MONITORING THE VET RECOMMENDATION AND OSNABRÜCK DECLARATION

Albania 2024

CONTENTS

COUNTRY BRIEF

Introduction

This document ('country brief') summarises the results of the second cycle of the integrated monitoring exercise on two policy documents: the EU [Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (2020)](#) and the [Osnabrück Declaration on VET as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies (2020)](#).

It is structured in two parts: the first one summarises findings of the 2024 monitoring exercise, covering 2023 policy developments (see below the link to the 2023 country brief, covering 2021-2022). The second part reports the outcomes of discussions among country stakeholders about a self-reflection/assessment of the country's participation in the EU cooperation process in VET during the Osnabrück policy cycle.

The ETF monitoring of the Recommendation and the Declaration is guided by an integrated framework structured along five EU priorities covering both policy documents: agile and resilient VET, adaptive to labour market needs; flexible VET and inclusive, providing progression and lifelong learning opportunities; innovative and excellent VET; attractive VET, based on modern and digitalised provision; VET underpinned by quality assurance. In 2022, the EU Member States and candidate countries committed to working on a selection of these priorities in their national implementation plans.

Aiming to align its reporting and monitoring activities with those of the EU Member States, Albania joined this process in 2020. This report summarises the main policy developments in Albania in 2023, in relation to the thematic priorities identified in the country's [National Implementation Plan](#) (NIP) 2021-2025.

The Osnabrück Declaration NIP 2021-2025 is an integral part of the National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2023-2030, which specifically addresses skills development in the context of a dynamic labour market. This strategy is harmonised with the Albanian National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI 2030), which also features skills shortages and mismatch among the most important challenges for the country. The Ministry in charge of employment and skills is the Ministry of Finance and Economy (MoFE)[1], which is supported by The National Agency for VET and Qualifications (NAVETQ) and National Employment and Skills Agency (NAES).

In 2023, Albania's economic growth was the highest in the Balkans. Employment increased to the level of 67.7%, while unemployment reached the lowest historic point of 10.7% at the end of 2023. The service sector is increasingly strategic for the country, while a large untapped potential for investment concerns many other sectors such as energy, tourism, agriculture. The average salary for the private sector has increased, while labour shortage continues to put the market under pressure.

Ongoing reforms and increased investments in vocational skills development including LLL continued to be in the government's focus in 2023.

- An important change was made in the existing VET Law, introducing 3-year VET programmes equivalent to level III of Albanian Qualification Framework (AQF), and a bridge year – after the fourth one – for those who want to take the State Matura.

- Post-secondary professional qualifications were offered by eight education and training providers.

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[1] Since January 2024, the VET responsibility falls under the Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation (MECI).

- The optimization process of the network of the public VET providers continued.

- The engagement of businesses in VET increased.

- Compared to 2022, in 2023 7% more students enrolled in vocational secondary education and the employment rate for recent IVET graduates in 2023 was 80%.

- The Youth Guarantee Programme was launched in 2023 and piloted in three municipalities in support of youngsters that are neither in education nor in employment.

There was a steady decrease in the population due to declined birth rates and emigration (the 2023 census confirmed a population of 2.4 million in Albania compared to 2.8 million in 2011). There are skills gaps due to migration, needs for new skills particularly in new sectors of the economy, gaps created by the current developments in the labour market related to innovation, services, care economy, slow returning rates of emigrants and a low presence of foreign employees which constitute bottlenecks for the ambitious economic growth agenda.

This document was prepared by Linda Rama in cooperation with key VET stakeholders in the country.

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Complementary relevant publications are: '

- 2023 Country Brief summarising the findings of the first monitoring cycle, covering policy developments of 2021 and 2022.
- 2023 policy development fiches, providing detailed evidence underpinning the country brief.
- 2022 country brief, providing a detailed description of the national VET context, challenges and national VET priorities.

Main policy developments in 2023

EU priority 1. Agile and resilient VET, adaptive to labour market needs

In 2023, Albania continued to progress under the EU priority 1 on implementing actions relevant to its committed thematic priorities.

The NAVETQ, with the engagement of private sector experts, further developed occupational standards, vocational qualifications, built curricula and programmes, and unified training courses by updated training materials.

