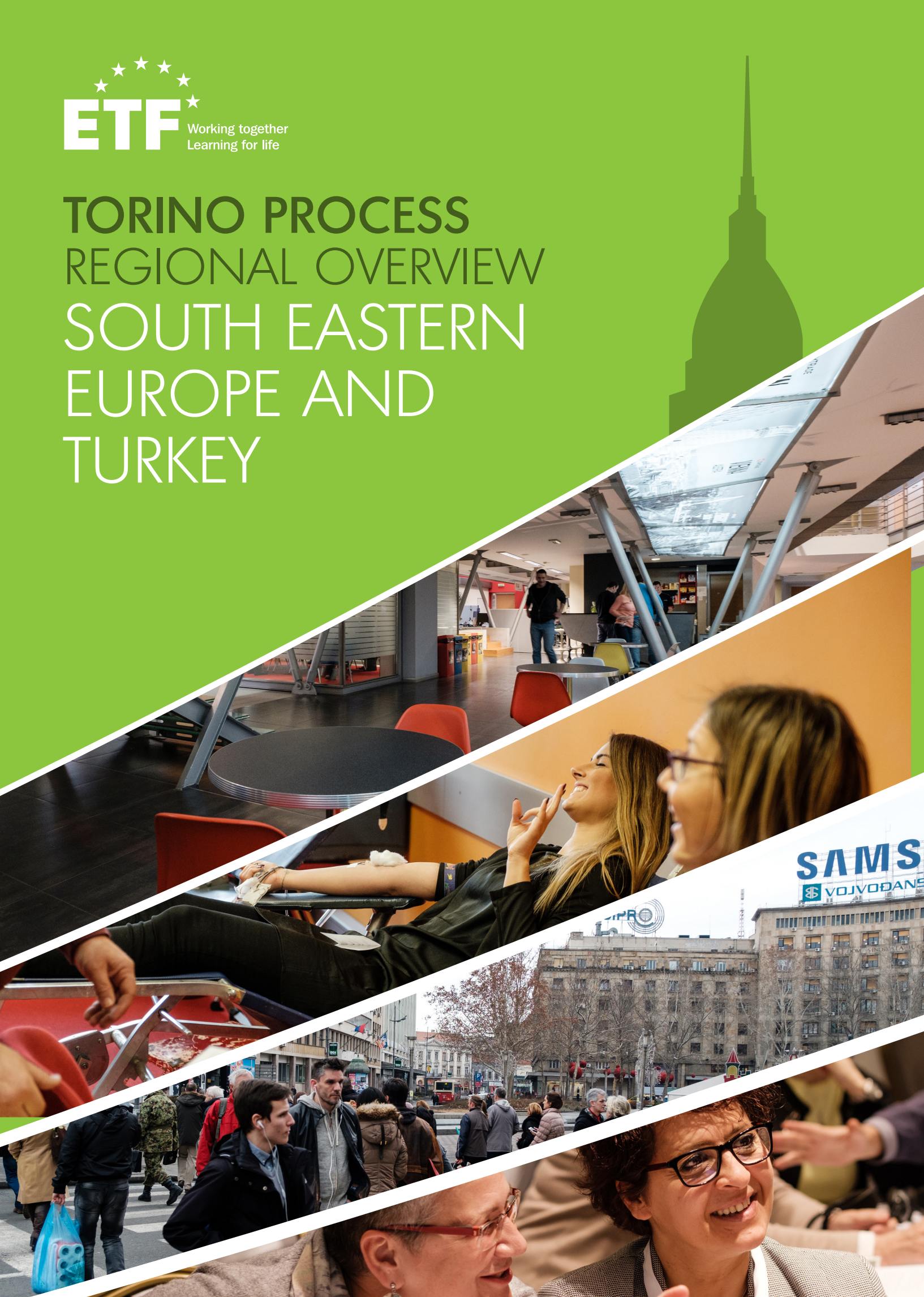


TORINO PROCESS REGIONAL OVERVIEW SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE AND TURKEY





SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE AND TURKEY

The countries of South Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) and Turkey share the prospect of EU membership. The accession process supports political and economic reforms that help the countries address shared challenges of economic governance and competitiveness, the rule of law, public administration reform, transparency and accountability of public services. Policy dialogue and policy development in the area of VET are part of this process.

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REGIONAL CONTEXT AND RESULTS



The economic situation of the region has improved since the last round of the Torino Process, with stronger growth, higher investment and more jobs. Despite global economic uncertainty, slow growth in the EU and the continuing refugee crisis, the region experienced economic growth in 2015 ranging from 0.8% to 4%, albeit in a context of low labour productivity and competitiveness.

