

MONITORING THE VET RECOMMENDATION AND THE OSNABRÜCK DECLARATION

MONTENEGRO 2025

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MONTENEGRO COUNTRY BRIEF

Introduction

This document ('country brief') summarises the third cycle of ETF monitoring of the EU [Council Recommendation on vocational education and training \(VET\) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience \(2020\)](#) and the [Osnabrück Declaration on vocational education and training as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies \(2020\)](#) in five candidate countries (1).

ETF monitoring of the Recommendation and the Declaration follows an integrated framework structured along 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 committed to work on some or all of these priorities in their national implementation plans (available [here](#)).

This country brief is split into two parts. The first summarises the findings of policy development monitoring 2024-2025. The second provides an overview of progress in NIP implementation since 2021 by EU priority area.

Aiming to align its reporting and monitoring work with that of EU Member States, Montenegro joined this process in 2022. This report summarises the main policy developments in Montenegro in 2024-2025 in relation to the thematic priorities identified in the country's National Implementation Plan.

In 2024, the [European Commission approved the national 2024-2027 Reform Agenda of Montenegro](#) (2), part of the Growth Plan for Western Balkans (3). This document sets out reforms to education, training, employment, social objectives, and inclusion. These include:

- Infrastructure: EUR 75 million for five new schools, ten renovated VET schools, and new equipment;
- Practical and Digital Education: enhancing work-based learning (WBL) and digital tools for teachers and students;
- Career Guidance: reform of career guidance and counselling and more resources are considered essential to help prepare graduates to make better informed career choices;
- Adult Learning: increasing adult take up of education from 3.5 % to 7 %.
- Human Capital Development: aligned with green and digital transitions, focusing on lifelong learning and upskilling.

In 2025, Montenegro approved the new Education Reform Strategy 2025-2035 (4). It also outlines the objectives, priorities and reforms planned for VET for the next decade (2025-2035). It is based on the relevant parts of the following documents the government approved in 2024.

(1) Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye.

(2) <https://reform-monitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Reform-agenda-Montenegro.pdf>

(3) https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/2023-communication-new-growth-plan-western-balkans_en

(4) <https://wapi.gov.me/download/28743ee8-41ee-45a2-b178-3c4c6267ee09?version=1.0>

- The 2024 Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the Development of VET 2020-2024 ⁽⁵⁾ ('old strategy'). Action-oriented goals to foster inclusive, accessible, and high-quality vocational education, in accordance with the NIP and the Osnabrück Declaration;
- The Final Report on the implementation of the Strategy for the Development of VET 2020-2024 (2020-2024) ⁽⁶⁾. Summarises progress, identifies gaps, and feeds into future reforms;
- Final evaluation of the old strategy. This was conducted by an independent evaluator in December 2024 and it informed the new Education Reform Strategy (2025-2035) as well.

Montenegro's new Education Reform Strategy places VET at the centre of its efforts to modernise the education system and align it with labour market needs.

- Expanding Dual Education: combining classroom learning with hands-on work experience to ease the school-to-work transition;
- Modernising the Curriculum: focusing on 21st-century competencies – digital literacy, critical thinking, entrepreneurship – especially in STEM fields;
- Career Guidance: establishing Career Centres to provide labour market information and help students plan pathways;
- Digital Transformation: digitising educational resources, training teachers, and introducing digital platforms;
- Infrastructure Investment: renovating schools, equipping labs and workshops to support practical, hands-on learning;
- Quality Assurance: modular courses, qualifications linked to labour market needs, and systems for recognising non-formal learning;
- Inclusive Education: more teaching assistants, Roma mediators, free transport, and school psychologists to ensure equal opportunities for all students;
- International Support: collaborations with the EU, UNICEF, UNESCO and ILO to strengthen reforms and provide funding.

This document was prepared by Rajko Kosovic in cooperation with the country's key VET stakeholders.

Further relevant publications are available here [Transforming vocational education and training: ETF monitoring initiatives and deliverables | ETF](#).

⁽⁵⁾ <https://wapi.gov.me/download/a6670cac-8d1c-44c7-a72b-28174d8936fa?version=1.0>

⁽⁶⁾ <https://wapi.gov.me/download/6020990f-f2d8-4f78-9395-1cd5644cc7f6?version=1.0>

Main policy developments in 2024-2025

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

Montenegro is ramping up its VET to meet changing labour market needs, respond to green and digital transitions, and foster inclusive growth. Recent initiatives underscore the country's commitment to modernising educational standards, strengthening WBL, and integrating environmental and gender equality considerations.

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

In 2024, Montenegro developed six new educational programmes plus three tailored to students with special educational needs (SEN). These reforms prioritise inclusivity and adaptability, equipping students with relevant competencies for the contemporary workforce.

In 2025, the Qualifications Council introduced 31 occupational and 28 qualification standards. The National Education Council adopted six educational programmes.

A total of 34 occupational standards and 34 vocational qualification standards relevant to inclusive vocational education were introduced, along with three educational programs in the fields of healthcare and agriculture. Additionally, three new programmes were approved: they have longer-duration and can be run in resource centres ⁽⁷⁾ and mainstream VET schools, namely assistant cook, assistant salesperson, and assistant tailor.

These programmes, whether newly developed or revised, are already being taught in schools.

Integrating green and digital skills and competences into VET curricula and programmes

The newly developed programmes align strongly with contemporary policy priorities, particularly in the areas of sustainability, equality, and skills for the future. One of the key features is the deliberate integration of green transition and gender equality principles into each curriculum. This approach ensures that environmental sustainability and social equity are not treated as add-ons, but as core components of vocational education, fully aligned with EU standards and national strategic goals.

In addition, teaching programmes place strong emphasis on developing both digital and environmental competencies. By prioritising digital literacy and green skills, the curricula aim to equip graduates with the knowledge and capabilities required to meet the changing demands of the labour market, especially given the ongoing ecological and technological transitions. This future-oriented design ensures that students are not only prepared for employment but are also empowered to contribute meaningfully to a more sustainable and inclusive economy.

