



CultiVETing

Cultivating Entrepreneurship in the
Agrifood Sector through VET

D2.2 Collection of Country Analyses and Comparisons (VET institutions)

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Acronym	CultiVETing
Project Title	Cultivating Entrepreneurship in the AgriFood Sector through VET
Agreement Number	101129381
EU Programme	ERASMUS-EDU-2023-CB-VET
Project Website	
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Date	July, 2024
Version	Draft
Authoring Partners	APPK, Kosovo
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Date	July, 2024
Version	Draft

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Acronyms

ACRONYM	FULL NAME
AI	Administrative Instruction
AKIS	Agriculture, Knowledge and Innovation System
AQF	Albanian Qualifications Framework
ATTC	Agriculture Technology Transfer Center
AUT	Agricultural University of Tirana
AVETAE	Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education
EARK	Agency of the Republic of Kosovo
EARK	Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INSTAT	Institute of Statistics
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
KAS	Kosovo Agency of Statistics
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MED	Municipal Education Directorates
MES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MESTI	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
MoSWY	Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth
NAES	National Agency for Employment and Skills
NAVETQ	National Agency for VET and Qualification
NESS	National Employment and Skills Strategy
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NQA	National Qualifications Authority
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETI	Vocational Education and Training Institutions
VTC	Vocational Training Centres
WB	Western Balkans.

Executive Summary

This report is prepared under the “CultiVETing: Cultivating Entrepreneurship in the AgriFood Sector through VET”, under the Erasmus+ program, searching to identify the gaps and needs between the VET sector and the labor market needs in the AgriFood sector in Western Balkans (WB). The study is focused on two countries Albania and Kosovo, by implementing the vocational cluster model for social innovation and green and sustainable production. Nowadays, more and more connections are required between all relevant actors influencing and working with VET specialists. The “Quadruple Helix model-based” eco-systems as indicated by OECD on Triple Helix Partnerships for Innovation,” is important in assisting the sustainable initiatives and implications for their long-term competitiveness on the field”.

There will be a particular need for human resources during the next 20 years due to Albania and Kosovo's applications to join the EU as member countries. The most significant economic sector to be affected by this process—possibly in both good and bad ways—will be agriculture. Encouraging the convergence of Albanian, Kosovar, and EU agriculture is vital since the economic development in rural areas is characterized by high dependence on agriculture.

As well food security nowadays is considered a crucial issue for a healthy and active life. European markets need to secure the necessary supply for high-quality food required from their consumers all over the world. The increasing markets are offering new export opportunities for Albanian and Kosovar enterprises to EU countries. Recently agricultural production in general and exports of some products have experienced an upward trend, such as vegetables (especially the greenhouses production), fruits, medicinal plants, etc.

On the other hand, rapid growth of macroeconomic indicators in both countries, which often did not translate into development and did not result in a reduction of inequality (Muço and Balliu, 2018). In this respect, cross-cutting themes such as youth employment, SMEs, green jobs, gender sensitivity, and the like should also be considered in the larger scheme of rural labor market and the development of the rural areas.

Nowadays, territorial development issues, management, and businesses in rural areas require special attention in terms of achieving the standards to produce agricultural products. New

market demands have shown that young farmers need to adopt advanced technologies and standards for their production.

Young people and women in particular in the rural areas are less integrated into the primary labor market, they are at higher risk of poverty in both countries. Migration and economic restructuring have also led to major gender inequalities.

Due to the national diversity of study models, education structures, teaching performances, etc., as well as the complexity of academic competencies characteristic of VET schools, the current state of the VET sector in Kosovo and Albania suffers from a research deficit.

In the context of a differentiated VET education system, assessing the development of competencies among students presents a methodological challenge. According to this viewpoint, there are high thresholds associated with the modeling and measurement of academic skills as well as their factors and outcomes. Finding an appropriate standard (such as future employment needs) to assess the development of competence is another difficult task. Academic and potential employment fields have ever-changing needs.

Part 1: Albania

1. Situation of the VET education in Albania

Vocational education and training (VET) is a crucial part of the education system in Albania. The majority of vocational education is taught in upper secondary schools in both countries. While in-company trainers assist learners during work-based learning, vocational teachers foster students' skill development in classroom environments.

Albania has had an extremely high degree of immigration in recent years. Even while free movement and globalization are the driving forces behind the movement, the quantity of departures relative to the population in Albania is concerning. According to data from an Economic and Social Center poll conducted in 2018, 79% of the students who responded expressed a desire to leave Albania. Additionally, students who were not in Albania responded to this poll, and 95% of them said that they would not want to go back. In order to stop emigration, the 2030 youth sector plan places a strong emphasis on getting young people involved in growing employment.

The aforementioned political context presents new challenges for the country and requires new competencies in order to reduce the gap between the competencies offered and those needed, which creates unemployment among young people.

In recent years, fundamental changes have occurred in every economic sector, typifying Albania's economic progress. Shifts in the labor market's need for professional abilities have been brought about by these shifts, which have had varying effects on different industries.

Quality of education remains a critical issue, particularly in pre-university education. Albania was ranked last with 13 points in the PISA report on creative thinking (OECD 2024). On the other hand, the average performance in science of 15-year-olds is 376 points, compared to an average of 485 points in OECD countries. Average 2022 results were down compared to 2018 in mathematics, reading, and science (OECD 2023). The decline in Albanian students' PISA 2022 results seems to be caused by a variety of causes such as the 2019 earthquake and COVID-19.

Even the public expenditures on education as a percentage of GDP are not considered at the desired level for Albania, which compared to 2021, have decreased by 0.2 percentage points, while public expenditures on education as a percentage of total public expenditures have decreased by 0.1 percentage points. These expenditures account for 9.7 % of total public expenditures for 2022 and constitute 2.9 % of total GDP (INSTAT 2023 c.).

2. VET Governance and Management System in Albania

The VET governance and management system in Albania is divided in two levels of administration: central, and municipal. At the central level, the system includes ministries and their supervising agencies. The municipal level encompasses the Regional Education Directorates, which are supported by the Ministry of Education and Sports at the same time.

The main national actors now have different tasks and obligations as a result of the changes in the legal framework. The two national agencies that are jointly in charge of VET, the National Agency for VET and Qualification (NAVETQ) and the National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES), are currently going through a reorganization process and aren't quite operational enough to offer the entire range of services that are required by law.

