



# TORINO PROCESS 2016-17

## KYRGYZSTAN

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive summary of the Torino Process 2016–17 Kyrgyzstan report.

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## Acronyms

<b>AD 2016</b>	Administrative data from the Agency for Initial and Secondary VET provided in the framework of the Torino Process 2016–17
<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>CPD</b>	Continuing professional development
<b>ETF</b>	European Training Foundation
<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product
<b>GIZ</b>	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
<b>IVET</b>	Initial vocational education and training
<b>KGS</b>	Kyrgyz som (national currency)
<b>NQF</b>	National Qualifications Framework
<b>NSC</b>	National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic
<b>PISA</b>	Programme for International Student Assessment
<b>SVET</b>	Secondary vocational education and training
<b>VET</b>	Vocational education and training (including IVET and SVET)

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### 1. Introduction

The 2015–16 period has been challenging for the Kyrgyz Republic with an economic slowdown and rising poverty levels in 2015. The overall economic setting changed as of summer 2015, when the country joined the Eurasian Economic Union.

The vocational education and training (VET) system underwent significant changes in governance in December 2015, when the VET Agency, responsible for initial VET (IVET), was placed under the Ministry of Education and Science. The Agency was also assigned responsibility for secondary VET (SVET) and renamed the Agency for Initial and Secondary VET. Thus, IVET and SVET, as well as higher education, became united within the same ministry for the first time.

The new governance structure provides opportunities to improve the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the VET system. The VET Agency work has however been hampered by the slow decision-making process on its statute. Despite the difficult institutional context, however, the VET system can demonstrate progress in several areas.

Since 2015, a greater number of VET development actions have been occurring in both IVET and SVET and the VET Agency has taken a stronger role in steering and supporting developments. The Agency has gained experience with the collection and use of evidence on skills needs and matching and has intensified its work with sector councils. Greater emphasis has been placed on the consolidation of development actions from pilot projects and on ways to support the implementation of these at system level. New actions, such as the development of a new qualification structure for VET staff and the analysis of VET staff development needs, have been undertaken with consideration of sustainability at system level.

In March 2016, the Kyrgyz National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was adopted by joint order of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Development. The NQF has the potential to provide an overall framework for VET developments but a full roadmap for operationalisation of the NQF is not yet in place.

The National Skills Fund became operational in autumn 2016 with donor support, providing financial support for needs-based VET provision in the form of short courses. The Fund may form the basis for a structured approach to continuing VET and for VET that is more accessible to vulnerable groups and potential migrants.

There are still many challenges ahead, including the coordination and optimisation of the two VET sub-systems, improvements to governance processes, overcoming the chronic under-financing of important aspects such as staff development and adequate teaching equipment and supplies, and ensuring the sustainability of the National Skills Fund.

## 2. Main findings

### Vision for VET

The political and institutional environment for VET reform in the Kyrgyz Republic has been in continual evolution since 2014. Parliamentary elections in autumn 2015 led to some re-organisation of the ministerial structure and responsibilities with some implications for the VET sector. In December 2015, the VET Agency, responsible for IVET, was transferred from the Ministry of Labour to the Ministry of Education and Science. The Agency was also assigned responsibility for SVET and renamed the Agency for Initial and Secondary VET<sup>1</sup>. Thus, IVET and SVET became united within the same ministry and the same agency for the first time.

This new arrangement offers the opportunity to overcome the disaggregation of VET and achieve better coordination on policies and reform efforts for IVET and SVET. However, the context is still highly challenging, as IVET and SVET operate under completely different conditions. Furthermore, no additional financial and human resources have so far been allocated to the process and a number of important decisions, such as the approval of the Agency's new statute or 'polozhenie', had not yet been adopted at the time of writing this report.

