



DIGITAL FACTSHEET DECEMBER 2018

DIGITAL SKILLS AND ONLINE LEARNING IN ALBANIA



DIGITAL SKILLS FOR VET STUDENTS

The number of people employed in the ICT sector in Albania has increased by 15% from 2012 to 2016¹, and the demand for ICT professionals keeps growing.

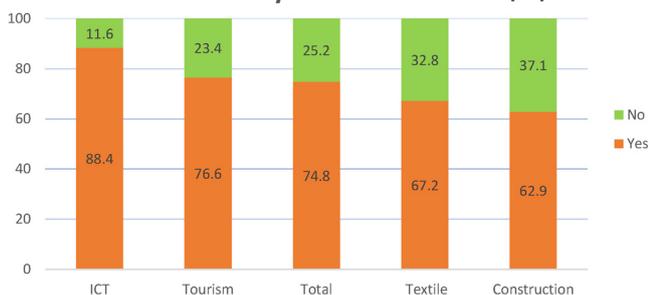
The National Employment and Skills Strategy and its action plan 2014–20 (NESS 2020)², adopted by the Government in November 2014, aims to improve the relevance and quality of the skills acquired in vocational education. The action plan does not include specific measures on digital skills, but it may be revised in 2019.

The National Pre-University Curriculum Framework, developed by the Institute of Educational Development, identifies digital competence as one of seven key competences to be developed in general education and vocational programmes. Digital competence comprises digital content creation and the use of internet, safety and problem-solving with the help of IT.

In 2016, ICT qualifications were the third most popular choice among VET students³. The specialisations include data network, support to ICT users and website development. The qualifications and curricula for IT programmes in VET⁴ are under review by the National Agency for Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications (NAVETO), the Swisscontact Skills for Jobs (S4J) project and IT businesses.

The use of internet is fairly common among VET students, as research highlights (see graph below)⁵. However, most vocational schools lack up-to-date equipment and dedicated ICT teachers and system administrators, which hampers the further development of students' digital skills and competences. A self-assessment tool – developed for vocational schools as part of their quality assurance system – covers indicators on transversal skills, including ICT skills, but it has not been fully implemented yet.

Students' use of internet by vocational sector (%)



Source: Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM), *Skills for Jobs*, 2016

¹ http://akshi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Digital_Agenda_Strategy_2015_-_2020.pdf

² www.seecel.hr/UserDocImages/Documents/EMP-SKILLS-STRATEGY_Albania.pdf

³ ETF monitoring report on progress in key competences in upper-secondary VET in Albania, March 2017 (Riga Process)

⁴ <http://skillsforjobs.al/al/albanian-vet-schools-will-soon-benefit-ict-curriculum-aligned-sector-requirements/>

⁵ <http://idmalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/JobSkills-EN-web.pdf>

Remote IT internships

Digital skills for programmers are mainly acquired in universities. To extend VET qualifications in IT, including in programming, Skills for Jobs (S4J) launched a pilot project in April 2018 offering remote internships to ICT students at Kolin Gjoka school in Lezha and Pavarësia industrial school in Vlora. The project involves ICT businesses, including 11 leading companies based in Tirana, who give the students practical assignments to be done in the classroom or at home. An online platform (Papion) is used.

<http://papion.al/>
<http://skillsforjobs.al/al/s4j-introducing-programming-vocational-schools-albania/>

Training in 3D printing

In April 2018 at the Pavarësia school, a group of 22 VET teachers and students started a pilot course in design software for 3D printers.

Provided by a Swiss company operating in Albania, the equipment and software were used to develop the digital skills and competences of students, to enable them to meet the demands of modern industry and to create tools which in turn could be used for teaching and learning.

<http://skillsforjobs.al/al/3d-printing-training-started-pavaresia-school-vlora/>



DIGITAL SKILLS FOR VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

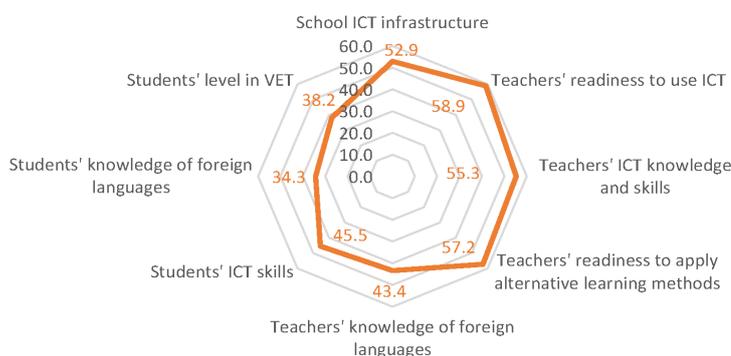
According to the 2017 VET Law, NAVETQ is responsible for the continuing professional development of VET teachers and instructors. A sublegal act specifying this role is underway; it will provide the basis for the necessary resources to be made available.

