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KOF Swiss Economic Institute

The KOF Education System Factbook:

Albania

Edition 1, March 2019

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List of Abbreviations

ETF	European Training Foundation
GCI	Global Competitiveness Index
GII	Global Innovation Index
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
KOF	Swiss Economic Institute
MoESY	Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth
MoSWY	Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth
NAVETQ	National Agency for VET Qualifications
NES	National Employment Service
NESS	National Employment and Skills Strategy (2014-2020)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PET	Professional Education and Training
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VPET	Vocational Professional Education and Training
VPETA	Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act
VS	Vocational Schools
VTC	Vocational Training Centre
WBL	Work Based Learning
WEF	World Economic Forum
YLMI	Youth Labour Market Index

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FOREWORD

The increasing competitiveness of the world economy as well as the high youth unemployment rates after the worldwide economic crises have put pressure on countries to upgrade the skills of their workforces. Consequently, vocational education and training (VET) has received growing attention in recent years, especially amongst policy-makers. For example, the European Commission defined common objectives and an action plan for the development of VET systems in European countries in the *Bruges Communiqué on Enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for 2011-2020* (European Commission, 2010). In addition, a growing number of US states and other industrialized, transition, and developing countries (for example Hong Kong, Singapore, Chile, Costa Rica, Benin and Nepal) are interested in either implementing VET systems or making their VET system more labor-market oriented.

The appealing outcome of the VET system is that it improves the transition of young people into the labor market by simultaneously providing work experience, remuneration and formal education degrees at the secondary education level. If the VET system is optimally designed, VET providers are in constant dialogue with the demand-side of the labor market, i.e. the companies. This close relationship guarantees that the learned skills are in demand on the labor market. Besides practical skills, VET systems also foster soft-skills such as emotional intelligence, reliability, accuracy, precision, and responsibility, which are important attributes for success in the labor market. Depending on the design and permeability of the education system, VET may also provide access to tertiary level education (according to the ISCED classification): either general education at the tertiary A level or professional education and training (PET) at the tertiary B level. PET provides occupation-specific qualifications that prepare students for highly technical and managerial positions. VET and PET systems are often referred to together as "vocational and professional education training (VPET)" systems.

Few countries have elaborate and efficient VPET systems. Among these is the Swiss VPET system, which is an example of an education system that successfully matches market supply and demand. The Swiss VPET system efficiently introduces adolescents to the labor market, as shown by Switzerland's 2007-2017 average youth unemployment rate of 8.1 percent compared to 14.8 percent for the OECD average (OECD, 2017).

Though not many countries have VPET systems that are comparable to Switzerland's in terms of quality, efficiency and permeability, many have education pathways that involve some kind of practical or school-based vocational education. The purpose of the KOF Education System Factbook Series is to provide information about the education systems of countries across the world, with a special focus on vocational and professional education and training.

In the KOF Education System Factbook: Albania, we describe Albania's vocational system and discuss the characteristics that are crucial to the functioning of the system. Essential components comprise the regulatory framework and the governance of the VPET system, the involved actors, and their competencies and duties. The Factbook also provides information regarding the financing of the system and describes the process of curriculum development and the involved actors.

The Factbook is structured as follows: First, we provide an overview of Albania's economy, labor market, and political system. The second part is dedicated to the description of the formal education system. The third section explains Albania's vocational education system. The last section offers a perspective on Albania's recent education reforms and challenges to be faced in the future.

EDITING AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1.   The Albanian Economy and its Political System

One of the main purposes of an education system is to provide the future workforce with the skills needed in the labour market. The particularities of a country's economy and labour market are important factors determining the current and future demand for skills. Therefore, these will briefly be described in the first part of this Factbook. In addition, this part provides an overview of Albania's political system with emphasis on the description of the education politics.

1.1   The Albanian Economy

In the early 1990s, Albania ended 46 years of communist rule and established a multiparty democracy. The transition from a centralized economy to a marked-based economy has proven challenging as successive governments have tried to address high unemployment, corruption, poor infrastructure, organized crime networks, and combative political opponents. Albania's GDP of US$ 11,424.6 is one of the lowest GDP per capita in the European continent, as compared to US$ 13,054.8 for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (from now on referred to as "Macedonia") and US$ 38,724.8 for OECD countries on average in 2016. These values are very similar to the ones for Bosnia and Kosovo (World Bank, 2017).

From 1990 onwards, the GDP of Albania grew at a rate of 3.0 percent per annum, whereas the Republic of Macedonia grew at a rate of 1.4 percent. The average growth for the OECD members was 2.1 percent. However, this growth is far from linear: it was very strong in the early 1990s and then slowed until reaching the lowest level of 1.1 percent in 2013. Since then, a recovery is observable, and in 2016, the growth of the Albanian economy was with 3.5 percent higher than the OECD-average (World Bank, 2016).

After 46 years of communism, which concentrated most economic activities in the agricultural and the industry sectors, Albania first started to open up its markets in 1990. In 2016, the service sector contributed a remarkable 53.2 percent to total value generation. About 40.2 percent of all people in the labour force were employed in the service sector (see Table 1). However, the service sector is not the most important sector in terms of employment. Even if the difference is small (40.2 percent versus 41.3 percent), the agricultural sector still employs most of the people working in the Albanian economy. The agricultural sector is also very important for the economy, as it contributed 22.9 percent to total value added, which is quite unusual from an international perspective (EU28 average: 1.5 percent). Finally, the secondary sector contributes almost as much to total value added as the agricultural sector (23.7 percent versus 22.9 percent), but is far less important in terms of employment (18.5 percent versus 41.3 percent).

Overall, the prevalence of the agricultural sector, especially with respect to employment, is striking. The main reason for this may be the relatively high importance of this sector during communism and relatively slow modernization over time. In fact, the agricultural sector is still limited primarily to small family operations and subsistence farming, due to a lack of modern equipment, unclear property rights, and the prevalence of small, inefficient plots of land (CIA, 2017).

Table 1: Value added and employment by sector, 2016

Sector	Albania: Value added[1] (%)	EU-28: Value added (%)	Albania: Employment[2] (%)	EU-28: Employment (%)
Primary sector	22.9	1.5	41.3	4.5
Agriculture, hunting and forestry, fishing	22.9	1.5	41.3	4.5
Secondary sector	23.7	24.8	18.5	21.6
Manufacturing, mining and quarrying and other industrial activities	13.2	19.4	11.6	15.3
of which: Manufacturing	6.4	16.1	(n.a.)	13.8
Construction	10.5	5.3	6.9	6.3
Tertiary sector	53.2	73.7	40.2	73.9
Wholesale and retail trade, repairs; hotels and restaurants; transport; information and communication	21.8	24.0	(n.a.)	27.6
Financial intermediation; real estate, renting & business activities	15.9	27.4	(n.a.)	16.4
Public administration, defense, education, health, and other service activities	15.5	22.3	(n.a.)	29.9

Source: (Eurostat, 2015; Eurostat, 2016a; Eurostat, 2016b).

However, since the beginning of the 2000s, the primary sector has been losing relative importance in terms of employment, as it can be seen in Figure 1, which shows employment by primary, secondary and tertiary (service) sector from 1990 to 2015. Figure 1 shows that the shares of employees in the service and industry sectors almost doubled in the last 20 year. In 2015 they reached 40 and 19 percent, respectively. In the same timeframe, employment in the primary sector has steadily decreased from 67 percent to 41 percent, but still accounts for the biggest share of employment.

In the global competitiveness index (GCI) of the World Economic Forum (WEF) for 2016, Albania ranks 75 out of 137 assessed countries. According to the global competitiveness report (2017), the most problematic factors for doing business in Albania are tax rates, corruption,

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[1] Due to rounding differences, the sum of all sector falls below 100 percent.
[2] 2015 instead of 2016. No more granular data are available for the secondary and tertiary sector.

difficult access to financing, government bureaucracy, and an inadequately educated workforce (WEF, 2017).

