

# KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

## 2025

# PALESTINE

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# ABOUT THIS PAPER

Each year, the ETF monitors developments in education, skills, and employment in its partner countries to support informed decision-making by identifying trends, opportunities, and challenges. The results are reported by country, across countries, and by selected theme.

The present document is the country-level report (country fiche) for 2025 for Palestine<sup>1</sup>. As with all ETF monitoring, it draws on multiple sources of evidence and is the culmination of a year-long process of data collection, analysis, and consultations. One key source of evidence is the ETF KIESE database, which provides internationally comparable indicators on areas such as country demography, economy, education, and employment. The indicators are sourced mainly from international repositories, including UNESCO, the World Bank, the OECD, Eurostat, and the ILO, while some come directly from partner countries, for instance, from their labour force surveys<sup>2</sup>.

Another source of evidence is the Torino Process, a flagship monitoring initiative of the ETF which compiles system performance indices (SPIs) on the basis of the KIESE data and expert surveys. The SPIs combine selected KIESE indicators to track policy and system performance in education and VET in key areas such as access, quality, and system management. Where KIESE data are missing, the SPIs rely on expert surveys, which help fill the gaps and contextualise the findings at the stage of analysis. 'Performance' in this context refers to the extent to which policies and systems deliver results in these areas<sup>3</sup>. In 2025, the ETF compiled SPIs for a total of 32 areas and sub-areas of performance, including for groups of learners such as youth and adults, males and females, socio-economically disadvantaged young people, and adults with no or low education.

The ETF country missions complement these data sources by engaging with key policy stakeholders, gathering qualitative insights on policy developments, recently enacted legislation, and major reform steps. Finally, where necessary, the ETF draws on third-party publications and analytical work to complement gaps in the data available or to clarify developments that are not fully captured in the ETF monitoring information.

The country fiche begins with Chapter 1 a country profile that describes the demographic and socio-economic conditions in the country. Chapter 2 presents recent policies in education and training, together with the structure of the education system, including adult learning. Chapter 3 provides an overview of employment and labour-market policies and introduces the main strategies, institutions, and programmes. Chapter 4, which is the final chapter, presents the results of policies and arrangements in education and training.

<sup>1</sup> This designation must not be construed as the recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue – hereinafter 'Palestine'.

<sup>2</sup> The full selection of KIESE indicators for 2025 can be found here: <https://bit.ly/4j6taZW>.

<sup>3</sup> The subset of KIESE indicators used for the calculation of the Torino Process SPIs in 2025 can be found here: <https://bit.ly/433OR8j>. The full list of questions used in the 2025 round of Torino Process system performance monitoring can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3YUlbXE>. For a full overview of the Torino Process system performance monitoring framework, see <https://bit.ly/47YGA6l>. The methodology for the calculation of the SPIs can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3XJq101>.

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Country profile and developments:** Human capital developments and initiatives in Palestine in the last twelve months have been severely affected by the war in Gaza and the violent escalations in the West Bank, not only in terms of direct impact on education, training and employment dynamics but also in terms of potential long-term impact on the country's human capital development. The country's GDP contracted strongly in 2024 compared with a no-war scenario, leaving more than 625 000 students in Gaza with no access to education, and unemployment rising dramatically. Despite the situation, the Palestinian Authority is working, in cooperation with donors such as the European Union and a number of EU Member States, on a set of reforms in many fields, including education and employment.
- **Developments in education and training:** Before the start of the war in Gaza, in order to solve the challenge of bridging the gap between the VET system and the labour market, measures had been put in place to improve the relevance of the system. They included the creation of a working group to reach the approval of a National Qualification Framework, the launch of new programmes with stronger involvement from the private sector to make the training offer more flexible and adapted to employers' needs, the establishment of the National TVET Commission, an institution for leading the VET strategy in the country and acting as a single contact point for donors in the VET field. In terms of access to education and training, in the period 2022–2024, school participation declined, enrolment in vocational programmes was low, early school leaving remained sizeable, and there were severe shortcomings in learning outcomes and infrastructure. Data availability is partial and reflects the complex realities of data collection in a conflict-affected setting.
- **Employment and labour market developments:** The war in Gaza has also further damaged the labour market of Palestine, characterised by a high degree of instability and structural vulnerability: in 2024, fewer than one-third (31.6%) of working-age adults in Palestine were employed, reversing the improvement observed in 2023. The overall employment rate had risen to 38.6% in 2023 but declined sharply following the onset of the war in Gaza in October of that year. Youth employment (ages 15–24) followed a similar trajectory, briefly rising to 23.7% in 2023 before falling to 19.2% in 2024. On the positive side, despite the current situation the Ministry of Labour is working in collaboration with donors to modernise the national Labour Market Information System (LMIS), using it as a basis for the development of an automated Skills Matching Platform, a Labour Market Compass Platform and a Startup & Entrepreneur Web Portal, with the aim of boosting employability in Palestine even under the present conditions.

# 1. COUNTRY PROFILE

**Table 1.1 Demographic and socio-economic context: key indicators, Palestine**

Indicator	Value	Year	Source
Total population (in thousands)	5 165.8	2023	UN DESA, World Bank
Relative size of youth population (%)	33.1	2023	UN DESA
Population growth rate	2.4	2023	World Bank, UN DESA
Dependency ratio	72.9	2023	World Bank, UN DESA
Immigrant stock as % of total population	5.0	2024	UN DESA
Emigrant stock as % of total population	77.0	2024	UN DESA
GDP growth rate	-5.4	2023	World Bank
GDP per capita (PPP)	5 896.7	2023	World Bank
Migrant remittance inflows (USD mil.) as % of GDP	18.6	2023	World Bank
Inflation rate	5.9	2023	IMF
Poverty headcount ratio (USD 8.30/day)	28.6	2023	World Bank
Gini coefficient (Income inequality)	33.7	2016	World Bank
Human development index (HDI)	0.674	2023	UNDP, World Bank

Source: ETF KIESE database

## 1.1 Demography

This section takes a look at a selection of indicators in Table 1.1 that describe the size and growth rate of the population, its age and economic structure, as well as the scale and impact of inward and outward migration on population size, composition, and skills availability.

The population of Palestine was approximately 5.17 million people in 2023 (Table 1.1), of whom over a third (33.1%) were aged 15–24. The relative size of the youth population is substantial and likely creates a robust demand for education and training. Combined with an annual population growth rate of about 2.4%, this probably already puts the labour market under pressure, increasing youth unemployment risks and driving demand for employment-related support services such as job-placement programmes and career guidance. Another factor contributing to this pressure is the high dependency ratio, which in Palestine stands at about 73 dependents per 100 working-age adults. Such a ratio is high by international standards, and – given the limited fiscal capacity of Palestine, its constrained economic opportunities, and vulnerability to external shocks – it intensifies the financial strain on both households and the government.

Many in Palestine seek to relieve some of these pressures by emigrating. As of 2024, nearly 77% of Palestinians lived abroad, which is one of the highest rates of outbound migration globally. This certainly helps in the short term to reduce immediate strain on the labour market and public finances, and by bringing valuable support through remittances, investment, and knowledge transfer. However, it also carries long-term consequences by causing a substantial loss of domestic talent and skills, which the very limited immigration into Palestine (around 5% of the population) cannot offset.

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the population of Gaza fell by about 6 per cent since the start of the war in 2023, reflecting a severe loss of population and large-scale displacement that are likely to have lasting effects on demographic composition and the availability of human capital (Reuters, 2025).

## 1.2 Economy

The data in this section describes the economic context of the country in terms of GDP growth rate, GDP per capita (PPP), migrant remittance inflows as a percentage of GDP, and the inflation rate (Table 1.1).

In 2023, as the war in Gaza began, economic activity in Palestine contracted sharply and the GDP declined by 5.4%. The war triggered an unprecedented collapse in the economy of Gaza: its output plunged by over 80% in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2023, and the GDP of the West Bank fell by about 22% in that quarter. Together with structural factors, such as declining foreign aid and the withholding of tax revenues by Israel, these developments contributed to a drop in the overall Palestinian GDP of 33% in Q4 2023 compared to the same quarter of the previous year (PCBS, 2024). In the same vein, the average living standards in Palestine are modest given the prolonged conflict conditions. In 2023, the GDP per capita (PPP) stood at roughly USD 5 897 (Table 1.1). This places Palestine in the lower middle-income category by international standards and aligns it with what is known from regular reporting on the impact of the ongoing conflict on Palestine as a whole, namely that standards of living are relatively modest, that there are significant constraints on economic opportunities, and that there is considerable potential for improving productivity, employment opportunities, and the overall quality of life.

It is important to note that this combined figure masks a huge internal gap between the two regions of Palestine. Even before the war, the GDP of Gaza per person was only about one-fifth of the per capita income in the West Bank (World Bank, 2025). In 2023, with the sharp contraction of economic activity compounded by inflation averaging 5.9% across Palestine, the real GDP per capita in Gaza collapsed to around USD 1 084, i.e. approximately 20% of the level of the West Bank (Shihadeh, 2025). In addition to that, Palestine is highly dependent on remittances, which in 2023 accounted for approximately 18.6% of its GDP and provided a major stream of revenue for Palestinian households. This heavy reliance creates significant vulnerabilities, particularly as key host countries for Palestinian diaspora communities – such as Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon – face their own economic hardships, political uncertainties, or policy changes related to refugees and migrant workers.

## 1.3 Income and living standards

In Palestine, nearly three in ten people (28.6%) lived below the upper-middle-income poverty line (USD 8.30 per day, PPP) as of 2023, which is indicative of widespread economic hardship. The fragile economy of Palestine means that any shocks, such as aid shortfalls or even further escalation of the war, would quickly intensify persistent vulnerabilities and push households deeper into poverty.