With a focus on digital skills, Montenegro conducted an annual survey using the SELFIE for schools' tool to assess digital education practices. The SELFIE survey was conducted in 157 primary and secondary schools with a total of 19,809 respondents. The findings from the SELFIE survey have informed school-level action plans and broader strategies, particularly the Strategy for the Digitalisation of the Education System. This benchmark helps identify gaps – e.g. which schools/regions lack equipment or need professional development – so that national or regional strategies can be better targeted.

Training on the use of the SELFIE tool is underway. Training on the SELFIE for TEACHERS application for 450 staff was planned to be carried out in 2025. SELFIE for TEACHERS is a free online tool intended for teachers who wish to assess and improve their use of digital

⁽⁷⁾ In Montenegro, resource centres are specialised educational institutions that provide support to children and students with special educational needs.

technologies in teaching. Language settings for the SELFIE for TEACHERS tool help teachers in their self-assessments.

Two key projects emerged in 2024 and 2025 to integrate the green transition and sustainability into VET curricula and programmes:

1) A EUR 500 000 grant was awarded in 2024 to the Mirko Vešović Secondary School of Economics in collaboration with ten partnering enterprises for the ‘Green Skills for Green Jobs’ project’. This initiative, funded by the Regional Challenge Fund ⁽⁸⁾, integrates green competencies into school-level business administration courses. The key objectives are:

- fostering cooperative training programs, which embed sustainability principles in economic and administrative roles.
- strengthening public-private partnerships to ensure that graduates possess green and digital competencies relevant to emerging labour market needs.

2) The Invest – Innovation in Green and Digital VET Skills for Sustainable Lifestyles – Project ⁽⁹⁾, coordinated by the Chamber of Economy of Montenegro, is actively contributing to transforming VET across the Western Balkans. Invest aims to strengthen the role VET institutions play in professional skills, promoting them as continuing professional training centres for secondary VET schools in Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was implemented in 2024 and 2025. One output was the Invest framework, which identifies the core skills, knowledge and values vocational school students require, with an emphasis on digital and environmental competencies.

On 9 October 2025, the Regional Challenge Fund (RCF) held its annual conference entitled ‘Smart Balkans: Shaping Skills for a Sustainable, Competitive Future – Navigating VET in a Digital and AI World’ in Budva, with others joining online.

Key competences

The Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation began developing the National Curriculum Framework at its first constitutive meeting of the working group. The group comprises school principals and representatives from key educational institutions, the academic community, and pedagogical-psychological services and will set out the principles and key objectives of work in education and improving the quality and modernity of Montenegro’s education sector.

Strengthening work-based learning

Dual education ⁽¹⁰⁾ continues to gain momentum in Montenegro, reflecting a real commitment to aligning vocational education with the needs of the labour market. In the 2024/2025 academic year, a total of 515 students were enrolled on three-year VET programmes delivered in cooperation with around 150 employers who provide practical training placements ⁽¹¹⁾. This means that dual education covers close to 13 % of students on three-year VET programmes and approximately 3 % of all VET students.

Enrolment figures by grade level further highlight sustained interest and continuity within the system: 239 students entered the first year, 227 continued into the second, and 49 reached the third year of study. Students who are not enrolled in dual education in the third-grade return to the school-based form of practical training.

⁽⁸⁾ <https://rcf-wb6.org/>

⁽⁹⁾ <https://invest-project.eu/>

⁽¹⁰⁾ Dual education was introduced in 2017 as part of the upper secondary three-year VET programmes. See country briefs for 2021-2022 and 2023 for more information.

⁽¹¹⁾ <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/eurypedia/montenegro/organisation-vocational-upper-secondary-education>

Recognising the critical importance of work-based learning in preparing students for the changing labour market, Montenegro's Vocational Education Act from 2025 ⁽¹²⁾ (Amendments to the Vocational Education Act) introduces a range of forward-looking measures aimed at strengthening dual and practical education. Among the most significant innovations is the formal recognition of Practical Training Coordinators (PTCs), who will be supported institutionally in overseeing and coordinating workplace-based learning. To reinforce this system, the Centre for Vocational Education appointed an advisor for practical and dual education in 2024. This advisor will work in close cooperation with PTCs to ensure quality and uniformity across institutions and employer partnerships.

To further standardise and professionalise the role of PTCs, a comprehensive guidebook has been published ⁽¹³⁾, offering clear operational procedures and best practice. This tool is designed to foster consistent quality and structure in practical training across various sectors and educational settings.

In addition to structural improvements, the Vocational Education Act establishes a Dual Education Support Fund. Financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation and open to contributions from donors, sponsors etc., the Fund serves as a vital mechanism for expanding and sustaining dual education. Its primary goals are to incentivize students to take part and provide financial and logistical support to employers. Fund resources may be used to support students through payment for transport and meal costs during training, for competitions and events to promote practical education, and to assist employers by covering equipment, safety and instructor costs, as well as reimbursements and incentives to offer permanent employment to trainees. The Rulebook detailing the conditions, amounts, manner, and procedure for allocation from the Dual Education Support Fund has recently been approved and now focus shifts to putting it into practice

The ETF conducted the study Work-Based Learning in Montenegro – An Assessment per EU Quality Standards ⁽¹⁴⁾ in 2025. This assessment provided valuable insights into how Montenegro's work-based learning practices aligned with EU quality standards. In addition, an external evaluation of the quality of work-based learning is currently being carried out in Montenegro to inform future improvements. Preliminary results indicate the need for additional practical training for teachers in occupational safety and soft skills.

On 7-8 October 2025, the 10th edition of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) partner countries seminar took place in Podgorica. It was organised in cooperation with the ETF and Ministry of Education, and focussed on work-based learning and apprenticeships, specifically the financial and non-financial incentives for such models and how to match companies to students.

⁽¹²⁾ <https://wapi.gov.me/download/4c4d52af-ba9b-4678-8e2e-595ab614b67b?version=1.0>

⁽¹³⁾ Guidebook for the Organisation and Implementation of School-Based and Dual Practical Training at Companies, 2025, OeAD, <https://wapi.gov.me/download/e00a1a32-2425-4bab-92f9-a9419043c742?version=1.0>

⁽¹⁴⁾ https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2025-09/WBL-Montenegro-edited_clean.pdf

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

Montenegro's VET system is undergoing significant transformation to address labour market demands, improve inclusivity and align with European standards. Recent developments highlight how qualifications for both IVET and CVET students have been modernised, vulnerable populations integrated, and lifelong learning promoted.

