BELARUS

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENTS 2020

KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT
(SEPTEMBER 2019–AUGUST 2020)

The Belarusian economy is expected to contract by roughly 3% in 2020 because of the drag from Covid-19 and headwinds from increased political tensions after a contested outcome in the presidential elections of August 2020. This will have an impact not only on economy but also likely on the labour market in the years to come.

The labour market in Belarus is developing under the conditions of complex demographic trends that affect the parameters of labour supply. Despite growth, the indicators of the economic efficiency of employment (labour productivity measured in terms of GDP per person employed, and real wages) show low values. Level of education remains a significant factor in providing employment opportunities to people and reducing their risk of unemployment. However, making an effective transition from school to work is an issue that has not yet received sufficient study and young people are becoming increasingly vulnerable in the labour market.

In 2019 a high employment rate of 67.7% and a low unemployment rate of 4.2%, together with a large number of hours worked per year, indicate that Belarus has exhausted its growth opportunities based on increased labour supply. As a result, the country needs another source of growth such as innovation, which implies learning new skills and competences.

To set the admission limits for new enrolments, the education system uses data on available vacancies provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the unemployed registered with the Public Employment Service (PES). However, these databases cannot be regarded as a valid proxy for demand. They neither define skills requirements nor provide complete or reliable information about the labour market and labour demand. Employers, when submitting information about vacancies, would benefit from the use of professional standards, which are yet to be developed in Belarus.

Given that state-owned companies hold a dominant position in the economy, their performance has a determining effect on the country's economic growth. While heavy government interventions in the economy have helped Belarus to avoid the social costs associated with economic restructuring, the policies have also distorted the allocation of labour and resources and severely eroded competitiveness. Belarus has launched ambitious programmes to increase the competitiveness of the national economy, particularly in innovative high-tech sectors such as IT, bio- and nanotechnology, robotics, energy-saving technologies, etc. According to the ETF Torino Process assessment, the successful implementation of such ambitious programmes depends largely on the availability and adaptability of skilled human resources. Owing to the current political crisis and instability in Belarus, however, several IT companies have recently announced plans to relocate their operations and staff, primarily to Ukraine. This may have an impact on the government's plans for a thriving IT sector.

Belarus is one of the only European countries that has not implemented strict coronavirus containment measures. In the absence of a lockdown, schools, VET institutions and universities have remained open. It is estimated, however, that roughly 50% of primary and secondary school children have studied partially at home during the pandemic at the request of their parents. In VET, most students have carried on their studies as usual. However, VET teacher in-service training activities have been moved to distance and online learning.

One employment policy measure has been to encourage people to accept temporary jobs available in the labour market. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the number of vacancies has declined sharply in 2020, while the number of intermediations provided by PES has risen.

Shrinking enrolments owing to a declining youth cohort puts pressure on VET provider networks to become more efficient and serve not only young people but also adults. In 2019 Belarus published its lifelong learning participation rate, which at 14.8% is higher than the EU average. Indeed, the country outperforms all of its neighbours in adult participation in learning. Given Belarus's potential as a leader in human development in the region, the country's future, further cooperation with the EU in advancing its skills development and labour market reforms will depend on whether the country finds a solution to the current political crisis and whether relations with the EU and its member states become normalised.

1. KEY DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

In 2019 Belarus's population was around 9.4 million based on preliminary data from a census carried out in the year. According to the census, the population has decreased by 1% since 2016. The share of youth in the general population has also declined, with the relative size of the youth population (aged 15–24) standing at 14% in 2019, and the population is ageing. A low fertility rate, which matches the rate in EU countries, is one of the main demographic challenges for Belarus. These demographic trends are likely to translate into new demands on the lifelong learning system and employment policy.

The country is undergoing a process of urbanisation that affects all groups of the population as the flows of internal migration are towards the cities, where industry and services are developing. In 2019, 77.5% of the population lived in urban areas. According to official statistics[1], Belarus has positive annual international migration inflows. Roughly two-thirds of migrants come from countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Statistics on labour emigration are very limited because most labour migration flows are to Russia. Integration agreements between Belarus and Russia imply the absence of a border and minimal barriers for the employment of Belarusians in Russia. They also create additional opportunities for the entry and exit of migrants. In recent years, for example, labour migration to Poland has increased owing to higher salaries, simplified work permit arrangements and growing demand for a skilled labour force[2].

Belarus is classified by the World Bank as a higher middle-income country. During most of the 2000s, a combination of favourable external factors and loose macroeconomic policies boosted economic growth. Annual growth rates averaged 9% in the period from 2002 to 2008. At the time, economic growth was accompanied by an impressive fall in the number of households below the national poverty line and an increase in household income. However, strong growth was also associated with increasing macroeconomic vulnerabilities and growing external imbalances.

After several years of slowing growth and increased macroeconomic volatility followed by a recession in 2015 and 2016, the economy started to recover in 2017 and gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 2.4%. In 2018 GDP growth accelerated to 3% but then in 2019 fell to 1.2%. In 2020 economic growth is expected to contract by around 3% because of the drag from Covid-19 and headwinds from increased political tensions after a contested outcome in the presidential elections of August 2020[3]. In the first half of 2020, Belarus was able to withstand an external demand shock because of a pre-election hike in wages and pensions, which supported household spending, and because the country did not introduce any major Covid-19 lockdown. As a small, open, commodity-exporting economy, however, Belarus is heavily exposed to the deep ongoing contractions in its main trading partners, Russia and the EU. This comes on top of a significant terms-of-trade shock as Russia gradually phases out discounts on its crude oil supplies to Belarus by 2025, which will affect the exports, fiscal revenues and competitiveness of Belarus's energy-exporting and energy-intensive firms. The World Bank forecasts serious macroeconomic risks owing to heavy debt redemptions in the pipeline and the

[1] https://belstat.gov.by/en/ofitsialnaya-statistika/Demographic-and-social-statistics/population-and-migration/

[2] https://findirector.by/articles/element/skolko-belorusskikh-trudovykh-migrantov-gotova-prinyat-polsha/

[3] https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/belarus/overview#3

economy is expected to enter a deeper recession in 2021, contracting by 5.5%. A slight recovery is anticipated in 2022.

