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► The vocational education and training system in Kosovo: addressing skills needs in the hospitality sector



- ▶ **The vocational education and training system in Kosovo: addressing skills needs in the hospitality sector**

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We also extend our sincere appreciation to the vocational education and training (VET) schools and vocational training centres (VTCs). Through their completion of questionnaires, participation in focus group discussions and readiness to share curricula and operational experiences, these institutions provided critical insights into current infrastructure needs and the practical realities of delivering vocational education in the Hotel, Restaurant and Catering (HoReCa) sector. Their input was essential in identifying both strengths and areas for improvement and significantly contributed to the development of actionable recommendations aimed at enhancing the quality, responsiveness, and effectiveness of Kosovo's VET system. Their engagement and collaboration are deeply appreciated and remain vital to the success of this initiative.

► List of abbreviations

AE	Adult Education
AI	Administrative Instruction
ALMM	Active Labour Market Measures
AVETAE	Agency for Vocational Education, Training and Adult Education
CoC	Centre of Competence
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CVETAE	Council for Vocational Education, Training and Adult Education
DLE	Department of Labour and Employment
DTPD	Division of Teacher Professional Development
DVET	Department of Vocational Education and Training
EARK	Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo
EI	Education Inspectorate
EMIS	Education management information system
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
HoReCa	Hotel, Restaurant and Catering
KAB	Know About Business
KCC	Kosovo Chamber of Commerce
LMI	Labour Market Intelligence
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
MSA	Market System Analysis
MED	Municipal Education Directorate
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MESTI	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
MFLT	Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers
MLFLWV	Ministry of Labour, Family and Liberation War Values
MIET	Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade
MIETI	Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship, Trade and Innovation
MLGA	Ministry of Local Government Administration
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NQA	National Qualifications Authority
NQF	National Qualifications Framework

OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OS	Occupational Standards
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SC	Steering Committee
SCC	Sectoral Skills Council
STED	Skills for Trade and Economic Diversification
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETI	Vocational Education and Training Institutions
VTC	Vocational Training Centre
WBL	Work-Based Learning

► Foreword

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) Analysis for the Hotel, Restaurant and Catering (HoReCa) sector in Kosovo has been prepared by the International Labour Organization (ILO) within the framework of the project HoReCa Kosovo (Hospitable, Resilient, Capable)—Support to the Labour Market Integration of Young People in the Hospitality Industry, supported by the Government of Italy through the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) and implemented by the ILO.

This analysis provides a comprehensive assessment of the VET system in Kosovo, with a particular focus on its relevance to the HoReCa sector. It examines the governance of the VET system, the provision of training, and the alignment between training supply and labour market demand. By identifying gaps, systemic constraints, and opportunities for improvement, the report aims to inform reforms and practical measures that will enhance the responsiveness of VET to the needs of both learners and employers in the hospitality industry.

The report was drafted by Lindita Boshtrakaj under the technical supervision of Alesandra Molz, Skills and Employability Specialist, Rania Bikhazi, Senior Technical Specialist, and Blerim Murtezi, Senior Programme Officer at the ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for Central and Eastern Europe (DWT/CO Budapest).

The analysis was carried out in close consultation with institutional counterparts, education and training institutions, social partners, private sector actors, and civil society organizations, whose valuable contributions ensured the relevance and accuracy of the findings.

We hope that this report will serve as a useful resource for policymakers, development partners, training providers, and industry stakeholders, and that it will support joint efforts to strengthen Kosovo's VET system, improve the employability of young people, and promote inclusive growth in the HoReCa sector.

Executive summary

► Executive summary

Hospitality and tourism is a very dynamic sector in Kosovo¹ and represents a growing source of employment for a skilled, adaptable workforce. However, persistent mismatches between training supply and labour market demand as well as structural challenges, such as outdated qualifications, underdeveloped school-to-work transition pathways and limited employer involvement, have constrained the sector's potential to employ young people, particularly those not in employment, education or training (NEET).

To unlock the sector's full employment potential, skilling, upskilling and reskilling programmes must be developed and tailored to the specific demands of the hospitality industry, focusing on customer service excellence, digital competencies, entrepreneurial skills and green practices. These efforts need to be embedded within broader reforms to strengthen curriculum relevance, expand work-based learning and foster institutional collaboration, positioning VET as a key enabler of inclusive and sustainable sectoral growth.

One of the most pressing challenges highlighted by this assessment is the persistent misalignment between vocational training provision and labour market demand. Existing qualifications and curricula require updating to reflect evolving industry demands, alongside the development of new qualifications, to reflect evolving roles and skill sets in the hospitality sector. To address this, the system must adopt more flexible, modular qualifications and integrate regularly updated sectoral intelligence, with an emphasis on customer service, digital literacy and green practices.

In addition, the fragmentation of governance responsibilities remains a significant concern. Oversight of VET is dispersed across multiple institutions, resulting in overlapping mandates, administrative inefficiencies and lack of coordination. Engagement with the private sector and social partners is largely consultative and ad hoc, rather than institutionalized through structured mechanisms. To address these challenges, it is essential to establish operational tripartite governance bodies – such as a dedicated Sectoral Skills Council for HoReCa – that can guide strategic workforce development and sector-specific planning. In parallel with this, mandates and responsibilities should be clearly defined across institutions, and bureaucratic procedures streamlined to reduce fragmentation and eliminate functional overlaps.

Quality assurance mechanisms and data systems remain underdeveloped. Kosovo has yet to adopt a comprehensive quality assurance framework for system-level assessment in VET, aligned with European standards. Similarly, the absence of systematic tracer studies and the fragmentation of VET data hinder evidence-based policymaking. Developing a unified VET management information system, integrated with labour market data, is essential for planning and monitoring.

Infrastructure gaps continue to affect learning quality. Many schools and training providers lack adequate, up-to-date equipment for practical training in hospitality-related profiles. Strategic investments in infrastructure, particularly through shared training hubs developed with private sector involvement, are needed to modernize learning environments.

¹ All references to Kosovo should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

Work-based learning (WBL) remains limited in both scale and scope. Although dual education models are emerging, many partnerships between VET institutions and employers remain informal or ad hoc. There is a need for standardised work-based learning frameworks, stronger incentives for employers and institutional capacity-building to facilitate structured cooperation.

The career guidance system within the education sector is regulated through by-laws, standards, and the qualification programme for career counsellors, and in many schools this role is carried out professionally. Nevertheless, practice indicates that the services provided often remain overly general and lack a dedicated sectoral focus. This limits students' orientation towards the specific demands of the labour market, including those of the hospitality sector. Consequently, career guidance does not sufficiently address the distinct requirements and opportunities within hospitality sector, leaving students in these profiles without the targeted support needed to navigate concrete career pathways, practical training opportunities, and connections with businesses in the sector. Sector-specific guidance tools, enhanced training for counsellors and stronger employer involvement in outreach and mentoring can make these services more impactful.

Similarly, while entrepreneurship education exists, it often lacks relevance and practical application. There is an opportunity to modernise entrepreneurship modules and embed practical, hospitality-focused training in both initial and continuing VET programmes.

The potential of recognition of prior learning (RPL) remains largely untapped. Despite a supportive legal framework, RPL is currently limited to a small number of pilot occupations in continuing VET. Complex accreditation procedures, high costs, limited institutional participation and low public awareness hinder broader uptake. Given the high incidence of informal learning in HoReCa roles, RPL can play a vital role in skills recognition and career mobility. Kosovo should expand RPL eligibility to include initial VET and combined qualifications and provide subsidies to support candidate participation.

While Kosovo's VET policies endorse inclusive education, access for underrepresented groups – including girls, ethnic minorities, rural populations, and persons with disabilities – remains uneven. Practical barriers persist, such as lack of support services, accessible infrastructure and targeted outreach. To improve equity, stronger affirmative measures and monitoring systems should be implemented.

Finally, Kosovo's participation in international mobility and cooperation programmes, such as Erasmus+, is still limited. Institutions often face procedural challenges and lack the language and technical capacity they need to engage. Establishing support mechanisms and enhancing proposal development skills will be key to strengthening international partnerships and visibility.

In conclusion, while the foundations for a modern and responsive VET system are in place, significant gaps remain. Advancing a dynamic, inclusive and labour-market driven VET system requires coordinated governance, targeted investment and stronger private sector engagement, particularly in high-potential sectors such as hospitality.

1. Introduction

► 1. Introduction

The hotel, restaurant and catering (HoReCa) sector plays a pivotal role in Kosovo's economic development. It represents a major source of employment, investment and service exports, with a significant growth dynamic. This role has been growing in recent years, as reflected in the steady expansion of formal businesses and job creation within the sector.

Official data from the Kosovo Tax Administration show that the number of tax-paying HoReCa businesses rose from 2,748 in 2019 to 3,853 in 2024, an increase of over 40 per cent. Over the same period, total employment in the sector rose from 12,975 to 21,039, a rise of over 62 per cent. Female employment nearly doubled during this period, from 3,083 in 2019 to 6,706 in 2024, reflecting the sector's growing gender inclusivity (Tax Administration of Kosovo, 2024). These figures underscore the sector's resilience and upward trend, particularly in the post-pandemic period, and its increasing importance in absorbing young jobseekers, driving local enterprise growth and supporting sustainable labour market development.

This positive trend is further evidenced by recent performance indicators in the accommodation and broader hospitality sector. In 2023, Kosovo recorded 1,547,462 overnight stays, nearly doubling the 818,832 stays in 2022. This marks a sixfold increase compared with the Covid-19 pandemic low of 261,420 overnight stays in 2020, when the sector was severely impacted. This represents a strong recovery and substantial growth compared with pre-pandemic levels, which stood at 490,401 overnight stays in 2019 and 476,446 in 2018 (KAS, 2024). The average occupancy rate in 2023 reached 32.09 per cent, a notable improvement from 13.13 per cent in 2022 and a mere 6.19 per cent in 2020. While this rebound signals a strong recovery, occupancy levels remain below their full potential, although this is partly due to the expanding accommodation capacity: available bed-nights have increased from 4.2 million in 2019–2020 to 4.8 million in 2023 (KAS, 2024).

In this context, tourism has solidified its position as a key contributor to Kosovo's economic development. Tourism-related revenues surpassed €2 billion in 2023 and contributed an estimated 19–20 per cent of GDP. The sector has thus emerged as one of the most dynamic drivers of economic growth, foreign exchange earnings and employment (KAS, 2024). This marks a significant recovery from the sharp decline experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and amounts to an absolute improvement on pre-pandemic levels.²

Despite notable progress, the HoReCa sector continues to face persistent challenges. In 2024, digital visibility remained limited. Only 732 out of 3,853 HoReCa establishments were listed on TripAdvisor, reducing international exposure, particularly for businesses in smaller municipalities. Guest satisfaction data from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics indicate high performance in 5-star hotels, with an average rating of 8.62 out of 10, while 2-star establishments received significantly lower ratings (6.07/10). This reveals considerable disparities in terms of service quality and consistency (KAS, 2024). In addition, customer feedback highlights several systemic weaknesses, including slow service, limited

² In 2019, tourism revenues were estimated at approximately €1.3 billion, accounting for around 23 per cent of GDP. This figure dropped to an estimated 10 per cent of GDP in 2020, in the wake of global travel restrictions. By 2021, the sector had rebounded strongly, with revenues exceeding 2019 levels and maintaining a consistent contribution of 19–20 per cent of GDP throughout 2022 and 2023. This signalled strong potential for sustained impact across both urban and rural areas.

staff training, inconsistent food quality and pricing concerns. These issues underscore the need for increased investment in workforce professionalization, service quality improvement and digital capacity-building to enhance the sector's competitiveness and long-term sustainability.

In this context, the International Labour Organization (ILO), with funding from the Government of Italy, has been implementing the project *"HoReCa Kosovo—Ho(spitable) Re(silient) Ca(pable): Support to the Labour Market Integration of Young People in the Hospitality Industry"*. The project aims to strengthen vocational education and training (VET) and work-based learning (WBL) systems in the HoReCa sector by enhancing the pertinence of training, fostering institutional collaboration and promoting job creation and entrepreneurship. In parallel, the project aims to improve the overall quality of employment in the sector, paying particular attention to working conditions, gender inclusion and long-term career development opportunities.

To support these efforts, a comprehensive assessment of the VET landscape in the HoReCa sector was conducted as part of the ILO's "HoReCa Kosovo" project. This assessment serves as a foundational activity to inform the project's implementation and guide the design of targeted, evidence-based interventions that address skills gaps and enhance employment outcomes.

The study focuses on analysing the current provision and performance of vocational education and training (VET) relevant to the hospitality sector, with a view to identifying key bottlenecks and systemic challenges. Particular attention is given to the alignment of curricula with labour market needs, the availability and quality of work-based learning, and the effectiveness of career guidance mechanisms. The assessment also examines the extent to which VET providers are equipped with physical infrastructure and equipment to deliver training that meets employer expectations and responds to the sector's evolving demands. Based on these findings, the study highlights key areas for intervention and offers actionable recommendations to strengthen the effectiveness, inclusiveness, and responsiveness of the VET system in supporting the growth and development of Kosovo's evolving HoReCa sector.

2. Structure of the report

► 2. Structure of the report

This report presents the findings of a comprehensive assessment of the vocational education and training (VET) system in Kosovo, with a specific focus on its relevance to the hotel, restaurant and catering (HoReCa) sector. It is structured in eleven sections, following a logical progression from contextual and system governance analysis to training provision, labour market alignment and actionable recommendations.

Following the introduction, the report presents the assessment methodology, detailing the data sources, analytical tools, and stakeholder engagement processes used. The core chapters examine:

- **The legal and strategic documents that govern the VET system**, including overarching policies on development, education, employment, youth, and tourism. This analysis highlights how these policies support or affect skills development in the HoReCa sector. In addition, progress and challenges related to equitable access to VET are explored, drawing specifically on the Education Strategy 2022–2026 and its Midterm Evaluation. This includes a review of measures taken to increase the participation of underrepresented groups and identifies ongoing gaps that continue to hinder inclusiveness in the VET system, paying attention to their implications for the HoReCa sector.
- **The governance structure of the VET system**, focusing on the distribution of roles and responsibilities among key institutions and mechanisms, as well as the challenges they face in executing core management functions. It also reviews the organization and operations of the VET providers, existing accountability mechanisms and the extent of stakeholder engagement, with particular emphasis on the functioning of tripartite structures and the involvement of employers and the private sector.
- **Training providers and qualifications in the HoReCa sector**, including qualification levels under the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), as well as gaps and opportunities in the current training provision, with particular attention to persistent gender disparities across qualification types and occupational profiles that continue to shape access, participation, and completion trends in the hospitality sector.
- **Labour market relevance of VET programmes**, assessing the extent to which current vocational and training programmes align with labour market demands. It compares curricula developed over the past decade, examines the integration of green, digital and soft skills, and evaluates the effectiveness of assessment and certification processes across public VET providers, including both VET schools and vocational training centres (VTCs).³ The section also covers the application of recognition of prior learning (RPL) mechanisms as part of the broader assessment and certification landscape.

³ VET schools operate within the formal pre-university education system and primarily serve young people in structured, school-based programmes. In contrast, vocational training centres (VTCs), while also awarding formal qualifications, are part of the non-formal education system and are managed primarily by the Employment Agency of Kosovo to serve adult learners and jobseekers through more flexible, labour-market-oriented training.

- **Work-based learning, career guidance and entrepreneurship training.** This analysis evaluates the availability and effectiveness of practical training through work-based learning (WBL), career guidance services, and entrepreneurship education. It also explores models for institutional collaboration and mobility schemes that support learner development.

The report also presents an assessment of the availability, quality and suitability of training equipment across VET providers in the HoReCa sector, identifying key gaps that may affect the delivery of practical training and skill acquisition.

The final sections provide actionable recommendations for improving the effectiveness, inclusiveness and responsiveness of the VET system in support of Kosovo's evolving HoReCa sector. The report concludes with a reference list of all sources cited and four annexes detailing the list of stakeholders interviewed, participants in focus groups with VET providers, results of the online survey on equipment needs, and an aggregated overview of those needs.

3. Methodology

► 3. Methodology

The assessment employed a mixed-method research approach, combining desk research with qualitative data collection through interviews and focus groups, as well as a quantitative survey on equipment needs among public VET providers. Data collection was carried out between February and May 2025.

The **desk review** focused on gathering and analysing relevant documents to assess the current VET landscape, identify key challenges and pinpoint opportunities for improving skills development in the HoReCa sector. It was structured around the following key areas:

- A comprehensive analysis of laws, policies, strategies and frameworks governing VET in Kosovo, with a focus on sector-specific guidelines shaping the design and delivery of training programmes, particularly within the HoReCa sector. Key findings from reports published in the past three years provided additional insights.
- An examination of sector-specific data on industry needs and labour market trends in the HoReCa sector to obtain an understanding of its structure in Kosovo, including an analysis of employment trends, job creation factors, in-demand skills and existing skill shortages identified through the ongoing STED diagnostic report.
- Mapping of existing formal and informal VET providers in the HoReCa sector, both public and private, to identify skills gaps by comparing the range of occupations and competencies covered against current industry needs. The analysis also assessed the level of qualifications offered in relation to the National System of Occupational Classification, identifying discrepancies between required skills and the qualifications provided by training institutions.
- An evaluation of existing curricula, training delivery methods, quality assurance processes, assessment procedures and certification standards. The curriculum review focused on structure, learning outcomes and the integration of green skills and ICT competencies.
- An assessment of existing career guidance frameworks and entrepreneurship training programmes in the HoReCa sector, examining their effectiveness in supporting career decision-making, job placement and entrepreneurial development within VET programmes, and evaluating their alignment with industry standards and capacity to address current and future skills needs.

To obtain a comprehensive understanding of system-wide challenges and opportunities, including challenges related to current VET management arrangements, **semi-structured interviews** were conducted with key stakeholders. These interviews provided qualitative data that complement the findings from the document analysis. The target groups included:

- Representatives from the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation; the Ministry of Labour, Finance and Transfers; the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports; the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development; the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers; the Qualifications Authority and the Employment Agency.⁴ These stakeholders provided insights into policy frameworks, institutional coordination, sectoral strategies and the regulatory environment affecting VET, skills development and labour market integration, as well as challenges encountered in implementation and potential solutions.

4 Representatives of the Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade were interviewed as part of the MSA conducted simultaneously by the ILO, and data were utilized to avoid duplication.

- Representatives of chambers of commerce and business associations, who provided insights into private sector engagement in skills development, workforce needs and the effectiveness of collaboration mechanisms between businesses and education providers. Their input helped to identify gaps in workforce readiness and opportunities to improve alignment between education and labour market demands.
- Workers' representatives to obtain a better understanding of barriers to education and employment, challenges in accessing training and career opportunities, and the effectiveness of existing policies and initiatives in promoting inclusive workforce participation.
- Civil society organizations actively advocating for VET and the employment of young people and Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. These organizations provided critical insights into the effectiveness of policies and programmes from the perspective of marginalized groups, highlighted advocacy efforts and identified gaps in support mechanisms for vulnerable populations.
- Stakeholders from donor-funded projects, international organizations and development agencies involved in VET reforms and workforce development provided valuable insights into ongoing interventions, best practices, lessons learned and coordination efforts within the sector. Their perspectives helped in assessing the impact of existing initiatives and identifying areas for further development and collaboration.

To examine the practical experiences and challenges faced by VET providers, the study included **focus group** discussions. Two separate focus groups were conducted: the first included public formal training providers and the second non-formal public providers. These discussions provided qualitative insights into the operational realities of public VET providers, helping to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The focus groups explored:

- Curriculum relevance and effectiveness, particularly how school-based autonomy is utilized to enhance skills development and align with industry needs.
- Approaches and methods for assessing and anticipating skills demand to ensure alignment with labour market requirements.
- Existing models for work-based learning, career guidance and entrepreneurship training within the HoReCa sector.
- Final assessment and examination procedures to evaluate competency attainment.
- Adequacy of learning materials and training equipment for practical skills development.
- Effectiveness of student support mechanisms, including career guidance and initiatives to foster entrepreneurial mindsets.
- The availability and impact of exchange programmes in enhancing training quality and exposure to best practices.

