



TORINO PROCESS SYSTEM MONITORING REPORT: KYRGYZSTAN (2023)



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This monitoring report was prepared by a team led by Mihaylo Milovanovitch, Senior Human Capital Development Expert and Coordinator for System Change and Lifelong Learning at the ETF. The report follows a proprietary monitoring methodology developed by the same team and is based on evidence collected, processed, analysed, and verified by the ETF and by national stakeholders in Kyrgyzstan under the overall leadership of Deputy Minister Abazbek, and with the invaluable support of Ms. Farida Ryskulueva as national Torino Process expert.

DISCLAIMER

This version of the report is preliminary. While it encapsulates the collaborative efforts and inputs from various counterparts at various stages, it awaits final verification by the participating country. Therefore, the report is released as "work in progress" which may be subject to refinement and subsequent endorsement in the future.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Scope of system performance monitoring: The Torino Process monitoring covers three major areas of commitment to lifelong learners: access to learning (Area A), quality of learning (Area B), and system organisation (Area C). These areas are divided into eight monitoring dimensions: access and participation in Area A; quality, relevance, excellence, and innovation in Area B; and system management/administration and resources in Area C.
- Access and attractiveness: The monitoring results suggest opportunities for improvement in the access to and attractiveness of VET. For instance, there is potential to better utilise state-funded seats and enhance participation in CVET programmes. Although learners benefit from smooth transitions between educational levels, policy and practice concerning the graduation of VET students require attention. Dropout rates, though fluctuating, are being addressed through stricter attendance policies. While support measures like scholarships are in place for the learners, there is a need to refine these initiatives and the incentives they address by re-evaluating support measures and funding models.
- Quality and relevance: The monitoring results show a strong focus on imparting foundational skills and competences in line with evolving economic trends. The VET system is geared towards the effective delivery of key competences through the State School Education Standard, which mandates foundational skills like problem-solving and literacy. VET bridges well with the labour market through WBL initiatives. However, despite these strengths, continuous upgrades are needed to match evolving technologies and market demands. Adult skills attainment is average, possibly due to a preference for more limited, short-term courses. While efforts to enhance employability and adapt to market needs exist, bureaucratic processes hinder swift VET programme updates in line with labour market needs. Nonetheless, integration of green and digital themes shows promise, albeit with room for further improvement to meet future demand more effectively.
- Excellence and innovation: Kyrgyzstan shows moderate progress in pedagogical excellence and stronger performance in programme content. Successful initiatives include dual training programmes and work-based learning, establishing training and production centres and pedagogical excellence hubs. Despite this, there is a systemic issue with implementation pace and donor dependency. As to innovation, VET in Kyrgyzstan is receptive to innovative solutions. Efforts in this respect include creating systems for recognising non-formal and informal qualifications, improving access to lifelong learning for adults, and supporting learners in VET. Challenges with innovation include limited systemic integration and reliance on project-specific support.
- System management and organisation: VET displays satisfactory performance in the domain of governance and stakeholder involvement, albeit with reliance on external funding. Participatory approaches, notably in dual training and work-based learning, are effective where supported by donor projects. Data utilisation for policymaking remains limited. Quality assurance efforts are in place, but progress at a slow pace. Leadership capacity varies across VET levels, with higher education institutions demonstrating more autonomy and self-sustainability. Internationalisation efforts are notable, especially in higher education, with tertiary VET providers engaging in cooperative projects and adopting international practices. Challenges in the domain of human and financial resources persist, leading also to disparities in the quality, adequacy, and availability of physical facilities and resources across the VET system.
- Quality and reliability of monitoring evidence: The monitoring results of Kyrgyzstan are less comparable internationally than those of other countries in the Torino Process sample, on average. These results are also at high risk of bias. Nevertheless, Kyrgyzstan tends to self-appraise the performance of its VET system in rather neutral, objective terms.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Focus and scope of monitoring

This report summarises the results of monitoring VET system performance in Kyrgyzstan, initiated in the context of the Torino Process and completed in 2023.¹ "Performance" describes the extent to which the VET system delivers against a targeted selection of national and international obligations (commitments) to learners and other stakeholders in support of learning through life (lifelong learning - LLL). "VET system"² refers to the network of institutions, people, policies, practices, resources, and methodologies in a country and the way in which they are organised to provide individuals of any age with the practical skills, knowledge, and competencies needed for specific occupations, trades, or professions.

The focus of monitoring is on the contribution of initial and continuing VET (IVET and CVET) to the learning activities of youth and adults in any learning setting (formal and non-formal), undertaken to improve their knowledge, skills, competences, and qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons. The purpose of the Torino Process monitoring exercise is to provide decision-makers, practitioners, and stakeholders with a reliable basis for informed decisions about policy improvement, resource allocation, strategy design, and follow-up analysis in support of lifelong learning.

The monitoring framework which underpins this report covers three major areas of commitment to lifelong learners: access to learning (Area A), quality of learning (Area B), and system organisation (Area C). These areas are divided into eight monitoring dimensions: access and participation in Area A: quality, relevance, excellence, and innovation in Area B; and system management/administration and resources in Area C. Within these areas and their dimensions, the Torino Process tracks a total of 30 system deliverables (outcomes)³ - the extent to which they are being delivered and how equitably they are distributed to thirteen groups of learners according to age, gender, socio-economic background, labour market and migration status, and typical learning setting.

The monitoring provides information in the form of a system performance index (SPI) for each of these outcomes and learner groups they serve, to a total of 82 indices per country.⁴ The SPIs can range from 0 to 100, where 100 indicates maximum or best performance. The indices describe VET system performance in formal and non-formal learning settings for youth and adults, females and males, disadvantaged learners, long-term unemployed jobseekers, economically inactive populations, and first-generation migrants.

This report showcases a selection of key monitoring results based on those indices, as follows: overall performance by broad monitoring dimension (Section 2.1), performance by specific area and system deliverable (Section 2.2 and subsections), and performance in support of specific groups of learners (Section 2.3). The report also provides an international average score⁵ for these results for

¹ The Torino Process is a multiannual review of vocational education and training (VET) in countries in East and South-East Europe (including Turkey), Central Asia, and the South and East Mediterranean region, which the ETF is carrying out in partnership with countries in these regions on a regular basis since 2010. For more information see https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/what-we-do/torino-process-policy-analysis-and-progress-monitoring

² This report may use "VET", "VET system", and "system" interchangeably.

³ Further in the report "outcomes" and "deliverables" are used interchangeably.

⁴ In rare cases where evidence is missing, the number of SPIs for a country can be lower.

⁵ "International average" refers to the average for countries participating in the Torino Process. At the time of preparation of this monitoring report, the evidence collection for some countries was still ongoing. As additional countries complete the monitoring exercise, the international averages shown in this report may change.

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

1.2 Comparability and reliability of monitoring data

The evidence for this monitoring report was collected and analysed in several steps from September 2022 until April 2023. After an initial round of collecting internationally comparable indicators for each of the system outcomes and learner groups covered by the monitoring framework, the ETF compiled a supplementary questionnaire for national authorities and stakeholders in Kyrgyzstan to gather information about outcomes and groups of learners for which such indicators were missing. The responses to the questionnaire were quantified and integrated with the rest of the monitoring data into a repository of mixed evidence, which was then used to calculate the system performance indices presented in this report.