The Gini coefficient for Palestine is 33.7 – a value which suggests that the distribution of income is uneven, but not extremely so. However, given that these data are now seven years old (Table 1.1), the recent economic disruptions may have widened these disparities further. As for broader income and living standard conditions, the Human Development Index (HDI) of Palestine stood at 0.674 in 2023, placing it in the ‘medium human development’ category. This HDI figure may appear higher than expected, given the severe humanitarian, economic, and infrastructural challenges in Palestine following the escalation of the war in Gaza in late 2023. However, the deepening crisis in Gaza is partially masked by the relatively better conditions in the West Bank, which accounts for roughly 60% of the population of Palestine. In addition, the index uses multi-year averages and often relies on slightly outdated data. The full consequences of the Gaza war will likely be fully visible only in subsequent HDI updates.

## 1.4 Recent developments

Even prior to the ongoing conflict in Gaza that began in October 2023, the Palestinian socio-economic environment was not favourable for reforms. Palestine is geographically segmented into East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank, with the latter further divided and intersected by Israeli settlements. This ‘archipelago economy’, along with its tense relationship with Israel, has obstructed various forms of communication, commerce, and the execution of development policies and programmes. In addition, Palestine is suffering from the lack of a unified political system, which is dominated in the West Bank by the Fatah party and in Gaza by Hamas. The war in Gaza and its ramifications in the West Bank have significantly destabilised the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Palestinian economy, necessitating an urgent and substantial response to prevent further deterioration and destabilisation of the West Bank. Tackling this need, the PA and the European Commission have agreed to proceed along a reform path, able to face the critical budget situation of the PA and the resulting economic effects. This reform is structured along different lines: (i) substantial and comprehensive administrative reforms of the Palestinian Authority; (ii) economic reform with private sector led growth; (iii) an improvement of the relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority including regular payments of the tax revenues due to the Palestinian authority and removing access restrictions on Palestinian workers; (iv) accompanying financial support from the international community, and (v) effective implementation of these reforms, confirmed through monitoring and leading to a robust track record (European Commission, 2024).

## 1.5 The war and its impact

The war in Gaza and the occupation of the West Bank has had a profound impact on socio-economic well-being, leading to widespread destruction and severe disruptions across all sectors. In the West Bank, violent escalations have resulted in business closures, sharply increased unemployment, and heightened financial burdens on families, making education and transportation unaffordable for many citizens. In particular, the war is leading to significant economic contraction, rising unemployment, and worsening humanitarian conditions, along several dimensions:

**GDP Decline.** By the end of 2024, Palestine’s real GDP had fallen by 28%, reversing 15 years of growth and returning it to 2009 levels, with the nominal GDP per capita at approximately USD 2 600. Gaza’s economy shrank by over 80% in 2024 and slid an additional 12% in Q1-2025; it now accounts for less than 3% of the total Palestinian GDP (down from the pre-conflict 17%). The West Bank saw a more modest recovery, growing by 10% year-on-year in Q1-2025, yet remains 17% below its pre-conflict level (World Bank, 2025).

**Surging Unemployment.** Unemployment across the Palestinian territories reached 79% in Gaza, and 33% in the West Bank. As of early 2025, unemployment has declined to 69% in Gaza and approximately 29% in the West Bank. Nearly 500 000 jobs have been lost since October 2023: about 200 000 in Gaza, 144 000 in the West Bank, and around 148 000 among West Bank commuters to Israel (PCBS, 2025).

**Food Insecurity.** Gaza is experiencing catastrophic hunger: over 640 000 people face famine conditions (IPC Phase 5), with more than 1.1 million in emergency food insecurity (IPC Phase 4). Over 95% of cropland and 80% of greenhouses have been damaged or are inaccessible (World Bank, 2025).

**Inflation and Cost of Living.** In 2024, Gaza’s consumer prices soared by over 227%, while in the West Bank inflation rose more moderately (at around 3%). As of September 2025, Palestine’s inflation rate was 17.7% year-on-year, and driven predominantly by food and utility prices. Poverty remains entrenched: the mid-2023 rates were: 28.6% nationally, i.e. nearly 64% in Gaza and around 12% in the West Bank. By early 2025, almost every household in Gaza was living in poverty, with the estimated overall rates climbing to nearly 40% (PCBS, 2025).

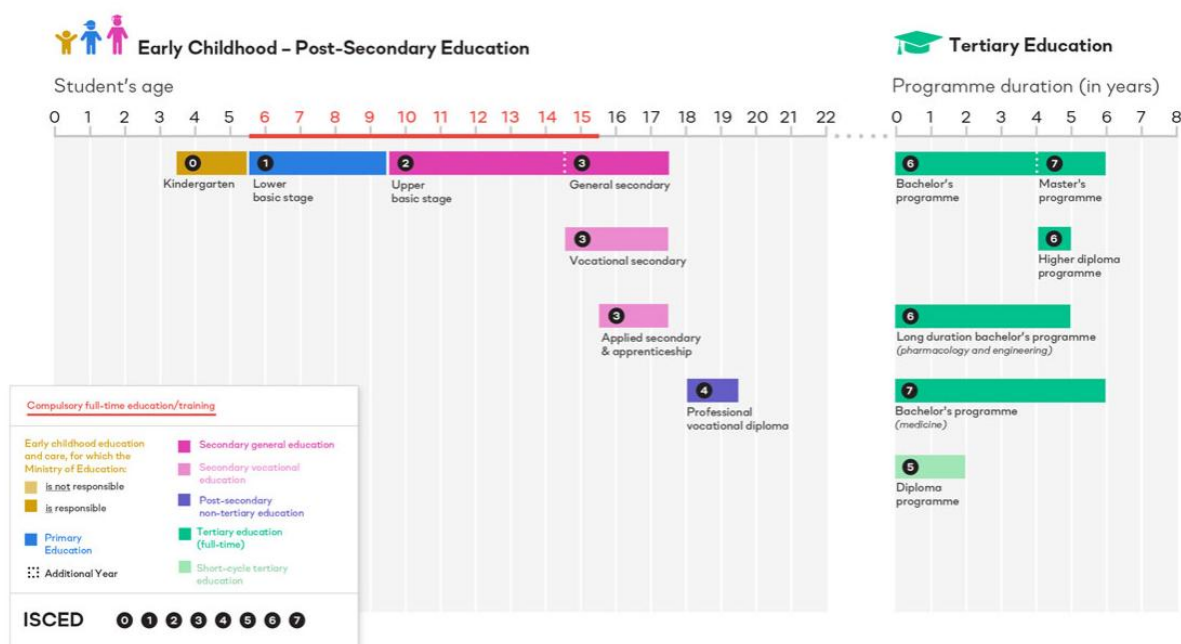


## 2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING: POLICIES AND DEVELOPMENTS

### 2.1 Structure and levels of education, including VET

This section provides a brief description of how the education system is organised across different levels, including pre-primary, primary, secondary (distinguishing between general and vocational tracks), tertiary, and adult learning. It uses the UNESCO ISCED classification and is based on monitoring information collected through the ETF Torino Process expert (monitoring) survey<sup>4</sup>.

**Figure 2.1 Structure of the education system: Palestine (2025)**



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2021). Using ISCED diagrams to compare education systems. UNESCO.

### Formal education

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Palestine is the initial stage of formal education, catering to children aged four to six. It is optional, until the second kindergarten year (KG2, age five) which became compulsory following the Education Law of 2017. Preschool education is delivered mainly through kindergartens run by private providers, civil society organisations, and increasingly by public institutions supervised by the Ministry of Education. Nursery care services for younger children (below age four) are overseen by the Ministry of Social Development, although actual provision is typically private or non-profit.

ECEC is followed by basic education, which is compulsory and spans ten years (Grades 1–10). Basic education is divided into lower basic (Grades 1–4), focusing on foundational literacy, numeracy, and social skills, and upper basic (Grades 5–10), which expands into sciences, languages, mathematics, social studies, arts, and physical education. This education is free in government and UNRWA schools (the latter specifically serving Palestinian refugees), with private schools also providing basic education. Completion of basic education (Grade 10) does not involve a national exam but leads to a Basic Education Completion Certificate, marking the transition to secondary or vocational education.

<sup>4</sup> In this report, the survey may be referred to interchangeably as the 'monitoring survey', 'expert survey', or 'Torino Process monitoring survey'.

Students completing basic education can enter either secondary general education or vocational education and training (VET). General secondary education, which is optional and lasts two years (Grades 11 and 12), provides specialised academic pathways in either scientific or humanities streams, culminating in the high-stakes General Secondary Education Certificate Examination. Passing this exam provides students with the General Secondary Education Certificate, required for entry into tertiary education.

Alternatively, students can choose vocational secondary education, also lasting two years (Grades 11–12). Vocational secondary schools offer practical training in fields like industrial trades, agriculture, commerce, hospitality, and home economics. Students who complete vocational secondary education sit for vocational examinations (Technical Tawjihi) to earn the Vocational Secondary Certificate, enabling immediate workforce entry or progression into post-secondary vocational institutions.

In Palestine, tertiary education is provided by universities, technical universities, university colleges, and community colleges, regulated by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. Universities offer Bachelor's degrees (typically four years), Master's degrees (two additional years), and Doctoral degrees (three to five years beyond the Master's). Fields such as engineering and pharmacy often require five years, and medical degrees typically take six years. Postgraduate education also includes Higher Diplomas (one-year programmes following a Bachelor's degree).

Alongside academic programmes, Palestine's vocational education system offers post-secondary pathways through community colleges and technical institutes. These institutions provide two-year programmes leading to an Associate Diploma. Students who obtain these diplomas can enter employment or, upon successful completion of a Comprehensive Exam, progress to Bachelor degree programmes at universities, typically at an advanced entry point. Recent reforms have aimed to enhance linkages between vocational education and higher education, though actual progression between pathways remains limited in reality (ETF, 2025b).

