

# 3<sup>rd</sup> İSTANBUL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

## FINAL REPORT

### NEW HORIZONS IN VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

---

### **Prepared by**

Kevser Rabia Mumcuoğlu Bayram  
Mehtap Nur Öksüz  
Meryem Beyza Aydın  
Zeynep Yalçıntaş

### **Rapporteurs**

Kevser Rabia Mumcuoğlu Bayram  
Zeynep Yalçıntaş  
Zehra Yıldırım  
Merve Şimşek

### **Graphic Design**

Betül Berra Kurt

İLKE Publication No: 212  
E-ISBN: 978-625-8350-71-5  
ISBN: 978-625-8350-70-8

---

This report consists of the outputs of the 3rd İstanbul Education Conference organized by the Research Center for Education Policy (EPAM), which operates under the umbrella of the İLKE Foundation for Science, Culture and Education.

---

## **Research Center for Education Policy (EPAM)**

Research Center for Education Policy (EPAM), which has carried out many publications and activities under the umbrella of İLKE Foundation for Science, Culture and Education, has undertaken the basic mission of monitoring, understanding, interpreting, explaining, and developing policies for the Türkiye of the future in the field of education with a sense of social responsibility. EPAM focuses on gathering, interpreting, and energizing Türkiye's experience, knowledge, and opportunities in the field of education, without sacrificing them to artificial debates and agendas, to produce solutions to the problems of today and the future. Its goal is to create a body of knowledge that will contribute to ensuring equality of opportunity and justice in education all over the world by conducting studies that will strengthen the field of education in Türkiye and to share it with the whole society. EPAM conducts needs-oriented, evidence-based, and inclusive studies; analyzes the issues on its agenda in the field of education from theoretical and historical perspectives, generates data, examines the policies implemented, produces policies, and brings perspective to discussions with different views. The main field of these studies is publications. Through publications, the increased interaction between civil society and policymakers and the mutual motivation shared for future work are very valuable. In this context, EPAM contributes to educational issues through monitoring reports, analysis reports, field research, policy analyses, policy notes, working notes and opinion pieces.

# About the Conference

Istanbul Education Conference (IEC) is an annual event dedicated to fostering innovation and collaboration in the field of education. Bringing together educators, researchers, policy makers and industry professionals, IEC serves as a platform for focused discussions, inspiring presentations, and networking opportunities. IEC aims to address the challenges and explore the opportunities of the ever-evolving education landscape with a commitment to promote excellence in education. Participants from Türkiye come together at this prestigious conference to exchange ideas, share best practices, and engage in meaningful dialogues on a wide range of topics such as curriculum development, pedagogical approaches, educational technology, and inclusive education. Fostering an inclusive and dynamic environment, IEC empowers participants to shape the future of education, drive innovation and transform the way we teach and learn.



The 1<sup>st</sup> İstanbul Education Conference was held in 2021 with the title "Skill Acquisition in the Digital Age". The conference brought together leading stakeholders in the field of education in Türkiye to discuss new skills emerging in the digital age and their integration into education.



The 2<sup>nd</sup> İstanbul Education Conference was organized in 2022 with the title "Mass Education: The Search for a Way Out". Dr. Saeeda Shah from the University of Leicester was the keynote speaker at the conference, where names from Türkiye's leading universities and civil society organizations discussed the future of mass education in Türkiye and the world.



The 3<sup>rd</sup> İstanbul Education Conference was organized with the theme of vocational and technical education. The importance of vocational and technical education, its current situation in Türkiye and the world, and current problems were discussed at the conference. The conference was organized with the aim of bringing together education stakeholders and sector representatives and addressing current debates in vocational and technical education in depth.



# The Outlook of Vocational and Technical Education in Türkiye

Kevser Rabia Mumcuoğlu Bayram

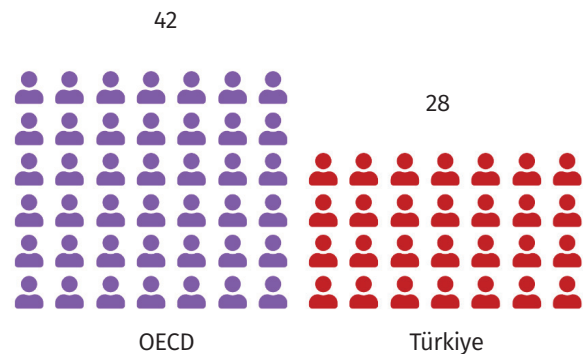
Researcher, İLKE Foundation

Increasing qualified labor force is critical for economic development and a developed industry. Vocational and technical education (VET) is the main source of this qualified workforce needed in many fields in our country. Providing an important opportunity for both young people and adults to develop their careers and professional skills, VET is a key component for social development and economic growth. Vocational education, as an education and training model at the micro level, enables individuals to acquire certain professional qualifications and career development because of these qualifications, while supporting economic development at the regional, sectoral, and societal level and ensuring the training of the labor force needed. Although the coefficient decision taken because of the education policies implemented in Türkiye at the end of the 90s led to a decline in demand for vocational and technical education institutions, developments in the 2000s enabled vocational and technical education to become preferred institutions again (for detailed information, see Bozgeyikli, 2019). With the acceleration of policies towards vocational and technical education in recent years, quantitative and qualitative developments in this field have visibly increased.

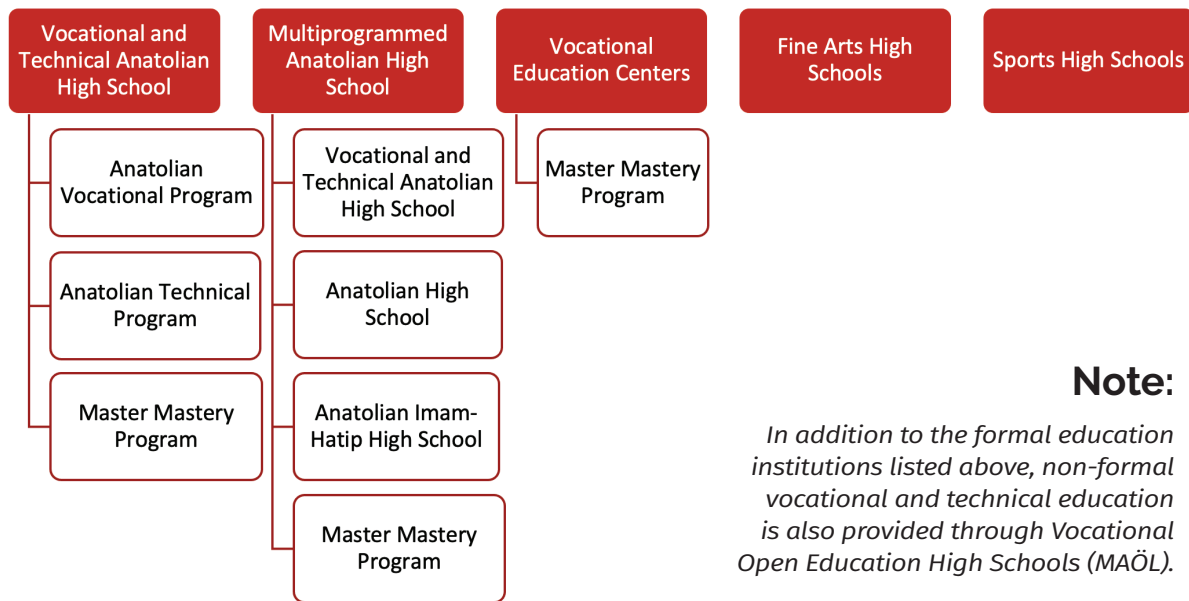
The need for a qualified labor force, intermediate and main staff is most met by vocational and technical secondary education institutions. The largest group of individuals receiving vocational education is vocational and technical secondary education students in formal education. Vocational and Technical Anatolian High Schools, Multi-Program Anatolian High Schools, Vocational Training Centers, Fine Arts High Schools and Sports High Schools are the formal education pillars of these institutions, which of-



According to official data, the ratio of vocational and technical secondary education students to total secondary education students in OECD countries in 2021 is 42.4%, while in Turkey it is only 28% (OECD, 2021).



**Figure 1.** Formal Vocational and Technical Education Institutions

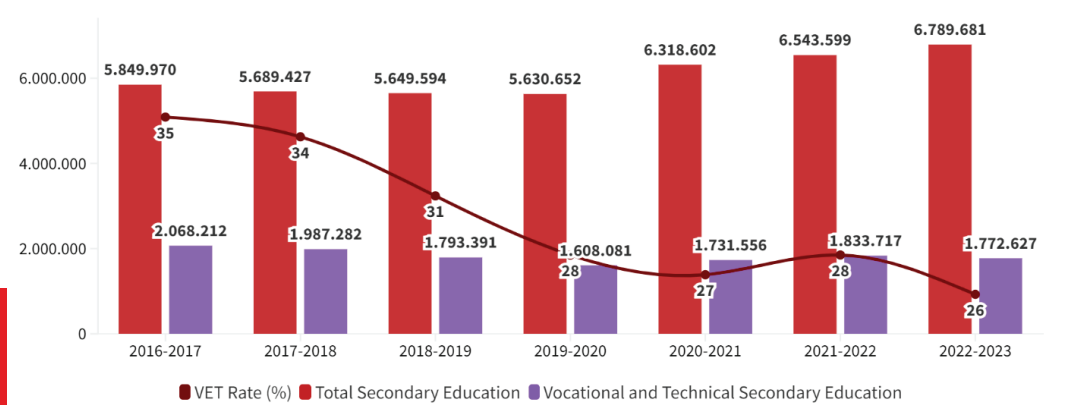


**Source:** Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education Outlook of Vocational and Technical Education in Turkey, 2018.

for the opportunity to acquire a profession without continuing higher education after compulsory education. The development of these institutions over the years in terms of quality and quantity can be seen as a means of economic and social development. The positive course of this development is related to the increase in the number of students in vocational and technical education. It is claimed that the ratio of vocational and technical secondary education students to total secondary education students in developed countries is around 65-70% (Bozgeyikli, 2019).

According to 2023 official statistics, the ratio of vocational and technical secondary education students to total secondary education students has declined to 26%. Likewise, the number of vocational and technical secondary education schools and teachers has also been on a gradual decline in recent years (MEB,

2023). The labor force participation, employment and unemployment rates of vocational and technical education graduates do not present an optimistic picture. Labor force participation and employment rates have gradually increased every year, while unemployment rates have decreased every year (TÜİK, 2023). While the labor force participation and employment rates of graduates from these institutions, which offer direct vocational training, should be much higher, the fact that they are still around 60% reveals the need to increase efforts in this direction. The increase in employment rates of vocational and technical education students, together with the advantages to be offered to the labor market, will directly positively affect the preferability of vocational and technical education institutions. For this reason, cooperation between vocational education and the sector is of great importance.