The legislative process of the VET reform has passed through different phases. Before the end of the communist era in 1991, Albania had a well-established Vocational Education and Training (VET) system serving the requirements of a planned economy (Hilpert 2020).

As a first step toward creating a unified legislative framework, the Law on Vocational Education and Training (VET Law no. 8872) was adopted in 2002. The new structure and duration of VET programmes (2+1+1, 2+2 or 4 years) was constituted in 2008, followed by the adoption of the Law on the Albanian Qualifications Framework (AQF). In 2011 the National Agency on the VET Education was established under the Ministry of Labour. The structure for formal vocational education in the 2+1+1 programmes was further defined by introducing exit points (levels) to the labour market after years 2 and 3 of study, and with year 4 leading to State Matura (Hilpert 2020).

During 2013–2014 the responsibility for VET passed to the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MoSWY) and was prepared the integrated National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS 2014–2020), this marked a very important milestone in boosting the VET reform, to

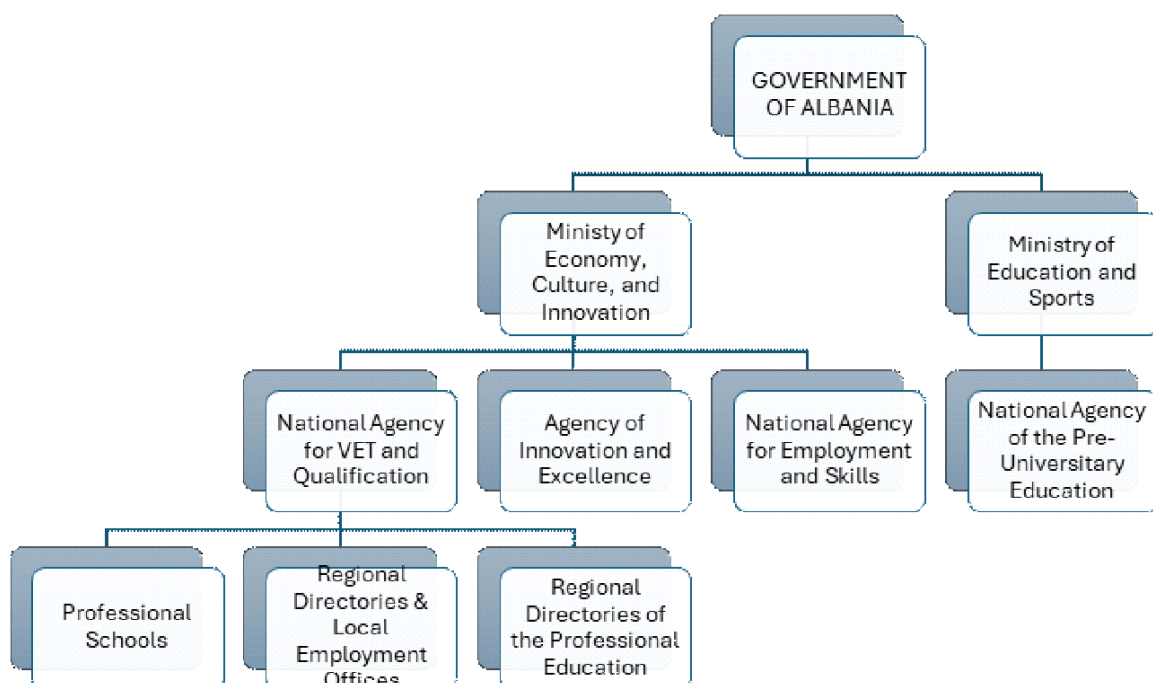
bring VET closer to the labour market and make it a powerful instrument to fight youth unemployment.

New VET Law 15/2017 was adopted by repeal of the Law of 2002 and all its subsequent amendments. The new law aims to complete the legal framework and create a system responsive to the labour market needs. It contains novelties regarding the governance framework and an increased autonomy of VET providers.

Law on Employment Promotion (Law 15/2019) was adopted, supporting the further reorganisation of the National Employment Service (NES) into NAES. VET has recently been centralized under the Ministry of Finance and Economy, which oversees a state-funded system comprised of two types of providers: vocational schools for young people and vocational training centres, mainly for adults (Pano, 2021).

Actually, VET agencies are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Economy, Culture, and Innovation.

