

MONITORING THE VET RECOMMENDATION AND THE OSNABRÜCK DECLARATION

NORTH MACEDONIA 2025

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NORTH MACEDONIA COUNTRY BRIEF

Introduction

This document ('country brief') summarises the results of the third cycle of the ETF monitoring in five candidate countries¹ on two policy documents: the EU [Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience \(2020\)](#) and the [Osnabrück Declaration on VET as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies \(2020\)](#).

The ETF monitoring of the Recommendation and the Declaration is guided by an integrated framework structured along five EU priorities covering both policy documents: agile and resilient vocational education and training (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 working on these priorities, or some of them, in their national implementation plans.

This country brief is structured in two parts: the first one summarises findings of the monitoring covering policy developments in 2024 and 2025; the second one provides an overview of NIPs implementation progress since 2021 by EU priority area.

Aiming to align its reporting and monitoring activities with those of EU Member States, North Macedonia joined this process in 2022. This report summarises the main policy developments in North Macedonia in 2024–2025, in relation to the thematic priorities identified in the country's National Implementation Plan (available [here](#)).

In 2024, regular parliamentary elections were held, resulting in a victory for the right-wing political party VMRO-DPMNE. A new government was subsequently formed, with Hristijan Mickoski appointed as the Prime Minister. Vesna Janevska was named the new Minister of Education and Science. The country's EU accession process remains stalled. This is also linked to the still ongoing disputes with Bulgarian political elites concerning Macedonian national identity and the origins of the Macedonian language.

The Government has placed a strong emphasis on the development of 'skills education and training' in the National Reform Agenda (Government of RNM, 2024). This area is highlighted as a key expected outcome within the Human Capital pillar, one of the five main reform fields identified in the agenda. As key indicators for progress in this area, the reform document outlines the following: 1. To strengthen the education system to address skills mismatches, increase access to and quality of VET, and improve access to work-based learning and dual education; 2. To increase participation in adult education and improve validation of non-formal and informal learning; 3. To improve the quality assurance in secondary and higher education.

This document was prepared by Ognen Spasovski in cooperation with key VET stakeholders in the country.

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

¹ Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye.

Main policy developments in 2024–2025

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

A major policy development occurred in 2025 when the Parliament adopted several new laws crucial to the advancement of vocational education and training. These include the Law on VET (Official Gazette of RNM, 2025), the Law on Adult Education (Official Gazette of RNM, 2025b) and the Law on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (Official Gazette of RNM, 2025c). In addition, significant amendments were adopted to the Law on Secondary Education (Official Gazette of RNM, 2025d). Following several years of preparation, the operationalisation of these laws enables the implementation of numerous measures prioritised in the country's National Implementation Plan (NIP)².

In 2025, by decision of the Minister of Education, the Concept document for vocational education and training (MOES, 2025) was adopted, showing an important strategic step in guiding future developments in the area.

Key developments during the 2024–2025 period include significant improvements in the area of work-based learning, accompanied by enhanced stakeholder engagement in VET, the initiation of policy reforms related to the introduction of the vocational matura and the introduction of career counselling services for students in secondary education.

In relation to the development and updating of learning resources and materials, relevant institutions – MOES, VET schools and the Centre for the Development of Vocational Education (CDVE)³ – continued the regular implementation of activities in this domain. Furthermore, in the context of 'graduate tracking', the first national Tracer Study Report was prepared, laying the groundwork for evidence-based monitoring of graduates' transitions from education to employment.

Modernisation of VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

In order to modernise VET standards – and subsequently the programmes – the 2025 Law on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) mandates that qualification standards must be revised at least every five years, in collaboration with employers and unions. With the adoption of this law, the regulation has become operational, enabling regular updates aligned with evolving labour market needs.

In 2024 and 2025, one teaching programme (for one subject) from each of the 14 vocational sectors in the existing VET programmes was updated by the CDVE (in cooperation with VET-relevant institutions), incorporating content focused on the development of green and digital skills. In addition, programmes for five new qualifications, fully aligned with green and digital skills, are being developed and will be implemented in the newly established Regional VET Centres in Štip and Bitola.

In the context of modernising curricula, nine extracurricular modules related to green skills were developed in 2024 across various sectors.

