MONITORING THE VET RECOMMENDATION AND THE OSNABRÜCK DECLARATION

ALBANIA 2025

CONTENTS

ALBANIA COUNTRY BRIEF

Introduction

The Albania country brief presents the results of the third cycle of the European Training Foundation (ETF)-led monitoring on the Osnabrück declaration (OD) on vocational education and training (VET) as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies (2020), and on the EU Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (2020). It represents a part of a broader exercise taking place simultaneously in five EU candidate countries (Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye). By 2022, each country committed to working on a set of priorities within five EU thematic areas, a commitment articulated in their respective National Implementation Plans (NIP). Aiming to align its reporting and monitoring activities with those of the EU Member States, Albania joined this process in 2022 by approving the 2022-2025 OD NIP (available here).

The ETF-led monitoring is guided by an analytical framework structured along five EU thematic priorities: (1) Agile and resilient VET, adaptive to labour market needs; (2) Flexible and inclusive VET, providing progression and lifelong learning opportunities; (3) Innovative and excellent VET; (4) Attractive VET, based on a modern and digitalised provision; and (5) VET underpinned by quality assurance.

This report is structured into two parts: the first part summarises policy developments in 2024–2025 by EU thematic priority, as articulated in the country's NIP; the second part provides a summary of the main developments under each EU thematic priority over the 2021–2025 period, including performance against EU targets set by the 2020 Council Recommendation on VET.

The Albania 2021-2025 Osnabrück Declaration NIP is an integral part of the 2023-2030 National Strategy for Employment and Skills, aligned with the Albanian National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI 2030). In January 2024, the Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation (MECI) was established, assuming responsibilities for employment and skills previously managed by the Ministry of Finance and Economy (MoFE).

General elections held in May 2025 resulted in a fourth consecutive victory for the Socialist Party. The new government was formed in September 2025. Responsibility for employment and skills falls under the Ministry of Economy and Innovation (MEI).

Since the European Union opened accession negotiations with Albania in March 2020, five accession conferences have taken place. Negotiations have opened in four clusters: Cluster 1 (Fundamentals), Cluster 6 (External Relations), Cluster 2 (Internal Market), and Cluster 3 (Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth). The Albanian Government aims to conclude the negotiations by 2027. The EU Commissioner for Enlargement has confirmed that both Albania and Montenegro have realistic prospects of completing the process between 2026 and 2027[1].

In 2024, Albania's economy grew by 4.05 % of GDP. The services sector was the largest contributor, accounting for 48.7 % of GDP, followed by agriculture at 15.5 %. Together, these two sectors represent 79.5 % of total employment in the country. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) increased by 5.6 %, with real estate continuing to lead, followed by the extractive industry, manufacturing and the electricity sector.

The employment rate rose to 68.6 % in 2024, although a gender employment gap of 12.5 % persists for women. The unemployment rate for individuals aged 15 and older reached a historic low of 8.8 %. However, youth unemployment (ages 15-24) remains high at 22.8 %. The gross average wage increased by 9.8 % compared to 2023.

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[1] Forum Europa, The European Commission believes Montenegro and Albania are leading the EU accession process, May 2025.

In 2024–2025 the vocational education and training (VET) sector continued to implement key reforms, including the optimisation of the VET providers' network and the introduction of the dual learning system in collaboration with the private sector. Efforts were also made to enhance the flexibility of the education system by enabling student transfers between general secondary education and vocational secondary education up to the end of grade 10. Private sector engagement in VET has been institutionalised at national level through the Sector Skills Committees – currently functional in two sectors: ICT and hospitality and tourism, with committees in the energy and agriculture sectors in the process of being activated/established. At provider level, engagement is facilitated through school development units, which are active in all VET institutions. Notably, in 2024, the School for Hospitality and Tourism in Tirana started a partnership with the *École hôtelière de Lausanne* (EHL) to deliver EHL-recognised programmes. The intention is to extend this experience to all schools offering hospitality and tourism programmes. Certificates issued by EHL for each successfully completed level are also recognised outside Albania and offer opportunities to continue higher education. Support for youth was increased through the Youth Guarantee Scheme, alongside increased investments in vocational education, particularly in areas such as digital learning.

Nevertheless, the sector continues to face challenges, including labour market pressures resulting from migration, skills mismatches with private sector needs, and the limited involvement of social partners in skills development and employment initiatives.

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

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Complementary relevant publications are available here: Transforming vocational education and training: ETF monitoring initiatives and deliverables | ETF

Main policy developments in 2024-2025

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

During the period from 2024 to 2025, the National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications was expanded with new qualifications. A revised format for qualification standards was developed, incorporating assessment modalities and the relative weight of each learning unit. Digital skills have been incorporated into all developed and revised occupational standards and vocational qualification standards, ensuring they align with current technological advancements.

Over the past 2 years, Albania's VET system has made progress in integrating green skills, such as those for recycling and circular economy principles across all vocational programmes. All qualifications (Levels 2-5 of the Albanian Qualifications Framework (AQF)) now include competences in safety, environmental protection, and eco-friendly practices. The subject 'Environment and Sustainable Development', revised to reflect the twin digital and green transitions, is now delivered in all vocational schools, combining practical activities, recycling initiatives and small projects, while sector-specific modules address waste reduction and sustainable practices. Additionally, the European University of Tirana launched the first short-term courses in tourism, with a focus on green and digital skills.

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

The Employment, Education and Vocational Training Commission is one of the six commissions of the NLC (National Labour Council) established in 2024–2025. The first meeting of the NLC was held in March 2025, where the work for the Establishment of the Joint Consultative Committee with the European Economic and Social Committee was presented. It will serve as a promoter of dialogue and cooperation between social partners and civil society organisations for activities in the framework of future membership of the European Union.

