TORINO PROCESS
2016-17
TURKEY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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<th>Acronyms</th>
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<tr>
<td>DGVT/ACVT</td>
<td>Directors General for Vocational Training / Advisory Committee for Vocational Training</td>
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<td>EAfA</td>
<td>European Alliance for Apprenticeship</td>
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<td>EQAVET</td>
<td>European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<td>EQF</td>
<td>European Qualifications Framework</td>
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<td>ETF</td>
<td>European Training Foundation</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>IPA</td>
<td>Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance</td>
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<td>ISCED</td>
<td>International Standard Classification of Education</td>
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<td>MoNE</td>
<td>Ministry of National Education</td>
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<td>MTD</td>
<td>Medium-term deliverable</td>
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<td>NEET</td>
<td>(Young people) Not in employment, education or training</td>
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<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-governmental organisations</td>
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<td>PIAAC</td>
<td>Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies</td>
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<td>TQF</td>
<td>Turkish Qualifications Framework</td>
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<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational education and training</td>
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1. Introduction

Turkey joined the Torino Process for the first time in 2014 and this 2016–17 round of the Torino Process is a self-assessment exercise similar to that of the previous round. Over the two intervening years, the Turkish government strategic documents and road maps on skills have been the main policy documents used to guide the implementation of measures to promote vocational and technical education and to strengthen links with the labour market. Turkey participated in many national, European Union (EU), European Training Foundation (ETF) and international reviews and assessments of the vocational education and training (VET) system between 2014 and 2016, providing reports in accordance with the EU policy frameworks and monitoring mechanisms.

As a member of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and G20, Turkey participates in international thematic reporting instruments, including European Commission and ETF thematic publications such as the assessment of the human capital dimensions of the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA). Turkish developments in education and training are discussed and reported in many forums, including the EU-Turkey high-level policy dialogue on progress in education, employment and social inclusion; sub-committee meetings and EU Progress Reporting; assessment of the Turkey Economic Reform Programme; and EU 2020 working groups.

Many national and international workshops have been held in Turkey to analyse and discuss developments and challenges associated with education and training throughout the 2014–16 period. Turkish authorities organised these workshops, many of them with support from EU-funded projects. The Riga medium-term deliverables (MTDs) workshops organised in 2016 were supported by the ETF in cooperation with the EU Delegation in Turkey.

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1 Including the 10th Development Plan (2014–2018), the MoNE’s Strategic Plan (2015–2019), the Vocational and Technical Education Strategy Paper (2014–2018), the National Lifelong Learning Strategy Paper (2014–2018), the National Employment Strategy of Turkey (2014–2023) and the National Entrepreneurship Strategy and Action Plan (2015–2018). The core element of these strategic frameworks is the enhancement of already established – or to be established – multi-level and multi-actor governance. The Vocational Education Council is an example of public-private partnership that brings together ministries, trade and employers’ unions, public institutions and social partners with the aim of pushing forward the implementation of the Turkish skills agenda.

2 Turkey follows all the EU developments taking inspiration from the Bruges Communiqué, the Riga follow-up MTDs including the new Skills Agenda and making a commitment to these in the implementation of education and training.

3 Turkey also reports on Cedefop/ETF themes – e.g. the Turkish National Qualification Inventory and the European Inventory on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning, 2016 Update.
The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security have organised a number of workshops to discuss the Turkish national qualifications system, VET provision, accreditation, quality assurance, lifelong learning, and entrepreneurial learning in VET with the support of the EU Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) instrument.

The Torino Process 2016–17 report complements and updates the 2014 report. Taken together with the previous report, it provides an interesting picture of the change and reform processes that have altered the perception of VET in Turkey, including an overview of the remaining challenges in structural reform and implementation of the agreed action plans. This report analyses the developments and challenges policy makers would like to address in the coming years. It underlines the importance of developing greater skills intelligence for policy making and more effective targeting of resources.