## Adult learning

In Palestine, there are opportunities for adults to engage in non-tertiary education and training programmes. Formal VET programmes in which adults can enrol are primarily coordinated by vocational training centres managed by the Ministry of Labour. These centres provide short-term training programmes that focus on occupational skills in areas such as construction, mechanics, electrical work, and ICT. The duration of training ranges from several months to over a year, with certificates awarded upon completion. CVET is further supported by community colleges and university-run continuing education centres, which offer professional training, language courses, ICT skills, and entrepreneurship education. Many of these programmes are modular, short-term, and flexible, designed to accommodate employed adults.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) provides additional adult learning opportunities specifically for Palestinian refugees through vocational and technical training institutes. These institutes offer accredited vocational training and professional skills development to enhance the employability of refugees. Additionally, there are adult literacy and numeracy courses delivered through centres run by the Ministry of Education, civil society organisations, and community-based initiatives, often targeting disadvantaged groups, particularly rural women.

Adults can also participate in non-formal opportunities for learning, which focus primarily on literacy, digital skills, and life skills. These programmes are frequently organised by non-governmental and civil society organisations, sometimes with international support. For example, initiatives led by international NGOs, including DVV International, offer community-based education and skills training that target social and economic participation, particularly for women and young adults.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online learning platforms, which increased the accessibility and flexibility of continuing education courses. Institutions such as Al-Quds Open University have long provided distance learning options for adult learners seeking academic qualifications, while various vocational and continuing education providers now offer blended or fully online programmes.

## 2.2 Strategy and legal framework

### General education

The National Policy Agenda 2017-2022 (State of Palestine, 2016) and the National Development Plan (State of Palestine, 2020) recognise the importance of education for economic growth and sustainable development and identifies quality education for all as a national priority. The Education Development Strategy in Palestine 2025 – 2027, comprises four strategic objectives: 1) strengthening the basic requirements to guarantee equitable and safe access to the national education system and ensure student retention; 2) improving the quality of the education system by developing the core components of the learning process; 3) strengthening the governance and management of the national education system; and 4) educational recovery and reconstruction (State of Palestine, 2024). This recent policy document aims to structure the efforts of the national government, and the numerous international donors present in the country to achieve the strategic goals and improve the whole education system<sup>5</sup>.

The current Palestinian-European Joint Strategy 2021-2024, titled 'Towards a democratic, accountable and sustainable Palestinian State', consists of a pillar that covers three sectors: education, health and social protection (European Commission, 2020). An analysis of the activities carried out within the joint strategy is presented in the Implementation Report 2022-2023 (European Commission, 2024). In addition to this continuous support, since the beginning of the war in Gaza the aid sent by EU member states has largely increased, with additional funds totalling over EUR 1.48 billion for humanitarian support (mainly food, health, water, sanitation, hygiene and shelter).

### Vocational education

The VET policy in Palestine has evolved through several key strategic and institutional changes. A major milestone was the adoption of the revised national TVET strategy in 2010, which replaced the original 1999 version. Subsequent education policies, such as the latest Education Development Strategy in Palestine 2025 – 2027, further emphasised the role of VET, stressing the need to promote stronger collaboration between vocational schools and the private sector through work-based learning (WBL) and apprenticeship programmes. In recent years, VET has undergone significant changes to better meet the needs of the job market and incorporate new technological developments, including the adoption of a Competency-Based Approach (CBA) in secondary vocational schools, particularly for upper secondary grades (Palestinian MoEHE & MoL, 2010) as well as transversal competences such as problem-solving, communication, and teamwork (ETF, 2024a).

The MoL Strategic Plan (2021–2025) adds to this overall policy framework by focusing on four main areas: (1) expanding TVET, particularly at the higher education level; (2) addressing structural and financial gaps to better link education with labour market needs, with support from the private sector; (3) encouraging entrepreneurship and cooperative learning models; and (4) expanding CVET through evening classes and targeted programmes for job seekers (Palestinian Ministry of Labour, 2021).

## 2.3 Main actors and governance

### National level

VET policymaking is in the hands of three main players: the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and the Ministry of Labour, complemented, since 2021, by the National TVET Commission (NTC), an entity composed of these Ministries, the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (FPCCIA), the trade unions, and Nablus University for Vocational and Technical Education. The NTC's primary role is to lead the policymaking of the TVET sector by overseeing and monitoring all institutions operating within this domain, in close cooperation with the various ministries responsible for different VET school categories. Additionally,

<sup>5</sup> The European Union is the biggest donor of external assistance to the Palestinians. A list of the main EU interventions can be found at [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/palestine/eu-projects-palestine\\_en?s=206](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/palestine/eu-projects-palestine_en?s=206).

the NTC coordinates donors' activities to ensure consistency across the sector and includes in its strategic plan provision to establish National Sector Skills Councils, the NSSCs, entities that should connect the labour market and the education and training systems, to foster demand orientation, and facilitate better use and development of people's skills. A pilot council, the Renewable Energy Sector Skill Council (RESSC) has been set up.

Even if reports indicate that there is a recommendation to dissolve the NTC in order to streamline government structures and reduce expenditures, at the time of writing the Commission remains formally in place, even if with limited capacity. This is in line with the fact that all administrative bodies responsible for governing VET suffer from a severe shortage of staff, which further limits their ability to fulfil their mandates in accordance with established standards and procedures.

### International level: donors

The EU is supporting the Palestinian Authority through the PEGASE mechanism, a program that provides, among other things, significant funding for the education sector. This support helps to strengthen the education system by funding various projects, contributing to the Palestinian Authority's priorities in education and other areas. The PEGASE support for education has been used for a variety of purposes, such as improving infrastructure, enhancing the education system, and providing support for paying teachers' salaries.

Donors are active in the VET field, providing for example support for the educational infrastructure to increase the number of digital devices and software in schools. In the last years, development partners have established more than 40 computer labs with a total of 2 220 computers and laptops (UNESCO, 2023b). Another example of donors' impact is the Skills Development Fund, developed in 2021 under the umbrella of Enabel's project 'Skilled Young Palestine', that should become a primary financial tool able to create an environment where training providers supply the skills that industry needs, avoiding funding duplication and stimulating a demand-led approach to VET provision by supporting private-sector leadership in the delivery of projects.

A major player in Palestinian VET is UNRWA, the UN agency that supports Palestinian refugees. The agency manages eight training centres with semi-professional, trade and short-term courses in a variety of specialisations that aim to prepare students for local employment. The specialisations include construction, nursing, hairdressing and fashion. Furthermore, graduates of the programmes enjoy high success rates in finding employment or self-employment. UNRWA also supports young women through its training programme.

## 2.4 Policies and developments

### Overview

Despite the creation of the National TVET Commission in 2021, the 2010 national strategy for the VET sector has not been updated. The absence of such a strategy has led to overlapping and sometimes duplicated interventions, and as a result VET programmes struggle to provide coherent and sustainable pathways aligned with national development priorities, with donor-driven projects and short-term interventions setting the agenda rather than a unified, forward-looking national vision.

A recent report by UNESCO's 'VET for Future' project noted that it would be essential to formulate a new national VET strategy that replaces the one put in place in 2010, by adopting a multi-sectoral approach and bringing together the needs of different government entities that are reflected in their strategic plans on the one hand and the national economic agenda and the national employment strategy on the other (Jabber, 2023). Having such a strategy would help tackle the challenges of the Palestinian VET system, as identified by the ETF Torino Process. Firstly, the rather rigid structure of the national TVET system makes it difficult to understand the market needs and adapt the training offer accordingly. Secondly, due to extremely high informality rates, it is almost impossible to track youth transitions from education to employment. These factors lead to a low quality of VET, especially

continuing vocational education and training (CVET). Nevertheless, VET graduates have more chance of finding a job than university graduates (ETF, 2024b).

## Qualifications, validation, and recognition

In 2022, the Council of Ministers mandated the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Committee with the aim of undertaking development of the Palestinian **National Qualifications Framework (NQF)**. The NQF Inter-Ministerial Committee and the broader stakeholder group, the NQF Taskforce, have been working with the support of GIZ and ETF and have finalised a White Paper on the NQF, which has been approved by the Palestinian government. The manuals for 'qualification provider accreditation' and 'qualification validation/placement' were developed to operationalise the NQF. Additionally, the Recognition of Prior Learning framework is planned to be developed next year. Regarding the governance of the NQF, a comparative study on NQF governance best practices and good practices is underway, which will inform policy-level decisions on the optimal NQF governance structure.

## Work-based learning

In recent years, GIZ, Enabel and the World Bank have been supporting the country in integrating work-based learning (WBL) at different levels of education. A national WBL strategy was developed in 2018, which outlines the different definitions and models that are in place for the education system. Regarding secondary-level VET, practical learning at the workplace is taking place, mainly through informal arrangements between schools, teachers, students, parents and local businesses. While donor funding has been instrumental in establishing WBL initiatives, providing equipment, supporting curriculum development, and offering student financial aid, this heavy reliance on external donor funding creates risk of unsustainability (for example, the USAID-funded Forsah project was recently halted).

## Career guidance

At local level, various institutions provide employment support services to Palestinian citizens, including employment offices, trade and industry associations, universities, non-governmental organisations (such as the Welfare Association, the Sharek Youth Forum, the Centre for Youth Economic Empowerment), and private institutions. A positive development in recent years has been the inclusion of career guidance within active labour market measures. However, a comprehensive and cohesive employment service system is still lacking in Palestine.