In addition to messages about system performance, the monitoring delivers information also about the international comparability of results of each country, the extent to which these results may be susceptible to bias, and how self-critical a country is when it reports about its policy and system performance for external monitoring purposes. This is possible because the monitoring methodology foresees keeping accurate records about the availability, origin and type of evidence used to calculate the 82 performance indices and corresponding results for each country, including Kyrgyzstan.

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

meen	international comparability of performance results (o-least comparable, 100-lany comparable)									
Kyrgyzstan: 14.3/100 Intl. average: 32.7/100										
0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
	•									
Risk of bias regarding system performance (0=highest risk, 100=lowest risk)										
Kyrgyzstan: 12.8/100 Intl. average: 23.9/100										
0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
	•									
Tendency to be self-critical regarding system performance (most critical=0, neutral=50, least critical=100)										
Kyrgyzstan: 62.2/100 Intl. average: 52.8/100										

50

60

70

80

90

100

International comparability of performance results (0=least comparable, 100=fully comparable)

40

10

20

30

In the group of countries covered by the Torino Process monitoring in 2023, Kyrgyzstan ranks in the lowest quartile in terms of the international comparability of its monitoring results (first horizontal scale in Figure 1). Less than a third of all countries in the Torino Process sample demonstrate a similar level of comparability. This result does not necessarily imply that Kyrgyzstan lacks nationallevel data, but it does suggest a significant shortage of internationally comparable information on the performance of its VET and lifelong learning systems.

The monitoring results of Kyrgyzstan are also at a relatively high risk of bias compared to other countries in the Torino Process, on average (second horizontal scale in Figure 1): less than 13% of the monitoring results for 2023 are based on quantitative evidence, compared to an average of 23.9% for the other countries participating in the system monitoring. Despite the higher bias potential, the responses provided by Kyrgyzstan in the supplementary monitoring questionnaire are not significantly

more positive than the self-assessment results of other countries in the Torino Process, as shown on the third horizontal scale in Figure 1. This implies that even with a lower reliance on quantitative data, the self-assessment of performance by authorities and stakeholders in Kyrgyzstan does not appear overly inflated when compared to that of other countries, on average

2. MONITORING RESULTS: KYRGYZSTAN

2.1 Policy and system performance in 2023: overall results

The Torino Process monitoring draws on multiple, often disparate, information sources and data. To facilitate a quick, efficient, and focused communication of key messages despite the diversity of information collected, the reporting of monitoring results aggregates the evidence in ways which facilitate a quick overview of system performance without sacrificing too much detail. The eight monitoring dimensions mentioned in the previous section are the top layer of reporting in this respect. They capture VET system performance in various domains, the selection of which is aligned with national and international country commitments and reform and development priorities concerning learning. These eight dimensions are described in Table 1.

No.	Dimension	Description
A.1	Access to learning	This dimension captures the degree to which initial VET (IVET), continuing VET (CVET), and other adult learning opportunities to which VET could contribute, are accessible and attractive for learners irrespective of who
		they are and why they wish to engage in learning.
A.2	Participation in learning	in the education and training system by looking at its vertical and horizontal permeability, that is whether learners can switch between general and vocational pathways and between formal and non-formal learning, as well as whether they complete their learning.
B.1	Quality and relevance	This dimension captures the extent to which learners in IVET and CVET are provided with basic skills and key competences, whether their learning has exposure to, and is relevant for, employment, and also whether they are provided with adequate career guidance.
В.2	Excellence	This dimension captures the presence of system-wide policies and measures to promote highest quality practices and results in teaching and training, content design and provision, governance and VET provider management, and equity and social inclusion.
В.3	Innovation	This dimension captures the presence of innovative practices and priorities on system level in the areas of access to learning, support for successful completion of learning, and quality of learning and training outcomes.
B.4	VET system responsiveness	This dimension captures the extent to which curricula for youth and adults consider themes of significance for sustainability, climate change awareness, and digitalisation, as well as whether the IVET and CVET systems are responsive to labour market needs, demographic changes, and socio-economic developments.
C.1	Steering and management	This dimension captures the availability of evidence for informed decision- making, the degree to which governance of VET is participatory, the presence and transparency of quality assurance arrangements, the quality and capacity of staff in leadership positions, and the degree of internationalisation of IVET and CVET.
C.2	Resourcing	This dimension captures the adequacy and efficiency of human and financial resources in IVET and CVET, and the extent to which the material base for learning and training is adequate, that is – conducive to effective teaching, training, and learning.

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

This chapter of the monitoring report presents the performance of the VET system in Kyrgyzstan across the eight dimensions of Torino Process monitoring. National authorities report that, in terms of overall performance, lifelong learners in Kyrgyzstan are well-placed to benefit from education and training, which is reported to be attuned to quality and relevance (Dimension B.1, SPI of 60) and committed to promoting innovative practices in VET (Dimension B.3, SPI of 80). The system is also seen as having institutional capacity in the domain of steering and management which is on par with that of other countries in the Torino Process (Dimension C.1, SPI of 43).

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



Theoretical⁶ index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100 Source: Torino Process monitoring database

However, not all learners seem to be able to benefit fully from these advantages. Successful participation in learning is an area of average performance (Dimension A.2, SPI of 58), and performance in support of access and attractiveness of VET programmes is subpar when compared to system performance in other dimensions of monitoring (Dimension A.1, SPI of 25).

The VET system in Kyrgyzstan also demonstrates a strong aptitude for innovation and responsiveness to external developments. However, despite a declared commitment to excellence in strategic documents, the system-wide promotion of, and support for, highest quality practices in

⁶ The Torino Process makes a distinction between theoretical (full) index range and index range used for reporting purposes. For reporting purposes, rare instances of extreme values on the low end (SPI < 10) and on the high end (SPI>90) of the index scale are truncated at the upper (10) and lower (90) decile end. This means that the reporting does not discriminate SPI values below 10 and above 90. The international average, on the other hand, is calculated using the full range of the index.

teaching and learning, is an area with scope for improvement (Dimension B.2, SPI of 50). There is also a serious challenge with securing financial, human, and physical resources for VET (Dimension C.2, SPI of 32).

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

VET performance in Kyrgyzstan in the eight monitoring dimensions presented above is driven by 30 policy and system outcomes. It is through these outcomes that the IVET and CVET subsystems work to meet the needs and expectations of stakeholders, particularly of youth and adult learners. This section of the monitoring report presents findings about system performance on the level of these deliverables. To facilitate reading and the navigation of content, the section groups the presentation of the 30 outcomes by the three major areas of commitment to learners, which were introduced in the first section of this report: access to learning (Area A), quality of learning (Area B), and system organisation (Area C). Reporting in Area B, the largest by the number of outcomes, is divided into B (1) and B (2).

2.2.1 Area A. Opportunities for lifelong learning: access and participation

In Area A (Access and participation in opportunities for LLL), the Torino Process tracks the first two monitoring dimensions presented in Section 2.1 – access/attractiveness and participation, with six system outcomes (Table 2).

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

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

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

The preceding section emphasises the weaker performance of Kyrgyzstan in the domain of accessibility and participation in VET. Despite national authorities noting that IVET programmes are generally available to all citizens aged between 15 and 30 and are admitted based on applications

and medical examination results, significant disparities still exist within that domain, potentially disadvantaging some learners due to age. Although system performance in support of access to IVET programmes is seen as solidly mid-range compared to other countries in the Torino Process (Outcome A.1.1), the reality is that many state-funded seats go under-used each year. For example, even though approximately 32,000 to 35,000 training seats are funded annually, the uptake remains low, particularly for popular trades where competition is high.

