

MONITORING THE VET RECOMMENDATION AND THE OSNABRÜCK DECLARATION

MONTENEGRO 2024

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COUNTRY BRIEF

Introduction

This document ('country brief') summarises the results of the second cycle of the integrated monitoring exercise for 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 one summarises findings of the 2024 monitoring exercise, covering 2023 policy developments, while the second 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's monitoring of the Recommendation and the Declaration is guided by an integrated framework structured around five EU priorities covering both policy documents: agile and resilient VET, adaptive to labour market needs; flexible and inclusive VET, providing progression and lifelong learning opportunities; innovative and excellent VET; attractive VET, based on modern and digitalised provision; and VET underpinned by quality assurance. In 2022, each country participating in this process committed to working on some or all of these priorities in their national implementation plans.

Aiming to align its reporting and monitoring activities with those of EU Member States, Montenegro joined this process in 2022. This report summarises the main policy developments in Montenegro in 2023, in relation to the thematic priorities identified in the country's National Implementation Plan¹ (see below for the report covering 2021 and 2022).

The Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation is the main institution in Montenegro in charge of VET. The last couple of years in Montenegro have seen frequent changes in government and line ministries, which resulted in a stall in education reform initiatives. The current VET Strategy 2020-24 included the Action Plan for 2020-21, but the plan for 2022-23 was never adopted. The Action Plan for 2024 was adopted in July 2024. Currently, a new and comprehensive education strategy 2025-30 (related to all education levels, including IVET and CVET) is being developed.

This document was prepared by Rajko Kosović in cooperation with key VET stakeholders in the country.

Complementary relevant publications are:

- the 2023 country brief², summarising the findings of the first monitoring cycle, covering policy developments of 2021 and 2022;
- the 2023 policy development fiches³, providing detailed evidence underpinning the country brief; and
- the 2022 country brief⁴, providing a detailed description of the national VET context, challenges and national VET priorities.

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=26471&langId=en>

² https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-12/Monitoring%20Osnabr%C3%BCck%20Declaration_Montenegro_2023.pdf

³ https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-12/ETF_Osnabrueck%20monitoring_PD%20fiche_%20Montenegro_2023_0.pdf

⁴ https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-06/Country%20Brief_Montenegro_edited.pdf

Main policy developments in 2023

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

In 2023, policy developments under this priority were part of the regular activities that fell under the relevant institutions' mandate. These include the modernisation of VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses, and efforts to engage VET stakeholders and strengthen partnerships in VET.

Moreover, several VET programmes in fields relevant to the green transition have been designed. 2023 developments also concerned the quality of work-based learning by strengthening the role of employees in charge of organising WBL, both at companies and in schools and laboratories.

Modernisation of VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

As part of its institutional mandate, in 2023 the Ministry of Education developed and adopted 24 vocational qualification standards, 5 examination catalogues, 10 standards of education-level qualifications and 10 educational programmes.

The latter were adopted by the Qualifications Council and the National Council for Education (multi-stakeholder bodies including employers' representatives) and offered to IVET students enrolled in 2023-2024. The design of these programmes included all the preparatory steps defined by law: designing occupational standards and designing qualification standards.

Integration of the green transition and sustainability into VET curricula and programmes

In 2023, Montenegro developed and offered new VET curricula: Renewable energy system installer, Installer of solar photovoltaic power plants, Installer of electric power equipment in wind farms, Installer of electric power equipment in small hydroelectric power plants, and Assistant installer of renewable electric energy source systems.

The design of these curricula started in 2022 on the initiative of employers from the energy sector. Elektroprivreda Crne Gore (EPCG) – a state-owned energy producer and distributor – and educational authorities participated in discussions on the qualifications in demand in this sector. At an institutional level, full cooperation between the major companies in the energy sector and education was established, which resulted in designing occupational and qualification standards and developing full qualifications that can be offered to IVET and CVET students (through upskilling and reskilling training programmes).

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Montenegro has continued to form and strengthen the existing partnerships in VET with social partners and private bodies.

In 2023, there were several occasions for such dialogue, including round tables with company representatives from different sectors aimed at discussing future skills and relative qualifications needs.

Another example is the 2023 cooperation agreement between the state-owned utility company EPCG, active in the energy sector, and the Ministry of Education. The objective of this agreement is to prepare modern programmes that support digital technologies, the green economy and sustainable development at secondary vocational education level through joint work among experts from EPCG, CEDIS (another utility company), the Centre for Vocational Education and teachers from schools. All this will be possible with the creation of conditions

for developing programmes for retraining and additional training, specialist programmes, and post-secondary VET programmes, as envisaged by the cooperation agreement.