The change in allocation of responsibility came too late to have any impact on the second generation of action programmes under the Education Development Strategy 2020. The action programmes for all education sub-sectors in the 2016–17 period were adopted in March 2016 and there was no evidence of coordination between the programmes for IVET and SVET, as was also the case for the 2012–15 action programmes. While there is some visible convergence of priorities, when analysed in detail, the action programmes demonstrate a very different understanding of these priorities. It is also questionable whether the actions foreseen for either IVET or SVET will contribute towards the VET sector objectives outlined in the Education Development Strategy 2020.

The Law on Education was amended and updated five times in the 2015–16 period, including points on accreditation and ownership of the technical-material infrastructure of education providers. Salaries for staff in education, including IVET staff, were increased in 2015, as were student stipends and allocations, but salaries for SVET staff were not covered by the amendment.

The IVET system continued with streamlining and efficiency initiatives through 2015–16, further reducing the number of IVET schools from 105 in 2014 to 101 in 2016.

### Efficiency in addressing economic and labour market demand

The labour market is influenced by a number of factors including changes in the sector composition of the economy, a shift away from agriculture towards services, a slowdown in economic growth since 2013, and a significant informal sector (71.7% of those employed in 2015), especially in rural areas (79.2% of those employed). This has combined with strong demographic pressure from the youth sector (those aged 15–24 years made up 28.2% of the population aged 15–64 in 2016) to create a situation where the economy has been unable to absorb the existing workforce for many years.

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<sup>1</sup> Responsibility for SVET was assigned directly to the Ministry of Education and Science in early 2017. This change is not reflected in this report, which was validated by VET stakeholders in November 2016.

The overall outcome was unemployment of 7.6% (those aged 15–64) in 2015, along with high levels of self-employment (39.2%). Youth unemployment (those aged 15–24) has been rising significantly, reaching 15% in 2015 – twice the rate of the whole population aged 15–64. The unemployment rate for women (both in the youth category and the general population) is considerably higher than the rate for men, standing at 19.1% for young women in 2015 (NSC, 2016). Remittances represented 25.7% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2015 (World Bank Development Indicators), but while remittances are of major importance to the national economy, migration also represents a major problem for many employers who find skilled workers leave for the Russian Federation or Kazakhstan, where pay is considerably higher.

Employment prospects are particularly poor for people with low educational attainment. Those with incomplete basic education (below grade 9) or even complete basic education (completed grade 9) are in the worst situation. This segment consistently shows the lowest activity rates (17.6% for those with primary education or less in 2015 and 37.9% for those with basic education in the same year) and the highest unemployment rates (8.7% for primary education level and less in 2015 and 11.6% for basic education).

IVET graduates have been especially successful on the labour market in recent years, demonstrating high activity rates (75.6% in 2015) and low unemployment rates (7.4% in 2015). SVET graduates have also largely been successful, although they have seen rising unemployment rates in recent years (from 6.1% in 2013 to 9.1% in 2014, but decreasing again to 8.0% in 2015 (NSC, 2016)). While the figures may look good at first glance, however, IVET graduates are mostly employed in the informal sector where employment is less stable, and where they are more likely to drop back into unemployment or family work (ETF transition study 2011/12; ETF tracer study 2015).

Employment opportunities in rural and urban environments differ markedly, with many fewer opportunities for formal or non-family related work in rural environments.

IVET schools have been a key provider of short training courses for the unemployed, which are supported by the employment service. The number of participants is, however, limited by the budget available for active labour market measures. In 2015, a marked increase was recorded, with 4 154 unemployed individuals in training delivered by IVET schools, compared to 3 691 in 2014. A similar increase was seen in short courses funded by enterprises in 2015, possibly indicating better interaction with enterprises. Over the same period, the number of self-funded participants declined to 6 268 persons (from 6 897 in 2014), possibly as a result of the economic challenges faced by the country in 2014/15 (AD 2016).

Although there is clearly a strong demand for short courses from different target groups (unemployed persons, employed persons requiring further training, individuals requiring further training or retraining, as well as members of vulnerable groups and potential migrants), until mid-2015 public funding for short courses was only available from the employment services. In autumn 2016, a National Skills Fund was set up and became operational with support to the VET sector from a second Asian Development Bank (ADB) project. The Fund supports short-term courses for all of these groups (to be delivered by pre-selected IVET or SVET providers) on the basis of either requests from enterprises or individual applications.