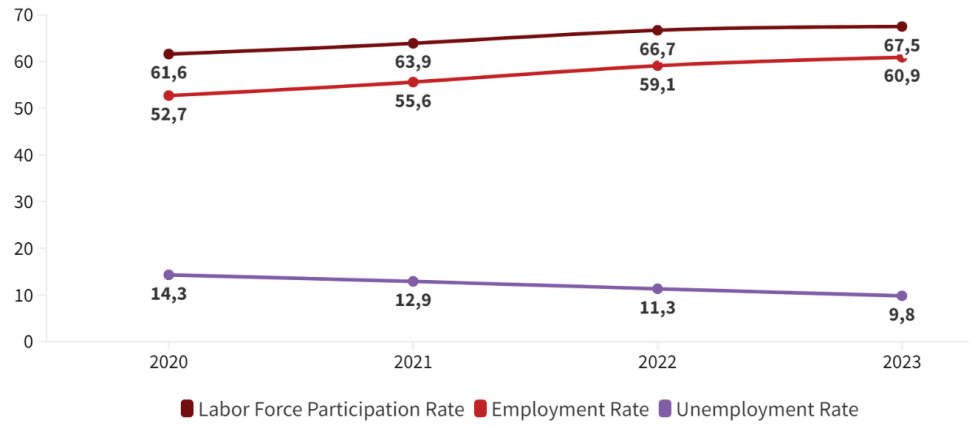


**Figure 2.** Total Secondary Education and Vocational and Technical Secondary Education Student Numbers and VET Ratio by Years (2016-2023)

**Source:** MEB, Formal Education Statistics, 2023.

**Figure 3.** Vocational and Technical Secondary Education Labor Force Participation, Employment and Unemployment Rates by Years (% , 2020-2023)

Source: TÜİK, 2023.



In vocational and technical education, in addition to quantitative increases such as increasing the number of students and improving labor force participation, it is also necessary to address qualitative improvements such as improving education models and curricula, strengthening internship opportunities and sector collaborations. To improve vocational and technical education and training and to find the best training model, it is not enough to look only at good practices around the world. Local education policies that consider the needs and skills demanded by the sector should be created and implemented according to the economic development and industrial progress goals of the countries (Bozgeyikli, 2019). Education systems in Türkiye have a centralized structure. This centralized structure can lead to delays in decision-making and failure to respond to local needs. Vocational and technical education institutions, which aim to train personnel for sectoral skills and needs that are constantly changing and transforming in parallel with technological developments, can be designed in a decentralized structure depending on these needs. However, focusing on local needs may in the long run lead to ignoring the national needs of the country in the context of economic and social development.

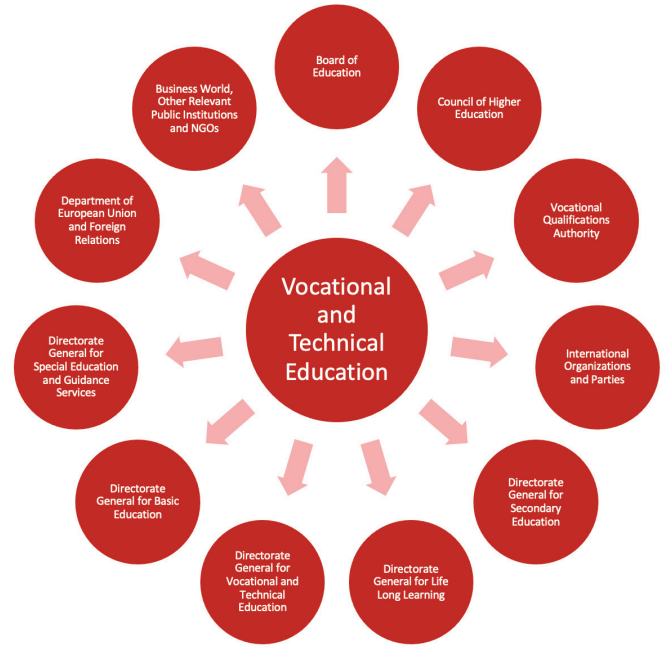
Vocational and technical education has a multi-branched structure extending from education and training to the sector. Within this structure, it covers education curricula and models, financing needs, professional development of educators, internship opportunities, changing technology and skill needs, formal and non-formal education, institution and sector collaborations and many other areas. In addition

to education in schools and centers, vocational and technical education includes different dimensions such as internship opportunities, scholarships abroad, transitions to higher education institutions and lifelong learning. This multidimensional structure enables multiple stakeholders to play an active role in vocational and technical education. MoNE General Directorate of Vocational and Technical Education, Vocational Qualifications Authority, Higher Education Institutions, international organizations such as the European Union European Training Foundation, and the business world constitute some of these stakeholders. These stakeholders play a role in improving the physical conditions of vocational and technical education students, increasing their social and economic opportunities, improving the quality of education, and updating curricula according to changing skill needs, from the education process to the internship period and afterwards to vocational training.

Vocational and technical education plays an important role in both education and economy. This role has led to the development of new policies and projects in vocational and technical education, and the emphasis on improving the quality and quantity of education. However, data and outputs show that vocational and technical education has not yet reached the targeted quality and quantity. This situation requires a comprehensive examination of vocational and technical education. Despite an increase in the employment rate of vocational and technical education graduates, the inadequacies in academic achievement averages, the failure to keep education programs up-to-date, and approaches that do not take into account the

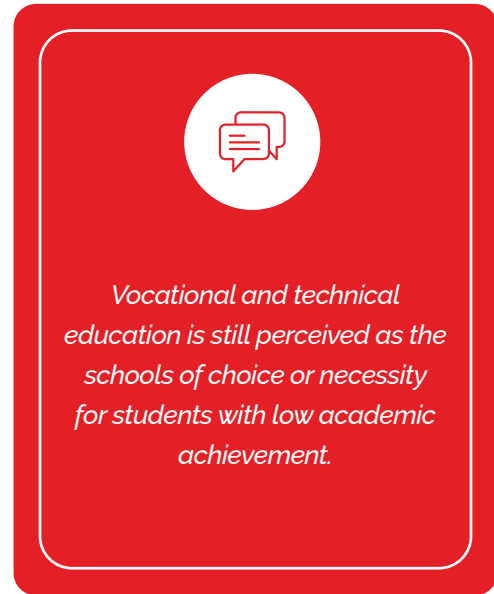
needs of the industry and sector pose obstacles to the progress of vocational and technical education institutions. Vocational and technical education is still perceived as a school that students with low academic achievement prefer or must prefer. To prevent this perception and to develop vocational and technical education comprehensively, internationally recognized programs and accreditation should be provided to ensure that education curricula are constantly updated. In addition, depending on these updates, teachers are expected to always improve themselves with new skills to train qualified students. To improve vocational and technical education and increase its desirability, multifaceted policies and programs that include all stakeholders need to be developed and implemented.

İLKE Foundation Research Center for Education Policy (EPAM) organized the 3<sup>rd</sup> İstanbul Education Conference with the theme of “New Horizons in Vocational and Technical Education” to encourage innovation and cooperation in the field of education and aimed to examine, explore, and improve vocational and technical education in cooperation with experts and to put forward innovative, feasible and sustainable suggestions. The 3<sup>rd</sup> İstanbul Education Conference “New Horizons in Vocational and Technical Education”, organized in cooperation with İstanbul Chamber of Commerce (ICOC), discussed current practices in vocational and technical education, sector collaborations, projects of national and international organizations and vocational education in lifelong learning. The conference hosted Ali Karagöz, *Director General of Vocational and Technical Education*, Prof. Dr. Mustafa Balcı, *Education and Training Sector Coordinator of the Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye*, Lida Kita and Georgios Zisimos from the *European Training Foundation*, Mustafa Necmi İlhan, *President of the Vocational Qualifications Authority of the Republic of Türkiye*, Prof. Dr. Feyza Arıcıoğlu, *Member of the Higher Education Quality Council* and Murat Hazıroğlu, *Board Member of İstanbul Chamber of Commerce*. Each speaker’s analyses, reviews and recommendations on vocational and technical education are compiled in this dossier and presented to those interested and researchers.



**Figure 4.** Stakeholders of Vocational and Technical Education

**Source:** MEB, 2018





# Preface

**Murat Haziroğlu**

*İstanbul Chamber of Commerce | Board Member*



“Vocational and technical education is indispensable to ensure sustainable economic and social development, to have a qualified workforce and to be competitive in the economy.”

Organized in cooperation with İstanbul Chamber of Commerce (ICOC) and İLKE Foundation, 3<sup>rd</sup> İstanbul Education Conference titled “New Horizons in Vocational and Technical Education” is undoubtedly an important step for the future of vocational and technical education. ICOC is proud to host the 3<sup>rd</sup> İstanbul Education Conference this year. Focusing on and addressing our common problems in vocational education with İLKE Foundation and Research Center for Education Policy (EPAM) will make significant contributions to the education community.

The most basic purpose of vocational education is to produce and present it to the market. For this reason, people around the world produce either for subsistence or for the market. One of the basic conditions of this production is the ability to make quality production. Quality production requires professional and technical knowledge. There are many opinions to put vocational and technical knowledge on a scientific basis. For example, according to economist Alfred Marshall, vocational education plays a fundamental role in increasing productivity and quality. Therefore, vocational education has an important place in improving the quality of life and increasing the earnings of the labor force.

Operating since 1882, the İstanbul Chamber of Commerce has undertaken the mission of explaining to

the authorities and the society the saving qualities of vocational education. Because the way for businesses and industry to meet the need for qualified labor force and intermediate staff is through vocational and technical education. Vocational and technical education is indispensable for sustainable economic and social development. Vocational education is inevitable to be competitive, to have a qualified workforce, and to ensure social peace and a fair distribution of income. If Türkiye had given more importance to vocational and technical education in the past, the country’s working population would have been more qualified. This, in turn, would have increased Türkiye’s economic welfare and raised the national income per capita. When recent history is examined, it is seen that Türkiye has been a country that has realized the importance of vocational and technical education since the second half of the 19th century. The establishment of vocational high schools such as agriculture, commerce, industry, forestry, and sericulture are concrete examples of this awareness. However, Türkiye had difficulty in taking firm steps to bring schools and industry together.

Since 1882, the ICOC has been conducting vocational training activities to increase competitiveness and qualify the workforce. In 1929, ICOC attempted to bring vocational and technical education schools together with industry by proposing that the management of vocational and technical high schools in İstanbul be

transferred to the ICOC. Unfortunately, this proposal was ignored by the governments of that period. However, under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the acceptance of the approach of bringing together chambers and vocational high schools in Türkiye was a turning point for the development of vocational and technical education. In this context, 54 Vocational and Technical Anatolian High Schools in İstanbul are currently patronized by the İstanbul Chamber of Commerce. There is an interesting dynamic in Turkish practices. The system is established, everything goes well, but when the eyes leave the system, the practices change. For this reason, it is important for the business world to continuously cooperate with both non-governmental organizations and the Ministry of National Education to ensure the sustainability of vocational and technical education.

It is of great importance to follow current practices in vocational and technical education, to address problems from a scientific perspective, and to bring new content to vocational education in accordance with the requirements of the age. Such conferences contribute to the development of vocational and technical education.

Vocational and technical education is a deep-rooted institution shaped not only by social and economic aspects but also by moral values. For this reason, vocational education has a model integrated with moral values and this model is called “ahilik”. Today, moral values cannot be excluded from vocational education.

Steps should be taken to make vocational and technical education more meaningful and to improve its social, economic, and moral aspects. These steps will transform vocational education from a hollow institution into a meaningful and valuable educational model. Moreover, with these qualities, vocational education will gain a spiritual depth and further strengthen its place in Türkiye. It is necessary to focus on and sustain these values to sustain the progress in vocational education achieved in the last decade and take it to higher levels.