The Sector Skills Committees (SSCs) in the ICT and hospitality and tourism sectors are exploring ways to enhance cooperation between them. alongside the consolidation of the ICT and hospitality and tourism sectoral committees, the energy sectoral committee was formally established in 2025 through a joint ministerial order, with activation planned by the end of the year. Furthermore, the agriculture sector was prioritised for the establishment of the fourth Sectoral Committee, with a proposal currently under preparation following the completion of the mapping and delimitation exercise.

Progress was also made in strengthening School Development Units (SDUs), including the development of operational manuals and regulatory guidelines for their organisation, functioning, planning and the implementation of professional internships in businesses, as well as capacity-building initiatives for SDU coordinators and business mentors.

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

For many years, the introduction of _Dual Vocational Education and Training_ (DVET) has been a subject of discussion and strategic planning among employment and VET institutions, VET providers, social partners and international donors supporting vocational education in Albania. The primary objective is to diversify qualification pathways for young people and better align VET outcomes with business needs for a skilled workforce. To enable this initiative, the necessary legal framework for DVET implementation was approved in 2024.

In the 2024-2025 academic year, the dual VET (DVET) model was implemented on a pilot basis alongside the traditional school-based system. The pilot is being carried out in 10 vocational schools across 8 regions and focuses on:

- culinary arts, Level III of the AQF (offered in six schools);

- reception, Level III of the AQF, offered by one school;

- auto-electrical services, Level III of the AQF, offered by two schools;

- installation of low-medium-high voltage power lines, Level III of the AQF, offered by two schools;

- multimedia, Level III of the AQF, offered by one school;

- electrical installation (civil and industrial), Level III of the AQF, offered by one school;

- supply and logistics management, Level IV of the AQF, offered by one school.

DVET was expanded in five additional schools in the 2025-2026 school year. There are also three programmes offered as one- to two-year post-secondary programmes (accommodation structure management, diagnostics and management in auto servicing, fashion design) at Level V of the AQF in nine VET schools. There are 400 students learning based on dual VET, and schools are cooperating with around 200 businesses. The goal is 500 students by the third year of DVET implementation. DVET providers have signed 97 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with companies operating in Tirana, Durrës, Lezha, Shkodra and Vlora.

To support in-company trainers working with DVET students, the national training programme 'Mentoring in Dual Vocational Education' was developed by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ) in 2024, and formally adopted by MECI in 2025. The programme aimed to equip in-company mentors with the skills and knowledge required to effectively plan and implement practical learning processes, fostering professional and personal competences in students for successful integration into the labour market. In parallel, over 70 vocational teachers in the fields of agriculture and mechanics were trained and certified in work-based learning methodologies, as well as in thematic areas such as sustainable development and environmental sustainability, social sustainability and gender equality, and general pedagogical methods including technological innovations in teaching.

The 'One-Stop-Shop Portal', part of the national platform puna.gov.al, administered by NAES, offers information and placement services for employers who partner with VET providers to deliver dual VET qualifications.

Establishing and developing skills intelligence systems, including graduate tracking

The Labour Market Information Observatory (LMIO) will process, and display labour market data based on profession, gender and region, for use by employment and skills institutions. Thus, in 2024, a national Skills Needs Assessment (SNA) was launched by UNDP in cooperation with NAES, with results expected to be published during 2025.

For the second consecutive year, NAES is preparing four regional labour market analyses covering the northern, south-eastern, south-western, and central regions. The findings are expected to offer insights into the alignment between VET and labour market supply and demand, particularly in terms of job vacancies by profession. This analysis will be complemented by data emerging from the tracking of employment outcomes related to school programmes, vocational tracks and employment promotion initiatives. The analyses will also inform evidence-based decisions on introducing new study programmes and phasing out those that no longer align with the needs of the regional labour market.

Building on skills anticipation studies, 10 revised or new framework curricula have been implemented in construction, agriculture, energy and tourism, embedding sustainability, renewable energy and green skills. Furthermore, within the SEEVET network (South-eastern Europe VET Agencies), supported by ERISEE and GIZ, regional occupational standards and teaching and learning materials were developed based on commonly agreed needs related to renewable energy. These efforts ensure that VET graduates are prepared for green responsible careers and actively contribute to Albania's green transition.

In addition, an assessment of the level of digitalisation and its impact on three key priority sectors – Energy, Hospitality and Tourism, and ICT – was conducted by the UNDP S4D project in 2025[2]. The study provides insights into the adoption of digital processes and the emergence of digital professions in the Albanian labour market as a guiding tool for VET and skills institutions.

It is decided that LMIO will have a specific module to structure the information, and work will be done on the development and implementation of a long-term skill needs forecasting tool. In relation to this, the National Employment and Skills Agency (NAES) is in the process of developing a labour market forecasting instrument, using the Lithuanian model as a reference. Tools such as questionnaires and sample guidelines have already been prepared. Although initially planned for 2025, the development of this instrument has been postponed for a second time to avoid overlap with the ongoing SNA process.

In 2024, NAES conducted a system-level tracer study that followed 3 104 trainees and 1 300 graduates from the 2023 cohort. The Tracer Reports were produced and the findings were presented during the 2024 Winter School. A national tracking survey is also underway for graduates from the 2023-2024 academic year in VET schools and for individuals who completed training in Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) in 2024. The results of this survey were prepared/drafted in August 2025.

During 2025, the integration between the information systems of VTCs and Employment Services was improved/upgraded, enabling electronic referral of unemployed job seekers to vocational training courses offered by public centres. The new online declaration service for those certified in the private vocational training system is in process. The SMIP system is in the process of being improved.

The institutionalisation of the LMIO platform is currently being implemented, following Prime Ministerial Order No 43, dated 5 March 2025, 'On the Establishment of the Inter-Institutional Working Group for the Identification and Regulation of Data Generation for Inclusion in the Labour Market Information Observatory.' In accordance with this order, the designated inter-institutional working group has been formally established.

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[2] The study will soon be available online.

