**Providing learning, employ people: trends in countries neighbouring the EU**

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Vocational education to prevent people from leaving school too early and counteract the persistently high numbers of inactive young people; Upskilling training to make it more equal, and address imbalances among men and women, young and old; Matching skills to labour market needs better to boost employability.

Even though there are local or regional differences, these are the main trends in 29 countries surrounding the EU – from Ukraine to Turkey to Morocco – as highlighted by [the 2018 ‘Key Indicators on Education, Skills and Employment’](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/key-indicators-education-skills-and-employment-2018), published by the European Training Foundation. The document presents the main findings from the 2018 collection of statistics that enables countries to evaluate and compare their progress in human capital development.

**Vocational education: an effective solution to be equally distributed**

Vocational training is proven to be a fast-track from school to work, with higher employment rates among young adults who graduated from vocational training in nearly all countries. Nevertheless, not all countries offer the same opportunities: while almost 100% of Uzbek upper-secondary students are enrolled in vocational programmes, only 10% of Georgian, Palestinian and Tunisian students follow vocational training. This has an impact on the dropout rate: in countries with many upper secondary students enrolled in vocational programmes (75%) – such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – up to 10% of students leave their studies early.

**Tackling social exclusion with basic skills**

In most countries neighbouring the EU, students are aged 15 when they begin vocational education, and it is common that they lack basic skills, such as reading, mathematics and science. Vocational education programmes therefore have to complement the provision of skills for employment with basic competences. Succeeding in this has a positive influence on persistently high youth unemployment rates – half of young people in Kosovo\*, around 45% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Palestine\*\*, and about one in three in Albania, Montenegro and Serbia.

**Increasing knowledge: yes, and matching with job market needs**

While in some countries (such as Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine) about two thirds of adults attain at most lower secondary education, in most countries increasing numbers of better-educated young people are entering the labour force. Although in line with growing knowledge-based labour force demand, this does not always lead to better employment prospects. Indeed, school-to-work transition remains problematic in most areas surrounding the EU, and in some countries, holding a university degree does not always mean being able to get a job.

**Taking care of workers, throughout their lives**

Access to training remains rather unbalanced in most countries: men are more likely than women to attend continuing training and young adults and those who are better educated enjoy more training opportunities than older workers. Upskilling through training can have positive consequences and therefore ensuring equal access is a necessary step – but this should not be pursued in purely quantitative terms: the content and focus of skills should match future labour market contexts.

**Background**

The European Training Foundation is the EU agency which support countries surrounding the EU to reform their vocational education and labour policies, in line with the EU’s external relations policy. Annually, the ETF publishes the ‘Key Indicators on Education, Skills and Employment’ publication, which offers cross-nationally comparable statistics to assess developments in vocational education, skills and labour market topics.