The trade, services and industrial sectors are the main sources of the country's economic development. The priority sectors include machinery and metalworking, oil refining, chemical and petrochemical industries, electrical power, consumer goods and food processing, and the timber and woodworking industry. In 2019 industrial production accounted for 31.3% of GDP, while agriculture amounted to 6.8% and services to 48.8%.

The existing economic model has prioritised the development of state-owned enterprises. These continue to play an important role in the economy, benefiting from a preferential regime in terms of financial and other resources and limited regulatory obligations. In recent years, the government has stepped up its efforts to promote private-sector development, strengthen the position of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and sustain growth, employment and resilience. Noteworthy achievements since the 2016 Small Business Act for Europe (SBA) assessment include the adoption in October 2018 of an SME development strategy for the period to 2030 and the elaboration of provisions for the establishment of an SME agency. In addition, the adoption in November 2017 of Presidential Decree No. 7 'On the Development of Entrepreneurship' has substantially simplified regulations on doing business, setting out provisions that minimise state interference in business operations, while presuming the good faith of enterprises and banning the introduction of new taxes until 2020. However, the contribution of SMEs to value added and employment in the business sector remain limited and state-owned enterprises continue to play a disproportionately large role in the economy[4].

Beroc[5], an independent research centre, estimates that Belarusian SMEs, which currently employ more than 1.3 million people, usually respond faster and more extensively than state companies do to downturns in the economy by laying off employees. At the same time, SMEs are also expected to be more sensitive in reacting to government support policies. The effects of Belarusian government policy measures on the economy and SMEs are somewhat ambiguous because the country did not introduce any containment or other specific restrictions against Covid-19, but companies continued operating. However, a sharp fall in revenues is expected across SMEs and their adaptability to respond to the crisis varies by sector.

The performance of state-owned companies has a determining effect on the country's economic growth. While heavy government interventions in the economy have helped Belarus to avoid the social costs associated with economic restructuring, the policies have also distorted the allocation of labour and resources and severely eroded competitiveness. Belarus has launched ambitious programmes to increase the competitiveness of the national economy, particularly in innovative high-tech sectors such as IT, bio- and nanotechnology, robotics, energy-saving technologies, etc. According to the ETF Torino Process assessment[6], the successful implementation of such ambitious programmes depends largely on the availability and adaptability of skilled human resources.

The share of the population below the national poverty line has fallen dramatically, dropping from 41.9% in 2000 to 5.6% in 2018, and even further in the first quarter of 2019 to 4.81% as a result of the growth in real household income. Moreover, Belarus has managed to reduce the poverty rate faster

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[4] OECD, *SME Policy Index: Eastern Partner Countries 2020*, Paris, 2020
[5] http://beroc.by/upload/iblock/d31/d31a2a6ccccc0e4a862abbe3f7a7d944.pdf
[6] ETF, *Policies for Human Capital Development: Belarus – An ETF Torino Process Assessment*, Turin, 2020

than any other country in the Europe and Central Asia region[7]. In terms of income equality, Belarus has one of the lowest Gini coefficients in the Commonwealth of Independent States and Eastern Europe (its Gini index stood at 25.2% in 2018) and the country performs relatively well on social indicators, ranking 50th out of 189 countries in the UN Human Development Index (2020)[8].

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 Trends and challenges

Expenditure on education is a priority on the government's agenda. The annual allocation for education is approximately 5% of GDP, which is comparable to the corresponding indicator for developed countries. The high level of expenditure on education pays off in good educational outcomes. The country has a high average duration of education (12.3 years) and a high number of expected years of study (15.5)[9]. The literacy rate is one of the highest in the world and the gross enrolment rates in both primary and secondary education are close to 100%[10].

In general, the educational attainment of the adult population is high. In 2019, 55.3% of the active population aged 25+ had attained a high level of education (tertiary and secondary specialised), 43.1% a medium level (general secondary and vocational) and only 1.5% a low level (general basic and lower).

The education system in Belarus includes formal, continuing (*dopolnitelnoje*) and special education. Formal education is divided into pre-school, general secondary (primary and secondary), vocational, specialised secondary, higher and postgraduate education. After completing general secondary education, 55% of graduates continue their studies in higher education, 25% go on to specialised (professional) secondary schools and 17% enrol in technical vocational schools. This two-level (pre-university) VET system explains the high participation rates in VET. The share of VET students in upper secondary education is high, standing at 42.7% in 2019. The share of tertiary education attainment has continued to increase, rising from 55.8% in 2017 to 58.3% in 2018.

Over the past five years, student enrolment numbers have been falling in both vocational and secondary specialised education, as well as in higher education. This can be explained by the dwindling number of young people in the 15–19 and 20–24 age groups. At the same time, however, enrolment numbers have been increasing in pre-primary and general secondary education[11].

In 2018 Belarus participated for the first time in the new round of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Belarus scored 474 points to stand 36th in the world ranking, outperforming many neighbouring countries (Ukraine, Moldova) and several EU member states (Croatia, Slovakia, Greece, Malta and Cyprus)[12]. Belarus fared slightly below the OECD average in

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[7] https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/10/17/poverty-reduction-in-belarus

[8] http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BLR

[9] ETF, KIESE 2020

[10] http://uis.unesco.org/country/BY

[11] ETF, *Youth Transition to Work in Belarus*, 2018: https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications

[12] https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018_CN_BLR.pdf

performance, but did better for example in indicators measuring equity in reading. However, the results also showed substantial differences between urban and regional schools and between children from low-income families and those with higher socio-economic status. These sharp differences raise concerns over equity.

Belarus did not announce any particular containment measures to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, schools, universities and VET institutions did not close down. However, parents had the right to withdraw their children temporarily from schools, and schools were allowed to grant the right for children to stay at home upon the request of their parents. Higher education institutions and universities did take some preventative measures such as organising distance and online learning (DOL) courses and reducing or postponing lectures that would involve bigger gatherings, and they tried to arrange and focus on courses in smaller groups. In most cases, VET students attended learning programmes as usual[13].