Acquisition of key competences

VETpreneur is a 3-year project, financed by the EU through the ERASMUS+ programme and launched in 2023. VETpreneur is predominantly concerned with the use of the European framework EntreComp (entrepreneurship as a key competence) in formal, informal and professional education and training in the Western Balkans.

Following the launch of the programme, the working document 'New Momentum - EntreComp [in the Western Balkans](#)' was published, detailing the process of integrating EntreComp skills into the education and training system in the Western Balkan countries.

Strengthening work-based learning, including apprenticeships

The educational authorities also focused on work-based learning in 2023.

The focus of the regional project 'Increasing quality of work-based learning by strengthening the role of practical training organisers', financed by OeAD-GmbH (Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation), is on further strengthening different forms of learning in companies and on good coordination between the two places of learning: schools and companies. The following project components were dealt with in 2023:

- standardising the procedures and processes of the work of practical training organiser (PTO), i.e. the person in the school in charge of organising all forms of work-based learning, and the supporting instruments (forms, questionnaires, contract templates, etc.);
- updating the training course for PTOs;
- drafting the Manual for Practical Training Coordinators in VET schools, through consultations with VET providers; it is now being finalised and edited for printing;
- designing quality indicators for the work of PTOs.

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

The least progress has been made in this area. Apart from some activities regarding digital and/or blended learning, and some new aspects related to the inclusiveness of education, little has been done in other aspects of this area.

The validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally remains an issue to be dealt with in the future.

Diversifying learning modes: face-to-face, digital and/or blended learning; adaptable/flexible training formats

At operational level, the Montenegro Education Information System (MEIS) for data monitoring and education planning has been further improved. In addition, continuous improvement is being made regarding the Digital School concept, by creating independent online courses for students, teachers and parents.

In 2023, about 1 000 teachers were educated, and the platform for independent online learning includes 1 116 courses, 12 231 lessons and 562 quizzes, across 58 disciplines. The total number of users of the platform (teachers, children and parents) is 32 294. The Ministry of Education presented the concept of 'Digital School' and the 'Digionica' platform, and it won an award for the improvement of electronic publishing at the International Podgorica Book and Education Fair.

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

In 2023, the country's commitment to inclusive vocational education was addressed through several measures:

- A Guide to Improving Quality and Inclusivity of education in the digital environment was designed and published by the Bureau for Education Services, in cooperation with the UNICEF office in Montenegro. The accompanying training programme supports all teachers in the application of different teaching strategies to stimulate students in finding their own learning style, through strengthening teachers' competences for teaching in digital environment. Additional attention during the implementation of the programme was aimed at children from vulnerable groups, so that quality access to relevant education can be provided to all children in the same way.
- The Bureau for Education Services, in cooperation with the Faculty of Science and Mathematics at the University of Montenegro, has been running the 'Innovations in Inclusive Education' programme since its implementation in 2021. The product of the cooperation is the web application 'vladamsituacijom' (English: 'I control the situation'), which contains social stories intended for students with difficulties in communication, interaction and socialisation, and those who need support in adopting social and social norms.
- Pedagogical-psychological teams of VET schools were presented by the VET Centre and Bureau for Education Services with the new IROP form (personalised educational development programme, i.e. for students with special educational needs) and a way of planning individualised lessons in accordance with the new form. Continuous support was provided to schools in preparing IROP and adapting the educational programme, especially for students with intellectual disabilities.

EU priority 3: Innovative and excellent VET

Having analysed what was happening in VET in Montenegro in 2023, we can conclude that the main focus was on modernising infrastructure for vocational training. After a long period of poor investment in educational infrastructure, 2023 saw a huge financial injection into the education system.

Modernising the vocational training infrastructure

The Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation and the European Investment Bank announced an international tender to select contractors to reconstruct nine secondary vocational schools in Montenegro (roughly a quarter of all VET schools, excluding art schools) in 2024. The goal of this project component is for the VET school to easily and sustainably comply with European standards and to enable the buildings to provide an acceptable level of working conditions in the future through good maintenance. The estimated value of the works is over EUR 4 850 000, excluding VAT and additional costs.