## Quality assurance

The TVET **quality assurance system** includes various measures, such as the competency centre standards that are benchmarked against ISO standards and quality standards for teachers (see Also Section 4.2). However, a VET national quality assurance authority does not exist. The current quality assurance approach mainly refers to the inspection of inputs with little autonomy for VET providers (ETF, 2020). Regarding **accreditation**, for VET institutions, the Ministries of Education and Labour oversee the accrediting and licensing of VET institutions and the adoption of their programmes.

## Centres of excellence

Embryonal 'skills ecosystems' exist in the country, composed of vocational schools that collaborate with local stakeholders, following the fact that in 2023 the MoE introduced the concept of school autonomy for secondary vocational schools. However, a government-led network of Centres of Vocational Excellence does not yet exist in Palestine. The main challenges in this respect are the lack of international connections of the TVET system in Palestine, with the exception of some active schools such as the Continuing Education Centre of the Al-Quds Open University that is part of the ETF Network of Excellence or the TVET League who is engaged in a number of international initiatives, and a lack of and cooperation with TVET researchers (Samara, 2024).



## Digital education and skills

The Palestinian ICT Strategy 2021-2023 (Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology, 2021) identifies the lack of qualified workers in the ICT sector as a challenge, but does not provide a clear roadmap for developing digital skills and the needs of the labour market, in a situation where the unemployment rate among computer science graduates is higher than that for graduates of business, law, natural sciences and health (World Bank, 2021). Building on the work done after the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 by the 'Distance Learning Taskforce', led by UNESCO and the Ministry of Education, distance learning solutions to ensure inclusive and equitable high-quality education have been tested in the country. This has resulted in a free online platform with resources and lessons, called the Palestinian eSchool Portal<sup>6</sup>, which is considered a unified electronic portal for all schools to communicate between the Ministry, schools, teachers and students. Several donor initiatives support the creation of digital learning platforms to make learning content available online. For example, the UNRWA Digital Learning Platform<sup>7</sup>, launched in 2021, provides remote learning resources to more than 550 000 Palestinian refugee students. Equip Palestine with E-Learning (E-Pal)<sup>8</sup> is a new initiative by the Palestine Polytechnic University and funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, to strengthen digital teaching approaches in the Palestinian higher education sector. Additionally, Al-Quds Open University operates through 19 branches and centres distributed all over the country and provides technical education through its Continuous Education Centre.

## 2.5 Education and training for reconstruction and recovery

VET is particularly vulnerable to disruptions during conflicts as it relies on specialised teachers and trainers who are difficult to replace, and since VET facilities often host specialised equipment and tools that can be damaged, this makes resource maintenance and updates challenging during prolonged conflicts (Barakat, 2009). Furthermore, VET students seem to be more likely to drop out of education or engage in hostilities, especially in regions where VET is perceived as a secondary option to academic paths, and where economic collapse caused by conflict undermines the prospects for gainful employment.

As mentioned above, since October 2023 enrolments as well as access to educational institutions have been severely hindered, and 12 out of 17 VET units, spread across 14 public schools in Gaza, have been severely damaged (see key data and indicators in the [ETF infographics](#)).

In the West Bank, the Israeli occupation has resulted in the damage and closure of many schools over the last decades. Since 2010, some 30 schools have been demolished by the Israeli authorities; the situation has recently worsened and by June 2025, some 84 schools serving over 12 000 students across the West Bank including East Jerusalem were subject to demolition orders issued by Israeli authorities (OPT Education Cluster, 2025b). Recent escalations greatly hindered access to education and VET services (World Bank, EU, UN, 2025: 68). By September 2024, nearly 782 000 children in the West Bank were at risk of missing the school year due to military operations and settler violence. With 58 schools facing demolition orders and daily closures reaching 20%, many students were forced to miss classes. Incidents of violence resulted in 67 student deaths and 367 injuries (ESCWA & UNDP, 2024). Rising poverty has led 29% of households to cut education spending, with 7% forced to rely on child labour. Children with disabilities and girls are at higher risk of dropping out due to financial pressures and harmful coping strategies, such as early marriage, while teachers have gone unpaid for over six months (ESCWA & UNDP, 2024; OPT Education Cluster, 2024).

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<sup>6</sup> [eschool.edu.ps](https://eschool.edu.ps)

<sup>7</sup> <https://keeplearning.unrwa.org/en/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://e-pal.ppu.edu/>

## 3. LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT: POLICIES AND DEVELOPMENTS

### 3.1 Strategy and legal framework

The national strategy to foster employment in Palestine is the **National Employment Strategy 2021-2025** (Ministry of Labour, 2021), that aims to achieve full, productive and freely chosen employment for jobseekers, particularly for women and young people. The strategy places employment at the heart of socio-economic development, viewing employment and decent work as a key focus to achieving stability, addressing the adverse consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Palestinian labour market, and responding to threats posed by the ongoing Israeli occupation.

### 3.2 Main actors and governance

#### National level

The primary authority overseeing employment policies, labour laws, and workforce development is the Ministry of Labour (MoL), that develops national employment strategies, regulates labour relations, occupational safety, and employment services and coordinates with other ministries and stakeholders to promote decent work. Support is provided by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), that provides labour market data and analysis essential for policy-making, tracks employment rates, labour force participation, and sectoral trends and publishes annual reports and special bulletins.

An important support role is played by the International Labour Organization (ILO), that supports policy development and capacity building through its Decent Work Programme, working with Palestinian tripartite partners (government, employers, workers) and focusing on expanding employment opportunities, social protection, and rights-based governance.

#### International level: donors

The main donor driven projects are:

- The EU-funded Youth Economic Empowerment in Palestine (YEP) and the Pathways to Employment in Palestine by Enabel, that address the lack of economic prospects for Palestinian youths, including vulnerable youths and young women, by empowering them to access decent employment opportunities.
- The Programme for Access to the Labour Market (PALM II), the More job opportunities for Palestinian youth II by GiZ.
- The Finance for Jobs (F4J) initiative by the World Bank, that support skills development and job creation for youths.

### 3.3 Policies and developments

#### Overview

Since 2003, the **Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection** (PFESP) works as the national umbrella institution and the executive arm of the Ministry of Labour for all employment, job creation and entrepreneurship development programmes implemented in Palestine. However, most employment-support programmes are dependent on donor support.

A number of online tools to support employment are being prepared to support employment and entrepreneurship across Palestine. The Ministry of Labour has integrated within its strategic vision the

establishment and management of the Labour Market Information System (LMIS), aiming to build a dynamic, comprehensive information system for the Palestinian labour market by providing accurate, up-to-date data on both labour supply and demand. One of the main components of the LMIS is the development of an automated Skills' Matching Platform — an online job matching tool based on skills — designed to cover all work stages and outputs, including system development, promotion, media coverage, training for citizens, and powered by an Artificial Intelligence (AI) engine that matches and recommends the best job opportunities for job seekers and the most suitable candidates for employers. The Platform, that is being developed with the support of the EU through the YEP project managed by Enabel, will be complemented by the Palestinian Labour Market Compass Platform, aimed at centralising all labour market data and information in one place incorporating advanced analytical tools for data analysis, visualisation, and the generation of recommendations related to the current and future labour market, and by the Startup & Entrepreneur Web Portal, a centralised digital hub for startups and entrepreneurs to create comprehensive profiles, showcasing skills, products, services, and specific needs.

### 3.4 Active labour market programmes (ALMPs)

Active support for employment is addressed by different, mainly donor-driven programmes. The European Strategy in support of Palestine 2021-2024, 'Towards a democratic, accountable and sustainable Palestinian state', supports policies aimed at creating decent jobs, especially for young people and women, including improving the quality of the employment services. An indirect objective of the new 'Youth Economic Empowerment in Palestine (YEP)' scheme is to enhance the capacity of public employment services. One of the expected results is the set-up and implementation of a 'First Employment Facility', which will involve a partnership between the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection (PFESP) and key private-sector umbrella organisations.

### 3.5 Labour market disruption and pathways to recovery

As already noted, the war has caused unprecedented devastation of the Palestinian labour market, and the official statistics exclude those who have withdrawn entirely from the labour force due to extremely limited job prospects— the ILO forecasts indicate declining labour force participation for both men and women amid the crisis (ILO, 2024b).

Job losses in the West Bank have been substantial. The World Bank reports that 144 000 positions were lost due to escalating violence and its spillover effects. Data from UNCTAD put the figures even higher, at approximately 306 000 jobs lost in the West Bank since early 2024. This has led to an estimated daily labour income loss of USD 25.5 million. ILO estimates are somewhat lower than those of UNCTAD, identifying a loss of 200 000 jobs since October 2023, representing over two-thirds of pre-war employment (ILO, 2024a). Historically, 20–30% of the Palestinian workforce was employed in the Israeli economy, a dynamic upended by the conflict's disruptions (UNCTAD, 2024).

These figures highlight the destructive and profound impacts of the war in Gaza on the Palestinian labour market, which was already rooted in an extremely complex socio-economic context. Occupation conditions have transformed the Palestinian economy into a dependent economy that provides Palestinian labour force without being granted the protection and legal rights usually afforded in formal employment. As a result, the local economy capacity to generate sustainable job opportunities has eroded. In this context, the future of Palestinian employment and its reliance on the Israeli labour market will remain shaped by structural imbalances and ingrained distortions, which have persisted for over half a century (MAS, 2024).



## 4. KEY INDICATORS: EDUCATION, SKILLS, EMPLOYMENT

### 4.1 Headline indicators

#### Education and VET

Monitoring a complex education and training system typically starts with three straightforward questions: who takes part, what do they achieve, and what supports the process?