Figure 1: Employment by sector (as % of total employment), 1994-2015[3]
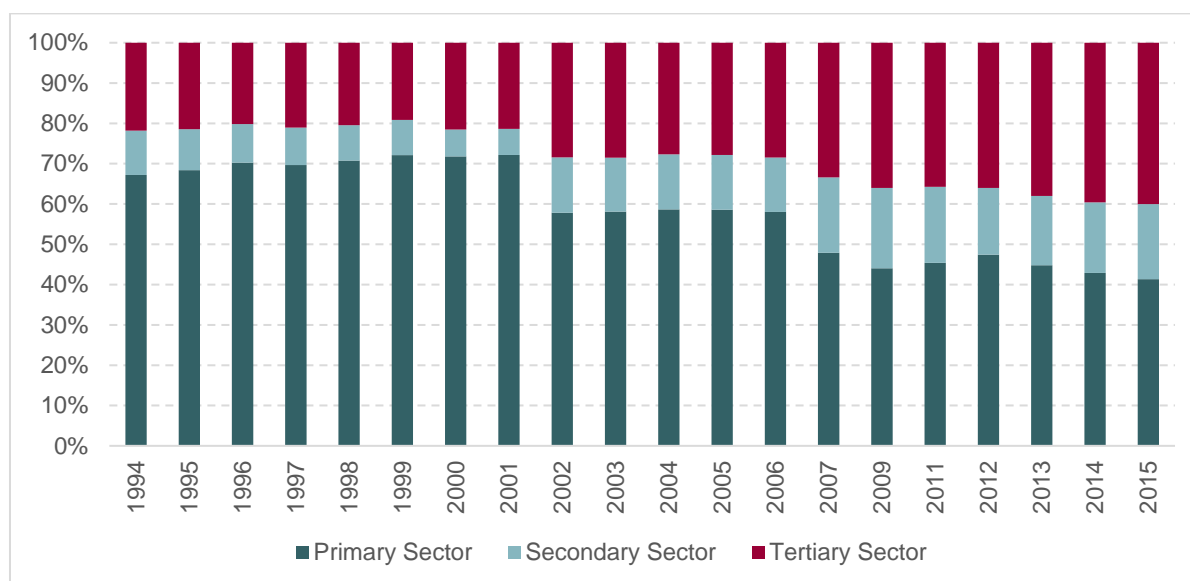
Source: (World Bank, 2017).

Nevertheless, among all thematic areas quantified by the GCI, Albania stands out in the two topics "health and primary education", where it was ranked at the 36th place (6.2 points out of 7), and "Higher education and training", where it was ranked at the 49th place with 4.8 points out of 7 (ibid.). Both components showed a positive development since 2012-2013.

Albania ranks 93rd in the tenth edition of the Global Innovation Index (GII), which assesses detailed metrics quantifying the innovativeness of 127 economies. In the 2017 GII, Albania could improve its position in the ranking relative to 2008: from rank 121 to rank 95. However, it could not regain its 2011 result, where it ranked on position 80 out of 127 countries (Dutta et al. 2017). Albania's 2017 ranking is the worst placement among the European economies – for comparison, Macedonia ranks 61st. According to the GII report, Albania's main weaknesses are its "innovation output" (e.g. knowledge creation and knowledge impact) and "efficiency ratio" (the ratio of the output sub-index over the input sub-index).

1.2 The Labour Market

In the first part of this section we will describe the general situation of Albania's labour market. In the second part, we will refer to the youth labour market in particular.

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[3] No reliable data found for 2008 and 2010

1.2.1 Overview of Albania's Labour Market

Compared to other OECD countries, the Albanian labour market is relatively regulated. One important component of labour market regulation are measures that protect workers from being dismissed, so-called employment protection legislation (EPL). A helpful measure to quantify the strictness of EPL across countries is the OECD Index of Employment Protection. This multidimensional index is scaled between zero to six, where zero refers to a low level of EPL and six to a high level of protection. In 2016, Albania had an index score of 2.49 in the index quantifying the strictness of EPL for regular and temporary workers, which is slightly above the OECD average of 2.37[4] (OECD, 2016).

Despite the relatively high level of de jure labour market regulation, the enforcement of the law by the responsible State Inspectorate for Labour and Social Services (SILSS) is often very poor. The law prohibits child labour, discrimination with respect to certain worker characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity) and requires premium pay for overtime, minimum number of rest periods and specifies a maximum number of work hours per week. However, these regulations are hardly enforced. The lack of enforcement is also poor with respect to occupational health, safety and workplace conditions, which is under the jurisdiction of the SILSS (US Department of State, 2016).

The minimum wage is fixed at 22,000 leks (US$176) per month, which is more than here times higher than the national poverty threshold of 6,874 leks (US$55) per month (data referring to 2013) (ibid.)

There are two big trade unions in Albania: the Independent Trade Unions of Albania (BSPSH) with estimated 85'000 members and the Confederation of Trade Unions (KSSh) with estimated 100'000 members (ICTUR, 2005). In general, trade unions in Albania are considered weak, as the Albanian economy is mainly composed of small or micro-sized family business (ETF, 2016). Over 90 percent of active enterprises employ up to four workers, primarily in the service sector (ETF, 2017).

Strikingly, in the education sector, low wages represent a serious problem for attracting and retaining qualified teachers (see Chapter 3.6). There are about 30'000 teachers in Albania (ETUCE, 2016).

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[4] The average refers to data of 2013

Table 2: Labour force participation rate, unemployment rate by age 2016

Age Group	Labour force participation rate		Unemployment rate	
	Albania	OECD average	Albania	OECD average
Total (15-64 years)	50.3	71.7	16.3	6.5
Youth (15-24 years)	34.3	47.2	36.4	12.9
Adults (25-64 years)	54.8	77.3	12.8	5.6

Source: (ILO, 2017), (OECD, 2017).

As shown in Table 2, the labour force participation rate in Albania was significantly lower than the OECD average across all age groups in 2016. One explanation for this may be the high number of worker working informally in the formal sector or in informal businesses, who may be less likely to appear in the statistics. In addition, many Albanian people, mostly young men (some 600'000-800'000) left the country to work abroad (World Bank, 2005). The ETF estimates that about a quarter of the working age population continues to migrate for work to the EU or other countries, mostly on a temporary basis (ETF, 2016). The low reliability of the data makes its interpretation therefore problematic.

The informal sector seems to be a not negligible problem in Albania. However, even if the awareness among employers and employees regarding the need to pay taxes is growing after major reforms of the labour inspection administration in 2009 and the opening of additional labour inspectorates, enforcement of taxing rules remains low, as offices are still underfunded and understaffed (Mihes, Popova, & Roch, 2011).

As shown in Table 2, Albania's unemployment rate is almost double that of the OECD average across all age groups. Thereby, compared to the OECD average, where youth unemployment is two times higher than unemployment of adults (aged 25-64), youth unemployment in Albania is even three times higher than for adults (aged 25-64).

As in many other countries, the risk of becoming unemployed in Albania declines with increasing education attainment (see Table 3). However, the decline is rather small when compared with the other European countries. Even for people with tertiary education, the unemployment rate is at 15.8 percent, i.e. more than three times the OECD average.

Table 3: Labour force participation rate, unemployment rate by educational attainment 2015 (persons aged 25-64)

Education Level	Labour force participation		Unemployment rate	
	Albania[5]	OECD average	Albania	OECD average
Less than upper secondary education	61.3	55.9	18.8	12.4
Upper secondary level education	71.7	74.2	16.5	7.3
Tertiary education	78.1	83.7	15.8	4.9

Source: (ILO, 2017), (OECD, 2017), (ILO, 2017), (OECD, 2017)

Please note that for Albania, the ILO only had data for the following four aggregate levels of education: less than basic, basic, intermediate, and advanced. The participation rates of the first two levels were mapped into our first category "less than upper secondary education" and combined using a weighted average. The weights were 0.07 and 0.93, respectively, according to the relative amount of workers with that level of education (ILO, 2017).

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[5] Note that the ILO data for Albania did not present an age category "25-64" but only "25+", which may also include people older than 64. However, this should not have a big impact on the percentages.

1.2.2 The Youth Labour Market

The KOF Swiss Economic Institute developed the KOF Youth Labour Market Index (KOF YLMI) to compare how adolescents participate in the labour market across countries (Renold et al., 2014). The foundation for this index is the critique that a single indicator, such as the unemployment rate, does not suffice to describe the youth labour market adequately nor provide enough information for a comprehensive cross-country analysis. To increase the amount of information analysed and to foster a multi-dimensional approach, the KOF YLMI consists of twelve labour market indicators[6] that are grouped into four categories.

Dimensions of the KOF YLMI
Activity state
- Unemployment rate
- Relaxed unemployment rate[7]
- Neither in employment nor in education or training rate (NEET rate)
Working conditions
Rate of adolescents:
- with a temporary contract
- in involuntary part-time work
- in jobs with atypical working hours
- in work at risk of poverty[8]
- Vulnerable unemployment rate[9]
Education
- Rate of adolescents in formal education and training
- Skills mismatch rate
Transition smoothness
- Relative unemployment ratio[10]
- Long-term unemployment rate[11]
Source: Renold et al. (2014).

The first category describes the *activity state* of youth (ages 15-24 years old) in the labour market. Adolescents are classified according to whether they are employed, in education, or neither (unemployed, discouraged and neither in employment nor in education or training; see info box to the right). The category *working conditions* and the corresponding indicators reflect the type and quality of jobs the working youth have. The *education* category accounts for the share of adolescents in education and training and for the relevance of and their skills on the labour market. The fourth category, *transition smoothness*, connects the other three categories by capturing the school-to-work transition phase of the youth. Each country obtains a score of 1 to 7 on each particular indicator of the KOF YLMI. A higher score reflects a more favourable situation regarding the youth labour market and a more efficient integration of the youth into the labour market.

One of the major drawbacks of the KOF YLMI is data availability. When data is lacking, a category can occasionally be based on a single indicator or must be omitted entirely when not

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[6] The data for these indicators are collected from different international institutions and cover up to 178 countries for the time period between 1991 and 2012.

