.⁵⁸ There are in total 94,720 NEETS aged 15-29.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ In 2014 the European Council launched the quality framework for traineeships, which provides for trainees to acquire high-quality work experience under safe and fair conditions (European Council 2014).

⁵⁷ The European Commission identifies several reasons for the high NEET rate including: “poor education-to-employment transitions, limited job and career opportunities in the labour market, under-supplied training options within active labour market measures, lack of accessible and/or affordable retraining and lifelong learning schemes, and low propensity of employers to invest in on-the-job training” (European Commission, 2022a).

⁵⁸ Youth not in education are those who were neither enrolled in school nor in a formal training program (e.g. vocational training) during a specified reference period (e.g., one week). For statistical purposes, youth are defined as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years.

⁵⁹ Calculated as $(24.4/17.6\% \times 71,064)$

The ETF has classified NEETs into four sub-groups: unemployed, family carers, discouraged jobseekers and other inactive young people due to illness or disability (ETF, 2015).⁶⁰ NEETs can also be classified into age groups, with targeted programmes for those aged 15-18, 19-24, and 25-29 (RCC, 2021). For the 15-18 age group, one-to-one counselling and remedial training programmes can provide participants with basic employability competences and job search skills. This could involve collaboration and coordination between Centres for Social Work (CSW) and the Public Employment Services (PES) and the development of integrated case management approaches (Scoppetta et al., 2018). For the 19-24 age group who have graduated from secondary VET school, short-term training courses can provide skills required by the labour market. These can be organised in partnership with employers and vocational training centres. For the 25-29 age group, some of whom may have graduated from higher education institutions, careers advice and job-search counselling services can be provided by PES, as can business start-up advice and loans for those with a viable business plan.

5.1 Policy towards the Youth Guarantee in Bosnia and Herzegovina

As elsewhere, the Youth Guarantee for Bosnia and Herzegovina 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. For the definitions and discussion of the details and distinctions between traineeship and apprenticeship see section 4.1 above. The Youth Guarantee is the only state-level activity currently being implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁶¹ It has attracted the active involvement of ministries of finance and ministries of health as well as ministries of education and employment. Stakeholders also include youth organisations, trade unions, chambers of commerce, employers' associations and others. 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 (European Commission, 2023). In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 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 Working Group held several meetings with the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the ILO, and the EU Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was agreed that the Youth Guarantee would include all youth up to 29 years old. The Employment Strategy in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2023–2030) recognises the Youth Guarantee as a new model of employment for young NEETs.

Unlike in other countries, 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 Bosnia and Herzegovina. As this is a complex process, by November 2023 two deadlines had been missed for drafting the Implementation Plan for the Youth Guarantee [1]. The Implementation Plans are intended to set out three separate Action Plans, one for each Entity and one for the Brčko District. Some progress has been made. The Action Plan for the Brčko District was adopted in November 2023 and the Action Plan for Republika Srpska was adopted at the end of 2023. The Implementation Plan for the Federation of BiH, and its associated Action Plan, has been delayed by coordination problems.⁶² The main challenge has been in achieving consensus among the ten cantons about a unified Youth Guarantee Action Plan. In particular, the cantonal PES have different ideas about what should be included in the plan. In contrast, employers are generally supportive of the Youth Guarantee initiative and do not have any substantial

⁶⁰ For example, it is estimated that in Serbia there are about 100,000 unemployed young people who have decided not to register with the local PES (i.e., Serbian National Employment Service). See: <https://eumogucnosti.rs/eu-podrzava-zaposljavanje-mladih-u-srbiji/?lang=en>

⁶¹ BiH has no national employment strategy, so the YG Implementation Plan forms a sort of substitute for that as a second-best option.

⁶² These delays have been due to changes to the minister and officials in charge of the Youth Guarantee in the Federation of BiH. The new government is keen to implement the Youth Guarantee and has been supporting it since coming to power in July 2023.

differences of opinion about it. It was expected that the Implementation Plan for the Youth Guarantee in the Federation of BiH would be completed by the end of 2023. The plan has been developed by a Working Group for the Youth Guarantee consisting of 24 experts including a representative from the PES and other key stakeholders. The implementation phase of the Youth Guarantee can begin once these different action plans have been confirmed by the respective governments. It is thought that, in practice, the main difficulties will arise in making the required changes to the relevant by-laws. The Working Group will monitor the implementation of the Action Plan.