Figure 1. VET education Hierarchy in Albania in 2024



Source : Expert elaboration



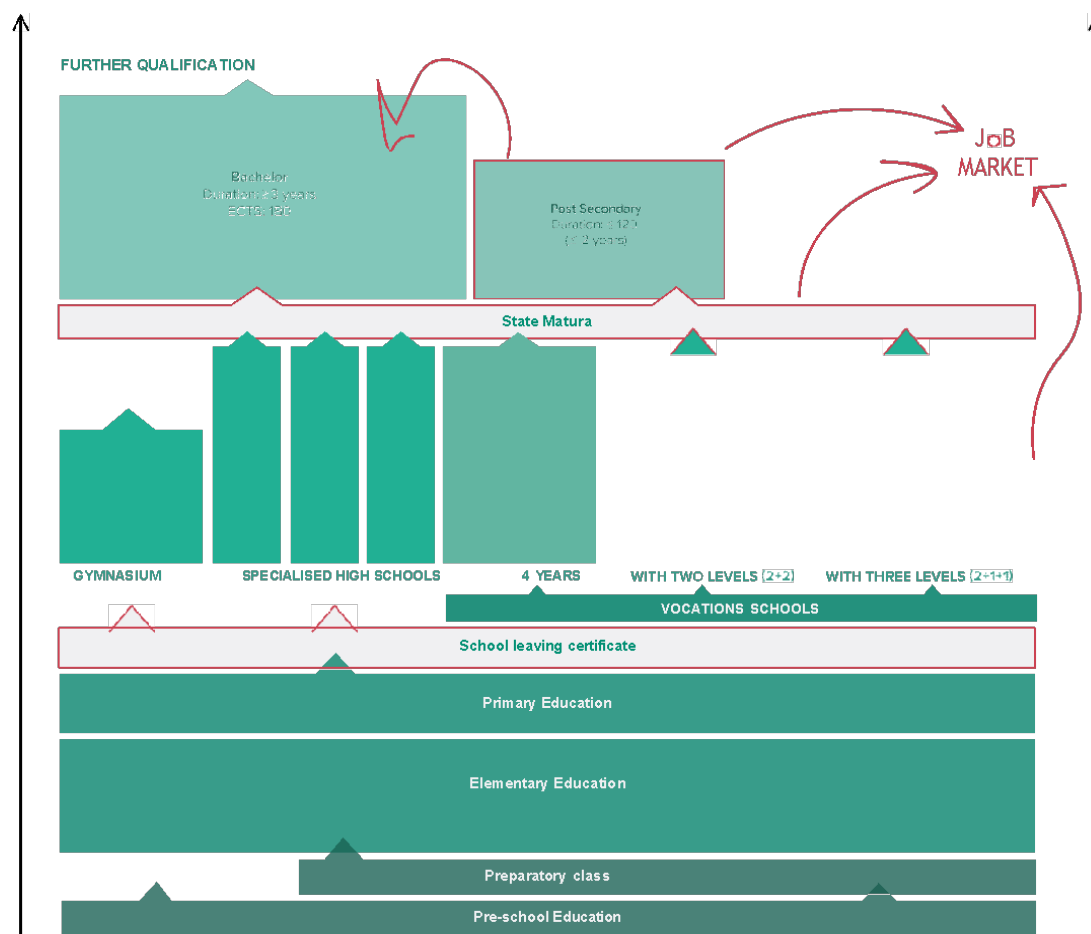
3. Education system in Albania

The education system in Albania is organized at these main levels:

- Preschool Education (ISCED age 3- 6 years old).
- Primary Education (ISCED 1 - grades 1-5).
- Lower Secondary Education (ISCED 2 - grades 6-9)
- Upper Secondary Education (ISCED 3 - grades 10-12).
- Higher Education (ISCED 5-8, including short cycle of higher education (5), Bachelor level (6), Master level (7) and Doctoral level (8).

In addition to the education levels, qualifications are also linked to their programs and curricula (MES 2021)

Figure 2. Education System in Albania





According to the NAVETQ, Albania has 38 Vocational and Technical Public Schools, including 11 focused on the field of agriculture. The Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation supports all the students registered in the agriculture direction of studies.¹ Professional schools that offer agriculture programs focus on Agronomy, Veterinary, Agritourism, Food technology, etc.

Horizontal bar chart showing the percentage of respondents who believe that the current government is responsible for the economic crisis in the United States. The chart compares responses from 2009 (orange bars) and 2012 (blue bars). The x-axis represents the percentage of respondents, ranging from 0 to 100. The y-axis lists various political figures and groups. The legend indicates that orange bars represent 2009 data and blue bars represent 2012 data.

Entity	2009 (%)	2012 (%)
Barack Obama	92	95
Mitt Romney	88	85
Joe Biden	85	82
John McCain	82	80
Michelle Obama	80	78
Paul Ryan	78	75
Timothy Wirth	75	72
Marco Rubio	72	70
Sheldon Adelson	70	68
Chris Christie	68	65
Paul Ryan	65	62
Timothy Wirth	62	60
Marco Rubio	60	58
Sheldon Adelson	58	55
Chris Christie	55	52
Paul Ryan	52	50
Timothy Wirth	50	48
Marco Rubio	48	45
Sheldon Adelson	45	42
Chris Christie	42	40
Paul Ryan	40	38
Timothy Wirth	38	35
Marco Rubio	35	32
Sheldon Adelson	32	30
Chris Christie	30	28
Paul Ryan	28	25
Timothy Wirth	25	22
Marco Rubio	22	20
Sheldon Adelson	20	18
Chris Christie	18	15
Paul Ryan	15	12
Timothy Wirth	12	10
Marco Rubio	10	8
Sheldon Adelson	8	5
Chris Christie	5	2
Paul Ryan	2	0

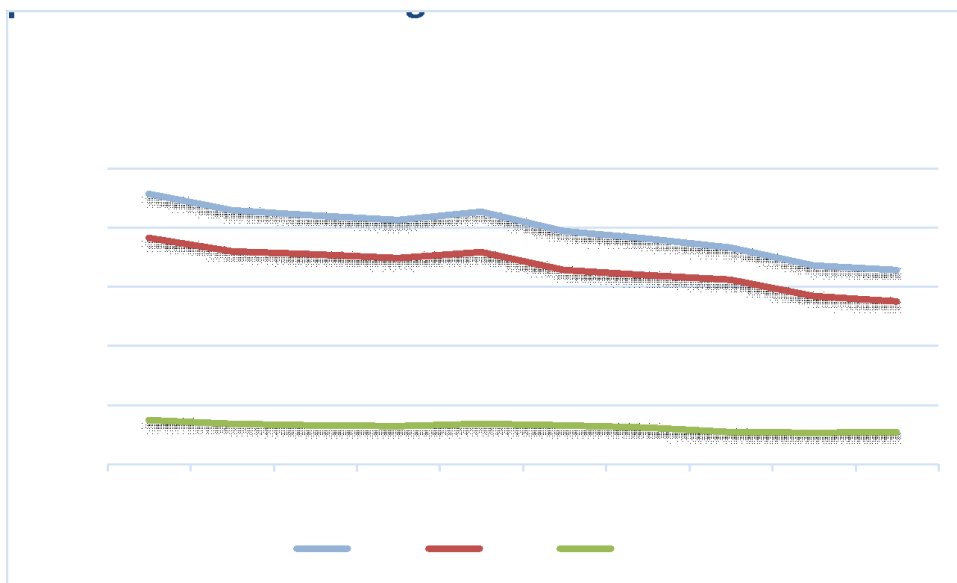
¹ <https://akpa.gov.al/shkollat-e-mesme-te-arsimit-profesional/>



Noteworthy is the fact that employment in the services sector is rising, despite a decline in those engaged in manufacturing and agriculture.

Despite promotional activities and support to students from rural areas in following VET education, participation in VET is low with only 18.2 % of upper secondary students enrolled in vocational schools in 2020 (European Commision, 2021).

Graphic 2. Number of students registered in professional schools in Albania 2014-2023



Source: INSTAT database 2024

The majority of the students are concentrated in the main cities and as shown in graphics 1 &2, the students' numbers in professional schools is declining. In addition, almost half of youth reside in rural areas thus their livelihoods and prospective in the labor force is linked to these areas.