As a member of the İstanbul Chamber of Commerce and as a businessperson, I have endeavored to present a perspective on the past, present and future of vocational education. Vocational education is a much broader subject than the general framework I have presented and has many different aspects. The İstanbul Education Conference offers the opportunity to discuss vocational education from all angles, from teachers to students, from physical infrastructure to the equipment used, from the active role of the business world in education to the curriculum. These discussions will enable us to develop our own unique examples and increase both our level of vocational education and our contribution to the Turkish economy. As a businessperson, I hope that our country will establish and maintain an understanding of vocational education that is integrated with the global world.

## Suggestions

**1**

To ensure the sustainability of vocational and technical education, the business world should continuously cooperate with both non-governmental organizations and the Ministry of National Education.

**2**

Current practices in vocational and technical education should be followed, problems should be addressed with a scientific perspective, and new content should be introduced to vocational education in accordance with the requirements of the age.

**3**

Steps should be taken to make vocational and technical education more meaningful and to improve its social, economic, and moral aspects. Vocational education should not only include vocational training but should also provide students with various values such as responsibility, honesty, and perseverance. The focus should be on sustaining these values to maintain and build on the progress in vocational education achieved in the last decade.



## Doç. Dr. Ümit Güneş

İLKE Foundation | Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors

3<sup>rd</sup> İstanbul Education Conference took place this year with a very exciting theme. With a theme that deals with “new horizons”, the conference shows that vocational and technical education is open to development and progress. Indeed, new horizons open space for developing new strategies. It is very important for all of us that innovation means “future” for our children, our country, and us.

When we talk about İLKE Foundation, the concepts of “new” and “future” come to mind. As İLKE Foundation, we believe that those who talk about the new and the future build the future. To build the future, we need to talk about today’s issues and the new more often. We must find solutions to the problems of this society we live in together. We must draw strength from our values and knowledge for sustainable and qualified solutions. Our values and knowledge, besides being very valuable, also have a cumulative feature. To find healthy, sustainable, qualified, and evidence-based solutions to our problems, we must be able to understand the past, past cases and current problems.

We, as İLKE Foundation, move forward with this mission, we carry out future and value-centered studies by understanding the past and the present; we aim to build the future. For this purpose, four main research centers are active at İLKE Foundation. Research Center for Education Policy (EPAM), which organized the 3<sup>rd</sup> İstanbul Education Conference, aims to contribute to education by providing reports on education to



*In order to find healthy, sustainable, qualified and evidence-based solutions to our problems, we need to understand the past, past cases and current problems.*



policy makers through field research, field monitoring reports, policy recommendations and projects. The second is the Research Center for Islamic Economics (IKAM), which makes very qualified contributions in the field of Islamic economics, carries out very transformative activities in the field, publishes a journal on Islamic economics and strives to develop models. In addition, there is the Research Center for Social Thought and Policy (TODAM), which works on social issues, and the Civil Society Academy (STA), which works to develop and strengthen the capacity of civil society and organize trainings on civil society.

İLKE Foundation is not only a structure consisting of four research centers, but also an umbrella organization. It has three member organizations, namely the Turkish Association for Economic Enterprise and Business Ethics (İGiAD), the Association for Scientific Studies (İLEM) and the Association for Non-formal Education and Culture (YEKDER). İGiAD is an organization that addresses very important issues related to business ethics, opens space for economic initiatives and prioritizes business ethics, conducts studies, and produces publications on this subject.

YEKDER is an association that develops, implements, and models original educational programs, publications and materials for children, youth, adults and educators. It carries out activities such as “Adab School” for preschoolers, “Home School” for children, “Marifet School” for young people, “Educator Development Program (EGP)” for educators, “Religious Education in the Family Program (ADEP)” for adults and parents, “Progressive Seminars Program (ASP)”, “Human and Social Science”, “Thematic Reading Groups” and “On-line Seminars”. İLEM is an institution that conducts academic research and organizes academic trainings and specialized studies.

İLKE Foundation and the Research Center for Educational Policy launched İstanbul Education Conference in 2021. The first one was organized with the theme of “Skill Acquisition in the Digital Age” and the second one with the theme of “Mass Education: The Search for a Way Out”. This year, under the title “New Horizons in Vocational and Technical Education”, it put today’s vocational and technical education on the agenda. I hope that the outputs of the conference will contribute to vocational and technical education.

## Ali Karagöz

Ministry of National Education | Director General of Vocational and Technical Education

Vocational and technical education has an important role in the economic development of countries and increasing social welfare when evaluated in terms of its potential to affect economic and social dynamics. Undoubtedly, one of the most important driving forces in making development sustainable is qualified human resources. The role of vocational and technical education stands out especially in the training of qualified human resources. This education has a key role in providing individuals with the necessary skills to enter the labor market, as well as enabling them to successfully manage their career transitions and provide them with a lifelong perspective. To shed light on the future of vocational and technical education, it is first necessary to look at Türkiye's rich past by remembering the roots of the "ahilik" culture. We also need to pay special attention to the reflection of the "ahilik" culture, which is the basis of apprenticeship training, on the whole vocational training process as a way of life and national morality coming from the depths of our history.

Rapid developments in science and technology, especially digitalization, which affects the way information is accessed and used, and changes in the way sectors produce and provide services, lead to significant changes in both quantitative and qualitative expectations for the workforce. These rapid changes are transforming the vocational and technical education system in form and substance, closely linked to factors such as economic conditions, technological capabilities, and industry trends. These developments have various effects on individuals' professional lives as well as their personal and social lives, and lead to the emergence of new skills and competencies that go beyond traditional knowledge, skills, and abilities. Factors such as digitalization, robotic technology, coding skills, automation, software development and artificial intelligence are



*Vocational and technical education ensures the training of qualified human resources, which is one of the most important driving forces in making development sustainable.*

transforming occupational behaviors, and creating new job fields. This change is altering the requirements of some professions and leading to the disappearance of others. In addition, relationships in the world of work are changing the way the world of work functions by influencing factors such as the level and quality of occupational skills expected from the workforce.

For individuals to adapt to these transformations in the sector and improve their professional competencies, it is necessary to build vocational ed-





education in a flexible structure. Accordingly, vocational, and technical education should be provided in an institution where formal and non-formal education and vocational training are handled together. This will make it easier for individuals to adapt to rapidly changing conditions. It is important to organize the curriculum with more emphasis on on-the-job training and to give more weight to vocational competencies in addition to academic basic skills. It is also necessary to plan the duration and content of education in a flexible and dynamic structure according to needs. Individuals who receive vocational and technical education will have the ability to adapt to the changing conditions of the labor force with the academic and social skills gained in formal education as well as the basic skills related to an occupational field.

Vocational and technical education is a system in which many stakeholders participate. It is important to provide the workforce with training in line with new skills and trends. Therefore, besides the public authority, employers and employees need to cooperate and be in collaboration with the labor market. One of the main criteria for the evaluation of vocational and technical education is the employability of individuals who receive this education. The em-



*Vocational and technical education plays an important role in adapting to new occupational knowledge and skills, transitioning between occupations when necessary and improving the skills of the existing workforce.*

ployability of individuals within the sector is closely linked to factors such as economic conditions and intellectual environment. Vocational and technical education plays an important role in adapting to new occupational knowledge and skills, transitioning between occupations when necessary and improving the skills of the existing workforce.

The lifelong learning approach aims to address the whole lifelong learning process by bringing together non-formal and formal education in vocational and technical education. It encourages effective participation by identifying the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders.

This approach aims to create and maintain a dynamic structure, considering the functioning of the system and the expected results and impacts.

The General Directorate of Vocational and Technical Education carries out a number of activities and plans for the future of vocational and technical education. The first of these is to make vocational and technical education accessible to more people, to raise students in a culture based on the ethics, and to ensure that every individual receives vocational training and obtains a certificate. To spread vocational and technical education to the base, it is to carry out studies by adhering to the principle of "Everyone should have a profession". It aims to increase the number of sector schools and sector-inte-

grated schools to increase employment rates. It aims to organize sector training programs to improve the professional skills of sector employees. It also plans to focus on skills needed in the future, such as electric vehicle technology, and provide training in this field. It seeks to develop educational collaborations

on quality agricultural practices to increase access to healthy food. It seeks to prevent the fragmentation of occupations into small tasks to encourage individuals to have broader skills and participate more easily in employment. It also seeks to share its experience with friendly and sister countries.

## Suggestions

---

**1**

To shed light on the future of vocational and technical education, first, efforts should be made to revitalize this culture by remembering the roots of the «ahilik» culture. Special attention should also be paid to the reflection of the ahi culture, which is the basis of apprenticeship training, on the entire vocational training process as a way of life and national morality coming from the depths of our history.

**2**

For individuals to be able to adapt to the transformations in the sector and improve their professional competencies, the duration and content of vocational education should be designed in a flexible and dynamic structure in line with the needs. This will make it easier for individuals to adapt to rapidly changing conditions.

**3**

Curricula should be organized with more emphasis on on-the-job training and more emphasis should be placed on vocational competencies in addition to academic basic skills.

**4**

In addition to the public authority, the support and active participation of the labor market and the sector should be ensured for the skills expected to be possessed by individuals who will join the labor force and for the continuous training and skills development of currently employed individuals.

# CHAPTER 1: Skills and Policies in Vocational Education

## Türkiye-Vocational Excellence for Reforms in Education and Training

**Lida Kita**

*Senior Human Capital Development Expert - Social Inclusion | European Training Foundation, EU Agency*

The discussion centers on the evolution of vocational education in Türkiye. We aim to delve into the collective wisdom gained from decades of collaboration with Türkiye and its various institutional partners. The European Training Foundation (ETF) has maintained a longstanding and close relationship with Türkiye. Throughout this journey, we have gleaned insights into vocational education and training, identified significant developments, areas in need of improvement, and the collaborative network that transcends national boundaries, encompassing partner countries we work with.

The European Training Foundation (ETF) cooperates with and complements the work of the European Commission and the European External Action Service, including responding to requests from the Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye, contributing to the EU-Türkiye bilateral policy dialogue.

The ETF gives input to EU policy monitoring mechanisms on VET, employment and social inclusion including an annual assessment of Türkiye's Economic Reform Program and wider human capital developments reported in the Torino Process. It supports sector policy dialogue and donor coordination. The ETF supports Türkiye institutions and stakeholders in the rolling out of Türkiye's Education Vision 2023 for the technical VET (TVET) and lifelong learning sectors, employment, work-based learning quality assurance framework including the cost-benefit analysis of apprenticeships, the Türkiye Qualifications Framework and the validation of non-formal learning, and skills for the future in certain sectors ("Countries-Türkiye", n.d.).



*Work-based learning is emerging as an important solution that Türkiye is pioneering due to a vibrant private sector and a tradition of dual education.*



As an EU agency headquartered in Turin, Italy, ETF operates in coordination with a multitude of countries, with Türkiye being a key partner. Our collaboration with Türkiye spans over 27 years, and it has been highly active across various platforms, engaging not only the Ministry of National Education but a broad spectrum of institutions and partners. What makes Türkiye's approach special and commendable is the consistent involvement of the private sector in all discussions, both within Türkiye and in exchanges with other countries. This active engagement resonates with European partners, countries involved, and ETF itself. As we interact with these countries, ETF has grown and evolved by assimilating lessons from each nation's experiences.