Participation in CVET is deficient (Outcome A.1.2), even when compared against an already subpar international average. National authorities acknowledge a decrease in the attractiveness of VET programmes, with a notable decline in enrolments from 34,400 in 2018 to 28,600 in 2021. Despite initiatives like reducing training periods in integrated programmes and implementing a credit-based system, challenges persist in drawing students to VET, particularly in rural areas where options are limited but represent a significant proportion of VET participants.

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





The performance of the VET system in securing access to other opportunities for lifelong learning beyond VET (Outcome A.1.3) is somewhat better but remains low overall. However, the establishment of the Skills Development Fund in 2020 and the implementation of various professional development programmes are promising steps towards enhancing lifelong learning opportunities, particularly in targeted economic sectors where new skills are in demand.

Once in a VET programme, learners in Kyrgyzstan can relatively easily navigate between different levels of education, reflecting a system reported to have high degrees of vertical and horizontal

permeability (Outcomes A.2.1 and A.2.2). This is supported by legislative changes made in July 2021 to the model State SVE and HVE standards, which aim to facilitate fair transitions across VET stages by recognising previous education outcomes and aligning them with the National Qualification Framework levels.

Despite the structural opportunities for mobility within the system, the progression through and the successful graduation of courses shows below-average performance. This points to a gap between the potential for movement within the education system and the actual effectiveness of these pathways in supporting the successful progression and graduation of learners. While transitions are technically possible and supported by systems such as 'Applicant Online' to improve the admissions transparency, the real-world outcomes suggest that improvements are necessary to enhance the practical effectiveness of these pathways.

Thus, dropout rates in VET institutions have shown fluctuations, with an increase noted from 7.2% in 2021 to 11% in 2022. This rise is partly attributed to the Ministry of Education and Science's enhanced monitoring and optimization efforts, which led to a more stringent enforcement of attendance policies and subsequently higher expulsion rates for non-attendance. Notably, the reasons for dropout such as marriage, illness, emigration, and military service do not significantly differ by gender, underscoring the multifaceted nature of dropout causes.

In Kyrgyzstan, learners within VET can navigate with relative ease between different levels of education, reflecting a system which is reported to have a high degree of vertical permeability (Outcome A.2.1). Similarly, horizontal permeability within learning pathways is a domain in which authorities report strong results (Outcome A.2.2), suggesting that transitions between different tracks in VET and general education are possible.

There are various measures in place in support of successful progression and graduation of students in VET, including scholarships for academic merit, dormitory accommodations for needy students, and opportunities to retake failed exams, aiming to aid those who struggle academically.

Against the backdrop of these supportive interventions, national authorities report that providers tend to avoid expelling students due to the financial repercussions of losing state and extra-budgetary funding. Typically, students with poor academic results are allowed to graduate in order to maintain institutional funding levels. For those expelled due to academic failures or other significant reasons, there are provisions for re-admission. These students can reapply at the end of a semester, with admission contingent on seat availability and the relevance of their previous studies. The curriculum is then adjusted to bridge any educational gaps within a year, ensuring that students meet the required standards.

These findings point to a critical issue in the structure and incentives of the VET system in Kyrgyzstan. The support measures, such as scholarships and accommodation, appear to be designed to help students overcome financial and logistical barriers to education. However, the underlying financial model of the institutions might inadvertently create a misalignment of incentives that affects educational outcomes.

If schools are motivated primarily by financial considerations to pass students who might otherwise fail—due to the risk of losing funding for each student who does not complete their course—it could mean that these institutions prioritise their financial stability over the academic success and genuine skill acquisition of their students. This situation could lead to graduates who are less prepared for the workforce, despite technically completing their courses (see also the discussion in the next section

about the employability of VET graduates). The discrepancy also explains the relatively low performance score in this dimension of monitoring (Outcome A.2.3).

In this context, it might be beneficial to re-evaluate the support measures and the overall funding model to ensure that they genuinely contribute to the quality of education and the successful, substantive progression of students through their courses. The focus could shift towards more targeted academic support, restructuring the incentives for institutions so that they align better with student success and educational integrity, rather than primarily financial outcomes

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

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

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

Code	Deliverable (outcome)	Description		
B.1.1	Key competences for LLL, quality of learning outcomes	This outcome captures the extent to which the education and training system succeeds in the provision of basic skills and key competences for learners in formal education (including IVET), as defined in regular international surveys and international assessments		
B.1.2	Adult skills and competences	This outcome captures the extent to which adults in working age dispose of basic skills and key competences, as captured by regular international surveys.		
B.1.3	Links between learning and the world of work	This outcome reflects the pragmatic relevance of IVET and CVET programmes through the lens of participation in work-based learning (WBL) and the share of programmes with outcomes/objectives that include a WBL component		
B.1.4	Employability of learners	This outcome refers to the labour market relevance of opportunities for LLL as captured through evidence of labour market outcomes of graduates from IVET, CVET, and other forms of LLL with a VET component		
B.1.5	Opportunities for career guidance	This outcome strives to capture the timely availability of up-to-date information about professions and education programmes, which information allows prospective and current students in VET to take informed decisions concerning their education and employment paths		
B.4.1	Relevance of learning content: green transition	This outcome captures the extent to which curricula for youth and adults consider themes of significance for sustainability and climate change awareness, including "green skills" for sustainable economies		
B.4.2	2 Relevance of learning content: digital transition This outcome tracks the extent to which curricula for youth and adults incorport basic digital station, and the extent to which learners are provide basic digital skills as a result			
B.4.3	Responsiveness of programme offering	This outcome captures the degree and speed of responsiveness of initial and continuing VET systems to the needs of the labour market and to other changes concerning demography and socio-economic developments		

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

The system performance data for Kyrgyzstan indicate robust delivery of foundational skills and competences, aligned with emerging economic trends. According to official information, the VET system in the country is designed to be effective in imparting key competences to young learners (Outcome B.1.1, SPI of 75). A cornerstone of this design is Kyrgyzstan's State School Education

Standard, which mandates that all VET programme entrants must have established basic skills like problem-solving, reading, and maths. The Standard ensures that programmes equip learners with key competences necessary for successful societal participation, such as environmental protection, ICT usage, teamwork, and basic entrepreneurial skills, thoroughly described in the state standards.

In line with this intention, VET in Kyrgyzstan is reported to be well-performing in bridging education with the labour market (Outcome B.1.3, SPI of 75). An example of this integration is the development and approval of the Work-Based Learning (WBL) concept, which includes hands-on learning, on-the-job training, and practical and laboratory classes, now accounting for a significant portion of the curriculum in VET programmes. By 2022, dual training regulations were solidified, expanding the range of trades covered and engaging more vocational schools in this model, thus enhancing practical training directly linked to current industry needs.

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



Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100 Source: Torino Process monitoring database

Despite these advances, the official information provided in the course of monitoring underlines that IVET and CVET programmes require continual upgrades to keep pace with rapidly evolving production technologies and labour market needs. Recent revisions have focused on switching to competence-based modular programmes, improving relationships with the labour market, updating content and methodologies, and employing the dual training system to ensure practical relevance. New courses have been introduced, such as 'Fundamentals of migration laws and processes' and 'Critical analysis of media content and fact-checking,' to meet contemporary demands.

Despite these actions, the skills and competences of adults show only average results (Outcome B.1.2). This may be linked to the reported focus of adult learners on acquiring specific, immediately

applicable skills through short-term courses, often sidelining broader educational components that might contribute to long-term career stability and growth. The emphasis on rapid skill acquisition is reflected in the popularity of courses designed to deliver quick returns on educational investment, such as 2-week to 1-month courses in practical trades, which align with the observed preferences of adults in the labour market.