[7] It is calculated as the number of unemployed and discouraged workers as a share of the entire labour force. Discouraged workers have given up the search for work (not actively seeking), although they have nor job and are currently available for work (also: "involuntary inactive").

[8] Those who cannot make a decent living out their earnings, being at risk of poverty as a percentage of the working population.

[9] Share of the employed population working on their own account or those working in their family business and thus contributing to the entire family income. Both are less likely to have formal work arrangements and are therefore less protected by labour laws and more exposed to economic risk.

[10] Is defined as the youth unemployment rate (15-24 years) as a share of the adult unemployment rate (25+). If the youth cohort is affected in the same way than the adult group with respect to unemployment, then the relative unemployment ratio will be equal to one. If the youth are relatively more affected, then the ratio will be bigger than one.

[11] Those unemployed for more than one year (52 weeks) in the total number of unemployed (according to the ILO definition).

a single indicator for that category exists in a given country. A lack of indicators can make comparisons across certain countries or groups of countries problematic and sometimes even impossible.

1.2.3 The KOF Youth Labour Market Index (KOF YLMI) for Albania

The YLMI for Albania was significantly lower than the OECD average from 2011 to 2015, as shown in Figure 2. Both indices were calculated using only the five common available indicators out of 12. The available indicators were unemployment rate, NEET rate, vulnerable employment rate, relative unemployment ratio and incidence of long-term unemployment rate.

Figure 2: The YLMI for Albania compared with the OECD Average 2011-2015
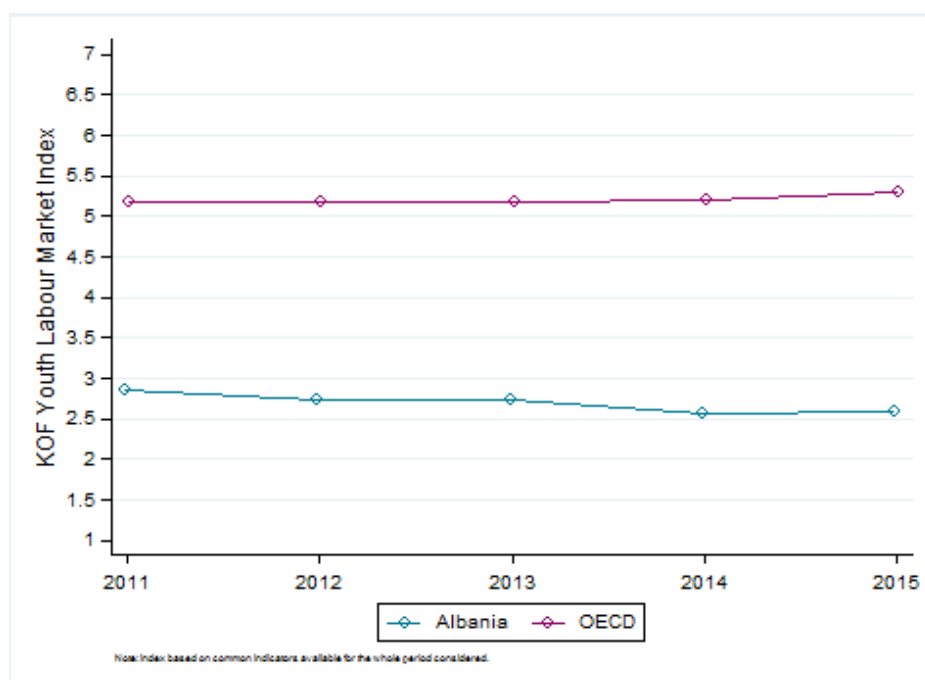
Source: (KOF Swiss Economic Institute, 2017).

If we analyze the single indicators, the only factor that improved over the last 5 years was the incidence of long-term unemployment rate. The other indicators worsened over time, especially the unemployment rate. The vulnerable unemployment rate consistently received the smallest score in the YLMI, because the percentage was always higher than the defined upper bound of 40 percent (Pusterla, 2016).

1.3 The Political System

Understanding the basics of a country's political system and getting to know the political goals with respect to its education system are crucial points for the understanding of the education system in a broader sense. In the first part, we explain Albania's political system in general. The politics and goals regarding the education system will be referred to in the second part.

1.3.1 Overview of the Albanian Political System

In 1992, Albania became a parliamentary republic with a president as head of state (actual: Ilir Meta, elected on the 28th of April 2017) and a prime minister as head of government (since 10 September 2013: Edi Rama; as of 2016). The cabinet is composed of 15 ministers, all belonging to the socialist party. The parliament is a unicameral assembly of 140 members elected from a multi-party system.

The country is divided into twelve administrative counties, which are further subdivided into 61 municipalities. Although there are 2980 villages or communities in Albania, the first level of governance and law enforcement is the municipality.

Albania has been a member of NATO since 2009. In the same year, it applied to become member of the European Union and received the candidate status in 2014.

The magazine *the Economist* produces a Democracy Index annually, which measures the level of democratization of 167 countries from expert's assessment of the electoral processes, the functioning of the government, the political freedoms, culture and participation. The result is a score from 0 to 10 and a classification of the country from "authoritarian regime" to "full democracy".

In 2016, Albania received a score of 5.91 out of 10 in 2016, which falls in the category of "hybrid regime", but very near to the next category "flawed democracy". Albania's lowest score was reached in the category concerning the functioning of the government (the Economist, 2017).

Corruption is also a major problem in Albania; despite a positive development in the last 5 years, the country scored 39 points out of 100 (perfectly clean) in the Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International, 2016).

1.3.2 Politics and Goals of the Education System

The educational system in Albania is managed by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth. The ministry has some dependent institutions like the National Examination Agency (PAK), the Education development institute (IZHA), the State Inspectorate of Education (ISHA), the Public Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (PAAHE) and the Textbook Publishing House (BOTEM), as well as other students and sports organizations. Furthermore, every county has its own regional educational department (Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, 2017).

As described in the draft of the strategy 2015-2020, the vision for the ministry of education is to:

"create an education system that addresses the needs and interests of the students; that creates conditions and opportunities for students to build and develop their knowledge, skills

and values required by society; that allows learners to develop independently and contribute to their well-being and the society". (Republic of Albania, 2016)

The strategic objectives stated in the same document highlight also the main challenges the Albanian educational system has to face:

- Increase access and enrolment in pre-university education
- Improving the quality of education
- Improve the decision-making process between central and local educational institutions
- Increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the financial resources

Note that the VET-System was a competence of the Ministry of Welfare and Youth until 2017. This Ministry was dissolved in 2017. Its Labour Directorate was incorporated in the Ministry of Finance, whereas the Youth Directorate was given to the Ministry of Education (Exit, 2017).

2.   Formal System of Education

Basic education (*Arsimi Bazë*) starts at the age of six years and is compulsory until the age of 16. It is composed of 5 years of primary education (classes I-V) and 4 years of lower secondary education (classes VI-IX). Pupils who are 16 years old, but did not finish primary education, can complete it in part-time schools. Basic education for pupils with special needs is organized either in special schools, in special classes within normal schools, or integrated into normal classes. (Eurydice, 2017).

Higher secondary education (*Arsimi i Mesëm*) is optional and lasts 2 to 4 years, depending on the type of school. It consists of general high schools (*Gjimnazet*), oriented high schools (*Arsimi i mesëm i orientuar*) and vocational/professional schools (*Shkollat e Mesme Profesionale*).

Since 2003, Albania is a full member of the Bologna process. With the Law Nr. 9741 of 21.05.2007, consecutive bachelor's and master's degrees as well as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) were implemented.

Both, public and private institutions, provide education in Albania at all levels. The Albanian law states that the main language for education is Albanian. However, persons belonging to national minorities are given the opportunity to learn and to be taught in their native language and learn their history and culture (Republic of Albania, 2016). Education in Albania is secular and depoliticized, as explicitly stated in the Law[12] Nr. 69/2012. The same law even forbids[13] directors of educational institutions to participate in the forums of political parties (ibid.).