The ETF provides expertise and collaborates closely with public/private institutions in human resources development in the country, including an interinstitutional high-level public-private steering group, operationally strategic national coordination structures and technical working groups. The pivotal actors in this narrative are the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, along with their respective institutional partners.

ETF was among the first to collaborate with Türkiye when it embarked on developing the national qualification framework. The key institutional partner is Türkiye Vocational Qualification Authority (VQA) ("National Qualifications Framework-Türkiye", 2023). The challenge lay in recognizing qualifications from the private sector, which is highly active in various industries across Türkiye. The country boasts robust research centers that monitor developments closely and collaborate with different stakeholders, such as the Ministry of National Education and qualification authorities.

The fundamental question arises: how can we acknowledge and harness the skills gained by young individuals in the private sector? This inquiry stems from extensive collaboration between ministries, the central system, and the private sector, with much of the learning occurring in a work-based setting. The emphasis here is on recognizing skills, not only those conferred through formal education and diplomas but also the lifelong skills acquired alongside job-specific competencies. Work-based learning emerges as a crucial solution, which Türkiye has pioneered due to its historical tradition of a vibrant private sector and dual education.



*The active participation of the private sector in vocational education and training is indispensable. Türkiye's private sector has participated significantly in the discussions on ETF and European platforms and has made important contributions to this collective effort.*

The landscape has evolved with the advent of digital technologies and the changing context within various sectors. Young people acquire skills not just through formal education but also informal education, a considerable portion of which occurs through work-based learning, including apprenticeships. ETF closely scrutinizes these areas, conducting analyses and monitoring, not merely for the sake of oversight but also for learning and adapting based on the developments witnessed in these countries.

Noteworthy progress has been made in staff training through government-driven initiatives, projects, and substantial support from the European Union. Türkiye has extensively benefited from EU support in the education and training sector. Vocational education and training have been at the forefront of these programs, contributing to Türkiye's impressive educational advancements. This development has been a collective effort, not solely driven by the public sector but substantially facilitated by private sector involvement, research centers, and the synergy between public and private stakeholders.



**Figure 5.** ETF's Ongoing Projects at National Level in Türkiye

The collaboration between ETF and Türkiye encompasses the skills agenda, focusing on employability, inclusion, and individual development among young people. This alignment has also involved financial support. ETF extends its gratitude to the ministry, as well as the private sector and various sectors for their openness in sharing their systems and modes of public-private partnerships in skills provision. Vocational education and training, as we understand it, cannot solely rely on traditional classroom methods; the private sector's active involvement is indispensable. Türkiye's private sector has notably engaged in discussions at the ETF and European platforms, making them significant contributors to this collective effort.

Over the years, vocational education and training in Türkiye have undergone significant reforms, characterized by a prominent trend toward decentralization. This shift, influenced primarily by the private sector, underscores the notion that traditional classroom methods, which provide education on blackboards, are insufficient to impart the required skills. Instead, the private sector advocates for a more flexible and collaborative approach. This partnership is vital because private sector stakeholders possess a deep understanding of their respective industries and the specific knowledge needed for skill development. They understand the urgency of skill acquisition and its direct impact on employability, which necessitates an agile approach.

Decentralization is a remarkable aspect of this transformation, with many schools and vocational education providers operating in the private sector. The existence of providers in the private sector may prompt questions about the need for such entities in what is traditionally seen as a public provision. As was previously mentioned, the private sector cannot afford to wait. However, the key point to underscore is the ongoing debate we have been having with our colleagues at the Türkiye Ministry of National Education. It revolves around how much the public sector can learn from what is happening. They aim to understand why the private sector excels in equipping individuals with skills, resulting in higher employability rates compared to public institutions. The figure below contains a comprehensive list of educational reforms in Türkiye, which showcases the country's extensive efforts in this sector. These reforms have been substantial, especially in the context of the 2023 strategy, which encompasses the Ministry's education and training strategy. This strategy was highly appreciated and extensively discussed with the private sector, various stakeholders, and institutions, leading to a significant launch for its implementation.

The ongoing reforms are part of Türkiye's national vocational education and training program. These initiatives provide significant learning opportunities and require further analysis and monitoring to glean insights that can contribute to future strategies. As

we approach the end of the 2023 strategy, it becomes crucial to consider the subsequent steps. ETF is eager to engage with the ministry and key stakeholders to discuss the long-term strategic view of vocational education and training in Türkiye, particularly how it can align with the needs and expectations of the private sector. This collaboration should not merely involve seminars and presentations but focus on developing a comprehensive strategy that encompasses the active participation of the private sector, universities, and vocational schools.

The ongoing projects at the national level have been highly productive and are closely monitored. Türkiye actively participates in various European networks and platforms, making substantial contributions to these endeavors. The Centers of Excellence, a substantial project supported by the EU and run by the Ministry of National Education, serves as an example. While Türkiye's Centers of Excellence enjoy considerable support from the private sector, there are lessons to be learned and outcomes to be assessed. The forthcoming strategy should incorporate these

lessons and consider the private sector's role in delivering, not just using, skills, and how it collaborates with the ministry to enhance employability.

In conclusion, Türkiye's journey in education and training has been marked by significant achievements and transformative initiatives, thanks to the collaboration of the public and private sectors and key stakeholders. ETF acknowledges the active participation of Türkiye and its continued engagement in European networks and projects. The experience gained in Türkiye has provided valuable insights, which can be used to shape future strategies and contribute to the ongoing development of vocational education and training. Having started in 2020, Türkiye has joined the European Training Foundation (ETF)'s Network for Excellence (ENE) in considerable number of VET providers. They are working closely with a considerable number of different sectors in Türkiye. We as ETF support, facilitate and encourage Türkiye public and private structures to continue sharing of developments, ideas, practices, and experiences ("Vocational Excellence", n.d.).

## Suggestions

---

**1**

Cooperation with the private sector in vocational and technical education should be strengthened. Private sector stakeholders have a deep understanding of their sector and the specific knowledge needed for skills development. Schools need to meet frequently with private sector stakeholders. Accordingly, access to internship opportunities for students should be more facilitated.

**2**

Organizations such as ETF should collaborate with the ministry and key stakeholders to discuss the long-term strategic perspective of vocational education and training in Türkiye, in particular how it can be aligned with the needs and expectations of the private sector. This collaboration should not only involve seminars and presentations but should focus on developing a comprehensive strategy involving the active participation of the private sector, universities, and vocational schools.

**3**

Vocational Centers of Excellence in Türkiye should learn from the private sector and incorporate lessons learned into the curriculum, not only using skills but also considering the role of the private sector in delivery and the way it collaborates with the ministry to increase employment.

# Shaping National VET Policies within an International Environment – Enablers and Success Cases

**Georgios Zisimos**

*Head of Policy Advice and EU Programming Unit |  
European Training Foundation, EU Agency*

İstanbul's unique multicultural background is of particular importance when we enter the field of vocational education and training. This backdrop holds particular significance as we delve into the realm of vocational education and training (VET). One of the most transformative aspects of VET in recent decades has been its remarkable international dimension. I firmly believe that unless we wholeheartedly embrace the international facet of vocational education and training, we will fall short in addressing the myriad challenges particularly when it comes to tailoring education for the individual.

It's worth noting that, as was previously highlighted, individuals today are less likely to confine themselves to the geographic location of their educational journey. They are more mobile and flexible, moving to new places, such as İstanbul, or venturing far from here. These individuals are integral to an educational system that plays a pivotal role in supporting the economy in a broad sense. It is evident that modern students are unlikely to confine themselves to their place of study; instead, they'll move across borders, whether coming to or leaving from places like İstanbul, where they become an integral part of a system supporting the broader economy.

For VET to effectively support the economy and society, which are inherently multicultural in today's world, it must embrace internationalization as its central theme. The European Training Foundation (ETF) is a European agency operating on behalf of the European Union (EU) and primarily engaged in decentralized activities. The ETF collaborates with countries outside the European Union, and our relationship with Türkiye spans several decades. While our focus is on vocational education and training, we recognize that VET no longer operates in isolation. It



*Vocational education and training is inherently international in character and scope. This makes it imperative to build partnerships and alliances among the many international stakeholders, partners and interlocutors that VET has.*





is intricately linked with all levels of education and extends into the realm of lifelong learning.

In the realm of vocational education and training, it's imperative to adopt a holistic perspective that encompasses not only education but also the broader domain of human capital development. This is precisely why our organization places a strong emphasis on human capital development. Consequently, we engage in a comprehensive examination that considers education on one side and labor market trends on the other. Given its international status, ETF also diligently analyze global labor market trends, as these are intricately relevant to our ongoing discussions. Moving beyond the conventional narrative surrounding education and training, it was observed that many of us tend to dwell on the challenges that have historically plagued this field. It has been a prevailing perception that vocational education and training struggled to meet the expectations set for it. However, the landscape has evolved significantly in recent times. We are now poised to adopt a more expansive viewpoint regarding VET, one that embraces inclusivity and equity. It's essential to recognize that VET serves as a catalyst for economic growth. Furthermore, it operates within the broader framework of human capital development, addressing both individual and societal needs and aspirations. In essence, VET is inherently international in its character and scope.

When discussions revolve around vocational education and training, the conversation often centers

on the challenges within this field. This traditional view has cast VET as an area that has, in some way, fallen short of expectations. However, that is not the case today. The lens through which we examine VET has evolved to embrace a more open perspective, one that can address issues of equity and inclusion, as exemplified by some of the examples you've already heard. VET now plays a crucial role in fostering growth and is integral to human capital development, catering to both individual and societal challenges and expectations. Thus, it has inherently become international in nature.

The VET brings together diverse stakeholders such as representatives from chambers, businesses, the government, international organizations, schools, municipalities operating beyond Türkiye's borders, educators, students, financial institutions, and various NGOs active in the field of VET. This collective representation illustrates that VET is no longer the exclusive domain of a single entity. It has become widespread, emphasizing the need to account for this diversity when formulating policies. This is the reality not only in Türkiye but in all countries. Anyone involved in VET worldwide will find themselves collaborating with an array of organizations. In addition to those mentioned earlier, one can also note the presence of international organizations such as the OECD, World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF, as well as financial institutions. In fact, ETF has been particularly engaged in collaborations with significant financial institutions, including meetings with the

European Investment Bank, which has expressed concern about investing in infrastructure without certainty regarding the availability of the requisite skills to support those investments. The discussions have revolved around ensuring that, alongside such investments, measures are implemented to enhance human capital development in the respective regions.

In the face of this multitude of international stakeholders, partners, and interlocutors, it is imperative that we establish partnerships and alliances. A craft association in Türkiye must cooperate with its Italian counterpart, while a vocational school in Türkiye should work hand in hand with a vocational school in Greece. This is the reality of VET today, and failing to embrace this interconnection in a timely manner may result in a loss of the true potential of vocational education and training.