VET performance in support of the employability of VET learners (Outcome B.1.4) is average as well. Despite the presence of a framework geared towards high quality of learning and training outcomes and stronger links between VET programmes and the labour market, demand for VET graduates remains subdued. The reasons may range from an economic slowdown at the time of monitoring, to a potential mismatch between the perceived value of VET qualifications and industry expectations, to an interpretation of VET quality that may not sufficiently consider labour market relevance as a priority result.

Authorities too report that, despite policy intentions, it is challenging to definitively assess how well graduates at all VET stages are equipped with the key competences specified in the state standards. This variability is reflected in the mixed success of graduates—while some navigate their careers successfully, others struggle to find their footing in the labour market and society. This inconsistency might contribute to the subdued demand for VET graduates, as employers may perceive a lack of uniform competence among them. Notably, work-based learning initiatives, though substantial, face hurdles in sectors like agriculture due to a lack of large enterprises and limited employer participation.

The limited responsiveness of VET to immediate needs from employers may play a role as well (Outcome B.4.3). The education system in Kyrgyzstan, including IVET and CVET, is widely regarded as conservative and slow to adapt to the rapid changes in the labour market and shifting demographic and socio-economic conditions. National authorities indicate that this sluggishness is partly due to the bureaucratic processes involved in updating VET curricula. For instance, the lists of IVET trades and SVE and HVE special fields are approved by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, and incorporating new trades or fields that arise in response to labour market developments is a lengthy process. It involves multiple governmental bodies and can take over a year, leading institutions to experiment with new trades or special fields unofficially.

Recent reforms have sought to address these issues by reducing the proportion of the curriculum mandated by the government to about 10%, allowing educational institutions more autonomy to adapt their programs. Despite this increased flexibility, there remains a significant challenge in ensuring that these institutions can effectively meet labour market demands and adapt to demographic and socioeconomic changes. Without adequate regulatory mechanisms, such as professional standards, the responsiveness of VET programs to market needs remains slow.

Moreover, updates to IVET program content also lag behind market needs. For instance, according to official information provided for the purpose of monitoring, courses on 'Business and entrepreneurship fundamentals' and 'Legal fundamentals of professional activity' have only recently been updated to reflect more current demands, such as the focus on digitalisation and migration laws. Similarly, new topics on environmental protection and media literacy are being added slowly. Decisions to streamline the training period for certain IVET programs reflect an attempt to align more closely with market conditions, where there is a demand for quicker pathways into the workforce. However, the rigid control over curriculum content by the government limits the ability of vocational schools to rapidly adapt to new industry trends.

Assessment and accreditation processes for training programs and providers also do not currently consider labour market needs or demographic and socio-economic changes effectively, although

there is an acknowledgment within the accreditation framework to evaluate how VET institutions are responding to these external pressures.

The Torino Process monitoring framework assesses the relevance of learning content from a longer-term perspective by examining the extent to which curricula incorporate forward-looking, emerging themes such as digital and green transitions. During the monitoring period, VET programmes in Kyrgyzstan demonstrated engagement with these themes. However, the emphasis on the digital transition was moderate, with an SPI of 50 (Outcome B.4.2), indicating an average performance level. In contrast, the green transition themes were better integrated, achieving a stronger SPI of 69 (Outcome B.4.1).

According to information provided in the course of monitoring, engagement in green transition themes within IVET programmes includes a structured 34-hour subject on 'Occupational protection and industrial ecology,' focused on environmental education. This is supplemented by practical activities such as the annual 'Plant your tree' event, where around 20,000 seedlings were planted in 2022, reflecting a hands-on approach to embedding green skills. Furthermore, there are examples of providers, such as school No. 43, which focus on integrating sustainable practices in the curriculum, like for example the implementation of the so called 'Dyykan Zhiger' concept which trains farmers in organic agriculture techniques.

The digital transition, while moderately emphasized, has seen specific initiatives aimed at enhancing digital competences. Collaborations with the Kyrgyz Software and Services Developers Association have led to the development of training programs for basic software specialists, culminating in the hosting of the first WORLDSKILLS Championship in Kyrgyzstan in 2021. This event, which focused on popular digital competencies like graphic design and web development, highlighted a growing recognition of the need for advanced digital skills. Despite these efforts, there remains a gap in widespread digital skills proficiency among VET students, with computer literacy largely confined to the specific trades relevant to IT.

These developments in both green and digital education within the VET system are part of a broader effort to align the curricula with the immediate and future needs of the labour market and societal expectations for sustainable development and technological adaptability. While there are significant advancements, the variability in how these skills are implemented and the depth of training indicate that further enhancement and integration of these themes could improve the overall effectiveness and relevance of VET programmes in Kyrgyzstan.

2.2.3 Area B (2). Lifelong learning outcomes: excellence and innovation

In the second part of Area B (Excellence and innovation in support of lifelong learning), the Torino Process monitors two performance dimensions – excellence and innovation, which accommodate a total of eight system outcomes. These outcomes include excellence in pedagogy, learning content, governance, and inclusion into learning, as well as systemic innovation supporting access, participation, quality, and relevance of learning and training. The outcomes included under Area B (2) are defined in Table 4.

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

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

Code	Deliverable (outcome)	Description		
5.4	Excellence in pedagogy and	This outcome captures the extent to which excellence in teaching and training is an acknowledged policy priority, as well as the extent to which its implementation is		
B.2.1	professional development	bearing fruit across the education and training system, including in the domain of professional development of teachers		
B.2.2	Excellence in programme content and implementation	This outcome captures the results of efforts to promote excellence in the content and implementation of VET programmes, with a specific focus on bringing them closer to the world of work (i.e. through work-based learning), on prioritising greening in curricula and teaching, as well as on promoting excellence in learning.		
B.2.3	Excellence in governance and provider management	This outcome captures the results of efforts to promote excellence in the domains of financing, leadership, and governance, as well as the extent to which these examples are systemic or not		
B.2.4	Excellence in social inclusion and equity	This outcome captures the results of efforts to promote excellence in the domain of equity and social inclusion in education and training, as well as the extent to which these examples are systemic or not		
B.3.1	Systemic innovation: access to opportunities for LLL	This outcome captures the presence of innovative practices and policy solutions in the domain of access to opportunities for lifelong learning.		
B.3.2	Systemic innovation: participation and graduation	This outcome captures the presence of innovative practices and policy solutions in the provision of support for participation in (and graduation from) opportunities for lifelong learning, and the extent to which they are systemic (or not)		
B.3.3	3 Systemic innovation: quality of learning and training outcomes This outcome captures the presence of innovative practices and policy soluti raising the quality of learning and training in terms of the knowledge, skills, a abilities acquired by learners			
B.3.4	Systemic innovation: relevance of learning and training	This outcome captures the presence of innovative practices and policy solutions for raising the labour market relevance of knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired by learners		

Kyrgyzstan demonstrates a moderate level of performance in the domain of excellence in pedagogy and professional development (Outcome B.2.1) and a stronger performance in programme content and implementation with an SPI of 75 (Outcome B.2.2). These outcomes may reflect the country's efforts towards integrating modern, future-oriented themes such as digitalisation and the green transition, albeit with varying degrees of success. The integration of such themes is part of a broader strategic intent encapsulated in the Education Development Programme 2040, which aims to improve the quality of VET and update its content based on professional standards. Currently, this process has been slow, with only a limited number of professional standards developed under pilot projects supported by international donors like the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Despite these strategic intentions, there remains a systemic issue with the implementation pace and the non-systemic nature of these efforts, which are often donor dependent. For instance, dual training and work-based learning methods have been well implemented through partnerships with employer associations and have led to the establishment of four training and production centres and eight centres for pedagogical excellence across the country. These centres are envisioned as hubs to disseminate modern knowledge, best practices, and innovations to VET students, teachers, and administrators.