2. Main findings

This self-assessment report is based on recent policy documents that present a comprehensive approach targeting stable economic growth; high-quality human capital; and strategic macroeconomic, sectoral, social and regional development policies. Turkey seeks to make education and training more responsive to societal and economic needs by enhancing content, planning and delivery in line with European and international standards and practices. Reforms and measures in recent years have focused on extending the number of years spent in compulsory education; developing a national qualifications framework; enhancing the capacity of recognition and certification of prior learning; embedding a skills anticipatory function in skills delivery systems; developing more innovative ways of establishing cooperation between schools and businesses; and making lifelong learning a more accessible opportunity for all.

There is a robust legal framework in Turkey. A unified and comprehensive vision and strategy is in place alongside many public-private partnerships. Key actors operate efficiently with adequate capabilities, and there is social dialogue and negotiation on VET policy decisions. Engagement with the public and private sectors, employers’ organisations and trade unions, sectoral organisations and society is high at almost all governance levels. A comprehensive system for career development has been initiated, connecting all quality assured academic, general and vocational qualifications in line with the Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF) for lifelong learning (as per the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)). A structure is in place for the development of VET governance.

MoNE manages an extensive educational system with educational services at all levels, more than 90% of which are provided by public education institutions. Administrative legislation and supervision related to formal and non-formal education (but not higher education) is the responsibility of MoNE. This ministry also regulates teacher employment and relocation and is responsible for providing the curriculum, timetables and textbooks used by students, explicitly using tests to monitor teaching practices in the classroom.

More than 17 million of the 78 million people in the country are school students in primary (6 million students in grades 1 to 4), lower secondary (6 million students in grades 5 to 8) and upper secondary education (5 million students in grades 9 to 12). There are currently 950 000 active teachers in the system, 130 000 of whom work in VET schools.

VET graduates from upper secondary education (ISCED 3–4 combined) are highly employable in Turkey, with a level of employability relatively higher than that of graduates from general secondary programmes. In 2015, 59.3% of recent graduates from VET programmes (aged 20–34) were employed against only 47.4% of graduates from general upper secondary programmes, reflecting a generally positive state of affairs. The figures are still relatively low compared to the EU average of 73%, mirroring the overall lower employment rate in Turkey against the EU.
The employability of VET recent graduates in Turkey also has a heavy gender-related difference where men have an employment rate of 71.4% (close to the EU average of 75% in 2015) whereas the rate for women stands at a mere 47.5% (EU average of 70.6%).

These numbers demonstrate that Turkish VET graduates have better employment prospects than their counterparts from general programmes (as is also the case in the vast majority of other countries). Furthermore, the figures show that even in a period of severe economic downturn, countries like Turkey that have a relatively high number of graduates from vocationally-oriented programmes, have actually succeeded in reducing the risk of unemployment for a sizeable group of vulnerable youth (i.e. those with upper secondary education as their highest attainment level).

The role of VET in providing skills for underperforming groups in Turkey is a widely-discussed issue that presents a policy concern. Factors such as inequalities in accessing education, persistent high levels of early school leaving, relatively low participation in training and lifelong learning by the adult population, and a relatively high number of individuals not in employment, education or training (NEETs) create a situation where better-coordinated efforts must be relaunched to provide citizens with new and equal opportunities.

In Turkey, 46.4% of all students enrolled in upper secondary education participated in vocational programmes in 2014. Most of these fell into the typical 15–19 year age group, with only 5% of students aged 20 years and older.

The NEET group also demonstrates a sizeable gender difference, with 33.7% of women falling into this category in 2015 (14.1% of men). NEET rates also increase with age, accounting for 35.5% of those aged 25–29 in 2015.

These numbers go hand-in-hand with the recent findings from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), reflecting lower participation rates in formal education from the age of 16. Even though Turkey has witnessed positive developments in the main statistics reflecting school-to-work transition (NEETs aged 15–24); there is still a significant proportion of NEETs despite the total falling from 29.6% in 2011 to 23.9% in 2015.