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[12] Articles 7 and 8
[13] Articles 30 and 55

Figure 3: The Albanian Education System
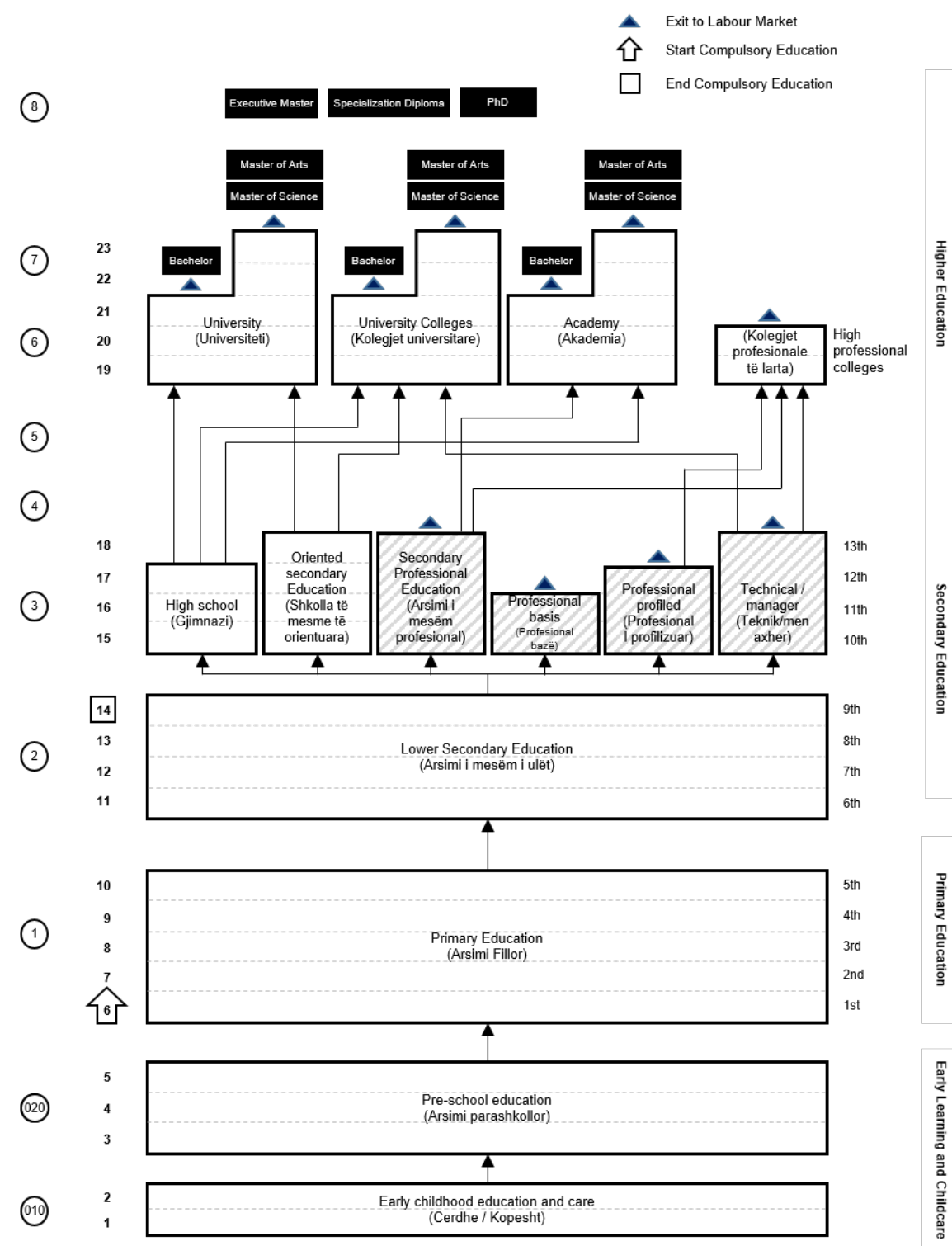
Source: own illustration.

Table 4: Enrolment ratios for different educational levels in Albania, 2015 (in %)

Educational level	ISCED 2011	Net Enrolment Ratio	Gross Enrolment Ratio
Early childhood educational development programmes	010	*n.a.*	*n.a.*
Pre-primary education	020	78.05	88.6
Primary education	1	*95.5**	113.7
Secondary education	2 – 3	85.9	95.8
Lower secondary education	2	90.7	101.49
Upper secondary education	3	68.5	89.46
Percentage of 15-24 year-olds enrolled in vocational secondary education	2-3	4.51	*n.a.*
Compulsory education age group	1-3	98.7	101.8
Post-secondary non-tertiary education	4	*n.a.*	1.8
Tertiary education	5 – 8	*n.a.*	58.1
Short-cycle tertiary education	5	*n.a.*	*n.a.*
Bachelor or equivalent level	6	*n.a.*	*n.a.*
Master or equivalent level	7	*n.a.*	*n.a.*
Doctoral or equivalent level	8	*n.a.*	*n.a.*
*Notes: *Number refers to 2014*			

Source: (UNESCO, 2017).

Table 4 shows the net enrolment ratio (NER) and the gross enrolment ratio (GER) by education level for the year 2015. The NER quantifies the total number of students in a theoretical age group (for a given education level) enrolled at that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group. The GER quantifies the number of students enrolled at a given education level— irrespective of their age— as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education.[14]

The NER and the GER can exceed 100 percent due to grade repetition. In addition, the GER can exceed 100 percent due to the inclusion of over-aged and under-aged students because of early or late entrants. In this case, a rigorous interpretation of the NER and GER requires additional information in order to assess the extent of repetition, late entrants, etc.

For Albania, the NER is below 100 for both, primary and lower secondary education, indicating that not all children who must actually attend school (during time when schooling is compulsory) do so.

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[14] For example, for the primary education level, the NER tells how many students in the typical primary school age are actually enrolled in primary school, while the GER sets the actual number of students in primary education— irrespective of their age—in relation to those who are in the official age to attend primary education.

In contrast, the GER is higher than 100 percent for primary and lower secondary education. The low repetition rate (between 0.7 percent and 1 percent) must be due to a non-negligible number of the students outside of the typical schooling age for these grades are actually enrolled in compulsory education, i.e. they start (or return to) school later in life (UNESCO, 2017)

2.1 Pre-Primary Education

Pre-primary education in Albania is free of charge, but not compulsory. It is offered to 3- to 6 year-olds by municipal nursery schools (*Cerdhe*). One pre-school teacher is in charge of approximately 15-25 children, depending on the location of the school: in remote villages, teachers may only have 10 children per group. The educational and care curricula in preschool establishments is organized in 240 teaching hours (lessons) per year (HERDATA, 2005).

The task of pre-school is to take care of the children and to prepare them for primary school. Until 1990, bigger companies had to provide kindergartens for the children of their employees. However, most of them had to close during the privatisation and closing of the former socialist institutions. In 1991, 109,000 children attended preschool education; in 2007, it was only 72,000 (-34.1 percent), with the most substantial fall taking place in rural areas. After 2007, the number of children in nurseries increased again and reached 81,865 in 2011/2012 (Schmidt-Neke, 2007).

2.2 Primary and Lower Secondary Education

Compulsory education in Albania follows a 9-year model based on 5 years of primary education (*Arsimi Fillor*) and 4 years of lower secondary education (*Arsimi i mesëm i ulët*). However, in the rural and mountainous regions, the classes are often combined or implemented in a reduced form in order to comply with the education regulations like curriculum content and minimum amount of students.

The series of documents needed to register a child in the first grade of basic education include the birth certificate, the statement of vaccination from the healthcare centre, a report from the oculist, the address of the child, and optionally the statement that he/she has visited kindergarten on respective groups (Eurydice, 2017).

Teaching at both levels is divided into two semesters with 34–35 weeks schooling per year. In addition to 2 weeks of holidays at the end of the year and 1 week for Easter, there is a break of 3 months from mid-June until mid-September. As in some other countries in south Europe, this longer break is due to the hot climate in summer.

In national exams of basic education, pupils are assessed in the following subjects: Albanian language, foreign language and math. Pupils of minority areas are assessed also for subjects in their mother tongue (ibid). In order to continue their studies, pupils have to obtain the "Leaving Certificate" (*Dëftesë Lirimi*) at the end of the 9th year (IAU, 2014).

Besides normal schools in basic education, special schools are also available for children with limited abilities. The curriculum for this program is developed according to different standards that are set under the guidance of the Ministry of Education. As previously mentioned, there are also schools for pupils from minorities, which beside the normal subjects teach also the language of the respective minority situated in that area, especially Greek.

2.3 Upper secondary Education

The landscape for upper secondary education in Albania is diverse. Broadly speaking, there are three main categories (Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, 2014):

- Full time high schools, or Gymnasium (*Gjimnazi*)

- "Oriented" secondary education (*Arsimi i mesëm i orientuar*)

- Vocational secondary education (*Arsimi i mesëm profesional*)

The Gymnasium, which is the most general upper secondary education program, lasts three years. This full-time secondary education program is free of charge and open to all students who completed basic education and are not older than 18 years of age. Pupils who have reached the age of twenty-one and have not yet finished high school are allowed to attend gymnasium on a part-time basis or through distance education (*Gjimnaz me kohw tw pjesshme*).

Schools offering "oriented" education are artistic schools, sports schools, foreign language schools and schools for other specialized areas.

The vocational secondary education track lasts two to four years and is structured into three levels of qualification, according to the Albanian Qualifications Framework[15]:

- Basic professional (*Profesional bazë*), with a duration of 2 years

- Professional profiled (*Profesional I profilizuar*), with a duration of 3 years

- Technical/manager (*Teknik/menaxher*), with a duration of 4 years

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[15] See chapter 3 for details about the Albanian Qualification Framework

More details about vocational education at the upper secondary level will be described in Chapter 3.