It was explained to the monitoring team that the Youth Guarantee in the Federation of BiH is expected to be implemented in four phases: preparation of an implementation plan; preparation for the implementation of pilot programmes in selected locations; carrying out the pilot projects; and an eventual full roll out of the Youth Guarantee across the country. The first two stages will require changes to the relevant bylaws.

The implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Bosnia and Herzegovina will provide a strong impetus for structural reforms and policy innovation with a focus on reaching out NEETs. It will require efforts by relevant authorities as well as cross-sectoral cooperation. Social dialogue and the participation of all the social partners in the design, implementation and execution of relevant measures should play an essential role. Cooperation agreements should be forged with employers' organisations, trade unions, schools and training centres, and non-governmental organisations.

5.2 Outreach to the main client groups for the Youth Guarantee

Some of the key problems in applying the Youth Guarantee in the EU have been the identification of NEETs, building the confidence and motivation of vulnerable young people, and eventually reducing their dependence on the programme (Neagu, 2023). Identifying and reaching out to unregistered NEETs should be done in the preparatory phase of implementing the Youth Guarantee. Dedicated youth outreach workers can be trained to identify and inform marginalised youth and build relationships with them over time. Mobile PES units can be deployed in remote rural areas. A survey of marginalised youth could be carried out by a polling company to provide more detailed and granular information about the characteristics of different NEET groups and their social and economic situation, problem areas and intentions to engage with the labour market. A better understanding of marginalised NEET groups is required so that support can be offered where appropriate and likely to achieve success. For ethnic groups such as Roma, a mediator service can engage with marginalised young people. Ex-prisoners can be offered support and training to re-engage with the labour market. Young mothers who wish to return to the labour market can be supported through the Youth Guarantee, in collaboration with women's associations and local community groups. Youth organisations can provide information to unregistered NEETs through established channels of communication, such as interactive web pages, social networks, social media and electronic information systems (RCC, 2021).

One interviewee considered that all young people who are not in employment, education or training are already registered as unemployed with the PES in order to register for health insurance paid. Due to this, it was thought that there would be no potential clients for the Youth Guarantee that are outside the PES system. This seems unlikely to be the case, especially considering marginalised youth, discouraged youth and inactive youth who would like to return to the labour market given sufficient appropriate support. Moreover, the PES in the Federation of BiH informed the monitoring team that potential Youth Guarantee participants will need to present themselves to the PES for preliminary registration to join the programme and to declare that they wish to join the Youth Guarantee programme. This suggests that the PES does not envisage an active outreach programme. Yet, for the Youth Guarantee programme to be a success, an active outreach programme will be required.

5.3 The role and capacity of Public Employment Services

According to the European Commission report on Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2023, the capacity of PES to provide quality services to jobseekers has been gradually improving, but remains weak (European Commission, 2023). The need to administer health insurance limits the ability of PES to assist active jobseekers. This is a key issue in the Federation of BiH where the records of the PES include people who are not actively looking for a job but register only to obtain health insurance. The Republika Srpska has separated these two categories and has discharged the PES from administrative duties related to provision of health insurance and other social benefits for the registered unemployed. This is not yet the case in other parts of the country and provides a model that should be followed in both the Federation of BiH and the Brčko District.

The PES in the Federation of BiH are working towards commencing the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in 2026. However, they are not well resourced and lack the capacity to implement the Youth Guarantee. In advance of the preparation of the implementation plan in the Federation of BiH, a pilot version of the Youth Guarantee is being developed in Zenica Doboje Canton (Visoko municipality) and West Herzegovina Canton (Citluk municipality) with the support of the ILO. These municipalities were chosen so as to have one in a Herzegovinian canton and one in a central Bosnian canton and on the basis that they already have a number of learning providers with the capacity to deliver the programme. Moreover, both cantons have a youth strategy. The pilot programmes will be set up and delivered by the Cantonal PES. The first step in the pilot locations will be a survey of the needs for reskilling. The Federation of BiH will provide funds to assist the pilot locations. It is expected that the pilot implementation programmes will demonstrate to the rest of the country what needs to be done.