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

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

There was a significant development in 2024 in increasing flexibility and responsiveness within upper secondary education. New measures now allow students to transfer between general secondary education and vocational secondary education up to the end of grade 10, creating more adaptable learning pathways (starting from the 2024-2025 academic year). This policy is based on a signed agreement between the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and the MECI, and enables transfers up to the end of grade 10, allowing students to pursue pathways more closely aligned with their interests and career aspirations. This policy marks a step towards creating a more flexible and learner-centred education system – one that supports personalised educational trajectories and responds more effectively to individual interests and labour market demands. To support the implementation, the legal framework was supported by necessary government decisions and instructions. A total of 21 framework curricula at AQF Level 2 were revised, and several general education subjects were adjusted to ensure consistency and coherence between general and vocational tracks. The revised curricula and transfer mechanisms were implemented from grade 10 onwards in the 2024-2025 academic year.

In addition, as part of ongoing education and training reforms, a report was commissioned in April 2025 by both UNICEF and UNDP Albania in the framework of the EU4Youth project on 'Assessing and recommending options on the permeability of the education system in Albania'. The purpose of the study is to assess the current state of the permeability between the different educational pathways and across the different levels of the Albanian education system, exploring critical elements that enable or hinder permeability in the system. The recommendations from the Permeability Study Report are expected to inform policies that support more flexible learning opportunities across the education sector throughout 2025.

NAES continues to implement Employment Promotion Programmes for unemployed jobseekers including NEETs. Two new programmes were implemented in 2025: the social reintegration programme (160 unemployed jobseekers) and the work-based learning programme (30 unemployed jobseekers). In addition, 293 unemployed jobseekers were enrolled in the coding programme.

In January 2025, the Youth Guarantee Action Plan (YGAP) (MECI, 2024) was revised to extend its implementation to the end of 2025 and expand its scope from municipal to regional level.

As of May 2025, a total of 1 013 young people, 56 % female and 44 % male, have registered under the Youth Guarantee Scheme. The long-term objectives of the programme, which extend to 2030, aim for nationwide expansion supported by the European Union's EUR 63 million Operational Programme 'EU for Youth Employment', which aims to benefit 40 000 young people. One key goal is to reduce the NEET rate from 26.1 % in 2021 to 15 % by 2030. A Communication Strategy for the Youth Guarantee Scheme (January 2025-June 2026) was launched by NAES (the National Employment and Skills Portal) and the National Youth Agency supported by UNICEF, targeting the three pilot municipalities of Tirana, Vlorë and Shkodër. The strategy aims to raise awareness among young people about the opportunities available to them under the Youth Guarantee framework.

In 2024, the Tirana Career Office, supported by the RISI Albania project[3], established a partnership with NAES to address the needs of young NEETs for career services and training, thereby contributing to the efficiency of their employment efforts. As result of a consultation process initiated by NAES with the aim of raising awareness about Youth Guarantee Scheme opportunities for young people, various categories of youth with diverse needs were identified. These included demotivated young people or

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[3] The objective of the RisiAlbania project is to promote the employment of young people aged 15-29 in an inclusive and sustainable manner. The project is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), in partnership with the Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation, and is implemented by Helvetas and Partners Albania. This project has been ongoing since 2013.

those with family responsibilities, those seeking practical experience and knowledge, marginalised groups, and young people facing health or social challenges. To strengthen outreach and impact, success stories were leveraged by NAES with the support of RISI Albania to illustrate the benefits of career guidance and skills development initiatives. These narratives were disseminated through targeted digital marketing campaigns, demonstrating how LLL can support smoother transitions into the labour market as well as career reorientation for young people.

Preventing school dropouts has been the focus of NAES activity. A UNICEF report on 'Profiles of Early Leavers and Young People at Risk of Early Leaving from Upper Secondary Education' (UNICEF, 2025) provides a comprehensive overview of the profiles of early school leavers and those at risk of dropping out from general and vocational upper secondary education in Albania and makes recommendations for changing the situation. This report is complementary to the review of the early warning system methodology and socio-emotional education conducted in 2024, followed by capacity-building activities for educational staff across 14 vocational schools. These schools developed tailored plans to prevent dropouts and submitted proposals to secure small grants aimed at implementing dropout prevention projects, currently active in 12 vocational education schools. Additionally, a financial mechanism to support the (re)registration of out-of-school youth and to prevent early school dropouts was activated through DCM No 666 on financial quotas for food in dormitories, and scholarships and fees for students in public educational institutions.

Learners' possibilities for accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally

Following extensive consultations with national stakeholders, NAVETQ has developed a draft Instruction on the Validation of Prior Learning, aligned with Albania's 2024 legislative plans. This initiative supports the implementation of the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) system. On 16 December 2024, MECI officially adopted Instruction 1109, December 2024 'On the procedures for the implementation of the VNFIL', establishing formalities regarding the assessment and certification of the VNFIL. To support the pilot phase, a dedicated roadmap was developed. Key stakeholders were consulted and it is now ready for validation by the ministry.

In parallel, the legal framework and quality assurance tools related to accreditation procedures have been revised to accommodate both VNFIL and LLL qualification providers. The improved legal framework for VET provider accreditation has already been adopted by MECI, and the updated self-assessment quality matrix is expected to be approved by the end of 2025. Accredited schools will act as ad hoc commissions consisting of field experts for the recognition and implementation of the RPL model. Only accredited institutions are authorised to evaluate and apply the RPL procedures, ensuring quality and standardisation in the process.

A mapping of best practices from EU Member States was carried out with the support of the EC to inform the development of a national model for the recognition of Lifelong Learning (LLL) qualifications in Albania. Based on this analysis, a national model was developed, and documents and procedures were established for the inclusion of LLL qualifications in AQF. As a result, LLL programmes with a minimum duration of 125 hours are now eligible to be recognised by NAVETQ as partial certifications within the AQF.