Table 1. Youth (aged 15-24 years) participation rate in VET (Albania), by sex, in percent

Years	Total	Female	Male
2019	5.5	2.0	8.9
2020	5.6	2.3	8.9
2021	5.7	2.4	9.0
2022	4.6	2.4	9.3

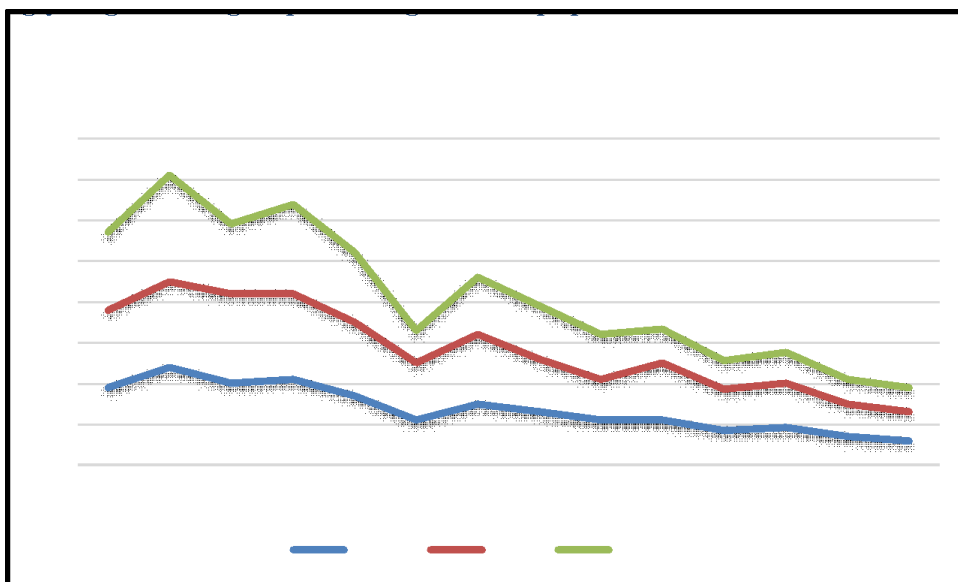


Source: European Training Foundation. 2023. Education, skills and employment – trends and developments, p. 55.

In recent years, the proportion of people with only a primary or lower secondary education (ISCED 0-2) has significantly decreased in Albania, from 60.4% to 51.8% for females and from 55% to 44.6% for males (ETF 2023).

The education and professional training lead to integration into the labour market, but also to more active participation in consultation and decision-making on the future of the rural and urban areas. The VET education in Albania is aligned with SDG4.1 and 4.4 targets 2030. With the aim to ensure the quality of education to all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes (INSTAT 2024).

Graphic 3. Lifelong learning as a percentage of the population of age 25–64 years



Source: INSTAT database 2024



According to SDG 4 goal it is important to “Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university”. As it is shown in graphic 3 this indicator needs to be improved in Albania.

For example the Agriculture, Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) does not always respond and address issues faced by family farms, though some of the ATTCs are very active in providing inputs and advice to farms (FAO 2022).

Lastly, all considerations should be done under a gender lens. The issue is twofold: first, if gender is not taken under consideration, there is the risk of exclusion of half of the population and the labor force. This in return would impact productivity and economic growth.

4. Vocational Education and labour market

Albania is facing many problems with the employment of young people in general and rural employment in particular, which is related to economic growth, migration, and poverty.

During the transitional period, there has been a great deal of unequal regional growth. The shift from a centrally planned to a market-driven economy has had the most overall influence on regional development (as well as on overall economic development). In all economic sectors, this shift has resulted in the closure and reorganization of several ineffective businesses. The need for VET professions and schools in Albania is a direct result of this development.

The following are some of the main trends in Albanian regional development: a notable rise in unemployment in areas that were formerly dominated by bigger, frequently mono sectoral enterprises and the agriculture sector; growing income and employment disparities between the center (Tirana) and the periphery;

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) states that Albania is among the countries most vulnerable to the exodus of young people and the workforce due to the pandemic's negative consequences. This is brought on by their lack of perspective, unemployment, corruption, and, in the event that they do find work, their poor pay.

Based on the estimates made by INSTAT (2023 a) Gross Domestic Product (GDP) share in agriculture in 2022 was 18.62% showing a decline compared to 2019 which was almost 20%



of the total GDP. In Albania, employment in agriculture during 2022 was 33.9% in total (INSTAT 2023 b.), with a slight decline in 2023 with 32.3% (INSTAT 2024).

Innovation is considered the main engine of growth (a watered-down version of development) as well as a differentiating factor useful for overcoming competitive constraints, at least partially. International institutions (OECD, EU, etc.) and national governments, who advocate these development policies based on innovation and competitiveness, have set up mechanisms to intensify selection between territories. This often results in land planners and managers acquiring a naive and wishful attitude, wanting to enter a competitive world and considering that valorizing local resources and supporting cutting-edge sectors are enough to generate development.

The matter of fact remains that much less is known in terms of economic activity, employment, and rural non-farm activity in the rural areas of Albania. Consideration of youth employment insures inclusion of a vital part of the labor force who will become the most productive force of tomorrow. Inclusion of youth into the labor force and the labor market increases the utilization of the available labor force as well as increase economic productivity.

In this respect, employment should be at the forefront of economic policy since it is directly linked to SDG 2030. Indeed, the poorest regions of both countries are still rural ones, and a high percentage of the employed work in agriculture are self-employed people. On the other hand the increased interest in reducing the environmental impact adopted in the European Green Deal (European Union, 2020) and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, sets concrete recommendations for:

- 1) Aligning the region with the EU's ambition for 2050 to make carbon carbon-neutral European continent.
- 2) Activating/exploiting the potential of the circular economy,
- 3) Reducing air, water and soil pollution,
- 4) Promoting sustainability in food production and supply, and
- 5) Exploiting the great tourism potential of the region, focusing in the protection of biodiversity and the restoration of ecosystems.

With the aim to improve youth employment, it is that SME-s have to direct their future potentials toward the green jobs market increase. In regards to the existence and development



of SME-s in rural areas special consideration should be given to the employment that they may foster as well as to economic sustainability. Further development of SMEs may also be linked to increased entrepreneurial efforts in the rural areas as well as skill development for the rural labor force. The possibility of green jobs may be viewed under EU initiatives to foster these types of jobs, especially in rural areas.

5. Qualifications and curricula

Contracting vocational schools or centers for trainings is very rarely considered by businesses. Mainly businesses do not have information in VET system. There are cases where businesses are participating in VET system by being part of VET provider supervisory body. Rarely businesses are involved in curricula design of a VET provider and involved also in dual learning jointly with VET providers. This process is more evident in the field of agriculture. With regard to the work readiness and employability of graduates, results from the assessment clearly demonstrate that the current VET system does not equip VET graduates with the necessary skills to enter the labor market.