Because focus groups make use of group interactions, data were analysed and findings presented at the group level. To validate the results, summaries of discussions and key conclusions from each focus group were shared with participants for feedback.

Finally, an **online survey** on equipment needs assessment for VET providers was conducted to assess the availability and adequacy of equipment and materials for practical training in HoReCa-related professions across all public vocational education and training providers, including vocational schools and vocational training centres.

4. Legal, policy and regulatory framework

► 4. Legal, policy and regulatory framework

This section draws on a desk review of key documents to examine the current state of the VET system in Kosovo. The review aims to identify systemic challenges and explore pathways for better aligning skills development efforts with the evolving demands of the HoReCa sector. It is organised around an analysis of the legal, policy and strategic frameworks governing VET, including sector-specific provisions that shape the design and delivery of training programmes.

► 4.1. Legal framework governing VET

Kosovo has established a comprehensive legal framework to govern the various aspects of vocational education and training, qualifications, adult learning, employment services and inclusion. This provides a solid foundation for further system development. This framework comprises several key legal acts that define institutional mandates, structures and processes across different levels of the system. They include the following:

- *Law No. 03/L-060 on National Qualifications* lays the foundations for the development and maintenance of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and establishes the National Qualifications Authority (NQA) as the body responsible for overseeing and ensuring the quality of qualification provision, except for qualifications regulated under the Law on Higher Education. The law also defines the establishment and functions of the NQA.
- *Law No. 04/L-138 on Vocational Education and Training* defines the organization, structure and management of vocational education and training institutions under the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), specifically vocational education and training institutions (VETIs) and centres of competence (CoC). It also mandates the establishment of the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVETAE) and the Council for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (CVETAE).
- *Law No. 04/L-143 on Adult Education and Training* governs the full scope of adult education processes as part of Kosovo's broader education system. It stipulates that institutions of adult education and training (IAETs) should be subject to oversight and evaluation by the NQA.
- *Law No. 06/L-046 on the Education Inspectorate* provides the legal basis for inspecting and supervising the enforcement of education-related legislation in all formal educational and training institutions across Kosovo.
- *Law No. 03/L-068 on Education in the Municipalities of the Republic of Kosovo* facilitates the decentralization of education by transferring several responsibilities from central to municipal authorities. It grants municipalities full authority to manage public education within their jurisdiction, including initial vocational education and training (IVET). Key responsibilities include school staffing, infrastructure management, performance monitoring and ensuring quality in educational delivery, as guided by MESTI.

- *Law No. 05/L-018 on the State Matura Examination* regulates the purpose, content, conditions, criteria and procedures for organizing the state matura exam. It also defines the responsibilities of the State Matura Commission, the Division for Assessment, Standards and Monitoring, the Municipal Directorates of Education, and upper secondary schools.
- *Law No. 03/L-019 on Vocational Training, Re-training and Employment of Persons with Disabilities* governs the rights, conditions and methods for the vocational training, re-training and employment of persons with disabilities, aiming to support their integration into the open labour market, in accordance with general and specific provisions set out in the applicable legislation.
- *Law No. 05/L-077 on the Registration and Provision of Services for the Unemployed, Jobseekers, and Employers* regulates registration processes, employment intermediation, career guidance and training services aimed at improving employability.
- *Law No. 04/L-205 on the Employment Agency* defines the Agency as an independent institution under the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW), charged with implementing employment, vocational training and rehabilitation policies. It covers the development of curricula, teaching resources and assessment procedures aligned with the NQF, while also detailing the structure, functions and supervisory responsibilities of EARK and its affiliated employment offices and training centres, including oversight of non-public employment service providers.
- *Law No. 08/L-074 on Tourism*⁵ defines the principles, standards and basic rules for the development and promotion of sustainable tourism in the Republic of Kosovo.
- *Law No. 05/L-020 on Gender Equality* guarantees, protects and promotes equality between genders as a fundamental value for the democratic development of society. It defines general and specific measures to safeguard and ensure equal rights for women and men and outlines the responsibilities and competencies of relevant institutions.

Despite the breadth of legislation, however, the current legal and institutional framework does not yet fully support the effective implementation of development goals or broader VET policy objectives across central, municipal and provider levels. Key challenges characterizing the system include:

- A fragmented governance structure, as VET functions are dispersed across multiple institutions, leading to coordination challenges.
- An unclear separation of roles between policymaking bodies and executive agencies, which contributes to blurred institutional mandates.
- Overlapping competences among institutions and mechanisms, which results in inefficiencies and duplication of efforts.
- Excessive bureaucracy, which hampers responsiveness and effective decision-making.
- Limited procedural clarity and coverage in the implementation of several core VET functions.
- Insufficient engagement of social partners, which weakens the system's relevance and responsiveness to labour market needs.
- Weak or non-functioning supervisory and accountability mechanisms, which undermine transparency and institutional performance.

5 <https://mint.rks-gov.net/desk/inc/media/18945C40-5670-4E02-B8AD-028A91AF1312.pdf> (accessed 14.04.2025).

- The lack of a clear assessment and strategy on how to develop the human resources needed for sectoral productivity, growth and competitiveness.

These shortcomings highlight the need for a more coherent, coordinated and accountable legal and governance framework to advance the quality and effectiveness of VET in Kosovo. Details on the implications of these challenges, particularly in relation to labour market-responsive and inclusive skills development, are further elaborated in section 5.2.

► 4.2. Policies and strategies guiding skills development

The advancement of vocational education and training (VET) in Kosovo, as well as the growth of the HoReCa sector, are guided by several key policy and strategic documents. Although Kosovo is not yet an EU candidate, the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) and the broader European integration process provide important guidance for the modernisation of the VET system and labour market policies. In this context, EU policy priorities and acquis-related frameworks in the areas of employment, social policy, education and culture serve as important reference points for ongoing reforms. These include efforts to strengthen the labour market relevance and quality of VET, expand work-based learning opportunities, enhance social dialogue and stakeholder cooperation, improve skills anticipation mechanisms, and promote lifelong learning and inclusive workforce development.

This subsection presents an overview of the key policy and strategic documents guiding the development of both the HoReCa sector and VET in Kosovo. It highlights how policy frameworks support skills development, service quality and sectoral growth, with a particular focus on aligning VET with labour market needs and fostering a skilled workforce to meet the demands of the tourism and hospitality industry.

4.2.1. National Development Strategy 2021–2030

The National Development Strategy provides a comprehensive framework for Kosovo's socio-economic development, including the tourism and hospitality sector. It focuses on key areas such as economic diversification, private sector development and the promotion of Kosovo as a competitive destination. The strategy outlines specific objectives related to:

- economic growth, where tourism is identified as a key sector for diversifying Kosovo's economy and creating new job opportunities;
- private sector support, by encouraging investment in the tourism and hospitality industry through incentives for both domestic and foreign investors;
- human capital development, with a focus on strengthening the alignment between vocational education and training (VET) and the labour market. This is identified as a key strategic measure.

The strategy faces implementation gaps, particularly regarding investment in education and the development of relevant skill sets needed in the HoReCa sector. More targeted investments in vocational education and training, especially in hospitality and tourism management, will be essential. Additionally, streamlining the investment climate to attract more investors in the HORECA sector will help unlock economic potential.

4.2.2. National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in Kosovo serves as a regulatory instrument for classifying and comparing qualifications based on learning outcomes, core competences and relevant occupational standards. It is meant to enhance transparency, consistency and quality across general, vocational and higher education, helping learners, employers and institutions to better understand the value and relevance of qualifications. By aligning qualifications with labour market needs, the NQF supports progression, mobility and lifelong learning.

The NQF puts strong emphasis on the accountability dimension of quality assurance, focusing on the assessment and certification of learning outcomes validated by the National Qualifications Authority (NQA). For VET providers to be accredited, they must demonstrate robust assessment systems, effective quality management of assessments, inclusive practices for learners with special needs, mechanisms for credit recognition and transfer, and the capacity to meet qualification-specific requirements, all supported by clear documentation and recordkeeping for quality assurance. Additionally, the NQF facilitates the recognition of prior learning, which is particularly relevant in sectors such as HoReCa, in which many people acquire skills informally or through on-the-job experience. By validating these competencies, the NQF expands access to formal certification and career advancement opportunities for a broader segment of the workforce.

4.2.3. The Kosovo Education Strategy 2022–2026

The education strategy strongly emphasizes the alignment of education and training with labour market needs, which is especially relevant for the growing HoReCa sector. By prioritizing vocational education and training (VET) reform, the strategy supports the development of a skilled and adaptable workforce equipped to meet the standards of the hospitality sector.

A key focus of the strategy is the expansion of work-based learning and dual VET models, ensuring that students in hospitality-related fields gain practical experience in real-world settings. It also promotes the modernization of curricula through cooperation with sectoral actors, improving the relevance and quality of training for roles such as hotel staff, cooks and restaurant managers.

Moreover, the strategy places a strong emphasis on lifelong learning and adult education, promoting flexible pathways for upskilling and reskilling, including modular training programmes tailored to the HoReCa sector. It also mainstreams cross-cutting priorities such as digital skills, sustainability and inclusion across education reforms, thereby supporting the sector's transition towards more environmentally sustainable, digitally enabled and inclusive practices. Together, these strategic priorities provide a strong policy foundation for strengthening human capital development in the HoReCa sector and enhancing its long-term competitiveness and resilience. Effective implementation remains limited, however. The midterm evaluation of the Strategy, conducted by the Office of the Prime Minister (PMO) in June 2024, indicates only moderate progress in delivering on Specific Objective 3, which focuses on aligning vocational education and training (VET) with technological advancements and labour market demands to support lifelong learning. Of the 43 planned actions under this objective, implementation data were available for 41, approximately 35 per cent of them showing substantial progress or full implementation. Key challenges persist, including delays in finalizing the VET curriculum framework, limited stakeholder coordination and insufficient data to adequately assess the status of several measures (PMO, 2024a). These gaps underscore the need to strengthen institutional capacities and improve inter-agency collaboration to fully achieve the intended reforms in the VET system.

4.2.4. Kosovo Employment Strategy 2021–2025

The Kosovo Employment Strategy aims to address labour market challenges by fostering job creation, particularly in high-potential sectors such as tourism and hospitality. It focuses on:

- creating sustainable employment opportunities, especially for young people and women in the HORECA sector;
- aligning workforce skills with labour market needs, particularly in emerging sectors such as hospitality and tourism;
- addressing the issue of informal employment, which is prevalent in the hospitality industry.

Despite the strategy's focus on employment, the HoReCa sector faces difficulties related to the informal labour market, low wages and lack of professional qualifications among workers. Strengthening vocational training programmes tailored to the HoReCa sector and improving labour market data collection will be key to addressing skills mismatches and improving the VET system.

4.2.5. Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan 2023–2026

In July 2021, Kosovo committed to the Western Balkans Declaration on the sustainable integration of young people (aged 15–29) into the labour market and pledged to implement a Youth Guarantee. This initial Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP) outlines a phased approach to reduce youth unemployment and support young people not in employment, education or training (NEET). The plan includes reforms to public employment services, outreach strategies and active labour market measures. These measures prioritize the reform and consolidation of the VET system, improvements in career guidance and counselling, expansion of recognition for non-formal and informal learning, and increased access to adult learning. The implementation of the Youth Guarantee is structured in phases, starting with pilot programmes in the municipalities of Ferizaj and Mitrovica in 2024. These pilots are aimed at testing and refining the approach before a broader rollout. The Kosovo Employment Agency is the primary institution responsible for delivering Youth Guarantee services, working in collaboration with various stakeholders, including government ministries, educational institutions and civil society organizations. A comprehensive implementation report is scheduled in 2025.

4.2.6. State Strategy for Youth 2024–2032

The Strategy for Youth outlines the long-term vision for youth empowerment, inclusion and participation. Developed by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, the strategy is built around three core pillars: empower, serve and engage. It seeks to improve young people's access to services, ensure their wellbeing, and foster their active role in democratic and community life.

The strategy identifies key focus areas such as youth participation and social responsibility, education and employment, health and wellbeing, social inclusion, and cultural engagement. While it emphasizes the need to align education with labour market demands and promote youth employment, the strategy provides limited detail on concrete skills development measures. It lacks a structured plan for equipping young people with specific vocational, digital, or entrepreneurial skills that are essential for employment readiness in a rapidly evolving labour market.

4.2.7. Kosovo Tourism Strategy 2024–2030

The Kosovo Tourism Strategy 2024–2030 is the cornerstone of tourism development in Kosovo. It aims to enhance Kosovo's global tourism presence, diversify tourism offerings and improve the quality of services in the HORECA sector. The strategy is built around several key objectives:

- increasing promotional activities and improving information flow;
- upgrading tourism infrastructure, including transportation networks, accommodation facilities and digital platforms for tourism information;
- promoting sustainable tourism practices, ensuring that the growth of the sector does not harm Kosovo's natural and cultural resources;
- expanding the tourism portfolio beyond traditional cultural tourism to include niche markets, such as adventure tourism, ecotourism and rural tourism;
- improving the skills of the workforce in the HORECA sector, especially in hospitality management, food safety and customer service.

While the tourism strategy aims to boost the sector's growth and visibility, the practical implementation of these objectives is hindered by limited funding and coordination issues between central and local governments. Key challenges include insufficient political commitment, low investment in infrastructure and fragmented efforts among stakeholders. Strengthening public-private partnerships, increasing investment in tourism infrastructure, and ensuring better coordination between ministries and local governments will be crucial for the success of this strategy.

4.2.8. The Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development 2022–2028

The Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development outlines Kosovo's long-term vision to modernize the agri-food sector and promote inclusive rural development, while aligning policies with the EU Common Agricultural Policy. It prioritizes competitiveness, sustainable resource use, improved rural infrastructure, and institutional readiness for EU integration.

The strategy acknowledges the role of skills development in fostering rural entrepreneurship and economic diversification, particularly in underdeveloped areas such as agro-tourism and bed-and-breakfast services. It highlights the lack of practical skills among rural populations in fields such as hospitality, food safety, business planning and financial management as a barrier to rural tourism growth.

Despite clearly identifying this gap, however, the strategy does not include specific measures or interventions to directly address the skills development needs it outlines. No concrete training programme or funding mechanism are proposed to build the required capacities for rural tourism or related services. As such, the strategy remains limited in terms of translating identified training needs into actionable, systematized support, leaving implementation to be addressed through other, potentially uncoordinated, channels.

► 4.3. Alignment of skills development and sectoral strategies

While the policy framework underscores the importance of human capital development and economic diversification, including tourism and hospitality, the integration of skills development into sectoral or industry-specific strategies (such as tourism or agriculture and rural development) remains limited. The Kosovo Tourism Strategy 2024–2030 acknowledges the need for a qualified workforce but provides only general commitments without a clearly defined roadmap for collaboration with VET institutions or alignment of occupational profiles and training offers with industry growth plans. Similarly, other sectoral strategies do not systematically embed skills development components, thereby missing opportunities to link workforce preparation with sector-specific goals.

Conversely, central education and employment strategies strongly emphasize improving skills relevance and employability, but do not sufficiently incorporate sectoral development plans or mechanisms for sustained cooperation with sectors such as HoReCa. This lack of reciprocal integration results in fragmented policy implementation and missed synergies between economic development and education planning.

By strengthening the alignment between VET and industry-specific strategies, and promoting mutual integration, Kosovo can better ensure that workforce development contributes directly to economic growth. In the HoReCa sector, this would require closer cooperation among the central level institutions responsible for education, labour, tourism, youth, agriculture and the economy, alongside the structured participation of the private sector in curriculum development, work-based learning arrangements, and the skills need anticipation.

► 4.4. Inclusion in vocational education and training

The Kosovo Education Strategy 2022–2026 sets out targeted measures to improve inclusion in vocational education and training (VET), with a focus on gender equality, disability inclusion and support for ethnic minorities. To address the underrepresentation of girls (who make up only about 42 per cent of VET students and are enrolled predominantly in fields such as health, business and administration, while remaining underrepresented in technical disciplines) the Strategy introduces affirmative measures, including scholarships for young women in technical and engineering profiles, as well as initiatives to strengthen gender-sensitive career guidance and eliminate gender stereotypes from curricula (MESTI, 2022). By 2023, 150 scholarships had been awarded in underrepresented VET fields, including 70 for girls in technical disciplines, indicating early progress (MESTI, 2024a). However, persistent cultural norms and limited career guidance services continue to constrain broader shifts in enrolment patterns and career choices among young women.

The Strategy also reinforces inclusive education for students with disabilities, prioritising infrastructural adaptation, early identification, and individualized support. Despite these intentions, the midterm evaluation shows that implementation has been slow: only 22 scholarships were awarded to students with special needs in 2022/23, and many VET institutions remain ill-equipped in terms of accessibility, assistive technologies and specialized staff (World Bank, 2023; PMO, 2024a). Weak coordination mechanisms and delayed referrals have further hindered progress, highlighting the need for more comprehensive educator training and inter-ministerial cooperation to support students with disabilities in transitioning into and succeeding in VET.

Efforts to improve access for ethnic minorities, particularly Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian (RAE) communities, have seen more tangible outcomes. Building on earlier interventions, the Strategy continued a publicly funded scholarship scheme, disbursing nearly 1,000 scholarships over two academic years with balanced gender distribution (PMO, 2024b). These measures have helped minority students to enrol and remain in vocational programmes. Nonetheless, overall participation remains significantly below national averages, and high dropout rates persist. The midterm evaluation stresses that community-based learning centres, which offer critical academic support to RAE students, face funding insecurity and are not yet institutionalized. Sustained investment in these centres and strengthened municipal action plans are considered essential to meeting inclusion targets for marginalized communities (MESTI, 2024a).

► 4.5. Involvement of employers' and workers' organisations in policy development processes

The level and nature of employer and worker organisation involvement differ across the various policy and strategic documents. In the development of overarching socio-economic, education, youth and sectoral strategies, such as the National Development Strategy 2021–2030, the Kosovo Education Strategy 2022–2026, the State Strategy for Youth 2024–2032, the Kosovo Tourism Strategy 2024–2030 and the Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development 2022–2028, consultations primarily involved public institutions, business associations, chambers of commerce, education and training providers, civil society organisations, youth organisations, sector representatives and development partners. In these processes, employer organisations generally had a more visible and structured role than workers' organisations, particularly in discussions related to private sector development, workforce needs, investment priorities, sector competitiveness, skills development and VET reform. Employer engagement has been particularly visible in areas related to occupational standards, qualifications, curriculum development and work-based learning, while the participation of workers' organisations appears to have been comparatively more limited and less systematically institutionalised.

By contrast, labour market and employment-related documents, including the Kosovo Employment Strategy 2021–2025 and the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan 2023–2026, reflected comparatively stronger involvement of labour market institutions and social partners, including both employers' and workers' organisations, given their focus on employment policies, employability, labour market activation and school-to-work transition measures. Social dialogue and stakeholder cooperation are more explicitly reflected in these policy frameworks.

Overall, while stakeholder participation in policy development processes has increased in recent years, the level and quality of engagement continue to vary across sectors and policy areas. Employers' organisations and business representatives have generally played a more prominent role, whereas the involvement of workers' organisations and broader social dialogue mechanisms has often remained more limited. This is also reflected in overarching strategic frameworks, including the National Development Strategy 2021–2030, where the participation of trade unions appears to have been comparatively less visible. Strengthening more balanced, structured and institutionalised social partner participation in policy design, implementation and monitoring will therefore be important not only for workforce development and VET governance, but also for promoting more inclusive, responsive and sustainable socio-economic development processes in Kosovo.

5. Institutional landscape and stakeholder engagement

► 5. Institutional landscape and stakeholder engagement

This chapter examines the institutional setup of the VET system through the lens of core governance functions, namely policy development, skills needs anticipation, curriculum development, the organization of training provision, accountability, and stakeholder engagement. Rather than focusing on individual institutions in isolation, the analysis is structured around these key functions, identifying the specific roles of relevant institutions and coordination mechanisms within each. Particular attention is paid to areas of fragmentation, overlapping mandates, weak lines of accountability and limited stakeholder involvement that undermine effective governance and system performance.