2.4 Postsecondary/Higher Education

Besides offering bachelor's and master's degrees, universities also have to offer doctorate or other post-graduate programmes. Courses may be offered by several facilities at the same time. Academies (*akademi*) may offer third-phase programmes, but are not obliged to. Vocational academies (*shkollë e lartë*) may only focus on master level programmes. Professional colleges (*kolegji profesional*) are also part of the tertiary sector and can be considered higher education facilities with university status (Schmidt-Neke, 2007).

Figure 4: Distribution of high education institutions
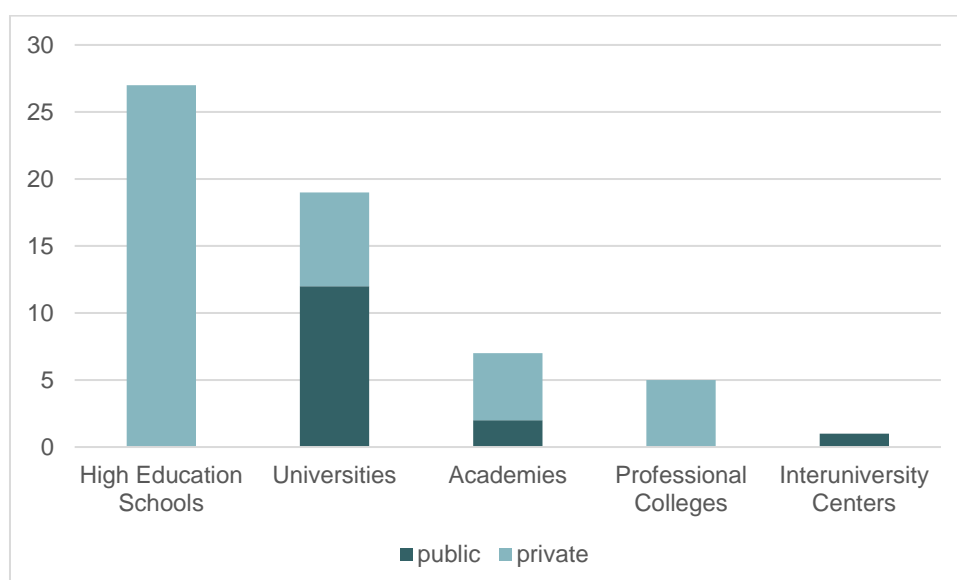
Source: (EHEA, 2015).

As mentioned before, Albania is a full member of the Bologna process since 2003. Since 2002, higher education is also open to private institutions, but despite scholarships and the chance to take out student loans at banks, the high tuition fees prevent most Albanians from entering these schools. According to the last National Report of the European Higher Education Area, in 2015 there were 15 public and 44 private higher education institutions in Albania, distributed according to Figure 4 (EHEA, 2015).

2.5 Continuing Education (Adult Education)

Both the quality of education, which did not keep the pace of changes in the labour market, and the shortage of opportunities for extended vocational training caused fast transformations in the continuing education and training sector. Foreign consulting organizations became very involved in Albania. For example, the German Association of Adult Education Programmes

(*Deutscher Volkshochschulverband*) supported the establishment of an Adult Education Project. In the meantime, higher education facilities also started to provide extended vocational training and Further Vocational Training Centres (*Qendra e Formimit Profesional, QFP*) have been established (Schmidt-Neke, 2007).

Due to previous demographic, social and migration factors, a supporting system has been developed in order to reduce drop-out rates in pre-university education and provide a second chance for compulsory education. Adults over the legal age (16 years) can acquire compulsory primary education in schools for adult education, so called evening schools, as part-time students. In addition, all public universities offer part-time studies for professionals who have completed upper secondary education and relevant candidates who have work experience and aspire to a university degree (Eurydice, 2017).

2.6   Teacher Education

The structure for the initial teacher education model was established in 2008.The first three years of the education of all future teachers coincide with the first cycle of higher education. Aspiring teachers must choose a specific subject, but have the modular flexibility to study more than one subject. The first three years are followed by one or two additional years of subject teacher or elementary education teacher preparation. Curricula of teacher education faculties and departments have clear guidelines regarding the core program and a reduced number of subjects. These curricula are more focused on pedagogical and methodological aspects, key skills, ICT, the English language, research and teaching practices in schools. In addition, the process of the compilation of the teacher education curriculum also considers the labour market and reflects the actual needs of the profession of teachers (Eurydice, 2017).

Universities are responsible for teacher education programmes. There is no general document or standards on teaching competencies. The profile of future teachers, their competences, curricula and mission, are described in the university documents submitted to the Agency for Accreditation and the Ministry of Education when applying for permission to offer teacher education programmes (ibid.).

3. The System of Vocational and Professional Education and Training

This section of the Factbook describes the vocational education and training (VET) system at the upper secondary level and the professional education and training system (PET) at the tertiary level in more detail. Thereby, the term vocational and professional education and training (VPET) refers to both, the VET and the PET system.

Table 5: Summary statistics of the Albanian VET system

VET pathway enrollment share out of all upper secondary (%)	19.5
Program enrollment share out of all VET pathway (%)	n/a
Number of curricula/qualifications	44 directions 110 profiles
Ø Share of time spent in workplace (vs. classroom)	30%[16]
Work contract (Yes/No)	No
Ø Share of vocation-specific content (vs. general) in classroom education	60%
Classroom/workplace sequencing (Alternating, Sequentially)	Alternating
Frequency of workplace learning (Annually, Semi-annually, quarterly, monthly, weekly)	weekly
Program duration (Years)	2,3 or 4
Involved Actors	MoSWY NAVETQ NES
Reform Years	6 (National Employment Skills Strategy 2014-2020)
Reforms Summary	- Establishing an Albanian Qualification Framework - Ensuring better education of teaching personnel

Sources: (UNESCO, 2017), (AFP, 2017), (Sulka, Mezini, & Shano, 2017).

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[16] This is a rounded average of the different percentages during the schooling years of the most popular schemes according to (Papa, Dhëmbo, Shehaj, & Dibra, 2016), page 50. Other models aim to reach a percentage of 50% (see Chapter 3.5.1).

3.1 Vocational Education and Training (VET; Upper Secondary Education Level)

Albania has a school-based VET system, i.e. the public VET schools implement theory and practice largely in a classroom setting. The curricula include strong general education elements, as VET offers shall also grant access to university level education (Kuqi & Kehl, 2017).

After successfully completing elementary education, students can enter the upper secondary education level in vocational schools (*Shkollat e Arsimit Profesional or VS*) or vocational training centres (*Qendrat e Formimit Profesional, or VTC*). Most of these schools and centres are public institutions (ILO, 2014). The VET schools teach general and vocational skills, whereas the vocational training centres provide in-depth training and short courses for the existing set of occupations.

In 2017, the VET system counted 39 public VS and 10 public VTC located in 8 regions (Tirane, Shkoder, Elbasan, Korce, Durres, Vlore, Fier and Gjirokaster) (AFP, 2017).

The VET schools lasts two to four years. Thereby, VET is offered in three different program (AFP, 2017):

- The first program consists of three "levels" (2+1+1 years) with 22 occupational fields for 72 occupational profiles. For example, for the occupational field "Hotel-Tourism" with the following occupational profiles: Kitchen/Patisserie, Reception, Tourism, Bar/Restaurant, and Travel Guide.

- The second program consists of two "levels" (2+2 years) with 6 occupational fields and 21 occupational profiles. For example, in the occupational field "Information and Communication Technology" there are the following occupational profiles: Data Networks, Website Development, Multimedia.

- The third program consists of one "level" of four years with two directions of teaching and two profiles (veterinary medicine and geodesy), which also grant access to university.

Table 6 gives an overview of the occupational fields that can be chosen for the first level. The second level normally offers a further specialization, whereas the fourth level (if present) is again more generic.

Table 6: List of occupational fields

Structure	Occupational fields for the first level
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Hotel - Tourism
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Textile
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Garments (PEM Pilot)
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Mechanics
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Combined Mechanism (PEM Pilot)
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Transport services services
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Electrical
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Combined Electrotechnics (PEM Pilot)
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Electronics
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Wood processing
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Wood Processing (PEM Pilot)
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Construction
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Food Technology
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Agro-food technology
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Chemical Technology
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Agriculture
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Fishing
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Polygraph
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Social-health services
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Geology - Mining
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Handicraft
Three-level Structure (2+1+1)	Thermohydraulic systems (AlbVET Pilot)
Two-level Structure (2+2)	Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
Two-level Structure (2+2)	Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (PEM pilot)
Two-level Structure (2+2)	Economy / Business
Two-level Structure (2+2)	Business Economics / Office Administration (PEM Pilot)
Two-level Structure (2+2)	Forests
Two-level Structure (2+2)	Agricultural Economics
Block Structure (4)	Veterinary Medicine
Block Structure (4)	Geodesy

Source: (AFP, 2017)

We will refer to all of the three programs as "Standard work-based learning" (WBL) programs in the following.

After each level, a vocational certificate is offered to students. These certificates grant students direct access to the labour market. Students who manage to graduate successfully after four years from any of the three programs are granted the state Matura and may progress to university (Merita Xhumari, 2016).