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Although this was not among the country's NIP commitments, Montenegro's reforms in VET include developments in adult learning (AL) such as the introduction of micro-qualifications, an emphasis on inclusive reskilling, and evidence-based analysis of adult learning by the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation.

Chamber of Economy (CoE) Initiatives for Reskilling

In 2024 and 2025, The Chamber of Economy (CoE) of Montenegro, in close consultation with the Centre for Vocational Education, the Ministry of Education, and representatives from secondary vocational schools, has brought in targeted reskilling initiatives to address labour market needs. These initiatives significantly expanded training schemes across a diverse range of vocational qualifications, prioritising inclusivity, notably in integrating vulnerable groups such as the Roma and Egyptian populations.

Training programmes for various occupational profiles have run successfully in several secondary vocational schools through the requalification initiative launched by the Chamber of Economy of Montenegro in cooperation with secondary schools. At the Mirko Vešović Secondary School of Economics, students have been trained as Business and Technical Secretaries and Accounting Technicians, while the Marko Radević Secondary School of Construction and Land Survey offered programmes to become a ceramic tile installers and painter's assistant. The Ivan Uskoković Secondary Vocational School provided training for motor vehicle mechanics, heating and cooling system fitters, and welders. Course-leavers received certificates at ceremonies at their schools in Podgorica. In addition to these completed courses, training is currently underway in several fields, including painting, ceramic tiling, accounting, and tourist guide – providing more students wider possibilities of vocational training. Looking ahead, further vocational courses are planned to meet emerging demands in sectors such as transport, metalwork, fashion, and beauty. Courses will be introduced for locksmiths, conductors, train drivers, forklift operators, and driving instructors at the Ivan Uskoković Secondary School; for painters at the Marko Radević High School; and for make-up artists at the Medical Secondary School; tourist guides (in cooperation with Donja Gorica University and the Mediterranean University) and security and protection of persons and property (in cooperation with the police academy).

Introduction of Micro-Qualifications

Recent legislative reforms, including amendments to the National Qualifications Framework Act (2025), the National Vocational Qualifications Act (2025), the VET Act (2025), and the Adult Education Act (2025), have introduced the concept of micro-qualifications. Micro-qualifications consist of smaller, focused modules designed to deliver specific job-relevant skills. This modular approach has been recognised by the country to accelerate workforce adaptability by providing learners with flexible and targeted learning opportunities; and to improve labour market responsiveness by equipping learners with the precise skill sets evolving economic sectors demand. The following rulebooks have also been approved.

- Rulebook on the form and content of the certificate of acquired national vocational qualification and the certificate of acquired micro-qualification or key competence;

- Rulebook on the manner and procedure for assessing knowledge, skills, and competences in the process of acquiring a micro-qualification or key competence;
- Rulebook on the manner and procedure for assessing knowledge, skills, and competences in the process of acquiring a national vocational qualification;
- Rulebook on the detailed manner and procedure for the recognition of foreign certificates or attestations.

Micro-qualifications are still at an early stage and are mainly being developed through various international projects in which Montenegro is involved (such as CRED4TEACH ⁽¹⁵⁾). However, there are currently no micro-qualifications run within the education system.

Another project more focused on VET is A New Path for Capacity Building in VET ⁽¹⁶⁾, which ran from January 2023 to December 2025. It was a collaboration with the Craft College – institution for adult education (Croatia) – as Project Leader and partners from Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro (mainly VET schools specialised in mechanical engineering and national VET agencies). It was run to create shared educational content in mechanical engineering, specifically in 3D printing technology, with active involvement from employers in defining the competencies sought. The general objective of the project is to reinforce ties between EU and non-EU countries in South-East Europe (Western-Balkans) through its analysis. Its joint definition of VET micro credentials will make VET schools and colleges more relevant, accessible and responsive to changes on the labour market.

Recognition of Self-Education in Adult Learning

Amendments to the Adult Education Act (2025) have expanded the framework to formally recognise self-education in addition to formal, non-formal, and informal learning pathways. This holistic recognition of diverse learning methods opens the way for a more inclusive and accessible lifelong learning ecosystem in Montenegro.

Analytical Support for Adult Learning Policy Development

To support evidence-based policymaking, the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation published several key studies during the 2024-2025 period.

Analysis of the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning ⁽¹⁷⁾ reviews the recognition of competencies acquired outside formal education, aiming to make adult learners more employable.

Analysis of Adult Education in Montenegro ⁽¹⁸⁾ offers an overview of the current system, identifying key strengths, challenges, and opportunities for further development.

Promoting Inclusive Education

The Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation was a winner at the 2025 EU Awards for Roma Integration in the Western Balkans and Türkiye. The European Commission awarded it first prize in recognition of its outstanding achievements in promoting the inclusion of Roma through education. The Centre for Vocational Education implemented transition plans by running training sessions for teachers and professional associates from secondary vocational schools. These sessions focused on the putting in place Individualised Transition Plans and Individualised Developmental Education Programmes within secondary vocational education. A total of 119 teachers took part.

⁽¹⁵⁾ <https://cred4teach.eu/>

⁽¹⁶⁾ <https://efvet.org/microcredentials-a-new-path-for-capacity-building-in-vet/>

⁽¹⁷⁾ <https://wapi.gov.me/download/2239b92d-0b5b-4f6a-8b7c-5427cfd3e66?version=1.0>

⁽¹⁸⁾ <https://wapi.gov.me/download/313ad1c8-42a6-4330-9fe5-dabdc9fdbe57?version=1.0>

Additional digital educational materials have also been developed as complementary resources for teaching and learning in primary schools, with the intention to extend this initiative to VET as well.

An application titled 'Vladam situacijom' ('I'm in Control of the Situation')¹⁹ was developed, containing 18 stories aimed at developing social skills, along with content designed to support the acquisition of pre-reading and reading skills in secondary vocational education. The application is available on the School Portal ⁽²⁰⁾.