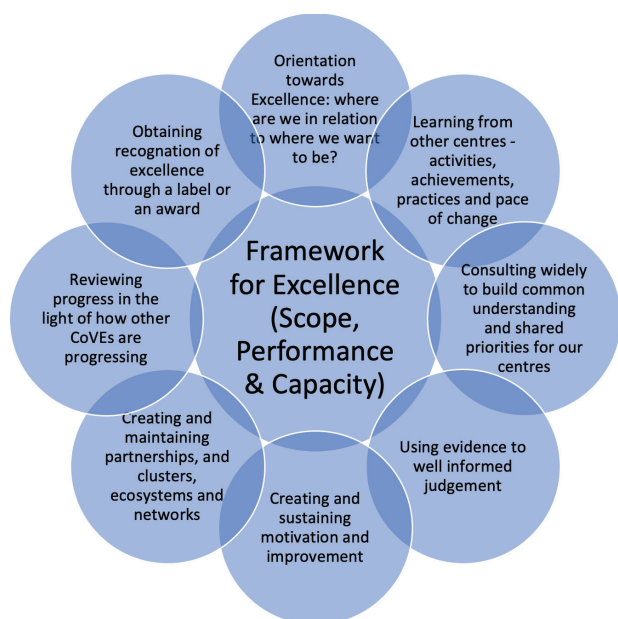
The second part of the topic is about the international dimension of VET, its connections with businesses, teacher training, and state-of-the-art equipment and innovation. In an earlier discussion, it was touched on the subject of innovation and how VET institutions are prepared to address topics like artificial intelligence. We also considered whether there is a need for a different type of establishment to accommodate these emerging demands.

Here, I'd like to emphasize the significance of Centers of Vocational Excellence. Vocational excellence is a cornerstone of VET and is uniquely suited for shaping policy. This is a central argument put forth by the ETF. What we implore from relevant stakeholders, not limited to ministries, is an in-depth examination of the true potential of Centers of Vocational Excellence. So, what exactly is a Center of Vocational Excellence? Imagine a traditional vocational school in a small Turkish town, which has been producing plumbers to support the local economy. This school may have been doing a commendable job within its region, but as technology evolves and labor markets change, it faces the challenge of ensuring that its students remain relevant in a rapidly evolving job landscape. This task becomes even more daunting for smaller institutions. How can a small school keep pace with technological advancements and the state-of-the-art equipment used in the industry? This is a common question in the realm of vocational education. The businesses that invest in cutting-edge equipment naturally want the learners to be trained using these advanced tools. However, achieving this without a robust partnership and a system of work-based learning, along with teachers equipped to adapt to the dynamic industry landscape, can be incredibly challenging.

This is where the concept of Centers of Vocational Excellence comes into play. These centers go beyond the traditional scope of vocational education and training. They bridge the gap by fostering collaboration with businesses, keeping students aligned with emerging technology and methodologies, and contributing to applied research and development. If a school does not have access to a broader ecosystem and lacks input from other institutions in different regions or countries that have successfully tackled similar challenges, they may find themselves unable to offer relevant curricula and training.

One key challenge in vocational education is financing. To purchase state-of-the-art equipment, these schools often require funding, which can come from international organizations, participation in programs, or even businesses themselves. The motivation for businesses to provide funding lies in the assurance of securing a highly skilled workforce that aligns with their operational needs. This model

**Figure 6.** Excellence Framework of Vocational Centers of Excellence





**Figure 7.** ENE Self-Assessment Tool Assessment Steps



of Centers of Vocational Excellence transcends the boundaries of conventional vocational education and training. It extends its reach beyond the usual confines of these institutions. Consider a scenario where societal challenges, such as sudden migrations, come into play, as observed in countries like Türkiye that hosts a large number of refugees. When schools face the urgent task of training refugees, the limitations of traditional vocational education and training programs become evident. The question arises: how can traditional vocational education and training institutions meet this demand, especially when their curricula, equipment, and infrastructure are not equipped to do so? In this context, Centers of Vocational Excellence step in as the orchestrators of various critical elements. They possess the capacity to synchronize resources and expertise. These centers have witnessed substantial growth in recent decades on a global scale. Türkiye stands out as a privileged partner in this endeavor, having established world-class Centers of Vocational Excellence. An illustrative example is the Center of Vocational Excellence in hot air balloon design and manufacturing in Türkiye, which ranks as a leading global organization in this field and is actively sought after for collaborative partnerships.

In 2018, when the European-level discussion on vocational excellence began to gain momentum, the European Training Foundation (ETF) recognized the need to explore its international dimensions. Consequently, we took the initiative to establish an international network. This network focuses on Centers of Vocational Excellence and has since grown to encompass more than 300 members, with a significant representation from Türkiye. The importance of this network lies in its potential to foster collaboration between Turkish Centers of Excellence and their

counterparts worldwide. It enables these centers to form partnerships, engage in programs, participate in peer learning activities, and collectively develop common tools.

The significance of these common tools should not be underestimated, as international policy harmonization often relies on shared tools, methodologies, practices, and approaches. As part of this network, the ETF Network for Excellence (ENE), which includes the development of a self-assessment tool is introduced. This tool delves into various dimensions of vocational excel-

lence, with several Turkish centers actively participating. Within this framework, ETF initiated various projects, including those focused on social inclusion and addressing the green transition, which, although



not discussed today, remains a pressing concern for many countries. Additionally, ETF is actively involved in projects related to digitalization and autonomy, aiming to foster autonomous operations and financing. Imagine a Vocational Educational Training (VET) school with an integral, often non-profit organization



“

*Transcending the boundaries of traditional vocational education and training, the Centers of Excellence model encourages collaboration with businesses, keeps students in tune with emerging technologies and methodologies, and contributes to applied research and development.*

that facilitates self-sustainability through product sales, curriculum development, and collaborative training efforts. Finland serves as a leading example of this model, where VET schools actively engage in entrepreneurial endeavors, even venturing into product development and sales, such as saunas and wooden houses. ETF has closely examined the eight key dimensions of excellence and, through extensive studies in over 40 countries, has highlighted the paramount role of business-education collaboration in shaping Vocational Centers of Excellence.

Another crucial aspect to emphasize is pedagogy. To achieve the status of a vocational excellence center, it's imperative to thoroughly assess and enhance the pedagogical approaches, curricula, and teacher professional development, all while maintaining a strong alignment with industry needs. Autonomy is key, allowing them to cultivate their own resources and operate within a lifelong learning framework. The inclusion of adults within the learning community is of paramount significance, as well. Furthermore, smart specialization, and autonomous identification of niche development areas, are crucial for Centers of Vocational Excellence. These centers should contribute to these discussions rather than solely relying on businesses. Industry 4.0 and digitalization represent areas where many centers of excellence see a need for development, an urgency amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

An interesting development is the capacity of educational institutions, including VET schools and Centers of Vocational Excellence, to conduct applied research. This concept was practically unthinkable a couple of decades ago. Yet, many centers have now significantly expanded their research capabilities, with examples like Tknika in the Basque Country, particularly the San Sebastian region, standing as leading exemplars.

In recent years, EFT has been working closely with the European Union and the European Commission to develop tools for vocational excellence. This includes the creation of an internationally agreed framework of vocational excellence. This framework seeks to identify common characteristics existing worldwide and promotes partnerships, shared leadership, and cooperation. The outcome is a set of rather intricate international tools that scrutinize various characteristics of vocational excellence, all founded on the principles of partnership. These tools will be available for use by any center of excellence worldwide, and they will enable ministries to monitor their responses. For these tools to be effective, we encourage schools to involve their entire ecosystem. This self-assessment isn't just about school leadership; it's about bringing all stakeholders together to collectively improve in various areas.

To conclude, I'd like to share a few key insights from our experience at the European Training Foundation. Firstly, when designing policies, it's crucial not only to consult with policymakers but also to engage policy shapers. The collective representation of individuals in this room represents those who help define the needs that must be addressed, and their role is instrumental. Secondly, the international dimension of vocational excellence is indispensable. It not only caters to the future labor market but also addresses the individual needs. It thrives on cooperation and alliances, with Centers of Vocational Excellence serving as pivotal facilitators, a role that Türkiye has actively embraced. Additionally, the synergy between Turkish Centers of Excellence and those in other countries, driven by shared niches and the desire for

growth, significantly contributes to this field. Lastly, vocational excellence is a burgeoning sector, and while we don't profess to have all the answers, we are continuously building our knowledge. The ETF is actively involved in various studies, some of which feature examples from Türkiye. These studies encompass digitalization, applied research, and areas like social inclusion. Ultimately, vocational excellence is an area that ministers worldwide hold in high regard. However, we emphasize the importance of ensuring that insights and experiences from schools are channeled back into the system. To achieve this, vocational education must prioritize inclusivity. Excellence, when harnessed correctly, can serve as a driving force for the entire vocational education and training system.

## Suggestions

---

1

A broader perspective on vocational education and training that embraces inclusion and equality should be adopted. It is crucial to recognize that vocational education and training acts as a catalyst for economic growth.

2

There is a need to build partnerships and alliances in vocational and technical education. For example, craft associations and artisans, vocational schools in different countries should cooperate with each other. It is important to embrace this interconnection in a timely manner so that vocational education and training does not lose its true potential.

3

To achieve the status of a vocational center of excellence, it is necessary to comprehensively evaluate and improve pedagogical approaches, curricula, professional development of teachers, all the while maintaining a strong alignment with the needs of the sector.

4

Smart specialization, autonomous identification of niche development areas, is crucial for Vocational Centers of Excellence. These centers should contribute to these discussions rather than relying solely on businesses. Autonomy is a key element, allowing them to develop their own resources and operate within a lifelong learning framework.

# Chapter 2: Vocational Education in Sectors, Labor Market and Lifelong Learning

## Employment, Sectors and Labor Market in Vocational and Technical Education

**Murat Haziroğlu**

*İstanbul Chamber of Commerce | Board Member*

3<sup>rd</sup> İstanbul Education Conference, organized under the theme “New Horizons in Vocational and Technical Education”, has a critical importance in terms of providing an opportunity to evaluate the importance of vocational and technical education in the business world in Türkiye under the title “Vocational Education in Sectors, Labor Market and Lifelong Learning”. From the perspective of vocational and technical education, vocational qualifications are a universal issue in the world of work. This is not only specific to Türkiye, but also an international issue. During our travels abroad, we observe that young people in other countries also tend not to prefer vocational and technical education institutions. This tendency of young people has important consequences for the business world and the economic welfare of countries.

It is noteworthy that in recent years, earning financial income through digital platforms has become more comfortable and attractive. Popular job fields that do not require vocational qualifications reduce the willingness of young people to continue vocational training. This leads to a shortage of qualified intermediate and main employees in the sectors and the labor market. As the business world, we must assess our responsibilities to maintain and increase the quality of vocational and technical education.

The İstanbul Chamber of Commerce launched the “Mobilization Project” with this sense of responsibility. Within the scope of this project, beyond increasing the trade volumes of the sectors, a series of projects were implemented to train the human resources needed by the business world. Sector representatives were brought together with young people by organizing regular events



*As the business world, we must continue to be aware of our responsibilities to improve the quality of vocational education and to meet the needs of the labor market, and we must continue our work in this direction.*

in the centers of transforming knowledge into commercial benefit. In this way, young people became more willing to improve their professional competencies and at the same time had the opportunity to better understand the demands of the labor market.