Efforts have been made to better understand quantitative and qualitative labour market demand in recent years, with the Ministry of Labour working on a medium-term prognosis of staffing requirements and local labour market analysis and the VET Agency gaining experience on sector analysis and occupational mapping. A total of eight sector analyses have been produced since 2014, involving employers and sector councils as far as possible. The analyses were then used to develop professional standards and teaching materials.

While sector analysis was initially supported through donor assistance, one particularly positive aspect has been the provision of funding from national budgetary resources in 2015, bringing the analysis process fully under the responsibility of the VET Agency. It should, however, be noted that no further national allocation was made in 2016. The Agency has also supported the development of a tracer study methodology that was formally adopted for the VET system in September 2016.

The 2015–16 period was marked by the consolidation and extension of the use of instruments for better labour market understanding and wider stakeholder involvement, especially in terms of sector councils. This type of work has brought valuable impact in the form of more and better evidence, but also improved VET content and interaction among key stakeholders. Every effort should be made to institutionalise this work, but this will only be possible if efforts take place on a regular basis (even if small in scale) and with adequate resources.

In the same period, the VET Agency further enhanced efforts to make career guidance available to young people. Building upon the concept approved in 2014, further innovative approaches have been developed and over 800 VET staff and students have been trained in delivering guidance activities, using both traditional and innovative methods. Attention has also been given to the development of materials to assist VET students in transition to the labour market.

Donor support has been given to update the teaching materials on entrepreneurship already previously in use in IVET, and teaching staff have been trained. The extent to which the chosen approach can support entrepreneurship for self-employment among IVET graduates remains unclear, however, in a context where other support measures, such as access to credits, are lacking.

### Efficiency in addressing demographic, social and inclusion demand

The Kyrgyz Republic continues to face numerous sociodemographic challenges that impact upon VET demand, especially: a large population of young people (requiring access to appropriate education and training and labour market opportunities); high levels of international and internal migration; high poverty levels combined with significant urban versus rural disparities; and a basic and general education system with poor outcomes in terms of student achievement and dropout rates.

Poverty fell in 2013–14, but increased again in 2015 to stand at 32%. Poverty rates demonstrate strong regional and urban versus rural disparities, and while the Bishkek and Chui region had demonstrated the lowest poverty rate for several years, a considerable increase was noted in 2015 (NSC, 2016).

The country's overall educational attainment has improved over the years. Nevertheless, the quality of education provision, especially at basic education level, remains a key concern following the poor outcomes of PISA 2006 and 2009 and the 2007 national sample-based assessment. As no new nationwide assessments have been carried out since then, it is impossible to say whether the reform implemented since has had a positive impact. One of the consequences of poor education quality, combined with high poverty levels and other socioeconomic challenges, is drop out at all education levels, including basic education level. Little has been done to explore or understand this problem to date. Apart from students dropping out, the decision by a rising number of students to leave the education system after basic education, and thus without relevant skills for the labour market, is a cause for concern. The share of young people aged 15–24 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) stood at 21.4% in 2015 (29.5% for women) (NSC, 2016).

Legislation and policy documents provide ample entitlement to free education for all citizens, especially those with special needs and disabilities. In practice, however, it is only IVET that foresees a number of special actions and approaches for these groups within the VET sub-sector, while SVET does not consider access in any of its policy or planning documents, nor does it collect any administrative data on students from vulnerable groups.

IVET is the only education level to accept students with incomplete basic education, but no systematic administrative data is available on the number of such students enrolled. IVET also has 'rehabilitation groups' that offer special support and study conditions for students from vulnerable backgrounds (orphans, students with no parental support and students with special needs). Since 2013, IVET has also made specific efforts to improve physical access to a number of schools and special curricula and teaching materials were prepared for students with special needs in 2014/15. Finally, IVET also provides training opportunities in a number of penitentiary institutions, training approximately 1 000–1 500 such students per year.