► 5.1. The governance system

The governance and management of vocational education and training in Kosovo operates across three interconnected levels: central, municipal and provider. The development and oversight of central VET policies and legislation are shared primarily between the **Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI)** and the **Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers (MFLT)**, with other line ministries contributing to VET in their specific sectors. MESTI, in consultation with key VET stakeholders, is responsible for a broad range of activities, including both formal and non-formal public and private initial vocational education and training (IVET) and continuous vocational education and training (CVET) programmes. In parallel, MFLT oversees non-formal public VET, both initial and continuous, with a focus on job seekers.

As an executive agency under MESTI, the **Agency for Vocational Education and Training and for Adult Education (AVETAE)** is tasked with managing and governing public VET schools, particularly in areas such as financial management, human resources and infrastructure. However, AVETAE currently oversees only six VET schools—known as Centres of competence (CoCs)—while the remaining VET schools operate under the authority of **municipal education directorates (MEDs)**. The CoCs are characterized by greater institutional autonomy and receive more substantial budgets to support work-based learning (ETF, 2024). MEDs are responsible for overseeing school operations, managing human resources, implementing national education and VET policies at the local level, and maintaining school infrastructure.

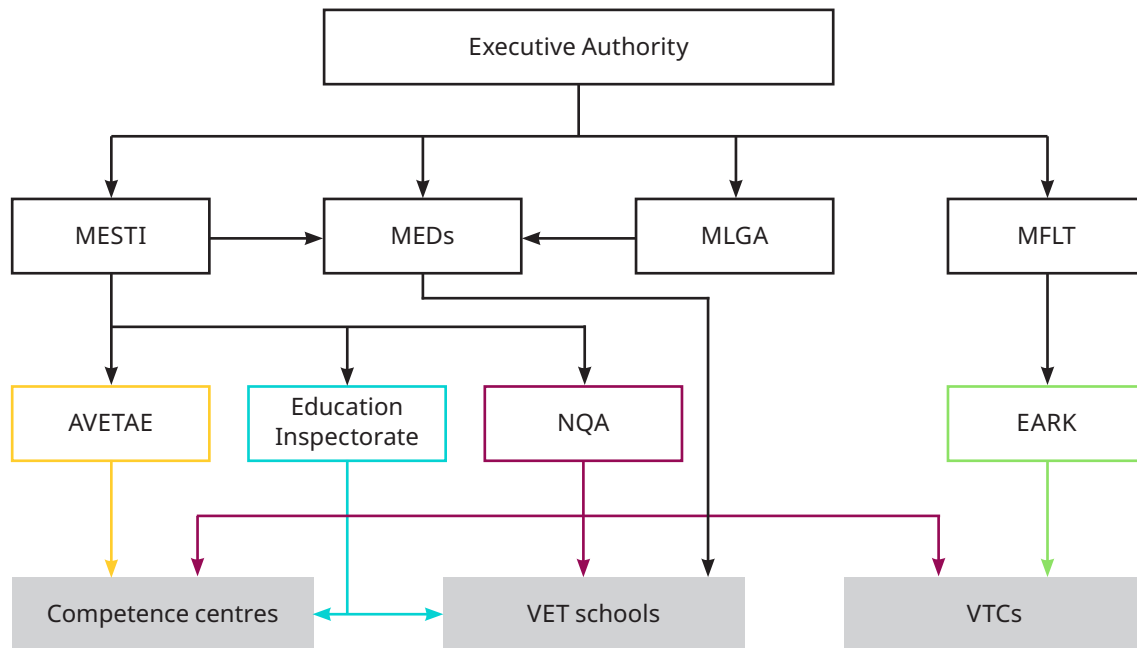
Non-formal public VET, both initial and continuous, targeted at job seekers, is delivered primarily by public vocational training centres (VTCs), which fall under the **Employment Agency** managed by the ministry of labour.

The National Qualifications Authority (NQA) is an independent public body, governed by a board of thirteen members representing key stakeholders, including public authorities, social partners, universities, civil society organizations and VET providers. The NQA is mandated to manage the development and maintenance of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Its responsibilities include validating VET qualifications, accrediting VET providers, establishing criteria for developing

occupational standards and verifying occupational standards up to NQF Level 5, which corresponds to EQF Level 5.

At the provider level, governance is shared between each institution's steering council and its leadership team.

► **Figure 1: Vocational education and training governance system**



This division of responsibilities has resulted in a fragmented VET management system, with overlapping functions, excessive bureaucracy and inefficient use of human and financial resources. The following sections outline key weaknesses in the current institutional and regulatory arrangements that hinder the effective implementation of national VET policies.

► 5.2. Core functions and operational constraints at system level

5.2.1. Anticipation of skills needs

The alignment of vocational education and training (VET) with evolving labour market demands is hindered primarily by the absence of clearly defined responsibility for skills needs assessment and anticipation at central, sectoral and local levels. In practice, this function has not been fulfilled, largely because of limited human resources and professional capacities, as well as a lack of accountability and performance management mechanisms. Additionally, the active and structured involvement of employers in this process has yet to be institutionalized. As a result, such analyses are not conducted systematically at any level:

- At the central level, the Employment Agency is responsible for maintaining the Labour Market Information System (LMIS),⁶ which is intended to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights into labour market supply and demand. However, many components of the LMIS remain underdeveloped, and data analyses, particularly those related to skills needs at central, sectoral or regional levels, are not yet available.
- At the sectoral level, Sectoral Skills Councils, which are intended to support the identification of skills and training needs, have not been established, and their expected contributions to sectoral analyses remain untapped. Moreover, the operation and institutional positioning of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are not yet fully regulated within Kosovo's VET governance framework.
- At the local level, municipalities are expected, under Article 28 (paragraphs 1 and 2) of the Law on VET, to assess local and regional labour market needs. However, the legal framework does not regulate cooperation mechanisms between municipalities and key local stakeholders, such as employers, VTCs, NGOs and other relevant actors. Moreover, municipal capacities to carry out such analyses remain limited.

5.2.2. Development and approval of occupational standards

The drafting and revision of occupational and qualification standards remains another critical weakness within the VET system. One of the key shortcomings undermining the effectiveness and efficiency of this function is the lack of clarity and overlapping mandates between the Council for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (CVETAE)⁷ and the Steering Council of the National Qualifications Authority (NQA) in the verification of occupational standards. In addition, the verification process is widely reported to be excessively lengthy and bureaucratic, further delaying the adoption and implementation of standards.⁸

Compounding these institutional bottlenecks is the limited initiative from the private sector in driving the development of occupational standards. In most sectors, including HoReCa, there is a notable absence of functioning sectoral skills councils or representative platforms to systematically lead the process of identifying evolving skills needs and translate them into updated occupational standards. This gap undermines the system's capacity to ensure that training provision remains relevant, responsive and aligned with current and emerging labour market demands.

6 GRK, Regulation (GRK) No. 14/2018 for internal organization and systematization of working places at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2018, stipulates that DVET-MESTI, shall, among other things, "ensure correlation of the territorial distribution of VET schools and VET programmes and profiles, with local economic development" and cooperate "with the central authority responsible for the labour market and with the local authorities to analyse and forecast short-, medium- and long-term job market dynamics". Because MESTI personnel have contested this re-organization process, this Regulation has not yet been fully implemented.

7 For more details on the mandate and core functions of this Council see section 5.5.

8 The process for verifying an occupational standard (OS) begins when the developer submits a request to the Council for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (CVETAE). CVETAE reviews the request to ensure that it meets the format requirements defined by the National Qualifications Authority (NQA). If compliant, CVETAE formally approves the application and forwards it to NQA. NQA then initiates the verification process through a team of external experts. Based on their report, the Steering Council (SC) of NQA makes the final decision to approve or reject the occupational standard. According to Article 6 (point 1.1), CVETAE's role is limited to verifying the completeness of the application and forwarding it to NQA for further processing and final approval by the NQA Steering Council, a task that could be carried out more efficiently directly by NQA.

5.2.3. Curriculum development

Responsibility for curriculum development and revision is also shared among several public institutions. Within MESTI, the Department of Vocational Education and Training (DVET) leads the development and revision of curricula for qualifications offered by VET schools and Centres of Competence (CoCs). In parallel, the Employment Agency is tasked with curriculum development for the qualifications delivered by the vocational training centres (VTCs).

Key deficiencies in the exercise of this function include the following:

- Duplication of efforts and inefficient use of resources, as both MESTI and EARK allocate public funds to similar activities, such as curriculum development and revision, teacher/instructor training, and the production of teaching and learning materials, without sufficient coordination or synergy.
- Insufficient institutional capacity on the part of VET providers to systematically identify and respond to any need for curriculum revision. Moreover, no dedicated support mechanism or institutional body is tasked with assisting VET providers in addressing these gaps.

5.2.4. Professional development of vocational education and training staff

Pre-service professional development of VET teachers in Kosovo is a critical area of teacher training, but it remains underdeveloped. Prospective VET teachers typically enter the profession with academic or technical qualifications in their field of instruction but often lack structured preparation in how to teach it. Unlike general education, in which teacher training is integrated in higher education institutions, there is no dedicated, standardized pre-service programme tailored to the specific didactic and practical requirements of VET teachers. As a result, many new VET teachers begin their careers without sufficient training in didactic/pedagogic skills, competency-based teaching methodologies, classroom management or facilitation of work-based learning. This limits their ability to provide modern, labour market-relevant instruction. A dedicated qualification pathway is therefore needed that combines both pedagogical and technical components for aspiring VET teachers. In an effort to tackle this problem, a draft qualification standard was developed for the training of VET teachers, and an analysis of the legal basis for interventions in this sector was carried out to guide future teacher professional development initiatives.⁹

Regarding career progression, the Teacher Development Framework does not adequately reflect the role or needs of VET teachers. Limited access to accredited training impedes their ability to meet annual continuous professional development (CPD) requirements (20 contact hours/year). Trainers in VTCs, governed by civil service rules, fall outside this framework altogether and lack a dedicated professional development pathway.

With regard to CPD, while MESTI, Municipal Education Directorates (MEDs), and VET schools are nominally responsible for teaching staff, and Employment Agency oversees the training of VTC instructors/trainers, responsibilities remain unclear and capacities are weak. Notable challenges include:

⁹ With the support of the EU/ADA funded project “Aligning Education and Training with Labour Market Needs” (ALLED2).

- ambiguity in CPD coordination between MESTI and MEDs;
- a near absence of continuous professional development in technical and vocational competences;
- a lack of sustainable financing, as continuous professional development is largely donor-dependent or limited to general pedagogical training;
- weak implementation of provider-based improvement plans, including provider-based continuous professional development.
- limited capacity of VET school and VTC leaderships to assess training needs and organize CPD initiatives, with little institutional support.

The lack of structured training for in-company instructors has been addressed in recent years by several donor-supported initiatives. These efforts have included the development and piloting of short training modules for in-company instructors¹⁰. However, these programmes have not yet been institutionalized or offered systematically as part of a national framework for WBL instructor training.

Overall, professional development remains fragmented, under-resourced and disconnected from institutional leadership. Strengthening school-level capacity, clarifying institutional mandates and establishing sustainable mechanisms for continuous professional development and evaluation across all categories of VET teachers, are essential for improving the quality of teaching in Kosovo's VET system.

5.2.5. Quality assurance of VET provision

The quality assurance system remains fragmented and underdeveloped, with critical gaps at both system and provider levels. Although the Law on VET (Article 32) permits the evaluation of the VET system at the request of key ministries or social partners, no institution has initiated such a review, and the responsible body for implementation has not been specified.

At the system level:

- Inadequate data systems weaken the foundation for informed decision-making and long-term planning in the VET sector.
- The lack of a legal basis for conducting national tracer studies makes it more difficult to assess graduate outcomes and the relevance of acquired skills to labour market needs.¹¹

¹⁰ The GIZ “Youth Engagement, Employment Promotion, and Skills Development” (YES) project designed an in-company instructor training programme with three consecutive levels (workplace instructor, in-company trainer, and master trainer). As a result, 230 workplace instructors, 64 in-company trainers and 42 master trainers obtained qualifications. Three institutions/associations were also supported in the accreditation process for providing certified training for instructors in the workplace.

During 2021–2024, the GIZ “Fit for Jobs” project extended support to the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce in accrediting the in-company trainer and master trainer programme. Moreover, while the project was running 11 school–business liaison assistants (SBLAs) were placed in 11 pilot schools. SBLAs were tasked primarily with implementing work-based learning (WBL) by supporting professional practice teachers in student placement. SBLAs played a crucial role in supporting professional practice teachers in various aspects of WBL implementation, including student placement, addressing challenging cases or company complaints, assessment of students, collecting WBL-related documents, and summarizing data.

¹¹ With the support of the EU funded KSV/801 project, implemented by LuxDev, a draft administrative instruction was developed to establish an updated tracer-study information system—a centralized platform for tracking VET graduates—to be hosted in the national data centre.

Excessive bureaucracy and a lack of clarity also characterize processes of qualification validation (for registration in the National Qualifications Framework) and the accreditation of VET providers offering these qualifications. Both are carried out by the National Qualifications Authority (NQA), as laid down in the Law on NQF. While the NQA focuses on quality control, the connection between quality control and quality development remains weak, leading to a codification of bureaucratic procedures rather than a focus on improving outcomes. Key deficiencies include:

- underdeveloped quality improvement mechanisms at the provider level, non-functional mechanisms at the municipal level (MED), and at the central level (MESTI);¹²
- lack of clear differentiation between programme validation and institutional accreditation;
- overlapping administrative procedures for private providers of formal VET that involve both NQA and MESTI, leading to duplication in verifying the same criteria and increasing financial and administrative burdens.

Furthermore, the regulatory framework remains unclear with regard to whether accreditation is directly linked to the right to deliver VET programmes, and the role of the Education Inspectorate in quality assurance for VET institutions is not well defined.

In the absence of a functional quality assurance system, additional procedural burdens risk reinforcing inefficiencies rather than driving improvements. A stronger emphasis is needed on systemic quality development, streamlined responsibilities and stakeholder trust in the value and impact of quality assurance mechanisms.

► 5.3. Organisation and operational constraints at the level of VET providers

5.3.1. Vocational education and training provision

Kosovo's public VET system is delivered through three main types of institution: regular VET schools, Centres of Competence (CoCs), and vocational training centres (VTCs). Each plays a distinct role in meeting skills development needs.

Regular VET schools, managed by municipal education directorates (MEDs), represent the majority of formal VET providers. They typically offer upper secondary education, leading to National Qualification Framework (NQF) Level 4 qualifications across a broad range of occupational profiles. In recent years, many have begun transitioning toward modular and competency-based curricula, and some have introduced dual VET through donor-supported initiatives.

Centres of Competence (CoCs) are centrally managed by the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVETAE), ensuring consistency with education and employment strategies. Initially established as flagship institutions, CoCs offer qualifications in specialized fields and are not territorially limited to students from the municipalities in which they operate; learners

¹² The role of the Education Inspectorate (EI) in quality assurance of VET provision in VET schools remains undefined.

from across Kosovo can apply and enrol in their programmes. They were initially equipped with modern infrastructure and intended to function as distinct centres of excellence, with more advanced governance, stronger labour market alignment and enhanced autonomy.¹³ However, many of these features are now also being implemented by regular VET schools, narrowing the practical differences between CCs and the rest of the VET network. Without a clearly maintained regulatory and operational distinction, CoCs risk being merged into the broader VET landscape rather than serving as innovation hubs or drivers of systemic reform.

Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) operate under the Employment Agency and primarily deliver non-formal, short-term training programmes targeting unemployed adults and jobseekers. Although training is delivered through a non-formal approach, VTCs issue formal qualifications, with many of their programmes aligned with occupational standards and referenced to NQF Levels 2 to 4. VTCs play a key role in promoting employability and facilitating rapid upskilling, although their links to employers and pathways to certification could be strengthened further.

► **Table 1: Summary comparison between public VET providers in Kosovo**

Dimension	Centres of Competence (CoCs)	Regular VET schools	Vocational training centres (VTCs)
Governance	Centralized (AVETAE / MESTI)	Decentralized (municipal education directorates)	Centralized (Employment Agency of Kosovo)
Target group	Upper secondary students (ages 15–18/19)	Upper secondary students (ages 15–18/19)	Unemployed adults, jobseekers and young people (16+)
Programme type	Formal education leading to NQF Level 4 or 5	Formal education leading to NQF Levels 3 and 4	Non-formal, short-term training (NQF Level 2–4)
Curriculum approach	Modular, competency-based curricula	Mixed: traditional and modular approaches	Competency-based, modular programmes aligned to occupations
Dual learning	Present in selected profiles	Increasingly implemented across profiles	Rare; primarily classroom-based with limited work-based learning
Employer engagement	Structured partnerships; stronger focus on industry	Varies; often informal or limited	Engaged in some programme, especially in job placement
Infrastructure	Purpose-built, modern, well-equipped	Mixed quality; often outdated or under-resourced	Basic facilities; focus on core trades and employability
NQF Level	NQF Levels 4 and 5	Primarily NQF Level 4	NQF Levels 2–4 (non-formal)
Funding source	Public + donor-funded (initially); central budget	Public (municipal budget + limited central allocations)	Public (through MFLT/ EARK)

Source: Legal and policy framework

¹³ The first competence centre (CC) was established in Ferizaj in 2013, focusing on health-related vocational education and training. This initiative was part of a broader effort by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MESTI), in collaboration with the Luxembourg Development Cooperation Agency (LuxDev), to enhance the quality and relevance of vocational education through specialized training centres. Subsequently, a second CC was established in Prizren, specializing in economics, trade and tourism.

5.3.2. Planning of VET programmes and student enrolment

The distribution of VET providers in Kosovo has evolved in an ad hoc manner, without a clear strategic vision guiding their establishment, specialization, or regional coverage. Qualification programmes have often been opened or closed without defined criteria or a coherent understanding of what constitutes a VET profile. As a result, Kosovo currently has 68 VET schools, including six Centres of competence (CoCs), a significant number of which are operating below optimal capacity. For example, 23 institutions have fewer than 200 students, and 16 have fewer than 100. The qualification programmes offered are often poorly aligned with central and local labour market demands, as well as broader development priorities. In addition, the absence of complementarity between the programmes delivered by VET schools (VETIs) and those offered by vocational training centres (VTCs) undermines the potential for a cohesive and integrated public VET system.

These challenges stem in part from the absence of a clearly mandated authority to oversee the planning of public VET provision. Although the adoption of Administrative Instruction No. 104/2020 by MESTI established procedures for opening and closing pre-university institutions (and assigned MESTI a coordinating role in consultation with municipalities) little progress has been made in implementation. Responsibilities remain fragmented across multiple actors, hindering coherent planning and the optimisation of VET services.

Planning of VET programmes and student enrolment is distributed across different levels and institutions, with blurred lines of responsibility. While CVETAE is expected to guide the development of qualification profiles, curricula and instructional resources, its advisory and regulatory functions are insufficiently defined. On the ground, VETIs and their steering councils are tasked with identifying local labour market needs, but decisions on student enrolment are ultimately made by municipal education directorates, often based more on existing teaching staff than on demand. Meanwhile, MESTI issues public calls for student registration, which are nominally informed by municipal economic assessments. Municipalities may also announce adult learning opportunities based on validated qualifications, but again systematic coordination is lacking.

The absence of central, sectoral and regional analyses of skills and training needs further constrains the ability of relevant actors to plan effectively. Without reliable data or a central authority to steer programme development, VET schools risk duplicating efforts or offering qualifications with limited relevance. The overlapping mandates of MESTI and EARK add further complexity, reducing the system's capacity to respond to economic shifts or workforce demand.

5.3.3. Budgeting and financial management

The VET budget is split between central and local levels, centralised for the employment sector (vocational training centres) and decentralised for the education sector (VET schools).