Albanian VET schools provide their training on two levels: first, the secondary education level (secondary VET program after basic education or secondary VET program after general secondary education) and second, on the higher education level (applied higher education program). The standard length of an applied higher education program is 2 years, aimed at preparing specialists and middle-level managers. A student, who graduates from an applied higher education programme in a VET school receives a diploma, and hasn't the right to continue their studies in a master's programme in Albania. The graduation certificate certifies that the person has covered a certain curriculum, at a certain level, and in a certain VET school. The graduation certificates and diplomas received from the VET schools are as follows: A student who graduates from a VET school (Upper Secondary Education); Higher education level Diploma near the Universities; VET certificates related to different courses. A student, who covers a basic VET programme at a VET school, gets a certificate and special entries are made on the graduation certificates from basic schools or upper secondary schools.

Evaluation of the various processes of the initial vocational education reform indicated that it virtually lacked consistency, homogeneity and coherence. Unequal results were achieved in different areas of vocational education reform.



The most problematic aspects of initial vocational education reform are as follows: formation of vocational education strategy and policy, vocational teacher preparation, vocational orientation and counseling, and the improvement of the vocational education image.



Part 2: Kosovo

1. Situation analysis in Kosovo

The current VET system in Kosovo faces numerous challenges, including inadequate quality, insufficient alignment with labor market needs, limited practical learning opportunities, and poor career counseling services. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach to improve governance, enhance curriculum alignment with market demands, and establish robust quality assurance mechanisms. Increasing investment in infrastructure, promoting gender balance, and fostering stronger cooperation with the business sector are essential steps towards a more effective VET system that can drive economic growth and improve living standards in Kosovo.

The insufficient quality of vocational education and training (VET) offerings in Kosovo has led to low employer satisfaction with the skills and competencies of VETI graduates. This issue is further compounded by a low transition rate from school to work. Opportunities for lifelong learning and mobility are limited, failing to meet the continuous retraining needs of the workforce. Therefore, the primary focus within this strategic area is to review and enhance the quality of vocational education and training. This includes developing transferable skills, digital skills, entrepreneurial skills, and professional technical skills, in alignment with labor market demands and trends in digital and green transformation.

In the modern economy, education is fundamental for economic growth and improving living standards. Kosovo's efforts to achieve these goals are directly linked to workforce productivity levels. The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) has estimated the rates of return on education in Kosovo, concluding that low-quality education significantly hinders economic growth. This analysis highlights that the skills gap is related to participation levels in education, specific competencies such as foreign languages and computer skills, soft skills, and the overall quality of education. The quality, inclusivity, and duration of schooling not only impact the improvement of human capital and create preconditions for social and economic development but also provide a foundation for enhancing employment opportunities (MESTI 2022).

Access to education in Kosovo varies across different levels. In early childhood education, only 37.8% of children below six years old are enrolled, indicating significant room for



improvement. In contrast, gross enrolment rates in primary (101.1%) and secondary (85%) education are relatively high and comparable to regional standards. Vocational education and training (VET) enrolls more than half of upper secondary students, showing good development. However, VET is frequently used as a pathway to higher education rather than fulfilling its intended role of preparing students for the labor market.

Higher education attendance is nearly half of the target youth population (49.4% of 18-22 year-olds), but there has been a significant decline over the past five years, not fully attributable to demographic changes. This decline reflects the sector's struggles with relevance to employability and smooth transitions from school to work.

Quality of education remains a critical issue, particularly in pre-university education. This is evidenced by Kosovo's ranking among the bottom three countries in the 2018 PISA results. Despite extensive reform efforts—such as shifting to competence-based curricula, enhancing teachers' initial training and continuous professional development, improving pedagogical resources, and advancing digitalization—the implementation of these reforms has not effectively bridged the quality gap. The limited budget priority given to the education sector reveals some discrepancies but also offers opportunities for improvement in quality and offerings. Education accounts for 4.1% of the gross domestic product, or 13.3% of total government spending. However, per-student spending is low compared to neighboring countries due to Kosovo's large child population.²

Table 2. Western Balkans Outlook, 2020-26

Table 1.1. Western Balkans Outlook, 2020–26

	2020	2021	2022	2023e	2024f	2025f	2026f
<i>Real GDP growth (percent)</i>							
Albania	-3.3	8.9	4.9	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-3.0	7.4	4.2	1.9	2.6	3.3	4.0
Kosovo	-5.3	10.7	4.3	3.1	3.7	3.9	3.9
North Macedonia	-4.7	4.5	2.2	1.0	2.5	2.9	3.0
Montenegro	-15.3	13.0	6.4	6.0	3.4	2.8	3.0
Serbia	-0.9	7.7	2.5	2.5	3.5	3.8	4.0
WB6	-3.0	7.9	3.4	2.6	3.2	3.5	3.8

Source: Invigorating Growth, Western Balkans Regular Economic Report No.25 Spring 2024.

² Kosovo* Rapid Education Diagnosis (RED): 'Addressing the weak links'. ETF, 2023.
https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-05/RED%20Kosovo%20-%20final%20report_for%20dissemination.pdf



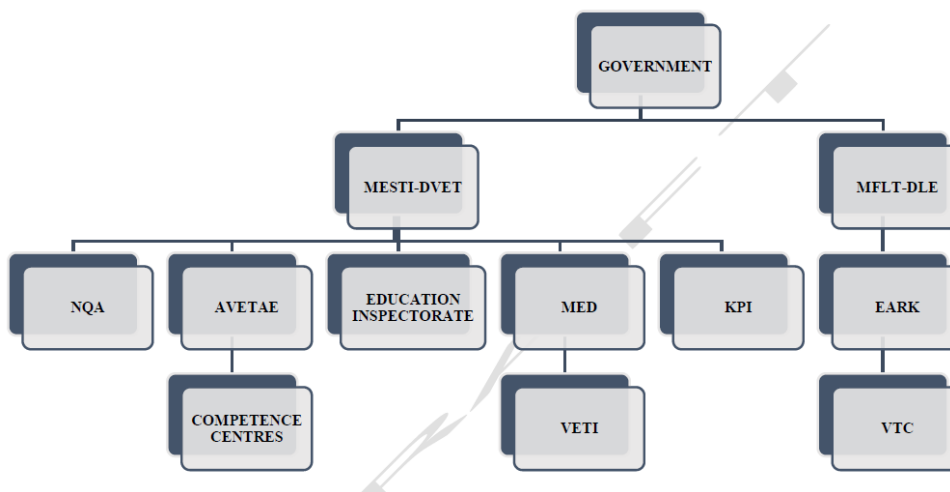
Kosovo's GDP growth shows a sharp recovery from a -5.3% decline in 2020 to 10.7% in 2021, stabilizing at 4.3% in 2022. Future projections estimate moderate growth rates of 3.1% in 2023, and around 3.7% to 3.9% from 2024 to 2026, indicating steady economic progress (Rovo et al. 2024).