The first question explores the extent to which learners engage in education or training. It is addressed by indicators grouped under *Participation and access* in Table 4.1: net enrolment rates at lower and upper secondary levels, the share of students in upper-secondary VET, the gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education, and adult participation rates in lifelong learning. The second question – what learners achieve – examines key education outcomes, such as learner progression and the skills or qualifications they obtain. These are reflected in the indicators under *Attainment, completion and outcomes*: the share of adults with tertiary qualifications, the rate of early leavers from education and training, and the percentage of 15-year-olds underachieving in mathematics. The third question considers the financial, physical, and informational resources that sustain the education process, reflected by the indicators under *Resources and data*: public expenditure on education as a share of the GDP, the adequacy of infrastructure, and the availability of internationally comparable data.

**Table 4.1 Headline indicators: education and VET (Palestine, EU average) (2022-2024)**

<b>Participation and access</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>EU (1)</b>	<b>Source</b>
Total net enrolment rate (lower secondary)	95.0	94.0	N.A.	98.1	UIS UNESCO
Total net enrolment rate (upper secondary)	77.1	75.9	N.A.	93.6	UIS UNESCO
Students in VET as a % of total upper secondary students	3.9	4.1	N.A.	48.8	UIS UNESCO
Gross enrolment ratio (tertiary)	45.8	44.5	N.A.	79.7	UIS UNESCO
Participation in training/lifelong learning in the previous 4 weeks (% aged 25-64)	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	13.3	LFS
<b>Attainment, completion and outcomes</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>EU (1)</b>	<b>Source</b>
Educational attainment of total population: % with ISCED 5-8	23.5	23.4	23.0	30.2	LFS
Early leavers from education and training (% aged 18-24)	31.2	30.6	33.8	9.3	LFS
Underachievers in maths (% aged 15)	79.9	N.A.	N.A.	31.1	PISA OECD
<b>Resources and data</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>EU (1)</b>	<b>Source</b>
Public expenditure on education (as % of GDP)	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	4.7	UIS UNESCO
Inadequate or poor-quality physical infrastructure (2)	68.5	N.A.	N.A.	27.9	PISA OECD
Availability of internationally comparable data on education	N.A.	5.3	44.4	N.A.	TRP (3)

Notes: 1. EU average, latest available year. PISA data: OECD average. 2. Percentage of students in schools whose principal reported that the school's capacity to provide instruction is hindered at least to some extent by an inadequate or poor-quality physical infrastructure. 3. ETF Torino Process (TRP).

Source: ETF KIESE database

The headline data in Table 4.1 show that the period 2022–2024 has been challenging for Palestine. School participation is declining, enrolment in vocational programmes is very low, early school leaving remains very high, and there are severe shortcomings in learning outcomes and infrastructure. Data availability is partial, which reflects the complex realities of data collection in a conflict-affected setting. Nevertheless, as a commendable outcome, Palestine managed to join the last round of OECD's PISA

in 2022, which resulted in a substantial increase in internationally comparable monitoring data becoming available on school education (44.4% of designated indicators available in 2024).

A closer look at the data in Table 4.1 reveals a slight decrease in participation in compulsory education. Enrolment at lower-secondary level fell from 95.0% in 2022 to 94.0% in 2023, below the EU benchmark of 98.1%. At the upper-secondary level, enrolment declined from 77.1% to 75.9%, which means that only about three-quarters of adolescents continue their education, considerably lower than in EU countries on average. VET enrolls only about 4% of upper-secondary students compared to nearly half (48.8%) in the EU, which means that practice-oriented educational routes remain limited in their reach, constrained by a number of economic, social and structural factors such as the low attractiveness of VET and the limited funding for the VET system.

Gross enrolment in tertiary education declined slightly from 45.8% in 2022 to 44.5% in 2023, to around half of the EU average (79.7%). The share of adults aged 25–64 holding tertiary qualifications has also declined marginally, from 23.5% in 2022 to 23.0% in 2024, widening the gap compared to EU countries (30.2%) and potentially constraining the pool of workers with advanced qualifications available to the labour market.

The proportion of young adults (18–24) who exited education prematurely increased from 30.6% in 2023 to 33.8% in 2024, more than triple the EU average of 9.3%. In the already vulnerable socio-economic context of Palestine, such high levels of early school leaving may further deepen disadvantage and worsen instability.

Such high rates of early school leaving are perhaps unsurprising, given the weak foundational skills learners acquire in the earlier stages of education. According to OECD's PISA results from 2022, in Palestine the proportion of underachievers in key subjects such as mathematics is high, with approximately 80% of 15-year-olds not reaching basic proficiency in mathematics—more than twice the OECD average of 31.1%.

The infrastructure conditions in schools also represent a significant barrier to effective learning. In 2022, almost 69% of students attended schools with inadequate or poor-quality facilities - more than double the EU reference point (27.9%). Such conditions likely undermine the effectiveness of teaching and the learning experiences of students.

## Employment and demand for skills

The set of labour-market indicators follows the same question-and-answer logic applied to education and training, but from the perspective of employment. The indicators are organised into two complementary groups: employment and labour-market outcomes and demand for skills (Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2 Headline indicators: employment (Palestine, EU average) (2022-2024)**

Employment and labour market outcomes	2022	2023	2024	EU (1)	Source
Employment rate (% aged 15+ or similar age group)	33.4	38.6	31.6	54.7	LFS
Employment rate (% aged 15-24 or similar age group)	20.2	23.7	19.2	35.0	LFS
Employment rate of recent graduates aged 20–34 (ISCED 3–8)	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	82.4	LFS
Unemployment rate (% aged 15+ or similar age group)	23.8	18.3	31.4	5.9	LFS
Unemployment rate (% aged 15-24 or similar age group)	35.3	29.7	43.0	14.9	LFS
NEET rate (% aged 15-29 or similar age group)	38.1	33.4	39.4	11.0	LFS

Demand for Skills	2022	2023	2024	EU (1)	Source
Employment by broad economic sectors (%): agriculture	8.0	6.0	6.8	3.3	LFS
Employment by broad economic sectors (%): industry	30.9	35.1	27.0	24.1	LFS
Employment by broad economic sectors (%): service	61.0	58.9	66.2	72.1	LFS
Incidence of vulnerable employment (%)	19.2	22.6	27.5	10.0	LFS
Employment by "educational mismatch": % matched	59.2	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	ILOSTAT

Notes: 1. Data refer to 2019. 2. Data refer to 2019, age group 15-59. 3. Data refer to 2019, age group 16-24. 4. Data refer to 2019, age group 15-24.

Source: ETF KIESE database

The data shown in Table 4.2 reflect the high degree of instability and structural vulnerability in the labour market of Palestine at the time of monitoring. In 2024, fewer than one-third (31.6%) of working-age adults in Palestine were employed, reversing the improvement observed in 2023. The overall employment rate had risen to 38.6% in 2023 but declined sharply following the onset of the war in Gaza in October of that year. This conflict likely intensified existing economic constraints, significantly reducing employment opportunities. Youth employment (ages 15–24) followed a similar trajectory, briefly rising to 23.7% in 2023 before falling to 19.2% in 2024, considerably below the EU average (35%).

The unemployment rate among adults has fluctuated in a similar way. It initially decreased from 23.8% in 2022 to 18.3% in 2023, before surging to 31.4% in 2024 – a figure which likely captures at least some of the impact of the war. Youth unemployment increased even more sharply in the reference period and reached 43.0% in 2024. Concurrently, the share of youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET) rose again to 39.4% in 2024. This likely reflects longstanding structural barriers, such as limited job creation capacity, misalignment between education and labour-market demand, and restrictions on movement and trade, as well as additional economic disruptions stemming from the Gaza conflict.

Employment by sector in Palestine also experienced substantial year-to-year fluctuations. The employment share of the industrial sector expanded from 30.9% in 2022 to 35.1% in 2023, then fell back to 27.0% in 2024. In contrast, employment in services rebounded to 66.2% in 2024 after a decline the preceding year. Agriculture in Palestine employs a smaller share of workers than the other main sectors (6.8% in 2024), yet still more than twice the share in EU countries, on average (3.3%). Such rapid shifts in employment by sector have likely been intensified by economic disruption following the onset of the war in Gaza, complicating strategic planning and policy formulation in both education and employment.

A particularly concerning aspect of the findings in this section is the worsening quality of jobs in Palestine. The incidence of vulnerable employment climbed from 19.2% in 2022 to 27.5% in 2024, which means that more than one in four jobs now feature insecurity or informality. Vulnerable employment has a range of negative consequences in any context, but in Palestine, its negative effects – such as reduced access to stable income, worker protection, and social safety nets – are being amplified by the war and thus are especially severe.

## 4.2 System performance indicators

As noted in the introduction to this paper, 'performance' in the context of ETF monitoring describes the extent to which VET systems deliver on their commitments to learners and stakeholders in support of lifelong learning. These commitments typically cover three key areas: ensuring broad and equitable access to opportunities for education and training; delivering high-quality and relevant education; and maintaining effective and efficient organisation and management of the education system, including adequate resourcing.

To measure performance systematically, the ETF uses System Performance Indices (SPIs), which summarise the extent to which education and training systems fulfil each of their commitments. Each SPI is presented on a scale from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating stronger performance.

Both the headline indicators in Section 4.1 and the SPIs presented in this section are guided by the same core questions: Who takes part? What do they achieve? How do education and training systems support them? The main difference between these two sets of data lies in how these questions are answered. Headline indicators answer the questions with single, stand-alone measures drawn directly from international data sources. The SPIs, on the other hand, are evaluative, composite measures. They are designed explicitly to assess how well VET systems fulfil broader policy commitments that cannot be adequately captured through individual statistics.