Public VET schools are funded primarily from a formula-based specific education grant, as defined by the Law on Public Financial Management and Accountability (Law No. 04/L-116 and Law No. 03/L-048) and the Law on Local Government Finance (Law No. 03/L-049). These grants are allocated from the central budget to municipalities, which then distribute the funds to individual schools. Administrative Instruction No. 33/2013 defines the formula for budget allocation at the municipal level, consisting of three sub-formulas: one for full-time teachers (based on student-teacher ratios), one for administrative and support staff, and one for goods and services. The allocation formula takes into account type of school, number of students and size of school facilities. The budget for goods and services is provided as a lump sum, and schools are responsible for preparing and managing their own spending plans. Article 5 (4.2) also permits reallocations between budget categories, offering theoretical flexibility in

budget execution. In relation to student–teacher ratios, municipalities are authorized to set their own benchmarks and may differentiate them across vocational education and training (VET) schools based on the specific needs of occupational profiles (AI 33/2013, Articles 5.2.6–5.2.7).

In practice, however, these flexibilities are not applied consistently. Many municipalities allocate similar funding levels across different types of schools, with limited differentiation between general and vocational education. Moreover, the formula does not account explicitly for the higher operational costs associated with specialized vocational programmes—such as those in the hospitality sector—which require modern training equipment, simulated work environments and frequent use of consumables.¹⁴ As a result, most VET schools receive comparable per-student funding regardless of programme needs. Resource-intensive programmes are often underfunded, particularly in the HoReCa sector, in which the lack of appropriate facilities directly affects training quality (ETF, 2021; LuxDev, 2023). Furthermore, budget execution is hampered by the insufficient planning capacity within municipal education directorates (MEDs), combined with staffing shortages and recurrent budget reallocation decisions. This reflects shifting priorities rather than VET needs. Consequently, even the limited budgets available are not always utilised fully or effectively.

Regarding vocational training centres (VTCs), they receive direct allocations from the MFLT budget as part of active labour market measures. Despite their strategic role in short-term training and workforce upskilling, VTCs remain modestly funded. Budgets typically cover salaries and basic operating costs, with limited provisions for programme development or equipment renewal.

Responsibility for budget implementation is equally fragmented. While municipalities manage VET schools finances, AVETAE oversees funding for centres of competence, and EARK handles VTC budgets. Procurement processes are similarly complex and inefficient. Municipalities often lack the technical capacity to manage equipment procurement, while delays in the supply of materials—particularly stationery and consumables—frequently disrupt the teaching process. VTCs are also left without discretionary funds for minor but essential operational needs, making them overly dependent on central decisions for everyday functions.

While VET schools are permitted to generate and use own-source revenues (for example, through services or adult training), complex procedures and unclear guidelines often discourage or delay their use. Revenues must be deposited into municipal accounts and are difficult to access, limiting their utility for reinvestment. Consequently, schools lack the capacity and incentives to engage in long-term financial planning or investment.

VTCs face similar constraints. Centrally managed, they have limited influence over spending, and financial planning is largely administrative. Poor capacity for budget execution and resource planning is also an issue to be addressed.

Altogether, the uncoordinated structure, regulatory gaps and fragmented financing mechanisms seriously limit the VET system’s responsiveness and impact. Strengthening governance, clarifying roles and enhancing capacities, while ensuring better alignment between planning, budgeting, procurement and labour market needs, are essential steps towards a more functional and future-oriented VET system in Kosovo.

¹⁴ With the support of the EU/ADA funded project “Aligning Education and Training with Labour Market Needs” (ALLED2), a new VET financing formula was developed (with ALLED2 assistance) and a draft Administrative Instruction on VET funding parameters and criteria has been prepared to improve funding allocation for vocational schools.

► 5.4. Accountability within the VET governance and management system

A functional performance management system for the institutions responsible for oversight is an essential component of quality governance and effective management in the VET system. However, this is largely absent in Kosovo. Although the legal framework outlines supervisory and reporting requirements, implementation remains weak or entirely lacking.

The current legal provisions include the following:

- Law No. 06/L-113 mandates each executive agency to prepare an annual performance plan and submit a detailed performance report by 31 March of the following year, outlining progress with regard to planned objectives. The supervising ministry is then expected to initiate a performance dialogue and prepare a performance statement for ministerial approval. However, key informant interviews indicate that while reports are submitted, follow-up actions—such as feedback, performance reviews or structured discussions—are rarely implemented. As a result, the performance management system remains largely non-functional. This issue also extends to the regular reporting practices of line ministry departments.
- The Law on Pre-University Education (Article 7) assigns the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), in cooperation with the Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA), responsibility for monitoring how municipalities fulfil their education-related duties. Despite this legal obligation, the procedures for supervision and reporting are not clearly defined, and MESTI does not actively perform this role.
- Administrative Instruction No. 106/2020 on the evaluation of school leadership performance stipulates that municipal education directorates (MEDs) are responsible for continuously monitoring, internally evaluating and annually reporting on the performance of school principals and vice-principals to the respective mayors. Despite this, consistent and structured implementation remains limited.

The failure to enforce these supervisory functions has undermined institutional accountability, hindered a culture of continuous improvement, and prevented the recognition of both achievements and areas in need of development. As a result, systemic challenges go unidentified, and opportunities to strengthen governance and management within the VET sector remain unexplored.

► 5.5. Engagement of social partners and institutional coordination

Tripartite structures have been legally established in Kosovo to facilitate dialogue at the central level on employment and vocational education and training. However, their effectiveness in ensuring coordinated and inclusive policy dialogue remains limited.

- **The Social Economic Council (SEC)** of Kosovo is a legally established tripartite body that facilitates structured dialogue among the public authorities, employers and trade unions on economic and social policies, including labour legislation, employment, and vocational education and training.¹⁵ The Council consists of 15 members, with equal representation—five representatives each from public authorities, employer organisations and trade unions.¹⁶

The SEC operates through specialized committees, which deliberate on policy issues and draft recommendations. These are submitted for discussion and adoption during the Council's plenary sessions, ensuring that policy decisions reflect consensus across all three parties.

Despite its strategic mandate, the SEC has faced operational challenges. Its most recent mandate expired in 2023, and a new council has yet to be appointed. Formal activities are thus at a standstill. Even during its last term, the SEC met only 10 times, well below the 48 meetings originally planned, limiting its ability to influence policy development and implementation effectively.

While the SEC does not include permanent seats for VET-specific institutions, the Ministry of Education represents those interests within the delegation of public authorities. The legal framework also allows for the participation of external stakeholders in an advisory capacity, enabling broader consultation when relevant

- The **Council for Vocational Education and Training and for Adults Education (CVETA)** in Kosovo is a central advisory body established under **Law No. 04/L-138 on Vocational Education and Training**. It has **15 members**, including representatives from the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers, other relevant ministries, the National Qualifications Authority (NQA), the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVETA), employer and business membership organizations and trade unions. CVETA's primary functions include the provision of specialized policy advice on vocational and adult education, approval of occupational standards, recommending curricula and qualification profiles, and facilitating inter-institutional coordination to align education and training with labour market needs.

Despite its strategic importance, the CVETA has faced operational challenges in recent years, including irregular meetings and limited engagement. However, these challenges have recently begun to be addressed: the council has been reactivated, meetings have resumed, and member engagement has increased. As a result, its role in the development and implementation of VET policies is gradually strengthening.

With regard to the municipal and sectoral levels, particularly in the HoReCa sector, tripartite structures remain underdeveloped or have yet to be established. The operation of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) is not yet regulated through a dedicated legal and institutional framework. While SSCs are foreseen in the draft new Law on VET/AAP and proposals for their regulation through secondary legislation have been developed, current and pilot SSC initiatives continue to operate primarily through project-supported

15 The SEC was formally established in 2009 through Government Decision No. 09/57 of 13 March 2009. This decision marked the transition from the earlier Tripartite Consultative Council, which had been functioning since 2001, to a more structured platform for social dialogue. The SEC's legal foundation was further solidified with the adoption of Law No. 04/L-008 on the Social Economic Council in 2011. This law delineated the Council's composition, functions and responsibilities, aiming to enhance its role in shaping labour, employment and social policies in Kosovo.

16 Government representatives include key ministries such as Labour, Finance, Economy, Education (which also covers VET), and Health. Employers are represented by the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce and the Kosovo Business Alliance, while workers are represented by national trade union confederations, primarily BSPK and KSLK.

arrangements, Terms of Reference and ministerial or institutional decisions. Ongoing reform efforts aim to further formalise and institutionalise the SSC model within Kosovo's VET governance system. At the time of the assessment, only four **Sectoral Skills Councils** had been established with donor support¹⁷ covering:

- agribusiness: led by the Association of Fruit and Vegetable Processors of Kosovo (PePeKo);
- information and communication technology: led by the Kosovo Association for Information and Communication Technology;
- wood processing: led by the Association of Wood Processors of Kosovo; and
- energy: led by the Metal Processing Industry and Renewable Energy Cluster of Kosovo.

These councils facilitate cooperation among key stakeholders, assess labour market needs, and develop tailored workforce solutions aligned with private sector requirements. Their mission includes advancing private sector leadership in identifying workforce needs, designing solutions and mobilizing financial resources; building the capacity of private sector actors and key workforce ecosystem stakeholders to co-develop and assess workforce strategies; and fostering long-term cooperation between industry, education providers and policymakers to create inclusive and sustainable employment solutions. While these initiatives provided important practical experience in sector-based coordination and employer engagement in skills development, publicly available evidence on their current operational status, long-term effectiveness, institutional integration and sustainability remains limited. This has informed ongoing efforts to further assess, pilot and institutionalise a more structured Sector Skills Council (SSC) model within Kosovo's VET governance system¹⁸. The goal is to support the institutionalisation of these councils within Kosovo's VET governance framework, ensuring their long-term contribution to skills and workforce development.

With regard to **municipal skills councils**, an initiative was launched in 2018 to establish a Municipal Working Council for Vocational Education and Training in Peja, under the Pro-Skills project implemented by the Institute for Training and Economic Development with support from Solidar Suisse. The council brought together representatives from local government, VET schools, employment offices and the private sector, covering priority sectors such as tourism, ICT, wood processing and metal processing.

Its main objectives included developing concept papers to support curriculum updates aligned with labour market needs, conducting local awareness campaigns on skills development opportunities, and creating structures for internships and mentoring to enhance practical training.

However, the initiative remained project-based, and no formal mechanism has since been institutionalized to ensure its continuity or replication in other municipalities. To date, Peja remains the only documented case of a functional municipal skills council, although similar multi-stakeholder coordination at the local level is often encouraged within donor-supported VET interventions.

¹⁷ These councils were established as Sector Workforce Councils under the Private Sector-Led Workforce Development Activity (PSWD) funded by USAID and implemented by IREX and partners.

¹⁸ Under the ILO HoReCa Kosovo project, supported by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), efforts were undertaken to strengthen sector-based skills governance in the hospitality sector, including stakeholder consultations and support for the establishment and functionalisation of the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for the HoReCa sector. In parallel, through the Matching Skills to Jobs (MSJ) project, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by Swisscontact, efforts are under way to pilot, monitor and further refine the SSC model in Kosovo. In cooperation with MES, AVETAE, employers' organisations, chambers of commerce, VET providers, trade unions and other sector stakeholders, these initiatives aim to strengthen sector-based skills governance and structured public-private dialogue, while also informing the gradual expansion of SSCs to additional priority sectors based on evidence, sector relevance and institutional readiness.

In 2022, as part of a series of mechanisms aimed at enhancing the governance and coordination of the vocational education and training (VET) system, an Executive Commission for the Development of the VET System was established. This initiative was in line with the objectives outlined in the National Development Strategy (2022–2030) and the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (2022–2026), which emphasize the importance of strengthening institutional frameworks to improve the quality and relevance of VET. This mechanism is tasked with strengthening inter-institutional coordination and promoting inclusive stakeholder dialogue to support the implementation of comprehensive VET reforms. Chaired by the Prime Minister, the Commission brings together key ministers, including those responsible for Education, Finance, Labour, Industry, Trade, and the Economy. The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) serves as the secretariat, supporting the Commission's operations and ensuring smooth administrative processes. However, the Commission does not currently include representation from employers' and workers' organizations, which limits opportunities for structured dialogue and well-informed, joint decision-making on skills development priorities.

To operationalize its mandate, the Commission has established two task forces:

- The Task Force on Effective VET Governance, established in 2022, focuses on improving coordination and coherence across the VET system. Its scope includes proposals for consolidating VET provision across formal and non-formal streams, such as VET schools, Centres of competence (CoCs), and vocational training centres (VTCs). It also addresses the need to revise the current flat-rate financing formula to better meet the diverse needs of VET schools. Its membership includes representatives from VET school management, MESTI, the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers, the Kosovo Employment Agency and the Agency for VET. The ongoing revision of the legal framework governing VET, initiated by this Task Force in 2024, is expected to improve system coordination, clarify institutional mandates and enhance the responsiveness of VET provision to labour market needs. Specific objectives of the concept document for the new law on vocational education and training include the following:
 - a) Restructuring of central-level institutions responsible for vocational education and training to improve coherence, coordination and effectiveness in policy implementation.
 - b) Empowering the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVETAE) with a comprehensive mandate, encompassing executive, administrative and regulatory functions in VET and the National Qualifications Framework.
 - c) Consolidation and harmonization of existing VET legislation into a single, unified legal framework to enhance legal clarity and consistency across the sector.
 - d) Establishment of independent mechanisms within AVETAE to oversee the accreditation of initial and continuous VET providers, ensuring quality and accountability.
 - e) Introduction of a structured mechanism to align VET programmes with labour market needs, enabling responsive and demand-driven education and training.
 - f) Development of an accountability framework within VET governance to ensure transparency, performance monitoring and continuous system improvement.

The Task Force on the Introduction and Implementation of Dual VET is tasked with coordinating stakeholders for the rollout and implementation of dual VET programmes in upper secondary education (grades 10–12). This task force includes representatives from MESTI, private companies, sectoral organizations, chambers of commerce, VET schools and international development partners. Its main achievements include the development and expansion of dual VET profiles, strengthening partnerships between vocational schools and employers, and supporting teacher training for dual VET

delivery. The Task Force has also contributed to the formulation of policy and regulatory frameworks to guide dual VET implementation, with the aim of aligning skills provision more closely with labour market needs.

Together, these task forces reflect a coordinated effort to strengthen the governance and delivery of VET in Kosovo, laying the groundwork for a more responsive, inclusive, and labour market-oriented education system. However, the absence of formal representation from among the social partners—employers' organizations and trade unions—greatly reduces opportunities for structured, well-informed tripartite social dialogue and the systematic incorporation of labour market insights. Enhancing the involvement of social partners in these working structures would contribute to greater relevance, responsiveness and sustainability in VET policy and implementation.

Moreover, to ensure long-term impact and systemic coherence, there is a pressing need to consolidate and operationalize tripartite structures at central, sectoral and municipal levels. Strengthening these mechanisms would improve social dialogue, foster institutional coordination and ensure that skills development policies are aligned effectively with the evolving needs of both employers and workers.

6. Overview of qualifications and VET providers in the hospitality sector

► 6. Overview of qualifications and VET providers in the hospitality sector

► 6.1. Qualification types and levels in the National Qualifications Framework

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) serves as a comprehensive system for classifying all recognized qualifications based on defined levels of learning outcomes. It supports transparency, progression and recognition of qualifications across different education and training sectors. The NQF is aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and supports the integration of general, vocational and higher education systems. The six qualification types defined under the NQF are described in Table 2.

► **Table 2: Overview of qualification types and levels in the Kosovo National Qualifications Framework**

Qualification types	Purpose	NQF levels	Credits	Content	Providers
Higher education qualifications (A)	Enable academic progression and professional development	5–8	ECTS	Academic disciplines or advanced professional profiles	Formal education settings
General education qualifications (B)	Prepare learners for higher education and lifelong learning	1–4	N/A	School subjects and cross-curricular competences aligned with the Curriculum Framework	Formal education settings
National combined qualifications (C)	Qualify learners to enter the labour market and prepare them for lifelong learning	3–4	At least 120	School subjects and modules aligned with National Occupational Standards and the Curriculum Framework	Formal education settings (VET schools and CCs) with real/simulated workplace practice
National professional qualifications (D)	Prepare learners for specific professions or job roles	2–5	Up to 120 ECVET	Modules aligned with National Occupational Standards	Non-formal education settings with real or simulated workplace practice ¹⁹

¹⁹ These qualifications can also be offered by VET schools as an additional service alongside their core provision of formal VET programmes.

Qualification types	Purpose	NQF levels	Credits	Content	Providers
Qualifications based on international standards (E)	Align with global labour market requirements	1–5	Up to 120 ECVET	Modules aligned with internationally recognized occupational standards	Non-formal education settings with real or simulated workplace practice ²⁰
Tailored qualifications (F)	Address specific operational needs of employers or institutions	1–5	ECVET	Modules defined by the standards of the organization developing the qualification	

Source: National Qualification Framework (NQF, 2020)

► 6.2. Skills development system in the HoReCa sector

The skills development system in Kosovo's HoReCa sector is evolving in response to the growing demand for qualified workers, driven by the expansion of tourism and hospitality services. Training is delivered through a mix of vocational education and training (VET) schools and vocational training centres. These institutions offer a variety of qualifications and short-term courses designed to build competencies in hospitality management, culinary arts, food and beverage services, and customer care.

The current training landscape highlights a growing acknowledgment of the HoReCa sector's potential to contribute to economic development and job creation. This mapping presents an overview of VET providers active in the sector, encompassing both public and private institutions that offer formal and non-formal training across all qualification levels in the hospitality industry.

► **Table 3: Overview of VET providers and HoReCa qualifications by type and level**

Education and qualification levels ²¹	Qualification type	Providers	Admissions 2025	Anticipated graduations 2025
Short-term courses (NQF 3–4)	National (and international) professional qualifications	12 VTCs (7 public and 5 private)	928	798
Upper secondary VET (NQF 3–4)	National combined qualifications	14 institutions (12 vocational schools and 2 Centres of competence)	270	216
Post-secondary vocational education (NQF 5, ISCED 4)	National (and international) professional qualifications	No providers	—	
Higher education (NQF 6, ISCED 6)	Higher education qualifications	2 institutions	356	121
Total			1,554	1,135

Source: VET providers

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ Levels 1–8 of the National Qualification Framework correspond directly to levels 1–8 of the European Qualifications Framework.

Table 4 details all relevant training providers; categorizes qualifications by occupational profile and NQF level; and presents data on admissions and anticipated graduations for the 2024/25 academic year. The data indicate that despite the broad institutional coverage of HoReCa-related training across Kosovo's VET system, enrolment remains critically low in several occupational profiles, particularly for Hospitality Assistant and Restaurant Assistant programmes offered by upper-secondary VET schools (NQF 3 and 4). In some cases, admissions have fallen below 10 students or are absent altogether. This signals potential issues of outdated programme content, limited attractiveness, weak promotion or misalignment with labour market demand. By contrast, enrolment in shorter, skills-focused programmes offered by public and private vocational training centres (for example, Assistant Cook, Baker, Pastry Cook) is significantly higher, indicating stronger responsiveness to labour market needs.

► **Table 4: Qualifications by level, occupational profile and training provider**

Provider type and qualification level	Providers	Occupational profiles	Admissions 2025 ²²	Anticipated graduations 2025
University (NQF 6/ISCED 6)	University of Applied Sciences, Ferizaj	Tourism and hospitality management	280	80
	University Haxhi Zeka, Peja	Tourism, hospitality and environment management	76	41
Centers of Competence/colleges (NQF 5/ISCED 4, 5)	—	—	—	—
VET schools/ Centres of Competence (NQF 3, 4/ISCED 3)	Tafil Kasumaj, Decan	Hospitality assistant	17	—
	Kadri Kusari, Gjakova	Hospitality assistant	14	17
	Sahit Baftiu, Gjilan	Hospitality assistant	6	—
		Cook	20	10
	Mithat Frashëri, Istog	Hospitality assistant ²³	—	—
	Hasan Prishtina, Mitrovica	Hospitality assistant	23	23
		Restaurant assistant ²⁴	—	—
	Ali Hadri, Peja	Hospitality and tourism	12	10
	7 Shtatori, Prishtina	Hospitality assistant	20	22
		Cook	29	18
	Ymer Prizreni 3 Prizren	Hospitality assistant	12	14
		Restaurant assistant	—	—
	Centre of Competence, Prizren	Hospitality and tourism	16	8
	Abdyl Ramaj, Suhareka	Hospitality assistant	24	15
	VETI, Shtime	Restaurant assistant	—	15
	Bahri Haxha, Vushtrri	Cook	28	24
	Centre of Competence, Malisheva	Hospitality and tourism	16	8
	Zenel Hajdini, Ferizaj	Cook	33	32

²² Data on formal education institutions refer to enrolments for the 2024/25 academic year, while data for non-formal public providers include both actual and anticipated enrolments for 2025.