NESS 2020 identified the limited skills and relatively advanced age of teachers (and instructors in particular), as hampering the modernisation and quality improvement of VET provision⁶. More specifically, major shortcomings in VET teachers and instructors' use of digital and online learning were noted in a NAVETQ analysis in June 2015. In 2016, 77% of VET teachers claimed that they needed training in the use of ICT in teaching and learning (ETF survey⁷).

As an initial measure, a 24-day Basic Didactics programme for VET teachers and instructors was launched in 2016. It aims to involve the 700 teachers and instructors currently in the system by 2019. An ETF mid-term evaluation of the programme in March 2018 confirms that participants have acquired some skills and knowledge in the use of internet and online media, but also that more time is to be dedicated to this subject. The programme should become compulsory for new teachers entering the VET system.

A survey on VET teachers' perceived challenges of blended learning shows that their readiness to use ICT is the most relevant obstacle.

Teachers' perceived challenges of blended learning (%)



Source: IDM, *Skills for Jobs*, 2016

Cisco academies

With support from GIZ and Swisscontact S4J projects, IT teachers from the VET centre of Kamza, Kolin Gjoka school in Lezha, industrial Pavarësia school in Vlora and Gjergji Canco electro-technic school received a Cisco standard industrial certificate upon completion of a three-month blended training. These schools have become Cisco academies, offering IT training opportunities to young and adult learners.

<http://skillsforjobs.al/al/three-cisco-netacademies-established-schoolssupported-skills-jobs-s4j/>

Social media for increased professionalism

In 2017, the ETF supported the creation of three communities of teachers on Facebook, covering hotel and tourism, business education, and plumbing programmes. Today these online communities count more than 150 teachers who share experience, and teaching and learning methods.

<http://europa.eu/!Rq97Rp>

Technology for innovative pedagogy

In collaboration with NAVETQ, in 2017 the ETF supported a project led by Irisoft Education, which delivered several IT training modules and involved 135 teachers from five vocational schools. The training included the development and use of a dedicated portal on vocational subjects.

<http://portali.irisoft.al/>

⁶ www.seecel.hr/UserDocImages/Documents/EMP-SKILLS-STRATEGY_Albania.pdf
⁷ www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/m/6393A72277E852CCC1257FCD005FEF1B_CPD%20Albania.pdf



DIGITAL AND ONLINE LEARNING IN INITIAL VET

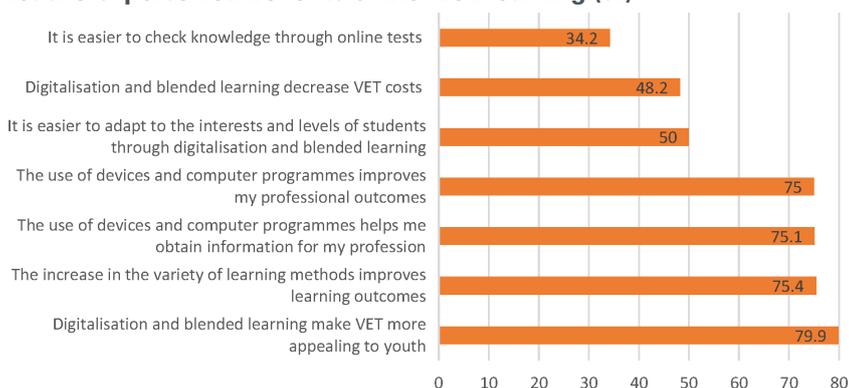
The Albanian Digital Agenda 2015–20⁸ points to the ‘integration of the use of ICTs in contemporary teaching and learning, where all actors, such as teachers, parents, students, policy makers and service providers, play specific roles in the creation of e-education spaces’. However, frameworks for digital skills and competences as well as IT qualifications and curricula at all levels of the Albanian Qualifications Framework have not been defined yet. Sector committees are to be set up, including for the IT sector, to look into these matters. The Albanian IT Association (AITA) is the lead organisation for the sector⁹.

In more than one third of schools, students have limited access to digital and online learning (DOL), as a background analysis of the Digital Agenda indicates. In VET institutions in particular, ICT is used at a low-to-moderate extent in teaching and learning. Various factors affect the use of DOL, such as the underfunding of the VET system, the school culture, teachers’ readiness to use ICT and students’ socio-economic background. The poor quality of digital resources is another obstacle.

So far, DOL has been developed through donor-funded initiatives. For example, the ALBIZ programme (2009–13) donated and installed labs, including computers and office equipment, in the 11 schools offering business education programmes in Albania. In 2012, ten ICT labs were provided to five vocational schools – in Shkoder, Tirana, Kamza and Elbasan – and ten classrooms were equipped with interactive whiteboards, applications for interactive learning, class management systems for e-learning, computer networks and infrastructure. The programme also initiated a Moodle platform to create a community of business education teachers. Unfortunately, the initiative was discontinued at the end of the programme.

There is a clear need for more investments and attention by national authorities to scale up existing good practices, support a more systematic adoption of DOL in VET and sustain the increasing interest of VET teachers in blended learning (75% of teachers believe that blended learning can improve students’ learning outcomes).