The government extended the school holidays by two weeks, bringing the overall spring holiday period to three weeks, but students were asked to return on 20 April. According to estimates in the media and from the Ministry of Education, only 30% to 40% of secondary school students did return while the remainder continued studying at home. The National Institute of Education published a guidance note with different DOL platforms and resources[14]. Also, the Republican Institute of Vocational Education (RIPO) posted its algorithm[15] on conducting DOL in VET institutions. According to RIPO, all in-service training and professional development activities for teachers were to be moved to DOL as of March 2020 and 9 out of 15 in-service training courses for VET teachers have been conducted online. The other modules, which include teachers' internships in companies, have been postponed. One of the problems seems to be the ambiguous status of DOL under current legislation.

As regards assessment, the Ministry of Education has issued a notification that the final grades for those studying at home will be based on their average score for the first three quarters if they have not come back to sit final exams in the last quarter of the 2019–2020 school year. The new academic year 2020–2021 started in September as usual, according to the Ministry of Education[16]. The ministry together with health authorities has prepared recommendations for schools and training institutions to prevent a further escalation of the pandemic in classrooms, and issued instructions on how to organise the learning process by adding distance and online resources in case the situation worsens.

2.2 Education and training policy and institutional setting

The guiding strategy document for the education sector is the State Programme on Education and Youth Policy 2016–2020, which covers all education levels, including general, VET and higher education. The programme envisages a collection of measures aimed at increasing the quality and accessibility of education to meet the needs of an innovative economy. This includes the formation of a 'cloud' informational and educational environment with quality resources and services that are based on modern information technologies. In 2020 the government has prepared a Development Strategy[17]

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[13] ETF, *Mapping Covid-19: The Overview*, https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/mapping-covid-19-overview

[14] http://e-asveta.adu.by/

[15] http://ripo.unibel.by/index.php?id=4586

[16] https://sputnik.by/education/20200828/1045575653/Minobr-vse-shkoly-Belarusi-nachnut-novyy-uchebnyy-god-v-obychnom-rezhime.html

[17] https://edu.gov.by/proekty/proekt-strategii-razvitiya-gosudarstvennoy-molodezhnoy-politiki/

on State Youth Policy up to 2030, which has been posted for public consultation on the website of the Ministry of Education. The strategy will be accompanied by the State Programme on Education and Youth Policy for the period 2021–2025.

The Education Code of the Republic of Belarus (2011) provides for the legal regulation of education at all levels, including continuing education. It not only regulates the learning process but also determines the distribution system and provides for the social protection of students, including the protection of the rights of people with a disability. The code is currently undergoing revision. The revised code will, for example, unify different types of public VET providers and reclassify them all as colleges. This is expected to pave the way towards optimising and restructuring VET provider networks and to improve their image among the population and learners. In the revised reading of the code, new provisions on the structure of education standards and curricula will now be included to enable the implementation of a modular approach in the delivery of education. The revised code is yet to be adopted.

In 2015 Belarus joined the Bologna Process and endorsed a roadmap for reforms in higher education. The Bologna-driven reforms require legislative changes in higher education, including amending the Education Code, introducing a national qualifications framework (NQF), abolishing compulsory placement in employment and setting up independent quality assurance for higher education. However, implementation of the reforms has been slow. A progress report[18] released by the Bologna Follow-Up Group in the spring of 2018 was highly critical and concluded that Belarus had not been able to fulfil any of its commitments in the roadmap. Belarus's progress on the Bologna reforms was on the agenda of the ministerial conference of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in Paris in May 2018. The ministers acknowledged Belarus's commitment and efforts to reform its higher education system, and agreed to partner with Belarus in order to provide support in implementing a higher education reform strategy[19] 2018–2020 to achievement alignment with the Bologna principles. The Ministry of Education sent a progress report[20] to the Bologna Follow-Up Group on the implementation of the country's action plan for 2019. The Belarusian Independent Bologna Committee reacted critically to the progress report and raised concerns over many issues, including a proper stakeholder consultation process[21].

In the course of implementing the strategy, the government announced a plan in March 2020 to establish a National Quality Assurance Agency in Education and the relevant amendments have since been made in the new reading of the Education Code. Although the progress report mentions that NQF levels have been developed for higher education, in reality they are yet to be aligned and adopted as part of the overall NQF that the Strategy for the Development of the National Qualifications System foresees for the period 2020–2023.

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[18] *Support to the Belarus Roadmap – Final Report*, 2018:
http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2018_Paris/72/3/MEN_conf-EHEA_AG2_03_950723.pdf

[19] *EHEA Paris 2018, Communiqué, Appendix II: Belarus strategy*:
http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2018_Paris/77/5/EHEAParis2018_Communique_AppendixII_952775.pdf

[20] http://srrb.niks.by/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/%d0%9e%d1%82%d1%87%d0%b5%d1%82-%d0%b7%d0%b0-2019-%d0%b3%d0%be%d0%b4_%d0%b0%d0%bd%d0%b3%d0%bb.pdf

[21] http://bolognaby.org/index.php/en/131-research-and-analytics-en/836-comments-on-the-national-report-of-the-republic-of-belarus-on-the-provisions-of-the-strategy-for-implementation-of-the-major-objectives-of-the-educational-system-development-in-line-with-the-ehea-principles-and-tools-implemented-in-2019-and-the-work-plan-of-implementation-of-ehea-tools-into-the-higher-education-system-of-the-republic-of-belarus-in-2019

In October 2018 the Council of Ministers adopted the Strategy for the Development of the National Qualifications System, which sets out the main directions and actions to modernise the system. In April 2019 the Council of Ministers adopted a decree[22] to establish a high-level National Council on Qualifications Development, which is chaired by the First Deputy Prime Minister and includes representatives of both the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MoLSP), as well as social partners. In 2020 the MoLSP reported that it had adopted two new regulations on the NQF: a procedure and criteria to link occupational standards (work functions) to qualification levels; and recommendations on sectoral qualifications frameworks. There are also a number of other regulations under preparation for the development of occupational standards, including the Council of Ministers' decision on the approval procedure. In September 2020 the ministry reported that 12 new occupational standards had received approval and that another 11 standards were expected to be finalised by the end of 2020.

The ongoing EU-financed Employment and VET (EVET) project (2017–2021) contributes to NQF implementation and the development and piloting of new qualifications in Belarus. In 2020 the ETF carried out a midterm evaluation[23] of the project. The evaluation team noted a hesitation among policymakers to make bold decisions to establish new institutions outside the scope of the existing bodies, and its recommendations included the activation and involvement of the National Council on Qualifications Development in order to foster NQF implementation and make decisions on institutional arrangements to manage the renewed qualifications system under development.