The PES in both the Federation of BiH and in Brčko District already offer several targeted programmes for unemployed young adults including retraining, upskilling at companies and non-formal programmes in foreign languages or entrepreneurship and digital competences. However, the programmes they offer tend to lack visibility. Various training programmes, from short private language courses to in-company training, are offered to unemployed youth through the active labour market policies (ALMP) provided by the PES. The PES in the Federation of BiH offer three months of on-the-job training followed by full time employment based on the provision of employment subsidies to employers. Currently these ALMPs are offered directly to employers, rather than to individual clients as will be the case with the Youth Guarantee. However, those measures have not yet been sufficient to reduce the large number of NEETs in the 15–29-year age group. Moreover, they do not cover youth that are not registered with the PES.

Interviewees in the Federation of BiH consider that formal education is not well adapted to prepare students for the labour market. It is thought that the reason many young people drop out of education after primary level is because they see few prospects in obtaining a job. This is also related to the lack of priority given within the education system to cater for marginalised youth. The Youth Guarantee therefore needs to enhance the general provision of CVET opportunities for youth. In particular, these young people should be offered the opportunity to catch up on a 3 or 4-year VET programme, possibly in a somewhat shortened form. Such programmes would probably also be needed for high school (gymnasium) graduates who do not want to study at university or who have dropped out of university.

In Republika Srpska, the PES has not included training within its ALMPs for the last three years on the grounds that the employers are not interested in providing training places for their clients. Therefore, they leave training to the adult education programmes of the IAE.

The Brčko District PES runs a Youth Programme which aims to keep young people in the locality. There is an Action Plan up to 2026 that provides training and retraining for young people, career counselling, and analysis of needs for new professions among other measures. Brčko PES does not have a comprehensive training programme but instead provides a number of *ad hoc* short courses. This, combined with the job subsidies and the self-employment measures, replicates the bare bones of a Youth Guarantee, but without all the “guarantee” part. In the framework of the employment and self-

employment programmes for the youth, which are implemented in the framework of the Youth Strategy 2022–2026. The goal of this strategy is to improve the position of young people, the youth sector, and youth organisations, as well as the relationship between the government and young people.

It is expected that IPA technical assistance grants and ILO grants will be used to support for the employment of youth within the Youth Guarantee. In the opinion of one interviewee, funds should be directed towards the human resource development of the PES who are already overloaded with work. One canton has only four employees to service 300 applicants for the Youth Guarantee, and as they will also have to develop individual plans for each client this will be an impossible task with the current levels of capacity and the small amount of funding currently available.

5.4 Fitness of learning providers to deliver commitments under the Youth Guarantee

The Ministry of Civil Affairs has studied the experience with the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in North Macedonia and found that one of the main obstacles to its effective implementation has been a lack of capacity among learning providers to meet demand. Relatively little is known about the fitness of the independent learning providers in Bosnia and Herzegovina to deliver the training commitments under the Youth Guarantee.

Learning providers include state-funded providers such as VET schools and university faculties, while independent learning providers consist of a range of private sector companies that deliver specialised training courses (such as IT or foreign languages) which are managed either on a for-profit basis or a not-for-profit basis. Learning providers can also be organised as training centres within large companies. Finally, smaller companies often provide mentors for students involved in WBL, who often need training themselves (Kovacevic, 2021). Specialised learning providers also include independent companies organised on a for-profit or not-for-profit (NGOs and civil society associations) basis that are established to deliver specific training programmes (e.g., in foreign languages⁶³ or ICT courses⁶⁴). To become a recognised learning provider, a business or NGO is required to undergo a lengthy process of registration and accreditation. Registering as a learning provider and the validation of the learning programme requires time and resources. It requires that a potential learning provider meets specific standards and norms for the educational work with adults defined by the Laws on adult education. The legal framework is not favourable to the creation of new adult education programmes or the registration of new independent learning providers.⁶⁵ According to the Law on Adult Education of Zenica-Doboj Canton⁶⁶ the providers of non-formal education for adults can issue completion certificates, but these are not publicly recognised. In case of urgent need, employers can submit a request to the Ministry of Education to organise swift training leading to recognised certificates. However, learning providers often complain about the lengthy and expensive process in registering their programmes. No agreement has yet been reached on the mode of cooperation between the PES in the different entities and cantons and learning providers. The PES in the Federation of BiH is carrying out a situation analysis to assess the training capacity for the Youth Guarantee and what needs to be done.