One important reform in VET involves introducing the vocational matura (as well as an art matura), which necessitates the development and implementation of appropriate examination programmes. According to the Law on VET, students completing a four-year VET programme may choose to take the State vocational matura, which grants access to higher education, or School vocational matura, leading to the labour market. Students finishing two- and three-year VET programmes will take the Completed (final) exam, which leads to the labour market. In 2025, the State Examination Centre developed a Concept document on the exams at the end of secondary education, which postulates

² The country brief summarising the main policy developments in 2021 and 2022 can be found on the ETF website: [North Macedonia](#). The country brief about 2023 developments can be found at this link: [North Macedonia](#). Detailed information is available in the country's policy developments fiches for 2021–2022 [here](#). Policy development fiches for 2023 are available [here](#).

³ With the adoption of the new Law on VET, the previous VET Centre was transformed into a Centre for the Development of Vocational Education (CDVE).

the modalities for implementation of the exams for state general (gymnasium), vocational and art matura (SEC, 2025).

During 2024 and 2025, the CDVE, MOES and BDE, in cooperation with the business sector, developed a standard template ('model') for subjects for dual education. The law provides for each VET school to appoint a coordinator for 'practical education and training', i.e. work-based learning.

Furthermore, the new Law on VET operationalised measures for career counselling and guidance. As part of this reform, every secondary school should hire a career counsellor.

Development and updating of learning resources and materials

Aiming to modernise vocational education programmes, in 2024 the Centre for the Development of Vocational Education, in collaboration with employers and companies, developed 14 handbooks covering all 14 vocational sectors (according to the NQF). For one part of the study plan for all of the qualifications, the school has autonomy to define learning outcomes and to develop content and methods of instruction, which will match the qualification-related specifics of the school and local labour market. This part of the programme is called 'School-programmed content', and all schools are obliged to develop it for all qualifications. The above-mentioned handbooks include an already prepared standard template ('model') for modular units focused on green skills and sustainable development, which teachers can use as a model for this 'school-programmed content' in teaching subjects related to any qualification.

Establishment and development of skills intelligence systems, including graduate tracking

In December 2024, the first report from the initial Tracer Study⁴ in the country was completed. This report should serve as a foundational reference for future planning of VET and is considered a promising and important tool for tracking the career paths of graduates and aligning VET with labour market demands. However, the first wave of the study faced a challenge in the form of a low response rate from graduates surveyed six months after graduation.

To strengthen this measure, the MOES has mandated that, as of academic year 2025/26, school-based career counsellors, in cooperation with classroom teachers, are responsible for administering the survey and maintaining records on graduates six months after they leave school. This requirement is formalised in the new Rulebook on Career Counselling (MOES, 2025c).

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

The laws on VET and on Secondary Education provide a solid basis for further improvement of WBL. The law on VET establishes a system of dual education that is based on WBL principles and stronger partnership with all stakeholders in VET.

The national field campaign 'Learn Smart, Work Professionally', aimed at promoting WBL in IVET at a local level, continues to be implemented by municipalities. As a result, the enrolment policies in VET schools are planned in accordance with the labour market needs at a local level using the analysis conducted by the municipalities in cooperation between VET schools and companies.

Employers are also directly involved in shaping the vocational education system by serving as members of the governing boards of the Centres for the Development of Vocational Education, where they are called to actively contribute to the design and revision of vocational curricula.

⁴ MOES, (2024). Internal report provided by WeGlobal on the realisation of the EU-funded project 'EU for Youth'. The report is not published. More details about the project activities can be found at this link: <https://eu4youth.mk/reports/>.

Strengthening work-based learning, including apprenticeships

With the adoption of the new Law on VET, a formal system of dual education has been established, grounded in WBL and strong partnership of all stakeholders in VET⁵. The cooperation between schools and the employers/companies at local level is developing, providing conditions for further expansion of the system and practices related to mandatory WBL and ferial practice⁶ (for all VET programmes). In this period, the policy of increasing the ratio of enrolment quotas favouring the VET programmes in secondary school continued, fostered by the municipalities and the Government, as well as the scholarship for VET students. As a result of these measures, in both 2024 and 2025, the trend of a gradual increase in the number of classes implementing practical and work-based learning continued, with the number of schools and companies participating in VET programmes with an 'increased number of practice classes' also following this trend. In the 2025/26 academic year, 71% of students enrolled in secondary education attended vocational schools⁷.

Developments in the area of strengthening WBL were significantly supported by the Education for employment⁸ project, which aimed at:

- improvement of formal secondary vocational education through strengthened cooperation and partnership between the public and private sector;
- improvement of the non-formal education training available, where the primary beneficiaries are unemployed youth as well as people from vulnerable categories.