Seven[2] out of 12 envisaged NIP measures under 'Establishing and developing skills intelligence systems' have been under implementation. Good progress has been made on developing skills needs analysis as a tool to inform short and mid-term planning of skills supply. The skills needs analysis tool was finalized for the ICT sector. The skills needs analysis for Digital and Green transition was done in four sectors, while the analysis is ongoing for the Tourism Sector. Information through the National Tracing survey for VET graduates/certified and other administrative sources continued to inform VET decision making. Accelerating the establishment of the Policy Research Unit and the Labour Market Information Observatory (LMIO) remains important for NIP implementation. Good progress has been made on engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET. Two SSC were given capacity to fulfil their role through capacity building and technical assistance activities and they have started to contribute to the revision and validation of qualifications. All measures envisaged to reinforce work-based learning, including apprenticeship, continued to be implemented. The number of companies offering WBL placements has significantly increased. In 2023, there were 2,677 such enterprises offering internships to 6,314 VET students. The composition of VET schools' management boards was revised in 2023 to enhance business representation and create more opportunities for internship and apprenticeships. 26 VET schools underwent this process in 2023[3].

These developments are analyzed in three policy development fiches, which are summarized below (full information on each policy development can be found in the PD fiches compilation, available on ETF OpenSpace).

1. Expanding/ introducing new qualification standards, also in view of the green transition

The NAVETQ is working on further developing the Albanian Qualification Framework (AQF)[4] by drafting new professional qualifications or updating existing ones.

The members of the Sector Skills Committees in ICT and in Hospitality and Tourism Sectors were trained and technically assisted to fulfil their role and adapt the qualifications' responsiveness to the needs of private businesses in their sectors. In 2023, the SSCs started the validation of the occupational standards for the following qualifications: 'Software engineering technician', AQF level IV; 'Cyber security specialist', AQF level V; 'Cook' and 'Kitchen - Pastry', and AQF level III.

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[2] Development and operationalization of the Labour Market Information Observatory (LMIO); Periodic Sector Skills Needs; Conduct Skills Needs Analysis for Digital and Green Transition Skills in Occupations; Regional skills needs' analysis; Annual VET graduate tracking; Assessment of LLL situation in Albania; Assessment of the NEET profile in Albania to regularly update the characterization of young NEETs as a tool to facilitate the implementation of the YG Scheme; Consolidate and improve the pool of professional staff for VET;

[3] For more information on WBL, see the dedicated paragraph below and visit https://www.puna.gov.al and https://skillsforjobs.al/

[4] Albanian Qualification Framework is based on the principles of the European Qualifications Framework (classifying qualifications in eight hierarchical levels)

Overall, in 2023, the NAVETQ revised/developed/validated the following:

- 22 occupational standards and 20 vocational qualifications standards (AQF levels 2-5);
- 27 Orientation Programmes[5] of vocational qualifications, and 6 Orientation Programmes for the Vocational State Matura;
- 10 VET curricula and their respective learning materials based on the findings of the skills needs analysis for Digital and Green transition in Agriculture, Construction, Energy and Tourism sector;
- 11 existing/new programs of Unified Vocational Training Courses;
- 26 frame curricula and 20 teaching and learning supporting materials for teachers and learners.

In the framework of VET accreditation, all public VET providers implemented a self-assessment process for the 5th year in row. In 2023, five VET providers previously accredited under certain conditions went through a Special Monitoring procedure and obtained full institutional accreditation. Four other VET providers (3 public and 1 non-public) applied for accreditation. External evaluators assigned for each applicant school finalized and submitted for approval the accreditation reports. The National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications was adopted by the MoFE and published.

2. Skills intelligence systems for better informed policies and decisions

The Labour Market Information Observatory (LMIO) is a platform conceived to collect and analyse labour market information from a wide range of sources such as administrative data, demand and supply data, data from INSTAT and other institutions such as the GDT, NAES, private employment agencies, think tanks and research institutions, international development partners. In addition to the labour market data collected from the administrative sources and from labour market statistics of INSTAT, in 2023 additional data and information was collected through:

- ⇒ The National Tracing Surveys for upper secondary VET graduates and for the VET centres' trainees.
- ⇒ Skills Needs Analysis in the ICT Sector.
- ⇒ Labour market needs analysis on green and digital skills in Agriculture, Construction, Energy and Tourism sectors.
- ⇒ Skill needs assessment of VET schools' teachers in Agriculture, Construction, Energy and Tourism sectors.
- ⇒ Regional Analyses of the labour market for the Northern, the South-eastern; the South-western and the Central region.

