



European Training Foundation

# COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER 2020 UPDATE: BELARUS



# A BRIEF SUMMARY OF KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN VET AND SKILLS AND EU AND DONOR COOPERATION DURING 2017–20

Belarus joined the Bologna Process in 2015 with a commitment to implement a roadmap of reforms by 2018. However, the Bologna Follow-up Group produced a highly critical report on Belarusian higher education reforms. The report was discussed at the Ministerial Conference for the European Higher Education Area in Paris in 2018, where ministers acknowledged the country's commitment. They agreed to support Belarus with a reform strategy for 2018–20 to adhere to the Bologna principles.

Belarus worked on conceptualising and clarifying the national qualifications framework (NQF) and updating the qualifications system. Its gradual approach resulted in a draft strategy for the qualifications system, which has been adopted by the Council of Ministers. The strategy will guide actions to update the qualifications system, including the adoption of the NQF.

The EU funds a technical assistance project on employment and VET that started in April 2018 after a year-long registration process. It focuses on the qualifications system, VET quality assurance, lifelong learning and the labour market information system. The project will run until spring 2021. The World Bank is implementing the Education Modernisation Project, which focuses on secondary general education and supports the establishment of the Education Management Information System. The project also covers the cost of Belarus's participation in PISA 2018, which is the first international assessment in which Belarus is taking part. Moreover, the World Bank is preparing a new Tertiary Education Project (USD 50 million) to improve the teaching and learning environment and the labour market relevance of higher education programmes. The project is expected to start in 2020.

## AN ASSESSMENT OF MID-TERM PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ETF'S 2020 OBJECTIVES

**Specific objective: Support and advise the EU Delegation and Belarusian partners to maximise the effectiveness of the EU employment and VET project and its contribution to VET system modernisation**

In response to an EU Delegation request in 2017, the ETF supported the formulation of a project for learning regions, as considered in the 2018 draft Annual Action Programme. Following consultation with the Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) and the EU Delegation, the proposed approach was to include Belarus in the Smart Specialisation Strategy, which has a strong human capital development component. However, the proposal was



eventually dropped from the EU 2018 Annual Action Programme due to a reduction in overall funding and a lack of agreement on partnership priorities between the EU and Belarus.

As a result of this exercise and the consultations, the government of Belarus became interested in the Smart Specialisation Strategy. Its application to participate was accepted by DG NEAR and the Joint Research Centre, so the process can now begin. The ETF's expertise was not required in 2019 to support the government and the EU in any further actions in this area but the ETF will remain available to advise if the need arises.

In 2019, the ETF was consulted and provided content advice on technical assistance (TA) project outputs at the request of the EU Delegation. In June 2019, the EU Delegation sent a formal request for ETF expertise to identify and formulate a new programme on education and training to be included in the 2020 Annual Action Programme as well as to undertake an md-term evaluation of the current TA project. The ETF will produce the first contributions for the draft Action Document by November 2019 for feedback and discussion with the EU Delegation and DG NEAR.

The National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus provided the ETF with official labour force survey data for 2018. This allowed the ETF to update the KIESE database (key indicators on education, skills and employment). In addition, Belarus was included in the ETF National Indicators in VET (NIVET) mapping exercise to complement the ETF database on indicators relating to VET and the labour market.

Belarus also participated in the ETF-led teachers' and school principals' continuing professional development survey, which was completed in spring 2019. Survey results were validated and disseminated in April 2019 in Minsk. The Republican Institute for Vocational Education (RIPO) requested the ETF to use the survey as an instrument to analyse teachers' planning and training needs in in-service training activities.

The ETF launched the Torino Process analysis on the progress of VET policy implementation in a lifelong learning context. It will advise national stakeholders and inform the EU on priority areas such as progress in updating the qualifications system, enhancing lifelong learning and improving the labour market information system. This can also be taken into account in the new EU programme. Moreover, the assessment of the Small Business Act (SBA), the aim of which was to review progress in the human capital aspect of the SBA, was completed in the first half of 2019.



## ACTIONS PLANNED FOR 2020

**Specific objective: Support and advise the EU Delegation and Belarusian partners in maximising the effectiveness of the EU employment and VET project and its contribution to VET system modernisation**

The ETF will continue to support the EU Delegation in 2020 to provide content and methodological advice for the EU-funded technical assistance project on employment and VET. It will also participate in project steering committee meetings as an observer. The ETF will support the EU Delegation and DG NEAR in formulating the new action plan to follow up on the current technical assistance project. For this purpose, the ETF will conduct also the above mentioned mid-term evaluation of the technical assistance project in the first quarter of 2020 with a view to reviewing the progress made in its implementation and advising the beneficiary, the EU Delegation and the contractor on implementation issues to maximise the results of the project. The mid-term evaluation will also identify the capacity building needs of the project beneficiaries to be taken into account in the new programme.

The ETF will also draft the Terms of Reference for the new technical assistance in 2020 so that the project can be launched as soon as the European Commission has adopted the 2020 Annual Action Programme.

The ETF will provide input for the Mobility Partnership dialogue. At the request of the European Commission, it will also provide a monitoring function and produce an update of the Country Fiche for 2020.

In 2020, Belarus will participate in ETF regional and thematic initiatives such as the Make it Match network and Work-Based Learning Forum. A Country Fiche on work-based learning will be prepared.