The project also developed and supported the campaign 'Learn smart, work professionally', which helps to promote and improve VET among students and schools in the country.

The described developments, including the model for dual education and the Handbooks for all vocational sectors – developed in cooperation between relevant educational institutions and the business sector – raise expectations for the improvement of the quality of WBL and dual education. Among the activities aimed at improving the quality of WBL, the CDVE organised an ETF Forum on Quality Assurance in VET in Skopje in May (peer visit focused on the quality assurance process in Work-based Learning), which resulted in a thematic report⁹.

⁵ More details in the Country Brief 2024, available at: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/document-attachments/monitoring-vet-recommendation-and-osnabruck-declaration-north-macedonia-2024> and in ETF (forthcoming), Work-based learning in North Macedonia – An assessment per EU quality standards.

⁶ In-company period of WBL at the end of the school year that all VET students need to undertake.

⁷ Source: MOES internal annual report.

⁸ The project is funded by the Swiss Embassy (NDC) and Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, and is realised in cooperation with the MOES and the CDVE, in partnership with the Macedonian Centre for Civic Education, the Macedonian Education Fund, the Economic Chamber of Macedonia and the University of Zurich. It started in 2018 and will last 10 years. More information can be found at the project website: <https://e4e.mk/en/home/>.

⁹ More on the report can be found at this link: <https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/events/peer-visit-etf-forum-quality-assurance-vocational-education-and-training-vet-north-macedonia>.

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

Major developments under this thematic priority include the fact that the measures of Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) became operational with the adoption of the Law on Adult education (AE) (Official Gazette of RNM, 2025b). Additionally, progress has been made in the sphere of inclusiveness through the new Law on SE (Official Gazette of RNM, 2025d), which introduces educational assistance for students with disabilities, and mediators to support inclusion of Roma students.

In 2025, the Minister of Education adopted the Strategy on Adult Education 2025–2030 (CAE, 2025), which aims at improving lifelong opportunities and inclusion of adults in education processes.

In the context of ‘Financial and non-financial incentives to learners’, the MOES provides scholarships for students enrolled in VET programmes. For 2025, funding has been provided for 1 570 students in dual VET, with each monthly scholarship amounting to approximately EUR 60 (around 8% of the country’s net average salary)¹⁰.

Using learning-outcome-based approaches and modularisation

The new Law on VET postulates that each qualification and study programme should be developed in a modular format. A module is defined as an independent and self-contained unit of learning, designed around clearly defined learning outcomes. In parallel with the preparation of the law, by 2024, eight such modules were developed, specifically targeting programmes related to digitalisation in VET. These modules aim to enhance the flexibility, relevance and responsiveness of VET programmes to evolving labour market demands and technological advancements.

Developing and applying partial qualifications

Developing and applying partial qualifications, lesser than full qualifications, was not among the NIP priorities. However, in alignment with positive international practices in VET, the new Law on NQF introduces micro-credentials as official records of achieved learning outcomes within a small, pre-defined and self-contained scope of learning. Micro-credentials are designed to develop specific skills and can be obtained through courses delivered by educational institutions or training organisations. They may function as standalone qualifications or be combined into a broader set of connected micro-credentials, offering flexible pathways for upskilling and lifelong learning. The Strategy on AE (CAE, 2025) foresees micro-credentials among the main tools and mechanisms providing opportunities to adults for inclusion and progress in learning and training processes, as well as in the labour market.

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

In 2025, several new laws and the Strategy on AE have been adopted, which pave the way to the establishment of a system for VNFIL:

- The Law on NQF postulates for the possibility to obtain qualifications through VNFIL.
- The Law on AE with a separate chapter thoroughly regulates the establishment of the system and VNFIL arrangements.
- The Law on VET regulates the functioning of the departments for validation in Regional VET Centres (RVETCs).

¹⁰ State Statistical Office, average salary for March 2025.

The Law on NQF postulates that through validation, candidates may obtain a qualification equivalent to formal education from NQF level 1 (diploma for completed primary education – equivalent to European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 1), as well as certificates for vocational qualification (certificate for occupation)¹¹ up to level 5B (equivalent to EQF level 5). The by-laws derived from the law were adopted in 2025 and published on the website of the Adult Education Centre¹².

The Strategy on AE (CAE, 2025) has VNFIL among the key areas in focus, in attempts to provide accessible learning pathways to adults and to recognise their competencies obtained non-formally and informally. This is seen as a powerful measure for improving social inclusion and meeting the labour market demands.

