

# COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER 2020 UPDATE: KOSOVO\*



\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence – hereinafter 'Kosovo'

## **A BRIEF SUMMARY OF KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN VET AND SKILLS AND EU AND DONOR COOPERATION DURING 2018–19**

Despite positive economic trends, the labour market remains characterised by high levels of inactivity and high unemployment rates – considerably higher than in other countries in the region and in the EU. Young people and women face the most difficult challenges in accessing the few jobs that are created. In such a context, there is huge underutilisation of skills, especially among those with high and medium skill levels. As a consequence, migration outflows and propensity to migrate are high.

The VET system has a weak capacity to address skills needs in the economy. This is particularly evident in the provision of hands-on skills, much in demand by employers. Reform is ongoing. Its aim is to improve the relevance of curricula, the capacity of trainers, the quality and availability of materials and the governance of the whole system. However, much work is still needed.

International donors remain very active in their support of education and training reform. In 2019, two important EU-funded projects started their activities: ALLED II and Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) 2018. Both projects address key issues aimed at improving the employability of VET graduates, and include actions in the fields of quality assurance, curriculum development and teacher training. Also involved are GIZ, DVV (German Adult Education Association), LuxDev (an aid and development agency operated by the government of Luxembourg) and the Austrian Development Cooperation.

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

The challenging skills and labour market issues identified in the 2019 country strategy paper remain relevant.

The ETF's support encourages the engagement of relevant stakeholders (often working in silos) and provides technical expertise in the three overlapping thematic areas that were emphasised in the country strategy paper: employment, qualifications and governance.

In 2019, the ETF completed four reports, which included analyses and recommendations. The ETF assessment conducted under the auspices of the Torino Process identified key priorities for action from a holistic, system-level perspective. The findings of the pilot project on tracer studies have provided elements for improving the quality and relevance of VET. The one-off report on the recognition and validation of prior learning identified the areas where further work is needed. The Small Business Act assessment highlighted slight progress in the development of entrepreneurial



learning and female entrepreneurship and in enterprise skills. A lot can be done to improve the entrepreneurship key competence approach, as opposed to separate courses on entrepreneurship.

The four reports have been discussed with national stakeholders and recommendations have been agreed on follow-up actions concerning the setting up of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the improvement of active labour market policies and the reinforcement of an entrepreneurial mindset and of the effectiveness of the VET system as a whole. They also provide inputs and guidance for other donors' initiatives, primarily the EU-funded projects. The ETF is cooperating with ALLED II and IPA 2018 projects to provide guidance and help build on ETF pilot initiatives and recommendations.

ETF support for the EU office in Pristina and the European Commission headquarters has informed monitoring and decision-making processes and strengthened the relevance of IPA projects by making the actions more specific.

The availability of key data in the field of human capital development remains problematic. Data is missing and indicators are not calculated for key EU benchmarks in education and training.

## ACTIONS PLANNED FOR 2020

There is no major change in the priorities of the ETF country strategy. ETF support will focus on two main objectives:

### Specific objective 1: Support EU external assistance

The ETF will continue to support IPA actions at the request of the EU Office in Kosovo and the European Commission. If requested, the ETF will provide support to the EU-Kosovo bilateral policy dialogue, including:

- inputs and progress reporting at bilateral subcommittee meetings
- an annual assessment of the Economic Reform Programme

The implementation of the new EU-funded projects, ALLED II and IPA 2018, will involve ETF support in areas linked to qualifications and recognition of prior learning. Tracer studies will evolve from direct support for national authorities and will provide inputs for the two projects. Given the similar scope of activities in the two projects, the ETF will provide guidance to ensure synergies and mutual reinforcement. ETF inputs will include:

- commenting and advising on the project inception report and progress reports
- commenting and advising on the quality of content-related written deliverables
- being an observer on the steering committee



## Specific objective 2: Reinforce the role and capacities of relevant bodies in a) policy advice for improved employability of women and vulnerable groups and b) for the proper governance of the VET system

- a) The ETF will support the formulation of the skills development component of the national action plan to promote women in society and will also support the activation of policies for long-term inactive individuals. The ETF's work will include participation in workshops, the formulation of policy recommendations, the review of documents and the sharing of EU good practices.
- b) The ETF will facilitate dialogue among national institutions and donors on key governance and legal issues in VET. The ETF's work will include policy learning and the organisation of a workshop to discuss issues, obstacles and possible changes to the VET governance and legal system.

Dialogue with Kosovar institutions dealing with statistical data related to human capital development will aim at identifying bottlenecks in the production and provision of data and remedial actions.

Kosovo will continue to participate in ETF corporate and cross-regional initiatives such as the annual conference, the Torino Process, the Forum for Quality Assurance in VET, the digital skills development actions: SELFIE and Factsheet, the Teachers' Professional Development project and the centres of excellence platform in VET.