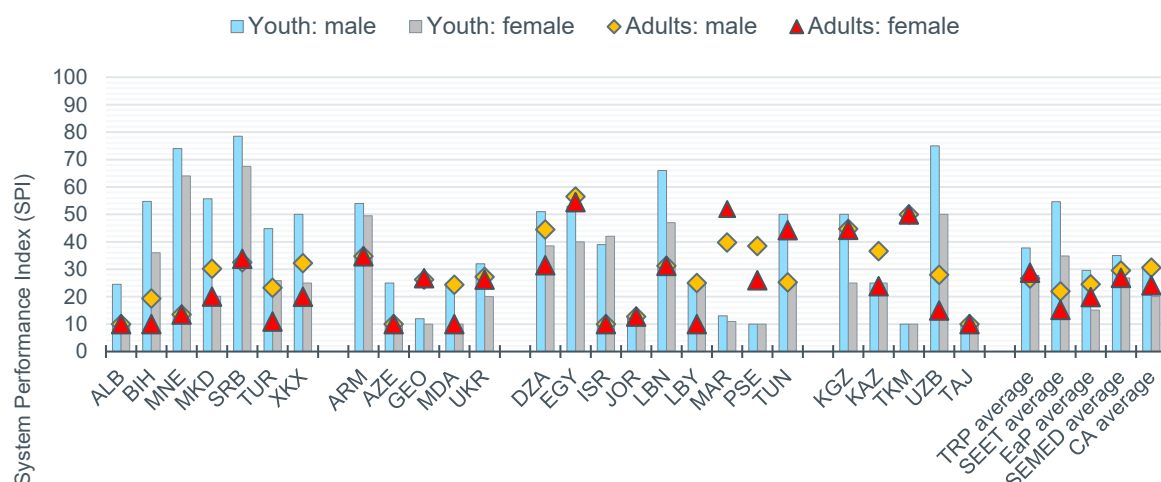
## Access and participation

This section presents system performance in VET and adult learning against two specific policy outcomes: support for equitable access and participation for young people and adults, and support for young people in initial VET (IVET) to successfully complete their programmes. The scope of SPIs tracking access differs according to the target group of learners. For youth, the SPI assesses access specifically to IVET, while for adults it captures access to continuing VET (CVET) and other adult learning opportunities, such as those provided through active labour market policies (ALMPs). A separate SPI measures how effectively young learners in IVET are supported in progressing through their programmes and achieving graduation. In both cases, performance depends on the policies and measures the country is implementing.

### Access by age and gender

Initial VET in Palestine is not particularly successful in enrolling young learners. With an SPI of only 10 for both genders, VET programmes appear considerably less attractive and accessible than in other countries in the SEMED region (SPI of 35 for boys, 27 for girls) and across the broader Torino Process sample (SPI of 38 for boys, 28 for girls) (Figure 4.1). Barriers include severe financial constraints, such as rising tuition and transportation costs that disproportionately affect rural and disadvantaged students, particularly after the economic downturn triggered by the Gaza war in October 2023. Checkpoints, closures, and safety concerns further restrict attendance by raising travel times and costs. Institutions also face operational limitations, including outdated infrastructure, inadequate resources, and chronic underfunding. Reliance on donor support makes it difficult to sustain or expand programmes, especially as international assistance shifts toward humanitarian relief. Yet, there are also positive developments. The Torino Process expert survey notes that providers increasingly align training with labour market demand, adding programmes in sustainable agriculture, electricity, hybrid vehicle maintenance, cybersecurity, and e-commerce. Some centres also offer hybrid and online courses to reduce mobility barriers.

**Figure 4.1 Access to learning opportunities by country, age and gender of learners - system performance index, ETF partner countries and international average (2025)**



Note: Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100<sup>9</sup>. Access for youth refers to IVET programmes.

Source: ETF KIESE and Torino Process databases

The VET system of Palestine is more effective in offering upskilling and reskilling for adults. Although only mid-range (SPI of 39 for men and 26 for women), system performance in support of participation in CVET is stronger than in the SEMED region on average (SPI of 30 for men, 27 for women) and the Torino Process sample on average (SPI of 27 for men, 29 for women). CVET institutions in Palestine often maintain closer links with employers, with targeted short-term courses providing practical skills, internships, and curriculum input from companies. However, it is still the case that financial burdens, geographic barriers, and persistent security concerns restrict broader participation in CVET and other adult learning, especially for women and disadvantaged groups. In addition, political instability and economic crisis further limit private sector capacity to host trainees and constrain learners' ability to sustain participation.

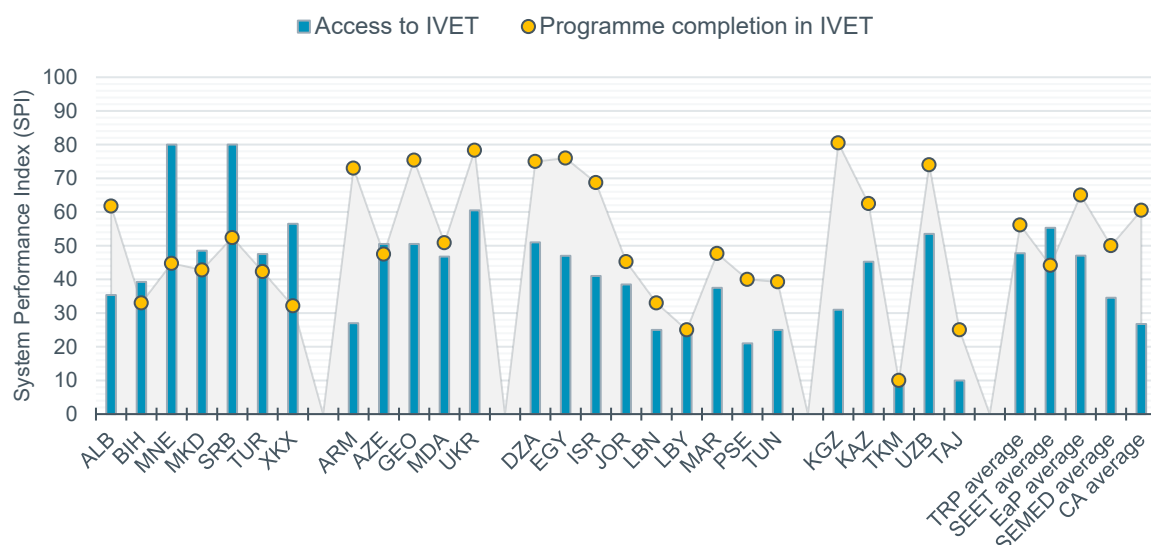
### Retention and programme completion

Although opportunities for young learners in Palestine to enter initial VET programmes are highly constrained, the environment they encounter after enrolment is comparatively supportive of their continuation and completion (Figure 4.2). Even so, both entry and completion scores remain below the SEMED regional averages (SPI of 35 for entry, 50 for completion) and well behind the international averages across the Torino Process sample (SPI of 48 for entry, 56 for completion).

The gap between system performance in support of access and in support of graduation is sizeable, a finding also observed in about a third of Torino Process countries. Several explanations are possible. First, learners who enrol in vocational education may genuinely benefit from a supportive environment. Second, the gap could reflect a selection effect, where mainly motivated or resilient students enrol. A third, less favourable, interpretation is that programmes apply lower standards or insufficiently rigorous assessments, allowing students to graduate irrespective of actual achievement. A fourth, and more encouraging, explanation lies in the growing use of targeted retention measures reported in the monitoring survey, such as fee waivers, travel subsidies, and hybrid delivery models, which ease the practical burdens on students and help them remain until graduation.

<sup>9</sup> The Torino Process makes a distinction between the theoretical (full) index range and index range used for reporting purposes. For reporting purposes, rare instances of extreme values on the low end (SPI < 10) and on the high end (SPI > 90) of the index scale are truncated at the upper (10) and lower (90) decile end. This means that the reporting does not discriminate SPI values below 10 and above 90. The international average, on the other hand, is calculated using the full range of the index.

**Figure 4.2 Access and programme completion in IVET - system performance index, ETF partner countries and international average**



Note: Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: ETF KIESE and Torino Process databases

Despite such internal support, progression and completion are hampered by external barriers. The monitoring survey highlights financial pressures, geographical limitations, and security concerns, all of which have intensified since the October 2023 war. Rising transport costs and reduced family incomes lead to irregular attendance and dropout rates of 10–25% in some centres. Checkpoints, road closures, and safety risks further disrupt participation, particularly for students in remote areas. Female learners are disproportionately affected, as families often hesitate to support long and unsafe commutes. Although societal attitudes toward VET are slowly changing, many young women still prioritise university pathways, both for personal preference and for social pressure. Adult women also struggle to combine training with household responsibilities and limited childcare, reducing their likelihood of completion compared with men. To counter these barriers, the monitoring survey notes that many training institutions have introduced targeted support such as scholarships, partial fee waivers, flexible scheduling, online or hybrid learning, and localised provision, all designed to improve access and retention.

## Quality and relevance of learning outcomes

In this section, the SPIs capture the quality of the provision of basic skills and key competences to learners in IVET, as well as the degree to which adults possess foundational skills. These results are complemented by selected KIESE indicators, which track the relevance of learning outcomes by examining employment rates of individuals aged 15 and older, disaggregated by educational attainment in ETF partner countries. ETF monitoring keeps quality and relevance separate because, although they often reinforce each other, they do not always coincide. Learners with strong foundational skills may still struggle to find suitable employment, while individuals might secure jobs without acquiring a comprehensive skillset. By tracking these aspects separately, the reporting hopes to identify both the intrinsic benefits of education and how effectively it aligns with the needs of the labour market.

