

KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

KOSOVO*

This paper was prepared by Matthias Themel, ETF, in September 2024.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While Kosovo¹ is preparing for scheduled elections in February 2025, measures imposed by the EU in 2023 which include a suspension on IPA funds are still in place at the time of writing this note (September 2024). Whereas internally, ambitious reforms have been set in motion, the process of normalising relations between Kosovo and Serbia is continuously confronted with challenges.

Key economic indicators, such as GDP growth, revenue, inflation and employment figures are showing positive trends. The Growth and Reform Plan for Kosovo 2024-2027, introduced in 2024, holds the potential for accelerating key reforms in areas related to national development and EU accession preparation, including education and employment.

One key event in 2024 was the implementation of the national census. Initial results revealed that the resident population of Kosovo is much lower than expected in the population projection (KAS 2017). Detailed analysis of the data has yet to be published to see what these findings will mean for demographic trends as well as for education and employment policies.

Kosovo is on a path of progressive reform in its VET, LLL and labour market systems, striving to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing economic landscape and approximation to EU standards. A major area of reform relates to the governance of VET and adult education and current efforts to revise the corresponding law. Significant progress could be made in relation to various forms of work-based learning and particularly to the area of dual VET. The creation of a task force by the Prime Minister to accelerate the availability of dual VET reflects a strong commitment to this goal. Further important developments, for example the establishment of Sector Workforce Councils, VET curriculum reform and career guidance are under way, based on close coordination between the government and development partners.

Regarding employment and the labour market, ambitious reforms are under way to increase the quality and effectiveness of employment services and active labour market measures. A new employment strategy has been adopted, and the labour law and the employment law are under review. Unemployment figures could be reduced significantly both for the general population and for youth. However, there are still very high rates of joblessness and inactivity, including NEETs. In response to the high NEET population, the Government has started the pilot implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Mitrovica and Ferizaj, aiming to reach 3,000 NEETS by the end of 2025.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to any position on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on Kosovo's declaration of independence

1. KEY POLITICAL, DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Political developments

The current government's term of office under pro-European Vetëvendosje's Albin Kurti as Prime Minister is coming to an end. The date for new elections was set to 9 February 2025.

Following the EU-mediated Ohrid agreement of March 2023, progress in normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia proved difficult. Measures imposed by the EU on Kosovo following violent escalations in the North in May 2023 stayed in place and included a freeze of financial support. In consequence, planned EU-funded projects could not go forward, limiting the capacity to progress with key reforms, including piloting of Youth Guarantee.

Since January 2024, citizens of Kosovo enjoy a liberalised visa regime for the Schengen area: for stays of up to 90 days within the Schengen area, a visa is no longer required. This does however not include stays for the purpose of study or work.

Demographics

A census took place in 2024, to update previous census data from 2011. Preliminary findings indicate that the resident population currently stands at 1,586,659 persons. This represents a decrease of 153,166 persons, corresponding to 8.8% of the 2011 population. The average age of the population has increased by 4.85 years and now stands at 34.82 years. The number of households has increased by almost 20%, while the number of persons per household has decreased from 5.9 in 2011 to 4.5 in 2024.

The 2024 census included an effort to enumerate the diaspora population. According to press reports, approximately 600,000 members of the diaspora registered by end of August 2024. The possibility to register online has been extended until end of 2024. Once available, results from this module are expected to give interesting new insights into the dynamics of outmigration.

The population decline was previously evident from school enrolment figures, which came down by 23.3% from school year 2013/14 to school year 2023/24. For the latter school year, 215,431 pupils were enrolled in (public and private) primary and secondary education (KAS, 2024, p. 84f.).

Migration adds significantly to the decline in population, with an estimated stock of 338,086 emigrated persons in 2022, representing 19.2% of the population. In 2018, this figure stood at 210,170 persons, representing 11.7% of the population. (Autoriteti Qeveritar për Migrim, 2023). The OECD states that Kosovo has 'the second highest emigration rate to the OECD area, with 22% of its population living in OECD destination countries' (OECD, 2022, p. 171). The share of women in the migrant stock in OECD countries is about the same as that of men for all WB6 economies, except for Kosovo (45%) (OECD, 2022, p. 49). Emigration flows have been growing in the past decade. (...) 'More than half of the Kosovar migrants of working age in OECD countries have low levels of education (52%), while the share of highly skilled migrants is relatively low at 13%' (OECD, 2022, p. 171). Wage gaps are an important pull factor driving emigration. In addition, gaps in human capital are emerging as a powerful determinant for explaining emigration to countries where returns to human capital are comparatively higher (ETF, 2022; Mara and Landesmann, 2022).

Key economic developments

In 2024, the economy of Kosovo had a strong start. The GDP in Q1 of 2024 rose to 5.6%, mainly driven by higher real disposable incomes (EC 2024b).

The Economic Reform Programme (ERP) projects annual GDP growth rates of 4.6% for 2024, 4.8% for 2025 and 4.4% for 2026, based in part on increased public investment (EC 2024a). The IMF

figures document past annual GDP growth at 4.3% for 2022, 3.3% for 2023 and project 3.8% for 2024 (IMF, 2024).

The annual average consumer price inflation rate was 5.2% in 2023 and is projected by the IMF to fall to 3.5% in 2024 (IMF, 2024). The fall of the inflation rate can mainly be attributed to lower global commodity prices (EC 2024b).

The establishment of the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans has the potential to provide significant benefits to the economy. For the period 2024-27, Kosovo can expect to access approximately EUR 800 million in grants and loans, conditioned on fulfilment of key reform targets. However, these funds are also conditioned on progress in the normalisation of relations with Serbia, based on the assessment of the EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue. A first pre-financing of 7% is planned for Q4 of 2024. Overall, the programme aim is to accelerate the socio-economic convergence of all Western Balkans economies with the EU.

Since 2018, Kosovo is engaged in the design of its Smart Specialisation Strategy, under the coordination of the Prime Minister's Office. The initial stages, i.e. the mapping of promising economic areas and the implementation of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process have been completed. Currently, the strategy is being drafted. (Radovanovic et al, 2024). 'Potential priorities coming from the mapping phase that have been explored in the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process include:

1) Information and Communication Technology; 2) Creative Industry sector; 3) Agro-processing sector; 4) Wood processing sector; 5) Green energy sector' (Radovanovic et al, 2024, p. 13).

Kosovo's informal sector is among the largest in Europe. This hinders economic development and strains already tight budgets. Depending on the definition used, informal workers made up between 35.6% and 42.4%² of the workers aged 15-64 in 2018 (RCC, 2023). Informality is higher among youth, men, less-educated people and rural residents (Robayo-Abril et al., 2020). The incidence of vulnerable employment has increased in Kosovo from 13.3% in 2022 to 15.3% in 2023, a sign of increasing informality risks as own account workers and unpaid family workers are less likely to have formal work arrangements.

Key social issues

An estimated 21.7% of the total population in 2023 lived on less than USD 6.85 per person per day, forecasted to fall to 19.7% in 2024 (World Bank, 2024a). 'To accelerate poverty reduction, Kosovo needs to strengthen the drivers of job creation and enhance private sector productivity. To facilitate this transition and spur growth, it is critical to enhance the regulatory environment, reduce infrastructure gaps, and strengthen human capital' (World Bank, 2024a, p. 1).

The Household Budget Survey data show that poor people are overrepresented in households headed by women, in households in which the head did not complete secondary education, in larger households and those with more children, and among Kosovars belonging to the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian populations (World Bank, 2022, p. 4).

'Children from poor households, and those with special needs, lack equal access to vital and quality health and education services. Children represent half of those benefiting from social assistance, but less than 10% of them are with special needs. Children with disabilities lack adequate health and rehabilitation services, social services and assistive equipment from state institutions. Most of them lack proper access to education facilities. Around 9% of children are involved in work, of whom 5.6% working under hazardous conditions, an issue being particularly evident among the Roma and Ashkali communities' (EC, 2023).