All data and information have been available and useful for VET and labour market institutions. However, the LMIO is not yet open to the public.

3. Develop standardized management and mechanisms for a systematic delivery of work- based learning through cooperation between enterprises and VET providers

In 2023, the Schools Development Units (SDUs) continued to be instrumental to bring schools closer to the world of work and to align curricula with the sectors' needs.

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[5] 'Orientation Programmes' prepare students for their final exams at the end of each level. The orientation programme helps teachers to focus their teaching on the basic theoretical concepts that are the subject of the theory test and provides instructions to organize the practical test that covers the professional competencies mentioned in the framework curriculum for the relevant level. Orientation programmes are developed based on the information provided by the framework curricula (subject-based).

In 2023, cooperating mechanisms and instruments between the SDUs and companies for work-based learning, such as Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), were further developed to support sustainable long-term cooperation with partner companies. Meetings of VET partner companies from four regions (Shkodër, Tiranë, Elbasan dhe Vlorë) were organized with the aim of creating a strong network of private sector companies at the regional level, advocating and planning actions for the development of VET. This network will serve as the basis for the establishment of the Albanian Alliance of Professional Practices. It also strengthens effective partnerships between VET providers and Regional Business Networks through the promotion of VET and the identification of business needs for skills by bridging the gap between education and industry requirements.

In 2023, discussions were held on the need to have a unified model for the SDUs' annual plan to improve their planning and monitoring process. In addition, the VET schools started their mid-term planning process. An important part of the annual and mid-term SDU plan is developed by the coordinator in charge of cooperation with businesses and work-based learning. 10 SDUs were supported with expertise and training by the Skills for Jobs project. Training has continued for the SDU coordinators and meetings were organized to share experiences and good practices.

In 2023, the NAVETQ offered a training programme for 40 teachers on practical education and training in VET schools in charge of in-company trainers' training through a cascade training model. Workshops on the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation phases of apprenticeships in companies continued during 2023.

The Regional Challenge Fund (RCF) continued to support the joint project initiatives of VET providers and partnering companies in Albania. In 2023, seven joint school-business projects were financed by RCF at an amount of EUR 8 million for investing in equipment, infrastructure and training at vocational training institutes that are implementing work-based learning.

With the start of the academic year 2023-2024, there has been a restructuring of the steering boards of 26 VET schools with the aim of increasing the business representation, contribution and participation in VET, offering more WBL opportunities for students, and improving the VET offer.

EU priority 2: Flexible VET and inclusive, providing progression and lifelong learning opportunities

In 2023, Albania made further progress in fostering inclusive lifelong learning opportunities, by including these in some policy areas that were not part of the national commitments set out in the 2022 NIP. Work continued on LLL in terms of expanding adult learning opportunities, improving the quality of adult learning programmes in response to labour market needs and by making them more inclusive. Additionally, the piloting of the Youth Guarantee Scheme started in three regions of Albania in support of NEETs. The LLL developments are analyzed in the policy development fiche, summarized below (full information can be found in the PD fiches compilation, available on ETF OpenSpace).

No further advancement was made on the Recognition of prior learning, although this is a priority in the National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2023-2030 and the NIP 2021-2025.

1. Promote and support LLL among citizens for better permeability and better integration in the labor market

In 2023, good progress was made on the implementation of all LLL measures envisaged in the NIP, apart from conducting a feasibility study and developing a roadmap on LLL[6], designing e-learning platforms for adults, and drafting the roadmap of the priority sectors for RPL implementation.

In 2023, the following were the main developments in LLL:

The implementation began of a subsidized training programme in ICT[7], which targets unemployed job seekers and other interested individuals. The application of the Coding Programme began on 23 January 23 2023 and the programme was outsourced for implementation to private providers. 1,200 job seekers benefitted from the subsidized training programme (100% financially supported).

Another programme offered was the digital skills training programme, implemented by all public VET providers. The curriculum is divided into two levels (basic level and average level) and contains the five basic digital competencies groups according to the EU Digital Competencies Framework 2.0. In 2023, there were 2,400 job seekers involved in the programme.

In 2023, a programme for re-integrating the labour market was designed by the NAES and approved by the MoFE. It aimed to address the needs of long-term unemployed (more than 6 months), who are registered in the public economic assistance scheme, and women living in administrative units where no public employment offices operate. Around 1,800 men and women unemployed jobseekers enrolled in short courses delivered by public VET centres.