The scope and structure of VET are defined annually by the 'state order' (a government-financed enrolment plan) for the training of workers and specialists, taking into account the current labour market situation, regional demography and the capacity of educational establishments. Since participation in courses in the initial VET system is based on a contractual agreement, graduates are channelled into employment after leaving school. This practice has a long tradition, but is currently suffering from poor job retention, among other challenges. On the one hand, professional guidance is ineffective and matching is inadequate between the requirements of employers and the learning outcomes of graduates. On the other hand, jobs are characterised by a low level of competitiveness owing to low wages and inadequate social protection packages.

In recent years Belarus has succeeded in improving its VET system, despite only limited international assistance and cooperation. VET institutions have sought to learn actively from developments in the EU and establish partnerships with other countries. Belarus continues to take an active part in international skills competitions (including World Skills) in order to raise awareness of VET opportunities and improve the image and attractiveness of VET among the population. Belarus has established a network of resource centres at VET colleges and institutions across the country. As a rule, the centres are well equipped with modern technology and simulation equipment in order to provide facilities and workshops for the practical training of students and the in-service training of VET teachers. The EU's EVET project has provided funding for equipment and facilities in six resource centres. The project has also supported Belarus in developing the concept of leading sectoral colleges (LSCs). An LSC is expected to act as a knowledge hub to monitor sectoral skills needs and update qualifications and training programmes.

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[22] http://government.gov.by/upload/docs/file88897aa5baec4e16.PDF

[23] ETF, *Midterm evaluation of EU TA project Employment and VET in Belarus*, July 2020, unpublished

The ETF Torino Process assessment[24] identified a number of issues that require attention in the future. It set out nine recommendations for improvements in formal and non-formal schooling/training and adult education that can help to address the three key human capital challenges discussed in the report: (i) skills deficiencies are tying SMEs to low value-added activities, (ii) regional competitiveness is lagging despite human capital endowments, and (iii) industries demand that VET responds to new quality efficiency and equity requirements.

The ETF's recommendations to meet the first challenge, that is, to adapt skills intelligence and workforce planning to reflect the diversity of employers better, are to provide targeted training to SME managers and entrepreneurs that will be monitored by the new Agency for SME Support and make use of the new learning opportunities offered to SMEs through actions related to smart specialisation. To meet the second challenge, the ETF recommends bringing entrepreneurial learning under a single common policy home, for example, the Council for Entrepreneurship Development, and lending targeted support to regional entrepreneurial ecosystems in areas where they have a competitive advantage. In response to the third challenge, the ETF recommends making use of resource centres to improve VET quality, efficiency and equity, modernise VET teacher education and training by focusing on the professional competence and practical work experience of VET teachers and perhaps less on pedagogical aspects, and combine theory and practice in the teaching profession in line with the findings of an earlier ETF survey on teachers' professional development[25]. The last recommendation, which is to enhance the relevance of VET by optimising the VET provider network at oblast level, is also important because enrolment in VET is shrinking as a result of the declining youth cohort. Consequently, the VET provider network needs to become more efficient and serve not only young people but also increasingly adults.

The MoE is the national body responsible for education at all levels. It has a Directorate for Professional Education that steers policy implementation in higher education, VET and lifelong learning. The Information and Analytical Centre (GIATS) is an MoE body responsible for education statistics, information systems in the education sector, and the digitalisation of the education system.

VET is state-regulated, and is managed by the MoE, other ministries, and state authorities or organisations at the national, regional and local levels. The MoE governs the VET system through six regional departments of education and the Education Committee of Minsk City. The Republican Institute of Vocational Education (RIPO) is responsible for the development of national standards and training materials, research and analysis on VET, VET teacher in-service training, and other support and methodological work relating to VET. RIPO has strong institutional and human resource capacity to support VET policy development and implementation.

Higher education institutions and universities report directly to the MoE. The Republican Institute for Higher Education, founded by Belarus State University, provides scientific and methodological support to the entire higher education system and carries out in-service training courses for the staff of universities and higher education institutions in Belarus.

The structured participation of social partners in overall policy development and implementation has been limited, but government decisions to modernise the national qualifications system have triggered greater active engagement from social partners since 2017: a number of new sectoral skills councils

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[24] ETF, *Policies for Human Capital Development: Belarus – An ETF Torino Process Assessment*, Turin, 2020
[25] https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-10/belarus_cpd_survey_2018.pdf

now draw on the involvement of sectoral line ministries and employer and social partner organisations. The sector skills councils bring together representatives of the sector and VET institutions to discuss and coordinate, for instance, the development of standards and work-based learning arrangements. In 2018 and 2019 the councils actively developed new occupational standards with the support of the EU's EVET project. The main employer organisations and trade unions are formal members of the National Council on Qualifications Development.

In 2019 the World Bank approved additional funding of USD 102 million for the Education Modernization Project[26] to improve access to a quality learning environment in selected general secondary schools and strengthen student assessment and education management information systems. The project will run until 2025. In May 2020 the World Bank approved a new higher education reform project of USD 109.9 million to support Belarus's commitments under the Bologna Process and modernise its higher education system[27]. The project will modernise and re-equip a number of higher education institutions and their learning facilities. The project will also provide Belarusian universities and colleges with opportunities to take a more active part in international programmes and initiatives. Lastly, the project will contribute to improving the quality of Belarusian tertiary education through the establishment of a National Quality Assurance Agency that is fully aligned with the Bologna Process.

3. LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT

3.1 Trends and challenges

Belstat has been conducting a labour force survey (LFS) on a quarterly basis since 2012 and publishing official LFS data since 2018.

Unlike most other post-Soviet countries and transition economies, Belarus has maintained a high employment rate, and the structure of the labour market has remained virtually unchanged because of the high number of large state-owned enterprises, inefficient and unproductive industries, and the slow development of the SME sector. The activity rate stood at 70.7% in 2019. It was slightly higher for men (75.5%) than for women (66.3%). The employment rate is also high, increasing slightly from 67.2% in 2017 to 67.7% in 2019. Good labour market outcomes are also reflected in the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs). The NEET rate increased slightly from 6.3% in 2018 to 6.9% in 2019, which is comparable to the highest-performing EU member states and much lower than in other countries of the region.