Yet, the monitoring results indicate a need for substantial progress in social inclusion and equity within the VET excellence domain (Outcome B.2.4). This suggests that VET in Kyrgyzstan may struggle to adopt and apply best practices for ensuring equal access and inclusion for all learners.

In the context of system performance monitoring within the Torino Process, excellence and innovation represent distinct yet interconnected domains. While excellence refers to the pursuit of highest quality practices and outcomes in various, mainstream domains of vocational education and training policy and delivery, innovation focuses on the presence of pioneering practices and policy solutions within these and related domains. Innovation in the context of monitoring is a proxy for the

adaptability, creativity, and forward-thinking approach in the VET system in responding to the evolving needs of learners and labour markets.



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

Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100 Source: Torino Process monitoring database

VET in Kyrgyzstan is quite open to innovative practices and solutions, especially in areas needing attention. The adult education sector, for example, is moving towards creating systems for the official recognition of non-formally and informally acquired qualifications and skills. Innovations to improve access to lifelong learning for adults and support for learners to engage and succeed in VET are ongoing, with a good degree of openness to novel solutions in supporting better quality and relevance of learning and training outcomes (Outcomes B.3.3 and B.3.4). Furthermore, the national qualifications framework approved in 2020 aims to facilitate this alignment with real economy demands. The dual training regulations introduced in 2022 and the independent qualification certification by employers in a real working environment are examples of efforts to increase the relevance and responsiveness of VET to labour market needs. These efforts, while promising, are challenged by their limited systemic integration and dependence on project-specific support.

However, the systemic implementation of inclusive education remains partial, with only 30% of planned measures under the inclusive education concept having been implemented due to funding constraints, despite early initiatives dating back to 1996 aimed at integrating an inclusive component supported by various international partners.

2.2.4 Area C. System organisation

In Area C (System organisation), the monitoring framework accommodates the last two dimensions presented in Section 2.1 – steering/management and resourcing, in which the Torino Process tracks a total of eight system outcomes. These outcomes include the availability and use of data for informed decision-making, the involvement of stakeholders in VET policy, provider management, and resourcing, quality assurance and accountability, the internationalisation of VET providers, as well as the availability and use of human and financial resources in VET. The outcomes included under Area C are defined in Table 5.

Code	Deliverable (outcome)	Description
C.1.1	Data availability and use	This outcome refers to the availability of administrative and big data as covered by Level 1 of the monitoring framework, participation in large scale international assessments, as well as technical capacity to generate/manage evidence to support monitoring and improvement
C.1.2	Participatory governance	This outcome captures the degree of involvement of the private sector and other external stakeholders in consultations and decisions concerning opportunities for LLL through initial and continuing VET
C.1.3	Public accountability and reliable quality assurance	This outcome tracks the extent to which reliable and trustworthy quality assurance (QA) mechanisms and accountability arrangements are in place which cover learners, teachers, and providers, as well as the extent to which the QA results are publicly available
C.1.4	Professional capacity of staff in leadership positions	This outcome monitors the availability and professional capacity of qualified staff in leadership roles and in other key administrative roles on provider level
C.1.5	Internationalisation	This outcome monitors the degree of internationalisation in IVET and CVET, such as internationalisation of QA arrangements, curricular content, qualifications (i.e. recognition of international credentials, awarding bodies being active beyond their country of origin, etc.)
C.2.1	Adequate financial resource allocations and use	This outcome captures the adequacy of financial resources invested in IVET and CVET in terms of level of investment and allocation, as well as the degree of diversification of funding between public and private sources
C.2.2	Adequate human resource allocation and use	This outcome captures the efficiency of human resource management in terms of availability of teachers and trainers, and the adequacy of their deployment and career management
C.2.3	Adequate material base	This outcome captures the extent to which the material base for learning and training is adequate, including learning and training materials which are supportive of and promote effective teaching, training, and learning

TABLE 5. POLICY AND SYSTEM OUTCOMES INCLUDED UNDER MONITORING AREA C: SYSTEM ORGANISATION

Kyrgyzstan reports satisfactory system performance in the domain of governance and stakeholder involvement in VET (Outcome C.1.2, SPI of 75). However, the efficacy of these participatory approaches and their reliance on evidence-based decision-making may warrant further scrutiny. The involvement of stakeholders is actively pursued through initiatives such as the dual training system and the development of work-based learning methods, which have been bolstered by interactions with employer associations. These initiatives have been successfully implemented where they are supported by donor projects, showing a proactive approach to governance. However, the reliance on external funding highlights a vulnerability in the sustainability of these practices.

Like many countries participating in the Torino Process monitoring, Kyrgyzstan faces challenges with the limited availability and use of data, particularly internationally comparable data (Outcome C.1.1). Despite the availability of internationally comparable data and operational data from MES, these data sources are underutilized in policymaking and monitoring. This underuse of available data illustrates a gap between data collection and its application in enhancing VET governance and effectiveness.

There is also a need for improvement in the area of quality assurance in VET (Outcome C.1.3). The development of professional standards is integral to enhancing quality assurance, but progress has been notably slow, as noted by national authorities. At the time of monitoring, only 29 professional standards have been developed under pilot projects supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for specific industrial sectors such as construction, catering, metalwork, agriculture, and energy. The limited number and scope of these standards highlight a significant gap in covering the diverse range of VET programs.

Moreover, the development and implementation of these standards are not systemic and depend heavily on donor projects, which raises concerns about their sustainability and broader applicability across the VET sector. This sporadic development process results in a lack of functionality in newly implemented standards, making it difficult for institutions to adhere to a unified quality framework.

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





To strengthen the VET quality assurance system, several policy measures have been introduced. One such initiative includes enhancing interaction with employer associations to align educational content more closely with labor market needs and to provide students with practical experience through internship and practice platforms. This measure has been effectively implemented through the dual training system and the development of work-based learning methods at both IVET and SVE stages. Still, much remains to be done.

The professional capacity of staff in leadership positions in VET merits attention too (Outcome C.1.4). Issues such as unsatisfactory pay, reputational concerns, and possibly a degree of politicization of the profession, may be deterring good quality candidates from applying to leadership positions in VET.

Overall, the availability and efficacy of leaders and key administrators vary significantly across different levels of the VET system. In Higher Vocational Education (HVE), for instance, universities are proactive and autonomous entities that independently conduct reforms and implement innovations. Leaders at this level tend to be highly qualified to manage substantial reforms and maintain institutional development. These universities enjoy a significant degree of academic freedom, which allows them to update their program content dynamically and engage in extensive international cooperation. Financially, a large portion of universities, nearly 80%, fund their operations through revenues from training contract students, showcasing a robust model of self-sustainability, which also demands solid leadership qualifications.

Secondary Vocational Education (SVE) has also seen rapid evolution, with provider leadership swiftly adapting to market conditions by offering relevant training programs and developing incomegenerating activities. About 60% of colleges have transitioned to self-funding, reflecting a significant shift towards market-driven operations. However, the qualifications of these leaders, while adequate for national operations, are not always sufficient for engaging in international cooperation, indicating a potential area for development.