The region continues to experience low rates of labour market participation and employment, high informality and precarious and vulnerable employment, which disproportionately affect women and young people. Most countries have increased their activity and employment rates in the 20-64 age group as compared to 2013, yet all continue to lag far behind EU averages. Economic growth has stimulated job creation, which explains the rise in labour market participation across the region, but unemployment remains widespread.

In 2015, aggregate unemployment remained high in all countries except Turkey, ranging from 17.1% to 32.9%. Youth unemployment (15-24 age group) was also well above the EU average, touching 33.2% to 62.3%. Only three countries, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro, succeeded in reducing both total and youth unemployment compared to 2013. The rest have seen rises in these indicators. In some countries with high youth unemployment (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia), 2015 youth unemployment ratios

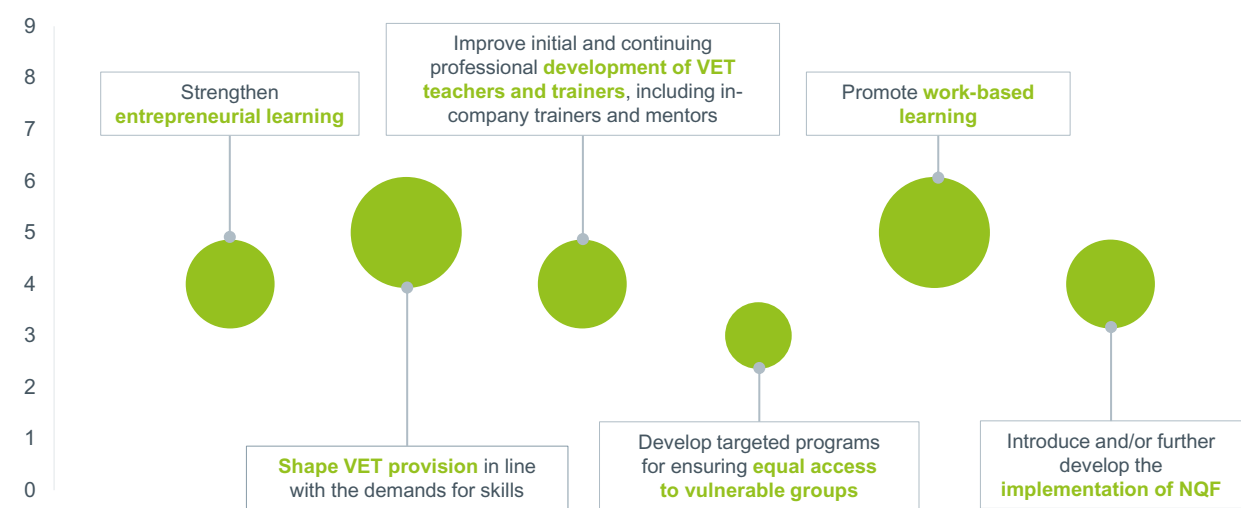
were comparatively low, suggesting that many young people remained outside the labour force for other reasons than staying longer in education.

The region's labour force has become better educated since 2013. With the exception of Montenegro, the proportion of the active population (15+) with at least upper secondary education (ISCED 3) increased in 2015, coming close to or exceeding the EU average of 80.1% in five of the seven enlargement countries. In Turkey and Albania this figure was 41.4% and 55.9% respectively. The percentage of people with tertiary education in the 30-34 age group rose compared to 2013, but the region still lags behind the EU in this respect.

How higher educational attainment translates into improved employability and better labour market outcomes is a complex process, depending on the quality and relevance of the skills acquired, as well as on a range of economic and labour market factors. Employment rates for recent graduates in the region have increased since 2013, but remain relatively low, falling below the 2015 EU average of 76.9% and the EU 2020 benchmark of 82%.

In 2015, unemployment rates among people aged 15+ with medium education levels (ISCED 3-4, including secondary and post-secondary VET) remained stable or lower than in 2013 in all enlargement countries except Albania and Turkey. This positive development could be ascribed to improved employability of VET graduates.

REGIONAL PRIORITIES



PROGRESS IN VET SYSTEM REFORMS



The Torino Process 2016 confirms VET as an important area of public policy-making in South Eastern Europe and Turkey. All countries in the region have adopted policy documents articulating visions and setting objectives for the medium to long-term development of their VET systems. They have continued to dedicate efforts to reforming their VET systems, spurred by national demand, supported by EU pre-accession funds and inspired by EU cooperation in VET.

“Countries have made progress with launching tools for systematic collection of skills intelligence, however skills mismatches persist and require a better coordinated and comprehensive policy response.”