The “SoftITO Software Academy” project was launched to respond to the rapidly changing demands of vocational and technical education and to keep its content up to date. The main goal of this project is to bring together young people who have analytical thinking skills, can code, meet the requirements of technology, and are productive. A curriculum with seven main topics was developed for this training. Applications were received from seven countries and 52 provinces in Türkiye. These applications were evaluated, and 9200 applications were accepted. Exams were organized to measure the computer literacy of the candidates and the successful ones were placed in online training classes for 600 people. As a result of these online trainings, 148 people received certificates of achievement. After the trainings, the projects developed by the young

people were evaluated and the successful ones were directed to internship and job opportunities. Thus, an exemplary model was created to meet the job demands in the sector and to meet the need for qualified personnel in the labor market.

Consequently, addressing the current challenges in vocational and technical education, we need to develop various projects and initiatives to achieve a better balance between the world of work and young people. The importance of vocational qualifications in the world of work should not be forgotten, as this is the basis for economic prosperity both in our country and internationally. As the business community, we must continue to be aware of our responsibilities to improve the quality of vocational education and to meet the needs of the labor market and we must continue our efforts in this direction. In addition to the vocational courses offered by the Ministry of National Education, as representatives of the business community, we should contribute to the development and strengthening of vocational and technical education.

## Suggestions

---

**1**

Efforts should be made to make the perception of vocational and technical education positive. To this end, the quality of teaching in vocational and technical education schools should be improved. Relevant stakeholders such as the Ministry of National Education and the business world should inform and raise awareness among young people and their families about the benefits of vocational and technical education.

**2**

The business community should take a more active role in improving the quality of vocational education and meeting the needs of the labor market.

**3**

In addition to the vocational courses offered by the Ministry of National Education, the business community should contribute to the development and strengthening of vocational and technical education. For example, by addressing current challenges in vocational and technical education, it should develop various projects and initiatives to achieve a better balance between business and young people.



# Vocational Qualification in Lifelong and Non-formal Learning

**Prof. Dr. Mustafa Necmi İlhan**

*Vocational Qualifications Authority of Türkiye | Board of Directors and President of the Authority*

Although there are many traditional approaches internationally for the development of vocational and technical education, it is important to proceed from the tradition of *ahilik* in order to be healthy, sustainable and national. For this purpose, development plans are regularly realized in Türkiye to ensure economic welfare and national development. One of the 12th Development Plan's medium-term targets is vocational and technical education. In order to realize these medium-term goals, the Vocational Qualifications Authority established three advisory boards, namely "Digital Transformation and Artificial Intelligence", "Green Transformation and Smart Agriculture" and finally "Space and Aviation". These boards are composed of professional groups that need different qualifications and requirements. The main objective of the Vocational Qualifications Authority is to focus on occupations from a national qualifications system and lifelong learning perspective. This board supports the development of vocational and technical education and ensures its continuity by working in coordination with the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of National Education, and the Council of Higher Education. To meet the demands and expectations of the business sector, it also includes labor unions and representatives of tradesmen. The reason for being multi-stakeholder is to ensure "qualified and certified" human resources. In line with this objective, it is necessary to support lifelong learning to create a qualified workforce, and to ensure high quality, efficiency, and satisfaction in production processes. The prerequisite for a sustainable vocational education is the provision of these services. So, where does the national qualification system and vocational qualifications fit in this context?

The national qualification system was set up to strengthen the relationship between education and employment. When you get a good education, employment opportunities should increase. Currently, in our country, employment opportunities for school leavers are limited to only



*In order to create a skilled workforce, lifelong learning should be supported and high quality, efficiency, and satisfaction should be ensured in production processes.*

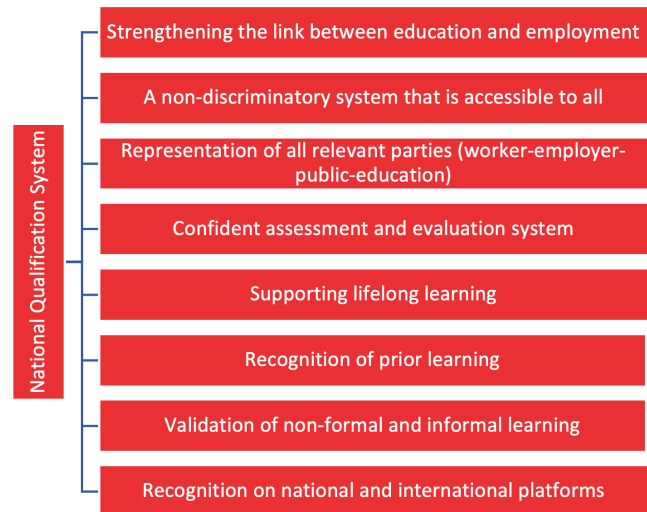


a few professions. These are medicine, policing, and military service. More employment policies are needed to improve the qualifications of other professional groups and to ensure their continuity. Graduates should be able to find a job immediately in the public and private sectors. There is a need to establish a link between the expectations and demands of the business world and the education system to facilitate the transition to work after graduation. The national qualification system has also emerged as an effort to align education programs and curricula with workforce demands. The main objective is to develop a qualified workforce and promote lifelong learning, as well as to ensure high quality, efficiency and satisfaction in services and production processes. It also seeks to solve the problems of access to suitable jobs after receiving education.

There are eight levels for the definition of national qualifications. The definition of these levels is of great importance for educational institutions and lifelong learning programs to train appropriate learners and promote employment. At the same time, the promotion of lifelong learning is one of the main objectives of the national qualifications system. It is important to create a non-discriminatory and fair system and to recognize prior learning. Focusing on receiving and representing the views of all relevant stakeholders, validating non-formal and informal learning, establishing a reliable assessment and evaluation system, and ensuring recognition on national and international platforms are among the main objectives. Activities are carried out at many stages from the preparation of occupational standards to qualifications, examination, and certification activities. The Department of Occupational Standards leads the preparation of occupational standards. This department focuses on vocational qualifications, examinations, and certification activities, and carries out qualification framework management and cooperation projects.

To standardize vocational qualifications, the Vocational Qualifications Authority requests the needs of the sector to be reported. The sector should tell us: "Sir, we need this kind of specialist, and we need people with this kind of skills." Of course, these needs may change over time. Professions may change, and some professions may become less important. However, we need to act together so that we can recognize that

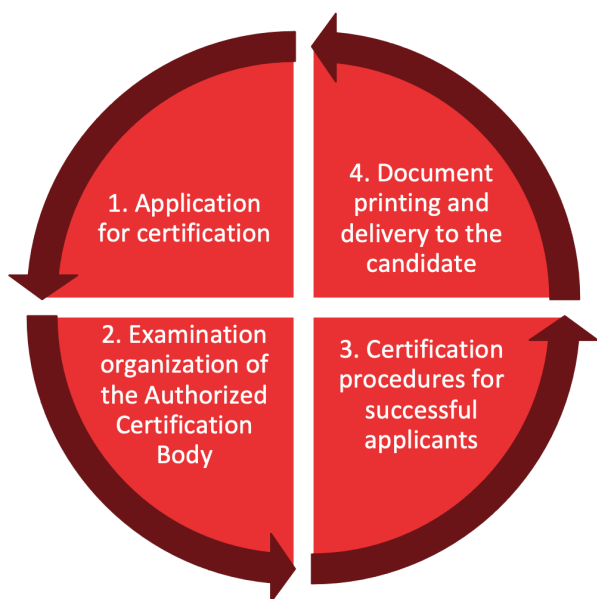
**Figure 8.** Importance of the National Qualification System



there are some changes in practice and that there is a need for updating. For this reason, cooperation is established with institutions that can represent the sector and working groups are formed. Occupational analysis is then carried out, occupational standards are determined, and national qualification documents are prepared. These documents are presented to the public and feedback is received. This feedback is evaluated, and corrections can be made when necessary. After the approval of the Board of Directors, we expect the national occupational standards to be published in the Official Gazette. As the Vocational Qualifications Authority, we take care to keep the process of creating standards and documenting skills always up to date. For this reason, attention is paid to updating them regularly every 5-6 years. However, in areas such as the informatics and artificial intelligence sector or the energy sector, demands are changing so fast that more frequent updates are needed.

It is a matter of curiosity how many people in Türkiye currently hold a vocational qualification certificate. When we look at the data provided by the system, we see that over 2.5 million citizens have a vocational qualification certificate. There are also 901 national occupational standards and 659 national qualifications. These numbers are beyond many European countries. According to the available data, we can say that we are further ahead than many European countries in terms of standards and qualifications. Another issue that is curious about the vocational qualification certificate is how the exams are carried out. Exams consist of a cycle between applications,

**Figure 9.** Process of Certification of Candidates at the Vocational Qualifications Authority



*The Vocational Qualifications Authority strives to harmonize the education system with the expectations of the business world as well as ensuring high quality, efficiency and satisfaction with its mission to promote lifelong learning.*

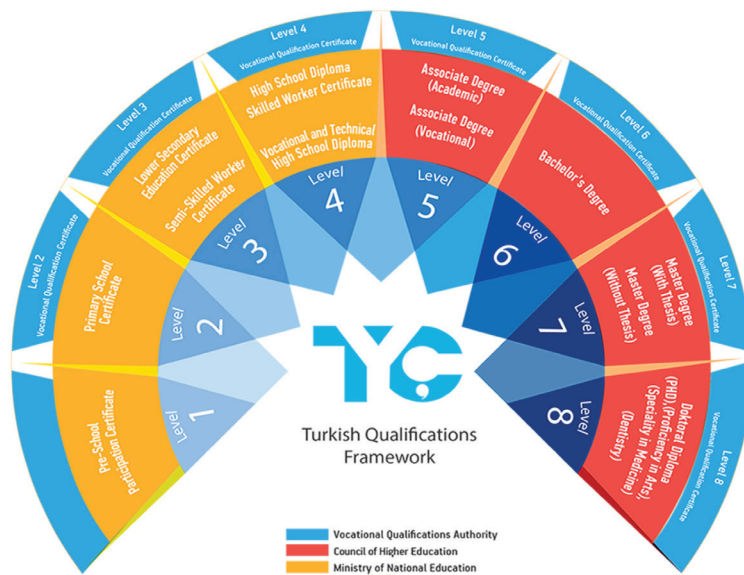
opinion, and result stages. Applications are made to authorized certification bodies and these bodies are accredited both by us and by Turkish Accreditation Agency (TÜRKAK). These organizations usually work with a long process, but it is worth noting that it can take about 6 months to obtain a certificate according to European Union standards. National qualifications are issued on a theoretical and performance-based basis, with the regulation of future conditions and appropriate examinations. Examinations are held and certificates are obtained for which competencies are possessed. Afterwards, there are processes of re-evaluation of the documents. Quality assurance mechanisms are actively used throughout these processes. Therefore, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) and the Ministry of National Education are our most important stakeholders.