The scenario is quite different in IVET, where institutions have less autonomy and adaptability to market conditions. While IVET providers are involved in production and service activities that benefit the local community, their operations remain predominantly state-funded. Recent changes have allowed these institutions to admit contract students, accounting for about 15% of the total student body, reflecting a shift towards a more diversified funding model. Perhaps for this reason, the qualifications of principals in IVET and of IVET administrators, while lower than those in SVE and HVE, are still deemed competent enough to make autonomous decisions regarding the development of their institutions and the creation of new IVET programs.

VET in Kyrgyzstan has made significant progress in internationalization (Outcome C.1.5, SPI of 75) due to the participation of providers in various initiatives supporting provider collaboration in internationally supported projects, but also due to openness to international experience, practice, and peer collaboration. In fact, performance in this domain appears to be outstanding compared to other countries participating in the Torino Process, on average.

While internationalization in IVET is not very developed in practice, the shift to credit-based modular learning has prepared these institutions to quickly align their programs to meet international standards if opportunities for student or teacher exchanges arise. According to national authorities, notable engagements include IVET providers participating in the 'Championship of professions' in Moscow and hosting the Digital Skills Competition in Bishkek, which are significant milestones in international exposure for VET students. These events are supported by initiatives that also facilitate study trips abroad for IVET and college representatives to learn from foreign educational practices.

Higher VET shows a more advanced level of internationalization. Since the mid-1990s, universities have engaged in cooperative projects with foreign institutions and have influenced significant curriculum reforms, including the adoption of two-level Bachelor-Master training systems and credit-based learning. Kyrgyz universities participate in the Erasmus Mundus programme, facilitating a dynamic exchange of students and teachers with European universities, some of which offer joint diplomas. Several international joint universities in Kyrgyzstan, such as the Aga Khan University of

Central Asia and the Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University, implement programs and learning technologies sourced from international partners.

Looking ahead, the Education Development Programme in the Kyrgyz Republic until 2040 prioritizes further internationalization of tertiary VET, aiming to increase the proportion of foreign students and visiting teachers, and to expand the number of master's programs offered in foreign languages. This strategic focus also includes enhancing the professional development of university teaching staff to incorporate more international training and internships, ensuring that the faculty's skills are on par with global standards.

Another block of outcomes in the area of system organization includes resources. Here, it is important to note that the term 'resources' within that context encompasses both the financial means to support teaching and learning, as well as the human capital required to deliver quality education.

Policy and system performance in the domain of human resources in VET in Kyrgyzstan is below average (Outcome C.2.2), highlighting the need for more effective strategies in workforce placement and development. Statistical data reveal that approximately 25% of tertiary educators hold multiple teaching positions, indicating a scarcity in dedicated teaching resources in both secondary VET and tertiary (higher) VET. This scarcity results not from a lack of available teachers but from the necessity for educators to occupy multiple roles to achieve sustainable income levels. In IVET, only 10% of staff combine jobs, with some vacancies filled by industry-specific training foremen.

Despite a regulated licensing system ensuring adequate staffing before program initiation, concerns persist regarding the distribution and qualification suitability of VET educators. The prevalent dissatisfaction among industry employers suggests an ineffective teaching standard within VET. Moreover, the absence of a unified career management system leads to inconsistent career development practices across institutions, heavily influenced by the management style of individual institution leaders. Recent initiatives, such as the focus on professional development at Tokmok Engineering and Pedagogical College and the proposed competitive systems for appointing VET leaders and certifying staff, indicate progress towards addressing these deficiencies.

Kyrgyzstan is also experiencing issues in the domain of financial resource allocation (Outcome C.2.1), both in terms of availability of resources for VET and their utilization. In the total funding allocated to education for 2022, IVET accounted for only 3.9%, with SVE and HVE receiving an even smaller share. This limited funding, mostly earmarked for wages and obligatory costs, constrains the capacity for developing VET infrastructure. Consequently, universities and colleges rely heavily on diversifying their educational and training services and expanding their range of special fields to generate additional income, primarily through increasing the number of contract students.

In IVET, about 20% to 30% of funding is derived from fee-based courses and production services offered to the community. Despite this, nearly all (96%) of the budget for IVET is directed towards salaries, with scant resources left for infrastructural and educational enhancements. These financial limitations are often supplemented by international donor projects, which have supported nearly 70% of VSs over the past thirty years, aiding in technical assistance and infrastructural development.

Furthermore, while IVET institutions attempt to manage their finances through fee-based courses, the high reliance on state funding and donor support illustrates a critical dependency that may hinder long-term sustainability and growth. The diversification between public and private sources of funding remains a key strategy as outlined by the Education Development Programme 2040, which encourages VET institutions to explore various funding avenues including national and local budgets, private donations, and income from advisory and research activities.

System performance in establishing a robust material base for teaching and learning is relatively low as well, both against the international average and other monitoring domains (Outcome C.2.3). VET providers in Kyrgyzstan are tasked with ensuring the availability of educational and training materials, although the use and quality of these materials vary. IVET institutions receive financial support from the state budget and donor projects, ensuring their materials are current, though not for all trades or at all providers. IVET materials, available in both electronic and paper formats in Kyrgyz and Russian, are generally sufficient.

Colleges and universities must independently update their materials, primarily using extrabudgetary funds. Due to limited funding, modern textbooks and teaching materials are infrequently updated. However, state VET institutions benefit from extensive library stocks accumulated during the Soviet era. Additionally, professors and teachers create textbooks and methodological papers. In VSs, module-based programs are common and are continually updated with the latest materials from various sources. Private and interstate universities, like Kyrgyz-Russian, Kyrgyz-Turkish, or Aga Khan Universities, maintain excellent supplies of contemporary educational literature, ensuring their students access high-quality materials.

According to official information, in general, the physical infrastructure of VET institutions varies, depending on financial capabilities and the commitment of school leaders to maintaining facilities. The infrastructure is generally satisfactory, with some institutions benefiting from donor-funded repairs and modern equipment. However, regional institutions often lack technical resources and adequate facilities. Colleges possess relatively good infrastructure but suffer from outdated training equipment, while universities, particularly private and interstate ones, feature modern facilities and computer equipment, though not all maintain high standards.

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

In this round, the Torino Process monitoring looks not only into the deliverables of national VET policies and systems in general but also into the degree to which they address the needs and expectations of present and prospective lifelong learners. The monitoring framework traces how well and equitably system outcomes are distributed to these learners depending on their age and gender, and by features which can be influenced by policy, such as socio-economic disadvantage, labour market status, migration status and learning setting/pathway.

The next sections provide an overview of how the IVET and CVET subsystems in Kyrgyzstan perform in a key selection of monitoring dimensions for the following key selection of learner groups: female learners (Section 2.3.1), disadvantaged learners (Section 2.3.2), populations who are long term unemployed, economically inactive, and have a low level of educational attainment (Section 2.3.3), as well as by their country of origin (Section 2.3.4).

2.3.1 Female learners

This section describes findings about VET system performance regarding access, participation, quality and relevance, and innovation to the benefit of female youth and adult learners in VET in Kyrgyzstan.

The legal framework in Kyrgyzstan ensures that access to IVET programmes is not restricted by gender, aligning with national laws that mandate non-discriminatory access to education. On the surface, this translates into high female participation: female learners, both young and adult, show a higher rate of opting for VET than other learners, on average (Dimension A.1). The VET system also

demonstrates a stronger than average performance in fostering innovation to support better access and participation of females (Dimension B.3).