### Quality of learning by age and gender

The monitoring results suggest that, like other countries in the SEMED region, Palestine struggles to deliver foundational skills and competences to young learners in VET, especially boys. The monitoring outcomes are slightly better for girls (SPI of 19), but still far below international and regional averages (SPI of 40 and 28, respectively, Figure 4.3). These weak results reflect high underachievement in core subjects: more than three-quarters of 15-year-olds score Level 1, or below, in reading (77.1%, KIESE



SPI 24) and mathematics (79.9%, KIESE SPI 25), while 0.1% reaches top-achievement levels (KIESE SPIs 27–29).

**Figure 4.3 Quality of skills and competences by country, age and gender of learners – system performance index, ETF partner countries and international average (2025)**



Note: Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: ETF KIESE and Torino Process databases

The Torino Process survey confirms that IVET struggles to ensure that learning outcomes are satisfactory and of relevance to the labour market. Graduates often lack the literacy, numeracy, problem-solving, and transversal competences that employers expect, with the exception of those in apprenticeship programmes, who perform better. Employers remain sceptical of the practical readiness of graduates and point out that they possess basic but shallow skills. Although a unified curriculum and examinations exist, their labour-market alignment is limited, and work-based learning and employer engagement lack consistency, leaving many programmes geared to occupations with a shrinking demand. Contributing factors include a shortage of qualified trainers, many lacking practical experience or up-to-date skills, and weak incentives for continuous development. Oversight is fragmented, quality standards are inconsistently applied, and resource constraints limit facilities and equipment. Quality is further undermined by unlicensed private providers operating with minimal regulation. Nevertheless, where private partnerships exist, especially in sectors such as pharmaceuticals and automotive maintenance, the quality and relevance of training tend to improve.

In contrast, adults in Palestine are more likely to possess foundational skills and competences than youth and, on average, their peers in other Torino Process countries (Figure 4.2). Their stronger performance reflects both structured re-skilling and upskilling efforts and practical experience gained in the workplace. According to the expert survey, adult training programmes benefit from targeted interventions, flexible delivery models – including hybrid learning – and closer alignment with the needs of employers. Providers actively seek feedback from businesses and adapt programmes accordingly.

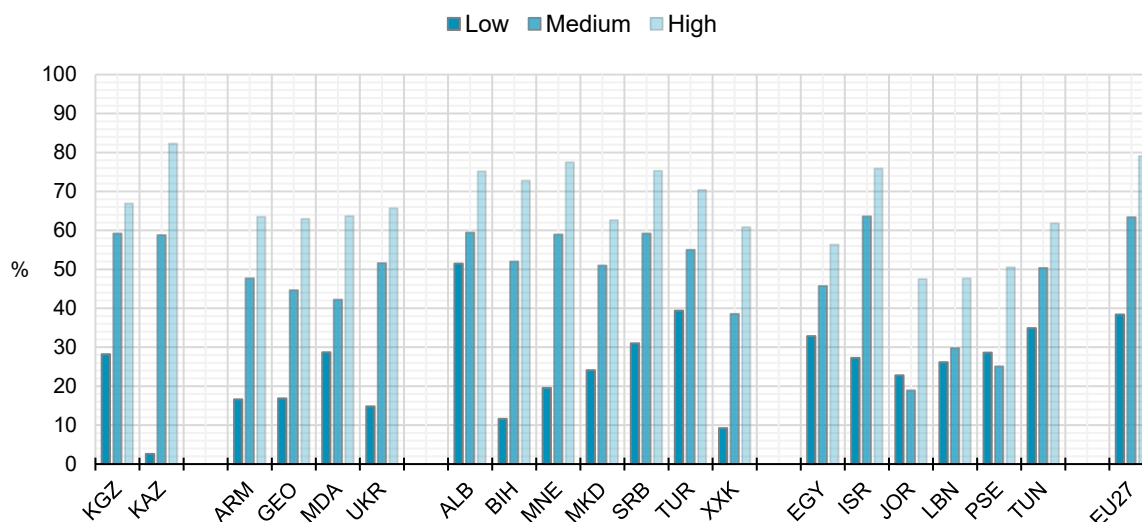
However, adult training faces difficulties in maintaining consistent quality standards, securing resources, and scaling provision. Combined with financial constraints and fragmented governance, these factors limit its potential to reach more learners and deliver stronger outcomes.

Even so, foundational skills remain more prevalent among working-age adults – particularly men – than among recent IVET graduates. This relative strength is reinforced by high levels of educational attainment: nearly one-quarter (23%) of the adult population completed tertiary education (ISCED 5–8) in 2024 (KIESE SPI Indicator 35), making it one of the highest performers in the region, while also indicating a solid base in higher-order literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving abilities.

## Relevance and labour market outcomes

This section uses employment data to gauge how effectively education in Palestine meets labour market needs. Specifically, it compares employment rates in Palestine, by the highest education level adults have reached, with EU-27 averages (Figure 4.4).

**Figure 4.4 Employment rate (age 15+) by educational attainment, ETF partner countries (2024)**



Source: ETF KIESE database

As in other countries in the Torino Process sample, educational attainment in Palestine is a strong predictor of employability. However, the patterns observed are atypical. Whereas employment prospects typically improve with higher qualifications, in Palestine the employment rate for adults with medium-level qualifications (25.1%) is slightly lower than for those with low qualifications (28.6%). Employment rates rise again for adults with tertiary education (50.5%) because, despite being the most educated, only one in two adults is employed (Figure 4.4).

The employment gap between Palestine and the EU-27 is wide across all educational levels but most dramatic for adults with medium qualifications, whose employment rate trails the EU average by 38 percentage points. Among low-qualified adults, Palestine's employment rate is about 10 percentage points below the EU average, while the gap narrows somewhat for highly educated adults, at around 29 percentage points.

The reasons for these results are beyond the scope of this text, but in other countries in the Torino Process sample, unusual employment patterns reflect structural challenges in the labour market, which typically include qualification inflation, limited opportunities for medium-qualified adults, or mismatches between educational outcomes and the skills which employers seek.

## System management and organisation

In this final section on policy and system performance, the focus shifts to the organisation and management of the education and training system, with particular attention on VET.

The analysis presents data on system performance in the form of SPIs in three areas: effective allocation and use of financial resources in VET; allocation, use, and professional capacity of human resources, including leadership skills and professional competence of school management and staff; and system steering and management, which includes data, quality assurance, school leadership, and the internationalisation of VET.

## Financial resources in VET and lifelong learning

This section looks into how effective Palestine is in ensuring adequate funding for VET, and how well this funding is converted into practical resources such as workshops, teaching materials, and

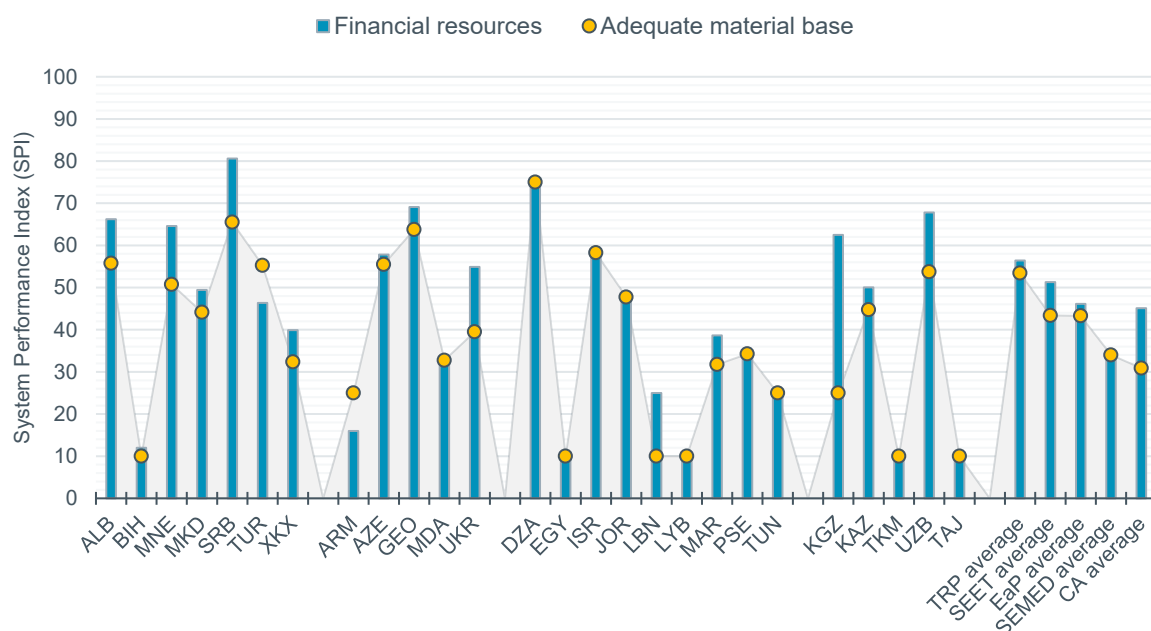


equipment, which are essential for effective teaching and learning. The data in Figure 4.5 show that, although conditions are not as limited as in some neighbouring countries, Palestine nevertheless operates under considerable resource constraints (SPI of 35 compared to an average SPI of 56 across the monitoring sample). Public investment in VET is modest, as it has historically been a low priority in education spending. In 2023, education absorbed close to 20% of total public expenditure, yet vocational programmes received only about 1.3% of that allocation (Ministry of Education – Palestine, 2023). Although other entities, such as the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Development, also provide VET, the share of the education budget devoted to VET remains a reliable indicator of its overall priority within public resource allocations.

These findings should be interpreted with caution, since averages mask wide differences between Gaza and the West Bank. The war that broke out in October 2023 had a catastrophic impact on Gaza's educational infrastructure – by spring 2025, close to 96% of school buildings had been hit or damaged (ETF, 2025a) – and it triggered a financial crisis in the West Bank that directly affected funding for education. Palestine also scores low on converting resources into material conditions for teaching and learning (SPI of 34). Since results are similarly weak for both resource mobilisation and their use, the data suggest that VET mobilises and spends funds with roughly equal, yet modest, effectiveness. In practice, teachers and learners continue to face major shortfalls due to the limited overall scale of investment.