In 2019 Belstat first published the lifelong learning participation rate (% of 25-64), which is remarkably high at 14.6%. The rate is higher than the EU average of 11.9% and the highest in the EU Neighbourhood region. It is also slightly higher for men at 16.0% than for women at 13.3%. Even people with a low educational background take part in lifelong learning at 8.0%, while higher educated people reach 16.2%. Since Belarus far outperforms all its neighbours in adult participation in learning, the issue would bear further analysis of current practice and policies to understand the underlying and enabling factors at work.

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[26] https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P166719
[27] https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P167992

For many years the official unemployment rate in Belarus has been very low, mostly around 1% of the working population based on the number of unemployed individuals registered with the Public Employment Service (PES). In 2019 the share of registered unemployed in the workforce was as low as 0.2%[28]. In 2017 Belstat first published an unemployment rate calculated with LFS data. The unemployment rate was 5.8% in 2016 and 5.6% in 2017, and fell even further to 4.2% in 2019. The youth unemployment rate was higher, standing at 10.7% in 2018, but it fell slightly to 10.2% in 2019. The long-term unemployment rate is low, standing at 1.2% in 2018, and the number of those in long-term unemployment as a share of the total unemployed was only around 4% in 2018.

A transformation is currently taking place in the sectoral structure of the employed population. The number of workers employed in the services sector grew from 57.3% in 2013 to 61.2% in 2019. Over the same period, employment in agriculture decreased slightly (from 9.6% in 2017 to 8.7% in 2018), while employment in industry increased (from 29.9% in 2017 to 30.1% in 2018). The public sector remains an important employer, absorbing roughly 40% of the workforce. Although employment has been steadily increasing in the private sector and decreasing in the public or state sector, the share of employment in the private sector is still among the lowest in the region. According to Belstat[29], the private sector employed 56.1% of the workforce in 2018. However, data on private-sector employment also includes limited and joint stock companies in which government ownership can reach up to 99%. Therefore, it can be concluded that employment in the public sector predominates in the Belarusian labour market, and the real share of private-sector employment requires further research. Interestingly, the analysis of the ETF Torino Process assessment has identified that SMEs have created most of the new jobs in Belarus[30].

The incidence of self-employment is very low, standing at 4.3% in 2019, suggesting a high proportion of formal employment in Belarus. There are no available estimates of informal employment, although there may be some categories of workers that can be related to informal employment, such as individual entrepreneurs and artisans. During the pandemic, one of the employment policy measures has been to encourage people to accept temporary jobs available in the labour market. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the number of vacancies has declined sharply while the number of intermediations provided by PES has increased in recent months. The ministry also reports that it has primarily supported companies that are able to retain and not lay off their workforce through the use of provisions in labour legislation, such as those that cover part-time jobs.

In 2018–2019 the EU Employment and VET project conducted a school-to-work transition survey[31], which showed that higher education was the best way to find employment and avoid unemployment for the young people surveyed. Young men complete their transition at the age of 24, while women do so a year later. The shortest transition was for young people with higher education, a phenomenon that can also be explained by the government policy on compulsory job assignments for higher education graduates. Job satisfaction is highest among higher education graduates and lowest among those who have not completed higher education. At all levels of education the correlation between actual jobs and the educational levels of young people showed slight over-qualification, and

[28] https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload/iblock/c17/c1758aafc21ec069dafba92b27dea768.pdf
[29] http://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/solialnaya-sfera/trud/godovye-dannye/raspredelenie-chislennosti-zanyatogo-naseleniya-po-formam-sobstvennosti1/
[30] ETF, *Policies for Human Capital Development: Belarus – An ETF Torino Process Assessment*, Turin, 2020
[31] NOVAK, *Analytical Report on School-to-Work Transition Survey*, 2019, unpublished

respondents reported that they had not been able to fully use the knowledge and skills gained in education.

In 2020 the EU's EVET project supported the administration of a survey in five economic sectors: 1) trade and public catering, 2) construction, 3) mechanical engineering, 4) IT and 5) creative industries. The nationally representative survey[32] involved face-to-face interviews with 1763 establishments in order to identify and rank skills requirements for the current workforce in terms of key competences and soft skills as well as professional/occupation-specific competences and knowledge. The survey also sought to identify potential future occupations and skills needs in the respective sectors. The survey outcomes will be used to identify the requirements for occupational standards and make proposals on future professions.

3.2 Employment policy and institutional setting

The State Programme on Social and Economic Development for 2016–2020 defines the priorities, directions and goals for the social and economic development of Belarus with the aim of increasing the country's competitiveness and improving the quality of life for Belarusian citizens. As one of these goals, the programme establishes an annual employment target of at least 50 000 people in newly created jobs. A long-term goal is to change the sectoral structure of the economy by reducing the proportion of high-energy and material-consuming production, replacing inefficient production with processes based on high levels of technology, innovations and new materials, and improving the effectiveness of labour resources and workforce competitiveness in the labour market.

The government continues to implement the State Programme on Social Protection and Employment Promotion for 2016–2020, which aims to develop a system of social protection for the population by enhancing the efficiency of employment policy, improving the conditions of labour protection, and ensuring the social integration of people with a disability and older citizens. The programme includes funding and measures on active and passive labour market policies, occupational safety and health, and specific measures targeted at vulnerable groups, particularly people with disabilities, and their social inclusion. A new State Programme for the period 2021–2025 is under development.

In 2016 the Law on Employment of the Population was amended to reduce social dependency. The most important amendments included provisions to establish more responsibilities for unemployed individuals, including the obligation to search for a job, and reduce the maximum period that an individual can register as unemployed from 36 to 18 months. The Law on Support for the Employment of the Population (2018) further aims to create optimum conditions for employment and establishes measures to stimulate employment and self-employment. The 2018 law also emphasises an individual approach, which means providing help to all unemployed people according to their individual needs through training or retraining, temporary work or other mechanisms. The 2018 law replaces a controversial suspended presidential decree of 2015 on 'social parasites' that required unemployed individuals to pay taxes for public services.