The amended Rulebook on norms and standards for financing institutions running publicly recognised educational courses introduces more flexible criteria, so that schools can bring in a greater number of experts to support students. These changes are already strengthening educational inclusivity: schools can now directly hire additional pedagogues and psychologists, ensuring timely support for student well-being. Social inclusion mediators are being recruited to assist the integration of marginalised groups, especially the Roma and Egyptian communities, while teaching assistants are being brought in to support students with special educational needs. The National Strategy for Gender Equality in Montenegro 2021-2025 emphasises the role of public education through awareness raising initiatives, and media to reduce stereotypes and prejudices about traditional gender roles – thus involving schools, teachers and textbooks as agents of change.

The Government introduced a master's in Gender Studies at the University of Montenegro in 2025. It is a two-year postgraduate academic course (120 ECTS), aimed at educating professionals to advance gender equality in the public, private and civil sectors.

⁽¹⁹⁾ <http://vladamsituacijom.edu.me/home>

⁽²⁰⁾ <https://www.skolskiportal.edu.me/Pages/Default.aspx>

EU priority 3: Innovative and excellent VET

2024-2025 developments in the modernization of VET infrastructure and strategic planning reflect a proactive approach to equipping schools with modern facilities, integrating green transition principles, and encouraging the digital and soft skills essential for contemporary labour markets.

Supporting Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs)

While the National Implementation Plan (NIP) did not initially prioritise Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs), the Education Reform Strategy 2025-2030 introduces clear directives for establishing such centres – one in each of the three regions. Projects for offsetting up regional centres of excellence for youth and adults are to be set out from the fourth quarter of 2025 to the second quarter of 2026. The specifications and procurement of equipment for regional centres of excellence for young people and adults will be delivered in 2026. One million euros has been secured from the State budget.

Modernising Infrastructure for Initial VET

Montenegro continues to invest in the modernisation of VET infrastructure, with a strong focus on aligning schools with its digital, sustainability, and energy efficiency goals. As part of this work, nine secondary VET schools – nearly 20 % of all such institutions in the country – have undergone major adaptation and reconstruction, supported by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). These upgrades aim to provide safe, modern, accessible environments for hands-on learning. Reconstruction work is currently underway on the sports halls of three vocational secondary schools in Podgorica.

In parallel, a nationwide Furniture Procurement Project, run in cooperation with the European Investment Bank (EIB), has improved the physical learning conditions in over 300 institutions, including VET schools.

A tender procedure is currently underway to procure specialised equipment for vocational secondary schools. The plan is for 60 % of vocational schools to have the necessary equipment by 2030, and 90 % by 2035.

Thanks to these investments, VET schools participating in The Education Energy Efficiency Project financed by the EBRD (it includes 3 secondary schools among the 24 educational buildings to be upgraded) have incorporated energy efficiency measures into their renovations – advancing Montenegro's green transition while raising students' awareness of sustainability and environmental responsibility.

Improving the digital infrastructure of VET provision

In 2024, nearly EUR 7 million was allocated for digital equipment for schools, including VET centres. As a result, there are now approximately 100 EdTech laboratories in Montenegrin schools (including VET centres), focusing on developing both digital and soft skills (e.g. communication, teamwork, critical thinking). These facilities provide hands-on experience with modern technologies, equipping students for emerging digital economies. Five VET providers have secured grants from the Regional Challenge Fund aimed at equipping schools with state-of-the-art tools and resources. These grants strengthen the capacity of schools to deliver high quality practical training aligned with regional and international standards.

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

One relevant development to support teachers and trainers has come from collective bargaining. Revisions to the Sectoral Collective Agreement for Education have resulted in a significant increase in teachers' salaries. Currently, the average teacher's salary in Montenegro stands at approximately EUR 1 000. This increase reflects a commitment to recognising the critical role teachers play in the country's social and economic development.

Other policy developments in this area mostly focus on support for teachers in integrating digital tools and skills into teaching and learning and career guidance. The Catalogue of professional development programmes for teachers for the 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 school years ⁽²¹⁾ was published in September 2025. This catalogue contains the official list of accredited professional development programmes that teachers can attend during the 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 school years to support the continuous enhancement of teaching quality and professional competencies.

Supporting teachers and trainers for and through digital tools

In 2024, the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation ran numerous professional development schemes aimed at enhancing the digital skills of all teachers, including those in VET. Montenegro is advancing digital competence in education through targeted training and infrastructure. Several hundred teachers, including those in vocational education, completed training in media and information literacy in 2024, equipping them to navigate and use digital content responsibly. To support modern teaching practices, all teachers now have access to Office 365, fostering digital collaboration across the education system. Additionally, with the new EdTech laboratories, 64 teachers have been trained in the use of PET recyclers and 3D printers through one-day practical sessions. A further 36 are expected to complete the training by the end of 2025, strengthening hands-on digital and environmental learning capacities. As part of the Digital, Inclusive, and Transformative: Quality Education for Montenegro ⁽²²⁾ project, jointly implemented by the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation in collaboration with UNICEF, UNESCO, and the ILO – with financial support from the Montenegro Accelerated Development Fund – a series of targeted digital training sessions have been launched in 2024 and 2025.

In 2024, 170 ICT coordinators completed one-day training on the Digital School concept, while 179 ICT coordinators, including those from VET schools, were trained in analytics within Microsoft Office 365 and Microsoft Teams.

Building on this momentum, the Ministry of Education carried out additional training in 2025, including two-day sessions on Microsoft Office 365 (150 teachers), Scratch programming (24 teachers), and online STEM courses (24 teachers), as well as a three-day course on 3D modelling for 36 teachers. These activities aim to strengthen digital competency across the education system and bring in innovative technologies to teaching and learning.

In 2024 and 2025, the International Labour Organization (ILO) developed two online training courses specifically tailored to vocational education teachers in Montenegro. Currently in the pilot phase, these courses aim to strengthen digital and teaching capacities within the VET system. The E-pedagogy course focuses on designing digital teaching content, equipping staff to use technology effectively in the classroom. The Employability Skills course supports the integration of key workplace competencies into teaching practices, enhancing students' readiness for the labour market. Both courses have been incorporated into the national framework for teacher professional development, contributing to digital inclusion and transformative, future-oriented teaching.