Strengthening VET’s responsiveness to the demands of the economy in a context of sluggish employment and high unemployment, especially among the young, has been the main priority. Steps have been taken in the right direction, but results have been mixed. New VET legislation has been adopted providing for demand-driven VET delivery (e.g. in Albania) and promoting apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning (e.g. in Turkey, Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). Improved curricula, new occupational profiles and standards have been developed and piloted (often with the involvement of employers) and efforts have been made to adapt enrolment and supply to the needs identified. However, skills mismatches persist.

While all enlargement countries have tools for skills identification and anticipation and use them with varying degrees of regularity, the 2016 Torino Process testifies to the efforts of the South Eastern European countries to establish mechanisms for systematic data collection on transitions to work and employability of VET learners. Such systems are already in place in Turkey. Tracer studies are being introduced in Albania, in preparation in Montenegro and planned in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Further action is required to adapt enrolment and VET provision to the needs identified and ensure skills match the requirements of national labour markets.

“Enhancing the internal efficiency of VET systems: good progress achieved with NQF developments, important commitments made for the promotion of work-based learning and apprenticeships in particular, time to act in the areas of quality assurance and CPD of VET teachers and trainers”

National qualifications frameworks (NQFs) continue to be a major driver of VET reform in the enlargement region thanks to their capacity to transform education systems by refocusing them on a learning outcome approach. All enlargement countries have further advanced their NQFs since the last Torino Process round. All have legislation and designated lead institutions in place, and most have stakeholder platforms, thus attaining intermediate or advanced stages of NQF development. Turkey, Montenegro and Kosovo have already settled most legal,



institutional and governance issues and have turned to implementing measures such as populating their frameworks with qualifications and establishing systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has reinforced its institutional framework, while Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, have made progress in developing comprehensive NQFs, drafting or revising laws, setting up working groups, and mapping and revising qualifications. Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo and Turkey successfully referenced their NQFs to the European Qualifications Framework in the reference period, enabling international comparison of their qualifications. Serbia plans to follow them later in 2017.

Quality remains an overarching goal of VET reforms in the enlargement region, but recent progress is limited. All countries have been making efforts to improve their VET quality assurance mechanisms at both system and provider level, in line with the EQAVET recommendation, and need to continue their work in this area, while involving wider range of stakeholders, especially social partners, in their VET quality assurance processes.

As key players in the quality of education and training, VET teachers and trainers are at the heart of national reforms. During the 2016 Torino Process, the enlargement countries reported many initiatives focusing on the recruitment, induction, career paths and professional development of teachers and trainers, with varying degrees of success. An alarming trend in South Eastern Europe is fewer people entering the profession and an ageing teacher population across the system, especially in VET. This could lead to teacher shortages in the medium to long term. Recent efforts have focused more on teachers and trainers in initial VET than in continuing VET, on in-service rather than pre-service training, and on teachers and trainers in schools rather than enterprises.

While Turkey has been performing better, continuing professional development (CPD) of VET teachers in the rest of the region is hampered by the general nature of most CPD activities, better adapted to the needs of teachers in general education than in VET. Few CPD providers in South Eastern Europe have the know-how and capacity to design and

deliver vocationally specific CPD, so there are few opportunities for VET teachers to develop further in their vocational specialism. With few exceptions, universities and companies are not involved in CPD of VET teachers, while company-based teacher training continues to be the exception, and often donor-driven. There are positive developments in Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with plans to mainstream pilot initiatives on training VET teachers in enterprises.

To sustain economic growth, productivity and competitiveness, VET needs to be more innovative and creative. Learning needs to break out of the rigid confines of school settings and open up to digital and online learning, entrepreneurship and workplace learning.

The 2016 round of the Torino Process reports that the enlargement countries, in particular the candidate ones, have committed to enhance opportunities for work-based learning (WBL). They have focused mainly on introducing or expanding of apprenticeship schemes. Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia currently have only informal apprenticeships, generally in the craft trades and largely donor-supported. However, they have recently taken important steps towards introducing formal apprenticeships in their VET systems. In Turkey, where nationwide apprenticeship schemes have existed for many years, there has been a steady decline in the number of apprentices over the last decade, especially in the craft trades and small enterprises. Legislative changes have been introduced to increase supply and demand for apprenticeship places. All five candidate countries have joined the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.

“Turning more people into VET learners: high attractiveness of IVET and good performance of most countries as regards early leaving from education and training but more efforts are needed to improve adult participation in CVET and the participation of vulnerable groups in both IVET and CVET, while putting in place fully operational VNFIL systems”



South Eastern Europe and Turkey...