These results mask important nuances. According to official information, despite solid system performance, societal stereotypes persist, influencing the choice of trades among male and female students. Over the past decade, the IVET system has seen a consistent gender distribution, with female students typically underrepresented in trades that do not align with traditional gender roles. This underrepresentation may be attributed to the perceived attractiveness of certain trades based on societal norms rather than the actual opportunities they may present. Traditionally gendered trades such as cooking and sewing attract predominantly female students, while mechanical and construction trades attract male students.



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

Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100 Source: Torino Process monitoring database

However, these stereotypes are beginning to shift, evidenced by a growing number of male students entering traditionally female-dominated fields and vice versa. Efforts to diversify the trade options and update career guidance systems are ongoing, aiming to challenge these stereotypes and encourage more gender-balanced participation across different trades. Furthermore, the updated Career guidance for IVET and SVE emphasizes gender-inclusive principles, obligating educational providers to combat gender stereotypes and promote equal opportunities. Despite these measures, the number of female students in technical and heavy-industry sectors remains low, reflecting broader cultural influences that shape educational and career choices.

Once enrolled in a training programme, female learners can also expect an environment which is conducive to engagement and progression (Dimension A.2), highlighting a strong performance for a learner group with which many countries in the Torino Process struggle – retaining female learners and helping them to progress. And yet, while the VET system supports gender equality in access and educational opportunities, in practice student retention and completion rates reveals a more complex situation influenced by gender, socio-economic factors, and cultural norms.

Despite legal guarantees of equal access to education for all genders, practical challenges persist. Female learners, in particular, face unique risks that can interrupt their education, such as the societal expectations around marriage and childbirth. These life events significantly impact their ability to continue and complete their studies unless education remains a prioritized value within their family structures. Even when such interruptions occur, some female students manage to resume their education and successfully complete their programs with substantial family support.

Conversely, male students often face pressure to prematurely end their education due to the economic need to support their families, which is a common expectation for young men in many communities. This economic pressure sometimes leads to dropout, similar to the challenges faced by their female counterparts from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The complexities of the dropout phenomenon are further highlighted by the lack of genderdifferentiated data for expulsion or repeated studies in VET settings. This lack of detailed data masks the nuanced experiences of students and the differential impacts of various dropout causes on different genders.

In general, the overall participation of women in the labour market and their engagement in lifelong learning opportunities is reported to reflect a relatively balanced gender distribution, suggesting that structural barriers in VET do not significantly hinder female participation. However, cultural stereotypes and personal circumstances, such as marriage or family obligations, continue to impact educational trajectories for female students, potentially influencing their ability to complete their studies.

The quality and relevance of skills and competences which prospective female learners can expect to receive (Dimension B.1), on the other hand, does not depend on their age. Both young and adult female learners can expect to benefit from higher quality skills than other learners, on average. Statistical data indicates that female students tend to perform well academically; they represent a smaller proportion of total dropouts compared to male students. However, the dropout rates due to academic failure are equally distributed between genders, reflecting that academic challenges are a universal issue rather than gender specific.

To address these challenges, there is a clear need for targeted strategies within the VET system to improve not only the accessibility of education for women as they transition from youth to adulthood but also to enhance support mechanisms for all students facing significant life changes or economic pressures. Implementing comprehensive support systems and maintaining flexible re-admission policies could mitigate the impact of these challenges, promoting higher completion rates across all demographics.

2.3.2 Disadvantaged learners

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

In Kyrgyzstan, the VET system has developed a range of supportive measures specifically targeted at disadvantaged youth, which aligns with the national policy to ensure broader access to vocational education and support for socio-economically vulnerable groups (Dimension A.1). According to national authorities, this approach is informed by the historical context where vocational

education is often seen as a viable path for those from challenging backgrounds, including children from multiple-children and low-income families, orphans, and those with disabilities.

State policies facilitate the inclusion of these groups by offering scholarships, meals, and dormitory accommodations, making VET an economically viable option for families that otherwise might not afford to educate their children. This has positioned IVET as a socially oriented choice that alleviates family burdens and prepares students for quick entry into the labour market, contributing positively to the income of their families.







Source: Torino Process monitoring database

Furthermore, VET institutions, particularly those located in rural and remote areas, are strategically placed to reduce transportation and accommodation expenses, which is a significant factor in enabling access for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This geographical accessibility of IVET programs underscores the system's alignment with the needs of its most economically vulnerable learners.

The VET system also provides a conducive environment for the participation and progression of most learners who are at a disadvantage (Dimension A.2). Once disadvantaged youth enrol in a VET course, they are even more likely to find opportunities to engage, advance, and graduate than other groups of learners in VET, on average. This emphasis on accessibility and progression seems indicative of a concerted effort to remove barriers for disadvantaged youth and support them towards graduation.

Indeed, according to official information, the VET system in Kyrgyzstan is structured to support not just the acquisition of vocational skills but also the development of key competences necessary for successful participation in society. This includes offering courses in foreign languages, business, entrepreneurship, and law within the VET curricula, which are crucial for building a well-rounded skill set. Innovation in facilitating access and encouraging participation for disadvantaged youth seems to be very much in place as well (Dimension B.3).

Additionally, specific attention is given to individuals who may lack basic educational achievements, such as graduates from specialised schools for children with intellectual challenges and individuals from detention facilities. Efforts to integrate these groups involve not only vocational training but also basic education and socialization activities, aimed at enhancing their team-working capabilities and societal integration.

However, while VET appeals broadly to disadvantaged students by offering rapid routes to employment through in-demand trades like construction, cooking, and seamstress work, the socioeconomic background of students still significantly impacts their educational outcomes, despite seemingly good results (Dimension B.1). Students from wealthier families generally have access to better primary and secondary education and additional resources, which often translates into higher motivation and better outcomes in VET as well. These students are also more likely to pursue higher education at universities immediately after school.

In contrast, socio-economically disadvantaged students, while they have access to VET, often face greater challenges in completing their education. According to official information, the academic preparation of these students is frequently inadequate for transitioning to higher levels of education, such as universities or colleges, which leads to a higher risk of academic failure in VET programs. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that there are successful exceptions, demonstrating that with adequate support, even those from the most challenging backgrounds can achieve significant educational outcomes in VET.

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

Section 2.3.3 presents findings about VET system performance from the perspective of three strategically important groups of adults: the long-term unemployed, the economically inactive adults, and those with low or no educational attainment.

The monitoring evidence suggests that VET in Kyrgyzstan is on a positive trajectory in terms of providing access and maintaining quality and relevance for adults at risk of disadvantage, yet it also highlights opportunities for policy improvement, as some of these groups of learners are more likely to benefit from adequate support and opportunity for learning than others.

While the VET system is highly accessible for adults at risk of disadvantage, including the longterm unemployed and those with low or no educational attainment (Dimension A.1), there are nuances in how these groups access and benefit from the system that could be improved through more tailored strategies. The evidence suggests that the long-term unemployed often enter VET to switch careers or enhance their skills, a pathway supported by short-term courses offered in highdemand trades. These courses, which focus on practical skills like cooking, construction, and ICT, are crucial as they align with immediate employment opportunities in the labour market.