Progress was made in *integrating lifelong learning qualifications into the AQF*. Methodological guidelines were developed to support this process, aligned with the existing legal framework. This initiative has broadened stakeholder engagement, particularly from private training providers, and has paved the way for the first round of applications for recognition of LLL qualifications. The first round of applications (three providers applying, with four professional qualifications) was successfully piloted and finalised, with a second call scheduled for the end of 2025.

Targeted awareness-raising activities about a common understanding of the importance of quality in the design and delivery of AQF-aligned qualifications primarily engaged licensed public and non-public training providers. Complementary communication efforts included the production and dissemination of informative videos through social media channels to reach broader stakeholder groups.

Discussions have been developed among VET and skills stakeholders on fostering a culture of lifelong learning as a key driver for social and economic transformation, laying a solid foundation for ongoing reforms and implementation efforts. In cooperation with the ETF, a feasibility study is underway to establish a credit system for VET. An ETF expert was invited to present the recent scientific research on emerging skill trends, underscoring the competencies required for future adaptability.

An important milestone in this process was the official adoption of 'Learning Units' within vocational qualification standards. This development strengthens the foundation for recognising micro-credentials and supports their integration as modular components within existing qualifications.

EU priority 3: Innovative and excellent VET

Improving digital infrastructure in VET provision

In 2024, the MoFE allocated around EUR 3.9 million from the state budget investment fund to upgrade buildings, laboratories, equipment and machinery for professional practice departments. Additionally, donor support (Swiss Cooperation, Austrian Development Cooperation, UNICEF, Save the Children, Deloitte Albania) sustained investments in ICT school laboratories and the procurement of digital equipment. Other main developments include:

During the 2024-2025 school year, the virtual learning environment MesoVET.al, currently managed by the S4J project, recorded a total of 16 605 cumulative users, with 8 704 active users, reflecting an increase in the use of its educational resources and tools. The platform was upgraded to Moodle Workplace version 4.0 to ensure seamless operation during high-demand periods such as e-exams and training sessions. Regular updates and maintenance – including optimisation, performance and load testing, and backups – have been consistently performed to maintain system stability.

MesoVET.al currently offers 126 subjects and 35 professional theory modules across 7 fields, available in 27 vocational schools nationwide. These courses have been fully developed and digitalised. Additionally, the development of 74 new subjects in 6 fields has begun, with 4 subjects completed by December 2024 and the remaining new subjects expected to be finalised during 2025-2026. For these subjects, whether completed or in progress, 81 trained teachers are actively engaged in developing digital learning materials.

In January 2025, NAES initiated the formation of an inter-institutional working group tasked with planning and implementing the transfer of the MesoVET platform to Albanian institutions responsible for VET. This transition will ensure the platform's use across the entire VET system and secure its long-term sustainability.

Additional digitalisation initiatives implemented by public institutions in cooperation with different donors over 2024-2025 focused on modernising the VET system through digitalisation in Albania included: (i) an assessment of the VET system, focusing on the integration of Virtual Reality (VR) technology into the teaching process; (ii) support for the setup and use of the Akelius platform at the School of Tourism and Hospitality, which facilitates flexible foreign language learning while enhancing young people's digital skills. This model is planned for replication in other schools; (iii) Inclusion by NAES, in cooperation with the ILO and other donors, of vocational secondary schools in agriculture in the 'Digital Agriculture for Rural Transformation (DART)' project, implemented during 2025-2026. This initiative includes a special fund dedicated to procuring digital equipment for these schools' workshops.

Digital vocational training system

The National Agency for Employment and Skills (AKPA) has completed the implementation of the digital vocational training system – an important achievement for the modernisation and digitalisation of public services in vocational training. This system aims to ensure integrated and efficient management of the entire vocational training process, enabling direct interaction between vocational training centres (VTCs), instructors and trainees. Through this system, key service delivery processes are fully digitalised, including Online application for participation in vocational training courses through the digital platform; electronic management of class registers, tracking attendance, schedules, modules and trainee assessments; automatic generation of electronic course completion certificates, verified and securely stored within the system. The implementation of this system ensures greater transparency, efficiency and quality in public service delivery, reduces administrative procedures, facilitates the work of instructors and training centres, and provides trainees with a modern, fast and reliable experience. This represents an important step towards the digital transformation of the national network of VTCs, fully aligned with the objectives of the 2023-2030 National Employment and Skills Strategy and the government's priorities for the digitalisation of public services.

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

Supporting teachers and trainers for and through digital

Supporting the transition from school/training to work for VET learners (both students and adult learners) was another commitment that made good progress. Career guidance coordinators were trained in all VET schools. Various events have been organised, such as open days at VET providers with the participation of companies, parents, children, local government representatives, etc. The open days also focused on girls' access to VET and the promotion of VET through student work and success stories. A national competition for VET students in ICT with a focus on programming, a virtual job and skills fair and a national programming competition, the skills week and national skills competitions, and the National Employment and Careers Fair have been some important activities held. The 'Gastro Alb 6' competition in the context of the International Food & Drink Expo (12 VET schools participated), the work and career fair, Automotive Fair Albania (three VET schools participated), Agrotech Fair, and 'Expo city Albania' (competition between schools offering agricultural education) have been organised over the last 4 years. Vocational school students have also participated in occupational skills competitions and skills fairs.

In the period from 2024 to 2025, teacher training in VET schools – promoted by MECI, NAVETQ and NAES – has continued on various digital topics. VET teachers were trained on the Digital Pedagogy Package (November 2024-January 2025), school managers and teachers were trained on the creation and use of 'Digital Archive', and teacher training was provided on topics such as the use of digital tools/technologies in teaching; creating digital learning materials; developing level exams via MesoVET.al; implementing gamification in digital teaching materials; blended learning approaches; twin transition concepts (digital and green) and the circular economy; and the PERMA model for managing not-for-profit organisations as a didactic tool for teachers[4]. Digitalisation Coordinators in SDUs were trained on supporting users of digital platforms, digital assessments and user reporting, including Moodle partner Wide Services (June to December 2024).