At the same time as the preparation on the relevant laws in the last few years, the work of the stakeholders in 2024 resulted in the verification of six vocational qualifications which could be implemented in VNFIL arrangements (leading to certificates for vocational qualifications). Those qualifications may be obtained in the RVETC that have them as part of its study programmes. These qualifications ready for validation are:

- RVETC in Ohrid: qualifications for Barista and Pizza master;
- RVETC in Tetovo: Locksmith and Web administrator;
- RVETC in Kumanovo: Producer of milk products and Tractor driver.

As part of the implementation of the VNFIL measures, piloting activities were carried out in the mentioned RVETCs. Specifically, validation was piloted with eight candidates at the RVETC in Kumanovo, four candidates at the RVETC in Ohrid and four candidates at the RVETC in Tetovo. Out of the total 16 candidates, two were women.

In parallel, a comprehensive set of Rulebooks covering all aspects of the VNFIL process has been developed. These Rulebooks are currently awaiting approval and formal adoption by the Secretariat for Regulations.

During 2025, the processes for verifying programmes for validation and accrediting institutions (providers of validation) were initiated, in accordance with the new regulations. In addition, a public call for establishing commissions for validation has been announced.

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

Following the reform on inclusive education in primary education from 2019, the new Law on SE (Official Gazette of RNM, 2025d) postulates for mandatory educational assistance to students with special educational needs due to disability, as well as for educational mediators for Roma students who are from vulnerable families or were out of education for a longer time. The by-laws derived from the law were adopted in 2025, and in the 2025/26 school year, educational assistants were engaged for the first time in secondary vocational schools.

The amendments to the Law on SE also mandate that schools, including VET schools, must establish two interconnected inclusive teams, responsible for coordinating and implementing inclusive practices and individualised support for students.

- The School Inclusive Team: this team is composed of one professional staff member (the school pedagogue, psychologist, social worker or sociologist), one teacher from among the school's teaching staff, one student from the student council, two parents or legal guardians, the career counsellor, a special educator and rehabilitator and the head of the secondary school. In vocational secondary schools, a representative from the business community is also included in the School

¹¹ Certificate for vocational qualification could lead to the labour market, but not to progression in regular/formal education system.

¹² <https://cov.gov.mk/%d0%b4%d0%be%d0%ba%d1%83%d0%bc%d0%b5%d0%bd%d1%82%d0%b8/>

Inclusive Team. The team is responsible for planning and implementing inclusion-related activities at the level of the entire secondary school.

- The Inclusive Team for the Student (with a disability): this team consists of the student, the teachers of the student with disabilities for the subject areas for which an Individualised Education Plan (IEP) or a modified programme is being developed, the student's parent or legal guardian, one professional staff member (the school pedagogue, psychologist, social worker or sociologist), the special educator and rehabilitator and the student's educational assistant. In vocational secondary schools, the career counsellor is also included in the Inclusive Team. The Inclusive Team operates as long as needed, or until the student completes secondary education. The team focuses on the specific student, their classmates and the design and implementation of the student's IEP or modified programme.

The Inclusive Teams are responsible for developing an 'Individualised Educational Plan' for each student with a disability. The law also postulates on reasonable adaptation of the conditions in schools and employers to the needs of the student(s), as well as how the school staff should assist employers-mentors in their work with students with disabilities.

Regarding teachers' professional development, two training cycles for teachers, running during the last few years, finished during 2024:

- Training in inclusive education, supported by UNDP, which included all teachers from the first three RVETCs.
- Training in modern pedagogy and andragogy for all teachers in vocational and practical subjects from all VET schools in the country (around 3 000). Training courses were held within the framework of the IPA-funded project 'Increasing Attractiveness, Inclusiveness and Relevance of VET and Adult Education'¹³.

During 2025, the MOES initiated another measure aimed at ensuring opportunities for inclusion in education and training for citizens serving sentences in penitentiary and correctional institutions. The MOES, in cooperation with the RVETCs, conducted a mapping of the educational levels of persons serving sentences in these institutions, aiming to provide them with opportunities for vocational education and training, financially supported by the MOES.

¹³ <https://mkvet.mk>;
<https://weglobal.org/en/i/increasing-attractiveness-inclusiveness-and-relevance-of-vet-and-adult-education>.

EU priority 3: Innovative and excellent VET

The main developments under this thematic priority concern advances with the Regional VET Centres (RVETCs). These developments generally refer to supporting Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) but are also closely related to the modernisation of vocational training infrastructure.