The MoLSP is a central governmental body that implements public policy on labour relations, labour protection, employment, social security and demographic security. On these matters, it plays a coordinating role with respect to other national government bodies, local councils, executive and administrative bodies, and public and international organisations. The Scientific Institute of Labour and

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[32] I. Lashuk, *Report on Scientific and Research Work in 5 Economic Sectors*, Belarusian State University of Economics, Minsk 2020, unpublished

Social Protection supports the MoLSP in the collection and analysis of evidence and plays a key role in coordinating the development of occupational standards. Within the institute, the MoLSP has created the Scientific and Methodological Centre of Professional Qualifications, which includes two units: one to develop professional qualifications, tariffing and remuneration, and the other to conduct labour market forecasting.

The organisational structure of the MoLSP includes structural units of the executive committees for the country's seven regions and Minsk City, which exercise public authority in the fields of labour, employment and social security. The regional Departments of Labour, Employment and Social Protection currently employ approximately 800 staff, who perform the PES function. The PES registers unemployed people and provides them with job search services. However, the number of beneficiaries of these services is rather low. Reluctance to register with the PES can be explained by the low level of unemployment benefits (currently EUR 10–20 per month).

Since 2014 the PES has provided free access to the National Bank of Vacancies[33]. This is a database that contains information on different occupations and lists any available opportunities to obtain the relevant education. Users of the portal can subscribe to the regular circulation of jobseekers' curricula vitae (CVs) to potential employers and receive notification by email when a new vacancy is posted to the database. To improve the relevance of the information in the database, amendments were made to the Law on Employment of the Population to require employers to inform the PES of any new vacancies within 5 days (the previous deadline was 14 days) and notify the PES when a vacancy is filled. Employers receive a clearly designed template to fill out their vacancy data according to current classifications. Vacancies are classified by type of economic activity in the context of regions, urban and rural areas, and vacancies for workers and employees.

In 2020 there has been a gradual transition to the use of a reference book on occupations, which is harmonised with the International Classification of Occupations ISCO-08, and the classification of vacancies has been developed in accordance with nine groups of professional qualifications. As of 30 July 2020, the National Bank of Vacancies has registered 78 500 vacancies from 157 300 organisations.

According to a recent ETF study, the online job portals with the highest ratings (Trudbox.by, GSZ.GOV.BY, Jobs.tut.by, JobLab.by, Praca.by) are the ones that have the largest number of vacancies and the greatest amount of employment assistance services (resume writing assistance, a CV database, articles, training courses, raising the position of CVs and vacancies in search engines, etc.) as well as analysis of the current situation in the labour market[34].

Compared to traditional employment channels (such as employment services, recruitment agencies, mass media, friends and acquaintances), online job portals can provide a broader information base and more efficient ways to find a job or employee, and give a better and more complete understanding of the situation in the labour market and its development trends. Portals of this kind can strengthen public policy in the field of employment and training, provide more effective tools to assist in the work

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[33] http://gsz.gov.by/

[34] A. Vankevich. *Landscape of the Web Labour Market in Belarus and Ranking of Online Job Vacancy Sources (websites)*, ETF, 2020, forthcoming.

of the state employment service, yield better signals for the education system and additional education for adults, and facilitate the integration of socially vulnerable people into the full life of society[35].

Intermediation services are also provided by private employment agencies, which mainly focus on the recruitment of mid-level personnel and specialists for the occupations that are most in demand in the labour market. As of 1 January 2017, all agencies that provide employment services to individuals must register with the MoLSP. Once registered, they are added to the Register of Employment Agencies. By 1 January 2018 there were 105 employment agencies on the register and in 2020 the number has surpassed 200[36].

Legislation determines the procedure for reserving jobs for people who are in particular need of social protection and are not able to compete in the labour market on an equal footing. These people constitute roughly 20% of the total number of those who are registered as unemployed. The PES sets quotas for employers (regardless of the form of enterprise ownership) in order to secure employment for members of vulnerable groups. Every year the PES conducts negotiations with employers to look for student work placements as part of the Youth Practice programme, which offers young people an opportunity to gain their first work experience. The PES also assists unemployed individuals to start entrepreneurial activity by offering consulting services, training and financial support in the form of a subsidy, and organises paid public work to give job opportunities to those who do not have any other source of income.

Belarus's management of its labour force retains a number of features from the Soviet period. One is the placement of graduates in a two-year assignment in public-sector or state-owned enterprises. This is compulsory for students who have studied free of charge in government-financed training places in higher education and specialised secondary education. However, such a scheme is no longer likely to work when, and if, the economy is privatised and the share of public employment decreases. At the moment, however, the system provides guaranteed first jobs for a large number of young people, thus reducing youth unemployment. The system was a target of criticism in the Bologna Follow-Up Group's review, which suggested abolishing the obligation, removing the burden of its implementation from higher education institutions, and replacing the work obligation with modern career guidance services for graduates, as in many universities in the EU.

Formal structures for social partnership and dialogue are in place and a number of social partner organisations exist. However, the dominant role of the government in the economy and labour market has reduced the need to involve social partners. In recent years there has nevertheless been a growing awareness of the importance of regular involvement from social partners in discussions on education and employment policy, particularly on modernising the national qualifications system.

The EU is one of the major donors in the field of education and employment policy. Its main contribution is a large-scale EUR 11.5 million project on employment and VET, implemented over the period 2018–2021. The main objective of the project is to enhance the employment prospects of young people and adults by ensuring greater synergy between the VET system's supply and the needs of the modern labour market, enhancing the quality and attractiveness of VET, and improving the labour market information system. ETF carried out a midterm evaluation of the project in 2019–2020 to assess the progress of reforms and make recommendations for the remaining implementation

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[35] ETF, *Policies for Human Capital Development: Belarus – An ETF Torino Process Assessment*, Turin, 2020
[36] http://mintrud.gov.by/ru/reestr_po_tr

period and beyond. The evaluation[37] acknowledged progress in many areas, but considered the slow pace of change and policy development to be a critical factor preventing the implementation of reforms in VET and employment. The evaluation produced a number of concrete recommendations for all stakeholders, including the extension of the project up to 2022. The report also recommended priority areas for future EU support. The Belarusian authorities agreed with the outcomes of the evaluation and expressed an interest in and a need for additional support from the EU to sustain the outcomes of the project and ensure their integration and application at oblast level. The continuation and scale of future EU support will depend largely on the resolution of the current political crisis and the normalisation of relations between Belarus and the EU and its member states.