⁽²¹⁾ <https://wapi.gov.me/download/71ea4150-f28a-4b49-960c-92a6754abbf6?version=1.0>

⁽²²⁾ <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/digital-inclusive-and-transformative-quality-education-montenegro>

The Strategy for the Digitisation of the Education System 2022-2027, adopted by the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation in 2022, had planned the development of the Digital Competence Framework for Teachers back in 2023. In June 2025, the National Council for Education of Montenegro gave a positive opinion on the teacher digital competence framework ⁽²³⁾. It is currently passing through the adoption process. A key component of Montenegro's efforts to enhance digital teaching is this upcoming framework. It will utilise the SELFIE for TEACHERS tool to self-assess educators and identify their strengths and areas for improvement in digital teaching. Once approved, comprehensive training programmes will be rolled out to address skills gaps revealed through self-assessment, ensuring that all teachers are equipped to deliver high-quality, technology-enhanced education.

Montenegro, through the Chamber of Economy of Montenegro, also actively participates in the DC-VET WB Project, a regional initiative addressing challenges in VET systems in Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. This project is funded through the Erasmus+ programme and involves seven partners from EU and Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) countries. Implementation started in 2024 and the project ran until December 2025. The focus was on strengthening vocational education in key sectors such as information technology, electronics, and automation and its primary objective was to enhance the responsiveness of VET schools to labour market demands by equipping students with relevant digital and green skills, ensuring they are prepared for the changing needs of the economy.

Supporting teachers and trainers through the green transition and sustainability

The INVEST – Innovation in Green and Digital VET Skills for Sustainable Lifestyles Project ⁽²⁴⁾ focuses on strengthening green and digital skills in vocational education and training. In 2024, the Chamber of Economy of Montenegro conducted an online survey and interviewed representatives of five secondary vocational schools as part of the project, to assess the current situation and needs in terms of green and digital skills, aiming to enhance the capacity of VET institutions in Montenegro and across the Western Balkans. The RESET project (2023-2025), supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the [Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe](#) (ERI SEE), produced teacher and student manuals on renewable energy across six Western Balkan economies. Led by authors from Montenegro, the manuals ⁽²⁵⁾ combine theory, practical exercises, video resources, and quizzes. The project was designed to extend VET in renewable energy by aligning training with energy sector needs and encouraging more education in renewable energy services.

Lifelong guidance

Passed by parliament in July 2025, the Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy in Montenegro 2025-2030 establishes a national framework for career guidance that is inclusive, coordinated and sustainable. It focuses on three pillars: strengthening career guidance within education, linking career services with the labour market, and ensuring quality and public awareness. Planned measures include a career centre within the Ministry, a national web platform, training for counsellors, and promotional campaigns. The strategy plans for strong stakeholder coordination, a budget of about EUR 4.2 million for 2025-2030, and an action plan for 2025-2026. A key target is that by 2030 at least 25 % of registered unemployed persons will have used career guidance services.

⁽²³⁾ <https://wapi.gov.me/download/aa2b536b-4ceb-4923-9a54-765bd6d1dffe?version=1.0>

⁽²⁴⁾ <https://invest-project.eu/>

⁽²⁵⁾ <https://wapi.gov.me/download/4712e574-52a9-4e8b-b750-f2283b03d18b?version=1.0>
<https://wapi.gov.me/download/3db3c7dc-cb5e-4244-bcf6-eb8e16193347?version=1.0>
<https://wapi.gov.me/download/eb3a6017-125d-40f5-b2d8-e3c01b3a1bde?version=1.0>
<https://wapi.gov.me/download/7717b1b1-5547-41af-a411-23f315ec4832?version=1.0>

The centralised career centre within the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation will act as a national organisational unit. It will coordinate services and provide structured support for students and jobseekers across the country.

A large group of professional career counsellors will be trained to deliver standardised, high-quality guidance at all levels of education. Together, these measures aim to build a more coherent and impactful career development support system in Montenegro.

In 2025, with support from the ETF ⁽²⁶⁾, Montenegro developed career guidance standards consisting of a career management skills framework, competence profile for career guidance practitioners, and a code of ethics for practitioners, with broad involvement from stakeholders. It is the first time such standards have been developed in Montenegro, and they are expected to be formally adopted in December 2025.

The Austrian agency for education and internationalization (OeAD) held a regional workshop entitled 'Get ready 4 VET through career guidance' in June 2025 in Montenegro. The workshop focused on detailing a new regional project on career guidance in primary education and VET. Participants from Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Austria exchanged their experiences and mapped out activities for these young people to strengthen their connection to the world of work.

One of the central topics of the workshop was how to promote vocational education as a key driver in career development and increasing youth employability in the region.

The national kick-off conference took place on 1-2 October 2025, bringing together representatives from the Ministry, VET Centre, Chamber of Economy, Employers' Federation, and primary and vocational schools. Here, the project was spelled out and participants agreed on the next steps.

Throughout 2025, the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation carried out a series of regional promotional events to explain vocational education to final-year primary school pupils. These events, held across all regions of Montenegro, highlighted the opportunities, practical skills and career pathways VET offers.

⁽²⁶⁾ https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/events/career-guidance-standards-montenegro?utm_source=chatgpt.com

EU priority 5. VET underpinned by quality assurance

Montenegro is focusing on improving quality assurance (QA) in VET through various sets of actions.

- Enhancing external evaluation: developing the mechanisms for conducting external evaluations in both Initial VET (IVET) and Continuing VET (CVET), including training for external evaluators.

To ensure the effectiveness of external evaluations, the training needs of external evaluators were identified. Based on these insights, targeted training was held for first-time external collaborators and evaluators. The National Council for Education went on to issue Competence Standards for External Evaluators ²⁷ after a session held in February 2024. This document serves as a foundational framework for improving external evaluators' skills and ensuring consistency in evaluation practices.

Regular external evaluations were conducted in nine VET schools, providing a comprehensive assessment of the quality of education and the adherence to established standards. Additionally, external evaluators audited six licensed adult education providers, reflecting a commitment to continuous improvement across all levels of vocational and adult learning.

- Expanding self-evaluation: strengthening the capacities of VET providers to conduct self-evaluations effectively.

The VET Centre's staff collected and analysed the latest self-evaluation reports from vocational and mixed schools. With 30 schools – over 60 % – submitting their reports, this data set provides valuable insights into the strengths and areas for improvement within these institutions. Recognising the importance of robust self-assessment practices, the QA Department of the VET Centre responded to requests from several schools by holding four training courses on Internal Evaluation and Self-Evaluation. This capacity-building work sought to strengthen the culture of continuous improvement within schools and to align self-evaluation practices with national quality standards.