Supporting RVETCs is a strategic objective aimed at enhancing the quality and attractiveness of VET, while also strengthening the cooperation and engagement of VET stakeholders. In line with this goal – as outlined in the National Strategy for Education 2018–2025 (MOES, 2018) – five RVETCs were established by 2023. During 2024, two additional RVETCs were created through the transformation of existing VET schools in Štip and Bitola. These two new centres are currently in the process of defining technical specifications for equipment and are expected to become fully operational in the 2025/26 academic year.¹⁴

Based on the resources already existing in the school (teaching staff in certain sectors/qualifications, equipment, etc.) and the mutual analysis of the labour market (between MOES, municipality and companies), the relevant stakeholders decided that the following qualifications/occupations shall be offered to potential students and candidates in the RVETC in Štip:

- Electro technician for computer technique and automation;
- Electro technician – energy specialist;
- Technician for industrial mechatronics;
- Machine technician – technician for computerised control.

There is also a proposition for a new profile – fashion designer – in this RVETC, which should be introduced in the 2026/27 academic year.

For the RVETC in Bitola, the following qualifications/occupations are selected to be offered in the electro-technical sector:

- Electro technician for computer technique and automation;
- Electro technician – energy specialist;
- Technician for industrial mechatronics.

There are proposals for the introduction of new profiles in this RVETC, which should be implemented in the 2026/27 academic year: Computer technician for video games and virtual reality; Computer technician for the application of artificial intelligence.

For the machine sector, this RVETC is offering the qualifications/occupations for:

- Machine technician; and
- Technician for computerised control.

The RVETC in Bitola is working on a proposal for a new profile, 'Technician for energy efficiency and acclimatisation', which is expected to be implemented in the 2026/27 academic year.

With the establishment of these two additional RVETCs, there are now seven RVETCs operating in the country. As the country comprises eight regions, the establishment of the eighth RVETC is planned for Skopje in the near future.

The renovation and equipping of the RVETCs was supported by the central budget and EU-funded project 'Increasing Attractiveness, Inclusiveness and Relevance of VET and Adult Education'¹⁵, which

¹⁴ More details in the Country Brief 2024, available at: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/document-attachments/monitoring-vet-recommendation-and-osnabruck-declaration-north-macedonia-2024>.

¹⁵ <https://mkvet.mk>;
<https://weglobal.org/en/i/increasing-attractiveness-inclusiveness-and-relevance-of-vet-and-adult-education>

finished in 2024. The first three RVETCs (Kumanovo, Tetovo, Ohrid) are now functional and equipped with ICT infrastructure. The next two RVETCs (Veles, Strumica) have recently entered the initial phase of reconstruction. Equipment specific for VET activities has been installed in the VETCs in Kumanovo and Ohrid.

Capacity building activities, in the form of workshops for teaching staff, have been held in the first five RVETCs, with support from the ETF.

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

A significant advancement under this thematic priority has been made in the area of post-secondary education. The adoption of the Law on VET in 2025 paves the way for expanding VET programmes to NQF and EQF Level 5B.

Expanding VET programmes to EQF levels 5-8

With the adoption of the Laws on Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, important regulatory improvements in the area of post-secondary education have been made operational.

To enhance access and broaden the opportunities offered by post-secondary VET, the new Law on VET allows graduates from general secondary schools (gymnasiums) to enrol in post-secondary education programmes without the previously required minimum of three years of work experience. This change is expected to attract a wider range of candidates, including recent graduates, and better align post-secondary education with labour market needs¹⁶.

In 2025, the MOES adopted and published the Concept Document on Post-Secondary Education (MOES, 2025b). The document was developed in the last few years by experts engaged through the IPA-funded project Increasing Attractiveness, Inclusiveness and Relevance of VET and Adult Education¹⁷ in close collaboration with representatives from relevant institutions. The Concept Document outlines the key prerequisites and stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of post-secondary education. It provides a comprehensive framework for the structure, organisation and delivery of post-secondary VET programmes. In addition, it defines the necessary quality assurance measures aimed at ensuring the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the post-secondary education system.

In parallel with the preparation of the Law on VET and its adoption in the last few years, three new programmes for post-secondary education were formally adopted in 2025, introducing qualifications for: Driver Instructor, Professional Driver and Computer Administrator. These programmes are aligned with identified labour market demands and aim to provide practical, job-oriented competencies for learners seeking to enter or advance in technical and vocational professions. They should start to be delivered by verified schools and organisations in 2025/26.