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey

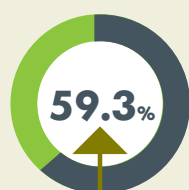
Although **employment rates** have risen, even the highest in the region

(Albania) is almost

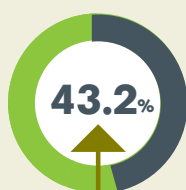
11 percentage points **below** the **EU-28** average



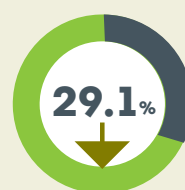
Employment rates in most countries have improved since 2013. In 2015, they stood at:



Albania



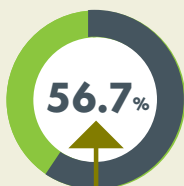
Bosnia & Herzegovina



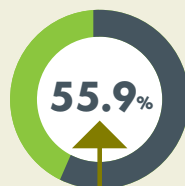
Kosovo



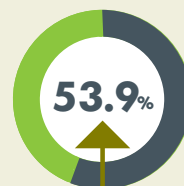
former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia



Montenegro



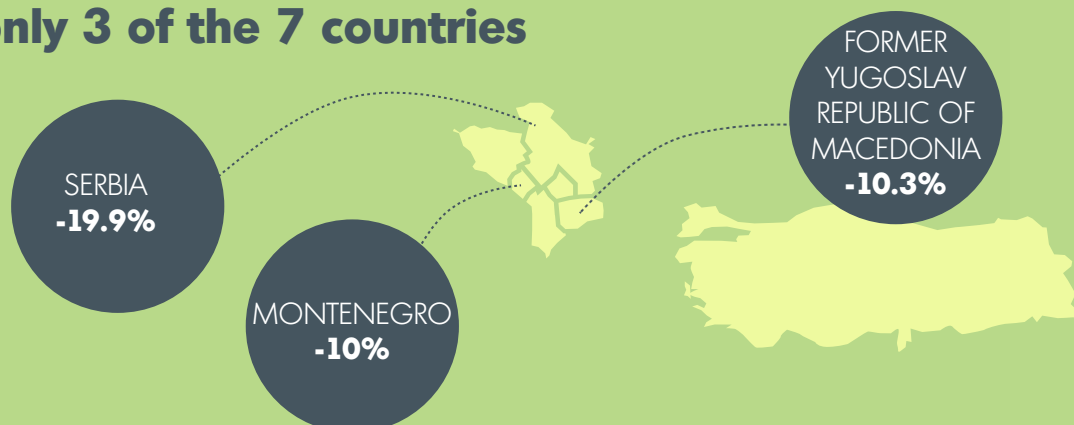
Serbia



Turkey

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But this has had a positive effect on unemployment in only 3 of the 7 countries

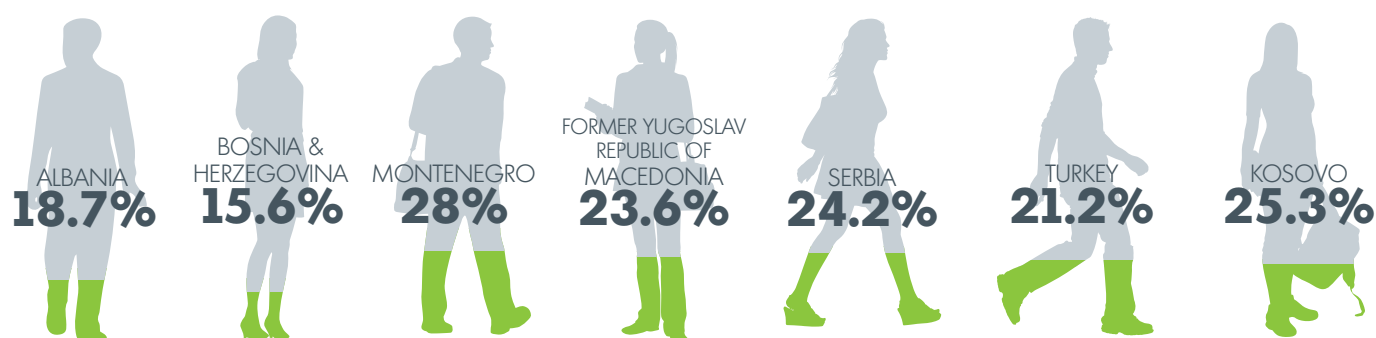


Participation in upper secondary **VET** has **increased** in most countries of the **region**. In 2015 the **share of VET students** was:



Higher education attainment has also **increased**.

Percentage of active population attaining higher level education:



Yet **NEET** (Not in Education, Employment or Training) **rates** are **well above the EU-28 average (12%)**.