Based on a DCM (264/2023), the piloting of the Youth Guarantee Scheme started in three regions of Albania in support of NEETs. In November and December 2023, the initial wave of registrations for the Youth Guarantee Scheme started. 72 young people signed up in December 2023. The pilot phase will continue throughout 2024.

Activities to Promote and support LLL among citizens were organized such as the 'Gastro Alb 6' Competition in the context of the International Food & Drink Expo 2023, 5th Edition, with the participation of the 12 vocational schools that offer hospitality-tourism majors. In addition, the Work and career fair, Automotive Fair Albania (three vocational secondary schools participated), Agrotech Fair 2023, 'Expocity Albania' (competition among schools offering agricultural education) were organized.

EU priority 3: Innovative and excellent VET

Good progress has been made in 2023 regarding the digitalization of the infrastructure and of learning in VET schools, with both public and private funds.

These developments are summarized below (full information can be found in the PD fiches compilation, available on ETF OpenSpace).

1. Supporting digitalization of infrastructure and learning and green transition in VET

An assessment instrument on ICT solutions for VET modernization was validated by national agencies and disseminated to all 46 VET providers in the country, with individual assessment reports/profiles prepared for each[8].

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[6] In 2023, the NAVETQ designed a Mapping Practices Study to support the implementation for integrating Lifelong Learning qualifications into the AQF with the aim of designing a model and process to support the levelling, accreditation, and implementation of LLL qualifications in Albania.
[7] Decree of Council of Ministers No. 646 dated 5.10.2022.
[8] The instrument and the reports were developed/prepared with the assistance of the S4J project.

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The E-VET@Albania 2030[9] activities included a hearing with stakeholders and potential partners, a public hybrid hearing meeting with stakeholders, and a high-level workshop in collaboration with the MoFE to address needs and optimize donor funding and technical support for VET modernization. Additionally, a public social media campaign on E-VET@Albania 2030 was carried out. However, the E-VET@Albania 2030 roadmap has faced delays in its implementation due to a lack of endorsement by the MoFE.

During 2023, both public and private funds were invested for the improvement and provision of the digital infrastructure of VET providers:

(i) The MoFE invested in the purchase of equipment for the following departments: kitchen, fitting and welding, automated technology, hydraulic, auto-mechanic, IT laboratory, electrotechnical department, and for thermos hydraulics.

(ii) International donors and private actors such as S4J, GIZ, Save the Children, Deloitte, Albania Marketing Service, Assist Digital sh.p.k. contributed to the digital infrastructure investments in several VET schools and pubic VET Centres by providing computers, TVs, tablets, video cameras, printers, and IT cabinets, etc.

EU priority 4. Attractive VET, based on modern and digitalised provision

In the framework of the ICT-supported modernization of the VET system, the support to VET teachers and trainers through digital means continued to be a high priority in 2023. All measures envisaged under the OD NIP for Albania are under implementation.

The Initial training of VET teachers through the 30-days programme 'Basics of didactics in VET' is a consolidated practice of the NAVETQ and continued to be instrumental in 2023. Furthermore, in 2023, the MesoVET platform[10] had more users, and featured online and offline functionalities. The digital focal points in VET schools were trained on Moodle administration. Training on blended training was supported by manuals and guidelines.

These developments are summarized below (full information can be found in the PD fiches, available on ETF OpenSpace).

1. Enhancing Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in the VET system, including digital competences

Good progress has been made in 2023 for enhancing initial and continuous professional development of teachers in VET schools.

All measures envisaged in the OD NIP for Albania are under implementation. The most important developments include:

- Initial VET teacher training continued on 'Basics of didactics in VET' with digital skills integrated in training curricula.
- A total of 55 subjects across five sectors (Business-Economy, Food Technology, Mechanics, ICT, and Services of Means of Transport) were developed and digitized by a team of 32 authors, six digitalization experts, and five pedagogical experts.
- The MesoVET platform (active in 10 partner schools of S4J) registered 14,998 active users, and a mobile application was launched for Android and iOS users, featuring offline functionality. 90 teachers were trained in 2023 on 'Using digital platforms (MesoVET)'. Approximately 5,650 students from nine providers attended 226 information sessions on the MesoVET new interface. Although the Mesovet platform is

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[9] E-VET@Albania 2030 is a Roadmap to ICT-supported modernization of Albanian VET. https://skillsforjobs.al/publications/e-vet-albania-2030-a-roadmap-to-ict-supported-modernization-of-albanian-vet/
[10] This is a virtual platform for skills development established and operational in 10 VET schools in Albania. https://mesovet.al

actively used in the S4J-supported schools, there has been limited progress in the decision-making on its nationwide adoption or integration with the Management Information System of Pre university Education (SMIP)[11].