In addition to these, a new programme is currently under development in the field of post-secondary non-formal education, designed to lead to the vocational qualification Specialist in Mechatronics for Trucks and Heavy Vehicles. This specialised programme addresses the growing need for highly skilled technicians in the automotive and transport sectors, especially in relation to the maintenance and servicing of advanced heavy-duty vehicles.

These regulatory developments significantly contribute to making vocational education and training more attractive and responsive to the needs of today's learners and labour market. The current legal framework allows for a diverse range of providers to offer post-secondary education – not only traditional educational institutions, but also private companies, training centres and other qualified organisations that meet the standards set by the Law on VET. This modern and flexible provision model supports the delivery of innovative, practice-oriented programmes tailored to specific sectoral needs. It also encourages stronger partnerships between education and industry, and promotes lifelong learning by opening opportunities for various target groups, including adult learners, professionals seeking upskilling and career changers.

¹⁶ More details in the Country Brief 2024, available at: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/document-attachments/monitoring-vet-recommendation-and-osnabruck-declaration-north-macedonia-2024>; and the PD fiche, available at: https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-12/ETF_Osnabrueck%20monitoring_PD%20fiche_%20N.Macedonia_2023.pdf.

¹⁷ <https://mkvet.mk>.

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

Several measures have been implemented to support the continuing professional development (CPD) of school staff, as previously described in Sections 2.5 and 3.2.

Specifically, training in inclusive education was provided with UNDP support to all teachers in the first three Regional Vocational Education and Training Centres (RVETCs), ensuring a more inclusive and modern learning environment. In addition, comprehensive training in modern pedagogy and andragogy was delivered to all teachers of vocational and practical subjects across all VET schools in the country (about 3 000), as part of the IPA-funded project Increasing Attractiveness, Inclusiveness and Relevance of VET and Adult Education¹⁸. These training courses aim at improving teachers' competencies in delivering vocational education and training. Another IPA-funded project, 'Improving Quality of Education', focuses in part on improving inclusive education practices, including in VET.

In addition, capacity-building activities, in the form of workshops for teachers, were conducted in the first five RVETCs, aiming to enhance teaching quality and support the modernisation of VET provision. Workshops were held with support by the ETF and EU-funded project 'EU for Youth'¹⁹.

During 2025, the BDE conducted training for career counsellors and career counselling teams in the schools. Additionally, training for career counsellors was also conducted by the NGO Association of Career Counsellors.

¹⁸ <https://mkvet.mk>;

<https://weglobal.org/en/j/increasing-attractiveness-inclusiveness-and-relevance-of-vet-and-adult-education>.

¹⁹ https://eu4youth.mk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Final_Report_TA-to-SRPC-EU-for-Youth_vF_June2025.pdf

EU priority 5. VET underpinned by quality assurance

The main policy developments under this thematic priority include the introduction of the state vocational matura, enhanced quality assurance of qualification standards and programmes through mandatory regular revisions and the pilot implementation of EQAVET quality indicators within the national education and training system.

Further developing national quality assurance systems

With the adoption of the Law on VET, the regulation on implementation of the State VET Matura became operational. This represents a significant advancement in assuring quality within the VET system. The implementation of the State VET Matura is scheduled to begin in the 2027/28 academic year. According to the regulation, the State VET Matura qualifies students for access to higher education, while the School VET Matura enables direct entry into the labour market. In addition, a Completed (Final) Exam is introduced for students completing two- and three-year VET programmes, providing formal recognition of their competencies, which also enables direct entry into the labour market.

Another key QA mechanism became operational with the adoption of the Law on the National Qualifications Framework. The law mandates that all qualification standards undergo a revision process at least once every five years, subject to validation and approval by the CDVE. This requirement ensures that qualifications remain aligned with evolving labour market needs and technological advancements.

Further efforts to align the national QA system with European standards are being led by the CDVE, in collaboration with other relevant national institutions. In this context, four quality indicators, as defined by the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), have been selected and are currently being piloted in a sample of VET schools. This initiative aims to test the applicability of EU QA indicators and enhance evidence-based planning, monitoring and continuous improvement in the VET system.

Performance against EU targets

The data presented in the table are collected in cooperation with the State Statistical Office (SSO), which is the main national institution responsible for gathering and processing data in various fields (<https://www.stat.gov.mk/>). Although SSO does not collect and process information specifically considering the EU targets in VET, the figures presented are provided in cooperation with the Office.