2. VET Governance and Management System in Kosovo

The VET governance and management system in Kosovo operates at three levels: central, municipal, and VET provider. At the central level, the system includes ministries and their supervising agencies. The municipal level encompasses the Municipal Education Directorates (MEDs). At the VET provider level, governance is the shared responsibility of the institution's Steering Council and management.

At the central level, cooperation and consultation mechanisms with employers and employees are facilitated through the Economic-Social Council and the Council for Vocational Education and Training and Adults. However, similar mechanisms at the municipal and sectoral levels have yet to be established.³

Figure 3: Vocational Education and Training Governance and Management Hierarchy



Source: Author elaboration

³ Vocational Education and Training Management System in Kosovo (Situation and alternatives for improvement), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, 2022.



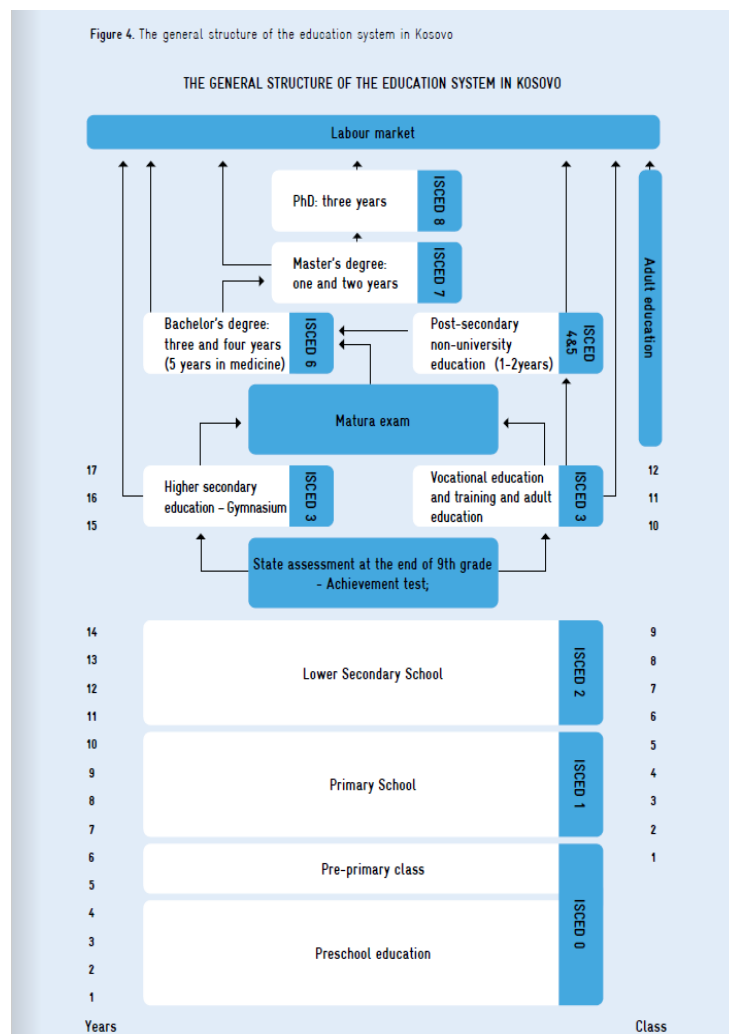
3. General information about the education system

The education system in Kosovo is organized at these main levels:

- Preschool Education (ISCED 0 - age < 6 years old).
- Primary Education (ISCED 1 - grades 1-5).
- Lower Secondary Education (ISCED 2 - grades 6-9)
- Upper Secondary Education (ISCED 3 - grades 10-12).
- Higher Education (ISCED 5-8, including short cycle of higher education (5), Bachelor level (6), Master level (7) and Doctoral level (8).

In addition to the education levels, qualifications are also linked to their programs and curricula. **Student Assessment Framework in Pre-University Education in Kosovo** describes the main features of the education system and has also helped to further refine the mapping between levels of education programs and the National Qualifications Framework of Kosovo (see Figure 4 below).

Figure 4. Education system in Kosovo





Source: Student Assessment Framework in Pre-University Education in Kosovo

Young people's interest in vocational education and training schools has increased in recent years and the level of students' orientation in vocational high schools and gymnasiums is balanced. Statistics from 2020/21 show that 53% of students in upper secondary education attend vocational education and training schools. Disaggregated by gender, the data show that compared to girls, boys are more likely to enroll in vocational education and training schools. About 42.3% of students in vocational education are girls. The gender analysis of the orientation in vocational education shows the tendency of the orientation of girls in the profiles of health and well-being, business, administration, and justice. Boys tend to orient themselves in the profiles of engineering, manufacturing and construction, information technology and communication. The rate of orientation of girls in technical profiles (area of engineering, manufacturing and construction) is 22.5%.(MESTI 2022)

Table 3. Enrolment in secondary vocational education by ISCED-F field and gender

	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21	
ISCED-F fields										
	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls
Human sciences and arts	1,323	832	1,558	1,024	1,448	1,023	1,568	1,067	1,546	1,059
Business, administration & justice/law	13,550	6,346	13,817	6,609	12,381	5,762	10,920	5,023	10,005	4,616
ICT	5,460	1,729	5,299	1,602	4,772	1,388	4,148	1,132	3,857	929
Engineering, manufacturing & construction	15,342	3,595	15,288	3,578	14,534	3,391	13,179	2,960	12,389	2,638
Agriculture, forestry, fishery and veterinary	1,301	404	1,824	656	1,541	536	1,333	442	1,227	466
Health and Welfare	7,152	4,822	7,591	5,161	8,022	5,495	8,839	6,123	8,912	6,330
Services	1,258	363	1,306	338	1,087	319	830	212	842	256
Other	0	0	83	24	18	2	0	0	72	33



Total	45,386	18,091	46,766	18,992	43,803	17,916	40,817	16,959	38,850	16,327
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Source: EMIS/MESTI

Despite recent data showing an increase in enrolment in vocational education and training schools and positioning Kosovo close to the average of developed EU countries, vocational schools continue to generally remain as a second choice, especially for students who could not enroll in gymnasiums. Enrolment in vocational schools does not have any specific criteria for admission and this has an impact in attracting low-achieving students or students who cannot enrol in gymnasiums.