Teachers in VET schools have been extensively trained over the past 2 years on green skills: over 266 instructors across agriculture, construction, tourism, energy and mechanics were certified in sustainable development, the circular economy, renewable energy, social responsibility, gender equality and work-based learning. All the teachers completing the Basics of Didactics in VET course are equipped to integrate green skills into their teaching, supported by a dedicated teaching package available on the NAVETQ website.

The 'SELFIEforTEACHERS' platform used for assessing the current digital competence level of teachers of general and vocational subjects in VET schools and areas for improvement was piloted with 17 VET schools. The initial VET qualification full course, 'Basics of Didactics in VET', was successfully completed, training 46 new teachers across 21 providers, with 38 certified. Additionally, there was continuing VET qualification for teachers of professional subjects, certifying 44 candidates.

With the support of GIZ, digital training sessions were held in 2024 for instructors at vocational centres.

Training and support for school staff

Training sessions for in-company instructors of companies (any size) in the field of agriculture and mechanics were organised, including several topics such as sustainable development and environmental sustainability, social sustainability and gender equality, technological developments in teaching, and work-based learning.

Management staff at VET schools received training and coaching on digital solutions for administrative processes, including the creation and use of the 'Digital Archive' – a tool designed to improve workflow

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[4] A framework designed to promote overall wellbeing in individuals through five core elements: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishments. It is implemented in various contexts, including education, leading to a positive and productive school environment.

efficiency via MesoVET's functionalities. They were also trained on the role of leadership in blended learning environments.

Digitalisation Coordinators were equipped to support platform users, manage digital assessments and generate user reports, with training provided in collaboration with the certified Moodle partner, Wide Services. Additionally, Digital Coordinators from six partner VET providers completed training on digital teaching tools and a refresher course on their responsibilities as MesoVET administrators, delivered by Wide Services.

Lifelong guidance

The online Community of Practice 'Frymëso'[5] has been actively sharing curriculum updates and providing practical teaching advice. The introduction of the new 'Let's Discuss Together' category on the platform has fostered greater collaboration among members. Additionally, students have been guided on how to enrol in short online courses available on MesoVET.

Several peer learning activities have been organised by MECI, NAVETQ and NAES for career orientation coordinators to exchange best practices and enhance their skills, and a practical guide has been developed to help them clarify the responsibilities of career orientation coordinators in VET and to promote collaboration with School Development Unit Coordinators (SDUs)[6] and other education stakeholders.

A campaign promoting lifelong learning to young people and employers was also conducted by RISI Albania. Through digital marketing, 10 success stories were highlighted so as to demonstrate the positive impact of career guidance and skills development initiatives, emphasising the benefits of lifelong learning for a smooth transition and reorientation within the labour market.

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[5] Since September 2020, the 'Skills for Jobs' project has enabled the 'Frymëso' Facebook group, an online environment to promote communities of practice for VET in Albania. This initiative arose from the need of teachers and other VET professionals to connect with each other at a time when they are facing challenges in combining different learning methods.
[6] SDUs, established over the 2021-2022 period in all VET schools, are in charge of CPD, curriculum development, business school liaison, career guidance, project development and implementation, and student tracking analysis.

ETF Working together Learning for life
European Training Foundation

EU priority 5: VET underpinned by quality assurance

No formal commitments were made in the 2024-2025 OD NIP. However, Albania continued to make progress in quality assurance within VET.

The self-assessment reports from all VET institutions were analysed by NAVETQ and external experts, and a National summary report on the self-assessment process and results was prepared and published on the NAVETQ website. The results highlighted increased awareness among 41 public and private VET providers about the importance of self-assessment, while also providing recommendations for improvement for each assessed field.

The accreditation process for 10 VET institutions delivering 42 professional qualifications has been completed and accreditation certificates were issued. To ensure the quality and transparency of this process, 30 external evaluators were further trained, certified and prepared by NAVETQ to assess accredited institutions in line with international best practices and sustainable development principles.

Experience from the accreditation process indicated that there was a need to revise the accreditation standards and criteria. Consequently, the revision process began in the first quarter of 2025. On 3 July 2025, the new Order of the Minister of Economy, Culture and Innovation No 845 'On the Accreditation Standards, criteria and procedures of VET providers' was approved, marking a pivotal step in aligning accreditation standards with evolving educational and labour market needs.

Recently, in accordance with the legal framework governing the field of VET (Law No 15/2017 'On Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Albania' and Decision of the Council of Ministers No 755 dated 9 December 2021 'On determining the documentation, procedures and criteria for conducting state inspections in the vocational education and training system'), the Directorate of Vocational Skills Policies and VET Inspection established the VET Inspection Sector, which, starting from September 2025, has begun inspecting public VET providers.

Performance against EU targets

The data for the employment rate of 2024-2025 VET graduates from the national tracking survey show that the employment rate for IVET graduates is 77.3 % (graduates attending university studies are excluded).

The NAES collects and provides administrative data from Public Vocational Schools regarding work-based learning during vocational education at upper secondary level. Out of 2 987 fourth-year students who are in the process of graduating in the 2024-2025 academic year, at least 2 185 of them have completed professional practice in a business setting. Since the majority of business-based internships take place during the third year, the data used for this target group refers to the previous academic year (2023-2024) regarding their professional practice in businesses.

According to NAES data, 167 initial vocational education and training (IVET) students participated in exchange programmes during 2024, out of a total of 14 892 students enrolled in public VET in the 2024-2025 academic year (if calculated for one academic year). Meanwhile, if the number of students who participated in exchange programmes during 2023 (194 students) is included, the total reaches 361, accounting for 2.4 %.