Donors and development aid agencies from other countries have been trying to introduce alternative VET schemes in Albania through different development support projects (see

Chapter 3.3.2 for more details). Table 7 gives an overview of these different models as listed in Sulka, Mezini and Shano (2017).

Table 7: Different Work-Based Learning schemes

Work-Based Learning Scheme	Number of VET schools	Origin / Main actors[17]
Standard Work-Based Learning	32[18]	Government, NAVETQ
AlbVET	10	SDC, Swisscontact
"Hermann Gmeiner" (Pilot)	1	Austrian VET school system
Multifunctional Center (Kamza)	1	GIZ, NAVETQ
Apprenticeship scheme	n/a	Hamburg VET Institute
Gradual Skill Development	5	SDC, Swisscontact (S4J project)

Source: (Sulka, Mezini, & Shano, 2017).

Professions

The official VET web-portal of Albania lists almost 100 different professions. About half of them are linked to a simple document with a bullet-list of 10-40 competencies (listed in Albanian and English) that are supposed to be gained during the programme. Some of these competencies are very general and are almost omnipresent, like "organize the work place", "use and maintain the work tools and materials" and "respect professional standards". Other are more specific like "select the number of combs for the textiles that are being produced" or "Create dynamic interactive pages by using programming technologies and techniques such as Javascript, PHP, AJAX" (AFP, 2017).

3.2   Professional Education and Training (PET; Post-Secondary Level)

Professional education and training (PET) programs at the postsecondary education level generally lasts 1-2 years. These can be attended after high school. This option is especially meant for graduates from high schools that do not aim to enrol in tertiary education (Sela, 2016).

In general, it is somehow difficult to separate programs in the PET system from academic programs. Many public and private universities also offer Professional Diplomas (3 years) and Professional Masters (2 years), beyond the regular bachelor and master programmes.

The Professional Diploma is described as pre-university education, and the student is supposed to work during the week and visit the bi-weekly lectures during the weekend.

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[17] See chapter 3.3.2 for more information about the actors and their initiatives.
[18] Estimate according to the remaining VET schools which were not specifically mentioned in (Sulka, Mezini, & Shano, 2017)

The Professional Master teaches subjects in a relatively applied manner and offers mainly hands-on training to achieve professional objectives. It is intended as a further qualification in a narrow field after the obtainment of a bachelor and consists of 60 or 90 ECTS. A mandatory attendance of 80 percent makes this almost a full-time study (European University of Tirana, 2018).

One example of a school exclusively offering PET in Albania is the Tirana Professional School. It was founded in 2015 and has two departments, IT and Electro Mechanics, offering 10 bachelor programmes, each of 120 ECTS. However, the professional practice part only accounts for 6 or 7 ECTS points, equivalent to only about 5 percent of the three-year curriculum (Kolegji Profesional i Tiranes i Akredituar, 2018).

3.3 Regulatory and Institutional Framework of the VPET System

3.3.1 Central Elements of VPET Legislation

The legal framework on VET in Albania is composed of a small set of laws. The first national law on VET was approved by the parliament in 2002. It had the character of a rather open framework law with options for a flexible implementation. However, its implementation was significantly hampered by the lack of secondary legislation. Subsequent revisions of the law defined the structure of VET as per the 2+1+1 system with exit points to the labour market after year 2 and year 3, and with year 4 leading to the Matura. A final revision of the law in 2014 gave Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MoSWY) the responsibility to supervise, regulate and manage the VET System (Sulka, Mezini, & Shano, 2017).

Laws in Albania are identified with a number of up to 5 digits, a slash and the year of adoption. For reference, these are the laws relevant for the VET system (ILO, 2014):

- **Law Nr. 8872/2002 on vocational education and training**

This law has 5 chapters. In the first chapter it defines the goals, the definitions and the beneficiaries. Chapter 2 explains the main criteria as institutions, duration of the education, evaluation, orientation etc. Chapter 3 clarifies the coordination mechanisms between the different ministries and responsible offices. Chapter 4 lists the standards and Chapter 5 the financing.

This law was modified with three other laws in the following years:

- **Law Nr. 10011/2008 modifying the Law 8872/2002**

This law modifies some articles regarding the basic education

- **Law Nr. 10434/2011 modifying the Law 8872/2002**

This law modifies the dispositions about levels and duration of the vocational education, public and private institutions, programmes etc.

- **Law Nr. 63/2014 modifying the Law 8872/2002**

This law modifies some regulations for the private VET institutions, for the certifications and for the consulting and orientation in the vocational education.

- **Law Nr. 15/2017 on education and professional training**

This recent law repeals some articles of the old 8872/2002 and regulates the main aspects of the VET system. It defines the competence of the ministry in charge of VET (without saying which it is) and what falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

- **Law Nr. 69/2012 on the pre-university education system**

This is a comprehensive law describing the education system for pupils from the age of six to sixteen. It regulates among others the financing, the curriculum, the evaluation, the teaching staff, the rights and obligations of pupils and their parents, and the education for minorities and vulnerable population groups.

Strategy documents:

- **Pre-University Education Development Strategy 2014-2020**

This draft of almost 100 pages was developed by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth in 2014. It defines the vision for the development of pre-university education, including the professional training and development, as well as the priorities for the funding, monitoring, assessment, and reporting. Besides defining policy goals, some main expected results with a termination date are also defined. However, the concrete implementation of them is not described, e.g. "by 2016, at least 50 programs for professional development are accredited based on needs" (Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, 2014).

- **National Employment and Skills Strategy 2014-2020 (NESS)**

The NESS is a general mid-term strategy to improve the employment situation in Albania, shaped between October 2012 and November 2014 during thematic workshops and stakeholders' meeting involving more than 500 participants and the relative ministries (European Commission, 2014). It was adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2014 (Decision No. 818 of 26.11.2014).

The four priorities of the NESS are:

  ➢ Foster decent job opportunities through effective labour market policies

- ➢ Offer quality vocational education and training to youth and adults
- ➢ Promote social inclusion and territorial cohesion
- ➢ Strengthen the governance of the labour market and qualification systems.

For a description of these priorities, see (European Commission, 2014).

The specific objectives of the NESS are (ILO, 2016):

- ➢ Increase labour market participation of the youth and provide job opportunities for all;

- ➢ Improve the quality and increase the coverage of vocational education and training (VET);

- ➢ Improve the quality and effectiveness of labour market institutions and services.

- • **National Strategy for Vocational Education Training and Lifelong Learning (2013-2020)**

This 67-page document was drafted in 2012 by the former Ministry of Education and Science and the former Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. It is the main outcome of the ETF Torino Process in Albania and it represents the state of affairs in 2012. It is part of ongoing discussions on policies and strategies in the country (Republic of Albania, 2012).

Unfortunately, the original document was not found, not even on the prime minister's specific webpage about it (Government of Albania Council of Ministers, 2018).

3.3.2 Key Actors

a) Vocational Education and Training

i) Government

- • **National Agency for VET and Qualifications (NAVETQ)**

The NAVETQ was established by the Decision of the Council of Ministers as of May 10th, 2006 and is one of the most important actors in VET policy for Albania. It aims to integrate the education and training and employment systems and is in charge of the definition and the assurance of standards, as for example the Albanian Qualifications Framework (AQF), leaning on the European Qualification Framework (EQF).

- • **Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth (MoESY)**

This Ministry was responsible for the entire school-based part of the VET system until 2014. However, it concentrates most of its efforts in the full-time, general education and the administration of the state Matura rather than in the VET system. Therefore, the competency

to regulate the VET system was shifted to the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MoSWY) in 2014.

- **Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MoSWY) (dissolved September 2017)**

The responsibility for the VET system and the NAVETQ was moved from the Ministry of Education to the MoSWY in 2014 (European Commission, 2014). The aim of this shift was to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of the VET system and enhance the labour market integration of the youth. However, the latter ministry was dissolved in September 2017 (Exit, 2017). At the same time, its former head Olta Xhaça, who just took office some months earlier (March 2017) replacing Mimi Kodheli (Republic of Albania, 2017), was moved to head of the Ministry of Defence (Republic of Albania, 2017).

- **National Employment service (NES)**

The NES is an autonomous body under MoSWY, mandated to carry out all the functions of a modern public employment service – e.g. job mediation, labour market information, administration of active and passive employment policies. Apart from job mediation, provision of labour market information and management of active and passive employment policies, NES is also responsible for the monitoring and implementation of VET programmes in public and private VET providers. As per the new VET Law 15/2017, NES (now National Agency for Employment and Skills) will be mandated with the day-to-day management of VET providers.

ii)   Representation and advisory bodies

In the last two decades, Albania is getting great financial and administrative support from abroad through the work of many different organisations. The following institutions currently have a stake in the VPET system. For each organisation, the main initiatives, timeframe and budget are listed. The main source, if not otherwise specified, is (ETF, 2016).

- **Instrument for pre-accession Assistance (IPA)**

This is the means by which the EU supports reforms in countries that are EU member candidates. The IPA supports the employment and skill sector in Albania with a contract of €30 million between 2016 and 2018, by setting measures to improve 10 different indicators. Such measures include, for example, the training of teachers in the VET system, the inclusion of vulnerable population groups in employment promotion programmes, and the reorganisation of the employment offices.