²³ 16 students in Grade 11.

²⁴ 20 students in Grade 11.

Provider type and qualification level	Providers	Occupational profiles	Admissions 2025 ²²	Anticipated graduations 2025
Public vocational training centres (NQF 3)	VTC Prishtina	Baker	30	18
		Pastry Cook	20	15
	VTC Gjilan	Assistant cook	60	40
	VTC Ferizaj	Assistant cook	85	80
		Bartender	20	12
		Waiter	50	40
	VTC Prizren	Assistant cook	120	110
		Waiter	30	25
		Bartender	20	12
		Baker	60	30
	VTC Gjakova	Assistant cook	60	55
	VTC Peja	Assistant cook	95	90
	VTC Mitrovica	Assistant cook	70	65
Private vocational training centres (NQF 3, 4)²⁵	VTEI Dituria, Prizren	Baker	37	37
	KADI, Vushtrri	Pastry Cook	13	13
	Kosovo Training Centre (KTC), Fushe Kosova	Pastry Cook	19	19
		Assistant cook	36	36
		Pizzaaiolo	12	12
		Cook	30	28
	ATC, Pristina	Hotel manager	7	7
		Cook	12	12
		Pastry Cook	6	6
		Pizzaaiolo	13	13
		Assistant cook	19	19
	Diakonie Kosova, Mitrovica	Assistant cook	4	4
Total			1,554	1,135

Source: VET providers

25 The data for private accredited providers are the official 2024 records from the National Qualifications Authority, reflecting the number of qualifications awarded to each respective provider, which remain valid for 2025.

Table 5 presents an aggregated overview of qualifications relevant to the HoReCa sector, organized by occupational profile and disaggregated by gender. It summarizes the total number of admissions and anticipated graduations for the 2024/25 academic year across all training providers, providing insights into gender representation and potential workforce supply in key occupational areas.

► **Table 5: Summary of qualifications by occupational profile, disaggregated by gender**

Occupational profiles	Qualification type	Level	Admissions 2024/25			Anticipated graduations 2024/25		
			Girls/ women	Boys/ men	Total	Girls/ women	Boys/ men	Total
Tourism and hospitality management	Higher education	NQF 6	125	231	356	67	54	121
Hospitality and tourism	Combined	NQF 4	15	29	44	7	9	26
Hospitality assistant	Combined	NQF 4	25	91	116	22	69	91
Restaurant assistant	Combined	NQF 4	—	—	—	6	9	15
Cook	Combined	NQF 4	38	72	110	29	55	84
Cook	Professional	NQF 4	10	32	42	15	25	40
Assistant cook	Professional	NQF 3	266	283	549	242	257	499
Hotel manager	Professional	NQF 4	2	5	7	2	5	7
Pastry Cook	Professional	NQF 3	58	—	58	53	—	53
Baker	Professional	NQF 3	38	89	127	20	65	85
Waiter	Professional	NQF 3	7	73	80	5	60	65
Barista	Professional	NQF 3	21	19	40	13	11	24
Pizzaiolo	Professional	NQF 3	2	23	25	2	23	25
Total			607	947	1,554	483	642	1,135

Source: VET providers

As presented in Table 4, the current qualifications offered in the HoReCa sector in Kosovo span from NQF Level 3 to Level 6, covering a variety of entry-level, technical and managerial profiles. The majority of qualifications are concentrated at NQF Levels 3 and 4, which serve primarily operational roles essential for initial employment in the food, beverage and hospitality industries:

- At NQF Level 3, the qualifications include assistant cook, waiter, barista, pizzaiolo, baker and pastry cook. These are all provided as professional qualifications, directly preparing learners for specific occupational functions and responding to immediate labour market needs.
- At NQF Level 4, the system expands to more complex combined and professional qualifications such as cook (combined and professional), restaurant assistant, hospitality assistant, and hotel manager. The presence of both combined and professional formats for the cook qualification indicates diverse training pathways within the same occupational domain, which probably balance theoretical and practical emphases. These Level 4 qualifications form a core tier of the VET system, preparing graduates for supervisory and mid-level technical roles.
- At the upper end, NQF Level 6 qualifications in tourism and hospitality management (higher education) reflect advanced training that is likely to be delivered by colleges or higher education institutions. These programmes are designed to prepare students for managerial and specialist roles in the sector and currently represent the highest formal qualification level in the field.

- A significant gap exists at NQF Level 5, which is typically intended to bridge the vocational-technical and managerial divide. The absence of Level 5 qualifications creates a missing link in the progression pathway, limiting opportunities for learners to upskill beyond operational roles without transitioning directly into higher education. This hinders the development of advanced technical expertise and applied managerial competencies that are increasingly required in the evolving HoReCa sector.

This qualification distribution reflects a structured but uneven system, in which lower-level, job-specific profiles are clearly defined and well-represented, while higher-level and cross-cutting occupational needs remain underdeveloped. Addressing these imbalances—including the creation of NQF Level 5 programmes—is essential for building a more responsive and inclusive qualifications framework aligned with sectoral growth and labour market demands.

These structural gaps are further compounded by persistent gender disparities across qualification types and occupational profiles, which continue to shape access, participation and completion trends in the hospitality and tourism sector. Women currently account for approximately 39 per cent of admissions across the analysed qualifications, indicating that significant gender imbalances in participation persist across the sector. However, gender differences become particularly visible when the data are disaggregated by occupational profile. Women remain concentrated predominantly in traditional roles, such as Pastry Cook (100 per cent), while also demonstrating relatively balanced participation in occupations such as assistant cook (49 per cent) and bartender (53 per cent). At the same time, they remain significantly underrepresented in more technical or traditionally male-dominated fields, including waiter (9 per cent), pizzaiolo (8 per cent) and hotel manager (29 per cent). These more balanced occupational profiles may offer important entry points for targeted interventions aimed at promoting more inclusive participation and challenging persistent occupational stereotypes.

In higher education, enrolment in tourism and hospitality management programmes shows that women represent approximately 35 per cent of new admissions but are expected to account for around 55 per cent of anticipated graduates. While these figures should be interpreted with caution, as enrolment and graduation data do not necessarily refer to the same student cohorts, they may nevertheless suggest relatively strong retention and academic success among women once enrolled.

These findings underscore the importance of tackling gender segregation within VET through targeted outreach and gender-sensitive career guidance. Occupational clustering by gender calls for stronger institutional action to address social norms, ensure inclusive learning environments, and promote equal access to emerging opportunities in the hospitality sector. These actions are critical to achieving both equity and workforce resilience in a sector with growing demand for skills.

► 6.3. Alignment of qualifications with current and emerging occupational demands

According to the ILO's recent market system analysis (MSA) of Kosovo's HoReCa sector²⁶, the demand side of Kosovo's HoReCa sector reflects a broader and more dynamic occupational structure than currently addressed by the VET system. Labour market needs extend well beyond traditional food

²⁶ The MSA was conducted between April and August 2025 under the framework of the ILO project "HoReCa Kosovo—Ho(spitable) Re(silient) Ca(pable)", supported by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS). The report is expected to be finalized and published in November 2025.

and beverage roles, with strong demand for mid-level and managerial positions that are essential for ensuring service quality and business performance. The MSA also highlights the sector's ongoing transformation in response to global trends. Emerging occupations—including sustainability officer, quality assurance manager, product/experience developer, rural tourism operator, digital solutions manager, and spa manager—point to a growing emphasis on innovation, digitalization and sustainable business practices. These positions demand higher levels of technical and transversal skills, signalling a shift toward more strategic and specialized roles. In parallel, a set of cross-cutting support functions—such as HR, accounting, IT support, marketing, and maintenance—are also identified as critical to the effective functioning of HoReCa businesses. These roles underscore the sector's increasing reliance on multidisciplinary competencies that extend beyond traditional hospitality services. Together, these trends illustrate the need for a more responsive and future-oriented approach to workforce development in the HoReCa sector.

Table 5 presents an overview of occupations currently in demand, as identified by the ILO MSA. It also shows their corresponding skill levels, the existence of occupational standards, and the qualifications conferred in 2024/25, including their respective qualification levels within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Occupations classified as low skill level (elementary qualifications under the Kosovo Occupational Classification System) are not included in the table, as they do not require formal qualifications. Similarly, generic occupations that support the HoReCa sector—such as HR, accounting, marketing, IT support, and maintenance—are excluded, as they are typically covered through broader training pathways not specific to the sector.

► **Table 6: In-demand occupations and qualification supply**

Occupations in demand (2025)	Occupational standard	Qualification supply (2024/25)	Qualification level (NQF)
Traditional HoReCa occupations			
Chef	Not available	Not available	Level 3
Sous chef	Not available	Assistant Cook	Level 3
Line cook	Assistant Cook	Assistant Cook	Level 3
Pastry chef	Available	Available	Level 3
Waiter/waitress	Not available	Available	Level 3
Bartender	Available ²⁷	Available	Level 3
Barista	Available ²⁷	Available	Level 3
Sommelier	Not available	Not available	—
Hotel manager	Not available ²⁸	Available	Level 4 and 6
Restaurant manager	Not available	Not available	—

27 The “Banakier” occupational standard is designed as a comprehensive role that blends the core functions of both barista and bartender.

28 The occupational standard for hotel and restaurant technician was developed as part of the TO REGOS (Towards Regionally-based Occupational Standards) project, an EU-funded initiative aimed at improving the relevance and regional coherence of vocational education and training (VET) systems across the Western Balkans. The project was implemented under the leadership of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia in partnership with institutions from Kosovo, Albania, North Macedonia and Montenegro, including the National Qualifications Authority of Kosovo (NQA) and MESTI. The standard defines a comprehensive profile combining operational and supervisory functions in hotel and restaurant services, such as managing front office operations, overseeing food and beverage services, and ensuring compliance with hygiene and safety regulations. A corresponding curriculum was also developed under the same project to support implementation in VET schools. As of April 2025, however, this occupational standard does not appear in the official list of approved occupational standards published by the NQA.

Occupations in demand (2025)	Occupational standard	Qualification supply (2024/25)	Qualification level (NQF)
Traditional HoReCa occupations (<i>continued</i>)			
Café manager	Not available	Not available	—
Event coordinator	Not available	Not available	—
Pizzaiolo	Available	Available	Level 3
Emerging occupations in HoReCa			
SPA manager	Not available	Not available	—
Sustainability officer	Not available	Not available	—
Quality assurance manager	Not available	Not available	—
Digital solutions manager	Not available	Not available	—
Product/experience developer	Not available	Not available	—
Rural tourism operator	Not available	Not available	—

Source: VET providers

As indicated in Table 5, there is a significant mismatch between the growing list of in-demand occupations in the HoReCa sector and existing occupational standards and qualifications. The sector increasingly demands a broad and evolving range of roles, including hotel and restaurant managers, chefs, sous chefs, sommeliers, sustainability and quality assurance officers, and digital solutions managers. However, the occupational standards currently in place, most of which were developed between 2017 and 2019, cover only a narrow subset of traditional roles, such as baker, bartender, pastry cook, pizzaiolo, and assistant cook. This gap highlights a core issue: existing occupational standards do not reflect the breadth or dynamism of labour market needs, which limits the system's ability to support the development of relevant and emerging qualifications. The process is further constrained by bureaucratic delays in validating new standards, which not only create bottlenecks in curriculum development and implementation, but also discourage employer engagement and investment in the system.²⁹

The lack of employer-driven input is a critical weakness. A more coordinated and responsive system is needed, one in which employers take a leading role in identifying labour shortages, skills shortages, skills gaps and emerging occupational requirements and subsequently in co-developing occupational standards that reflect real-world workplace expectations. These standards must extend beyond kitchen-based roles to include front-of-house functions, hospitality services and supervisory positions. A collaborative, employer-led and streamlined validation process is essential to ensure timely and relevant programme delivery.

In parallel, a significant mismatch persists between the qualifications currently offered and the occupations in demand. While roles such as cook, waiter/waitress, bartender and hotel manager are supported by formal qualifications at NQF Levels 3 and 4, many high-demand occupations lack both qualifications and occupational standards. These include chef, sous chef, sommelier, restaurant and café manager, and event coordinator. For example, the chef role is only partially covered by the Level 4 cook qualification (MESTI 2022c), which does not address the creative and managerial dimensions typically required at higher levels (e.g., NQF Level 5 and above).

²⁹ For example, an occupational standard for waiters was developed with the support of the ALLED2 Project co-founded by the EU and ADC, but its validation has been pending since 2023. Consequently, the vocational training centre (VTC) continues to deliver training based on a 2017 curriculum, as the validation process for the newly developed programme cannot proceed without an approved standard. This delay hampers efforts to modernize training and align it with current labour market requirements.

Emerging professions—such as spa manager, sustainability officer, quality assurance manager, digital solutions manager, product/experience developer, and rural tourism operator—also lack appropriate qualifications or occupational standards. Although the dual VET curriculum for hospitality assistant (MESTI 2022b) references rural tourism, it remains conceptual and unimplemented through practical modules. Similarly, product and experience development, while included in the 2020 core curriculum for hospitality assistant (MESTI 2020a), is not operationalized into modules that equip learners to design local experiences or tourism packages.

Adding to this challenge is the complete absence of NQF Level 5 qualifications, which are essential to bridge the gap between mid-level technical roles and higher education. This missing tier limits upskilling opportunities and leaves a void in developing supervisory and applied managerial competencies within the sector.

The overall effectiveness of the VET system is further undermined by the lack of reliable data on graduate outcomes, which hampers efforts to assess the impact of training programmes and inform system-level improvements. This challenge is particularly concerning in the context of persistently high youth unemployment and a NEET rate of around 30 per cent among young people aged 15–24 in Kosovo. This raises fears that many students enrolled in HoReCa programmes may never transition into the labour market, either during or after their studies.

This dual challenge of misaligned skills and limited employability undermines the ability of the VET system to respond effectively to the needs of the HoReCa sector. Solving this problem requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach that bridges gaps in both the supply of qualifications and the demand for skilled labour. First, the development of broader and up-to-date occupational standards across all functional areas of the sector is essential, extending beyond kitchen-based roles to encompass front-of-house operations, hospitality services and mid-level supervisory positions. This should be accompanied by the introduction of NQF Level 5 qualifications, which currently are absent but critical for enabling vertical progression and the development of applied managerial competencies. The validation process for occupational standards must also be streamlined to avoid bureaucratic delays that hinder curriculum development and discourage employer engagement.

Stronger and more structured employer involvement in the design and revision of qualifications is equally important to ensure relevance and responsiveness. This should be complemented by efforts to strengthen the feedback loop between VET providers and labour market actors, supported by systematic use of labour market intelligence tools to inform the design and continuous improvement of programmes.

At the same time, the system must address the demand-side constraints that affect graduate employability. This includes stimulating the creation of decent jobs in Kosovo's HoReCa sector. Informality, undeclared work and workers' rights infractions are frequently found in this sector. Improving sector performance, competitiveness and attractiveness needs to go hand in hand with improving working conditions, including for seasonal workers. It also calls for developing clear, attractive career pathways within the HoReCa sector. Targeted support measures such as career guidance, structured industry placements and school-to-work transition schemes can facilitate young people's entry into employment. This must be paired with reforms that tackle the sector's structural challenges, including informality, seasonality and limited career progression, to ensure that employment opportunities are not only accessible but also inclusive, decent and sustainable.

Finally, to guide and monitor these reforms, it is essential to establish a robust graduate tracking mechanism that collects and analyses data on employment outcomes, further education and labour market integration. Such an evidence base would support more informed policy decisions, enhance accountability and enable continuous improvements in programme design and delivery. Collectively, these measures would strengthen the labour market responsiveness of Kosovo's VET system and its capacity to equip learners for meaningful, sustainable employment in the evolving HoReCa sector.

7. Labour market relevance of VET programmes

► 7. Labour market relevance of VET programmes

The public vocational education and training (VET) system holds considerable potential to support youth employability and contribute to the economic development at large. To fully harness this potential, it is essential not only to align qualification programmes with in-demand occupations but also to strengthen their overall labour market relevance. These are two key priorities identified by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI, 2024). The alignment of qualification programmes with occupations in demand ensures that the vocational education and training (VET) system contributes to tackling broader labour shortages by providing an adequate supply of qualified people. However, ensuring labour market relevance requires more than quantitative alignment with occupational demand. It involves embedding the right mix of technical, cognitive and transferable skills into qualifications to meet employer expectations and evolving workplace requirements. This is critical to reducing skills shortages, as employers struggle to find suitably skilled candidates, and skills gaps, as workers, even though employed, lack the specific competencies needed to perform effectively. To this end, labour market relevance must be strengthened continuously through the regular updating of curricula, the active involvement of employers in programme design and delivery, and the systematic alignment of learning outcomes with real-world job requirements.

The following analysis of the labour market relevance of VET programmes focuses on the importance and quality of qualification programmes provided by public institutions, including both formal and non-formal providers. The private institutions referenced in this report are accredited, which means that their programmes have already undergone quality assurance to ensure compliance with national standards. As such, the emphasis here is on assessing public provision. In that regard, variability in curriculum implementation, alignment with occupational standards, and quality assurance mechanisms remain key to improvement and system strengthening.

► 7.1. Overview of qualification programmes in VET schools

Hospitality-related qualifications are offered through a broad network of public vocational education institutions in Kosovo. They span different municipalities and focus primarily on hospitality, culinary arts and restaurant services. The Hospitality Assistant profile is the most widely implemented, available in 9 out of the 14 VET schools that deliver HoReCa-related qualifications. It is offered in Deçan, Gjakovë, Gjiilan, Istog, Mitrovicë (South), Pejë, Prishtinë, Prizren, and Suharekë, underscoring its foundational role in the sector. This qualification is delivered using both the 2013 and the updated 2020 curricula, and several institutions have adopted dual VET modalities (Grades 10–12).

Cook qualifications are provided in five VET schools—Gjiilan, Pejë, Shtime, Ferizaj, and Prishtina—while the Restaurant Assistant programme is available in three institutions: Mitrovicë (South), Prizren, and Shtime.

In addition, Centres of Competence in Prizren and Malishevë offer broader programmes under the hospitality and tourism profile, suggesting a more integrated and potentially advanced curriculum designed to address the sector's evolving needs.

With regard to qualification programmes, the Cook, Restaurant Assistant, Hotel Assistant, and Hospitality and Tourism Services profiles are delivered based on curricula developed in 2013 (MEST, 2013a; MEST, 2013b; MEST, 2013c; MEST, 2013d). As part of efforts to modernise the VET offer and strengthen its alignment with industry needs, the curricula for the Cook and Hospitality Assistant profiles were revised in 2020 (MEST, 2020a; MEST, 2020b), while in 2022, dual VET programmes were also developed for the Cook and Hospitality Assistant profiles, combining school-based learning with practical training in enterprises (MESTI, 2022b; MESTI, 2022c). Additionally, a few programmes are offered under the broader title of hospitality and tourism, indicating a more integrated thematic focus. Notably, one cook qualification programme still operates under the older 2012 curriculum (MESTI, 2012), reflecting a degree of inconsistency in curriculum updates across institutions. This diversity in curriculum versions and delivery formats reflects ongoing efforts to modernize training and enhance alignment with labour market demands, although it also suggests the need for further standardization and updates to ensure consistent quality and relevance.

7.1.1. Evolution of curricula: 2012/2013 vs 2020/2022

A comparison between older curricula (2012–2013) and newer versions (2020–2022) reveals both continuity and significant advancements in Kosovo's VET system. Both generations follow an outcomes-based, modular structure, reflecting broader VET reform efforts. While the older curricula laid a solid foundation, the 2020/2022 revisions significantly enhance relevance, depth and responsiveness. They better reflect industry standards, integrate dual VET and offer clearer guidance on the development of transferable skills. Both versions share the overarching aim of preparing students to meet the demands of a competitive and evolving labour market, nationally and beyond.