² The estimates vary depending on the definition of informality. When defining informal workers as those who are employees and employers in small firms (five or fewer workers), self-employed with or without employees in non-professional occupations (i.e. clerks, service and market sales workers, agricultural workers, craft workers, machine operators and workers in non-professional occupations) or unpaid family workers, informality amounts to 42.4% based on the 2018 Labour Force Survey (LFS) data. If defined as an employee with no written contract, self-employed in firms with fewer than five workers, self-employed in non-professional occupations or unpaid family workers, the informality rate is 35.6% (Robayo-Abril et al., 2020).

The most disadvantaged people do not always benefit from adequate social assistance. The World Bank (2022) notes that ‘recent increases in spending on war-related pensions have crowded out spending toward the poor. Disability benefits require declaration of 100% disability with regular re-assessments’ (p. 8). Data on the proportion of the population at risk of poverty after social transfers for Kosovo show 27.9 % of the population falling within this range (2018, latest data available on Eurostat). The same indicator in the EU stood at 16.5% in 2022. In April 2023, the Assembly ratified an agreement with the World Bank to conduct thorough reforms in the social assistance system (EC, 2023), which currently lacks public health insurance and unemployment insurance.

In 2017, the share of severe material deprivation, based on the EU severe material deprivation index, was 54% for the total population, and 84% of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian population (UNDP 2018). The State Strategy for Youth Action Plan (MCYS, n.d.) aims to reduce this metric to 20% and 40% respectively, by 2030.

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 Trends and challenges

In the 2023/24 school year, 215,431 pupils attended primary and lower secondary education (both public and private) – a decline of 23.3% compared to the 280,823 pupils a decade earlier, in school year 2013/14. The number of upper secondary pupils in school year 2023/24 was 65,757 – a decline of 34.5% from a decade ago (KAS, 2024, p. 84f.).

While student numbers at primary and lower secondary levels declined by 30% from school year 2008/09 to school year 2022/23, the number of teachers declined by less than 1%. In the same period, the student to teacher ratio decreased from 1:18.5 to 1:12.9 (KAS, 2023, p. 92). At secondary level, the number of students declined by 31% in the same period, while the number of teachers declined by just 12 persons, resulting in a student to teacher ratio of 1:13.1 for school year 2022/23 (KAS, 2023, p. 93). At the same time, there is a general shortage of school buildings, which requires 65% of all schools to work in two shifts and 1% even in three shifts (source: EMIS data 2021/22), preventing schools from carrying out after-school activities.

Some small municipalities have established gymnasias or opened certain VET programmes, despite not having the conditions in place for them. They are reluctant to change VET programmes now to 'avoid surplus teaching staff' who are paid centrally by the Ministry of Finance (MESTI, 2022a, p. 34). The MESTI mentions some 2 000 surplus teachers on the payroll who do not have specific teaching assignments but cannot be moved to other locations. An adjustment of education provision and staffing numbers might allow the Kosovo government to invest saved funds into upgrading education and training facilities, offers and quality (Viertel, 2020, p. 17). A MESTI working group is currently looking into the issue of adjusting the school network.

The management of pre-university education is shared between the MESTI, municipal education directorates (MEDs) and schools. The MEDs, which are generally understaffed, handle all procurement issues for schools and pay their bills. This can create problems for schools, as they fully depend on the MEDs. The MESTI lacks the legal basis and capacity to control how state education funds are used. Reporting lines from the MEDs to the MESTI are almost non-existent. Thus, the decentralised management system needs major structural reforms, perhaps as part of a reorganisation of the entire regional set-up of Kosovo and reform of public administration. Generally, there is a lack of investment in improving the quality of infrastructure, reforming curricula, improving teachers' skills and updating and learning (MESTI, 2022b, p. 30). The MESTI, through a dedicated working group, is working on a new funding formula for education, including VET.

According to the EC's assessment of Kosovo's Economic Reform Programme 2022-2024, 'improving the quality and relevance of the education system to increase employment and mitigate skills mismatches' is one of Kosovo's three structural challenges (EC, 2022b, p. 300).

Human capital challenges in Kosovo broadly relate to the need to:

- use demographic, labour market and skills-needs analyses to inform and align skills formation systems for young people and adults;
- nurture, across all curricula and levels of education, cross-curricular key competences with a specific emphasis on maths, linguistics, digital, citizenship, entrepreneurship and career management skills;
- raise the quality and relevance of general and vocational education overall; and
- implement integrated measures that address labour demand and supply-side issues and combine training with insights into workplace practices and support for business start-ups and growth (Viertel, 2020, p. 35).

Education strategy and legal framework for education

The MESTI, with support from international partners, drew up the Education Strategy 2022-2026, which the Government approved on 30 September 2022. The Strategy was based on a prior thorough analysis of the available evidence and key challenges in education (see e.g. Bajrami, 2021). It also includes, for the first time, a chapter on digitising education (see section below for more details). The estimated costs amount to EUR 323 million (MESTI, 2022b, p. 10), of which 57% are planned to be funded by the state budget. A system of annual progress monitoring has been put in place which is supported by GIZ. The report for the period 2022/23 has been produced but is not available to the public. A mid-term evaluation of the strategy is planned for end 2024, including a report that will be available to the public.

The Education Strategy 2022-26 has five strategic objectives which relate to pre-school education (11% of cost estimate), pre-university education (50% of cost-estimate), vocational training, education and adult education (6% of cost estimate), higher education (17% of cost estimate), and digitalisation of education (16% of cost estimate).

For the past years, the legal framework is subject to wide-ranging reforms. The new Law on Early Childhood Education has been approved by the parliament in July 2023. Working groups were established in 2023 to draft a concept note for a new Law on VET and Adult Education and to draft the law itself. The concept note was presented in April 2024 and commented by stakeholders. The Law on Pre-University Education is planned to be revised, and the Law on Higher Education is pending for revision for some time now (double majority in the Parliament needed).

In July 2024, new secondary legislation was adopted to comprehensively regulate the selection procedures and appointment of education staff in public education and training institutions of pre-university education.

Education expenditure

With a government expenditure on education that amounted to 3.2% of GDP in 2023 (down from 4.6% in 2020 and 4.3% in 2019 – KAS, 2024, p. 86), Kosovo is currently on a downward trend away from the EU average (5% in 2020 and 4.7% in 2022, the latest year available). Relative to total public expenditure, 13.4% were spent on education in 2022 (MESTI, 2023, p. 99). This is a high percentage when compared with EU-27 average of 9.4% in 2021. However, in terms of outcomes, Kosovo faces many challenges. A child from Kosovo born in 2020 can expect to have spent an average of 13.2 years in education by the time he or she turns 18. However, factoring in learning outcomes at graduation, this corresponds to only 7.9 learning adjusted years of school. In comparison, the learning adjusted years of school in, for example, Montenegro would be 8.9 and in Albania 9.0 (World Bank, 2023).

The current per capita funding formula (under revision), which has remained unchanged since 2008, takes into account the number of students and teachers, special education needs and non-wage operational costs (ETF, 2023a). So far, school managements have had little discretion over their budgets and lack autonomous budget management systems. The MEDs are in charge of budget plans and submit them to the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers (MFLT), while the MESTI has little control over how many funds go where and how they are used.

The MESTI does not have a specific budget line for adult education and training. Training for unemployed adults is part of active employment policies and funded through the MFLT.

Access, participation and early school leaving

The pre-school education offer is insufficient, lacks in quality assurance, and also risks reinforcing rural-urban and work-related inequalities. Ten municipalities are deprived of public pre-school institutions; the largely private offer in urban areas benefits families who can afford it; and last but not least, the limited number of teaching hours at public pre-school and pre-primary levels does not solve the issue of low activity rates among women, as it is not a sustainable solution for finding a full or even part-time job (ETF, 2023a).

The gross enrolment rate of 37.8% for preschool and pre-primary education (children aged 3 to 5) is lower than the OECD and EU averages. Within this average, pre-primary education, which refers to the last year before primary school for 5-year-olds, achieves an enrolment rate of 89.1% (ETF, 2023a).

The new Law on Early Childhood Education of 2023 makes pre-primary education compulsory for all children from September 2024. Fewer girls are sent to kindergarten than boys, especially outside Prishtina (MESTI, 2022b). Didactic guidelines and materials are inadequate.