Labour market problems currently include low levels of qualification among the labour force, gender inequalities, regional discrepancies, unregistered employment, a high number of economically inactive persons of working age and the deficient enforcement of labour legislation. The social situation is marked by unequal income distribution and segments of the population that are especially vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. VET has a crucial role to play in enhancing the skills of these marginalised groups in society.

National qualification standards have a crucial role to play in bringing the VET system into line with the educational, economic and social demands of young people. These standards are built on the basis of detailed knowledge, skills and competences descriptions based on international models, including the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET); assessment of competences and assessment of prior learning; the recognition, validation and certification of competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts (during professional and real life experience); and the aim to improve the qualifications of individuals.

The 2012 law allowed for the creation of Organised Industrial Zones to establish private upper secondary VET schools, running concurrently with a programme that aims to close the gap between skills supply and demand, designed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security with the help of agencies, social partners and communities. New regulations in March 2016 broadened the private sector role out from the Organised Industrial Zones, allowing the private sector to set up private upper secondary VET schools wherever possible, under the general classification of ‘thematic VET schools’.
Turkey is witnessing positive developments against the EU 2020 targets. Considerable progress has been made especially on the EU 2020 twofold target: on education, reducing the number of early leavers and increasing tertiary attainment; and on adult participation in lifelong learning, which has also improved, albeit from relatively low levels. When reporting against the EU 2020 targets in education and the labour market, the findings (August 2016) showed Turkey's performance on key indicators in the area of human resources development set out in the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Education and Training 2020 Strategic Framework.

Turkey's strategic targets link in closely with European priorities in the field, namely to increase educational attainment, the employment rate and participation in lifelong learning. On-going participation in all of the available EU and international VET-focused initiatives and studies has allowed Turkey to align its education and training policies and actions with the EU frameworks. Peer learning from EU and international developments has been used to adapt the policies and practices to the Turkish context.

Following the Riga conclusions of 2015, the ETF has supported the Turkish authorities – mainly MoNE, the Directors General for Vocational Training and the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (DGVT/ACVT) – in focusing more on the implementation of MTDs. This support has helped Turkey to make strategic choices on relevant policy options capable of being the ‘drivers of change’ that will achieve the best results in the implementation of the Riga MTDs (2015–2020). This implies support for Turkish institutions, helping them to make the most impactful policy implementation choices in line with the strategic priorities and capacities already declared in official documents.

A Turkish National Action Plan for EU Accession presented to the European Commission in March 2016 lists actions planned by the Turkish authorities between 2016 until 2019 to bring the country into alignment with EU legislation, to continue education and training reform and to promote the skills agenda.

In June 2015 Turkey has sealed its commitment to progress on the basis of the accession agenda (Chapter 19) by signing the Riga Declaration and joining the European Alliance for Apprenticeship (EAAfA). The country has made an active contribution to EU debates with regular participation in the DGVT/ACVT meetings and EU 2020 working groups. The Turkish DGVT/ACVT has worked closely with the ETF and in 2016 it made a specific request for ETF support in the form of expertise and support for the Riga process with a focus on the ex-ante assessment of policy choices under Riga MTDs 1 and 5, which were classed as a priority.

As a result, the five Riga MTDs were covered in the National Action Plan for the Accession to the EU and the Roadmap submitted to the European Commission services in March 2016. The first regional EAAfA seminar was held in Kayseri on 29–30 September 2016, bringing together all candidate country representatives and experts from the European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. A commitment was made for Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) funding along with a national contribution for the implementation of policy options under each of the Riga MTDs. Applications for the Erasmus+ programme have increased in numbers following the focus on implementation of the Riga MTDs.

In June 2016, Turkey reported advancement in all five MTDs and, in parallel, the Turkish authorities prioritised two of these as more urgent: MTD 1 – Promote work-based learning in all its forms (three policy options identified) and; MTD 5 – Initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers (four policy options identified).