A major innovation is the introduction of the Core Curriculum format, rolled out between 2020 and 2022. It provides a clearer distinction between general and professional competencies and includes revised content on international cuisine, modern service systems, and enhanced foreign-language integration. These changes are aimed at strengthening students' ability to operate in professional, often multilingual environments.

Another key development is the introduction of dual VET, initiated around 2019–2020 and gradually implemented from 2022 onward. Unlike the older curricula, which included limited practical components, the new approach embeds structured work-based learning throughout the programme, enhancing relevance and student exposure to real job conditions.

In addition, the updated curricula put more emphasis on soft and transversal skills (such as teamwork, initiative, communication and critical thinking) which are now explicitly defined within modules. The newer documents offer a more comprehensive framework for developing student attitudes and behaviours in line with sector expectations.

7.1.2. Alignment with labour market needs

The labour market relevance of VET programmes in Kosovo's HoReCa sector has been shaped by increasing efforts to align training content with employer needs. The 2020 curricula clearly state the aim of equipping students with skills that meet real labour market demands, recognizing the need to shift toward more evidence-based and employer-informed curriculum development.

The curricula address many of the sector's core requirements by including technical skills, international service systems and foreign language training, which are all essential for operating in a modern, globally connected hospitality environment. Dual VET, which combines classroom-based education with practical, on-the-job experience, further enhances employability by providing students with direct exposure to real-world work settings.³⁰

One challenge that came to light is that the curricula are quite dense, covering many modules and subjects in a three-year span. There is a risk that such breadth may jeopardize depth, so that certain topics may not be addressed sufficiently due to time constraints. For example, students are acquainted with elements of tourism geography, business and food technology alongside core trade skills, even though some schools report difficulties in allocating enough time for practical learning. Allowing greater flexibility (for example, by enabling providers to adapt or emphasize specific modules based on local sectoral demand) could improve both effectiveness and relevance. While the curriculum does mention adaptability to emerging trends, granting schools more discretion to adjust or prioritize elective modules would further boost responsiveness.

Underutilization of schools' autonomy with regard to the curriculum, which allows institutions to tailor content to local labour market needs, is another significant issue.³¹ Despite its potential, this flexibility is rarely exercised, often because of limited institutional capacity, lack of clear guidance and weak collaboration with local employers. As a result, schools may miss out on critical opportunities to adapt more dynamically to evolving sectoral demands.

Compounding this is the slow pace of curriculum revision, currently on a cycle of approximately 7–8 years. Given the rapid transformation of the hospitality industry, driven by digital innovation, sustainability requirements, and changing consumer expectations, this timeframe is inadequate to ensure that content remains current and competitive. Moreover, while the existing curricula provide a solid foundation and address many core competencies valued by Kosovo's HoReCa employers, they fall short with regard to integrating emerging skills, such as digital marketing, sustainability management and advanced culinary innovation, all of which are increasingly important for long-term employability in the sector.

To address these challenges, it is essential to increase the frequency of curriculum updates, support employer-informed and evidence-based curriculum development and strengthen institutional capacity to effectively apply school-level autonomy for localized, timely curriculum adjustments. Enhancing these mechanisms will ensure that VET programmes remain relevant, flexible and responsive to evolving labour market needs.

30 Further details on dual VET are provided in section 8.

31 In general, the regulatory framework enables schools to play an active role in diversifying training provision and testing new modalities, such as dual VET. AI 01/2014 explicitly tasks VET schools with analysing labour market needs and planning their training offers accordingly. Based on this analysis, schools may submit formal requests to adopt new occupational profiles that are more in line with regional economic priorities or emerging skills demands.

With regard to curriculum planning:

- The KCF 2016 grants all upper secondary schools, including VET institutions, 20 per cent curriculum autonomy, enabling them to design and implement school-based content beyond the 80 per cent centrally prescribed curriculum.
- The AI (MESTI) No. 11/2023 provides guidance on the development and implementation of elective curriculum components in pre-university education. It outlines the procedures for curriculum planning, approval and quality assurance of elective modules within the 20 per cent flexible portion.
- Complementing this broader flexibility, AI 02/2014 provides VET schools with targeted autonomy to develop specific professional modules within existing occupational profiles, particularly those that address identified labour market demands. The development of such modules requires approval by MESTI for qualifications at levels 3 and 4, and accreditation by the National Qualifications Authority (NQA) for level 5 qualifications.

7.1.3. Integration of green, digital and soft skills

Modern VET curricula are expected to integrate green, digital and soft/transversal skills. Kosovo's HoReCa programmes have made notable progress in these areas, though some gaps remain. While soft and transversal skills are effectively embedded, green and digital competencies are currently addressed at a foundational level. The current approach to green and digital competencies remains operational rather than strategic, focusing on immediate workplace needs (such as hygiene, basic IT) rather than equipping students with advanced sustainability or digital transformation skills.

Green skills/sustainability

Environmental awareness is present across both older and newer curricula, primarily through modules on hygiene, food safety and waste management. For instance, the 2012 cook curriculum included training on managing food waste and maintaining sanitary conditions. Similarly, the 2020 curriculum reinforces environmental hygiene and proper disinfection practices. However, broader sustainability themes such as energy-efficient practices, sustainable sourcing or green tourism are not addressed explicitly. Future curricula could benefit from incorporating these topics to align with global sustainability trends in the hospitality industry.

Digital/ICT skills

Digital competencies are addressed at a basic level, primarily through general ICT education and the use of technology in training environments (for example, computers, internet access, presentation tools). Some curricula refer to the use of digital tools in practical training. However, there has been only limited integration of specialized industry software, such as reservation systems, digital cash registers or inventory tools. While students may encounter these during dual VET placements, the curricula themselves lack explicit learning outcomes related to modern hospitality technologies. As digitalization advances, curricula should embed more targeted ICT skills relevant to hospitality operations.

Soft and transversal skills

The strongest area of integration is soft skills, which are clearly emphasized in the newer curricula. Defined learning outcomes highlight communication, teamwork, patience, initiative and critical thinking as essential competencies. Teaching methods such as group work, role play and project-based learning support the development of these skills. In addition, foreign language communication, especially in English, is prioritized, along with entrepreneurship education and mentoring. These skills are crucial in a service-oriented sector and help ensure that students are prepared not just technically, but also socially and professionally.

As the sector evolves, future curriculum updates should expand and deepen the integration of sustainability principles and industry-specific digital tools to ensure that graduates are competitive in a fast-changing labour market.

7.1.4. Assessment and certification

Formal vocational education programmes are built around a competency-based assessment model, in which students are evaluated against clear learning outcomes across theoretical and practical components. Assessment is meant to be organized through a combination of formative (ongoing) and summative (final) evaluations, using tools such as written tests, oral presentations, project work and practical demonstrations that simulate real work environments.

Given the hands-on nature of the HoReCa sector, practical assessment plays a central role, especially in modules delivered in training kitchens, service areas or (under dual VET programmes) directly in

the workplace. In dual VET programmes such as hospitality assistant and cook, final-year students are expected to complete structured professional practice, supported by supervision, self-reflection and mentor feedback from employers.

Certification is awarded upon successful completion of all modules and the final examination at the end of Grade 12, corresponding to NQF Level 4. These qualifications are officially recognized, enabling graduates to either enter the labour market or continue to post-secondary or tertiary education (NQF Level 5 or 6).

However, a key structural issue affects learners who might not complete all three years. Although the curricula are designed to allow an early exit at the end of Grade 11, corresponding to NQF Level 3, no formal, standardized final examination or certification mechanism is organised at that level. As a result, students who leave after two years, whether for employment or other reasons, receive no officially recognized credential, despite having completed a significant portion of vocational training. This lack of formal certification at the end of Grade 11 undermines the intended flexibility of the VET system, which is designed to accommodate multiple exit and re-entry points in line with lifelong learning principles.

Beyond this structural gap, schools report additional challenges in the assessment process. There is considerable variation in the quality and consistency of assessments across institutions, highlighting the need for stronger guidance and oversight. In dual VET programmes, the coordination between schools and employers regarding the evaluation of practical learning is often weak or informal, leading to inconsistencies in the measurement of workplace performance. Furthermore, the use of digital assessment tools remains limited. The absence of systems such as e-portfolios or digital testing platforms not only reduces transparency but also constrains opportunities for modernizing the evaluation process.

Addressing these issues would significantly enhance the inclusiveness, transparency and responsiveness of the VET system. This includes establishing a formal certification pathway at the end of Grade 11 that corresponds to NQF Level 3, thereby ensuring that learners who exit early are still recognized for their achievements. It also requires strengthening quality assurance mechanisms, expanding the use of digital assessment tools and formalizing coordination structures between schools and employers, particularly in dual VET contexts, so that practical evaluations are consistent, credible and closely aligned with curriculum outcomes.

► 7.2. Overview of qualification programmes in vocational training centres

Public non-formal training, reskilling and upskilling of unemployed adults in the HoReCa sector is delivered through vocational training centres (VTCs), which are operated by the Employment Agency. They offer short-cycle qualifications tailored to immediate labour market needs. Unlike the formal VET system, these programmes follow a single, standardised curriculum for each qualification, which ensures consistency across all centres. Of the five programmes currently offered, Baker and Pastry Cook have been validated and the respective institutions accredited for their provision. For the remaining programmes, preparations are currently under way for validation and accreditation.

Currently, the most widely offered qualification is assistant cook, available at six VTCs: Gjilan, Ferizaj, Gjakovë, Pejë, Mitrovicë and Prizren. Other qualifications include Baker (offered in Prishtina and Prizren), Pastry Cook (Prishtina), and Waiter and Bartender (both available in Ferizaj and Prizren). This

provision is generally in line with established occupational standards for the HoReCa sector, with the exception of the Waiter standard, which is still in the process of validation and approval.

These non-formal programmes are well-structured, practical, and fit for short-cycle workforce entry, offering foundational skills in core hospitality occupations. They are modular, outcomes-based and offer credible certification pathways. They serve as a key instrument for skilling young NEETs and unemployed individuals, particularly in response to local sectoral demand.

7.2.1. Curriculum structure of VTC programmes

Each programme is modular in design, offering a coherent sequence of occupationally relevant units. The modules blend technical content with hygiene, safety and (in some cases) basic economic and business principles.

Strong emphasis is put on practical training, which makes up approximately 60–80 per cent of total learning time, depending on the qualification. Theoretical content supports practical skill-building rather than being delivered in isolation. However, these programmes are typically conducted in simulated settings, as direct work-based learning (for example, apprenticeships) is not a formal requirement.

7.2.2. Alignment with labour market needs

All programmes are formally linked to occupational standards validated between 2017 and 2019 (for example, for baker, assistant cook, and Pastry Cook), though the waiter standard remains under validation (see above). These standards provide the foundation for defining core competencies and learning outcomes.

However, there is some misalignment between the breadth of the training programmes and the limited scope of existing occupational standards, which cover mainly technical kitchen-based roles. Updating and expanding these standards (particularly to include service and supervisory functions) would improve the relevance and adaptability of training provision to the evolving needs of the HoReCa sector.

7.2.3. Integration of soft, digital and green skills in VTC programmes

The integration of soft and transversal skills is a consistent strength across all programmes. Core competencies such as communication, teamwork and hygiene awareness are embedded throughout the curricula, supporting learners' readiness for customer-facing roles. In particular, service-oriented qualifications such as waiter and bartender put additional emphasis on professional etiquette, customer interaction and service quality, which are essential in the hospitality environment.

In contrast, the inclusion of digital skills remains limited. References to technology use are generally confined to basic operational tools, such as kitchen equipment or cash registers. There is little to no mention of modern digital systems commonly used in the hospitality industry, such as point-of-sale (POS) software, online reservation platforms or inventory management tools. This indicates a gap between training content and current workplace technology needs.

Green skills are most visible in programmes linked to food preparation, in which modules address hygiene, environmental safety and waste management. These elements reflect an understanding of safe and responsible kitchen operations. However, broader concepts of sustainability, including energy efficiency, eco-friendly service practices and sustainable sourcing, are not covered explicitly. As environmental considerations become increasingly important in the hospitality sector, expanding the scope of green skills would enhance the relevance and long-term value of these programmes.

7.2.4. Assessment and certification of candidates in VTCs

Assessment is competency-based, and candidates are evaluated through both theoretical knowledge checks and practical demonstrations. Final certification is granted upon successful completion of all modules and fulfilment of performance criteria. Two out of five programmes are validated and aligned with national accreditation standards, and certificates for these programmes are recognized under the Kosovo Qualifications Framework.

► 7.3. Recognition of prior learning

Kosovo's recognition of prior learning (RPL) system is regulated by Administrative Instruction No. 31/2014 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning and Administrative Instruction No. 09/2019 on the accreditation of RPL providers. These instruments are in line with European Council Recommendation 2012/C 398/01, ensuring consistency with European standards.

Under this framework, accredited institutions assess whether a candidate's knowledge and skills meet the requirements of a national vocational qualification (NVQ) listed in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The process involves several key stages: candidate application, evidence submission, assessment by trained evaluators, and certification if learning outcomes are met. Institutions must undergo formal accreditation by the National Qualifications Authority (NQA) to deliver RPL services and must ensure quality and impartiality throughout the assessment process.

The central institution mandated to lead the implementation of recognition of prior learning (RPL) is the National Qualifications Authority (NQA). It is responsible for accrediting institutions authorized to deliver RPL, ensuring alignment with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and developing quality standards for assessment. To facilitate broader access and streamline procedures, the NQA introduced a digital RPL management system and an electronic accreditation platform in 2021–2022. These tools allow candidates to apply for assessment online and enable institutions to submit applications for RPL accreditation more efficiently. In parallel, with the support of the European Training Foundation (ETF) and DVV International, the NQA delivered structured training programmes for RPL coordinators, mentors and assessors to strengthen institutional readiness.

Despite these developments, the implementation of RPL remains limited. Only a limited number of institutions, mainly private VET providers, have been accredited to carry out RPL assessments. Of the approximately 125 national vocational qualifications currently included in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), RPL implementation has so far been confined to three pilot occupations: hairdressing, welding and electrical installations.

Challenges and gaps limit the impact and scale-up of recognition of prior learning, including:

- ▶ Limited provider participation: accreditation is mandatory for any institution to offer RPL, but the process is complex. Financial costs and bureaucratic procedures have discouraged many public VET providers from applying.
- ▶ Cost barriers: unlike formal schooling, RPL services in Kosovo are not free. Candidates must pay fees for assessment, and institutions must cover accreditation costs. Given tight budgets, many providers (especially public ones) find these costs prohibitive.
- ▶ Capacity constraints: the NQA and its stakeholders have limited staff and resources to manage, monitor and promote RPL across Kosovo. Expanding RPL requires more trained evaluators and streamlined administration.
- ▶ Awareness and demand: public understanding of RPL is very low. Potential beneficiaries (workers and employers) often do not know that RPL exists or how to access it, indicating an urgent need for awareness raising campaigns and guidance services.
- ▶ Scope limitations: current regulations restrict RPL to continuing VET (adult education); initial vocational and general education pathways are not covered. This narrows RPL's reach across the economy.

These challenges are particularly pertinent in the hospitality sector, where a large portion of the workforce acquires skills informally, on the job or through life experience. Roles such as cooks, servers and cleaners often lack access to formal certification, even when workers perform to industry standards. Recognition of prior learning presents a valuable opportunity to recognize these competencies, contributing to both individual career progression and improved service quality across the HoReCa sector.

To unlock the full potential of RPL, Kosovo should consider reducing financial barriers for candidates and providers, strengthening provider capacities, and expanding the system's scope beyond adult education. Public information campaigns and stronger partnerships between RPL providers, employers and career guidance services will be essential to build trust and stimulate demand. With sustained commitment from public institutions and donor support, Kosovo's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) system, which is still in the early stages of development, can evolve into a powerful mechanism for addressing skills gaps, promoting lifelong learning, and fostering inclusive participation in the labour market.

8. Work-based learning, career guidance and entrepreneurship training

► 8. Work-based learning, career guidance and entrepreneurship training

In this section the implementation of work-based learning (WBL) is reviewed, with a particular focus on dual VET. In this, progress, institutional practices and challenges encountered in both school and workplace settings are highlighted. Also under assessment are the availability and quality of career guidance services, which play a vital role in helping learners make informed choices about their educational and professional futures. Lastly, the chapter examines how entrepreneurship is embedded in both formal and non-formal programmes, paying attention to role in fostering self-employment and enterprise development in the HoReCa sector.

Through this analysis, the section identifies gaps, good practices and opportunities to strengthen these pillars of VET in support of a more responsive, inclusive and future-ready skills development system.

► 8.1. Work-based learning

Practical training has long been a cornerstone of HoReCa education in Kosovo, given the skill-intensive nature of the sector. Earlier curricula (2012–2013) emphasized in-school workshops and short internships, offering modules with strong hands-on components, such as food preparation and service. These were delivered through workshops, supervised by instructors who assessed students through practical demonstrations and work diaries. However, these efforts were largely school-driven and lacked a structured framework for continuous, workplace-integrated learning.

The 2022 curricula mark a significant shift by formally integrating dual VET, in which students split their time between school and companies.³² This model in Kosovo aims to improve job readiness by aligning

32 Given the absence of a universally recognized definition of “dual learning” or related terms within the VET context, the Donor Committee for Dual Vocational Education and Training facilitated discussions among stakeholders in Kosovo to develop a classification of key concepts. This effort aimed to promote a more coherent and aligned understanding of dual learning and its various forms across institutions and partners (DC dVET, 2024). As a result of this dialogue, a typology of learning modalities was developed to differentiate between varying levels of work integration within VET programmes, including the following:

- Work-based learning/learning at work, which is at one end of the spectrum and involves learners being exposed to real work processes and gaining practical experience in a workplace setting.
- Dualized VET, which is at the other end of the spectrum and refers to school-based learning enriched with elements that bring working life into the classroom or school workshop. This can be considered to be learning about work. Another common modality is the internship, which represents a more structured form of workplace practice.
- The combination and expansion of these elements leads to what is referred to as dual VET, in which theoretical and practical learning are integrated through aligned curricula and typically delivered within the framework of an apprenticeship.

In this context, “dual VET” is used as an umbrella term that encompasses both dualized VET programmes—which include a modest share of work-based learning and view participants primarily as students—and dual VET, characterized by a substantial share of work-based learning (generally not less than 50 per cent), during which learners are treated as employees of a company (DC dVET, 2024).

classroom learning with real-world experience in hospitality environments. It is organized as a three-year programme, combining school-based learning at VET schools with practical training in companies. Students spend at least 50 per cent of their total training time in real workplaces, supported by structured in-company training plans aligned with standardized curricula. The first semester focuses entirely on school-based learning to address knowledge gaps and prepare students for workplace integration, including soft skills development, CV preparation and the search for suitable training companies. From the second semester onwards, students alternate between school and company-based training, gradually increasing their time spent in the workplace. Students sign formal contracts with companies, receive monthly compensation, and maintain a “dual VET diary” to document their progress, which is a requirement for graduation. Coordination between VET schools and companies is formalized through cooperation agreements, and dedicated instructors in both venues are expected to be responsible for monitoring and assessing student development.

Table 7 presents an overview of practical training components across various HoReCa-related VET curricula currently implemented in Kosovo. It outlines the number of hours dedicated to practical training each year, distinguishing between traditional school-based programmes and those delivered under dual VET. The data highlight the share of practical training in relation to total lesson hours and reflect the evolving emphasis on work-based learning in vocational education reforms. Notably, dual VET curricula allocate a higher percentage of instruction time to in-company training, enhancing alignment with labour market needs and improving graduate employability.