The average gross enrolment rate (GER) in primary education is 101% and is therefore similar to averages for the region. GER for primary and lower secondary education is 97.6% in 2022/23 (MESTI, 2023, p. 85). The MESTI calculates that 'about 3.4% of children are not involved in primary and lower secondary education' (MESTI, 2023, p. 88). In the past two decades, the government, with the help of donors, has invested in constructing and refurbishing school buildings and facilities. Learning is conducted in four languages: Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian and Turkish. Special Learning Centres have been established in various municipalities, which have helped improve the participation of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) families in compulsory education (9 years). However, the sustainable funding of the Learning Centres is not ensured, and RAE attendance at upper secondary level remains low despite scholarships provided by MESTI (MESTI, 2022b). There is evidence of some schools segregating children of RAE communities, which is against regulations³.

It is estimated that 38,000 children with disabilities in Kosovo do not attend school. The number has increased in regular schools but decreased in the resource centres. The main problems include the lack of suitable definitions of various forms of disability, barrier-free access to schools and adequate support, and the low number of suitably qualified teachers and assistants (MESTI, 2022b).

LFS data show relatively low early school leaving rates, currently standing at 7.7% in 2023. However, high NEET rates indicate a major need to monitor and address school engagement and labour market relevance of education and training.

At upper secondary level, VET remains a second choice into which lower-performing students enrol. The enrolment rate of upper secondary school students in VET programmes has remained at around 50% since 2015. All students have the chance to sit State Matura exams, regardless of which programme they enrol in. While this regulation creates high permeability, it is also criticised for enabling weaker students to circumvent higher academic standards in general education.

Having left school, few possibilities remain for young and adults to develop their skills. The Agency for VET and Adult Education (AVETAE) has developed an additional module in their webpage in recent years where vocational schools can fill in the form with the data on the enrolment of adult education candidates according to respective education profiles.

2,000 learners attended adult education programmes comprising grades 10, 11 and 12 in 2021/2022 school year (MESTI 2022c, p. 71) a figure that subsequently decreased to 830 attendees in 2023/2024 (KAS online database, retrieved on 01/10/2024⁴). Of these, only ca. 27%, were female. Efforts are being made to include job seekers in formal education programmes in vocational schools or short non-formal courses in VTCs, as well as validation of non-formal and informal learning opportunities. Due to limited resources made available for active labour market measures, such lifelong learning opportunities for jobseekers and other categories remain extremely limited with only 2,877 participants in 2023, out of which ca. 63% were male jobseekers (ETF ALMPs data collection, 2024). The adult learning participation rate (25-64) was 5.6% in 2020, an improvement of 2.9 pp from 2019 (KAS, LFS data). However, adult training opportunities across Kosovo remain restricted. Courses are often short and at basic skills levels. The training provided does not always improve the

³ <https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/ghost-schools-ghetto-schools-and-segregated-shifts/>, last accessed 25 October 2024

⁴ [Attendance in education and training for adults by year, municipality, grade and sex](https://askdata.rks.gov.net/pxweb/en/ASKdata/ASKdata_Education_4%20Education%20and%20training%20for%20adults/edu25.px/table/tableViewLayout1/). Retrievable from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, under https://askdata.rks.gov.net/pxweb/en/ASKdata/ASKdata_Education_4%20Education%20and%20training%20for%20adults/edu25.px/table/tableViewLayout1/ last accessed 23 October 2024

position of young people on the labour market, particularly that of low-skilled jobseekers (Viertel, 2020). The education strategy 2022-2026 provides a range of measures to increase the quality, availability and participation in adult education (MESTI, 2022a).

While access to continuous VET and other opportunities for LLL remain problematic, the Kosovo education system provides for very high progression/graduation rates (ETF, 2023).

PISA results

In the OECD's 2015, 2018 and 2022 PISA tests in mathematics, reading and science, Kosovo ranked among the low performing countries in international comparison. In 2022, the PISA results for Kosovo followed the global pattern of backsliding on previous levels of learning achievements, observed as a consequence of the COVID crisis.

Results for Kosovo as percentage of students attaining at least Level 2 proficiency, and the OECD average (OECD 2019 and 2023)

	Kosovo 2018	Kosovo 2022	OECD average 2018	OECD average 2022
Mathematics	23%	15%	76%	69%
Reading	21%	17%	77%	74%
Science	23%	21%	78%	76%

This means that most of Kosovo's students fall below Level 2 in reading, mathematics and science proficiency, the baseline required as a foundation for later learning and work.

The new State Strategy for Youth 2024-32 (MCYS, not dated) refers to the need to raise the quality of education in Kosovo. The indicator framework of the strategy refers to PISA results as proxy indicator of education quality and states as target for 2032 a '13% increase: for Reading, Mathematics and Science' (p. 39).

Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)

The latest detailed data on NEETs has been generated via an ILO study, carried out in the context of preparations for the Youth Guarantee and cited in the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP). According to the YGIP, in 2020, 'approximately 193,000 young people are NEET, corresponding to 40.4% per cent of the total youth population. Of the total NEET count, young unemployed population represents 26.6%, with a prevalence of long-term unemployed (18.7% of all young NEETs). Of these young NEETs, only 5% are registered with the Kosovo Employment Agency. (...) NEET rates are higher for women compared to men (43% and 38%, respectively), for young people in the 25-29 and 20-24 cohort (56.6% and 45.6%, respectively) compared to teenagers (21.8%), for young people living in Mitrovica and Ferizaj (55.5% and 47.4%), and for youth with tertiary educational attainment (51.5%). Approximately 73.4% of the total NEET population is represented by young people who are inactive, due to discouragement (27.6%), family and care responsibilities (16%) and for other unspecified reasons (19.5%). In terms of probability estimates, the risk of becoming NEET in Kosovo increases – at least in the last three years - with increasing levels of educational attainment. Since 2018 NEET rates for those with primary education levelled at below 30%, the rates of secondary educated youth increased – at a moderate pace – to just over 40%, while the NEET rates for university educated young people increased from around 30% to over 50%.' (MFLT, 2022, p. 6f).

Time series of NEET in the 15-24 age bracket, based on LFS data, show consistently high values of over 33.6% since 2020, and reaching 33.4% in 2023 (with just a small gender gap). However, there is a decrease in absolute numbers from over 112,000 NEETs in 2020 to ca. 96,000 in 2023. Youth unemployment (same age bracket) could be reduced significantly from 49.1% in 2020 to 17.3% in

2023. With only ca. 11,000 young unemployed in 2023, Kosovo confirms a NEET pattern of young people who are inactive, discouraged and not actively seeking jobs (KAS, online database, retrieved on 01/10/2024).

The pilot phase of the Youth Guarantee has started in Mitrovica and Ferizaj in 2024. Unfortunately, due to the ongoing suspension of EU IPA funding under the temporary measures imposed by the EU in 2023, the pilot had to be started with minimum resources and later scaled down. New data on NEET are being collected in the process and will be reported early in 2025.

2.2 Initial VET and adult learning

Strategic and legal framework for initial VET and adult learning

The Education Strategy 2022-2026 also covers VET. There is a process of an annual review of the Education Strategy, supported by GIZ. At the time of writing this document, the results of the review for the period 2022-23 have not been made public. A mid-term review of the strategy is scheduled to start end 2024, the results of which will be published in due course.

The current Law on VET (No 04/L-138) was adopted in 2013. The law was criticised for not regulating VET for young people and adults comprehensively, as it misses important cross-references to other pieces of primary legislation, such as the Law on Pre-University Education (No 04/L-032), the Law on Education in the Municipalities (No 03/L-068), the Law on Higher Education (No 04/L-037), the Law on Adult Education and Training (No 04/L-143), the Law on the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo (EARK), and the Laws on the National Qualifications Framework and the National Qualifications Authority (NQA).

In 2023, the MESTI started the process of drafting a new law on VET and Adult Education. A concept note for the law was shared with stakeholders in April 2024. Based on comments received, the working group will start the drafting process.

VET governance and financing arrangements

VET institutions (69 institutions in 2024) fall under the institutional umbrella of the MESTI and are managed by the MEDs, as described above. The exceptions are the six (VET) Centres of Competence, for which the Agency for VET and Adult Education (AVETAE) has management responsibility. The AVETAE does not currently have the capacity to manage all 69 VET schools, as envisaged by the Law on VET, but could be upgraded to do so.