According to DVV International (Hadžimerović, 2021) there are more than 150 organisations and institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina are currently accredited by the relevant ministries as adult education providers. Although many providers are entered in official Registers, the exact number is unknown. Registers of learning providers that meet the legal requirements are held by different

⁶³ For example, ESL Base lists 21 schools providing English language learning: <https://www.eslbase.com/schools/bosnia-and-herzegovina>

⁶⁴ For example, Lusha provides a list of 4 companies providing e-learning courses: <https://www.lusha.com/company-search/e-learning-providers/dd319d3b23/bosnia-and-herzegovina/203/>

⁶⁵ The adult education providers accreditation procedure is described only in Sarajevo Canton Law on Adult Education of Canton Sarajevo, Article 26., "Official Gazette of Canton Sarajevo", No. 1/96, 2/96 - Correction, 3/96 - Correction 16/97, 14/00, 4/01, 28/04 and 6/13)

⁶⁶ The Law on Adult Education of Zenica-Doboj Canton ("Official Gazette of Zenica Doboj Canton" No. 5/2014 and 13/2018)

ministries, but mostly only include primary and secondary schools, rather than non-formal providers in the private sector. However, from the register of learning providers held by Sarajevo Canton it appears that Sarajevo has 34 registered learning providers who offer 44 formal programmes and 52 non-formal programmes, with an increasing trend in the number of providers. All new programmes must be accredited by the cantonal commission, which consists of five members, but which lacks a representative from the business sector. The process of training programme accreditation lasts two months. In addition, Some university faculties have set up centres for lifelong learning and professional development.

The non-formal sector has recently been growing, as an increasing number of different institutions and organisations from the public, private or NGO sectors has started to implement different kinds of educational programme. A survey carried out by DVV found that non-formal learning providers cover a wide range of training opportunities with most offering subjects like economics, engineering, healthcare and catering, with a few offering subjects like training in entrepreneurship, chemistry and law.

Data on individual learning providers in the private sector is available from the Statistical Business Register compiled from information provided by annually by the Ministry of Finance, the tax authorities at the entity level, on a quarterly basis by the Indirect Taxation Authority and twice a year by the Central Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In September 2023 the register had 613 private entrepreneurs providing educational activities, most of whom were running micro-enterprises with between 0-9 employees.⁶⁷ Only four learning providers had a greater capacity with 20-49 employees. In total, the capacity of the private sector to provide training or job opportunities within the context of the Youth Guarantee seems to be very limited throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. If we assume that there are on average 2 employees per learning provider (according to Eurostat data this is the average number of employees in companies with 0-9 workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina), and that each employee can train 50 youth per year, then each learning provider employee can provide training to up to 100 learners per year through the Youth Guarantee. In this case, the overall capacity of the private learning provider sector, as it stands at the current time, would be to provide training to about 60,000 learners annually.⁶⁸ Let us assume that this capacity is already fully used with existing clients. Since there are 71,000 NEETS aged 15-24, it would seem that capacity would have to be more than doubled to handle this number of trainees, assuming that all outstanding NEETs were trained in one year. However, if we add in the NEETs between the ages of 25 and 29, there would be about 95,000 NEETS to be dealt with, which would require an increase of 150% in the capacity of the system, calculated according to the above methodology. In practice, not all NEETs would be dealt with 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.