The draft Teacher Strategy document calls for a balanced approach to cover both the competences and needs of teachers and MoNE’s strategic priorities. In order to ensure this balance, the strategy recommends the institutionalisation of a needs assessment, along with a monitoring, orientation and evaluation system at the provincial or sub-provincial operational level in order to bring in appropriate models for provision.

Training within the continuing professional development bracket will be credit-rated and will be evaluated within the career progression system. To ensure this is appropriate plans are in place for: (i) the development of a system of professional development and evaluation based on teacher competences; (ii) the development of an integrated system for the professional development of teachers, taking into account the operational levels; (iii) the reorganisation and promotion of a school-based professional development model; (iv) the determination of a minimum duration for in-service training; (v) cooperation with training providers; and (vi) cooperation with unions in the professional development of their members. The draft Teacher Strategy document also examines ways of improving career progression and the reward system for teachers.

Providing career opportunities and a competency-based career development plan would contribute to both personal and organisational motivation and performance. However, an evaluation and reward system based on competences using multiple performance criteria is an essential element in this regard. Two elements are needed to ensure that this is established; firstly, there must be strategic action to restructure the career system and, secondly, there must be strategic actions to provide awareness training for training managers and inspectors, as well as the establishment of codes of ethics.

Structured implementation of work-based learning still represents an area of challenge. VET students are facing problems at the stage of transition to the labour market. The formal requirements as stated in the legislation, regulations and administrative rules need to be underpinned by elements such as trust, cooperation between key actors, shared commitments and resourcing if the quality of work-based learning programmes is to be improved. The Turkish authorities have agreed to develop a more structured apprenticeship system for all companies, regardless of location, sector or size. Emphasis is being placed upon the establishment of shared training centres for small and medium-sized enterprises with the help of chambers of commerce, chambers of industry and MoNE’s vocational education centres and an umbrella monitoring mechanism is being established for all apprenticeships.

On 5 December 2016, the Turkish Grand National Assembly approved changes to the work-based learning legislation. In the same year, the ETF started to work with MoNE and related partners to: (i) establish national data collection, regulations and a legal framework regarding vocational and technical education and the provision of work-based learning of all kinds; (ii) support the Turkish Statistical Institute, which recently launched the Official Statistical Programme (RIP) that aims to integrate work-based learning statistics in monitoring achievement. These options will be elaborated upon in greater detail in the upcoming assessment exercise by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the ETF.

The National Education Quality Framework was accepted in 2015, covering 14 basic evaluation and monitoring areas and 80 subdomains. This framework was developed due to the need for up-to-date information by students, teachers, schools, districts, provinces and the entire country, in order to improve the quality of education. Turkey actively follows the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET platform) in order to revitalise quality assurance on the VET teaching and learning process in the country.

5 www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/CPD_Turkey
In May 2016, MoNE members of EQAVET National Reference Points were awarded a grant from EQAVET to further develop and implement norms and processes for the internal and external evaluation of schools (on a small scale at this stage), and to establish adequate mechanisms for the engagement of social partners in VET quality assurance. Although the National Education Quality Framework was adopted in 2015, little development has been recorded during the current reporting period, indeed, there has been little reporting on the developments at all.

Turkey has gained momentum in reforming its qualifications systems, specifically focusing on how to develop and implement a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning. The MoNE 2014–2018 Lifelong Learning Strategy document strongly focuses on the validation processes and promotes the extensive use of validation. The EU-funded Lifelong Learning II project was launched in 2016 to extend the provision and quality of non-formal and informal learning and to enhance the institutional set up and mechanisms. MoNE’s Directorate-General for Lifelong Learning is still to present the draft law, prepared under Lifelong Learning I project, to parliament.

Turkey’s Inventory on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning was finalised in May 2016 (updating the 2014 version) and will form part of the compendium for the 2016 European Inventory on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning. Also, Turkey participated in the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) for the first time and the results were published on 28 June 2016. The low PIAAC results in Turkey were triggered mainly by gaps in education (access, participation, completion), low capability to build foundational skills, limited content of education and poor continuing development of skills. In order to address these issues, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security has launched a consultation process to draw up an Adult Skills Strategic Roadmap 2017–2023 focusing on a wider set of actions to reduce these gaps.