The EARK, under the institutional umbrella of the MFLT, funds and manages eight Vocational Training Centres (VTCs). These VTCs provide labour market relevant training (mostly short courses) to registered jobseekers. The mandate for adult education lies with the MESTI, which is why the EARK's role in managing the VTCs has been questioned in the past. For the moment, however, there does not seem to be any momentum to change this arrangement.

The tripartite National VET Council is not working properly. Regional VET councils are emerging: recent efforts by IREX (USAID) resulted in the establishment of Sector Workforce Councils in the 'Information and Communications Technology, wood processing, and agri-business growth sectors to unite employers, educators, the diaspora, civil society, policy makers, and donors to define workforce development needs, and support workforce development solutions' (IREX, 2024).

A more regular social dialogue should take place on the various aspects of VET legislation, policies, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Social dialogue does take place under the Social Economic Council led by the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers (MFLT), but this is related to labour legislation and provisions and has been dormant since 2023, when the regular tenure of members expired, and no new members were appointed.

VET funding has not increased significantly in recent years (MESTI, 2022b, p. 34). The current per capita funding formula is inadequate for VET schools, which require more resources compared to

general secondary schools, taking into account their specific needs for equipment and materials, teachers' continuous professional development, and other cost factors. With support from donor-funded projects (including the IPA / ADA 2017 ALLED2 project), the government works on a new financing formula. While VET schools are allowed to generate their own income, their lack of autonomy and various practical problems prevent them from doing so.

Qualifications, validation and recognition

The Law on the Kosovo Qualifications Framework was adopted in 2008. The framework now includes 192 VET and 396 higher education qualifications. However, these may be linked to individual providers only and may overlap. The National Qualifications Authority (NQA) has accredited 104 VET providers by January 2024. It uses an e-accreditation management system that assists providers in the process. A report by Rizvanolli-Bajraktari (2021), drafted in the context of the IPA/ADA 2017 ALLED2 project, points to some issues regarding the validation of qualifications and the accreditation of providers. Contentious issues include, among others, the fact that labour market players are not always involved in the quality assurance of qualifications; qualifications are linked to individual providers, which has led to a plethora of overlapping qualifications; the NQA's regulation on a modular approach is not followed in curriculum development; the MESTI does not see a need for public VET institutions to go through an accreditation process, and hence initial VET qualifications offered by public VET schools are not part of the NQF; incidences of corruption to obtain institutional accreditation; etc. Discussions are ongoing to address these issues and to bring NQF-related functions under an enlarged AVETAE.

The IPA/LuxDev 2018 ESVET-PRO project identified priority profiles in which services for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) could be offered; published manuals for the accreditation and evaluation of RPL providers; undertook various promotion activities; and trained 16 experts who will assess applications of RPL providers and 18 trainers who will train RPL providers in the future. Currently (January 2024) there are 8 RPL providers, of which 2 are public VETCs and 6 are private institutions. These providers have so far provided services to 267 individuals⁵.

So far, 125 occupational standards have been defined⁶. A register of qualifications has been developed and will be accessible to the public soon.

Quality and quality assurance

Despite continuous efforts from education stakeholders over the past decade to tackle issues of quality and relevance, the situation is not satisfactory. A dedicated 'Quality Assurance Strategy for Kosovo Pre-university Education' (MEST, not dated) was devised for the period 2016-2020, but not fully implemented. The education strategy 2022-2026 (MESTI 2022) provides a frank analysis of the areas in which quality and QA mechanisms need to be improved and proposes wide-ranging measures for the development of a comprehensive and effective approach to quality and QA. Measures foreseen for general education include, inter alia, changes in the inspection system, quality development and reporting system, teacher training and appraisal, curriculum development, infrastructure and capacity building at all levels. The chapter on VET and adult education includes specific objectives related to governance, funding and information management system, consolidation of quality assurance mechanisms, at central, local and VETI level, curriculum and practical learning opportunities.

A core curriculum for VET is under development and its principles are already being applied for the design of dual VET curricula. A programme for the pre-service training of VET teachers has been started in collaboration with the University of Zadar. New regulation for the selection of school personnel has been passed in 2024. An inter-ministerial working group has been established in 2024 to look into the follow-up of the 2023 ETF Rapid Education Diagnostic report, which includes a number of recommendations with relevance to effective quality assurance of the education system.

⁵ Personal communication from National Qualifications Agency Kosovo, 25 January 2024

⁶ Personal communication from National Qualifications Agency Kosovo, 15 November 2023

To measure learning achievements, two national tests are organised every year: achievement tests at the end of the 9th grade and State Matura exams at the end of the 12th grade. Staff from the MESTI's Division for Quality Assurance, Standards, Evaluation and Licensing have been trained and test items improved over time. The MESTI (2022b) holds, however, that 'the main challenge is administering tests and preventing cheating in schools' (p. 31). Staff shortages limit the capacity to analyse the results from national and international assessments and draw policy conclusions.

On 20 September 2022, the Board of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) accepted the Kosovo Accreditation Agency's application for affiliate status. This decision may eventually facilitate the process of recognising graduates' diplomas in European countries and the exchange of students and professors.

Work-based learning arrangements

Decisive progress has been made in WBL arrangements over recent years, based on the clear strategic priorities of the National Development Plan 2030 and the Education Strategy 2022-26 to make VET more responsive to labour market needs. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister, a task force for the initiation of dual VET has been established. The pilot implementation of dual VET has started in school year 2022/23 for four profiles, and 2023/24 for an additional eight profiles. The first graduates will exit dual VET in 2025. The curricula for further dual VET profiles are under preparation, with support from LUX Dev.

A regulation has been approved in 2020 for the organisation of WBL. The new VET law which is currently under preparation by the MESTI is expected to further regulate WBL and dual VET more specifically. The Kosovo Chamber of Commerce (KCC) has entered a MoU with the MESTI under which it has specific responsibilities for linking businesses with VET providers and supporting businesses in the implementation of dual VET at the workplace.

In a 2023/24 study implemented by the ETF (ETF, forthcoming), the status of WBL arrangements in Kosovo are thoroughly reviewed, both pertaining to dual VET and other forms of WBL. Current practices in Kosovo are benchmarked against the 14 criteria of the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeship (EFQEA) and the European Quality Framework for Traineeships, highlighting the achievements made and remaining challenges or gaps to be addressed through legislation changes or enhanced WBL practices.

Kosovo is being encouraged to become part of the EU's European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA), of which other Western Balkan countries are already members. The membership application was under preparation by MESTI at the time of writing this country fiche.

Digital education and skills

In March 2023, with support from the World Bank, Kosovo connected its last remaining non-connected village to high-speed broadband internet, achieving one of the highest internet penetrations in Europe (World Bank, 2023b). The devices most used to access the internet were mobile/smart phones (94.8%), smart media devices such as smart TVs or game consoles (39.8%) and laptop computers (22.1%) (KAS, 2023b).

Kosovo joined the ICILS 2023 (International Computer and Information Literacy Study) which will help monitor targets for student digital competences. The results of this study, in which 35 countries globally participated, are expected in November 2024.

The situation regarding the specific Education Strategy (ES) 2022-2026 objectives are as follows. Infrastructure (ES objective 5.1): internet connectivity is missing in 1,058 schools. However, MESTI plans to allocate EUR 6.5 million each year till 2026 to progressively fill this gap. The target is to connect at least 250 schools each year. The current average of 1 computer per 35 learners is insufficient. Loans and grants for hardware will be provided by the World Bank, and other international donors. The availability of digital educational resources (ES objective 5.2) presents another challenge, especially for VET. Furthermore, digital skills of educators (ES objective 5.4) are seen as a key obstacle and would require needs analyses and the devising and provision of digital skills training for

teachers and trainers. The ES foresees the use of [DIGCOMP EDU](#) as a reference framework for educators' digital skills. This tool could support self-assessment among teachers and help design a training package to improve educators' digital skills. The digital capacity of schools (ES objective 5.3): the ES indicates [DIGCOM.ORG](#) as a reference for the digital capacity of schools. The 2024-27 EU Growth and Reform Plan will support several of the Education Strategy targets for digitalisation of education.