Public educational institutions of vocational education and training, except Centres of Competence, are under the direct supervision of municipalities which exercise this role through municipal education directorates. The central government is responsible for making education policies, funding and inspection. Within this system, educational institutions have very little managerial and financial autonomy.

The authority of municipalities, which are in charge of managing gymnasiums and vocational schools, has made it very difficult for students to move from one municipality to another. This has led some small municipalities to establish gymnasiums or certain professional education profiles even if they don't have infrastructural and professional conditions to do so. In addition, municipalities are not flexible in changing the profiles in vocational schools, to address inter alia the problem of surplus teaching staff. On the other hand, the capacities of the municipal education directorates to supervise the educational institutions are more than limited and the MEDs do not have any organizational structure in accordance with their function. Moreover, the line of authority from the municipal education directorates to the MESTI is missing.

AVETAE manages six VETI (Centres of Competence), although the legal framework and the budget needed are not adopted to enable AVETAE to manage all vocational schools while its capacity to fulfil this function remains a challenge. On the other hand, the capacities of the National Qualifications Authority are limited to respond to the dynamics needed for the validation and accreditation of new qualifications and for the approval of occupational standards.



At the vocational school level, apart from limited managerial and financial autonomy, no organizational structure is defined. Consequently, the mechanisms for quality assurance, career guidance, cooperation with businesses and school-based TPD differ between schools.

In terms of VET financing, the current financing level does not meet the needs of vocational schools. VET funding has not increased significantly in recent years, whereas the current funding formula is generalized and counted per student and not with any differentiation of expenditures according to the profile specific needs. Budget execution is largely carried out by municipalities, including the management of procurement and payments. This causes many practical problems for schools, especially when faced with emergency needs, and burdens education officials in the municipality with meeting the daily needs of educational institutions, ranging from minor repairs to larger investments. The situation is the same with the schools which are under the AVETAE authority. Although there is a regulation on the planning and spending of own source revenues realized by the institutions of vocational education and training and adult education, in practical terms they face difficulties in managing their own source revenues. Recently, MESTI has started work on preparing a formula for financing vocational education and training.

The legal framework of VET turns out to be complex, fragmented and deficient in addressing some issues, leading to a fragmented approach between the institutions responsible for external QA processes in the VET system and enabling a systematic and comprehensive approach. In this context, while the National Qualifications Framework recognizes a broader QA system in VET (including the role of the Education Inspectorate for VETI external evaluation), the bylaws governing QA processes in general education do not cover vocational schools, limiting the responsibility for external quality assurance in vocational schools only in the NQA. The authority for the validation of curricula between MESTI and NQA is not clear, whereas the link between the right to provide VET and accreditation is not regulated for public VET institutions. Mechanisms for QA at the system level are not defined. As a result, there is a lack of systematic monitoring of the VET system and regular reporting on quality and development of VET at the system level, which would inform and facilitate the drafting and planning of strategic VET policies at the country level. Procedures for regular collection of feedback from VET providers, as a basis for the continuous development of the National Quality Assurance Framework, are not defined.



Internal quality assurance mechanisms have not yet been fully consolidated and self-assessment processes are largely conducted formally (just to fulfil an obligation) but without significant impact on quality improvement. In this way, the interest of vocational schools in conducting internal evaluation of the school has decreased. On the other hand, the opportunities for continuous professional development of Quality Assurance Coordinators are limited, while the available guidelines for internal quality assurance processes do not sufficiently address the needs of schools for adequate implementation of the quality cycle. In this context, quality management at the level of vocational schools and at the level of the system is not functional and efficient in monitoring quality, identifying intervention priorities for quality improvement and implementing them.(MESTI 2022)

4. Linking vocational education and training with the labour market

Secondary vocational education is supposed to train and prepare students in many different professions and crafts to enter the labour market upon completion of secondary vocational education. But many estimates show that vocational high schools in Kosovo do not satisfactorily meet this goal. In general, the condition and quality of these schools are not at the right level, because these schools face many challenges, such as lack of proper cooperation with businesses, insufficient adaptation to the labour market, insufficient infrastructure and equipment, lack of laboratories and workshops, lack of practical teaching and learning and on-the-job training, lack of teaching materials and lack of career guidance and counselling services in the preliminary school cycle.

Currently, a significant number of qualifications offered in vocational schools are not based on labour market needs, the occupational standards are missing for many profiles, curriculum for general subjects is not updated and decisions to open certain profiles are made without any proper analysis of labour market needs. The new curricula approval and implementation commencement was pushed with the idea to initially finalize and approve the Core Curriculum for VET, intensify the process of drafting occupational standards and on that basis unify the approach and structure of curricula designed for professional profiles, as well as to ensure the interconnection with the labour market needs.

Labour market research is not supported by the labour market information system which does not provide data that is updated and relevant to the labour market (i.e., employers) needs and



requirements. On the other hand, there is a lack of a standardized methodology for labour market research and forecasting the labour market needs.

Career counselling and guidance remains a challenge and the services provided are still limited to some municipalities. In some municipalities there are career counselling and guidance centres at the municipal level or career counselling and guidance offices are located within schools. In recent years, several training programs have been implemented for vocational school teachers for career counselling and cooperation with employers, as well as investments in career centres in several vocational schools. However, not enough progress has been made in appointing counsellors for career guidance and orientation.

Teaching is mainly theoretical whereas opportunities for teachers' professional development in improving pedagogical skills and conducting practical teaching and learning are limited. Even the path of professional preparation of (pre-service) teachers for VET is not clear.