Teachers’ perceived benefits of blended learning (%)



Note: Percentage of surveyed teachers reporting scales 4 or 5 on a 5-point Likert scale
Source: IDM, *Skills for Jobs*, 2016

⁸ www.seecel.hr/UserDocImages/Documents/EMP-SKILLS-STRATEGY_Albania.pdf

⁹ <http://aita-al.org>

Digital learning materials

Supported by teachers and experts, the Swisscontact Skills for Jobs (S4J) project is developing digital learning contents for IT, hotel and tourism, and business education programmes.

An open-source learning platform offers digital resources that can be used for classroom practice or self-learning at the learner’s own pace and place.

www.metronom.al



DIGITAL AND ONLINE LEARNING IN CONTINUING VET

The National Employment and Skills Strategy 2014–21 aims to improve the quality of vocational education and training in a lifelong learning perspective, thus covering also continuing VET.

The adult learning participation rate in Albania is low – 0.9% in 2017, down from 1.1% in 2016 (INSTAT, LFS). Data on the use of DOL in adult learning is not available but DOL opportunities for adults seem to be marginal.

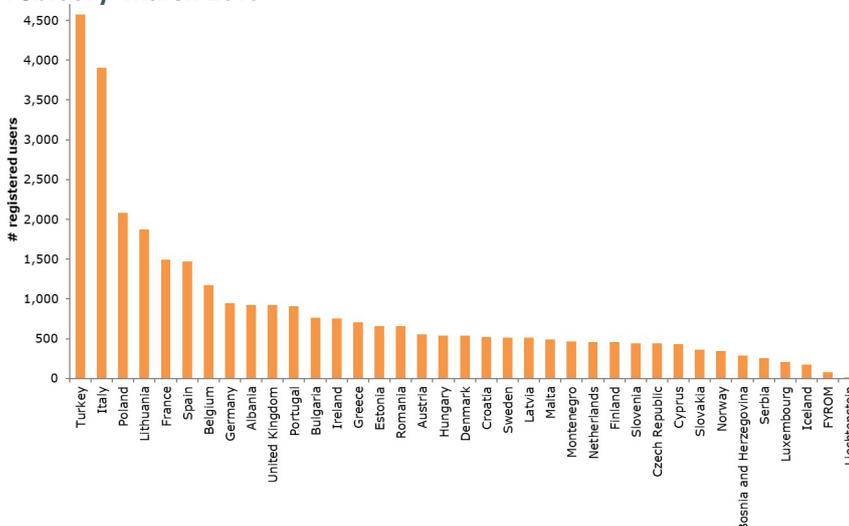
As the private sector is dominated by micro and small-sized enterprises with limited options and resources for upgrading employee skills, DOL seems to offer a valid solution to improve access to and quality of adult training provision, including in remote regions.

Training provision for adults is provided, among others, via a network of ten public vocational centres, under the responsibility of the National Employment Service. IT courses are among participants' most popular choices. There is no system in place to monitor the standards and methods of these centres, where courses are largely based on traditional approaches to teaching and learning.

Private IT training providers, such as Protik (see box), provide more sophisticated IT training for higher fees.

Since 2015, NAVETQ is responsible for promoting the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE)¹⁰ as a hub for adult education connecting public and private training providers¹¹, an initiative that raises a high interest in Albania.

Registered EPALE users by country of origin (Erasmus+), February–March 2018



Source: European Commission, EPALE – Web and social media analytics, March 2018¹²

ICT resource centre Protik

Protik, a not-for-profit organisation, was established in 2012 by the Government of Albania, USAID, Albanian-American Development Foundation, Microsoft, Cisco and Albtelecom. Its mission is to catalyse the development of start-ups and the ICT sector in the country. It offers online workshops, courses and ICT resources.

www.protik.org/about-us

IT career opportunities for young women

In line with the global trend towards attracting more women in the ICT sector, Albania's Massive Open Online Courses (ALMOOC) offer ICT courses that are in high demand in the country. More than 42% of the 8,500 trainees who have completed such courses are female.

<http://kodim.almoc.com/v2/>

Vodafone Albania Foundation

Vodafone Albania manages a number of social projects, such as using mobile phone technology and Vodafone's 3G network to serve the healthcare of people living in the most remote areas of the country, developing software for reading the computer in Albanian via audio for people with visual impairments, as well as creating 120 'i-Clubs' (innovation clubs) involving schools across the country in extracurricular youth education.

www.vodafone.al/vodafone/Impacts_518_2.php

¹⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/it/nss/national-support-services-albania>

¹¹ NAVETQ 2016 annual report, Tirana, p. 17

¹² https://cdn4.fpfis.tech.ec.europa.eu/epale/cdn/farfuture/nVrt6kXaLaEjOIZBDfAPMcWuE7uPP2btB7tJU3UtxM/mtime:1524047084/sites/epale/files/epale-analytics-report-2018-03_v1.1.pdf