The project 'Functional analysis of educational infrastructure with recommendations for improvement' was launched. This project, which is directly financed by the Government of Montenegro, is designed to enhance the capacity of national and local stakeholders, primarily the Ministry of Education, to better plan, deliver and manage school infrastructure. It will enable the establishment of better foundations for investment planning in the maintenance and construction of educational infrastructure (including VET schools), which will ultimately contribute to a higher-quality education process. Field visits to the educational facilities have been conducted, and experts from different fields (architects, civil engineers, mechanical and

electro-technical engineers, and education specialists) assessed the education-related infrastructure and provided recommendations for improving specific educational infrastructure, including rough/initial cost estimates for the investment.

Improving the digital infrastructure of VET provision

The Minister of Education, Science and Innovation signed a contract for the procurement of computer equipment worth EUR 6 337 214, namely: 4 575 computers, 1 133 laptops, 1 806 TVs, 516 projectors and 445 printers that has been made available to primary and secondary schools in Montenegro (including VET schools).

As for the indicators and milestones from the Education System Digitalization Strategy, this situation is as follows:

Indicator	Baseline (2022)	Objective for 2023	Achieved in 2023
Student-computer ratio (number of students per computer)	1:15	1:14	1:15
Share of education institutions with a local computer network (LAN)	65%	70%	82%

All educational institutions up to higher education level have an internet connection. In 190 institutions, the internet connection is ensured via ADSL, while in 61 institutions it is ensured by satellite connection.

IPC Technopolis (Innovation Entrepreneurial Center) from Nikšić donated an educational robot cell to the Nikšić Vocational School, which will enable students to acquire practical skills relevant to their occupations.

IPC Technopolis also provided the equipment for the same school in 2022. The equipment includes the sectors of mechatronics, electrical engineering, programming and energy, and should support the school in implementing practical training, preparing students for competitions, and in extracurricular activities.

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

Montenegro has established a robust system of educators' continuous professional development and continued to roll it out in 2023. Numerous training activities for all those working in the VET subsystem were carried out, with a focus on further developing digital skills. However, support for teachers and trainers for the green transition and sustainability is still not visible.

Systematic approaches to, and opportunities for, initial and continuing professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers

The national VET agency has created opportunities for continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers by designing and adopting the Catalogue of CPD training programmes for 2023/24 and 2024/25. At the same time, the agency provided a great deal of support to VET providers, especially the assistance in implementing new educational programmes.

- A total of 163 teachers from secondary vocational and mixed schools from several towns in Montenegro attended training sessions organised by the VET Centre. During the training, teachers were presented with forms for planning educational work, i.e. the Annual Work Plan and the Learning Outcome Realisation Plan, and were given instructions on how to fill

them in and on how to record lessons and evaluate learning outcomes in the new register book designed for modularised educational programmes. The new IROP form (for SEN students), and instructions on how to fill it in, were also presented at the training.

- One-day training sessions for new educational programme coordinators were organised by the VET Centre to monitor the implementation of modularised educational programmes in the 2023/2024 school year. A total of 56 new coordinators from secondary vocational and mixed schools from towns all across Montenegro attended, and were divided into four groups.
- The national VET Agency, in cooperation with the Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD), organised the training of organisers of practical education in the 2023/2024 school year. The training was attended by 19 of the 33 organisers from secondary vocational and mixed schools in Montenegro.
- 58 VET teachers of vocational-theoretical subjects and practical classes received professional training in 2023, spending a few days at employers' premises in order to be updated on the changes in the profession.

Support for teachers and trainers for and through digital tools

- Training was delivered to 750 teachers (including VET teachers) according to the ECDL standard (basic IT literacy). Training for 1 000 employees (including VET schools) was delivered in educational institutions for the implementation of the Digital School concept.
- As for the indicators and milestones from the Education System Digitalization Strategy, the situation is as follows:

Indicator	Baseline (2022)	Objective for 2023	Achieved in 2023
Share of employees in educational institutions trained in the application of the Digital School concept	40%	50%	46%

- The joint UN project 'Digital, Inclusive and Transformative – Quality Education for All' was launched in 2023. It seeks to enhance the digitisation of education and the digital inclusion of students and teachers in primary and secondary schools (including VET), in particular in northern Montenegro. It will provide digital skills for teachers and digitisation coordinators; equip and launch EdTech hubs; and organise digital summer camps for students, to equip them with 21st-century skills. The following components of the project deal with digital skills:
 - the professional development of VET teachers on the principles of learner-centred e-pedagogy and e-content creation to create their own electronic and blended training materials;
 - a network of 'focal point' teachers at TVET schools, who will support application and replicability in the future;
 - organizing teachers' visits to industry to conduct job shadowing, in particular exposing TVET teachers to the application of digitisation at the workplace.
- Several training sessions on improving VET teachers' digital skills were also delivered: 'Digital classroom – the door to the future' (30 teachers), 'PowerPoint in class' (30 teachers), 'Using SolidWorks 3D' (20 teachers), 'Student enterprises' (17 teachers) and 'Excel in economics' (32 teachers).