In 2019, the European Training Foundation (ETF) and MESTI piloted the EU's SELFIE tool, which is already available in Albanian and Serbian. Using SELFIE on a system-wide level could be a way to gather evidence of needs and foster digital innovation in schools, as a component of school development plans. The MESTI plans to create a division for digital education and hire 100 ICT coordinators in schools have been delayed.

'Shkollat.org', the localised version of the Learning Passport, was launched in 2021 by the MESTI in collaboration with UNICEF. The learning platform combines video-learning content with other communication tools. A 2023 review of Shkollat.org found that 'Digital learning platforms, such as Shkollat.org, are under-utilised, and engaging, curriculum-aligned digital content is rarely available. Teachers need structured, quality hands-on trainings on blended learning that allow them to learn about digital pedagogies at their own pace, based on their learning needs. Finally, continued support in scaling-up access to devices and connectivity is needed, to ensure all children can effectively engage with digital learning' (UNICEF, 2023a, p. 20). The OECD states that there 'has been some recent progress made in strengthening skills for the digital transition, namely through efforts to adopt the European Digital Competency Framework in its curriculum framework. However, digital skills acquisition among students still remains limited by the inadequate ICT infrastructure in schools' (OECD, 2024, p. 106)

The 2023 European Skills and Jobs Survey provided detailed insight into the digital skills needs of the workforce. The results show that digital upskilling is not yet rolled out systematically. Only 15% of the workers reported having learnt to use new digital technologies at work, even though Kosovo is an average performer regarding new digital technologies introduced at work (28%) (ETF, 2023b).

Statistics on education and training

The MESTI's Education Management Information System (EMIS) is called SMIA and has been in operation since 2011 (Adjijogov, 2017). It has been developed by EduSoft at the request of the Government, and therefore is not an open-source platform. It also has no public access. Data are collected on pre-primary, primary and secondary levels of education, including VET. Via the EMIS, data are collected on students (aggregated), staff (aggregated), and institutions (UNICEF, 2023b). 'Although the government of Kosovo has made efforts to enhance its Education Management Information System (EMIS) and establish a centralised digital platform for pre-university education, there remains substantial room to improve the economy's data collection and management. Strengthened collection and analysis of this data could bolster evidence-based policymaking and facilitate better benchmarking with regional and EU counterparts' (OECD, 2024).

A detailed analysis of available data, missing data and monitoring gaps of SMIA is provided in the ETF RED report (ETF, 2023a, p. 23).

'The legal framework for tracking graduates from the VET system at the national level is missing and consequently the data on employment of graduates and the compliance of their skills with the labour market demands are missing' (MESTI, 2022, p. 44). This statement applies both to initial and continuous VET.

The Education Strategy 2022-2026 (MESTI, 2022, p. 80) mentions plans to establish a new digital platform 'with elements of e-Government in education, Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), School/Education Management Systems (SMS/EMS), Learning Management Systems (LMS), a platform for organising and publishing digital teaching materials, etc., in order to include all levels of education, from preschool to university level, including the public, non-public and private sector of

education in Kosovo. This platform should be integrated with all other digital platforms of all Kosovo institutions’.

Under the new 2024 World Bank-funded Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for Kosovo's Human Capital Project, component 1 (iii) will develop and implement a cross-sectoral ECEC module for the EMIS and overall improve the core structure of the EMIS (World Bank, 2024c).

3. LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT

3.1 Trends and challenges

Kosovo's labour market is slowly improving. The employment rate increased from 24.8% in 2020 to 31.3% in 2023. In the same period, the unemployment rate decreased from 25.7% to 10.8%. However, high inactivity rates, low employment rates, large gender employment gaps and high rates of NEETs are of concern.

There are a number of longstanding structural weaknesses which need to be addressed in the context of EU approximation, including:

- the lack of unemployment and health insurance and the partial lack of occupational safety measures for employed;
- lack of employment protection legislation;
- the low level of expenditure on active labour market policies (ALMPs); the insufficient tracking of ALMP outcomes; the need for continuous capacity-building of employment service staff; and the high incidence of long-term unemployment, especially among low-skilled people (OECD, 2024);
- gender inequality in terms of employment and pay gaps;
- the skills gap among unemployed people, including young people; and
- the large share of informal work.

A number of measures have recently been taken to incentivise the formalisation of work, including new electronic tax reporting tools, and the adoption, in 2023, of a new Law on Tax Administration Procedures, which regulates, inter alia, the obligation to establish and notify work contracts prior to the start of a new employment, the obligation to pay salaries and wages via bank transfers, and regulated information exchange with financial service providers (EC 2024a, p. 98f)

Labour market characteristics

As mentioned above, the unemployment rate has decreased by 14.9 pp since 2020, reaching 10.8% in 2023, which is nearly twice the unemployment rate of the EU of 6.1% in 2023 (Eurostat, 2024⁷) 'Given the stagnant employment and activity rates in the population, this reduction is likely a result of increased exits from the labour market due to higher levels of emigration – a phenomenon expected to continue given the introduction of the visa-free regime with the EU in January 2024. In fact, a recent study revealed that more than one-quarter of Kosovar adults were contemplating emigrating during the first half of 2024, spurred by this recent visa liberalisation (GAP Institute, 2024[9])' (OECD, 2024, p. 121). In addition, high remittance rates discourage labour force participation (OECD, 2024). Long-term unemployment is pervasive, at a rate of 65.2% in 2022 (Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, 2024⁸). Such a high rate of long-term unemployment suggests 'that the skills possessed by these individuals are not in demand by the labour market' (OSCE, 2024), but also underlines the demographic situation of Kosovo in which job creation cannot keep up with the large number of new labour market entrants.

Recovering from the Covid pandemic, the labour market in Kosovo could maintain some positive momentum. Labour demand, wages, formalisation of employment and the absolute number of employed persons increased, while unemployment decreased sharply. Inactivity however remained the highest in the region.

⁷ https://doi.org/10.2908/UNE_RT_A, last accessed 24 October 2024

⁸ <https://data.wiiw.ac.at/seejobsgateway-q.html>, last accessed 24 October 2024

Labour Force Survey data for 2023, published by Kosovo Agency for Statistics, show that:

- Inactivity (age group 15-64) slightly dropped to 59.3%, with the female rate as high as 75.8% and the lower male rate at 42.2%. In other words, still only 40.7% of working-age Kosovars participated in the labour force, and the gender gap remains the highest in Europe.
- The employment rate (age group 15-64) climbed to 36.3%, up 2.5 pp since 2022. Close to 23,000 jobs were added to the economy since 2022 (LFS data). The employment rate however still falls behind the regional average of 48.1% (World Bank, 2024b).
- While employment rates (age group 15-64) are on the increase both for men and women, a stark gender employment gap persists, with the male employment rate at 53.4% and the female rate at 19.8%. Among the reasons for this is the lower involvement of women in wage employment entrepreneurship, this is also linked to lower access to finance and property, to family responsibilities, and the lack of affordable early childhood education and care facilities.
- The employment rate per educational attainment shows that the likelihood of employment sharply rises with educational attainment. The rate for low educational attainment is 9.2% (+22% since 2015), for medium educational attainment 38.6% (+28% since 2015), and for high educational attainment 60.8% (+19% since 2015).
- Gendered employment patterns remain unchanged. Women are more frequently employed in education, and health and public administration, while men are more frequently employed in the trade, construction and manufacturing sectors.
- 62.7% of employed persons have permanent contracts for their main jobs, while 32.1% have temporary contracts (ETF e-survey on working and learning, 2024), indicating a strong increase in the share of permanent contracts.
- The unemployment rate (age group 15-64) fell to 10.9%. Unemployment was higher among women with a rate of 18.3%, compared to the rate for men of 7.7%.
- Unemployment rate according to educational attainment: 22.6% for low educational attainment, 10.0% for medium educational attainment, and 7.5% for high educational attainment.
- Youth unemployment continued to decrease, with an unemployment rate (age group 15-24) of 17.3%, and (age group 15-29) 17.2%. For both age brackets, the male unemployment rate is close to 14%, whereas the female unemployment rate is close to 23% (LFS data). In comparison, the overall youth unemployment rate in the region is 25.5% and in the EU 13.8% (World Bank, 2024b).

See the attached Statistical Annex for the EU monitoring indicators where labour market indicators for different age groups are disaggregated.