5.5 Lessons from the Youth Guarantee in Croatia

The Youth Guarantee has been widely adopted in the EU new members states of Central and Eastern Europe (Santos-Brien, 2018). With almost 10 years' experience with the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, the experience of Croatia can provide valuable lessons for policymakers in Bosnia and Herzegovina who wish to implement it there. The Youth Guarantee was introduced in Croatia in 2014 covering young people aged 15-29. The lead institutions are the Public Employment Service, the Croatian Youth Council and the Council for the Implementation Plan of the Youth Guarantee (Bejaković et al., 2016). The initial phases of Youth Guarantee experienced relatively high administrative costs due

⁶⁷ Eurostat Enterprise statistics by size class and NACE Rev.2 activity, Online data code: sbs_sc_oww

⁶⁸ Calculated as $613 \times 2 \times 50 = 61,300$

to the large number of registered young unemployed people and the relatively low rates of job creation (Botrić, 2017). Implementation measures included support for youth work placement or youth self-employment, and support for training or a return to education for vulnerable youths. Youth employment centres were supported to implement the Youth Guarantee and to provide mentorship activities. Outreach measures included a NEET tracking system, a national Youth Guarantee campaign, support for youth activities and information centres. Tax breaks were provided to companies employing NEETs (Neagu, 2023). Career guidance was provided alongside youth entrepreneurship programmes, grants for business start-ups, guidance and/or financial support for business plan development. Following the application of the Youth Guarantee in Croatia, the NEET rate fell from 19.6% in 2013 to 14.9% in 2021, demonstrating the potential positive impact of the Youth Guarantee (European Commission, 2020d).⁶⁹

Training can be suitable for young people at risk of exclusion who struggled in their secondary education. However, regular vocational qualification pathways can be too demanding for some young people, and so an offer of alternative training programmes tailored to specific youth groups is often appropriate.

⁶⁹ In the EU as a whole, partly due to the Youth Guarantee, there were 1.7 million fewer NEETs in 2019 compared to 2013. The youth unemployment rate (15-24) was down to 14.9% in 2019 (from 24.4% in 2013) and the NEET rate went down from 13.0% in 2013 to 10.1%. Cumulatively, during seven years, over 24 million young people received an offer of employment, continued education, a traineeship or an apprenticeship through the Youth Guarantee. See: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/el/qanda_20_1194

6. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has reviewed policies towards on lifelong learning with a focus on work-based learning, including practical training in VET schools, dual education models, traineeships and apprenticeships, training at work and retraining. Such policies aim to prepare people of all ages for the world of work and to address skill gaps linked to technological advances that have left many older workers with outdated skills. VET school graduates in Bosnia and Herzegovina miss out on practical training and struggle to find a job, contributing to high rates of youth unemployment. Among older age groups, three quarters of unemployed people are long-term unemployed and lack appropriate skills, while employers report problems of skill mismatch and shortages of skilled workers. More effective policies are needed to address these weaknesses, including improved lifelong learning opportunities for VET graduates, unemployed youth, the long-term unemployed, and adult returners to the labour market. In addition, a many young people are outside the formal education system and also out of work or not in training. The proposed policy solution to this is the Youth Guarantee, which the paper considers in detail too.

WBL in initial VET

In initial VET, the use of WBL involves teaching practical skills to students in a work environment. If well organised, it can augment the knowledge, skills and competences of students, meeting the needs of employers and easing the transition from education to work. Yet, it is relatively weakly developed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Only two fifths of VET schools provide any practical training for their students, and the quality of WBL opportunities are insufficient to achieve adequate learning outcomes. Recently, a modified format of practical training known as dual education has been promoted for VET schools. This experimental system is “school-based” rather than “company-based” (as in Germany or Austria). It is still in an experimental phase and support from stakeholders (chambers, schools, companies) is limited.

The key WBL learning providers for VET students, other than their schools, are private and, to a lesser extent, public companies that provide practical training placements. In a recent survey, more than two fifths of businesses expressed an interest in offering WBL opportunities to VET students. However, employers require greater incentives to take on VET students, in-company trainers need support, and trainees need remuneration. Despite this, the regulatory framework for WBL is inadequate and an appropriate financing mechanism for WBL has not yet been designed.