Although innovative solutions targeting access and participation (Dimension B.3) are equally focused on all three groups of at-risk adults, the success of innovation aimed at economically inactive adults has been relatively subdued. There is a need for more tailored strategies that better facilitate the engagement of this difficult-to-reach group in learning. While VET is instrumental in supporting active labour market policies overall, this segment of the population requires additional effort to fully benefit from the available opportunities. It must also be noted that overall, this is an area of notable challenge for most countries in the Torino Process.



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



According to national authorities, the economic participation of these adults post-training is influenced by various factors, including the actual job availability and the match between the skills acquired and those demanded by employers. For those with low or no educational attainment, access to higher levels of vocational training remains a challenge unless they complete secondary education equivalency, which is available through IVET systems integrated with general education curricula. This integration helps address the educational barriers faced by disadvantaged adults, providing them with the necessary qualifications to progress in VET or enter the workforce with a better skill set.

The weaker participation in learning of economically inactive individuals is not likely to be because of lack of quality and relevance on offer. In fact, the learning opportunities at the disposal of this group of prospective learners are reported to provide better than average quality of skills (Dimension B.1). For many prospective learners, especially those in rural areas, economic inactivity might stem from household duties or subsistence farming, rather than a straightforward disengagement from the labour market. Training programs for economically inactive adults are thus more effective when they include flexible learning options that consider the learners' schedules and responsibilities. Additionally, enhancing the attractiveness of VET for this group involves promoting courses that are relevant to their daily lives and future employment opportunities, such as courses in entrepreneurship, digital literacy, and specific trades that offer quick returns through self-employment or local industry engagement.

The participation of these groups in VET is also significantly influenced by the availability of funding and support measures such as scholarships, stipends, or subsidized training, which reduce the financial barriers to accessing education. Encouraging greater participation from economically inactive adults in VET could be achieved by extending these financial support mechanisms and through targeted outreach that communicates the potential personal and economic benefits of acquiring new skills.

2.3.4 Learners by country of origin

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

The VET system in Kyrgyzstan is effective towards first-generation migrants in all dimensions in which the monitoring tracks this group of learners.



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



Specifically, first-generation migrants have access to learning (Dimension A.1) at a level that exceeds the broader learner average, indicating that the VET system is providing effective entry points for this group. System support for the participation and progression of first-generation migrants (Dimension A.2) is high as well, suggesting that once enrolled, first-generation migrants are likely to continue and succeed within the VET pathway.

The monitoring results also suggest that the quality and relevance of learning for students with migrant background (Dimension B.1) is a domain in which the VET system performs very well, which implies that the skills and knowledge provided are closely aligned with the needs and expectations of this group of learners.

According to official information, the legal framework in Kyrgyzstan provides comprehensive support for immigrants' access to education across all stages of vocational education and training (VET), including initial, secondary, and higher vocational education. According to the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic 'On external migration' and 'On the legal status of foreign citizens in the Kyrgyz Republic,' immigrants, both foreign citizens and stateless persons, are entitled to education and training services on a contractual basis, with fees for migrants at vocational schools (VSs) being the same as for Kyrgyzstan citizens.

Despite the openness of laws, the actual participation of migrant students in VET programs, particularly in short-term courses, is not distinctly recorded, blending into the general statistics of foreign students. For example, in 2022, a total of 301 ethnic Kyrgyz from other countries, including 162 females, benefited from state-funded quotas, demonstrating the state's support for this group. Additionally, 89 foreign citizens attended short-term courses at vocational schools, illustrating a moderate level of attractiveness of VET programs to migrants.

For CVET, migrants can also enrol based on contractual terms. The accessibility of these programs is further evidenced by the significant increase in the number of foreign students at universities, suggesting an attractive and open educational environment.

Despite these provisions, there are no specific records regarding the performance of migrant students or their integration into the workforce post-training, nor are there distinct statistics on their proficiency in basic skills and key competences. The approach to education for migrants is inclusive, offering equal opportunities without formal restrictions. However, certain groups, like the Pamir Kyrgyz, may face challenges due to lower levels of basic skills and language proficiency, highlighting the need for tailored support measures.

3. SUPPLEMENTARY SOURCES AND INFORMATION

3.1 Links to background information and data

The system performance indices presented in this report were calculated based on a selection of international quantitative indicators for Kyrgyzstan and the qualitative responses of stakeholders where such indicators were missing.

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

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1m9SPXj2gVxcPY98tmJIomIrwrO9YzHE2/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=110154518834912853011&rtpof=true&sd=true

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

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XPtrfvzhy-AN1ux6GbAmF6RdfA9xfJRw/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=110154518834912853011&rtpof=true&sd=true

General information for the Torino Process as well as the reports and data of other participating countries, can be found here: <u>https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/what-we-do/torino-process-policy-analysis-and-progress-monitoring</u>.⁷

⁷ The Torino Process monitoring reports and data will be released gradually in the period March-May 2023 in the order in which countries submit their evidence and the reports are being finalised with them.

3.2 Definitions, terminological clarifications, methodological limitations

3.2.1 Definitions and terminological clarifications

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

- Youth: Population in the official age of entrance and participation in initial VET programmes.
- Adults: Population of working age (15+ years of age) not enrolled in initial VET programmes.
- Disadvantaged youth: This refers to socio-economic disadvantage and describes youth with access to below-average levels of financial, social, cultural, and human capital resources.
- Long-term unemployed: Long-term unemployment refers to the number of people who are out of work and have been actively seeking employment for at least one year.
- Inactive populations: Adults of working age who are outside of the labour force, meaning that they are neither employed nor registered as unemployed (that is, seeking employment)
- Lifelong learning: any learning activity undertaken throughout life, to improve knowledge, skills/competences and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons.
- System performance: describes the extent to which the VET system delivers against a targeted selection of national and international obligations (commitments) to learners and other stakeholders in support of learning through life (lifelong learning - LLL).
- Initial VET: Vocational education and training carried out in the formal system of initial education (usually upper or post-secondary) before entering working life.
- Continuing VET: Formal or non-formal vocational education and training carried out after initial VET and usually after the beginning of working life.
- Adult education: Adult education or learning may refer to any formal, non-formal, or informal learning activity, both general and vocational, undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training.

3.2.2 Methodological limitations

The system performance indices developed in the framework of the Torino Process, are based on a rich methodological framework. This framework relies on various principles and theoretical underpinnings to ensure that the design, implementation, and evaluation of the indices is plausible in terms of theoretical foundations, technical reproducibility, and statistical fitness. The primary aim of these indices is to offer insights that can guide the monitoring of countries and inform their policy planning, not to promote their comparative ranking.

While various options were available during the different phases of the construction of the indices, the final choices represent a series of decisions which were deemed adequate and appropriate to promote reliability and avoid bias, in full awareness that by their very nature, indices like those require constant refinement. Therefore, the construction and calculation of the performance indices will remain an ongoing process to address the following limitations:

1. Refinement of aggregations and analysis: the current version of the indices represents a sub-set of the national systems under analysis. While these are sufficient for the formulation of initial findings, future cross-country analysis will include a larger number of countries with possible alternative (dis)aggregations i.e., at regional or development level, which may also affect the formulas using in the calculation of the indices as well as their values. The methodological framework of the Torino Process monitoring allows for such extensions and refinement without jeopardizing the validity of results which have been released already.

2. Choice of evidence: while the goal of this exercise is to monitor equally the different areas of interest, their dimensions and related outcomes, different countries may rely on a different, country-specific mix of qualitative and quantitative indicators from a predefined list for all countries. This also applies to the last available (reference) year for the quantitative indicators, which may vary between indicators and countries within a five-year limit.