VET Recommendation Indicator	Country (year)	EU-27 (2022)	EU target (2025)
1. Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20-34 years age group) (%)	77.3 %	79.7 %	82 %
2. Recent IVET graduates (20-34 years age group) with work-based learning experience as part of their VET (%)		60.1 %	60 %
3. Learners in IVET who benefited from learning mobility abroad (%)	1.12 %	2.1 % (2021)	8 %

Source (1): Key indicators on VET | CEDEFOP (europa.eu)

Source (2): NAES

Source (3): NAES

Albania's NIP implementation 2021-2025: an overview

Recap of NIP commitments

Thematic priorities	NIP Commitments 2021-2025
Agile and resilient VET, adaptive to labour market needs	
Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses	Develop new or revise existing Occupational Standards and Curricula.
Establishing and developing skills intelligence systems, including graduate tracking	Development and operationalisation of the LMIO, as an internal system that collects and analyses information from administrative data, labour market data and economic data provided by INSTAT, the tax office, NAES, other ministries and private employment agencies.
	Periodic sector skills needs, on the basis of requirements of the established and functioning SSCs.
	Regular SNAs at national level (every 2 years) to inform short-term and mid-term planning and the development of skills supply.
	Conduct a SNA for digital and green transition skills in occupations.
	Regular regional skills needs assessments.
	Conceptualise, design and implement a skills forecasting instrument.
	Annual VET graduate tracking.
	Conceptualise, design and implement the analysis on labour and skills impact for the strategic investments – as part of the LMIO (Durrës Yacht Marine, Vlora Airport including Kukes).
	Assessment of the LLL situation in Albania (SNA, INSTAT surveys, NAES databases and training provided by public and private providers).
	Develop an assessment of the NEET profile in Albania to regularly update the characterisation of young NEETs as a tool to facilitate the implementation of the YG Scheme.
	Establish and consolidate the Policy Research Unit.
	Consolidate and improve the pool of professional staff for VET in MoFE, NAES and NAVETQ, and in the management bodies or business development units at the VET providers.
Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET	Elaborate and consult policy briefs with all relevant national, regional and sectoral stakeholders and social partners (including NC VET and NCL Commission on Employment and VET), in line with the evidence and signals produced by the LMIO and VET system developments.
	Establishment of SSCs in identified priority sectors (ICT, Tourism, Agriculture).

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	Capacity building of SSC members to improve their concrete contribution to adapting VET programmes (qualifications).
	SSCs propose new qualifications, revise existing ones, and support the development and validation of qualifications in three sectors.
Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships	Develop and deliver policies and procedures for the certification of champion companies and in-company instructors where work-based learning can happen (based on the current approved work-based learning regulation).
	Establishment of cooperating mechanisms and instruments between VET providers of teaching staff and in-company instructors and business champions for implementation of work-based learning.
	Clustering of VET providers according to sectors with the aim of advancing and improving implementation of work-based learning in partnership with business champions (sectoral communities of practice).
	Strengthen the development units within the facilities of the VET provider in partnership with business champions.
	Train in-company instructors to be training on the implementation of work-based learning.
	Teachers at VET institutions become acquainted with companies and other employers of VET graduates, by organising intensive visits and short internships for VET teachers in companies, in a first stage, on a voluntary basis, and for teachers of technical subjects dedicated further training courses in specific and advanced technical areas (internships, continuing training courses, R&D and prototype development, market research).
	Strengthening VET providers' steering boards in order to support better linkage of VET providers with local/regional labour market needs.

Flexible and inclusive VET, providing progression and lifelong learning opportunities

Diversifying modes of learning: face-to-face, digital and/or blended learning; adaptable/flexible training formats	
	Institutional support by central institutions and donors to accredited VET for a quality implementation of blended learning.
Learners' possibilities for accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally	Consolidate the legal framework on lifelong learning for improved permeability and better integration into the labour market (IVET and C-VET system structure and criteria, RPL, outsourcing).
	Promote lifelong learning among citizens (LLL weeks, career and occupational fairs).
	Conduct a feasibility study and develop a national roadmap on LLL.
	Develop incentives to support the pathways for flexible learning opportunities across the further education and training and higher education sectors, including through part-time, online and modular learning, to further enable individuals to participate in Lifelong Learning (individual learning accounts, vouchers, etc.).
	Design and deliver an e-learning platform for adults.

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	Upskilling and reskilling programmes for the employed workforce Business Investment Development Strategy (BIDS).
	Implementation of EPPs with the focus on providing LLL opportunities to job seekers (internships, community employment programmes, adult learning).
	The roadmap of the priority sectors for RPL implementation drafted and approved.
	Selected providers trained and piloting the selected model of RPL.

Innovative and excellent VET

Modernising infrastructure for vocational training	
Improving the digital infrastructure of VET provision	Infrastructure provision, hosting and maintenance through: a) Hosting and supporting platforms as a teaching and monitoring system: MesoVET as a nationwide digital platform for VET schools; b) Management information system (extended from 'SMIP' for VET); c) Hardware and Internet access for blended learning in classrooms (digital and green); Equipping schools with hardware, software and Internet access.
	Upgrade equipment in selected public VET providers to accommodate learning in new/revised curricula based on Green and Digital Elements.
	Upgrade equipment for MoFE, NAES and NAVETQ to ensure compliance with Green and Digital Elements.
	Digital promotion campaigns and promotion of the green transition in VET (recreational attitudes).

Attractive VET, based on modern and digitalised provision

Systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers	Training and coaching of teachers on blended learning through an accredited MOOC that is offered to all VET teachers and a cascade modality of training and coaching.
Supporting teachers and trainers for and through digital	Training of teachers for digital content creation by fostering teachers' digital skills through training, workshops, tutorials and awareness raising on what digital content represents and how it can upgrade teaching and learning processes.
	Training and hands on coaching and mentoring of teachers on platforms' use.
	Training and exchange between Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and Curricular Development (CD) coordinators through the establishment of a highly engaging Community of Practice among CPD and CD coordinators.
Lifelong guidance	Optimise career guidance in VET provision.