WBL in continuing VET

Work-based learning in CVET comprises internships, traineeships, apprenticeships, and company-based training and re-training, as well as non-vocational adult education; it can be delivered through formal, non-formal and informal learning activities. Some progress has been made in relation to the development of internships and traineeships in the field of adult education and lifelong learning. The Republika Srpska Public Employment Institute has implemented an traineeship programme for young unemployed university graduates. In the Federation of BiH and Brčko District has made progress introducing traineeships. In the Federation of BiH a trainee is entitled to 70% of the salary of the respective job (80% in Brčko District). Programmes in Tuzla Canton and Canton Sarajevo support in-company placements of unemployed people without any work experience for six months to one year. Less progress has been made in the introduction of apprenticeships. While apprenticeship programmes that provide training over an extended period can produce greater benefits than short-exposure WBL programmes such as traineeships, they have not yet been widely recognised. This form of CVET has been adopted only in Republika Srpska, where an apprenticeship can last up to one year after which the apprentice takes a proficiency exam to carry out work in the chosen profession. The apprenticeship is carried out under a paid employment contract and subject to the labour law.

Learning providers include VET schools, universities, private companies and public institutions that provide learning opportunities for adults organised by the public employment services (PES). However, the legal framework is not favourable to the creation of new adult education programmes or the registration of new independent learning providers. Many private companies train their own employees in their own training centres (on-the-job learning). Studies have found that participation in non-formal learning significantly reduces the probability of an individual experiencing unemployment in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In most cases, the costs of non-formal adult education are borne by the participants. Trainings for unemployed people are also financed by the PES as part of their active employment measures. While laws on adult education allow for the validation of non-formal knowledge, skills, and competencies, education authorities have not yet developed appropriate models to enable these provisions to be implemented. Further development of the Qualification Framework for credit accumulation and credit transfer, along with the formal recognition of prior learning (RPL), is important for workers, job seekers, and women returners to the labour market who may have valuable skills and competences but lack a qualifications. Private learning institutions are leaders in RPL and as yet public education institutions have not made much progress in this respect.

Youth Guarantee in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The EU Youth Guarantee was launched in 2013 and reinforced in 2020 with a renewed emphasis on apprenticeships. It aims to provide 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. According to BHAS data, the NEET rate for 15–29-year-olds in BiH in 2022 was 23.5%, more than twice the level in the EU for the same period at 11.7%. Many are low-skilled and need support in developing the skills needed on the labour market. The Youth Guarantee implementation plans and associated action plans were adopted at the end of 2023 in Republika Srpska and Brčko District, while pilot versions have been implemented in two municipalities in the Federation of BiH. The Youth Guarantee will be implemented by the public employment services (PES) which will require an increase in capacity to provide these services. Currently the PES in Republika Srpska does not offer training programmes to its clients, while training in the Federation of BiH and Brčko District have limited reach and capacity. As yet, the apprenticeship form of WBL is not well developed and will need to be introduced on a more substantial basis to meet the requirements of the Youth Guarantee.

Training will be provided by learning providers, including VET schools, universities, and private for-profit and not-for-profit providers. However, VET schools have limited interest in providing work-based learning in CVET programmes as they are unable to retain the income from such additional effort on their own account. Currently there are over 600 private entrepreneurs offering educational services, with an average of two employees each, with the capacity to provide training services to an estimated 60,000 learners annually. Managing the additional 95,000 NEETs who are potentially eligible for training under the Youth Guarantee would require a substantial expansion in the capacity of the learning providers. It is estimated that the capacity of the private training sector would need to increase by about 15% each year to cope with the requirements of the Youth Guarantee, at least in the initial years.

In the light of the above conclusions, we set out a series of recommendations for improving the lifelong learning framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The implementation of these recommendations requires the commitment of all the responsible education authorities and stakeholders that take part in the process of implementation of work-based learning “dual education” in IVET, and work-based learning in CVET in the education and training systems in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

6.1 Policy recommendations on WBL in IVET

1. Enhance the implementation of the strategic document on VET “Improvement of Quality and Relevance of Vocational Education and Training in Bosnia and Herzegovina - In the light of Riga Conclusions for the period 2021-2030” and recommendations from Osnabrück Declaration.
5. Improve, or re-draft legislative frameworks in VET in reference to work-based learning (practical training, dual education,) in close cooperation with the business sector.
6. Consult with Chambers of Commerce and Employers’ Associations on improving VET attractiveness and its promotion.
7. Improve the training of school coordinators and company mentors.
8. Discuss the revision of budget allocation methods: Develop an instrument to assess the programme-specific costs implications in close consultation with VET providers and companies in specific sectors.
9. Establish on-line registers of companies providing training to VET schools in the Chambers of Commerce in every Canton in the Federation of BiH and Brčko District BiH.
10. Consolidate the work of the Tripartite Councils at the level of entities and cantons, and Advisory Councils at the level of VET schools.
11. Follow up the forecasts of future jobs required by the labour market and based on that, develop occupational and qualifications standards and curricula related to learning outcomes in specific field such as green technology and smart specialisation.
12. Improve quality assurance in VET, based on the EQAVET model that was developed a few years ago and introduce evaluation mechanisms in work-based learning programmes.