Development and approval of the Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF) has been completed, in alignment with the EQF, and the Cabinet approved the Regulations on the Procedures and Principles for the Implementation of the TQF in 2015. Significant reforms have been undertaken for better recognition of non-formal and informal learning, enhancement of flexible pathways for lifelong skills development, and improvements to efficiency and equity in education and training systems.

Links between VET policy and the labour market have been strengthened, with a greater focus on the learning outcomes to be used as a basis for curriculum design, teaching, assessment and learning environments. The TQF was developed in a joint effort between the Vocational Qualifications Authority, MoNE, the Council of Higher Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in association with other relevant ministries and public institutions, chambers of industry and commerce, labour and trade unions, professional institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and academics.

Regulations relating to the TQF are based on regulation No 29537 and amended national occupational standards and qualifications regulations published in the Official Gazette 29507 of 19 November 2015. Another legislative development can be seen in the amendment to assessment and certification regulations No 29503 approved on 15 October 2015.

In 2016, the Vocational Qualifications Authority worked on qualification certificates for 40 dangerous and hazardous occupations. The Authority signed 102 protocols with employer organisations, trade unions, higher education institutions, professional bodies and NGOs in efforts to develop national occupational standards. The proposed system of assessment, evaluation and certification has led to the establishment of 41 authorised certification bodies and two new authorised vocational testing (VocTest) centres were opened in Ankara and Gaziantep in May–June 2016.
Turkey presented the ‘State of Play’ on its referencing process to the EQF Advisory Group in December 2014. This process required approved changes in TQF regulation, which came into force in October 2015. The Turkish draft referencing report has also been finalised and submitted to the EQF Advisory Group for planned discussions at the EQF Advisory Group meeting in March 2017.

Entrepreneurship in VET is more developed in Turkey than throughout the rest of the EU pre-accession region (2015 Small Business Act). The VET Strategy 2014–2018 features elements of entrepreneurship key competences, such as creativity and more developed start-up skills. This chimes well with the Riga recommendations for key competence promotion in VET. The recently published European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp) provides an opportunity for more developed systemic reforms on entrepreneurship key competences.

Vocational internships within enterprises could be extended beyond occupation-specific skills to include business skills such as business planning or finance. Turkey requires a more coordinated approach to sharing good practice in entrepreneurial learning at all education levels. This is important to support policy makers in determining what works well, and at what cost. Expertise developed through provision offered by MoNE, the Turkish Small and Medium Business Agency (KOSGEB), the Higher Council of Education (YÖK), VET entities and university start-up training could be harnessed for the wider VET and higher education network. The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) provides an Entrepreneurial and Innovative Universities Index that constitutes an excellent example of how universities benchmark performance on entrepreneurship promotion. There is sufficient capacity to develop such an initiative for VET schools as well.

Turkey’s achievements and underlying growth potential are to be commended, but there is still a recognised need, in EU and international strategic documents, for structural and governance reform in the human resources development sector.

In particular, Turkey has been advised to upgrade and make better use of its human capital through the pursuit of an education agenda and the deepening and widening of labour market reforms. More specifically, the qualifications of low-skilled workers should be improved through training and female labour force participation should be stimulated through flexible working conditions. Turkey has been invited to implement strategies to align education and training policies with labour market needs and many studies and surveys, both national and international, confirm that acquiring the right skills remains a challenge in Turkey.

Coordination at national, local and interministerial levels is in need of rationalisation and educational data collection and, most importantly, analysis leave some room for improvement. Indicators for specific fields are especially needed, as the necessary data are already partially collected without the use of adequate indicators. Capacity for analysis and the interpretation of data must be expanded in order to allow for the use of findings in policy development with better integration and joint exploitation of databases within the different institutions (interinstitutional exchange) as the accurate identification of skills needs and anticipation require timely and reliable data.