Despite active efforts by IVET to improve the offer for specific student groups, the number of students from specified vulnerable groups (orphans, students with special needs, students in rehabilitation groups) remains rather limited in comparison to the overall number of potential students within this category. In fact, the number of special needs students served declined from 141 in 2014 to 110 in 2015, demonstrating that IVET is not yet able to reach out to special needs students in an active manner. The number of students in rehabilitation groups also declined from 941 in 2014 to 609 in 2015 (AD 2016) following the adaptation of regulations in 2015, although it is hoped that the number will increase again as of 2016.

IVET is particularly strongly impacted by socioeconomic challenges and poor education quality at basic education level. It is a strand of education with a strong social mandate given that it typically serves the lower income population segments and constituencies requiring special support. The system maintains a comprehensive network of schools in urban and rural areas. However, the quality of education offered by the various schools can differ.

Schools in rural environments in particular experience less well-developed infrastructure systems ('materialno tekhnicheskaya basa') and less well-maintained facilities (workshops, hostels, classrooms), as very little has been invested in maintenance and refurbishment over a number of years. IVET provision in rural areas and the capacity of schools to support local populations with skills development and rural regeneration thus continues to be a challenge. With donor support, refurbishment and modernisation efforts were undertaken in 2014 and 2015 for about 40 schools, including schools in rural areas (AD 2016).

IVET has an increasing number of potential clients: those with incomplete basic education (IVET is the only available pathway for such students) and those who leave education after the basic level. Increasing numbers of people also require retraining due to economic change and the tense labour market situation, and IVET has responded to the demands of this latter group by developing short courses. These are, however, provided on a fee-paying basis, putting them beyond the reach of many individuals, and it is also not yet possible to combine a number of short courses in order to obtain an IVET diploma.

More flexible VET provision has been supported in recent years through the introduction of a competence-based approach and the modularisation of courses. It should be noted that the VET Agency drafted a regulation on the recognition of non-formal learning in the 2015/16 academic year that was awaiting approval in autumn 2016.

In 2016, a National Skills Fund was set up with donor support. This Fund aims to make flexible training (especially short training courses) more accessible to a number of target groups, such as those from remote rural areas and other vulnerable groups who do not have easy access to the resources needed to fund their own training. At this stage, the training is expected to be provided by VET schools and colleges.

Gender equality represents a further challenge for both IVET and SVET. Female participation in IVET is around 30%, while it stands at about 60% for SVET (NSC, 2015). Both sub-sectors show marked

gender patterns for particular professions and specialisations (ETF tracer study 2015). The IVET sub-sector planned a number of actions to improve female participation in the 2012-14 action programme, but this issue is omitted from the 2016–17 programme, even though the situation has in no way improved. No gender-related actions have been planned in SVET.

Progression mechanisms between IVET and SVET are lacking. This represents a major challenge and can be expected to impact the attractiveness of IVET in a negative manner. The lack of progression mechanisms also severely limits the opportunities for IVET graduates to progress efficiently on to the next education and qualification level in SVET. There is no coordination of study programmes between IVET and SVET and the only way for IVET students to progress to SVET is for them to enter the first grade of SVET in the absence of any agreed modular or credit approaches.

The VET Agency is aware of this lack of opportunity for progression and intends to address this issue.

### Internal efficiency of the VET system

Following reforms to the salary and staffing structure of education providers (including IVET and SVET) in 2011 and 2013, the teaching staff categories in VET were abolished. At the same time, the systematic approach to regular teacher assessment was discontinued. Since 2011, the main factors affecting VET staff salaries have been level of education, years of teaching experience and size and location of the school, with special supplements being paid for work in challenging conditions (schools in rural and remote or high mountain environments). The salary reform attracted more young teachers into education, including VET. Two years of very minor salary increases in 2013 and 2014 were followed by a considerable improvement in 2015, including in IVET (but not SVET). This has had a positive impact for IVET, with 96% of posts filled in 2015, compared to only 86% in 2014 (AD 2016). Although the posts are nominally filled, providers state that it is difficult to attract masters with sufficient practical experience, as the salary level provided in IVET is lower than that provided by enterprises in the private sector.