6.2 Policy recommendations on WBL in CVET

1. Improve social dialogue and partnerships and governance arrangements that will encourage effective collaboration on work-based learning in CVET.
2. Update and harmonise laws on adult education to equalise accreditation and re-accreditation of education programmes, external evaluation of the learning outcomes, and self-evaluation of learning providers.
3. Develop and provide targeted support to learning providers through consultancy and counselling services.
4. Secure financing instruments for adult learning and CVET through tax incentives, training funds, and grants
5. Allow VET schools more autonomy in creating own revenues, budgeting and financial management of own resources for offering additional adult education programmes.
6. Improve recognition and certification of adult education and training providers.
7. Develop a common monitoring framework with aim to monitor performance of providers and better tracking of adult education and training outcomes
8. Improve pedagogical competences of trainers for adult education courses to ensure the delivery of high-quality training based on continuous professional development.
9. Improve collection of statistical data on work-based learning in CVET to enable better analysis of the field and informed, evidence-based policy and decision-making.
10. Develop online databases that will provide details on existing training programmes, which can help individuals, employers and institutions make informed adult learning choices
11. Raise awareness of employers in SME sector concerning CVET opportunities and benefits.
12. Develop strategic policy documents and legal frameworks relevant to VNFIL/RPL
13. Continue with the further development of the Qualification Framework and the VNFIL/RPL as one of the elements of a lifelong learning system to unblock the access of jobseekers and other adults to the labour market.
14. Include VNFIL/RPL services in ALMP as a form of employment enhancement and career promotion prospects and lifelong learning opportunity for adult learners.

6.3 Policy recommendations on the Youth Guarantee

1. In the Federation of BiH and Brčko District, consider passing a new law on apprenticeship which would enable formal apprenticeships to be offered to young people in the profession of their choice in line with the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships.
2. In Republika Srpska, review the Law on Labour to harmonise the provisions on apprenticeship with the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships.
3. In the Federation of BiH and in Brčko District, consider emulating the programme in Republika Srpska that trains young unemployed people with a university degree who take a professional exam at the end of their training.
4. Develop new training programmes for young ex-offenders to re-engage with the labour market.
5. Develop new training programmes for young mothers to re-engage with the labour market in collaboration with women's associations.
6. Develop a mediator service to reach out to young Roma NEETs
7. Expand the capacity of PES at all levels to deal with the additional demands of the YG. Hire additional dedicated staff to run the programme.
8. Ensure greater visibility of PES training programmes for young people and expand these to cover NEETs who are not registered as unemployed at the PES.
9. Enhance the training programmes of the PES and enlarge their capacity, with larger funding commensurate to the ambitions of the YG to provide all young people with a job, training or apprenticeship within four months of becoming unemployed.
10. Encourage PES to adopt a pro-active approach to reaching out to disaffected youth who are NEETs but not registered as unemployed with the PES. Arrange the training of dedicated youth outreach workers.
11. Carry out a survey of marginalised youth to provide more detailed and granular information about the characteristics of different NEET groups and their social and economic situation, problem areas and intentions to engage with the labour market.
12. Provide business support and technical assistance to small private learning providers to expand their operations in the context of the requirements of the Youth Guarantee and support business advisory services to assist young NEETs who wish to set up their own business ventures with appropriate mentorship and early-stage income support.
13. Expand the capacity of private sector learning providers to meet the new demands that will arise through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. Enable this expansion through formal government guarantees to back up applications for European and private finance loans to support the expansion of capacity of these learning providers.
14. Enable entry of new private sector learning providers companies by easing the start-up process and easing the registration requirements, regulations, and costs of establishing new training programmes.

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