Lifelong guidance

- For the first time, thanks to the support of UNICEF and the TUI Care Foundation, secondary schools in Podgorica and Cetinje, Mirko Vešović Secondary VET Economic School in Podgorica and Ivan Goran Kovačić Secondary Mixed School (general and VET) in Herceg Novi offered students career guidance and on-the-job training during the 2023/24 school year. The Chamber of Commerce of Montenegro invited all businesspeople to join UNICEF's 'Opportunities' programme in order to provide Montenegrin youth with the opportunity to attend practical training in the profession in which they want to pursue a career. The introduction of career guidance in Montenegrin high schools was piloted in four schools in 2023 and three more from 2024. As a result, by the end of 2026, more than 1 200 adolescents in Montenegro will have the opportunity to better understand what different jobs look like in real life, and to more easily make an informed decision about their future profession.
- A professional training programme on the topic of 'Career information, counselling and guidance in adult education' was organised by the Centre for Vocational Education for employees of adult education providers who implement programmes to acquire vocational qualifications and key skills.
- A good number of activities were conducted regularly: campaigns for attracting students to VET called 'Vocational is the key'; publishing informative books such as 'Where to go after primary school', organising presentations by VET schools at VET fairs; organising university presentations to prospective students; job and career fairs; etc.

EU priority 5. VET underpinned by quality assurance

Quality assurance remains high on the Montenegrin education agenda. Having established multiple quality-assurance mechanisms in the past few years, in 2023 Montenegro continued to revise the existing QA standards and, for the first time, designed new QA standards exclusively for VET. How these newly adopted QA standards will be incorporated into the VET system remains to be seen.

5.1 Further developing national quality-assurance systems

Two sets of quality indicators were designed and refined through a regional initiative supported by ERI SEE: Quality Standards and Quality Indicators for External Evaluation of VET (based on the EQAVET Framework), and Quality Standards and Quality Indicators for External Evaluation of Work-Based Learning (WBL) at Schools (practical training in schools – laboratories, school workshops, school farms, etc.) and in companies. The decision on how these standards and indicators will be incorporated into the existing QA framework is yet to be made by the Ministry of Education and the VET Centre.

Competence standards for the external evaluators who assess the quality of VET providers were also designed and adopted.

One of the two new departments of the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation that were created in December 2023 is the **Department for improving the quality of secondary general and vocational education**.

14 external evaluations of vocational schools were carried out, as were two external evaluations of adult education providers.

Three training sessions were conducted on 'Internal evaluation', with 87 teachers participating. Several consultative meetings were also held with quality-assurance teams at VET schools.

A questionnaire to determine the training needs of external evaluators, within the Enhancements in the Quality of Education and Training in South Eastern Europe EQET SEE project, was agreed and implemented. An online regional meeting was held, during which the results of the questionnaire to determine the training needs of external evaluators were presented (within the scope of the EQET SEE project).

Performance against EU targets

The main national institution responsible for gathering and processing data in various fields, including education, is the Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT):

<https://www.monstat.org/eng/index.php>. MONSTAT collects information from all relevant institutions in the country. However, MONSTAT does not specifically collect and process information on performance against EU targets in VET. Therefore, only partial information is available, as presented in the table. The figure presented is officially provided by MONSTAT and refers to the employment rate for recent IVET graduates (age group 20-34 years), as a percentage. Two other indicators are very difficult to calculate. Given that all VET students in Montenegro have to spend a certain number of their practical training classes at companies (as defined by the educational programme), this percentage should be very high, but we do not know what happens in practice.

As for mobility of learners, Montenegro has begun sending VET students and their teachers abroad, but these figures are still so small that it would be a negligible number if expressed as a percentage.

VET Recommendation Indicator	Montenegro (2023)	EU-27 (2022)	EU target (2025)
Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (age group 20-34 years) (%)	60.8 M– 59,6 F–62,9	79.7	82
Recent IVET graduates (age group 20-34 years) with work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%)		60.1	60
Learners in IVET who conducted learning abroad (%)		2.1 (2021)	8

Source: [Key indicators on VET | CEDEFOP \(europa.eu\)](https://www.cefop.europa.eu/)

The country's reflections on its participation in the Osnabrück process

The annual monitoring process (Osnabrück process) of developments in VET against the country's priorities as per its NIP, is based on consultations with representatives from most relevant stakeholders in the country.