The most significant challenges relate to the management of and access to statistics and long-term planning tools in relation to: (i) data collection; (ii) the reliability of data for forecasting and anticipating labour market and skills requirements; and (iii) the use of existing data at all levels of decision making and monitoring.

Essentially, Turkey needs to ensure a more coherent and evidence-based policy approach on human resources development and improved institutional and inter-institutional cooperation. Most institutions are equipped with adequate human, financial and technical resources, but, at some levels, the absence of mechanisms to ensure intra/inter-departmental and inter-institutional coordination at all levels can create disruption in implementation, which undermines performance in the administration of
education and training. Strengthening evidence and capacity for better institutional performance will lead to a better alignment of the education and training system with the needs of the economy and the labour market.

As an EU accession candidate country, Turkey has the benefit of funding from IPA II to improve social and economic indicators and conditions in the country before accession takes place. This financial backing from the EU has led to major progress on data and statistical provision for developing methodologies; coordination between institutions; and cooperation with Eurostat, the EU statistical office. Turkey reports on all the EU education and training 2020 data and benchmarking. The government has also developed two online information systems for VET, employment and lifelong learning.

3. Recommendations for action

Rolling out/implementation of the policy choices of the two priority Riga MTDs (as a follow up of the ex-ante assessment)

1. Promote work-based learning in all its forms (MTD 1).

2. Introduce systematic approaches and opportunities for initial and continuing professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors in both school and work-based settings (MTD 5).

Overall planning and management

1. Increase the involvement of all stakeholders, as well as civil society and business, in VET policy making to meet labour market needs and challenges.

2. Define a comprehensive framework for the involvement of private sector, employers and social partners in VET.

3. Improve access to a quality system of initial and continuing VET to develop skills and narrow the gap between education and the labour market.

4. Create incentives to get businesses more involved in VET.

5. Further promote entrepreneurship and strengthen links between the needs of enterprises and education and training, resulting in a more integrated skills intelligence framework.

6. Further enhance the implementation of government policies and programmes for social impact and to give specific target groups and rural areas equal access to education as well as social services and assistance.

7. Develop policies to meet the local needs of VET and labour markets.

8. Make VET governance more efficient in terms of public administration.

Finance and funding

1. Increase financial resources for VET with a focus on the selected Riga MTDs and define a coherent framework for allocation of funding.

2. Simplify financing and budget allocation for lifelong learning.

3. Develop a legal framework for the financial autonomy of VET providers.

5. Promote the autonomy of public bodies in budget allocation at all levels of governance.

6. Consult social partners and VET providers on financial incentives for public-private VET financing.

7. Provide financial incentives for VET financing by the public sector, social partners and, especially, the private sector. In addition, develop a framework of incentives and institutionalise this through legislation engaging all the beneficiaries.

Coordination mechanisms for VET policy making

1. Promote closer dialogue with the clients and users of the public human resources development system.

2. Establish better coordination between the private sector and vocational schools. Moreover, engage social partners, NGOs and private sector stakeholders more in VET monitoring and evaluation.

3. Strengthen the engagement of local stakeholders in policy decision making and public-private partnerships and initiatives that meet local skills development needs.

4. Further strengthen the involvement of public and private stakeholders as well as social partners and NGOs in VET policy making at all levels of governance. Strengthen private sector involvement in VET governance and in the consultation process to meet the needs of local communities and local labour markets.

5. Foster the use of the European credit system for VET (ECVET) for validating non-formal, informal and prior learning.

6. Improve the capacity building of NGOs to involve them further in education, employment, and VET policy making and monitoring, to foster the social inclusion of young people.

7. Enhance the network of VET and lifelong learning providers and private sector stakeholders to foster public-private partnerships to create apprenticeships and address the mismatch between VET and labour market skills needs, especially at local level.

8. Further develop the National Vocational Information System and the lifelong learning web portal.
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