Statistics on the labour market and employment

Since 2012, KAS has been carrying out labour force surveys following EUROSTAT standards and methodologies. For 2024, however, the publication of LFS data is delayed due to census implementation, which takes up most of the available resources at the KAS.

The Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo (EARK) maintains a sophisticated IT-based labour market information system (LMIS)⁹, containing rich data on jobseekers, unemployed people, employers, vacancies, ALMPs and job mediation outcomes. With the support of the EU and Austria in the co-financed project ALLED2, the LMIS was linked to data points from 12 different national data bases (including, inter alia, the employment service, the tax administration, the business registry, ministry of labour and transfers, ministry of education, etc.). The website, referred to as the Labour Market Barometer, is presented in the form of a dashboard, with the possibility to drill down to more granular data.

⁹ See <https://sitp.rks-gov.net/>.

Kosovo participated in the European Skills and Jobs survey 2023, implemented by the ETF in line with CEDEFOP's methodology for the EU-27. The publication of results (cross-country report) is planned before end of 2024.

3.2 Employment policy and institutional settings

Strategy and legal framework in the employment policy field

The Kosovo Employment Strategy 2024-2028 (KES) (MFLT, not dated a) has been approved and is in force. It pursues three main objectives:

1. Develop skills and competences of the workforce and reduce skills mismatches.
2. Increasing participation in the labour market of other groups at the risk of exclusion (women, young people, people with disabilities, and ethnic communities).
3. Improve working conditions and decent work opportunities.

The Employment Strategy Action Plan 2024-2026 (MFLT, not dated b) is budgeted with EUR 90.4 million, of which close to 13% is committed to objective 1, 87% to objective 2, and less than 1% for objective 3.

The Kosovo Labour Law (LAW No.03/L-212) originates from 2010 and is currently under review. The process of drafting the new labour law has started but the initial timeline for submitting a law to the assembly in 2023 could not be met.

The Employment Law is also under review. It is planned to merge the law on the employment agency and the law on employment services under one law¹⁰.

Initiatives to boost employment

The number of registered job seekers dropped from 70,790 in 2019 to 41,773 in 2023, i.e. well below pre-pandemic levels (ETF, ALMP data collection).

Services provided by the EARK include the registration of job vacancies, registration of unemployed persons, counselling and referral of jobseekers to ALMPs, and support to employers e.g. through job fairs and recruitment services (OSCE, 2024). In 2023, 56,790 persons participated in job counselling, and 29,983 persons participated in career counselling.

Active labour market policy (ALMP) measures in 2023 included: direct job creation (3,535 persons); vocational training (2,877 persons); wage subsidies (1,641 persons); professional practice (698 persons); and public works (27 persons). In total, 8,778 persons were referred to various ALMP measures.

The EARK achieved a transition rate of 14.2%, corresponding to 5,903 individuals. Expenditure on ALMPs amounted to EUR 5.3 million in 2023, corresponding to 0.05% of GDP. In comparison, the EU average of expenditure on ALMPs, as a percentage of GDP, is 0.39% (OECD, 2024).

The Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan was approved by the Government in 2022. Based on detailed analyses of the NEET population, the Youth Guarantee (YG) is being piloted in two locations (Mitrovica and Ferizaj). The targeted number of beneficiaries during the pilot phase is 3,000, until end of 2025. However, the feasibility of this target depends on the reversal of IPA fund suspension under the EU measures. Preparations for the implementation are advancing and several structural changes in the EARK have been initiated in order to ascertain a smooth implementation of the YG in the pilot regions and beyond. The YG outreach strategy will be managed under the MCYS; contacts with the business community and youth organisations for the implementation of YG services will be under the responsibility of MYCS¹¹.

¹⁰ Personal communication by the EARK management, January 2024.

¹¹ Personal communication by the EARK management, January 2024.

Initiatives to increase the capacity of the public employment services

The EARK is an independent body within the MFLT. Its mandate includes the provision of employment services to jobseekers and employers; the administration and implementation of ALMPs; the provision of labour migration counselling; the payment of maternity leave compensation; and determining the proof of unemployment status as a condition for access to social assistance.

Starting in 2024, its organisational structure will be transformed. At head office level there will be four departments, and new units will be added for procurement, audit, Youth Guarantee, ALMMs, and monitoring. Regionally, there will be seven offices with seven advisors each, links to social work centres, and a dedicated capacity for analysis and monitoring. The number of full-time equivalent positions will be increased from 264 currently to 351. Recruitment for additional staff will commence once the new EARK regulation has been approved¹².

During the lockdown period, a new web application was launched to register unemployed jobseekers and vacancies. 2020 also saw the launch of the digital 'Kosovo Generation Unlimited' platform (matching youth to WBL opportunities), followed by the 2023 launch of the Superpuna platform (matching youth to employment opportunities).

Training of the EARK counsellors is foreseen in the context of the piloting of the YG.

For further information, please contact Matthias Themel, European Training Foundation by email at matthias.themel@etf.europa.eu.

¹² Personal communication by the EARK management, January 2024.

KOSOVO: STATISTICAL ANNEX

The Annex includes annual data from 2015, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023, or the last available year.

	Indicator	2015	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
1	Total population (in thousands) ⁽¹⁾	1788.2	1788.9	1790.1	1786.0	1768.1	1756.4	
2	Relative size of youth population (age group 15-24 and denominator age 15-64, %) ^{(1) C}	28.0	26.9	26.6	26.4	26.2	26.1	
3	GDP growth rate (%)	5.9	4.8	-5.3	10.7	4.3	3.3	
4	Gross value added by sector (%)	Agriculture	7.7	7.2	7.4	6.9	7.4	7.8
		Industry	26.9	27.1	27.6	27.4	27.2	26.3
		Services	46.6	46.4	47.6	45.9	45.7	46.0
5	Public expenditure on education (as % of GDP)	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	
6	Public expenditure on education (as % of total public expenditure)	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	
7	Adult literacy (%)	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	
8	Educational attainment of total population (aged 15+) (%)	Low ⁽²⁾	45.1	43.4	42.8	39.8	38.2	37.0
		Medium ⁽³⁾	42.8	43.5	43.4	44.1	45.4	46.7
		High ⁽⁴⁾	12.1	13.1	13.8	16.1	16.4	16.3
9	Early leavers from education and training (aged 18-24) (%)	Total	14.5	8.2	7.8	7.0	7.8	7.7
		Male	11.8	8.0	7.3	7.0	8.2	7.6
		Female	17.5	8.4	8.4	7.0	7.4	7.8
10	Total NET enrolment rate (%)	Lower secondary	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.
		Upper secondary	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.

	Indicator		2015	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
11	Share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%)		50.8	51.2	52.9	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.
12	Low achievement in reading, mathematics and science – PISA (%)	Reading	76.9	76.9 ⁽⁵⁾	N.A.	N.A.	83.1	N.A.
		Mathematics	77.7	76.6 ⁽⁵⁾	N.A.	N.A.	85.0	N.A.
		Science	67.7	76.5 ⁽⁵⁾	N.A.	N.A.	79.3	N.A.
13	Activity rate (aged 15+) (%)	Total	33.5	35.3	33.4	34.4	29.4	35.1
		Male	50.8	52.6	49.0	49.8	43.1	50.0
		Female	16.0	18.2	18.0	19.1	15.9	20.8
14	Inactivity rate (aged 15+) (%)	Total	66.5	64.7	66.6	65.6	66.4	64.9
		Male	49.2	47.4	51.0	50.2	51.6	50.0
		Female	84.0	81.8	82.0	80.9	81.0	79.2
15	Employment rate (aged 15+) (%)	Total	22.5	26.3	24.8	27.3	29.4	31.3
		Male	34.7	40.8	37.6	40.4	43.1	46.2
		Female	10.2	12.0	12.2	14.4	15.9	17.0
16	Employment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%)	Low ⁽²⁾	7.5	9.1	8.3	8.4	8.8	9.2
		Medium ⁽³⁾	30.1	34.1	31.5	33.4	36.1	38.6
		High ⁽⁴⁾	51.3	57.5	54.7	57.4	58.8	60.8
17	Employment by sector (%)	Agriculture	2.3	5.2	4.8	2.8	2.2 ⁽⁶⁾	2.4
		Industry	28.2	27.6	27.3	25.3	24.4 ⁽⁷⁾	24.7
		Services	69.5	67.1	67.9	71.9	73.4 ⁽⁸⁾	72.9
18	Incidence of self-employment (%)		29.1	27.1	26.9	22.2	21.2	22.2