Summary of policy developments 2021-2025

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

During the NIP implementation period, Albania committed to modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses, establishing and developing skills intelligence systems, including graduate tracking, engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships, and reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships.

Albania completed the referencing of the AQF to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), with the EQF now included on all vocational certificates.

The development of new or revised Occupational Standards and Curricula has progressed steadily. The National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications was enriched with new professional qualifications, and an improved format for qualification standards was developed, incorporating assessment modalities and the weighting of each learning unit. Additionally, digital skills were integrated into the developed and revised occupational standards and vocational qualification standards. The National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications has been formally adopted and published, and provisions are in place to periodically revise it every 4 years or at shorter intervals as needed.

Stakeholder engagement and partnerships in VET have been institutionalised at national level through SSCs and at provider level through SDUs. Two sector committees, ICT and Tourism, and Hospitality, actively contribute to enriching and consolidating the existing VET offerings. A joint ministerial order between the Ministry for Energy and MECI was issued for the establishment and composition of the Energy Sectoral Committee, and the Committee will be activated during 2025. A preliminary study, including a mapping of relevant stakeholders, is in process to support the establishment of a Sector Skills Committee in Agriculture.

Progress has been made in reinforcing work-based learning (WBL), including apprenticeships, within IVET. The established SDUs have institutionalised business – school cooperation through coordinators responsible for CPD, curriculum development, business liaison, career guidance, project development and implementation, and student tracking and analysis. Standardised mechanisms for systematic WBL delivery and a manual outlining a quality criterion for school-business cooperation were developed by NAVETQ. Business liaisons in SDUs received training, MoUs were signed between businesses and schools, and company mentors were trained and certified. Additionally, a network of VET professionals – AFPro[7] – was established in three priority sectors: tourism, agriculture and ICT. The restructuring of VET school steering boards has been completed, aiming to enhance business contribution in VET and improve the overall VET offer. Work is ongoing to design a unified model for the SDUs' annual planning process, to strengthen their planning and monitoring capabilities.

A dual VET (DVET) system was launched on a pilot basis for the 2024-2025 academic year across 10 vocational schools in 8 regions, focusing on four strategic sectors: tourism, communication and information technology, transport and energy.

Progress has been made in preparatory work for establishing a Skills Intelligence System to support more informed policy-making and decision-making. Several modules have already been populated with data and findings from various studies, including annual National Tracking Surveys of VET graduates, SNAs in the ICT, tourism and hospitality sectors, sectoral labour market analyses on green and digital skills, as well as regional labour market analyses covering the northern, south-eastern, south-western and central regions. A comprehensive national SNA was initiated in 2024, with results

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[7] AFPro (www.afpro.al) is an initiative of NAES and UNICEF to establish a platform that unites students, teachers, entrepreneurs, businesses, young professionals and policy-makers to create a strong, sustainable community. Focusing on creativity, innovation and collaboration, it allows VET students to share ideas, improve their skills and create new opportunities by engaging with businesses and professionals in the information technology, tourism-hospitality and agriculture sectors. AFPro operates nationally and regionally. As of 2025, 43 experts are part of the platform and over 600 young people have participated in its activities.

expected to be published by October 2025. The LMIO platform is not yet in place, but it is expected to be soon institutionalised and accessible after the Prime Ministerial Order issued in March 2025, which requires the establishment of an inter-institutional working group tasked with identifying and regulating the data generation to be included in the LMIO platform.

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

Albania has committed to diversifying modes of learning and expanding learners' opportunities for the accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal pathways.

There has been progress in improving the flexibility and permeability of the secondary education system in Albania. A policy assessment was conducted to explore ways to re-engage NEET youth in education, support the completion of unfinished studies, and enhance access to vocational and technical training programmes. A key development was the introduction of a new policy enabling students to transfer from general high schools to vocational schools during their first year. This policy allows transfers up to the end of grade 10, helping students align their education with their career interests. The revised curricula and transfer options began to be implemented in grade 10 in the 2024-2025 academic year. Starting from the 2025-2026 academic year, students who complete grade 10 in general secondary education will also be eligible to transfer into grade 11 of vocational secondary education.

The implementation of Employment Promotion Programmes (EPPs) focusing on Lifelong Learning (LLL) opportunities for job seekers has also progressed well. Multiple targeted programmes were launched, including: support for the continuous learning of unemployed individuals through tailored curricula in basic digital skills, structured into levels and modules; a one-year community work initiative; a fully subsidised ICT training programme; a self-employment scheme piloted in four regions, which includes financial support of nearly EUR 5 000 and training in business plan development; a social reintegration programme targeting long-term unemployed individuals (jobless for over 6 months), particularly women in administrative areas without employment office coverage.

The piloting of the Youth Guarantee Scheme commenced in three municipalities to support NEETs. The initial wave of registrations took place in November and December 2023. As of May 2025, 1 013 young people (56 % female, 44 % male) had registered under the scheme. The Youth Guarantee Action Plan was revised in January 2025, extending its implementation until the end of 2025 and scaling efforts from municipal to regional levels. A dedicated Communication Strategy for the Youth Guarantee Scheme (January 2025 to June 2026) has been developed to raise awareness among young people.

A financial mechanism has been created and implemented to support the (re)registration of out-of-school youth and to prevent early school dropout. A review of the Early Warning System methodology and socio-emotional education was carried out, accompanied by capacity building for educational staff in 14 vocational schools. A pilot dropout prevention programme is now active in 12 vocational education schools.

EU priority 3: Innovative and excellent VET

Albania has committed to modernising the infrastructure for vocational training and promoting sustainability and green practices within VET institutions. While progress has been made in enhancing digital infrastructure for VET provision, developments in greening and sustainability have advanced at a slower pace.