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Recent ETF Country Intelligence Products:
- Mapping of Covid-19 impact on education and training
- ETF Torino Process Assessment
- NQF Inventory Country Page https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/nqf-inventories

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[37] ETF, *Midterm evaluation of EU TA project Employment and VET in Belarus*, July 2020, unpublished

STATISTICAL ANNEX - BELARUS

Annex includes annual data from 2010, 2015, 2018 and 2019 or the last available year.

	Indicator		2010	2015	2018	2019
1	Total population ('000)[1]		9,490.6	9,489.6	9,483.5	9,466.9
2	Relative size of youth population (age group 15–24 and denominator age range 15–64, %)[1] C		20.5	16.2	14.4	14.0
3	GDP growth rate (%)		7.8	-3.8	3.1	1.2
4	GDP by sector (%)	Agriculture added value	8.9	6.3	6.6	6.8
		Industry added value	35.4	32.7	31.3	31.3
		Services added value	43.5	47.7	47.8	48.8
5	Public expenditure on education (as % of GDP)		5.1	4.8	4.8 (2017)	M.D.
6	Public expenditure on education (as % of total public expenditure)		11.8	11.5	12.3 (2017)	M.D.
7	Adult literacy (%)		M.D.	M.D.	81.4 2	M.D.
8	Educational attainment of adult population (aged 25–64 or 15+) (%)[3] [4]	Low	M.D.	M.D.	1.5	1.5
		Medium	M.D.	M.D.	44.2	43.1
		High	M.D.	M.D.	54.3	55.3
9	Early leavers from education and training (aged 18–24) (%)[5]	Total	M.D.	M.D.	1.8	2.1
		Male	M.D.	M.D.	2.2	2.5
		Female	M.D.	M.D.	1.4	1.6
10	Gross enrolment rates in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%)		127.8	113.1	115.4	M.D.
11	Share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%)		38.6	42.6	41.7	M.D.
12	Tertiary education attainment (aged 30–34) (%)		M.D.	55.7 (2016)	58.3	M.D.
13	Participation in training/lifelong learning (age group 25–64) by sex (%)	Total	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	14.6
		Male	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	16.0
		Female	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	13.3
14	Low achievement in reading, mathematics and science – PISA (%)	Reading	N.A.	N.A.	23.4	N.A.
		Mathematics	N.A.	N.A.	29.4	N.A.
		Science	N.A.	N.A.	24.2	N.A.
15	Activity rate (aged 15+) (%)[6]	Total	M.D.	M.D.	70.9	70.7

	Indicator		2010	2015	2018	2019
		Male	M.D.	M.D.	76.1	75.5
		Female	M.D.	M.D.	66.2	66.3
16	Inactivity rate (aged 15+) (%)[6]	Total	M.D.	M.D.	29.1	29.3
		Male	M.D.	M.D.	23.9	24.5
		Female	M.D.	M.D.	33.8	33.7
17	Employment rate (aged 15+) (%)[6]	Total	M.D.	M.D.	67.5	67.7
		Male	M.D.	M.D.	71.6	71.6
		Female	M.D.	M.D.	63.9	64.2
18	Employment rate by educational attainment (% aged 15+%)[6] [4]	Low	M.D.	M.D.	15.2	16.1
		Medium	M.D.	M.D.	64.5	64.4
		High	M.D.	M.D.	77.2	77.2
19	Employment by sector (%)[7] [8]	Agriculture	10.4	9.6	9.3	8.7
		Industry+Construction	34.2	31.5	30.1	30.1
		Services	55.4	59.0	60.6	61.2
20	Incidence of self-employment (%)[6]		M.D.	M.D.	4.2	4.3
21	Incidence of vulnerable employment (%)[6]		M.D.	M.D.	3.3	3.4
22	Unemployment rate (aged 15+) (%)[6]	Total	M.D.	M.D.	4.8	4.2
		Male	M.D.	M.D.	5.9	5.1
		Female	M.D.	M.D.	3.6	3.2
23	Unemployment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%)[6] [4]	Low	M.D.	M.D.	10.5	8.7
		Medium	M.D.	M.D.	6.4	5.8
		High	M.D.	M.D.	3.3	2.8
24	Long-term unemployment rate (aged 15+) (%)[6]		M.D.	1.2 (2016)	1.2	M.D.
25	Youth unemployment rate (aged 15–24) (%)	Total	M.D.	M.D.	10.7	10.2
		Male	M.D.	M.D.	12.7	12.9
		Female	M.D.	M.D.	8.4	7.3
26	Proportion of people aged 15–24 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%)[5]	Total	M.D.	M.D.	6.3	6.9
		Male	M.D.	M.D.	7.0	8.1
		Female	M.D.	M.D.	5.6	5.7

Last update: September 2020

Notes:
[1] Mid-year estimations
[2] UIS Estimation
[3] Active population aged 15–74
[4] Low – primary and basic general education; Medium – general secondary and vocational-technical education; High – secondary special and higher education
[5] The calculation takes into account those not in education at the time of the survey, including those trained independently (not under the supervision of a teacher).
[6] Age group 15–74
[7] Based on administrative data (annual average labour resources estimate)
[8] Age group 16–59 (males) and 16–54 (females)