- 50 teachers went through the qualification exams in the field of digital skills of which 48 were certified.
- 9 additional digital focal points were trained on Moodle administration (digitalization focal points in schools in order to facilitate digitalization of the teaching process).
- Teachers were trained on 'Blended learning' and 'change management and emotional leadership' (with a focus on digitalization of VET), etc. Methodological guidelines were prepared by the NAVETQ on introducing blended learning to the adult learning field.
- Publications on 'From Vision to Reality - Successful Cases of a Teaching Lesson Using MesoVET Platform' and 'Inspiring Cases – Professional Practices of Students in Vocational Education' were completed. Two manuals/guidelines for MesoVET, one for teachers and one for school administrators, were also published.

EU priority 5. VET underpinned by quality assurance (VET Recommendation F)

The work on quality assurance in VET has continued its progress. In 2023, four VET providers (three public and one private) applied for accreditation. Accreditation Reports were submitted and are waiting for the MECI approval. Five VET providers previously accredited with conditions, went through the Special Monitoring procedure and obtained full institutional accreditation. The optimization process of VET providers was finalized in three cities and it will be extended to other regions in the upcoming academic years. The accreditation and optimization process will impact the quality of VET provision nationwide.

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[11] The SMIP platform is a state database for managing information on pre-university education in real time, and for providing services for informing parents about the progress of children who can track their children's overall progress as well as grades for each subject, various comments from teachers, absences, etc. https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/albania/national-reforms-school-education

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Performance against EU targets

There has been good progress regarding the employment rate of graduates. The National Tracing survey concludes that the employment rate for recent IVET graduates is 80% (graduates attending university studies are excluded), which is higher than in 2022 (77.4%).

The NAES collects and provides administrative data from Public Vocational Schools regarding work-based learning during vocational education. 74% of recent IVET graduates had work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training. This is a result of the increased needs of businesses for qualified workers due to their development activities, the increased cooperation between businesses and schools and the increased student quality in VET.

For the academic year 2023-2024, 1.33% of VET students benefitted from learning mobility abroad. The data are collected by the NAES and are also reported in the framework of the National Youth Strategy.

VET Recommendation Indicator	Country (year)	EU-27 (2022)	EU target (2025)
Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (age group 20-34 years) (%)	80%	79.7%	82%
Recent IVET graduates (age group 20-34 years) with work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%)	74%	60.1%	60%
Learners in IVET who benefitted from learning mobility abroad (%)	1.33%	2.1% (2021)	8%

Source: Key indicators on VET | CEDEFOP (europa.eu)

Country's reflections on participation in the Osnabrück process

The development process of the country's National Implementation Plan has been aligned with the development process of the NESS 2023-2030, the Economic Reform Programme 2022-2024 and the efforts of the Albanian Government to establish the national Youth Guarantee Scheme. The implementation process of the NIP is led by the MoFE supported by the NAVETQ and NAES. Each agency develops its activity based on annual work plans aligned with the envisaged measures of the NESS 2023-2030, NIP and other commitments. The Ministry collects information on a yearly basis from the Agencies and other involved actors such as the network of public VET providers and international financed projects in support of skills and employment.

For the preparation of this report, direct communication was held with the Vice Minister of the MECI, the Director and experts of the NAVETQ and NESS, and with stakeholders involved in VET such as the SSCs, the European Union through IPA II within the 'EU for Inclusion' program and IPA III 'Operational Program for the Youth Guarantee'; the Swiss government and the Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), through the 'Development of Skills for Employment' and 'Skills for Work' Projects; the German government, through the PROSEED programme, supporting economic development and vocational education and training; the German Bank for Reconstruction (KfW) involved in improving and modernizing the infrastructure of vocational education and training; and the Regional Challenge Fund (RCF), in which more than half of the VET public providers are engaged in partnerships with private companies. Bilateral discussions were held with individual VET providers and independent experts engaged in the area of skills and employment.