The IPA also founded a VET project of €3.45 million, which started in March 2016, to assists the country in the establishment of multifunctional VET centres in Elbasan, Shkodra, Fier and Tirana by 2018.

- **European Training Foundation (ETF)**

The many projects of this foundation help transitioning and developing countries harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems, in the context of the EU's external relations policy. It has been operational since 1994 and is based in Turin (Italy). In the Torino Process, a participatory analysis of the VET systems, the ETF monitors the status and the progress of its partner countries in this domain. In Albania, the ETF has provided timely and reliable support and analyses to the EC services with a view to make EU assistance efficient and effective. This concerns both relevant IPA 2013 projects and upcoming development operational plans, programmes and measures funded from IPA II. This includes monitoring, evaluation or impact assessment missions upon request. In addition, the ETF helps Albania to undertake analyses in line with EU requirements and integrate relevant EU platforms and processes (ETF, 2014).

- **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**

The UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. The UNDP is coordinating some projects in Albania but the main sources for funding are the development agencies of the single countries, as for example for the project "Skills Development for Employment" described below (UNDP, 2014).

- **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)**

The SDC is an agency for international cooperation of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs that contributes to alleviating poverty and problems associated with development. It has given a substantial contribution to the Vocational Education and Training sector in Albania over a time span of almost two decades (Papa, Dhëmbo, Shehaj, & Dibra, 2016).

The SDC's most recent projects are: the "Making Labour Market work for Young People" project (RISI) of $4.5 million (2013-2016) focused on the sectors of agro-processing, ICT, tourism, and labour market information. The project "Skills Development for Employment" (SD4E) of $3.17 million (2014-2018) supported the national employment service (NES) by redesigning the employment promotion programs and optimizing the network of public and private VET providers. The "Skills for Job" project (S4J) of CHF6.3 million (2016-2019) tries to make business collaborate with the VET-schools, especially in the area of tourism, construction, textiles, and ICT.

- **Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)**

The GIZ is a German development agency that provides international development cooperation. Its main commissioning party is the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The GIZ founded different VET projects in Albania with €8 million between 2010 and 2016. As of spring 2018, the GTZ contributed an integrated support with €10.5 million between 2017 and 2019 for the Training Center in Kamza and provides technical and financial support for another five VTCs offering short-term training measures for adults (€2 million).

- **Italian Development Cooperation**

The Italian Development Cooperation has been active in Albania for many years with numerous projects. The biggest contribution in recent years (2014-2016) was a project of €5 million supporting agricultural and food-processing VET schools in Fier and Lushnja. Other projects include one aimed at fostering self-entrepreneurship and dual training to youth in Qendra (2014-2017, €738'000), vocational programmes in fashion in Tirana as well as mechatronics in Shkodra (2014-2016, €447'000).

- **Austrian Development Agency (ADA)**

The ADA is the operational unit of Austrian Development Cooperation, which operates on behalf of the Federal Government. It is promoting targeted business partnerships between companies and vocational schools and providing training for VET teachers through some projects for a total of about €0.5 million until 2017.

- **World Bank**

The World Bank is undertaking a mapping of all the private training providers and is contemplating a new loan agreement to support the skills sector from 2018 onwards.

- **German Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW)**

The KfW is a German government-owned development bank. According to (ETF, 2016) the KfW is willing to invest €2 million in the VET system in the next years, but no further concrete indication was found about this intention.

- **Hamburger Institut für Berufliche Bildung (HIBB)**

The HIBB implemented the project "Apprenticeship for Youth Employment in Albania", in close collaboration with the NAVETQ, with the aim to identify a sustainable way and draft a road map for Albania to introduce apprenticeship as a systematic work-place based learning scheme (Heusinger, 2015).

- **Other private consulting companies**

Governmental development organizations sometimes contract private consulting companies for the implementation or the monitoring of the projects. For example, the GIZ contracted the German PEM Consult[19] (PEM, 2013), whereas the SDC contracted the Swiss company KEK-CDC Consulting[20] (Kehl & Nano, 2014).

iii)   Education and training providers

In Albania as of spring 2018, there were:

- 39 Vocational Schools

- 10 Vocational Training Centres

b) Professional Education and Training

i)   Government

Since all the PET providers are higher education institutions, the whole responsibility for PET lies within the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth (MoESY).

ii)   Education and training providers

- Different public and private (professional) universities offering Professional Diplomas and Professional Masters.

3.4   Educational Finance of the VPET System

The following two sections summarize the financing systems of VET and PET in Albania.

3.4.1   Educational finance of the VET system

Albania still spends less on education as a percentage of GDP (3 percent in 2011) than other Balkan countries (4.4 percent on average) and EU countries (5.4 percent). Since the expenditures for students in VET are three times higher than those for general education, and since VET is 100 percent publicly funded, the pressure on VET is high. Finding a way to finance, steer, and deliver VET in a public-private partnership mode is therefore key to any future development of VET (Kehl & Nano, 2014).

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[19] https://www.pem-consult.de/
[20] http://www.kek.ch/

Public VET is funded by the state budget, local government budget, national and international programmes on VET, contributions of employers and employees, donor contributions, sponsorships and other sources allowed by law (Sulka, Mezini, & Shano, 2017).

The bulk of the state VET financing comes from the central government – the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, through a budget program "Vocational Education and Training" – while local governments finance a small part of it.

Public VET providers could generate revenue by exercising their own economic activity (for example by selling goods and services or renting the facilities), but incomplete or imprecise regulations prevent them from embarking on such activities, despite being equipped with a proper tax identification number since January 2015 (Dibra, 2015).

Over the past four years, the increased interest in VET has been demonstrated by the financial allocations for the sector. Total budget expenditures dedicated to VET in 2017 were 2.4 times higher than in 2016 and 7.1 times higher than in 2015. The promotion of VET by the MoSWY has produced some initial results, including a significant increase in the number of new enrolments in VET institutions, as well as an improvement in the quality of students choosing vocational education and training (Sulka, Mezini, & Shano, 2017).

Table 8: National expenditure on VET

In million lek	2015	2016	2017
Total government expenditures	4'564'370	4'502'240	4'675'990
Secondary Education expenditures in % of total budget – including VET	1.88	1.83	1.94
Total VET expenditures	1.5	2	2.8
VET expenditures in % of total expenditures	0.31	0.42	0.59

Source: (Sulka, Mezini, & Shano, 2017).

However, if we compare these numbers with the budget of the foreign development projects (see Chapter 3.3.2), we notice that 99 percent of the VET system is actually financed through external support.

Table 9: Breakdown of the VET expenditures

In thousands lek	2015	2016	2017
Total Expenditures	1'494'262	2'030'334	2'776'570
Current expenditures	1'323'470	1'526'238	1'563'860
1.1 Consumables and operative	220'000	352'000	433'000
1.2 Salaries and insurance	1'095'570	1'166'238	1'122'860
1.3 Text subsidies	8'000	8'000	8'000
2. Capital Expenditures	170'692	504'096	1'212'710

Source: (Sulka, Mezini, & Shano, 2017).

3.4.2 Educational finance of the PET system

As mentioned in Chapter 3.2, it is somehow difficult to separate professional education training from academic education. It is therefore complex to isolate the financing of the former. It has to be assumed that the public universities are founded by the government, whereas the private institutes are founded mainly through the registering fees. For reference, the Tirana Professional School requires a fee of €2'200 per school year (Kolegji Profesional i Tiranes i Akredituar, 2018).

3.5 Curriculum Development

The curriculum is a central element for the functioning of a VPET system by defining the framework and the (quality) standards for the education system. The development of a curriculum can be decomposed into a three-step process with a curriculum design, a curriculum application and a curriculum feedback phase. This theoretical concept is called the Curriculum Value Chain and is depicted in the picture below (CVC; for more details see (Bolli, et al., 2016)).