The employment rate of recent IVET graduates is low compared to the EU average and target. Among the reasons explaining such situation are: 1) comparatively less available job positions on the labour market and a high unemployment rate; and 2) a significant share of recent IVET graduates come from the sectors of medicine, economics, law and technical studies, and many of them continue their education at the university level.

The figure on 'Recent IVET graduates (aged 20–34) with work-based learning experience (minimum of one month duration) as part of their vocational education and training (%)' refers to the students in vocational education and training at upper secondary level. In recent years, all such students are exposed to mandatory work-based learning classes and ferial practice (summer internship), sometimes for a total duration of one month, which would result in a high share of IVET students exposed to WBL. However, this was not the case for all IVET graduates in the 20–34 age group; we should also consider that the total duration of WBL varies greatly for different IVET student groups (i.e. in dual education classes or otherwise, in different years of study, etc.).

The percentage on 'Learners in IVET who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad' is relatively close to the EU target. That may also be the result of the expansion of mobility programmes such Erasmus+ in the country in recent years.

VET Recommendation Indicator	Country (year)*	EU-27 (2022)	EU target (2025)
Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (aged 20–34) (%)	49.1% (2020) ²⁰	79.7%	82%
Recent IVET graduates (aged 20–34) with work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%)		60.1%	60%
Learners in IVET who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad (%)	5.1% (2022)	2.1% (2021)	8%

Source: [Key indicators on VET | CEDEFOP \(europa.eu\)](#)

* country definitions of the indicators differ from the EU definitions.

²⁰ The State Statistical Office provided this data on demand. The total number of people who completed secondary vocational education aged 20–34 was 3 152 in 2022. The total number of those employed for the same age group in 2024 was 1 048. This would make the share equal to 33.2%.

North Macedonia's NIP implementation 2021–2025: an overview

Recap of NIP commitments

In 2022, a team comprising representatives from key VET-related stakeholders in the Republic of North Macedonia developed the National Implementation Plan. The priorities outlined in the NIP are summarised below and organised in alignment with the corresponding EU priorities.

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

- To regularly revise and improve standards of qualifications and occupations, and subsequently vocational study programmes, in alignment with the labour market needs and developments;
- To increase awareness and attractiveness of vocational education and training and to appropriately adapt the enrolment policy with bigger focus on VET;
- To improve work-based learning in companies and participation of students through cooperation between schools and business sector.

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

- To establish a system of validation of non-formal and informal learning, and to provide education opportunities for adults and people out of the educational process.

EU priority 3: Innovative and excellent VET

- To establish Regional VET Centres through a collaborative process based on local and national analyses of needs and available resources. The goal is to develop well-equipped centres staffed with qualified personnel, working towards becoming hubs of excellence in vocational education and training.

Attractive VET, based on modern and digitalised provision

- To increase awareness and attractiveness of post-secondary education, to improve its provision and offer of available programmes, to appropriately train the staff and to improve its monitoring and evaluation.

EU priority 5: VET underpinned by quality assurance

- To improve the quality assurance mechanisms by improving monitoring and evaluation of the cooperation between schools and companies, and by introducing indicators for VET in schools' 'Integral evaluations'.

Summary of policy developments 2021-2025

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

In the context of this EU priority, the major policy developments in the country are in alignment with the priorities outlined in the NIP. Between 2021 and 2025, most laws and strategic documents relevant to vocational education and training (VET) were developed and adopted by Parliament in 2025. There has been a continuous rise in awareness and attractiveness of VET, accompanied by strengthened collaboration between schools and the business sector. These developments have been reflected in a steady increase in the number of students enrolling and participating in work-based learning (WBL) and dual VET programmes, with 71% of students enrolled in secondary education attending vocational schools in the 2025/26 academic year.

A new Concept document for VET was adopted in 2025. Next year, 2026, the VET concept will be piloted in three RVETCs for three qualifications (personal services, mechanical engineering and tourism and hospitality), as well as a Concept document on the exams at the end of secondary

education and Handbooks for all vocational sectors developed in cooperation between relevant educational institutions and the business sector.

There are several developments in the context of standards and curricula: the new Law on NQF stipulates for mandatory modernisation of the qualification standards and programmes at least every five years; nine extracurricular modules related to green competences and eight new modules focused on digitalisation were developed and introduced into existing VET programmes during 2024; and vocational matura has been introduced with the new Law on VET, together with career counselling services for students in secondary education with the new Law on SE.

The MOES also started establishing a system of graduate tracking, with the first survey performed in 2024.