Another point is that if an organization is considering becoming a certification body, it first attends our free seminars. Those who attend these seminars evaluate the job and answer the questions “Can I do this job?” or “Can I not do this job?”. The Vocational Qualifications Authority prioritizes encouraging public institutions to provide certification. It is very valuable for a university or chamber of commerce, chamber of industry or chamber of professions to provide certification. This is because it ensures that work is carried out in a more standardized, appropriate, and accurate way. Below are a few images showing how certification is done and how assessments take place (see Fig-

ure 9). These images are from different areas, covering a range of work, from desk jobs to construction work in the open field. For example, there are certification processes for electrical work or outdoor construction work. In addition, we continue our work in areas such as artificial intelligence, digital transformation, smart agriculture, green transformation, aviation, and space, which we have just started. To be able to carry out this certification process, it becomes important which professions we will define. For example, “Who is a data entry person? What qualifications and learning does this person have?” we need to proceed by defining questions such as. We need to make definitions in the same way in subjects such as human resources. Although it looks like a human resources specialist, this profession has a certain competence and standard. It is part of our job to determine this and create standards.

In summary, a vocational qualification certificate is a document similar to the European practice. However, while this document only shows that a person has certain competencies, the assessment process may be subject to each country’s own rules. This is just like the acceptance of programs of graduates of some universities in Europe. Our main aim is to advance the qualifications framework in an appropriate way. In this framework, the blue color represents the tasks of our qualifications body, the yellow color represents the tasks of the Ministry of National Education, and the red color represents the tasks of higher education in-

**Figure 10. Turkish Qualifications Framework**



stitutions. These tasks are defined according to levels, levels 1, 2, 3 and 4, as well as the Ministry of National Education is responsible for levels 5 and 6, while we and higher education institutions are responsible for levels 2, 3 and 4. The master's and doctoral level can be a separate discussion. There may need to be long discussions on which level. However, I think that levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 should be implemented better. Our aim here is to define and quality assure the learning

outcomes of the certificates issued by the Ministry of National Education, the Council of Higher Education, and the Vocational Qualification Authority, which are in line with the Turkish context (see Figure 10).

In conclusion, the Vocational Qualifications Authority is important in terms of making the national qualification system in the field of vocational and technical education in Türkiye operational and contributing to the definition of vocational qualifications, strengthening the relationship between education and employment, and developing a qualified workforce. With its mission to promote lifelong learning, it strives to ensure high quality, efficiency, and satisfaction

as well as to harmonize the education system with the expectations of the business world. The Vocational Qualifications Authority and other stakeholders in cooperation with it carry out various activities to achieve these goals and keep the national qualification system constantly updated. This effort contributes to the economic welfare and development of the country by improving the quality of vocational education in Türkiye.

## Suggestions

**1**

It is necessary to establish a link between the expectations and demands of the business world and the education system in order to facilitate the transition to business life after graduation. In Türkiye, employment opportunities for school graduates are limited to a few professions such as medicine, police and military service. More employment policies should be established to improve the qualifications of other occupational groups and ensure their continuity.

**2**

The Vocational Qualifications Authority should make more frequent updates in establishing standards and certifying skills in areas such as the informatics and artificial intelligence sector or the energy sector because of the development of technology every day. While other fields are updated every 5-6 years, the certification criteria should be updated in a shorter period according to the level of development in these fields.

**3**

Job descriptions required qualifications and criteria should be clearly defined and standardized when performing the certification process. For example, the certification process should be based on the question "Who is a data entry person? What qualifications and learning does this person have?" should be defined.

# Chapter 3: Excellence and Quality in Vocational Education: Models and Practices

## VET Centers of Excellence and Teacher Education in Türkiye

**Prof. Dr. Mustafa Balci**

*Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye | Education and Training Sector Coordinator*

The issue of how lifelong learning can be supported within vocational education can be addressed in line with the definition provided by the European Center for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (CDFEO). CDFEO defines lifelong learning as activities carried out continuously for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, competencies, and contents in formal, non-formal or informal learning environments for personal, social, or professional reasons. In this context, while explaining the concept of lifelong learning, it is emphasized that this process starts from early childhood and continues until adulthood through formal, non-formal and informal learning in family, school, workplace, living environment and other social contexts. When we focus on Türkiye's own qualifications framework, this process, which is designed as a projection of European standards, aims to improve the knowledge, skills, and abilities of individuals with personal or professional motivations and aims to increase personal development, competitiveness, increase employment data, reduce social exclusion and promote active citizenship. In other words, it is based on a continuous learning cycle. At this point, lifelong learning has a great place and importance in vocational and technical education.

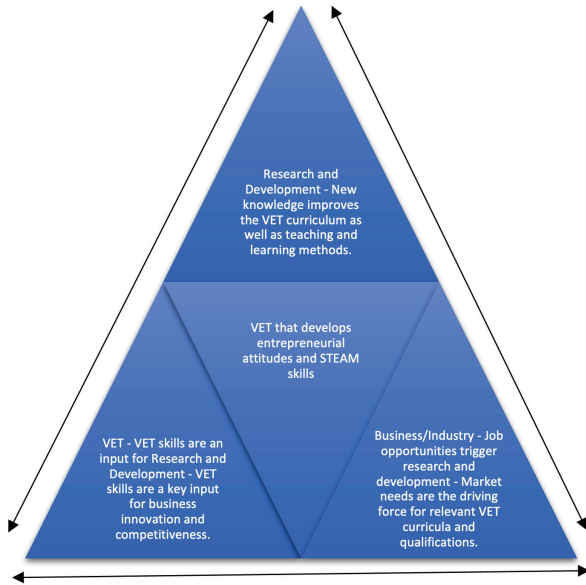
Lifelong learning takes into account the dynamic nature of working life, as it is a process where individuals continuously acquire different skills and abilities. Individuals may face the need to provide flexibility and diversity in their careers by participating in different training and learning opportunities throughout their lives. Lifelong learning in vocational and technical education is valuable in keeping traditional professions alive. In this context, creating spe-



*Changing labor demands around the world and changing parameters in the business world are changing the content and quality of professions, making it necessary for us to think deeply about the future of vocational and technical education.*



**Figure 11.** Vocational Center of Excellence Knowledge Triangle



cial certification programs for forgotten professions can support the sustainability of these professions. For example, certification and training programs can be developed for traditional professions such as filigree embroidery.

As the Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye, we attach great importance to the official certification of the achievements obtained through participation in all these formal, non-formal, lifelong and free learning activities and the skills acquired by individuals in the lifelong learning process. The certification of these achievements in cooperation with the Vocational Qualifications Authority is valuable in terms of formalizing vocational and technical education. In this way, it allows people to have more opportunities in employment. However, in some cases more regulation may be needed. For example, while certification is mandatory in hazardous occupations, it may not be mandatory in less hazardous occupations. Even in lower risk occupations, certification should be considered necessary depending on safety requirements. This is because it may not be possible to expect people to continue in the same occupation for long periods of time. People may want to continue their work in different positions as time passes in their lives. Some occupations in the hazardous group such as welding, mining and heavy industry may not be continued due to advancing age. Therefore, the qualifications of the profession and the characteristics of

the practitioner may change. Individuals may change their career fields by using the documents and competencies they have acquired in different educational environments over time. At this point, the Vocational Qualifications Authority formalizes the profession by supporting lifelong learning.

Another point is that changing labor demands worldwide and changing parameters in the business world are changing the content and quality of professions. This situation requires us to think deeply about the future of vocational and technical education. In this process, we see that some professions are gradually becoming extinct. One example is the box office clerk. When you travel to Northern Europe, you hardly see people working at bank counters. You may even need to make an appointment in advance to deposit your money. Similarly in Türkiye, some professions are at risk of disappearing due to technological changes. In the Turkish context, sustaining traditional professions is an important goal. To this end, we have a special advisory board to ensure the continuation of these professions. For example, we are developing special certification programs for traditional professions such as filigree embroidery. Certification bodies try to document the professional knowledge, skills, and competencies that individuals acquire throughout their lifetime, taking into account all kinds of learning environments. Thus, individuals can shape their careers and transition to different fields of work.

Another activity planned to improve the quality of vocational and technical education is the establishment of Sectoral Centers of Excellence within the ME-TEK III project. Located in Istanbul, Kocaeli, Ankara, Bursa, İzmir, Ankara, Bursa, İzmir, and Ankara, these centers cover vocational areas in a total of 25 sectors, including printing, metal, information technologies, renewable energy, aircraft maintenance, machinery and design, metallurgy, furniture, construction and rail systems.

The objectives of these centers can be summarized as follows:

- Improving the quality of vocational education by ensuring the professional development of field teachers in vocational and technical education institutions under the coordination of Vocational Excellence Centers (VECs) es-

established by MoNE and relevant sector representatives,

- Establishing and operating mechanisms to ensure continuous professional development of teachers through the creation of ties/networks between vocational and technical education and the relevant sector at local, regional, national, and international levels, and to ensure the adaptation of teachers to the developments in the sector,
- Determining the field competencies and in-service training needs of vocational teachers according to changing technological developments and carrying out on-the-job skills training and in-service training activities in cooperation with the relevant sector.

In conclusion, the Turkish Qualifications Framework supports lifelong learning by including all quality-assured qualifications regardless of any learning modality. This approach provides a framework in which individuals can develop their own professions, acquire new qualifications, or explore different career paths by offering continuous learning opportunities. Furthermore, efforts are made to further improve lifelong learning by following similar practices at international level. However, it should be emphasized that the preservation of traditional professions is also of great importance in this process and certification and training programs need to be developed for these professions as well. With this approach, Türkiye creates a successful impression in similar studies in Europe.



# Suggestions

---

**1**

New centers should be established to preserve cultural heritage, ensure the continuation of traditional professions, transfer them to future generations, and prevent the extinction of forgotten professions, and special certification programs and training opportunities should be created to maintain and develop these professions.

**2**

Vocational training programs should offer more flexible training models for students currently in training and individuals practicing the profession. Lifelong learning should be promoted by offering students and professionals different time and place options, such as online learning options, evening classes or weekend schooling.

**3**

Sectoral centers of excellence should be spread across the country, and occupations appropriate to geographical regions should be offered and promoted in these centers of excellence.

**4**

Sectoral centers of excellence should bring together vocational education institutions, the business world and sector representatives more frequently and encourage close cooperation.

**5**

The Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye should introduce similar practices at the international level to the business world and professional groups by organizing frequent conferences and workshops in Türkiye, and financial support should be provided to institutions to encourage international cooperation in vocational education.

**6**

Provide infrastructure in classrooms and provide up-to-date technical materials to align vocational training programs with technology and digital skills. The training curriculum should be frequently revised in line with the requirements of the digital age.

**7**

A Vocational Research Institute should be established in cooperation with the Vocational Qualifications Authority and the The Higher Education Quality Council to identify and research new professions and lines of work in line with the needs of the sector and the labor market.

# Quality and Accreditation in Vocational Education

**Prof. Dr. Feyza Arıcıoğlu**

*Higher Education Quality Council | Board Member*

The Higher Education Quality Council (YÖKAK) is an institution that examines conversations at the university level that are held at the high school level. In Türkiye, the concept of “quality in graduate education” is a relatively new phenomenon. The Higher Education Quality Council was established in December 2015, so the issue of quality in universities and higher education is quite new. The institution has important stakeholders. The Higher Education Quality Council operates in close cooperation with stakeholders such as the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), Center for Assessment, Selection and Placement (ÖSYM), Vocational Qualifications Authority, The Scientific and Technological

Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBİTAK) and many other institutions. It operates within a large ecosystem, taking into account global trends and related fields of activity. The main functions of the organization can be summarized under three headings: To carry out external evaluations of higher education institutions, to authorize associations and institutions for the accreditation of undergraduate education, and to spread the quality assurance culture more widely.