Figure 5: Curriculum Value Chain (CVC)
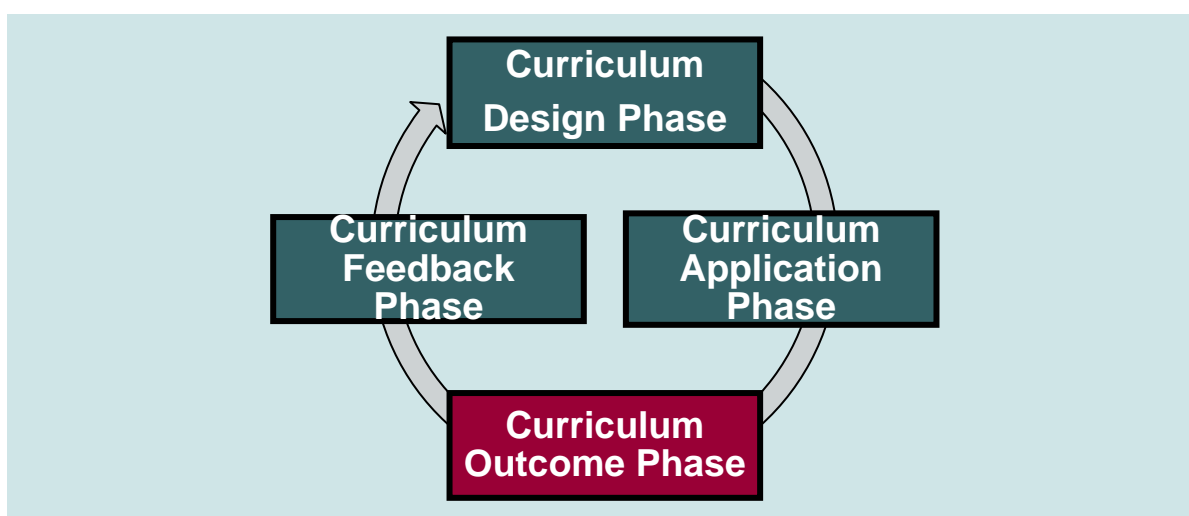
Source: (Bolli, et al., 2016)

In the curriculum design phase, VET curriculum content and qualification standards are decided upon by the relevant actors. Therefore, the discussion in the respective subchapter below focuses on the degree and the amount of stakeholder participation concerning curriculum design in Albania. The curriculum application phase revolves around the implementation of the curriculum. Because learning environments differ heavily across countries—especially with respect to the prevalence of workplace learning—the curriculum application phase subchapter in this Factbook focuses those learning environments. Specifically, it addresses where learning takes place and whether the curriculum dictates both school and workplace learning or only one of the two. Finally, curriculum outcomes can be collected and analysed in the curriculum feedback phase. This evaluation process is important as it may render a more refined curriculum design than was possible in the first place.

3.5.1 Curriculum Design Phase

The design phase is crucial for the whole curriculum process. In order to ensure that the skills taught in the VPET programmes correspond to the needs of the labour market, experts from

companies should be involved in defining the qualification standards and learning contents of the curricula.

In Albania, the general education component is planned by the Ministry of Education, while the vocational part of the curricula is managed by the NAVETQ. According to Papa et al. (2016), NAVETQ was not fully accomplishing this task until 2016 due to the transitory period of transferring all VET responsibility under MoSWY and VET law being under discussion.

Papa et al (2016) state that the school curricula are developed by the vocational teachers, translating the frame curricula into teaching programs, preferably aligned with the specific regional needs. In this regard, teachers' roles and their ability to perform this task is indispensable, as are the infrastructure conditions, the legal framework, and the relations with employers,

However, for the time being, only few contacts between VET schools and private business are established and maintained. Therefore, only little information about the demanded level of skills and knowledge by the labour market is available in the VET institutions (Heusinger, 2015).

3.5.2 Curriculum Application Phase

The way in which a curriculum is implemented—especially with respect to learning environments—is important to achieve the intended learning outcome.

In the standard WBL, i.e. the most diffused VET-scheme, the ratios between theory and practice are defined as follows: 20 percent of practice in the first year, 40 percent in the second, 50 percent in the third and 20 percent in the fourth year. The curricula for various vocational profiles developed by the respective VET school are organized into three main curricular elements:

1. General theory

2. Professional Theory

3. Vocational practice

Practical learning at business premises only takes place in the third and fourth years of studies, as depicted in Table 10 (Sulka, Mezini, & Shano, 2017).

Table 10: Theory/Practice Ratio for the Standard WBL

Level	Class	% of theory	% of practice	Practice place
I	X	80%	20 % - consisting of 6 hours/week or 216 hours/year	School Workshop
I	XI	60%	40 % - consisting of 12 hours/week or 408 hours/year	School Workshop
II	XII	50%	50 % - consisting of 15 hours/week or 510 hours/year	School & Business
III	XIII	80%	20 % - consisting of 6 hours/week or 204 hours/year	School & Business

Source: (Sulka, Mezini, & Shano, 2017).

The other work-based learning VET programs introduced through development projects from foreign donors, tend to have a greater percentage of practice. For example, the scheme used in the AlbVET Project financed by the Swiss agency SDC (actually adopted by 10 VET schools) has a significantly higher ratio of practice, as shown in the Table 11. The ratio between theory and practice is 50/50 throughout the 4 school years. This and a close relationship with the business sector have increased the value of the VET graduates of this program in the labour market (Sulka, Mezini, & Shano, 2017).

Table 11: Theory/Practice Ratio for the WBL introduced with the project AlbVET

Level	Class	Duration theory	Duration practice	Practice place
I	X	50% (16 Weeks +2 w exams)	50% (18 W-Learning project)	School Workshop
I	XI	50% (16 Weeks +2 w exams)	50% (18 W-Learning project)	School Workshop
II	XII	44% (14 Weeks + 2 w exams)	56% (45% WBL + 11% Learning Project)	16 weeks in business 4 weeks Learning Project
III	XIII	50% (16 Weeks +2 w exams)	50% (33% learning project + 17% WBL)	6 weeks in business 12 weeks learning project

Source: (Sulka, Mezini, & Shano, 2017).

3.5.3 Curriculum Feedback Phase

The curriculum feedback phase addresses the question of whether and how educational outcomes are analysed. Based on this, the curriculum could be re-worked and improved.

Under the Standard WBL, the students' skills and capabilities are evaluated by VET teachers, with practically no participation of companies in the assessment. The WBL scheme ensures that students obtain the basic required skills and competencies that serve to support their career path. According to Sulka et al. (2017), this structure needs to be improved in terms of ensuring a greater and direct role of businesses in their assessment.

The curricula need to be evaluated and interpreted according to the real work in the companies. It is essential to carry out this task with a certain level of flexibility but without compromising the quality of the training result. This process should be managed by an In-company trainer together with the VET-provider, with the focus on employability in the respective profession and not in preparation for passing the state Matura. A good example in this regard is the training of "thermo-hydraulic installations" which was the pilot programme of the AlbVET project (Heusinger, 2015).

3.6   Supplying Personnel for the VPET System (Teacher Education)

Academic staff in a VET school is composed of teachers responsible for general education courses and teachers in charge of professional theory or professional practice. In the VTCs, the teaching staff is composed only of instructors (Papa, Dhëmbo, Shehaj, & Dibra, 2016).

In Albanian society, the VET sector tends to be less attractive than general secondary education, both because of the average reputation and the low earning potential. Up until now, VET teachers have been paid lower salaries than high school teachers have. In the Vocational Training Centres it is even worse, as they are paid on an hourly basis, receiving 300 leks (ca. EUR 2) per lesson (ETF, 2017). Even if we would consider 40 teaching hours per week, this wage would be below the country's average monthly salary of 330 EUR (Trading Economics, 2017).

In 2016 there were about 700 VET teachers and trainers. Only 40 of them (5.4 percent) underwent a basic pedagogy programme. Efforts in this area are ongoing and the target for 2017 is to raise this percentage to 50 percent in 2017 (ETF, 2017).

There is also an aging problem in the academic staff. More than half of vocational subjects' teachers (theory and practice) and 41 pecent of instructors are above 50 years old. A considerable percentage of teachers are near retirement age – based on GIZ/ETF data of 2014, 21.4 percent of academic staff will retire by 2019 (Papa, Dhëmbo, Shehaj, & Dibra, 2016).

4.   Major Reforms in the Past and Challenges for the Future

4.1   Major reforms

The change of the political system in the early 1990s was followed by a total collapse of what used to be a relatively well-organized and structured system that fed the Albanian centralized economy with a skilled workforce. The network of VET schools has been reduced from about 308 in the 1990s to only 41 in 2010 (Nikolovska, 2010). The number of VET graduates declined

rapidly from a high of 19'079 in 1991 to only 2'844 in 2012. Whereas elements of the dual system were integrated prior to the 1990s, they were lost following the changes that ensued. Vocational education and training were largely left out of the reforms of the secondary education system in the country (Sulka, Mezini, & Shano, 2017).

Through the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, the Albanian government launched the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2014-2020 (NESS) in February 2014. The strategy is based on four pillars, which determine the development of VET in the future (Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, 2016):

A. Foster decent job opportunities through effective labour market policies

B. Offer quality vocational education and training to youth and adults

C. Promote social inclusion and territorial cohesion

D. Strengthen the governance of the labour market and qualification systems

According to this strategy and to the government programme, VET schools shifted from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth. This transfer was primarily about structures, organisation and administration. These decisions are crucial for future development, and they prepare the ground for coming years in formal, and partly also in non-formal, VET. However, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth was dissolved in 2017 and the responsibility of this strategy is not completely clear at the moment of writing (spring of 2018).

4.2 Major challenges

Albania is facing following challenges in properly structuring its PVET System (Sela, 2016):

- The training has to be better oriented towards the demand of the labour market

- The management of VET providers needs to be improved and centralized

- A system for VET graduates to measure the performance (feedback mechanism) has to be established

- The financing of VET has to be improved with contributes from the private sector

- The relationships with businesses at all stages of VET have to be formalized.

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