Supplementary evidence through the Torino Process monitoring survey shows that available government funding mainly covers salaries and basic operations, with minimal capital spending: in 2023, only 0.01% of the education budget was directed to infrastructure or equipment. Primary and secondary education together consume about 90% of total education spending, leaving vocational programmes with little scope for expansion or upgrading. Roughly 80% of the MOE's budget goes to salaries (plus 9% for pensions), whereas only 3.6% is set aside for development.

**Figure 4.5 Allocation and use of financial resources in education and VET – index of system performance, ETF partner countries and international average (2024)**



Note: Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100  
Source: ETF KIESE and Torino Process databases

As a result, school and training centre budgets for maintenance, consumables, and new purchases are extremely tight. One recurring problem is securing consumable training materials—such as wood for carpentry, metal for welding, or spare parts for mechanics. With operating budgets too limited to

cover these items, some institutions rely on small income-generating activities, such as repair jobs or production orders, to finance training materials.

### **Human resources: allocation, use, professional capacity**

With an SPI of 32, which is well below both the regional and Torino Process averages, the issue of human resources in VET – particularly trainers and teachers – emerges as one of the more significant areas in need of attention in Palestine. According to the Torino Process monitoring survey, the shortages of qualified trainers in both IVET and CVET are widespread, and extend across fields and includes both legacy programmes and emerging areas such as AI, electric vehicles, and culinary arts. The shortages are severe enough to have forced at least some providers to cancel programmes due to an inability to hire or retain trainers.

Among the reasons for the shortages are poor remuneration and employment conditions. Trainers are often hired on part-time or short-term contracts without prospects for professional development or stable employment. The substandard salaries are pushing some trainers to leave for better-paying opportunities or to drop out of the VET sector entirely. The limited availability of qualified personnel is compounded by weak or absent systems for professional development. While some centres invest in upskilling their trainers through donor-funded projects or internal efforts, these opportunities are typically short-term and unequally distributed. There is no national framework to support in-service training or to ensure the systematic pedagogical and technical development of trainers. In the absence of a dedicated strategy for continuous professional development, most training staff must rely on personal initiative or informal networks to improve their skills.

Across the VET system, there is also a lack of consistent standards for trainer accreditation, licensing, or evaluation. In many CVET and short-term training centres, recruitment is based on informal vetting processes or personal experience rather than national quality assurance criteria.

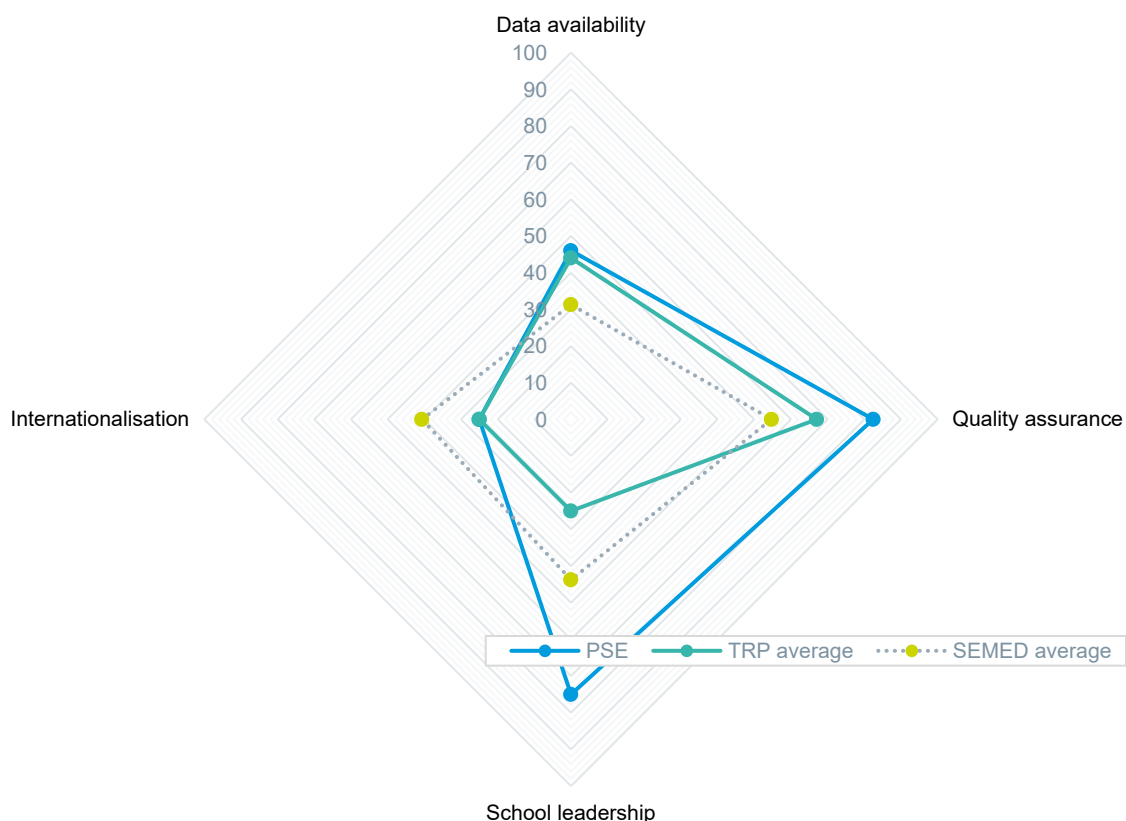
According to the expert survey, the war in Gaza has exacerbated these structural weaknesses. Financial hardship and rising insecurity have contributed to high staff turnover, the exit of experienced trainers from the sector, and growing fatigue among those who remain. Public employment freezes have prevented new hiring, and VET providers increasingly manage their human resource challenges in isolation, while relying on ad hoc arrangements to maintain delivery of their programmes.

### **System steering and management**

This section summarises the system performance results in the domains of data availability, quality assurance, school leadership, and internationalisation in VET in Palestine (Figure 4.6).

The monitoring survey suggests that, despite strong regional results (SPI of 46 for Palestine versus 31 for SEMED), the data availability on VET in Palestine remains weak. Basic data systems exist in some ministries, but they are fragmented and lack integration. A labour market information system is in place but under-used, and no centralised database tracks learners, trainer qualifications, or training outcomes. VET and labour market institutions often rely on ad hoc surveys, informal networks, or donor-driven tracer studies, leading to planning based on anecdotal evidence. The absence of real-time labour market data further hampers alignment of the VET offer with labour market expectations.

**Figure 4.6 System steering and management in TVET – index of system performance, selected dimensions, ETF partner countries and Torino Process average (2024)**



Note: Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: ETF KIESE and Torino Process databases

Monitoring results in the domain of quality assurance are more positive (Figure 4.6). Nearly all IVET and general education principals report that self-evaluation is routinely carried out (Indicator 84, OECD PISA), that curricular profiles and educational goals are clearly documented (Indicator 86), that written performance standards exist (Indicator 87), and that student test results and graduation rates are closely monitored (Indicator 89). These practices represent the core elements of an internal quality-assurance cycle.

External quality assurance, however, has not reached full coverage. While 88.6% of students attend schools regularly reviewed by external bodies (KIESE SPI Indicator 85), a sizeable minority do not. About 30% of students are in schools without regular external coaching or improvement support. Accountability is also directed more towards families than the wider community: 92.3% of students are in schools that share results with parents (Indicator 83), but only 12.8% attend schools that publicly display results (Indicator 81). Data recording is widespread, yet system-level tracking is patchy, with only 62.6% of students in schools where authorities monitor achievement data over time (Indicator 82). Expert survey evidence also points to structural weaknesses, inadequate oversight, and fragmentation.

One of the more important challenges in this domain of system operation is the fragmentation of quality assurance practices. Standardised exams exist for short-term courses in specific fields, such as electricity, but have not been expanded to other areas. The professional capacity of school leaders in VET varies between providers and is therefore not consistent. Many institutions benefit from committed managers with strong planning skills, yet these efforts are often siloed in the absence of a national framework for leadership development. Frequent transfers of skilled staff into ministries create shortages at provider level, while other shortages are filled by underqualified appointees. Ambiguous

mandates, limited budgets, and weak inter-ministerial coordination restrict provider autonomy and limit leadership effectiveness, especially in public VET centres.

While comparable to the Torino Process average, VET in Palestine has less international exposure than the VET systems of SEMED countries on average (Figure 4.6). According to the monitoring survey, internationalisation efforts are present, but they are small-scale, donor-dependent, and vulnerable to funding cuts. Student exchanges, trainer visits, and the adoption of international practices are not institutionalised, leaving internationalisation a marginal system priority.

# ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
ALMP	Active Labour Market
CBA	Competency-Based Approach
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
CVET	Continuing Vocational Education and Training
DVV	German Adult Education Association
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
Enabel	Belgian Development Agency
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro (currency)
FPCCIA	Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture
GDP	Gross domestic product
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
KG2	Kindergarten Year 2
KIESE	Key Indicators of the Education System

LFS	Labour Force Survey
LMIS	Labour market information system
MAS	Palestinian Economic Policy Research Institute
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MOHESR	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
MOL	Ministry of Labour
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territory
PA	Palestinian Authority
PALM	Programme for Access to the Labour Market
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PFESP	Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection for Workers
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
Q4	Fourth Quarter
RESSC	Renewable Energy Sector Skills Council
SEMED	Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region
SPI	System Performance Index
TVET	Technical vocational education and training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNWRA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
VET	Vocational education and training
WBL	Work-based learning
YEP	Youth Economic Empowerment in Palestine

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