Increasing the number of VET learners is a strategic objective for Europe's education systems, including those of the enlargement countries. With the exception of Albania, the proportion of students enrolled in upper secondary VET in 2015 was high, standing at 50%-75% of upper secondary students. In Albania, this figure was close to 20%. The countries with the lowest VET enrolments, Albania and Turkey, have steadily increasing numbers since 2010, with Albania showing the highest growth in upper secondary VET since 2013.

Engaging more people in VET means not only attracting new learners, but also keeping learners in the system, so they graduate with a recognised qualification. Most countries have succeeded in decreasing their rates of early leaving from education and training since 2013, except Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, where it has risen slightly. In 2015, Montenegro and Serbia were already below the EU 2020 benchmark of 10%, with 5.7% and 7.4% of early school leavers respectively (2015 data), while the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with 11.4%, was close to the EU average of 11%, and Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania lagged far behind with rates between 36.4% and 21.3%.

In the enlargement countries, initial VET is relatively attractive, but participation in continuing VET is a major problem, with very low adult participation in lifelong learning. In Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia adult participation has declined since 2013, and has not changed in Montenegro. Only Serbia and Turkey have seen improvement, with growth of 20-22% over 2013-2015. The countries need to further improve the external social efficiency of VET by building equitable and accessible VET systems, developing adult learning and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

“On the way to new modalities of involvement of social partners in VET governance and promoting autonomy of VET providers...”

The enlargement region has continued to devote effort and resources to improving VET governance to ensure multi-stakeholder engagement

and participatory approaches in the design, implementation and monitoring of VET policies. The countries of South Eastern Europe have all expressed dissatisfaction with the degree of commitment of social partners and businesses and are eager for change. Involving social partners in the consultation phase is no longer enough, and national authorities are keen to share responsibility for VET decision-making, financing and implementation. Turkey has been working on a new model of VET governance ensuring greater participation of the business world in VET decision making.

The countries are making efforts to give VET providers more autonomy. It is acknowledged that VET providers have little financial independence, and financial incentives for public-private partnership are lacking.

The 2016 Torino Process reports indicate that public spending is not sufficient to ensure quality VET provision in the enlargement countries. Government budgets for public VET institutions in most countries cover the only teachers' salaries and operating costs. Other costs such as equipment for school workshops, materials for practical training, teacher training and professional development, need to be covered by EU pre-accession funds and financial support provided by Member State donors.

Building on the progress made and addressing emerging challenges will help VET systems in the region better serve citizens and societies at large. Initial and continuing VET share the twin objectives of contributing to employability and economic growth, and responding to the needs and aspirations of individual learners, as well as broader societal challenges, in particular social inclusion. They should enable both young people and adults to pursue attractive and challenging career opportunities, and appeal equally to women and men, to people with high potential and those who, for different reasons, face the risk of exclusion from the labour market.



EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

A stylized map of the Balkans region, including parts of Europe and North Africa. The map is rendered in light gray with white outlines for country borders. Three specific countries are highlighted in a solid green color: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Albania. Each highlighted country has a green circular marker placed within its borders. From each marker, a thin green line extends to a corresponding green rectangular text box. The text boxes contain the name of the country and a description of a 'good practice' example related to VET (Vocational Education and Training) policy-making and monitoring.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Torino Process 2016 was implemented as a self-assessment exercise, fully respecting the principles of participatory VET policy-making and monitoring.

Montenegro

A pilot project for in-company training of VET teachers has expanded the supply of CPD activities targeting the vocational specialisms of VET teachers.

Albania

Albania has established an Integrated Policy Management Group including representatives of ministries and agencies, social partners and donors to provide strategic oversight and systematic multi-stakeholder monitoring for the implementation of the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2020.



Serbia

Serbia is preparing the ground for introducing formal apprenticeships by building a national concept, establishing a legal basis for apprenticeship schemes, and allocating budget for the first phases of implementation.

Kosovo

The tools of self-assessment and accreditation have been successfully applied for managing quality throughout the entire training cycle (from planning to design and delivery) in the Vocational Training Centre in Prizren.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

A Skills Observatory has been established, and a tracer system for VET graduates introduced to ensure systematic identification of skills needs and tracking the employability of VET graduates and to provide continuous feedback loops in the VET system.

Turkey

In order to making existing apprenticeships more attractive and accessible, Turkey has made changes to national legislation enabling more learners (including those from formal VET) to find apprenticeship places and more companies (especially small businesses) to find apprentices.



The ETF is an EU agency that helps transition and developing countries to harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems in the context of the EU's external relations policy.

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