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

Under this EU priority, major development is in alignment with the NIP, and concerns the establishment of a system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The necessary regulatory framework has been developed, and several qualifications have already been piloted through validation procedures.

Additional progress relevant to EU Priority 2 relates to enhancing inclusiveness in education. New regulations have introduced provisions for educational assistance to support students with disabilities, as well as educational mediators to assist Roma students from vulnerable families. These measures aim to ensure equitable access to education and promote the inclusion of marginalised groups within the education system. In addition, a significant proportion of VET teachers were trained in inclusive and modern Pedagogy.

Aiming at flexible learning paths, the new Law on VET stipulates that all programmes need to be developed (or revised) in a modular way, whilst the Law on NQF introduces the possibility for the development of partial qualifications, in a form of micro-credentials.

In 2022, the MOES adopted a new Concept document on secondary education for adults (MOES, 2022) recommending study programmes for adults to be developed based on key competences and aligned with the VNFIL arrangements.

EU priority 3: Innovative and excellent VET

A major development under this EU priority concerns the establishment of Regional VET Centres by transforming the existing VET schools. This process was based on comprehensive local and national analyses of market needs, and in collaborative process with the business sector. Modernisation, equipment and staff professional development was supported by the EU-funded projects 'Increasing Attractiveness, Inclusiveness and Relevance of VET and Adult Education' and 'EU for Youth'. By 2025, RVETCs have been established in seven out of the eight regions of the country: three in 2021, two in 2023 and two in 2024. Establishment of the eighth RVETC is planned for Skopje in the near future. RVETCs are envisaged as learning communities bringing together students from secondary and higher education, teachers, academics and members of the business community, collaboratively contributing to bridging the gap between the supply of VET and the demand on the labour market, fostering an innovative culture at the local, regional and national levels and contributing to digital and green transition.

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

The main development under EU priority 4 is also in alignment with the country NIP and relates to the improvement of programmes and the provision of post-secondary education. Between 2021 and 2025, progress was made with the development and official adoption of the Concept Document on Post-Secondary Education and three new study plans and programmes for post-secondary education, marking a key step toward modernising and expanding this educational level.

Among the key developments during the designated period in the framework of this EU priority are the measures related to professional development of schools' staff. Namely, training in inclusive education was provided to all teachers in the first three Regional Vocational Education and Training Centres

(RVETCs), as well as capacity-building activities for teachers in the first five RVETCs, aiming to enhance teaching quality and support the modernisation of VET provision. In addition, comprehensive training in modern Pedagogy and Andragogy was provided to all teachers of vocational and practical subjects across all VET schools in the country. During 2025, training courses for career counsellors and career counselling teams were carried out in the schools.

EU priority 5: VET underpinned by quality assurance

The main developments under this EU priority are aligned with the country's National Implementation Plan and relate to the following areas: the introduction of the State Vocational Matura and the assurance of quality in qualification standards and programmes. The new regulatory framework mandates regular revisions of qualification standards at least every five years, which in turn necessitates the periodic revision of corresponding study programmes. These measures aim to ensure that vocational education remains relevant, responsive to labour market needs and aligned with European quality assurance practices.

Conclusions

Several interconnected development trajectories in the area of vocational education and training have recently taken place in the country. The most relevant among these can be found below.

- The system of work-based learning and dual VET is steadily advancing, with a growing proportion of students enrolling in such pathways. In support of inclusive education, new regulations now mandate educational assistance for students with disabilities enrolled in VET programmes. Aligned with these improvements is the establishment of Regional VET Centres in seven out of eight regions of the country. To sustain progress in VET, continuous, in-depth analysis of labour market skills demand, conducted in collaboration with the business sector and social partners, is essential, along with the development of an effective system for tracking the career trajectories of graduates.
- The basis of the system for validation of non-formal and informal learning is established. To ensure its full implementation and impact, it requires ongoing institutional support. This includes raising awareness about its benefits, providing tailored training for stakeholders involved in the process and developing sustainable financing mechanisms.
- In the context of expanding VET programmes to EQF levels 5–8, there is significant development in revitalising post-secondary VET. This policy measure needs further substantial support in implementation to realise its potential.
- Certain developments aim to foster all processes in VET in line with appropriate quality assurance measures. Among them are the introduction of the vocational matura and mandatory revision of qualification standards and programmes at regular intervals. To improve effectiveness of the quality assurance in VET, QA measures need to be supported in alignment with the EQAVET system.

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