► **Table 7: Allocation of practical training hours in HoReCa VET programmes**

Curriculum	Year	Practical hours	Estimated total lesson hours	% Practical training	Main training mode
Cook (2012)	Y1	245 h	~1,100 h	~22%	School-based + short in-company practice
	Y2	350 h	~1,100 h	~32%	
	Y3	384 h	~1,100 h	~35%	
	Total	979 h	~3,300 h	~30%	
Restaurant assistant (2013)	Y1	~204 h	~1,100 h	~19%	School-based + short in-company practice
	Y2	~300 h	~1,100 h	~27%	
	Y3	~350 h	~1,100 h	~32%	
	Total	~850–900 h	~3,300 h	~26–27%	
Hospitality assistant (2013)	Y1	~204 h	~1,100 h	~19%	School-based + short in-company practice
	Y2	~300 h	~1,100 h	~27%	
	Y3	~350 h	~1,100 h	~32%	
	Total	~850–900 h	~3,300 h	~26–27%	
Hospitality assistant (2020)	Y1	210 h	~1,100 h	~19%	Mixed (school + internship)
	Y2	315 h	~1,100 h	~29%	
	Y3	384 h	~1,100 h	~35%	
	Total	909 h	~3,300 h	~28%	
Hospitality assistant-dual (2022)	Y1	~400 h (est.)	~1,100 h	~36%	Dual (school + company)
	Y2	~500 h (est.)	~1,100 h	~45%	
	Y3	~600 h (est.)	~1,100 h	~55%	
	Total	~1,500 h (est.)	~3,300 h	~45%	
Cook-dual (2022)	Y1	~400 h (est.)	~1,100 h	~36%	Dual (school + company)
	Y2	~500 h (est.)	~1,100 h	~45%	
	Y3	~600 h (est.)	~1,100 h	~55%	
	Total	~1,500 h (est.)	~3,300 h	~45%	

Source: Curriculum documents

Recent evaluations in student and company surveys confirm the growing impact of dual VET implementation (GFA, 2023). Students report high satisfaction with soft skills development, company support and the structure of workplace learning: over 94 per cent actively participate and complete key programme components, such as work diaries and contractual agreements. Similarly, businesses report notable improvements in students' knowledge, practical skills and workplace behaviours, rating over 70 per cent of students highly across key soft skills indicators. Companies also expressed a strong readiness to continue to offer dual VET places and hire graduates, demonstrating the model's positive contribution to bridging education and employment.

While these evaluations indicate encouraging progress in the implementation of dual VET at both the student and company levels, broader systemic challenges persist with regard to fully embedding work-based learning practices within the HoReCa sector. Although a significant proportion of providers report that partnerships meet basic work-based learning requirements by offering students practical exposure, critical gaps remain. These include limited employer involvement in curriculum development; an insufficient number of structured internship opportunities; and occasional misalignments between industry needs and the skills imparted through training. Consequently, while industry collaboration is established, it remains only partially effective and requires more strategic and structured engagement to properly strengthen the quality and relevance of vocational education.

Key challenges that were identified on the implementation side:

- Limited capacity of employers: most businesses in the HoReCa sector are micro or small enterprises, often lacking the resources, scale or infrastructure needed to offer comprehensive training across all required occupational skills.
- Unstructured workplace learning: work-based learning is often not implemented according to curriculum standards, with inadequate planning, supervision or alignment with intended learning outcomes. Cases were also reported in which students were treated as regular employees, without proper regard for their age, educational needs or learning objectives.
- Appearance-based selection concerns: in some instances, students were rejected from placements based on non-educational criteria, such as physical appearance or height, especially in roles like bartending. While presentation standards are recognized in the hospitality industry, such practices raise concerns about equal access to training and inclusiveness for all learners.
- Financial concerns: employers expressed reluctance to participate in dual VET, often citing perceived financial obligations or the absence of incentive mechanisms to support student placements.
- School-based constraints: many schools struggle to deliver high-quality practical training because of the lack of functional workshops, outdated or insufficient equipment, limited availability of consumables, and gaps in instructor capacity to conduct effective hands-on learning.
- Underdeveloped coordination mechanisms: only a few schools have designated WBL coordinators responsible for managing employer partnerships, which results in fragmented and inconsistent implementation of work-based learning.

Administrative Instruction 137/2020 regulates the organization, supervision and evaluation of work-based learning, and Administrative Instruction 135/2020 outlines student safety protocols, but there is still no formal mechanism to incentivize enterprise participation in dual VET. Without such support, many employers remain hesitant to engage meaningfully.

In response to workplace limitations, some schools have invested in simulated work environments to ensure that students may still gain practical exposure. These facilities—such as training kitchens and mock reception areas—are valuable substitutes, though not a full replacement for real-world learning.

In summary, the transition of HoReCa related curricula from ad hoc internships to structured dual VET is a major advance. However, successful implementation hinges on resolving systemic challenges, particularly in school-industry cooperation, infrastructure and instructor support.

► 8.2. Career guidance

Career guidance has emerged as a central component of Kosovo's education and training system, particularly when it comes to aligning young people's skills with evolving labour market demands. Recognizing the role of career support in fostering lifelong learning and employability, Kosovo has made substantial strides towards institutionalising and professionalising career guidance services, particularly in vocational education and training (VET) and upper secondary education.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), in collaboration with development partners, spearheaded efforts to embed structured career guidance services across the education system. Central to this was the introduction of Administrative Instruction (MESTI) No. 18/2023, which regulates the organization, standards and duties of career counsellors operating in both VET schools and gymnasiums (MESTI, 2023). This regulation institutionalized the career counsellor role in school organizational charts and outlined clear standards for service provision, infrastructure needs and monitoring mechanisms.

A key feature of the current system is the establishment of school-based career centres (SBCCs) within VET schools, introduced through donor-supported initiatives such as Helvetas' Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) project. These centres aim to bridge the gap between education and employment by providing personalized career advice, organizing career fairs, facilitating access to career information through platforms such as Busulla.com, and engaging employers directly in student career development. By 2024, 23 career centres had been established across Kosovo, serving approximately 12,000 students and setting a new standard for delivering sustainable career services through public funding and local ownership (Helvetas, 2024). Notably, out of the 13 VET schools offering HoReCa-related qualifications, 12 have operational career centres, highlighting strong institutional uptake in the sector.

A formal qualification and training programme for career advisors (aligned with NQF Level 5) was also developed in cooperation with the National Qualifications Authority (NQA). This initiative addressed a significant barrier, as many teachers were initially reluctant to assume career counselling roles because of the lack of accredited credentials and limited professional recognition (Helvetas, 2024). A career centre network was established for vocational schools, bringing together over 50 members from all career centres established to date.

To complement school-based initiatives, Kosovo has embraced digital innovation through the development of Busulla.com, the official national career guidance platform endorsed by the MESTI. This platform was established through a public-private partnership involving Smart Bits, LuxDev and other donors, aiming to provide comprehensive career guidance services across the country. Busulla.com offers a suite of tools, including self-assessment tests, detailed occupational profiles, information on labour market demand and compensation rates, and direct links to career advisors. Its functionalities are comparable to the International Labour Organization's Occupational Outlook platforms implemented in neighbouring countries, such as North Macedonia's www.zanimanja.mk. Busulla.com is also integrated into the training curricula for teachers responsible for career guidance, as well as into educational programmes. This integration ensures that both educators and students

are equipped to utilize the platform effectively, fostering a more informed and proactive approach to career planning.

Despite these advancements, several challenges persist in the effective delivery of career guidance services. Ensuring sustainable funding remains a significant concern, particularly in municipalities with limited financial resources. Although career counsellors have received standardized training, sector-specific modules and tools (especially for fast-growing industries such as hospitality) are lacking. This gap limits counsellors' ability to provide students with targeted, industry-relevant guidance. Furthermore, while digital platforms such as Busulla.com have broadened access to general career information, stronger alignment is needed between school-based guidance activities and the evolving demands of key economic sectors. In many cases, the absence of tailored sectoral strategies, materials and basic infrastructure—such as furnished career centre spaces and up-to-date information resources—hampers efforts to promote specialized career pathways. As a result, valuable opportunities to guide students toward meaningful employment in high-potential sectors such as HoReCa often remain underutilized.

Looking ahead, Kosovo is well positioned to build upon the foundations laid over the past decade. Plans are under way to expand career guidance services across all vocational education and training (VET) and general secondary schools. Institutionalization efforts, such as integrating career guidance into national education budgets and teacher training systems, are critical to ensuring long-term sustainability. Strengthening partnerships with employers and expanding outreach to underrepresented groups will be vital in creating a career guidance system that leaves no one behind. As the system continues to mature, it has the potential to play a central role in empowering the next generation to navigate their futures with more confidence, resilience and opportunities.

► 8.3. Entrepreneurship training

The integration of entrepreneurship education in Kosovo's HoReCa-related vocational programmes has advanced notably in recent years, particularly through the adoption of the 2020 core curricula and their dual VET adaptations. These more recent programmes reflect a structured and deliberate approach to building entrepreneurial competencies among students, an essential step in a sector in which self-employment and small business ownership are common career pathways.

In the 2022 dual VET curricula (for example, for hospitality assistants and cooks) entrepreneurship was introduced through a dedicated module titled "Applied trade and entrepreneurship" in Grade 10. This module covers core concepts of entrepreneurship, including the role and characteristics of entrepreneurs, stages of business development, sales strategies, and creativity in business idea generation. Learning outcomes are clearly articulated and promote both theoretical understanding and applied entrepreneurial thinking. Students are encouraged to explore the value of entrepreneurship, compare wage employment with self-employment, and develop essential transversal skills, such as communication, initiative and problem-solving, all within the context of the hospitality industry.

In contrast, the 2013 curricula (for example, for hospitality assistants and restaurant assistants) do not include a standalone entrepreneurship element. While these programmes incorporate some elements of marketing, business awareness and service management, they lack a comprehensive focus on entrepreneurship as a distinct skill set. Entrepreneurial learning, where present, is embedded within broader vocational content without specific outcomes or dedicated instruction time.

Overall, the evolution from implicit treatment of entrepreneurship to dedicated, outcome-driven modules represents a significant improvement in the relevance and responsiveness of the curricula to labour market realities. The dual VET curricula in particular provide a more holistic preparation for students, equipping them not only for employment but also for self-employment and innovation in the HoReCa sector.

Entrepreneurship is crucial in the HoReCa sector, in which many workers eventually become self-employed or establish small businesses. For this reason, continued emphasis on business skills, real-life project work and engagement with successful entrepreneurs is strongly encouraged. In particular, earlier curricula still in use should be expanded or retrofitted to strengthen entrepreneurship components, while schools are encouraged to complement theoretical content with practical exposure, such as guest lectures, enterprise visits, or mini-business projects. These enhancements will ensure that all learners, regardless of programme type, are equipped with the entrepreneurial mindset and competencies needed in today's dynamic hospitality industry.

With regard to non-formal programmes, basic entrepreneurial awareness is incorporated to a modest extent in most non-formal HoReCa training programmes (typically through introductory modules on economics and self-employment) while overall depth and application remain limited. Beyond these introductory modules, two (out of seven nationwide) vocational training centres (VTCs) offer two distinct entrepreneurship-focused training programmes:

- **Managing an SME (250 hours):** This more comprehensive programme provides foundational knowledge and applied skills for managing a small or medium-sized enterprise. It is designed for aspiring entrepreneurs or current small-business managers seeking structured, practical training.
- **Producing a Business Plan (40 hours):** A shorter, focused training course that equips participants with the skills needed to conceptualize, draft and refine a viable business plan. This course targets people preparing for self-employment or those looking to formalize and present their business ideas for financing or incubation.

These programmes mark an important step toward strengthening entrepreneurship education within the non-formal public training system. However, their limited availability means that both access and overall impact are constrained. Expanding these programmes across all VTCs and embedding similar entrepreneurial content into core HoReCa qualifications would significantly enhance the entrepreneurial readiness of graduates. This would ensure that all learners, not just those in select centres, are equipped with practical, business-oriented skills in line with Kosovo's labour market needs and broader economic development priorities.

Beyond technical and business knowledge, teaching entrepreneurship plays a transformative role in shaping young people's mindsets. It helps to build an entrepreneurial culture by encouraging learners to view self-employment as a viable and aspirational career path. Through participatory and experiential learning approaches, these courses cultivate key entrepreneurial traits such as initiative, creativity and risk awareness, while fostering critical thinking about traditional employment options. This shift in perspective is especially valuable in the HoReCa sector, in which small business ownership and innovation can drive job creation and service improvement.

In parallel, emerging opportunities for entrepreneurship training online are beginning to take shape in Kosovo as well. Some donor-supported initiatives have piloted digital modules to complement in-person instruction. However, effective implementation of online or hybrid formats will require adapting existing curricula for digital use, strengthening infrastructure and building trainer capacity. With appropriate support, online entrepreneurship training could offer greater flexibility, reach underserved populations, and act as a valuable supplement to in-person learning, particularly in remote or rural areas.

► 8.4. Institutional twinning and mobility schemes

Kosovo's vocational education and training (VET) institutions have been making concerted efforts to engage in international collaborations and mobility initiatives to enhance educational quality and align with European standards. However, the scope and scale of these initiatives remain limited, often constrained by factors such as language barriers, funding challenges and institutional capacities. Additionally, until recently, the lack of visa liberalization posed a significant obstacle to mobility.

These constraints must be loosened in order to unlock the full benefits of international cooperation, particularly in enhancing the quality and relevance of vocational education and training and improving employment outcomes for learners.

9. Assessment of current equipment, alignment with labour market needs

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As part of equipment needs assessment, a questionnaire was sent to VET providers across Kosovo. Responses were collected from 12 out of 14 public vocational education institutions offering HoReCa-related qualifications and from all 7 vocational training centres (VTCs).

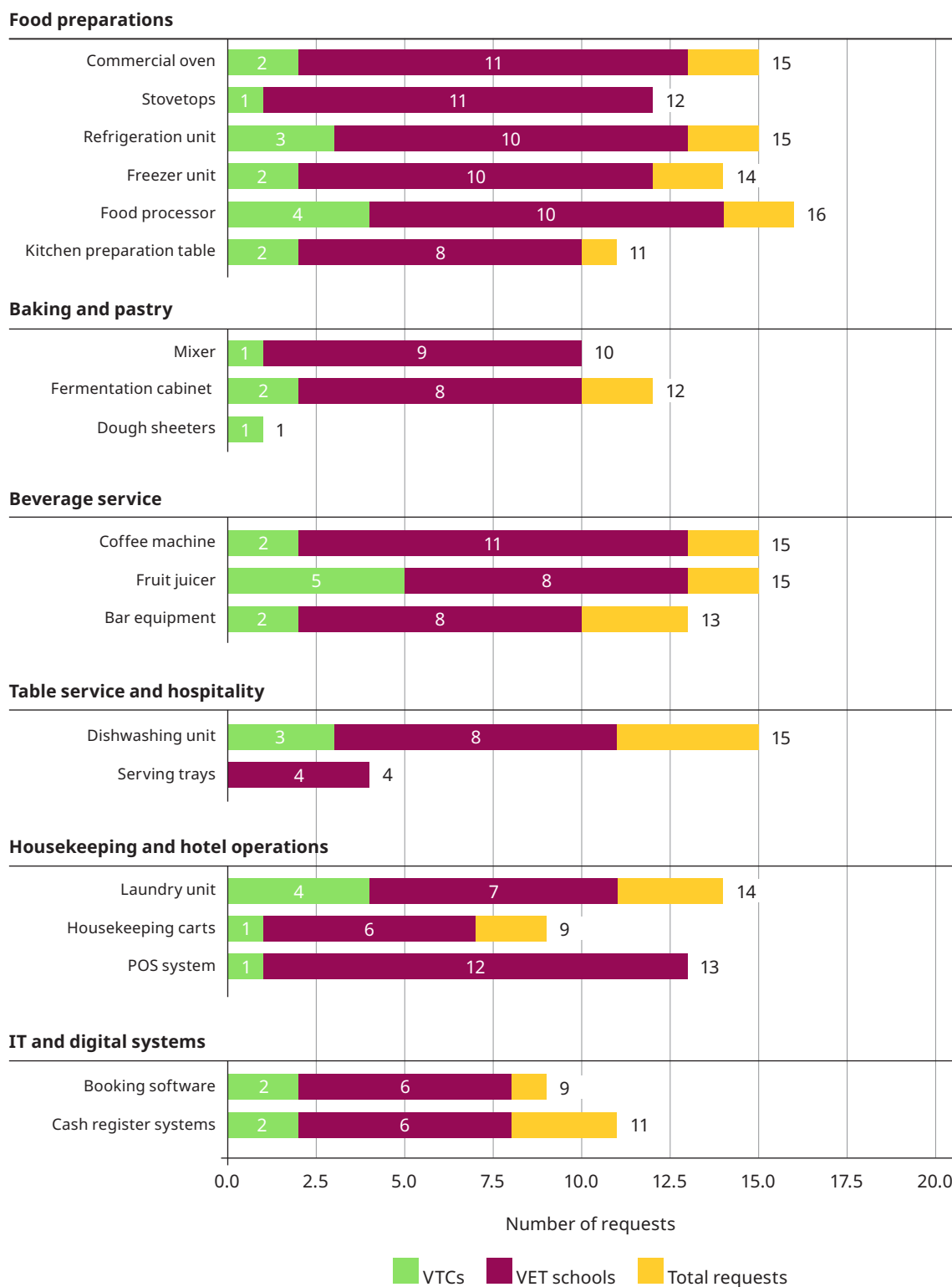
The assessment of existing equipment across VET schools and VTCs reveals that, in most cases, current resources only partially meet industry standards. Common challenges include outdated or obsolete machinery, insufficient quantities of essential equipment to support effective practical training, and a lack of specialized or advanced tools that reflect the latest technological developments in the hospitality sector. While basic practical needs are often covered, there is a clear and pressing need to upgrade and expand equipment inventories to ensure that training environments are fully aligned with contemporary industry requirements.

The equipment needs assessment further identifies substantial demand for food preparation, hospitality and hotel operations equipment. VET schools report a notably higher volume of requests compared with VTCs. Priority needs in food preparation include commercial ovens, refrigeration units and food processors, while baking and pastry equipment (such as fermentation cabinets and mixers) are also highly sought after. Beverage service equipment, particularly coffee machines and fruit juicers, is in strong demand, and VTCs account for a notable share of fruit juicer requests.

The dishwashing units are likewise in high demand. However, the low demand for serving trays and the lack of simulated hotel environments across institutions indicate significant deficiencies in the practical training infrastructure for front-of-house operations. Similarly, hotel operations equipment, including laundry units and point-of-sale (POS) systems, is prioritized, reflecting efforts to strengthen hotel management training. Moderate demand for IT and digital systems indicates a growing, but still emerging, emphasis on digital skill development. Additionally, a range of small kitchen appliances, requested exclusively by VTCs, points to emerging specialized training needs.

Overall, the assessment underscores strong foundational needs across key occupational areas while highlighting critical gaps, particularly in hospitality simulation facilities and service-side training infrastructure. Addressing these gaps is essential to ensure that VET schools provide comprehensive, sector-relevant vocational skills development.

Figure 2 provides an overview of the most needed equipment to better align practical training facilities with contemporary sectoral standards.

► **Figure 2: Equipment needs by type and institution**

Source: VET providers

A strong consensus was identified around a number of key priorities. Institutions emphasize the importance of aligning training with current sectoral standards to improve graduate employability and meet labour market expectations. Updating outdated equipment is considered essential to integrate the latest technologies and to provide students with hands-on experience using tools and systems commonly found in modern workplaces. Furthermore, respondents noted that addressing equipment gaps is necessary to respond to feedback from employers and evaluations of work-based learning practices. Overall, investment in equipment is viewed as critical to maintaining the quality, relevance and competitiveness of vocational education in the hospitality and tourism sector.

However, the self-assessment conducted by VET providers highlighted important limitations in institutional capacities to assess equipment and infrastructure needs against modern sectoral and pedagogical standards. In many cases, identified needs focused primarily on replacing or acquiring equipment, without sufficiently considering broader requirements related to functionality, efficiency, ergonomics, occupational safety and health, workflow organization, energy efficiency, accessibility, and pedagogical suitability for high-quality practical training. This points to the need for additional technical guidance and support to help institutions plan investments in a more strategic and sustainable manner, aligned with modern industry standards and effective teaching and learning practices.