Another VET challenge remains in conducting practical teaching and learning (at school and in workplace). Workshops for many profiles are missing, even if they exist, they cannot be fully utilized due to outdated (or lack of) equipment, lack of raw material (consumables) needed for practical training and insufficient preparation of instructors for conducting practical teaching and learning. On the other hand, dual education piloting has not started yet. The challenges in delivering work-based learning are different, both on the part of schools and employers. Despite the willingness of employers to admit students for work-based learning, they generally do not have capacity to accommodate a large number of students. Most Kosovar enterprises are micro and small and have vision for short-term development. Moreover, even in cases where students conduct work-based learning at an employer, it is rarely is done with proper planning based on curriculum requirements. Other challenges that hinder the conducting of work-based learning are lack of long-term development plans in most enterprises, lack of coordinators in schools who would serve as facilitators between schools and employers.

In 2020, MESTI has approved the AI 137/2020 work-based learning in vocational education and training institutions⁴, which regulates the way of organizing, conducting and evaluating students during the conduction of work-based learning. The regulation 135/2020 on the protection and preservation of students' health during practical training at school and in the

⁴ <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2020/12/udhzimi-administrative-me-nr-137-2020-te-mesurit-ne-vendin-e-punese-ne-iaap.pdf>



workplace has been approved. However, there is still no instrument for stimulating enterprises to cooperate with schools in conducting work-based learning.

MESTI has approved the AI 136/2020 on establishing an incentive structure to support the education of students in deficient profiles and for girls/women in technical profiles in vocational education and training institutions. In this regard, scholarships are allocated for girls attending vocational schools in the profiles of food technology and agribusiness and for girls who enrol in technical courses in vocational schools.

The legal framework for tracking graduates from the VET system at the national level is missing and consequently the data on employment of graduates and the compliance of their skills with the labour market demands are missing (MESTI 2022).

The Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) has released the results of the Labour Force Survey for Q3 2023. Unemployment rate in Kosovo 10.6%. About two thirds of the population in Kosovo (1 180 450) are working age population (21 665 less than in the same period of the previous year). Active persons were 483 259 (15 093 more than in the same period of the previous year). Inactive persons were 697 191 (36 758 less than in the same period of the previous year). Employed persons were 432 040 (14 567 more than in the same period of the previous year). Unemployed persons were 51 219 (526 less than in the same period of the previous year).

5. The key indicators of the labour market

Young people face significant challenges in transitioning from school to work due to the education system's quality, relevance, and inclusiveness issues. Additionally, there is a mismatch between their expectations and the actual demands of the job market.⁵

The percentage of employed males was 53.9% (3.1% higher than in the same period of the previous year). Whereas the percentage of employed females was 20.2% (1.1% higher than in the same period of the previous year). The employment rate was 36.6% (1.9% higher than in the same period of the previous year). The unemployment rate was lower at 10.6% (-0.4%

⁵ Kosovo Annual Report 2023. UNICEF, 2023.
<https://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/media/4596/file/English.pdf>



lower than in the same period of the previous year). And among young people (15-24 years old), the unemployment rate was higher by 1.6% than in the same period of the previous year.

The rate of inactivity continues to remain quite high (59.1%), lower (-2.0 %), compared to the same period of the previous year. The rate of inactivity among females was very pronounced with 75.2%, compared to males, 42.0%.

The economic sectors leading with employment continue to be: trade with 19.9%, construction with 12.6%, education with 10.0%, manufacturing with 9.1%, public administration and defense with 8.2%, etc. Females were employed mainly in the education, trade and health care sectors, with 55.1% of them. Whereas, males were mainly employed in the sectors of trade, construction, manufacturing, public administration and defense, accommodation and service activities, with 62.4%.⁶

6. Qualifications and curricula

The current curricula for the qualifications provided by the public VET providers do not sufficiently comply with labour market needs, with the descriptors defined by the NQF for respective levels and types of qualifications, nor with the key competencies defined by the Curriculum Framework for Pre-University Education (in the case of formal programs).

The first weakness in relation to this governance function is related to the fact that the responsibility for carrying out national, sectorial, and regional analyses of the skills and training needs is not clearly defined in the current system of governance and management of VET, and/or has not been fulfilled (in the absence of human resources and professional capacity, but also due to the lack of accountability and performance management). Active and responsible participation of employers in this regard is also not institutionalised. Consequently, these analyses are not available at any level:

- At the central level, the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo (EARK) - maintains the Labour Market Information System (LMIS), which provides quantitative and qualitative information on the situation and trends of labour supply and demand; however, many elements of the LMIS are still not operational, while data analysis, including skills needs at national, sector and regional levels, are not available.

⁶ Labour Force Survey (LFS), Q3. Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2023.



- As for the sectorial analyses of skills and training needs, the VET Sector Committees have not been established, therefore, their contribution to these analyses is not utilised.
- At the local level, the analysis of the local and regional labour market needs (is anticipated) to be done by the municipalities (Law on VET, Article 28, paragraph 1 and 2); however, cooperation mechanisms with employers, with VTCs, NGOs and other parties of interest at the local level are not regulated by the legal framework, while the capacity of municipalities for such analysis is insufficient.
- At the level of VETIs, the responsibility for researching and identifying the necessary qualifications in the local labour market falls on the Steering Council. The SCs are not functional and do not fulfil their role to research the labour market and to suggest revision or/and adjustment of qualification programs (within the autonomy of the VETIs) as well as opening or closing VET programs in VETIs.⁷

⁷ Vocational Education and Training Management System in Kosovo (Situation and alternatives for improvement), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, 2022.



Conclusions

This Report gives useful brainstorming ideas for the future proposed curricula on VET education in Albania and Kosovo. The report has to come up with some qualitative results and recommendations.

There is a lack of effective cooperation between stakeholders in the field, including business, academia, and public institutions and also VET infrastructure remains relatively weak in both countries.

The official statistics from INSTAT and KAS give information for the whole economic activity and the data are not detailed for subsectors.

The industry development and growth potentials in the domestic market don't offer long-term employment potential for young graduates.

The greatest problem in Albania and Kosovo labour market is the mismatch between the supply and the demand of labour. There is at the same time high unemployment and the lack of a sufficiently qualified labour force, with youth and long-term unemployment rates remaining high. The challenges in matching the supply and demand of the labour market, in addressing the existing skills gap and improving the quality of the existing labour force, as well as counteracting the risk of a growing social divide, remain high.

Neither the VET schools nor the VET programmes are accredited in Albania. Talks on rectifying this situation are ongoing.

The lack of a comprehensive system of vocational counseling and guidance is partly addressed by VET Centres in both countries. In addition, it is intended that professionally trained counselors will also soon be employed in VET schools.



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