Legend:
C = ETF calculations
N.A. = Not applicable
M.D. = Missing data

ANNEX: DEFINITIONS OF INDICATORS

	Description	Definition
1	Total population ('000)	The total population is estimated as the number of people having their usual residence in a country on 1 January of the respective year. When information on the usually resident population is not available, countries may report legal or registered residents.
2	Relative size of youth population (age group 15–24) (%)	This is the ratio of the youth population (aged 15–24) to the working-age population, usually aged 15–64 (74)/15+.
3	GDP growth rate (%)	Annual percentage growth rate of GDP at market prices based on constant local currency. Aggregates are based on constant 2010 US dollars. GDP is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or for depletion and degradation of natural resources.
4	GDP by sector (%)	The share of value added from Agriculture, Industry and Services. Agriculture corresponds to ISIC divisions 1–5 and includes forestry, hunting and fishing, as well as cultivation of crops and livestock production. Value added is the net output of a sector after adding up all outputs and subtracting intermediate inputs. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or depletion and degradation of natural resources. The origin of value added is determined by the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), revision 3 or 4.
5	Public expenditure on education (as % of GDP)	Public expenditure on education expressed as a percentage of GDP. Generally, the public sector funds education either by directly bearing the current and capital expenses of educational institutions, or by supporting students and their families with scholarships and public loans as well as by transferring public subsidies for educational activities to private firms or non-profit organisations (transfer to private households and enterprises). Both types of transactions together are reported as total public expenditure on education.
6	Public expenditure on education (as % of total public expenditure)	Public expenditure on education expressed as a percentage of total public expenditure. Generally, the public sector funds education either by directly bearing the current and capital expenses of educational institutions, or by supporting students and their families with scholarships and public loans as well as by transferring public subsidies for educational activities to private firms or non-profit organisations (transfer to private households and enterprises). Both types of transactions together are reported as total public expenditure on education.
7	Adult literacy (%)	Adult literacy is the percentage of the population aged 15 years and over who can both read and write a short simple statement on his/her everyday life, and understand it. Generally, 'literacy' also encompasses 'numeracy' – the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations.
8	Educational attainment of adult population (25–64 or aged 15+) (%)	Educational attainment refers to the highest educational level achieved by individuals expressed as a percentage of all persons in that age group. This is usually measured in terms of the highest educational programme successfully completed, which is typically certified by a recognised qualification. Recognised intermediate qualifications are classified at a lower level than the programme itself.

	Description	Definition
9	Early leavers from education and training (age group 18–24) (%)	Early leavers from education and training are defined as the percentage of the population aged 18–24 with at most lower secondary education who were not in further education or training during the four weeks preceding the survey. Lower secondary education refers to ISCED 1997 levels 0–2 and 3C short (i.e. programmes lasting under two years) for data up to 2013 and to ISCED 2011 levels 0–2 for data from 2014 onwards.
10	Gross enrolment rates in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%)	Number of students enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education.
11	Share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%)	Total number of students enrolled in vocational programmes at a given level of education (in this case, upper secondary), expressed as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled in all programmes (vocational and general) at that level.
12	Tertiary education attainment (aged 30–34) (%)	Tertiary attainment is calculated as the percentage of the population aged 30–34 who have successfully completed tertiary studies (e.g. university, higher technical institution). Educational attainment refers to ISCED 1997 level 5–6 up to 2013 and ISCED 2011 level 5–8 from 2014 onwards.
13	Participation in training/lifelong learning (age group 25–64) (%)	Participants in lifelong learning refers to persons aged 25–64 who stated that they received education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey (numerator). The denominator is the total population of the same age group, excluding those who did not answer the question on participation in education and training. The information collected relates to all education or training, whether or not it is relevant to the respondent's current or possible future job. If a different reference period is used, this should be indicated.
14	Low achievement in reading, maths and science – PISA (%)	Low achievers are the 15-year-olds who are failing to reach level 2 on the PISA scale for reading, mathematics and science.
15	Activity rate (aged 15+) (%)	The activity rate is calculated by dividing the active population by the population of the same age group. The active population (also called 'labour force') is defined as the sum of employed and unemployed people. The inactive population consists of all people who are classified as neither employed nor unemployed.
16	Inactivity rate (aged 15+) (%)	The inactivity/out of the labour force rate is calculated by dividing the inactive population by the population of the same age group. The inactive population consists of all people who are classified as neither employed nor unemployed.
17	Employment rate (aged 15+) (%)	The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of employed people by the population of the same age group. Employed people are all people who worked at least one hour for pay or profit during the reference period or were temporarily absent from such work. If a different age group is used, this should be indicated.
18	Employment rate by educational attainment (% aged 15+)	The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of employed persons by the population of the same age group. Employed persons are all persons who worked at least one hour for pay or profit during the reference period or were temporarily absent from such work. If a different age group is used, this should be indicated. Educational levels refer to the highest educational level successfully completed. Three levels are considered: Low (ISCED level 0–2), Medium (ISCED level 3–4) and High (ISCED 1997 level 5–6, and ISCED 2011 level 5–8).

	Description	Definition
19	Employment by sector (%)	This indicator provides information on the relative importance of different economic activities with regard to employment. Data are presented by broad branches of economic activity (i.e. Agriculture/Industry/Services) based on the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC). In Europe, the NACE classification is consistent with ISIC.
20	Incidence of self-employment (%)	The incidence of self-employment is expressed by the self-employed (i.e. employers + own-account workers + contributing family workers) as a proportion of the total employed.
21	Incidence of vulnerable employment (%)	The incidence of vulnerable employment is expressed by the own-account workers and contributing family workers as a proportion of the total employed.
22	Unemployment rate (aged 15+) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15–64 or 15+ who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the two weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work, i.e. had taken specific steps in the four-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, three months).
23	Unemployment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15–64 or 15+ who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the two weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work (had taken specific steps in the four-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, three months)). Educational levels refer to the highest educational level successfully completed. Three levels are considered: low (ISCED level 0–2), medium (ISCED level 3–4) and high (ISCED 1997 level 5–6, and ISCED 2011 level 5–8).
24	Long-term unemployment rate (aged 15+) (%)	The long-term unemployment rate is the share of people in the total active population who have been unemployed for 12 months or more, expressed as a percentage. The duration of unemployment is defined as the duration of a search for a job or as the period of time since the last job was held (if this period is shorter than the duration of the search for a job).
25	Youth unemployment rate (aged 15–24) (%)	The youth unemployment ratio is calculated by dividing the number of unemployed people aged 15–24 by the total population of the same age group.
26	Proportion of people aged 15–24 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%)	The indicator provides information on young people aged 15–24 who meet the following two conditions: first, they are not employed (i.e. unemployed or inactive according to the ILO definition); and second, they have not received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey. Data are expressed as a percentage of the total population of the same age group and gender, excluding the respondents who have not answered the question on participation in education and training.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

EHEA	European Higher Education Area
DOL	Distance and online learning
GDP	Gross domestic product
LFS	Labour force survey
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
NQF	National qualifications framework
PES	Public Employment Service
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RIPO	Republican Institute of Vocational Education
SBA	Small Business Act for Europe
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
USD	United States dollars
VET	Vocational education and training

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