Another important aspect to be considered as part of the needs assessment is the potential introduction of new qualifications to address emerging occupational demands. This would require a comprehensive evaluation of additional equipment needs to support both existing programmes and new qualifications, ensuring that VET schools are adequately equipped to deliver high-quality, sector-relevant training and improve the employability of graduates in the hospitality and tourism sector.

In parallel, resource allocation must be guided by principles of efficiency and sustainability. For example, equipping institutions with limited capacity or low enrolment may not represent the most effective use of resources. Alternative solutions, such as shared training facilities or regional centres, would need to be explored to ensure optimal utilization of equipment and broader access for students.

In this context, particular attention will also be paid to dynamic institutions that, while not currently offering sector-relevant profiles or curricula, demonstrate strong interest in the opportunities presented by the HoReCa sector. Institutions located in areas with high potential for tourism and hospitality development should be mobilized to enhance the overall responsiveness and reach of the VET system. It is essential to take due consideration of all these aspects, including institutional potential, regional development opportunities, occupations in demand, as well as equipment and qualification needs, when planning measures to support the effective and sustainable expansion of vocational education in the sector.

10. Recommendations to enhance VET responsiveness and quality for the HoReCa sector

► 10. Recommendations to enhance VET responsiveness and quality for the HoReCa sector

The hospitality and tourism (HoReCa) sector in Kosovo presents a growing source of employment and a dynamic field requiring a skilled, adaptable workforce. However, persistent mismatches between training supply and labour market demand, combined with structural challenges such as outdated qualifications, underdeveloped pathways, and limited employer involvement, have constrained the sector's potential to absorb young talent, particularly young NEETs.

To lay the foundation for coordinated, long-term improvements, it is recommended to develop a comprehensive skills strategy for the HoReCa sector. Informed by labour market intelligence and developed in close collaboration with sectoral stakeholders, training providers and public institutions, the strategy will serve as a roadmap for human resource development to support the sector's sustained growth. It will define priority occupations, address critical skills gaps, align qualifications with evolving market demands and promote inclusive, employment-oriented learning pathways. Alignment with the EU acquis and broader European policy frameworks should also be considered an important driver for the modernisation of vocational education and training in the HoReCa sector. The gradual approximation of Kosovo's education, employment and tourism-related policies with EU standards requires strengthening the quality, relevance, inclusiveness and labour market responsiveness of VET provision. This includes promoting competency-based qualifications, quality assurance mechanisms, work-based learning, recognition of skills and qualifications, and the integration of green, digital and entrepreneurial competences in line with evolving European priorities for sustainable tourism and workforce development. In this context, strengthening the HoReCa skills ecosystem represents not only an economic and employment priority, but also an important component of Kosovo's broader European integration agenda.

Recognising the initiation of legislative reform aimed at reducing fragmentation, eliminating functional overlaps and establishing a more coherent and accountable VET governance framework, the following recommendations offer a structured roadmap for the development and implementation of Kosovo's proposed skills strategy. They are designed to enhance the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of the VET system by addressing key gaps in qualification design, programme delivery, assessment practices, training infrastructure and institutional coordination.

1. Support consolidation of the Sectoral Skills Council for the HoReCa sector

Key actions include:

- a) Formalising the mandate and governance structure of the Sectoral Skills Council (SSC), clarifying roles, decision-making procedures and its advisory authority in qualification development, occupational standards and skills forecasting.

- b) Ensuring balanced representation of key stakeholders, including employers, training providers, chambers of commerce, trade unions and relevant ministries.
- c) Providing technical and administrative support for the SSC's operation, including secretariat services, expert facilitation and meeting coordination to maintain regular and results-oriented engagement.
- d) Enhancing the Council's role in conducting skills-demand and anticipation studies, with a focus on identifying emerging skill needs in the sector and endorsing priority occupations. In addition, the Council should assess the need to revise qualification programmes, facilitate the drafting and revision of occupational standards, support employer and employee involvement in VET management processes, and promote the implementation of work-based learning.
- e) Facilitating capacity-building for SSC members, including training on the NQF, qualification development processes and sectoral skills planning tools;
- f) Linking SSC recommendations to policy and funding decisions, ensuring that outputs are not only consultative but also shape programme approval, curriculum revision and public investment in training.

2. Institutionalize and expand the use of labour market intelligence tools to improve the responsiveness of the VET system to labour market needs in the HoReCa sector

Key actions include:

- a) Building institutional capacity within ministries and VET agencies to lead and coordinate regular labour and skills demand and anticipation analysis.
- b) Promoting employer participation in validating findings and shaping programme responses.
- c) Establishing formal mechanisms for sharing labour market data with VET providers, policymakers and employers.

3. Support the development of a coherent, demand-responsive and future-oriented qualification offer that reflects the evolving skills needs of the HoReCa sector and supports inclusive, sustainable economic growth

Key actions include:

- a) Ensuring all updated and new qualifications embed green skills, digital skills and entrepreneurship education, equipping learners to promote sustainability, take advantage of technology and create an entrepreneurship culture by promoting self-employment or business development within the sector.
- b) Coordinating provision between formal and non-formal public VET providers to avoid overlap, strengthen lifelong learning pathways and support the upskilling of both new entrants and current sector workers.
- c) Discontinuing low-relevance or duplicative programmes that no longer correspond to current labour market demand.
- d) Introducing new qualifications and modular content to address identified gaps and support emerging occupations.

4. Establish a formal certification mechanism at NQF Level 3 to recognize partial completion of formal vocational education programmes, improving the overall inclusiveness and flexibility of the VET system

Key actions include:

- a) Developing a standardized final assessment and certification process aligned with NQF Level 3 learning outcomes and occupational standards for relevant profiles.
- b) Defining clear criteria and procedures for certification of early leavers, including recognition of completed modules and practical training components.
- c) Providing guidance and orientation to VET schools on the implementation of the certification mechanism, including adjustments to assessment practices and student support services.
- d) Raising awareness among employers about the value and recognition of NQF Level 3 certificates to strengthen their relevance in the labour market.
- e) Monitoring and evaluating implementation of the certification process to ensure quality, equity and alignment with labour market needs.

5. Foster sustained and meaningful participation of HoReCa employers in the development of qualifications and the evaluation of practical skills

Key actions include:

- a) Engaging leading industry actors early in the qualification lifecycle, emphasizing how their input directly shapes the quality of future employees and helps address skills shortages in the sector.
- b) Establishing flexible and time-efficient engagement models, such as short-term roles in qualification review panels or half-day participation in practical exams, to reduce the time burden on busy professionals.
- c) Recognizing employer contributions publicly, for example through certificates of contribution, listings on institutional websites, or co-branding of jointly validated qualifications.
- d) Offering professional networking opportunities, such as participation in advisory boards or VET-industry roundtables, to reinforce the value of engagement as a platform for influence and visibility.
- e) Providing light training or orientation for employer representatives involved in assessments, ensuring they understand the evaluation criteria and quality assurance framework while feeling confident in their role.
- f) Showcasing success stories, highlighting how employer involvement has led to improved training outcomes, better prepared candidates and stronger recruitment pipelines for participating businesses.
- g) Exploring financial or non-financial incentives in collaboration with chambers of commerce or employer associations (for example, priority access to trained graduates, vouchers for training contributions, or use of institutional facilities).

6. Strengthen human and institutional capacity for design and delivery of high quality, relevant and industry-responsive training in the HoReCa sector

Key actions include:

- a) Providing targeted professional development for VET teachers and instructors, focused on modern pedagogy, digital tools, green and entrepreneurial skills, and up-to-date sectoral practices.
- b) Facilitating structured sectoral exposure for trainers and staff through internships, job shadowing and in-company training to ensure practical relevance.
- c) Developing training-of-trainers (ToT) programmes for instructors in both formal and non-formal settings, especially in emerging areas such as experience design, digital hospitality solutions, entrepreneurship and sustainability.
- d) Strengthening institutional capacity in curriculum development, employer engagement, programme implementation and quality assurance.
- e) Promoting institutional twinning and staff mobility, both domestically and internationally, to support peer learning, exchange of good practices, and alignment with regional and EU standards.
- f) Encouraging knowledge sharing platforms and communities of practice among VET professionals to foster innovation and collaboration across institutions.

7. Explore options for enhancing career guidance programmes in the hotel industry

Key actions include:

- a) Developing sector-specific modules to complement the training programme for career counsellors, with a focus on the HoReCa sector. These modules should enhance counsellors' understanding of sector-specific career pathways, skill requirements and employment trends, enabling them to provide more targeted and informed guidance to students and jobseekers interested in hospitality and tourism professions.
- b) Supporting stronger alignment between career guidance services and the evolving demands of the HoReCa sector, ensuring that guidance reflects current and emerging occupational trends, skill needs, and career pathways, including self-employment.
- c) Strengthening partnerships with employers to enhance the relevance and impact of career guidance through workplace exposure, mentoring and real-world insights.
- d) Expanding outreach to underrepresented groups to build an inclusive career guidance system that promotes equal access to information and opportunities, ensuring that no one is left behind.

8. Upgrade training infrastructure and equipment to support practical skills development

Key actions include:

- a) Replacing outdated training equipment with modern tools and technologies that reflect current sectoral standards in food preparation, hospitality and hotel operations.
- b) Expanding essential equipment inventories to ensure that all learners have access to practical training resources, particularly in areas such as culinary arts, housekeeping and service.

- c) Establishing and upgrading simulated training environments within VET institutions—including fully equipped kitchen and HoReCa assistant labs—to strengthen hands-on learning in food preparation, front-of-house operations, customer service, and event management. These facilities should provide realistic, practice-oriented settings that mirror industry standards and enhance students' readiness for employment in the hospitality sector.
- d) Integrating digital tools and systems, such as booking platforms, point-of-sale (POS) systems, cash registers, and property management software, to develop learners' digital competencies and prepare them for technology-enabled workplaces.
- e) Aligning all infrastructure investments with evolving market and technological trends, while ensuring full compliance with safety and health regulations, security measures, hygiene, and accessibility standards. This will help maintain training environments that are modern, compliant, and responsive to the evolving needs of the HoReCa sector.

9. Leverage and upgrade existing active labour market measures (ALMMs) to improve the integration of young NEETs

Key actions include:

- a) Adapting existing wage subsidy and on-the-job training schemes to target in-demand HoReCa occupations, such as front-desk staff, cooks, waitstaff, baristas and housekeeping roles, in partnership with hotels, restaurants and tourism operators.
- b) Aligning VTC training programmes supported by the Employment Agency with the updated offer of formal VET providers for the HoReCa sector. The joint package should be designed collaboratively to enable flexible learning pathways between formal and non-formal programmes, while avoiding duplication and ensuring strong labour market relevance through consistent content, shared learning outcomes and modular delivery.
- c) Expanding access to entrepreneurship education and training through blended and online delivery, building on emerging tools such as the ILO's Know About Business (KAB), Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) e-modules and other digital learning platforms. These resources can be also integrated into the broader HoReCa training package to increase outreach, flexibility and cost-effectiveness, particularly for young NEETs in remote or underserved areas, and to complement in-person coaching and mentoring support.
- d) Enhancing the self-employment support scheme (start-up grants, mentoring and coaching) to reflect HoReCa entrepreneurship opportunities, such as small guesthouses, food and beverage ventures, rural tourism services, or event-based businesses.
- e) Coordinating targeted outreach and activation strategies in collaboration with municipal employment offices, VET schools and local actors to engage NEET young people, especially in underserved urban and rural areas, into HoReCa-focused ALMMs.
- f) Jointly monitoring NEET outcomes in the HoReCa sector, including placement rates, business start-ups and retention, using existing data systems to support continuous improvement and scaling of effective practices.

10. Develop and implement a central mechanism to track the employment and education outcomes of VET graduates

Key actions include:

- a) Designing and piloting a graduate tracking system integrated with central education and labour market data systems.
- b) Collecting data on employment status, job relevance, working conditions and further education six to twelve months after graduation.
- c) Disaggregating results by qualification, gender, region and sector to support inclusive policy responses.
- d) Using findings to inform curriculum updates, improve student support services and refine sector strategies.

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Annexes

► Annexes

► Annex 1: List of key stakeholders interviewed³³

Key stakeholders interviewed	
1	Mr Avni Gashi, quality assurance expert, National Qualification Authority
2	Ms Donjeta Nimani, RPL official, National Qualification Authority
3	Ms Ferdeze Agaj, acting head of the Division for Quality Assurance and Certification, Vocational Training Department, Employment Agency
4	Mr Ylber Aliu, head of the Division for Employment and Vocational Training, Department of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers
5	Ms Lindita Podvorica, senior official for employment policies, Department of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers
6	Ms Ardita Sopjani, senior official for employment policies, Department of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers
7	Ms Bukuriye Visoka, senior official for VET, Department of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers
8	Ms Shqipe Dema, director of the Department for Rural Development Policies, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development
9	Ms Nysrete Doda-Gashi, head of the Division for Farm Investment and Diversification, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development
10	Ms Valbona Fetiu-Mjeku, head of the Division for Vocational Education and Training Standards and Quality Assurance
11	Mr Besart Krasniqi, director of VET Department, Kosovo Chamber of Commerce
12	Mr Besart Zymeri, manager at KORABI PURATOS, private training provider
13	Ms Njomza Uka, programme coordinator, VORAE ³⁴
14	Marije Vuksani, project manager, Empowering Youth for Inclusive Employment, Terre des Hommes
15	Naser Lajqi, project manager, Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in Western Kosovo, Syri i Vizionit
16	Mr Ralph Rothe, project manager, Skills for sustainable jobs in Kosovo, LUXDEV
17	Mr Kujtim Sermahaj, national VET expert, Skills for Sustainable Jobs in Kosovo, LUXDEV
18	Mr Hajdin Berisha, national VET expert, Skills for Sustainable Jobs in Kosovo, LUXDEV
19	Ms Majlinda Rizvanolli, team leader, Matching Skills to Jobs Project, SWISSCONTACT
20	Ms Edona Nahi, programme component manager, Fit for Jobs, GIZ
21	Ms Alberta Alihajdari, advisor on VET and the labour market, Fit for Jobs II Project, GIZ

³³ Other relevant stakeholders for this study, interviewed as part of the simultaneously conducted MSA, include: Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade, Department of Tourism, Kosovo Investment and Enterprises Support Agency, Tourism Union, Head of the Union of Hotels in Kosovo, Kosovo Confederation of Trade Unions.

³⁴ An NGO that actively advocates for and supports the integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities into Kosovo's socio-economic landscape.

► Annex 2: List of participants in focus groups with VET providersd

a) List of participants in the focus group with public VET schools offering qualification programmes in HoReCa-related professions

1	Ms Hatixhe Retkoceri, school director, 7 shtatori, Prishtina
2	Ms Mimoza Pirraku, teacher and career councillor, 7 shtatori, Prishtina
3	Ms Deshira Mustafaj, teacher, Hasan Prishtina, Mitrovica
4	Ms Merita Bokshi, school director, Kadri Kusari, Gjakova
5	Ms Valdete Hyseni, teacher, Kadri Kusari, Gjakova
6	Ms Shyrete Zeqiri, teacher, Sahit Baftiu, Gjilan
7	Ms Mizaferre Mujku, teacher, Sahit Baftiu, Gjilan
8	Mr Ahmet Rrustemi, teacher, Sahit Baftiu, Gjilan
9	Mr Abdullah Imeri, school director, Zenel Hajdini, Ferizaj
10	Ms Sadete Lohaj, teacher, Zenel Hajdini, Ferizaj
11	Ms Myvedete Gavazaj, school director, Ymer Prizreni, Prizren
12	Mr Nuridin Halili, teacher, Ymer Prizreni, Prizren

b) List of participants in the focus group with VTC trainers offering qualification programmes in HoReCa-related professions

1	Ms Leonora Hetemi, quality assurance coordinator, VTC Ferizaj
2	Mr Adnan Islami, trainer—cook assistant, VTC Ferizaj
3	Mr Fehmi Xhini, trainer—barista and waiter, VTC Ferizaj
4	Mr Lulzim Haliti, trainer—cook assistant, VTC Prizren
5	Mr Fadil Fondaj, trainer—barista and waiter, VTC Prizren
6	Ms Habibe Elshani, trainer—Baker, VTC Prizren
7	Mr Sinan Gashi, head, VTC Prizren
8	Ms Erodita Tatligji, trainer—cook assistant, VTC Peja
9	Ms Florije Ferati, trainer—cook assistant, VTC Mitrovica
10	Ms Valdrina Sulejmani, trainer—cook assistant, VTC Gjakova

► Annex 3: Online survey on equipment needs

1. General information

- ☐ Name of institution: _____
- ☐ Location: _____
- ☐ The specific HoReCa programme you are referring to in this survey: _____
- ☐ Number of enrolled students/candidates in this programme: _____
- ☐ Number of teaching staff in this programme: _____
- ☐ Existing partnerships with sector/industry (if any): _____

2. Curriculum and training requirements

- ☐ Does the curriculum require hands-on practical training?
- ☐ Are there specific industry standards or accreditation requirements for equipment?
- ☐ Is the current equipment aligned with the latest industry trends and technologies?
- ☐ Do students have sufficient access to equipment to meet learning outcomes?

3. Existing equipment inventory

- ☐ Is there an updated inventory of existing equipment?
- ☐ Are existing machines and tools functional and in good condition?
- ☐ Are any critical pieces of equipment outdated or obsolete?
- ☐ Is maintenance or repair a viable option for older equipment?
- ☐ Does the current equipment meet safety and hygiene standards?

4. Equipment needs by category

For each item below, please indicate whether your institution has “sufficient”, “needs additional” or if the equipment is “not available”.³⁵

4.1. Food preparation

- ☐ Commercial ovens
- ☐ Stovetops
- ☐ Refrigeration units
- ☐ Food processors
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

³⁵ Sufficient: the current equipment meets training needs; Needs Additional: some equipment is available, but more is required; Not Available: the equipment is not available at the institution.

4.2. Baking and pastry

- ☐ Mixers
- ☐ Dough sheeters
- ☐ Proofing cabinets
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

4.3. Beverage service

- ☐ Coffee machines
- ☐ Juicers
- ☐ Bar equipment
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

4.4. Table service and hospitality

- ☐ Serving trays
- ☐ Dishwashing units
- ☐ POS (point of sale) systems
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

4.5. IT and digital systems

- ☐ Booking software
- ☐ Cash register systems
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

4.6. Marketing

- ☐ Digital marketing tools (e.g., social media management, graphic design software)
- ☐ Promotional materials (e.g., brochures, menus, signage)
- ☐ Market research tools and customer feedback systems
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

► **Annex 4: Aggregated equipment needs**

Equipment needed	Total requests	VET schools	VTCs
Food preparation			
Commercial oven	15	11	2
Stovetops	12	11	1
Refrigeration unit	15	10	3
Freezer unit	14	10	2
Food processor	16	10	4
Kitchen preparation table	11	8	2
Baking and pastry			
Mixer	10	9	1
Fermentation cabinet	12	8	2
Dough sheeters	1		1
Beverage service			
Coffee machine	15	11	2
Fruit juicer	15	8	5
Bar equipment	13	8	2
Table service and hospitality			
Dishwashing unit	15	8	3
Serving trays	4	4	
No simulated hotel space available			
Housekeeping and hotel operations			
Laundry unit	14	7	4
Housekeeping carts	9	6	1
POS system	13	12	1
IT and digital systems			
Booking software	9	6	2
Cash register systems	11	6	2
(Additional small kitchen equipment)			
Blender	1	0	1
Chocolate fountain (200W)	1	0	1
Crepe maker (1200W)	1	0	1
Double-walled pot	1	0	1
Electric kettle (2400W)	1	0	1
Hot dog machine	1	0	1
Ice cream machine	1	0	1
Ice machine	1	0	1
Manual pasta sheet machine	1	0	1
Meat grinder (600W)	1	0	1
Meatball mold spoon	1	0	1
Pasta dough laminator	1	0	1
Popcorn machine	1	0	1
Professional knife set (Zepter)	1	0	1
Rotating cake stand	1	0	1
Spice grinder	1	0	1
Spice rack (12 jars)	1	0	1
Stainless steel steam tray	1	0	1
Waffle maker	1	0	1

Source: Author

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