- Review of practical training models: assessing current models of practical training and providing recommendations for improvement.
- Designing quality indicators: creating quality indicators for practical training in all its forms, followed by self-evaluation and external evaluation using these indicators.
- Quality of qualifications/vocational education programmes

To ensure that vocational education is of the highest quality, the VET Centre began evaluating how modular courses were run in 2024. The project was underpinned by a rigorous methodological framework and sought to generate data-driven insights into the running of and outcomes from modularised curricula. This research will inform future curriculum development and provide evidence to support effective educational practices in vocational training.

The VET Centre has designed a set of forms ⁽²⁸⁾ to support VET teachers and ensure uniform pedagogical documentation. These include the annual work plan, the plan for achieving learning outcomes, and lesson preparation forms, accompanied by detailed guidelines for their use, as well as annexes suggesting learning activities, teaching methods, and work formats to help teachers meet the defined learning outcomes.

(27) https://eget.erisee.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/National-standards-of-competences-for-external-evaluators_ME.pdf

(28) <https://www.gov.me/clanak/pedagoska-dokumentacija-za-planiranje-modula>

Recent amendments to the legislation on vocational education and training are intended to enhance quality assurance and simplify the recognition of qualifications, as follows:

- Responsibility for testing and validation of vocational skills has been reallocated from adult education providers to centralised examination authorities (the examination centre), ensuring consistency and rigour in skills validation.
 - Institutions overseeing vocational education (the VET centre) are increasingly involved in the recognition of foreign vocational qualifications, facilitating labour mobility and the transferability of skills in line with European and international standards.
- Strengthening leadership in education: selection of School Principals

For the first time in Montenegro, the selection process for state school principals now includes both a written and an oral examination. These measures are detailed in the newly adopted Rulebook on the verification of competencies, knowledge, and abilities of candidates when nominating principals of public schools.

The initial implementation of this dual examination has revealed significant challenges, with over 50 % of candidates failing the assessment. This underscores the need for targeted professional development and capacity building for aspiring school leaders.

Recent amendments to the General Education Act stipulate that the Minister for Education must appoint the candidate that scores highest in the tests.

- Improving examination standards: vocational Matura (school leavers) exam

Amendments to the Rulebook on the manner and procedure for taking the VET Matura exam for students continuing their education have introduced stricter examination conditions:

- The use of mobile phone detectors during examinations to deter cheating;
- Two teachers to be present in exam rooms with up to 15 students to invigilate.

The stricter conditions led to a noticeable decline in exam results in June 2024 compared to previous years.

Performance against EU targets

The Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT ⁽²⁹⁾) is the main national body in charge of collecting and processing data across various sectors, including education: It gathers information from all relevant national institutions. However, MONSTAT does not specifically collect information on Montenegro's performance against EU-level VET indicators. As a result, only limited data is available, as shown in the table below.

The only figure MONSTAT officially reports is the employment rate of recent IVET graduates (ages 20-34), expressed as a percentage. Two additional indicators are difficult to measure accurately. Although all VET students in Montenegro are required to complete a portion of their practical training in companies as part of their course, it is unclear how this is implemented in practice – though the participation rate should theoretically be very high. There is currently no precise information on how many VET students (and especially those enrolled in three-year courses) undertake practical training with employers or on the amount of training they receive. Regarding student mobility, Montenegro has begun sending VET students and teachers abroad. However, the numbers remain very low and would represent only a negligible percentage if quantified. According to the Education Reform Strategy, one of the key indicators related to teachers focuses on their participation in international mobility schemes. The baseline value is currently 0.3 %, indicating limited opportunities and take up of mobility initiatives. The strategic goal is to gradually increase this percentage to 4 % by 2030 and 8 % by 2035, reflecting the government's commitment to enhancing teachers' professional development, international cooperation, and the exchange of good educational practices.

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 benefitted from study abroad (%)		2.1 % (2021)	8 %

Source: MONSTAT

Multiple other institutions (e.g., the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, Centre for Vocational Education, Employment Agency, MONSTAT, schools, etc.) collect data, but often without coordination. Lack of interoperability leads to inconsistent and incomplete data sets. Data collection on VET in Montenegro faces several interrelated challenges. These issues affect the quality, availability, and usability of data for policymaking, planning, and monitoring. The key challenges include fragmentation of data sources; limited coverage of key indicators; poor data disaggregation; capacity constraints; underuse of data for policy and practice; inadequate labour market information system (LMIS); insufficient monitoring of WBL; and digitalisation.

⁽²⁹⁾ <https://www.monstat.org/eng/index.php>

Montenegro's NIP implementation 2021-2025: an overview

Recap of NIP commitments

The general objectives of the NIP by 2025 are:

- Strengthening quality assurance in VET with a focus on WBL in all its forms;
- VET from a lifelong learning perspective;
- Matching VET provision to labour market needs;
- Digitalising VET – Digital Classrooms.

Cluster I. Strengthening quality assurance in VET with a focus on WBL in all its forms (VET Recommendation F)

- Measure I.1. Further develop national quality assurance systems for both IVET and CVET using the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) framework and with a focus on external evaluation of VET providers;
- Measure I.2. Support self-evaluation as a complementary and effective means of quality assurance;
- Measure I.3. Reinforce work-based learning and apprenticeships by implementing the European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships.

Cluster II. VET from a lifelong learning perspective

- Measure II.1. Increase take up in high quality and inclusive lifelong learning;
- Measure II.2. Green VET programmes;
- Measure II.3. Promote key competences as part of qualification and curriculum requirements in VET qualifications in line with the National Key Competence Framework.

Cluster III. Matching VET provision with labour market needs

- Measure III.1. Develop national and regional skills intelligence systems, including skills anticipation;
- Measure III.2. Establish a graduate tracking system;
- Measure III.3. Strengthen Career Guidance and Counselling in VET schools.

Cluster IV. Digitising VET – digital schools

- Measure IV.1. Support the development of digital infrastructure for learning and teaching;
- Measure IV.2. Support VET educators by equipping them with adequate skills and tools for and through digital technologies;
- Measure IV.3. Create digital content for teaching and learning.