The 2015 salary increase made no significant change to the make-up of the VET teaching staff. In 2015, within IVET, 58% of teaching staff had a higher education qualification, 34% an SVET qualification and 8% basic secondary education (AD 2016). Within SVET the majority of staff (96% in the 2013/14 academic year) held higher education qualifications (NSC, 2015).

Concern has been expressed for some time over the lack of qualification requirements focused on professional competences for VET staff as well as the lack of opportunities for professional development. Since 2015, with the support of the ADB VET II project, the Republican Scientific Methodological Centre has been developing a three-level qualification structure for VET staff, that specifies competence requirements and assessment approaches. The proposed assessment system was tested in spring 2016 with 60 IVET and SVET providers and the results were used to map staff development needs (AD 2016). A series of in-service training modules have been developed to support the development of competences identified within the qualification structure and these are expected to be used as of autumn 2016. The proposed qualification structure and assessment approach entered the final consultation phase in autumn 2016, as a preliminary step for VET Agency's approval at system level. Approval of the approach and successful testing of the new modules will represent a major development of the in-service training system for VET, as training offer will be better aligned to needs and can be better prioritised. Furthermore, the new approach has been developed for both IVET and SVET, representing a solid step in the right direction towards addressing the lack of a structured continuing professional development (CPD) approach for SVET.

While significant progress has been made in terms of CPD needs analysis and content development, this area of work continues to be under-financed. Resources for in-service training to the Republican Scientific Methodological Centre continue to cover only IVET and are insufficient even to these ends. The Centre's resources cover only course provision but do not even guarantee access to CPD for the



20% of VET staff required by existing regulations to participate in such training once every five years. The Centre made special efforts to provide more courses in the regions in 2015 (44% of courses provided in that year) (AD 2016), aiming to overcome the inability of schools to cover travel costs, but the Centre itself is insufficiently resourced for this. No systematic CPD exists for SVET, nor has it done in previous years.

Work has been stepped up on the use of a competence-based approach in VET and on agreeing teaching content with employers. Up until 2014, this development mainly concerned IVET, but developments could also be seen in plans for 15 qualifications for the SVET level as of 2015 (AD 2016).

In the 2014–16 period, donor support (European Union, ADB) has aided the refurbishment of over 50% of VET schools, including schools in rural areas, with some receiving new teaching equipment and seven additional VET schools being made accessible to special needs students (AD 2016). Furthermore, a number of SVET providers have been selected to receive teaching equipment support through the ADB project for the first time.

Despite these positive developments, most VET schools still require considerable refurbishment as they date from the 1950s and 60s.

The ‘National programme for the development of the state language’ has resulted in efforts to publish more teaching materials in Kyrgyz and to provide these to educational establishments, including IVET and SVET providers. Concurrently, the Republican Scientific Methodological Centre has improved the accessibility of new materials on its website. Furthermore, e-learning approaches for IVET and SVET are also under development with support from the ADB VET II project.

Work-based learning already represents an integral part of IVET and SVET in the form of internships, as both VET levels include mandatory enterprise-based practice. However, IVET puts greater emphasis on this aspect and its practice periods typically last longer than their equivalent in SVET. A small number of VET schools work in close cooperation with enterprises in such a way that all practical training takes place within the enterprise, rather than in a school workshop. Given the predominance of small and micro enterprises in the Kyrgyz economy, this approach is not yet widely used. At system level, work is ongoing between the VET Agency and the light industry sector, on the introduction of a dual approach, where all practical training will take place within the enterprise. By autumn 2016, teaching plans were being adapted and regulations prepared, to allow a pilot phase to run from the 2017/18 academic year.