This chapter summarises the outcomes of the country's self-reflection about its participation in the Osnabrück process, focussing on its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

STRENGTHS:

- The priorities and objectives for Albania within the Osnabrück process are an integral part of the NESS 2023-2030, the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2030 and reflected in the Economic Reform Programme (ERP) 2022 -2024. This has improved institutional coordination in the effective implementation of employment and skills policies.
- The monitoring process is eased by the fact that the majority of actors have been direct contributors to the drafting process of the NIP for Albania, they are engaged in its implementation and involved during 2022 and 2023 in the monitoring process.
- There is an improved VET planning process, which encourages more investments in educational infrastructure and staff training.
- There is an increased cooperation and coordination between countries inside and outside the region on developing and implementing common educational and training policies, and harmonizing standards and practices in the field of continuing education.
- The increased commitment of institutions and actors contributes to the monitoring and evaluation processes.

WEAKNESSES

- The implementation process of the NIP is mostly based on the policy developments at national level, which may leave out good practices at the providers' level.
- There is insufficient harmonization of the NIP objectives with the complex local realities, which can be addressed with more local tailored objectives.
- There is a weak involvement of the social partners in the VET policy making and monitoring.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The Osnabrück process has facilitated the transfer of knowledge and skills between countries by ensuring the mutual recognition of qualifications and training and increasing the mobility of students and workers.
- Digitization and improvements to the Management Information System have enhanced evidence based VET planning and monitoring policies.
- There is EU technical assistance and financial support for Albania, which assist institutions in the implementation and monitoring of their commitments.
- The implementation of the Osnabrück Declaration Plan ensures a coherent EU skills development policy and funding opportunities such as IPA EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, etc.

THREATS

- Insufficient funds to meet the settled commitments.
- Bureaucracy, complex administrative procedures and insufficient human capacities in certain cases complicate the implementation of VET policies and make the process less efficient and slow compared to the rapid developments in the labour market.
- The increased but still insufficient participation of all stakeholders, such as non-governmental organizations, the private sector, trade unions and students in VET.
- The fast pace at which technology is developing risks outdating current VET programmes/profiles during their implementation cycle.

Conclusions

The NIP 2021-2025 is well harmonized and integrated with the existing policy and strategic framework, which has eased the planning and monitoring processes as well as the actors' contributions to implementation. Local tailored NIP objectives to respond to local realities and more involvement of social partners are needed. The fast pace of technological advancements appears as a risk factor for outdating the current VET programmes/curricula, but also provides opportunities for improving teaching and learning processes as well as evidence-based VET planning and monitoring. The Osnabrück process has facilitated the transfer of knowledge and skills between countries and the development and implementation of common educational and training policies with harmonized standards, which is very helpful for the country's advancement in the VET sector.

Good progress was made in 2023 in the implementation of committed NIP thematic priorities. The Sector Skills Committees in ICT and Hospitality and Tourism Sector enhanced their role in 2023 and started to contribute to the development/revision/validation of vocational standards.

Quality assurance in VET has continued its progress. In 2023, nine public and private VET providers either were accredited or have completed the full accreditation procedure and are waiting for the MECI approval. The optimization process of VET providers was finalized in three cities and will be extended in the other regions.

VET providers increased their cooperation with businesses. Steering Boards were reorganized in all VET providers in 2023 in order to bring a more cooperative spirit to the private sector in school leadership and work started to build their capacities for mid-term planning. Networks of VET partner businesses in four regions were established as a step towards the establishment of the Albanian Alliance of Professional Practices.

Work-based learning opportunities through internships and apprenticeships were evident in an increasing number of partner businesses in 2023. A growing readiness within the private sector to forge new partnerships with the public VET system was noticeable. Currently, there is a larger scope for further exploring innovative financing models, such as the dual system approach, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), and co-financing schemes, which can

distribute the costs and benefits of VET more equitably between the state, the private sector, and trainees.

In 2023, the LLL offer for adults expanded with ICT subsidized programmes, and reintegration training programmes for long term unemployed jobseekers under the Social assistance scheme. In addition, the piloting of the Youth Guarantee Scheme in support of NEET started in three regions of Albania and the pilot phase will continue throughout 2024. No progress was noted in 2023 regarding RPL.

Investments continued to improve the digital infrastructure, digital learning and teachers ' digital competences through the contribution of both public and private initiatives. However, it has become evident that schools need long-term solutions for infrastructural needs, digital learning materials, and teacher training. Strengthening the synergy between the VET system and the private sector with digitalization initiatives remains crucial.

References

Detailed lists of references are available in the policy development fiches that are published on ETF OpenSpace.