The overview of 2023 policy developments and areas for improvement were presented and discussed during a meeting organised by the ETF in Turin on 27 and 28 May. This meeting was an ideal opportunity for a group discussion among the Montenegrin, consisting of the Director-General for General Secondary and Vocational Education, the Director-General for Adult Education and Lifelong Learning and a member of the Chamber of Economy of Montenegro. The discussion was dedicated to a self-reflection and analysis of the country's experience on participation in the Osnabrück policy monitoring cycle. The discussion aimed at identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the process. This discussion was continued with face-to-face meetings or telephone conversations with each of the participants. The outcomes of the group discussion are summarised below.

Strengths

The group discussion resulted in following conclusions being drawn on the strengths of the monitoring process:

- The relevant stakeholders involved in the monitoring process find that priorities in the NIP are identified in accordance with the national VET Strategy 2020-24 and other major strategic documents, related mostly to digitisation and sustainable development, which makes the whole process itself easier to understand and monitor.
- The Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation is fully aware of the importance of this monitoring process, as is the Centre for VET (the national VET agency). In addition, this exercise will provide a solid basis for developing a comprehensive Education Strategy, which will be designed in 2024.
- A significant strength of the monitoring process is that institutions in the country are cooperative and transparent in this process. They are usually open for consultation, providing/sharing data, and searching for missing data.
- A specific strength of the Osnabrück process is that it provides a unique opportunity for all stakeholders, including social partners, to participate in EU cooperation initiatives in VET, and to develop a common understanding of VET priorities in the country, their stage of implementation and opportunities for improvement.
- The DGVT and ACVT members have the opportunity to learn about and participate in international developments in EU cooperation. These experiences bring valuable evidence – which is available for consideration in designing and planning national policy developments – especially towards achieving excellence in VET.
- The monitoring process results in an outcome that is summarised in a one-stop-shop document available to various stakeholders for planning further developments and for further monitoring steps. This quality of the summarised information about advancement in NIP commitments could facilitate the further monitoring of the Plan.
- An enormously vital strength for further improving the monitoring process is the support from the ETF and other partners from abroad. The ETF has provided its full support to Montenegro in this process.

Weaknesses

During the discussion, the group of relevant stakeholders identified the following weaknesses in the monitoring process:

- Not all the directly involved stakeholders or those at higher policy levels (decision-makers) are familiar with the Montenegrin NIP. This is probably because of the frequent changes in government in Montenegro in the past few years, which also resulted in changes in management teams of ministries and educational institutions;

thus, new people in new positions did not know about the developments in the matter. This might lead decision-makers to underestimate the importance of many activities relevant to the monitoring process.

This situation risks jeopardising the whole process, as it may lower the participation of a wider variety of stakeholders involved in the monitoring process, hindering the collection of their views and contributions.

- Without collecting the relevant data in a regular and systematic manner, there can be no valid and exact information on many aspects of VET. At times, producing data for a single VET indicator can be a very long and painstaking process, as no mechanisms for collecting or exchanging data among institutions have been put in place.

Opportunities

The group identified the following opportunities for improving the monitoring process:

- A significant opportunity for improving the monitoring process is to put into practice a new electronic data collection and exchange at national level, which would facilitate the process of gathering and exchanging relevant data and reporting among relevant institutions relating to important VET-related areas.
- Making the NIP itself a more visible and publicly visible document may improve the whole monitoring process. This would increase the opportunities for providing support from wider range of relevant stakeholders in both NIP implementation and the monitoring process.
- The Working Group on monitoring the NIP could be consulted and involved with designing the Education Strategy when it comes to IVET and CVET. This may result in:
 - strengthening collaboration and more effective coordination among relevant institutions and social partners in the monitoring process;
 - increased and more meaningful involvement of social partners in the monitoring process;
 - the timely resolution of any issues that arise concerning the monitoring process; and
 - more effective coordination among relevant institutions, with a focus on planning and financing NIP-related measures and their monitoring.
- Peer learning from other countries, especially neighbouring countries that stem from the same education system, can be a very good opportunity to learn from the process and compare different aspects of VET.