The primary guiding document for digital transformation in the VET system is the Roadmap for VET modernisation through ICT, which outlines a clear vision and future scenarios. Based on this roadmap, investments have been made in digital infrastructure across VET institutions. These include the

provision of smart TVs to support blended learning, the installation of functional Wi-Fi systems, and the delivery of PCs and other IT equipment to vocational schools and VTCs.

The virtual learning platform MesoVET.al has been developed and continues to grow in usage, with plans underway to formally integrate it into the institutions responsible for VET in Albania, ensuring its long-term sustainability. Additionally, a management information system (MIS) for VET has been established and is undergoing continuous improvements to support efficient service delivery and administration.

To support evidence-based planning and monitoring, a dedicated assessment instrument for ICT solutions in VET modernisation was validated and disseminated to all 46 VET providers in the country. This tool generated individual assessment reports and digital profiles for each institution, enabling tailored follow-up and strategic interventions.

Both public and private investments have contributed to the improvement and expansion of digital infrastructure in VET providers, reinforcing Albania's commitment to building a modern, inclusive and digitally capable VET system.

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

In its 2021-2025 OD NIP, Albania committed to supporting teachers and trainers in and through digital tools, as well as strengthening lifelong guidance.

A revised institutional system for initial and continuous teacher training in VET is now operational through the CPD Coordinators embedded within SDUs. Digital learning and teaching have been systematically integrated into the 30-day training course 'Basics of Didactics in VET', which is compulsory for all newly recruited VET teachers.

Ongoing teacher training initiatives cover a wide array of digital topics, including the Digital Pedagogy Package, the use of tools such as Canva, Kahoot, and Articulate Rise, the creation of digital learning materials, the development of level exams through MesoVET, gamification in digital teaching, blended learning, the twin transition (green and digital), the circular economy, etc.

Digitalisation experts, pedagogical specialists and VET teachers have collaborated on the development and digitalisation of vocational subjects. To support digital integration, digital focal points have been trained on Moodle administration to facilitate the digitalisation of teaching processes within schools.

In support of blended learning in adult education, NAVETQ has developed and disseminated methodological guidelines, ensuring consistent and high-quality implementation across providers.

With the support of GIZ, digital training was held in 2024 for instructors at vocational centres.

Several peer learning activities have been conducted among career orientation coordinators to promote the exchange of best practices for lifelong guidance. A practical guide was developed to clearly define the responsibilities of career orientation coordinators in VET and to foster collaboration with development unit coordinators and other stakeholders. Additionally, a communications campaign was launched to promote LLL to young people and employers, highlighting the importance of continuous skills development for sustainable employment.

EU priority 5: VET underpinned by quality assurance

Although no commitment was made in the 2021-2025 NIP regarding quality assurance, it has remained a central focus in the development of the VET system.

As of March 2025, approximately 40 % of VET providers have completed their institutional accreditation process. Additionally, accreditation was successfully granted for 42 professional qualifications, with corresponding certificates issued. The progress made through these processes highlighted the need to revise existing accreditation standards and criteria to ensure continued

relevance and effectiveness. As a result, a comprehensive revision process began in Q1 2025 to update and refine the standards guiding institutional and qualification-level accreditation in VET.

Conclusions

The measures envisaged in 2021-2025 OD NIP for Albania are all under implementation, but they stand at different development stages.

Good progress has been made on VET stakeholders' engagement, strengthening partnerships and reinforcing WBL, including apprenticeships in VET and introduction of dual VET in 10 VET schools. The implementation of EPPs with the focus on providing lifelong learning (LLL) opportunities to jobseekers (internships, community employment programmes, adult learning) for better permeability and better integration in the labour market has also progressed well, including the start of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee Scheme in three regions of Albania in support of NEETs. The VET system has progressed in terms of improved digital infrastructure for VET provision and enhancing the CPD of teachers in the VET system, including digital competences.

The LMIO is currently offering information to VET and skills institutions, but the platform is not yet operational and accessible to the public. An inter-institutional working group is currently being established to institutionalise the platform. Progress has been reported in terms of making VET institutions sustainable and green, and supporting the green transition in VET, and further acceleration is needed in this respect. Despite the adoption of the legal basis regarding the system for recognising prior learning, no further progress was made, although this is a priority in the 2023-2030 National Strategy for Employment and Skills and 2021-2025 NIP.

The main future challenges related to these commitments can be summarised as follows:

Consolidation of Achieved Results. This encompasses the establishment of new SSCs in energy, agriculture and other priority sectors in Albania and enhancing their role on validating occupational standards and qualifications in line with labour market dynamics; further strengthening the role of SDUs and their coordinators, particularly regarding WBL and CPD; expansion of the National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications with new qualifications; broadening and nationwide enhancing of the EPPs and their LLL opportunities for jobseekers;

Finalisation of Reforms and Institutionalisation. This involves completing the optimisation of the VET schools network, which has so far been finalised in four regions (Korça, Elbasan, Durrës – Kavajë, Rrëshen – Rrubic Region, with the transition of the non-public school St. Joseph the Worker into a public school, based on the ministerial Order from MECI in May 2025) and remains ongoing in others; the expansion of dual VET (DVET) across all vocational schools and for all profiles aligned with private sector and local labour market needs; establishing a fully functional and up-to-date LMIO that is accessible and valuable to all labour market stakeholders, including unemployed jobseekers and particularly NEETs; extension of the Youth Guarantee Scheme to additional regions in Albania to meet the NEET reduction targets for 2030; institutionalisation of the MesoVET.al virtual learning platform as a platform operating under NAES (now under the S4J project).

Acceleration of Other Reforms and Measures. This includes advancing the digital and, comparatively more intensively, the green transition through anticipation mechanisms to identify challenges such as curriculum revisions, emerging qualification needs, and the readiness of VET providers to support these transitions, both in current teaching and learning practices and future outlooks. It also involves the implementation of VNFIL aligned with the EQF, as well as the introduction and integration of micro-credentials into the AQF, in support of the efforts made for the integration of LLL qualifications into the AQF.

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