Summary of policy developments 2021-2025

This section summarises key actions and major achievements under each of the EU priorities from 2021 to 2025.

EU Priority 1: Agile and Resilient VET

Since adopting the National Qualifications Framework in 2010, Montenegro has progressively modernised its vocational education and training, with the period 2021-2025 marking a significant shift from planning to concrete implementation. Most initial VET programmes have now been revised or are being updated to reflect changing labour market needs, supported by new occupational and qualification standards. The introduction of ten new initial VET programmes for the 2023/2024 school year signalled a decisive move toward modular, outcome-based design and stronger alignment with the National Qualifications Framework.

Digitalisation has become a defining feature of this reform period. Guided by the Strategy for Digitalisation in Education (2022-2027), Montenegro has worked to strengthen digital competences among teachers and learners, introduce standards for digital textbooks, and ensure vulnerable groups are included within the digital environment. Tools such as SELFIE and the Guide to Improving Quality and Inclusivity of Education in the Digital Environment, developed with UNICEF, have helped schools assess their digital readiness and integrate technology into daily teaching. The EIB-backed Digital Classroom project has provided schools with modern equipment, reducing the digital gap and enabling smoother implementation of an updated, technology-rich curriculum.

The green transition has also gained momentum. New VET programmes in renewable energy and environmental protection were introduced in cooperation with employers, addressing emerging occupations such as renewable energy system installers and maintenance technicians. Collaboration agreements with major energy companies have ensured that training content reflects real industry needs, while initiatives like Eco-Schools have encouraged environmental awareness and sustainable practices within schools.

These reforms have been reinforced by closer involvement of stakeholders at all levels. Sectoral committees, employers and trade union representatives have played an active role in shaping new standards and programmes, which in turn have strengthened the relevance and responsiveness of qualifications. Investments in digital learning resources and teacher training has accompanied curricular renewal, ensuring that reforms were effectively applied in classrooms and workshops.

Work-based learning has continued to expand and mature during this period. Regional projects have helped strengthen practical training in companies by clarifying the responsibilities of practical training coordinators and improving collaboration between schools and employers. Take up of dual education has increased steadily, supported by new quality indicators for monitoring. At the same time, Montenegro has launched a process to identify the training needs of teachers and company instructors using the findings of an external evaluation of practical education. This assessment, to be completed by the end of 2025, will serve as the basis for targeted training in 2026.

EU Priority 2: Flexible and Inclusive VET

Montenegro has strengthened the flexibility and inclusiveness of its VET, promoting lifelong learning and wider participation among both young people and adults. Progress has been signalled by a diversification in learning modes, new shorter qualifications, improved validation mechanisms for prior learning, and measures to support equal access to education and training.

Montenegro has diversified learning formats to include face-to-face, digital and blended approaches. Digital learning platforms now provide on-demand access to recorded lessons across vocational sectors such as engineering, agriculture, healthcare and tourism, increasing accessibility for learners in different regions and for adults combining work and study.

The introduction of micro-qualifications into national legislation represents a key step towards greater adaptability in VET. These shorter, targeted learning units enable learners to acquire specific competences aligned with labour market needs, supporting employability and flexible career progression.

Mechanisms for validation and recognition of learning outcomes have been consolidated under central examination authorities to ensure quality and transparency. VET institutions have taken a more active role in recognising foreign vocational qualifications, improving consistency and facilitating mobility.

Although not formally part of the National Implementation Plan commitments, reforms in vocational education have also advanced adult learning. The introduction of micro-qualifications, inclusive retraining programmes and labour market-based analysis has strengthened opportunities for reskilling. In 2024-2025, the Chamber of Economy, in cooperation with education institutions, implemented extensive reskilling initiatives addressing labour market needs and prioritising vulnerable groups.

Efforts to ensure equal opportunities and inclusiveness have been reinforced through amended financing rules that allow schools to hire additional experts, including pedagogical and psychological staff, mediators and teaching assistants for students with special needs. These measures enhance the capacity of schools to provide tailored support and ensure access for all learners.

EU Priority 3: Innovative and Excellent VET

Between 2021 and 2025, Montenegro made notable progress in upgrading its VET infrastructure, with significant investments in digital readiness, sustainability, and regional excellence. About one-fifth of VET schools underwent renovation or reconstruction, improving safety and learning conditions, while all VET institutions were equipped with new digital tools such as laptops, smart displays and projectors. These upgrades have strengthened the capacity for blended and digital learning across the board.

Comprehensive assessments of infrastructure were conducted to identify priorities for future investment and ensure that VET schools provide sustainable, safe and high-quality learning environments. The country has made use of regional and international, particularly for digitalisation, teacher capacity building and institutional development.

Plans are also underway to establish Centres of Vocational Excellence in all three regions of Montenegro, designed to link up education, business and research, foster innovation, and encourage regional development. Overall, these investments demonstrate Montenegro's commitment to building a modern, digital and sustainable VET system capable of meeting future labour market needs.

EU Priority 4: Attractive VET

Montenegro has strengthened its professional development framework for school leaders, teachers and trainers, establishing more systematic opportunities for both initial and continuous training. This work has focused on aligning teaching competences with evolving digital and green priorities in VET.

Teachers and trainers have received support to integrate sustainability and green skills into VET programmes, reflecting labour market needs and environmental standards. At the same time, the Education System Digitalisation Strategy (2022-2027) has guided work to enhance digital competence among teachers and students, improve digital infrastructure, and ensure inclusive access to technology. As a result, more teachers are proficient in using digital tools, and learning environments are becoming more interactive and engaging.

In the area of career guidance and counselling, Montenegro has adopted the Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy 2025-2030, which provides a framework for developing lifelong guidance services. Plans include a central Career Centre and a network of trained counsellors. Teachers are also being helped to be more inclusive and provide appropriate guidance for students from different backgrounds.

EU Priority 5: Quality Assurance in VET

Montenegro has strengthened the quality assurance framework for VET by updating methodologies and aligning more with European standards. Joint evaluation teams have been established to assess both vocational and general education programmes, ensuring coherence and comparability. A set of 13 VET-specific indicators, aligned with the EQAVET framework, now guides monitoring and evaluation, improving the consistency and relevance of quality assessments.