Threats

As a result of the group discussion, the following threats to the monitoring process were identified:

- As there will be no separate strategy for each education level or subsystem (such as VET), but rather a single comprehensive strategy covering all pre-university levels and subsystems of education, VET may not be given proper attention, and may therefore be more difficult to monitor.
- The non-existence of certain data may lead to uninformed decisions being made, and may make reporting for various EU and national processes – including the Osnabrück process – time-consuming for the stakeholders involved. Consequently, this may threaten the quality of the reports produced.
- Not having VET strategies with precisely defined budgets may give rise to uncertainty around the funds available to implement the NIP measures covered by the monitoring process.

Conclusions

A) Conclusions on the country's developments in 2023 against commitments in the NIP

In accordance with the national strategic documents, which have similar goals as the National Implementation Plan, policy creators have planned various developments in VET for 2023. However, due to different reasons – mainly the status -quo in reforms of VET-related legislative framework – many of the planned development were prevented from being implemented. Taking into consideration the developments in focus, the following conclusions could be derived:

- The most notable policy developments in VET in 2023 were improvements in the overall school infrastructure (school buildings, heating systems and reconstruction of learning spaces), with a special focus on schools' digital infrastructure.
- A great deal of effort was made to provide schools with proper support in terms of training provision. Hundreds of teachers and other VET educators were given the opportunity to professionally develop.
- When it comes to work-based learning, a lot of support and training were provided for practical training organisers (PTOs), with one entire project led by the Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation dedicated to strengthening the role of PTOs in the system.
- A lot of activities aimed at Montenegro's participation in regional initiatives: developing regional occupational standards and multiple regional standards and indicators relating to quality assurance.

At the same time, there is room for improvement in the following areas:

- In the field of establishing a VNFIL system, there is a lot of room to build on all the work that has previously been done, and in spreading all the information needed to all potential users. Generally, a lot can be done to better inform the public about everything that is happening in IVET and CVET by using the most advanced means of communication.
- Career guidance, which involves using the most recent VET data and tracking VET students' outcomes, should be given a boost, as Montenegro has not started from scratch.

One general observation is that when implementing measures, there is too much dependence on support from international donors and EU funds. On top of that, project activities and deliverables are usually not sustainable enough, meaning that the impact of VET project activities is short-lasting.

B) Conclusions on stakeholders' self-assessment/reflection on participation in the Osnabrück process

During the meeting in Turin on 28 May organized by the ETF, and the meetings and conversations upon returning to Montenegro, the national team discussed the country's experience and reflections on its participation in the Osnabrück policy monitoring cycle. The discussion resulted in the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the Osnabrück monitoring process being identified, which are presented briefly below.

Strengths

- Montenegro has a long tradition of taking part in various EU initiatives and monitoring exercises regarding VET, resulting in a good level of preparedness for active participation in this particular process.
- The current strategy on VET, the VET Strategy 2020-24, is in line with VET trends in the EU, which made it much easier to design the NIP and monitor progress.
- The most relevant institutions in the country (educational and those representing the world of work) recognise the importance of the Osnabrück process, and are cooperative and transparent in the process and support it.

Weaknesses

- The whole process of participation is led much more by educational institutions, whereas stakeholders from the world of work and other institutions usually follow the steps taken by the Ministry of Education, and rarely take initiatives or have a more significant role in the process.
- An inter-institutional working group that was to monitor the implementation of the NIP was never officially set up, which made the monitoring process more difficult.
- There is still an issue of informing the more professional public about the processes in which Montenegro participates, which results in poorer visibility of the new initiatives and reform actions.
- There is often insufficient manpower in the state institutions to respond to numerous EU questionnaires and report to monitoring processes on various aspects of education and the labour market.

Opportunities

- The Osnabrück process provides an opportunity to all stakeholders to catch up with EU initiatives in VET, enabling them to develop a common understanding of VET priorities in the country, which further helps in designing, planning and monitoring the future strategies and plans.
- The monitoring process provides a good opportunity to analyse and support VET policy development and implementation in Montenegro.
- It also helps to improve policy learning between the EU and Montenegro.
- Furthermore, it is an opportunity to discuss at national level how Montenegro implements its national VET plans in line with the EU priorities in VET, and opportunities for moving them forward.

Threats

- The institutional set-up undergoes frequent changes, which may result in less understanding of the roles and responsibilities that the institutions have in this and similar processes.
- The unavailability of data, and delays in producing it, can be disappointing for those involved in the monitoring process.
- There are too many strategies and national documents without clear budgets that have to be consulted when making plans and reporting on the process.

References

Detailed lists of references are available in the policy development fiches that are published on [ETF OpenSpace](#).