	Indicator		2015	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
19	Incidence of vulnerable employment (%)		22.8	18.9	17.1	12.8	13.5	15.5
20	Unemployment rate (aged 15+) (%) ⁽¹⁰⁾	Total	32.8	25.5	25.7	20.6	12.5	10.8
		Male	31.7	22.4	23.3	18.9	10.9	7.6
		Female	36.5	34.4	32.2	25.0	16.4	18.2
21	Unemployment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%) ⁽⁹⁾	Low ⁽²⁾	47.0	32.2	34.2	30.3	21.4	22.6
		Medium ⁽³⁾	33.6	25.6	26.6	21.1	11.6	10.0
		High ⁽⁴⁾	18.8	21.3	19.2	15.5	10.6	7.5
22	Unemployment rate (aged 15-24) (%) ⁽¹⁰⁾	Total	57.7	49.4	49.1	38.0	21.4	17.3
		Male	54.2	44.1	45.2	33.7	18.6	14.4
		Female	67.2	60.3	57.2	46.5	27.0	22.8
23	Proportion of people aged 15-24 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%)	Total	31.4	32.7	33.6	32.1	33.0	33.4
		Male	28.3	31.4	34.0	31.8	32.2	32.9
		Female	34.9	34.2	33.2	32.4	33.8	33.9
	Proportion of people aged 15-29 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%)	Total	39.1	39.8	40.4	36.6	36.6	37.6
		Male	33.7	35.5	37.9	34.5	33.3	33.5
		Female	45.3	44.7	43.0	39.0	40.1	41.9
24	Participation in training/lifelong learning (% aged 25-64)	Total	4.9	2.7	5.6	18.2	17.8	4.5
		Male	5.9	2.9	5.8	18.5	18.3	4.3
		Female	3.8	2.6	5.5	17.9	17.2	4.8

	Indicator	2015	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
25	Human Development Index	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.

Last update: 07/10/2024

Sources:

Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4: The World Bank, World Development Indicators database

Indicator: 11: MEST/KAS, EMIS system

Indicators 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24: KAS, Labour Force Survey

Indicator 12: OECD PISA 2018 Results (Volume I) Annex B1; OECD PISA 2022 Results (Volume I)

Notes:

(1) Estimation.

(2) Low – ISCED 0-2

(3) Medium – ISCED 3-4

(4) High – ISCED 5-8

(5) PISA: 2019 refers to 2018

(6) Agriculture (A)

(7) Industry (B-F)

(8) Services (G-U)

(9) 2021 refers to 3rd quarter of 2021

(10) 2019, 2020: break in time series

Legend:

C = ETF calculations

N.A. = Not Applicable

M.D. = Missing Data

ANNEX: DEFINITIONS OF INDICATORS

	Description	Definition
1	Total population (in thousands)	The total population is estimated as the number of people having their usual residence in a country on 1 January of the respective year. When information on the usually resident population is not available, countries may report legal or registered residents.
2	Relative size of youth population (age group 15–24) (%)	This is the ratio of the youth population (aged 15–24) to the working-age population, usually aged 15–64 (or 15–74 or 15+).
3	GDP growth rate (%)	Annual percentage growth rate of GDP at market prices based on constant local currency. Aggregates are based on constant 2010 U.S. dollars. GDP is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or for depletion and degradation of natural resources.
4	Gross value added by sector (%)	The share of value added from Agriculture, Industry and Services. Agriculture corresponds to ISIC divisions 1–5 and includes forestry, hunting, and fishing, as well as cultivation of crops and livestock production. Value added is the net output of a sector after adding up all outputs and subtracting intermediate inputs. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or depletion and degradation of natural resources. The origin of value added is determined by the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), revision 3 or 4. Industry corresponds to the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) tabulation categories C-F (revision 3) or tabulation categories B-F (revision 4), and includes mining and quarrying (including oil production), manufacturing, construction, and public utilities (electricity, gas, and water). Services correspond to ISIC divisions 50-99 and they include value added in wholesale and retail trade (including hotels and restaurants), transport, and government, financial, professional, and personal services such as education, health care, and real estate services. Also included are imputed bank service charges, import duties, and any statistical discrepancies noted by national compilers as well as discrepancies arising from rescaling.
5	Public expenditure on education (as % of GDP)	Public expenditure on education expressed as a percentage of GDP. Generally, the public sector funds education either by directly bearing the current and capital expenses of educational institutions, or by supporting students and their families with scholarships and public loans as well as by transferring public subsidies for educational activities to private firms or non-profit organisations (transfer to private households and enterprises). Both types of transactions together are reported as total public expenditure on education.
6	Public expenditure on education (as % of total public expenditure)	Public expenditure on education expressed as a percentage of total public expenditure. Generally, the public sector funds education either by directly bearing the current and capital expenses of educational institutions, or by supporting students and their families with scholarships and public loans as well as by transferring public subsidies for educational activities to private firms or non-profit organisations (transfer to private households and enterprises). Both types of transactions together are reported as total public expenditure on education.
7	Adult literacy (%)	Adult literacy is the percentage of the population aged 15 years and over who can both read and write a short simple statement on his/her everyday life, and understand it. Generally, 'literacy' also encompasses 'numeracy' – the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations.

	Description	Definition
8	Educational attainment of total population (aged 15+) (%)	Educational attainment refers to the highest educational level achieved by individuals expressed as a percentage of all persons in that age group. This is usually measured in terms of the highest educational programme successfully completed, which is typically certified by a recognised qualification. Recognised intermediate qualifications are classified at a lower level than the programme itself.
9	Early leavers from education and training (aged 18-24) (%)	Early leavers from education and training are defined as the percentage of the population aged 18–24 with at most lower secondary education who were not in further education or training during the four weeks preceding the survey. Lower secondary education refers to ISCED 1997 levels 0–2 and 3C short (i.e. programmes lasting under two years) for data up to 2013 and to ISCED 2011 levels 0–2 for data from 2014 onwards.
10	Total NET enrolment rate	Total number of students of the official age group for a given level of education who are enrolled in any level of education, expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population.
11	Share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%)	Total number of students enrolled in vocational programmes at a given level of education (in this case, upper secondary), expressed as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled in all programmes (vocational and general) at that level.
12	Low achievement in reading, maths and science – PISA (%)	Low achievers are the 15-year-olds who are failing to reach level 2 on the PISA scale for reading, mathematics and science.
13	Activity rate (aged 15+) (%)	The activity rate is calculated by dividing the active population by the population of the same age group. The active population (also called 'labour force') is defined as the sum of employed and unemployed people. The inactive population consists of all people who are classified as neither employed nor unemployed.
14	Inactivity rate (aged 15+) (%)	The inactivity/out of the labour force rate is calculated by dividing the inactive population by the population of the same age group. The inactive population consists of all people who are classified as neither employed nor unemployed.
15	Employment rate (aged 15+) (%)	The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of employed people by the population of the same age group. Employed people are all people who worked at least one hour for pay or profit during the reference period or were temporarily absent from such work. If a different age group is used, this should be indicated.
16	Employment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%)	The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of employed persons by the population of the same age group. Employed persons are all persons who worked at least one hour for pay or profit during the reference period or were temporarily absent from such work. If a different age group is used, this should be indicated. Educational levels refer to the highest educational level successfully completed. Three levels are considered: Low (ISCED level 0–2), Medium (ISCED level 3–4) and High (ISCED 1997 level 5–6, and ISCED 2011 level 5–8).
17	Employment by sector (%)	This indicator provides information on the relative importance of different economic activities with regard to employment. Data are presented by broad branches of economic activity (i.e. Agriculture/Industry/Services) based on the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC). In Europe, the NACE classification is consistent with ISIC.
18	Incidence of self-employment (%)	The incidence of self-employment is expressed by the self-employed (i.e. employers + own-account workers + contributing family workers) as a proportion of the total employed.