In quality assurance for VET providers, work has progressed on the implementation of independent accreditation. Donor support (particularly from GIZ) has been used for the training of many VET staff, providing them with training materials and familiarising them with the approach and accompanying information. By autumn 2016, the issue of how VET schools and colleges should cover the costs of independent accreditation was yet to be clarified.

In student assessment, work to explore employer-led independent certification of final year students in IVET and SVET continued in 2015 and 2016. The approach was piloted with 2015 and 2016 IVET and SVET graduates drawing positive feedback from both the employer and provider sides. Exactly how this approach could be scaled up to system level in the medium term is not yet clear, but the VET Agency has initiated work to update existing regulations on final or qualifying exams to include elements of independent certification.

An important step was made towards the development of an NQF when a joint order was issued on the adoption of the Kyrgyz NQF by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Development in March 2016. This order outlines the purpose of the NQF and its structure (10 levels – and how they correspond to European Qualifications Framework (EQF) levels) along with

the elements to be considered in the description. The order states that learning outcomes are to be used and that these should be described in terms of knowledge, understanding, practical capacity and skills, level of autonomy and responsibility, and the corresponding qualification.

NQF-related work could form a good basis for systematisation and better links between a number of developments initiated in recent years, including those in the VET sector. For example, this could include the approach used in IVET to develop professional and occupational standards together with employers and sector councils and then to develop the curricula and teaching content based upon these. Also, developments linked to student assessment and the validation of informal and non-formal learning could be systematised and widely adopted under the umbrella of the NQF. At the same time, it should be noted that the order provides no indication on how NQF-related work should progress and no responsible persons had been identified for this dossier within the two ministries at the time of writing. Torino Process-related discussions with stakeholders and potential participants in NQF work revealed that only a very small number of persons are familiar with the NQF concept to date, although some have taken part in training activities supported by international donors since 2006 (European Union, ADB).

## Governance and policy practices in the VET system

The most important change in governance in the period covered by this Torino Process report has been the re-organisation of ministerial responsibilities in December 2015. This resulted in the VET Agency being transferred under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science. At the same time the Agency gained responsibility for SVET and was renamed the Agency for Initial and Secondary VET.

Even though the decision on the new responsibilities of the Agency was taken in December 2015, the Agency's new statute had not yet been approved by autumn 2016, which means that the Agency has been given only limited opportunities to initiate new developments. This has also meant that staff, as well as IVET and SVET providers, have faced an extended period of lack of clarity and uncertainty.

Despite this opacity, the VET Agency has gone as far as possible to consider a VET development perspective encompassing both IVET and SVET through 2015 to 2016. This was, however, not always easy to achieve, as the two VET systems have been operating under very different conditions for many years in terms of sources of funding (state funding for IVET, student fee-based funding for SVET), planned outcomes for their graduates (labour market-focused for IVET, higher education-oriented for SVET) and the central administration guidance and intervention provided (present in a centralised manner for IVET, mostly VET college-led for SVET).

In 2015–16 the emphasis for governance mechanisms was placed on improving the workings of existing bodies. Examples of this include the proposals to change the composition of the National Skills Council and to review the composition and tasks of school boards. The work of sector skills councils was also enhanced. By 2016, a total of seven sector skills councils had been set up and engaged in joint projects with the VET system, including aspects related to SVET for the first time.

Many stakeholders note that a great deal of work still needs to be done to improve the functioning of a number of governance bodies. The National Skills Council is not yet fully able to support and coordinate VET-related issues among the various ministries and employers' organisations and the activity of sector councils has only been maintained through direct or indirect donor support so far. Exactly what the role and mandate of councils could be in the long term remains to be decided, as does the issue of resourcing these.