Regional cooperation has contributed to a harmonisation of quality standards and indicators, particularly in the areas of external evaluation and work-based learning. Competence standards for external evaluators have been developed to ensure objectivity and professionalism, setting out clear requirements for conducting evaluations and reporting results.

Further measures have strengthened the integrity of and accountability within the education sector. The Matura exam is now held under stricter procedures, including enhanced identity checks, a complete ban on electronic devices, standardised seating and invigilation, and immediate sanctions for violations. Selection of school principals has also been made more transparent and merit-based: vacancies are filled through public competitions involving standardised testing and interviews, with candidates ranked according to results. Under recent amendments to the General Education Act, the Minister is required to appoint the highest-ranked candidate.

Conclusions

Drafting Montenegro's new Education Reform Strategy has provided a critical opportunity to assess the state of vocational education and training, identify persistent gaps, and set forward-looking priorities. Drawing on national insights and the outcomes of the Osnabrück monitoring process, it is a clear pathway that emerges to modernise VET, improve learning outcomes, and align education more closely with labour market realities.

As the Herring Declaration has been adopted as a continuation of the Osnabrück process, aligning VET policies with European trends has become imperative; therefore, it will be important to take the Herring Declaration into account when developing future two-year action plans.

1. Modernising VET for a changing economy

To ensure that VET keeps pace with economic and technological transformations, Montenegro needs to build a system rooted in evidence-based policy. This starts with robust skills intelligence: research on labour market needs should guide sectoral strategies and inform the continuous updating of both youth and adult qualifications, with special attention paid to green and digital skills. This approach must also foster inclusion by designing qualifications and training opportunities that are accessible to women, persons with disabilities, Roma, and other vulnerable groups.

The educational offer in VET needs to be modernised by continuing to revise and create programmes aligned with the needs of emerging industries. Promoting in-demand qualifications and raising the profile of VET more broadly will help shift perceptions and increase its attractiveness. To better manage supply and demand, Montenegro should bring in a graduate tracking system that connects education outcomes with labour market data, supporting better planning and policy evaluation.

Another key issue to be addressed is the availability of and access to learning opportunities in remote areas, especially outside of Podgorica. This might help support fairer socio-economic development, curb brain drain and redress internal migration.

Special attention must also be paid to equipping learners with key competences, such as critical thinking, digital literacy, communication, and entrepreneurship. Implementation of the Montenegrin Key Competences Framework, aligned with the EU framework, is essential. This is particularly true in VET, where students often begin with weaker competences, as shown by PISA results.

2. Strengthening career guidance and transitions

Smooth transitions – from primary to secondary education, and from education to employment – are essential for learner success. Montenegro plans to institutionalise career guidance and mentoring across all levels of education. Every student should benefit from individualised support, including career guidance and counselling, transition planning, and access to career centres. These measures are backed up by commitments in both the National Growth Plan and the Higher Education Strategy (2024-2027) and should be integrated into the new Career Guidance and Counselling model.

3. Reinforcing practical learning through more employer involvement

A critical reform area is the expansion and improvement of WBL, including apprenticeships and school-based practical training. The timeline for reform must focus on improving the quality of practical training across all forms – not only in companies, but also in school settings – with clear quality standards, trained mentors, and monitoring mechanisms.

Efforts to involve small and medium-sized enterprises (which comprise the majority of Montenegro's economy) will require incentive schemes to be set up, stronger partnerships with employers, and ongoing support to stay involved. VET teachers and instructors should receive targeted professional development, based on identified needs, to deliver effective practical training in line with modern workplace demands. Regional centres of excellence in VET may serve as hubs for quality training of both youth and adults. They might also host supra-company training centres that help companies – especially micro and small ones – to access new technologies and innovate their services by offering work-placements to students who do not find a company.

4. Promoting Lifelong Learning and Adult Education

Montenegro recognises the need to foster a culture of lifelong learning, especially in light of rapid economic change and digitalisation. Adult education must become more responsive and accessible, offering flexible pathways such as micro-credentials, short-form qualifications, and modular programmes tailored to adult learners, including those already in employment.

The development and revision of adult education programmes must be informed by labour market needs. The Growth Plan envisages revising at least 30 highly sought after programmes and developing at least 10 new ones that lead to green and digital jobs. Stronger partnerships between adult education providers, employers, and the Employment Agency are needed to support these reforms, along with a unified database to monitor participation and identify gaps.

Recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally is another key lever. Montenegro needs to establish clear, accessible systems for validation, ensuring that skills gained through work experience, volunteering, or informal training can be recognised and linked to formal qualifications. Visibility and communication will be essential so that learners and employers understand the available pathways and procedures.

5. Ensuring flexibility and progression pathways in VET

To support flexible learning paths, VET must offer bridges between IVET and CVET, as well as between vocational and general education and higher education. Montenegro should develop qualifications at EQF/NQF level 5 and create the necessary conditions for learners to take the *majstorski ispit* (master craftsman exam), expanding vertical mobility and progression within the VET system.

Expanding the use of micro-credentials and short-form qualifications will also enable more agile responses to labour market needs, providing opportunities for upskilling and reskilling across all age groups and educational backgrounds.

6. Advancing quality assurance in VET

High quality VET depends on a credible and effective quality assurance system. Montenegro would benefit from further developing its national framework by aligning with European VET standards, involving all relevant stakeholders, and ensuring the full implementation of the newly designed quality standards. Internal processes also need strengthening, particularly the self-evaluation practices of IVET and CVET providers. External evaluations should be better utilised, with findings feeding into continuous improvement, especially in thematic areas such as WBL, career guidance, and digital learning.

7. Investing in learning resources and digital innovation

The relevance and accessibility of VET also depend on the quality of learning materials. Montenegro should continue to develop its central repository of educational resources, ensuring they reflect the national context, support inclusion, and are regularly updated. This is

an opportunity to scale up the development of digital textbooks, which offer flexibility and interactive features that support both learners and educators.

8. Building stronger partnerships with the economic sector and international networks

Engaging the economic sector is essential to the success of VET reform. It will be important for Montenegro to establish structured cooperation with employers for planning, delivering, and evaluating vocational programmes. This includes involving companies in practical training, contributing to teacher professional development, and participating in governance structures, for example in sector skills councils. International partnerships and participation in European VET networks can further enrich the system by introducing good practices and fostering innovation.

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