	Description	Definition
19	Incidence of vulnerable employment (%)	The incidence of vulnerable employment is expressed by the own-account workers and contributing family workers as a proportion of the total employed.
20	Unemployment rate (aged 15+) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15–64 or 15+ who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the two weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work, i.e. had taken specific steps in the four-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, three months).
21	Unemployment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15–64 or 15+ who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the two weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work (had taken specific steps in the four-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, three months)). Educational levels refer to the highest educational level successfully completed. Three levels are considered: low (ISCED level 0–2), medium (ISCED level 3–4) and high (ISCED 1997 level 5–6, and ISCED 2011 level 5–8).
22	Unemployment rate (aged 15-24) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15–24 who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the two weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work, i.e. had taken specific steps in the four-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, three months).
23	Proportion of people aged 15–24/15-29 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%)	The indicator provides information on young people aged 15–24 who meet the following two conditions: first, they are not employed (i.e. unemployed or inactive according to the ILO definition); and second, they have not received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey. Data are expressed as a percentage of the total population of the same age group and gender, excluding the respondents who have not answered the question on participation in education and training.
24	Participation in training/lifelong learning (% aged 25-64)	Participants in lifelong learning refers to persons aged 25–64 who stated that they received education or training in the 12 months preceding the survey (numerator). The denominator is the total population of the same age group, excluding those who did not answer the question on participation in education and training. The information collected relates to all education or training, whether or not it is relevant to the respondent's current or possible future job. If a different reference period is used, this should be indicated.
25	Human Development Index	The index is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living.

ANNEX – KEY DONOR PROJECTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Aligning Education and Training with Labour Market Needs – ALLED Phase II (ALLED2): ALLED2 is co-funded by the EU and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA). The project duration is from March 2019 till April 2025, the project budget is EUR 5 million, of which 24% funded by ADA. The ALLED2 project focuses on improving the quality and relevance of education and training programs to meet labour market needs while supporting legislative adaptations to enhance employability. It promotes alignment between education and the private sector through systemic cooperation models. By fostering collaboration between education and labour market stakeholders, the project emphasizes innovation as a key factor in addressing workforce demands. Using the "triple helix principle" of public sector, academia, and business cooperation, ALLED2 aims to establish a labour market-responsive education system in Kosovo, driving economic growth and employability, with a focus on Vocational Education and Training (VET).

LuxDev: The Support to VET Reform project (2018-2024, EUR 10,3 million) supports the reform of Kosovo's vocational education and training (VET) system by enhancing governance structures, public-private partnerships, and digitalisation, while aligning training centres with labour market demands. It focuses on modernising curricula, particularly in health, economy, and ICT, and establishing a Centre of Competence for information and communication technologies in Pristina, aligned with Kosovo's strategic education and development priorities. The Skills for Sustainable Jobs project aims to promote sustainable economic growth by enhancing innovation, inclusiveness, and social development, with a focus on improving job opportunities for young people and women through market-oriented vocational education and training (VET). Key initiatives include strengthening private sector involvement in VET, operationalising centres of competence in ICT and renewable energy/energy efficiency, fostering ICT research through collaboration with the University of Luxembourg, and supporting lifelong learning, particularly for women, in key sectors.

Matching Skills to Jobs (MSJ) project of SwissContact: Duration of MSJ is from 2024 to 2029, with a budget of SFR 14 million. The MSJ project seeks to enhance the responsiveness of the VET system to labour market demands. It supports the Government of Kosovo in implementing planned VET reforms by strengthening the capacity of key VET institutions, contributing to the long-term alignment of VET delivery with labour market requirements (governance pillar). Additionally, the project works with industry to develop a clear vision of the skills needed at various levels and facilitates the implementation of selected vocational training programs in collaboration with multiple providers (private sector engagement pillar).

GIZ: since July 2024, GIZ has entered into its new programming phase. With a timeframe of 3 years and a budget of EUR 5.5 million, GIZ will continue working on (a) supporting MESTI on VET, with specific focus on dual VET and (b) supporting the MFLT for improving the transition from school to work.

Private Sector-Led Workforce Development Activity in Kosovo (PSWD) of IREX / USAID: PSWD is a five-year initiative (2022-2026, USD 10 million) aimed at supporting Kosovo's private sector in developing and strengthening the workforce by fostering market-oriented skills in the following economic sectors: ICT, wood processing, energy and agri-business. PSWD promotes cooperation between the private sector, technical and vocational education and training providers, government, youth, and civil society organizations to equip young people with the skills needed to meet the demands of Kosovo's growing industries and transition into employment within these sectors. The initiative focuses on addressing systemic challenges and seizing opportunities across three interconnected areas: skills demand, skills supply, and the enabling environment.

Regional Challenge Fund of KfW: In order to address skills mismatch and underdeveloped quality of VET, KfW has established the "Regional Challenge Fund," financed by Germany (EUR 64 million) and Switzerland (EUR 10 million). Its goal is to improve vocational training for students, enhancing

their employability through close collaboration with private enterprises, following the principles of the German dual system. The fund operates in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, supporting partnerships between state-recognized vocational schools and private companies. These partnerships can apply for funding to improve infrastructure, equipment, training content, and teacher development. The fund is implemented by the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF). The first two calls for proposals generated significant interest, with approximately 350 consortia applying. Ultimately, 63 projects were selected, including over 60% from vocational schools, alongside technical colleges and vocational academies.

Generation Unlimited (GU) of UNICEF: GU was launched during the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly as a global partnership involving young people, governments, multilateral organisations, the private sector, and civil society. It seeks to drive investment in education, skills, training, and empowerment for the growing global population of adolescents and young people aged 10 to 24. The initiative aims to ensure that all young people are engaged in education, learning, training, or employment by 2030. Kosovo has been shortlisted alongside 15 other countries to host the GU Youth Challenge. This initiative focuses on developing solutions within three core areas: secondary education, skills for learning, employability and decent work, and empowerment, with particular emphasis on supporting girls.

World Bank: Support to Kosovo education system project completed in 2022 (focus on basic education). In May 2024 the World Bank signed an agreement for a new Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for Kosovo's Human Capital Project (USD 20 million, multi-donor trust fund). There is a digital component: upon request of the government, the EMIS will receive a general overhaul, the system will be renovated and modules on early childhood education added; there will be vouchers for vulnerable families (identified via the social assistance scheme) to place their children into early childhood education facilities.

Kosovo Compact of Millenium Challenge Corporation (MCC) / USAID: The Kosovo Compact builds on the previous Threshold Programme (USD 49 million), both focussing on the sustainable energy transition of Kosovo. Kosovo Compact came into force in April 2024 and has a total grant value of USD 202 million. Within the Kosovo Compact Energy Storage Project, a significant component will support the development of green skills for the Kosovo energy economy.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
ALLED2	Second phase of the Aligning Education to Employment project (ADA, with funding from EC)
ALMMs	Active labour market measures
ALMPs	Active labour market policies
AVETAE	Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education
EaFA	European Alliance for Apprenticeships
EARK	Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo
EC	European Commission
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
EFQEA	European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ES	Education Strategy 2022-2026
ESVET-PRO	European Union Support to Vocational Education and Training, Professional Qualification and Occupation project
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
EUROSTAT	Statistical Office of the European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
GER	Gross enrolment rate
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
ICILS	International Computer and Information Literacy Study
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICT	Information and communication technology
ILO	International labour organisation

ILOSTAT	Statistical Office of the International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISIC	International Student Identity Card
IT	Information Technology
KAA	Kosovo Accreditation Agency
KAS	Kosovo Agency for Statistics
KCC	Kosovo Chamber of Commerce
KES	Kosovo Employment Strategy 2024-2028
KESP	Kosovo Education Strategic Plan
KIESA	Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LLL	Lifelong learning
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
LuxDev	Bilateral cooperation agency of Luxembourg
MYCS	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports
MEDs	Municipal education directorates
MESTI	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
MFLT	Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
NQA	National Qualifications Authority
NQF	National Qualification Framework
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PES	Public Employment Service
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RAE	Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council

RED	Rapid Education Diagnosis
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
SIMP	Kosovo's Labor Management Information System
SMIA	Kosovo's Education Management System
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USD	United States Dollar
VET	Vocational education and training
VETI	Vocational education and training institution
VTCs	Vocational training centres
WBL	Work-based learning
XK	Country code for Kosovo
YG	Youth Guarantee
YGIP	Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan

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