No significant developments have been made towards the academic and financial autonomy of VET providers, which differs between IVET and SVET. The use of financial resources in particular continues to be highly regulated, including the treatment of resources earned by the providers

themselves. At the same time, many VET providers lack the knowledge they need to make the best possible use of their existing academic and financial discretion. One positive development has been the removal of the influence of the anti-monopoly commission on services provided by VET providers, allowing them now to charge reasonable prices for fee-based services.

Education spending has been maintained at a level similar to that of previous years, accounting for 5.6% of GDP and 21.8% of public expenditure in 2015 (Ministry of Finance data). However, with 40% of the population aged 19 and younger, per student expenditure as a percentage of GDP remains low.

The bulk of the education budget continues to cover teacher salaries, while items such as building repairs, teaching equipment and supplies are chronically underfunded. Nevertheless, with donor support, IVET building repairs and equipment spending increased in 2014–15, reaching 8% of the state budget. With the exception of 2015, there has been no budgetary allocation for data collection and analysis, so this area of work is mostly covered by donor organisations (AD 2016).

Clear budgetary information is available for IVET, but no detailed data is available for SVET or adult training, as these two sub-systems receive funding from different sources.

The IVET system has been working to optimise the school network, decreasing the number of schools from 110 in 2012 to 101 in 2016. This optimisation has mainly been achieved by incorporating smaller schools as branches of larger schools, meaning that places for students have remained unaffected. The VET Agency estimates that this exercise has resulted in savings of KGS 24 million in the 2013–15 period (AD 2016). However, this amount was not reinvested for improvements in VET, such as further development of a CPD system, or better teaching infrastructure.

### 3. Recommendations for action

The Torino Process 2016–17 analysis leads to the following recommendations.

1. Work on an integrated vision and strategy for VET from a lifelong learning perspective, encompassing IVET and SVET and continuing VET, should be initiated. The strategy should define specific and measurable objectives in terms of VET outcomes for economic and labour market relevance, equity and equality as well as efficiency and quality. Based upon the defined objectives, a 2018–20 action plan should be developed. As part of the work on an integrated strategy and action plan, relevant indicators should be agreed upon and statistical and administrative evidence collection reviewed and aligned between the VET sub-sectors.
2. The Kyrgyz Republic is well supported in its reform efforts by the donor community. It is important that the Ministry of Education and Science and the VET Agency take an active and coordinated role in sustaining these reforms by:
  - developing systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms – In the medium term, this should also include ex-ante assessment in order to consider scenarios for new developments, including aspects such as sustainability. Monitoring mechanisms should systematically explore how new developments are being translated at the provider level, to aid the early identification of where providers require additional support in terms of adapted administrative rules, better documentation of new approaches or training;
  - further developing evidence collection and cooperation on evidence collection – Cooperation should also be sought with other institutions, such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, the State Migration Services and the National Statistical Committee. The National Skills Fund should also be involved, as far as possible, in evidence collection and analysis on its capacity to work with all its target groups and skills demand at regional level;

- searching for the means to obtain sustainable financial resources for key aspects to support a strong VET system and skills development – Sustainable funding under the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science, the VET Agency and the RSMC should be sought for regular evidence collection and analysis concerning skills matching, as well as for adequate provision and further development of CPD for staff in VET. Stable financing sources should also be sought to support the sustainability of the National Skills Fund.
3. The newly adopted NQF can provide an overall rationale for developments in VET and higher education from a lifelong learning perspective. It can also provide a rationale to systematise the work initiated on standards and outcome-based curriculum design and assessment in recent years. The operationalisation of the NQF will require intense and long-term stakeholder cooperation as well as human and financial resources. A roadmap on the operationalisation of the NQF, developed jointly by national stakeholders and the donor community, could serve as a basis for this long-term project. A roadmap could also assist in securing the necessary financial resources.

Social partnership and inter-ministerial cooperation mechanisms should be further developed as they will be of key importance for the operationalisation of the NQF. The role of the National Skills Council should be reviewed, as should its interaction with sector councils. The role and mandate of councils should be further fine-tuned and sustainable financial resources for their work identified.







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