YÖKAK encourages universities to conduct their own internal evaluations every year. This involves a process called “Institutional Internal Evaluation Report”. These reports are regularly published on YÖKAK’s website, so that each university can review the reports of other institutions.

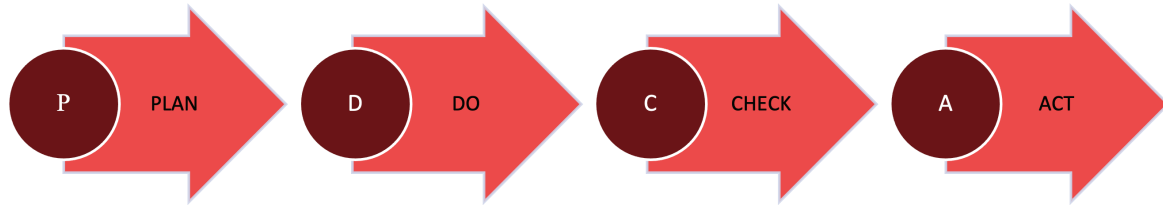
When evaluating universities, we conduct this process under four main headings: Leadership, management, education and training, research and development, and social contribution. This evaluation process is based on the work of a group. This group is tasked with attributing a level of maturity to all activities carried out at universities. Under each main heading there are a number of sub-headings. This stage assesses whether there is detailed planning for each sub-heading. After the planning phase, it is exam-



*The main purpose of universities is to provide excellent education and training. However, in some thematic or research-oriented universities, the quality of education and training may not meet expectations.*



**Figure 12. PDCA Cycle in Quality Processes**

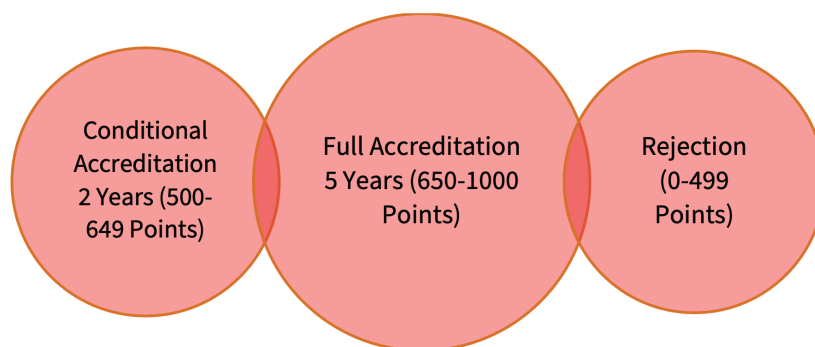


ined how successful the implementation has been. If an implementation is successful, it is important that it is continuously monitored and evaluated. The results of the evaluation should be used to make necessary changes within the university. Furthermore, each university is encouraged to develop practices that are unique and can serve as an example for others.

This process is referred to as “PDCA” within the Quality Council (see Figure 12). Each university has its own mission, vision, strategic plans, and policies. However, what is important is how effectively these plans are implemented and how these practices are disseminated throughout the university community. Universities should regularly evaluate their practices and make improvements when necessary. Sharing and adopting good practices with other universities is also an important part of this process. As a result, this PDCA represents an approach that is applicable to any field.

The Higher Education Quality Authority has evaluated the last 30 years of universities in our country. During this period, many developments have taken place and many important steps have been taken. However, we need further improvements to monitor the results of these steps, evaluate the data obtained and determine future strategies. The process of evaluating

universities involves a carefully planned and rigorous mechanism. As a first step, each university needs to conduct a self-assessment. Having completed the self-assessment, the institutions are then visited by an assessment team consisting of faculty, administrative staff and student representatives. This team prepares a second report after the on-site inspection. In the third step, a commission member and expert from YÖKAK compares the two reports and identifies any discrepancies. At this stage, the head of the team explains these discrepancies, supported by evidence. Why are there these differences? Why were these decisions made? Or has the institution been able to assess itself objectively enough? After all these questions are answered, a conclusion is reached. At this final stage, a consistency analysis is performed. After this analysis, universities that score 650 points out of a total of 1000 points receive full accreditation for 5 years, while those between 500-649 points receive conditional accreditation for 2 years. Institutions below this score cannot receive accreditation. A new criterion that we have been applying for the last year is related to the quality of education and training. The main goal of universities is to provide excellent education and training. However, in some thematic or research-oriented universities, we encounter situations where the quality of education and training



**Figure 13. Types of Accreditations and Required Scores for Universities\***

**Note:** Institutions that do not exceed 280 points in the Education and Training title cannot receive full accreditation for 5 years.



does not meet expectations. For this reason, universities that do not exceed 280 points in education and training cannot receive full accreditation for 5 years, regardless of their total score.

As of 2023, YÖKAK has completed the external institutional evaluation of 118 universities in Türkiye. As a result of these evaluations, 18 universities were granted full accreditation for 5 years and 35 universities were granted conditional accreditation for 2 years. However, as part of this process, it is seen that many institutions have applied and there are still 90 universities that do not have any accreditation at the undergraduate level. This situation reflects one of the areas where our country has room for improvement. This practice of continuous monitoring and improvement is also practiced at YÖKAK and we are not content with simply completing accreditation processes. Regardless of whether the institutions have received accreditation or not, we re-evaluate the institutions after two years through interim evaluation and monitoring programs. The main purpose of these monitoring programs is to observe how much progress the institutions have made and how much they have im-



*YÖKAK strives to disseminate and internalize the quality culture in higher education, to increase the quality in higher education through many national and international collaborations and to improve accreditation processes.*

proved in the elements identified in the first evaluation. During the interim evaluation and monitoring programs, a report prepared by our experts is submitted and these reports are forwarded to the universities. The reports describe in detail the universities' areas for improvement and their strengths. Universities are provided with recommendations to overcome their shortcomings or maintain their strengths.

Similarly, as of September 2023, the external evaluation of 188 institutions has been completed. In this process, 146 institutions were included in the Institutional Monitoring Program and

53 universities completed the Institutional Accreditation Program. The 2023 Institutional Accreditation Program is ongoing and is being carried out successfully with the valuable contributions of a team and our stakeholders. Within this framework, we have two main work packages: Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation (first work package) and recognition and authorization of accreditation bodies (second work package). Details of these activities can be found on YÖKAK's official website.

In Türkiye, 21 agencies and 21 associations are current-

ly authorized to accredit undergraduate programs. This number is increasing in line with the needs. We are also developing collaborations with international agencies that allow us to both be recognized and to recognize them. As of now, we are in cooperation with 13 international agencies.

By 2020, we became a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and received additional registration. This represents an important step in the Bologna process. In addition, as of 2023, YÖKAK activities received additional registration under the European Standards Directive. This has made our diplomas more visible in the European higher education arena. A map showing fully recognized members and with different colors marking those in transition. It is extremely important for the international recognition of the university students we graduate.

Finally, YÖKAK aims to address education at the master's and doctoral levels in parallel with the developments in undergraduate education. These levels of

education differ significantly from the bachelor's level and allow for direct doctoral study in certain professional fields. For example, some fields such as dentistry, pharmacy and medicine are examples of this category. We have therefore started to think about what steps we can take at levels 7 and 8 (master's and PhD). We have also prioritized a strategy to increase the number of PhD graduates and to think about what competencies graduates have and which sectors they are directed to. This has become an area where we need to evaluate the support that our universities and faculty members provide to students.

YÖKAK carries out various activities to disseminate and internalize the quality culture in higher education. Students are important stakeholders in this process and the active work of student commissions is of great value. As a result, with many national and international collaborations, YÖKAK strives to increase quality in higher education and improve accreditation processes. We hope to move forward with a joint effort to adapt to the changing world requirements and shape the future.

## Suggestions

---

**1**

Sharing of good practices among universities should be encouraged. Other universities should be encouraged to strengthen their own quality development processes by taking similar practices as examples.

**2**

For universities that do not receive accreditation, consultants should be appointed and supervised by the Higher Education Quality Council, and activities should be carried out in student clubs to ensure the necessary competencies in faculties.

**3**

The culture of quality assurance should be spread throughout the university community, and everyone should be encouraged to contribute to the quality improvement process.

**4**

Collaboration and communication between the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), the Higher Education Quality Council (YÖKAK) and other stakeholders should be continuously strengthened.

# CONCLUSION

---

Organized by İLKE Foundation's Research Center for Education Policy (EPAM) in collaboration with Istanbul Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the 3<sup>rd</sup> İstanbul Education Conference addressed the present and future of vocational and technical education by touching upon all aspects of vocational and technical education with the theme New Horizons in Vocational and Technical Education. The conference hosted Ali Karagöz, Director General of Vocational and Technical Education of the Ministry of National Education; Prof. Dr. Mustafa Balcı, Education and Training Sector Coordinator of the Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye; Lida Kita and Georgios Zisimos from the European Training Foundation; Mustafa Necmi İlhan, President of the Vocational Qualifications Authority of the Republic of Türkiye; Prof. Dr. Feyza Arıcıoğlu, Member of the Higher Education Quality Council; and Murat Hazıroğlu, Member of the Board of Directors of ICOC. The conference presented current practices in vocational and technical education, sector collaborations, projects of national and international organizations and vocational education in lifelong learning in all aspects. The topics discussed at the conference were written and reported in order to contribute to vocational and technical education studies and to be presented to those concerned.

In order to improve vocational and technical education and increase its preferability, all stakeholders of vocational and technical education should act in cooperation with common projects and policies. Cooperation with the private sector in vocational and technical education should be strengthened. Schools should come together frequently with private sector stakeholders and students' access to internship opportunities should be facilitated more. Collaborations to be established by chambers of

commerce, industry and tradesmen with vocational and technical secondary education institutions of the relevant fields will enable vocational education students to get to know their fields before graduation, to start working with internship opportunities, and at the same time increase their employment opportunities after graduation. It is also necessary to establish a link between the expectations and demands of the business world and the education system in order to facilitate the transition to business life after graduation. Meeting these expectations depends on schools and the sector working in cooperation through joint curricula and programs.

In order to improve vocational and technical education and increase its preferability, all stakeholders of vocational and technical education should act in cooperation with common projects and policies. Cooperation with the private sector in vocational and technical education should be strengthened. Schools should come together frequently with private sector stakeholders and students' access to internship opportunities should be facilitated more. Collaborations to be established by chambers of commerce, industry and tradesmen with vocational and technical secondary education institutions of the relevant fields will enable vocational education students to get to know their fields before graduation, to start working with internship opportunities, and at the same time increase their employment opportunities after graduation. It is also necessary to establish a link between the expectations and demands of the business world and the education system in order to facilitate the transition to business life after graduation. Meeting these expectations depends on schools and the sector working in cooperation through joint curricula and programs.



# SPEAKERS

---



**Ali Karagöz**

*Ministry of National Education |  
Director General of Vocational and  
Technical Education*

He completed his undergraduate education at Gazi University, Faculty of Technical Education, Metal Teaching and Anadolu University, Faculty of Economics, International Relations and his master's degree at Gazi University, Institute of Science and Technology. He received his doctorate education at the Institute of Security Sciences of the Police Academy. He worked as a teacher and school principal in industrial vocational high schools for many years. Afterwards, he worked as a branch manager in the General Directorate of Technical Education for Boys, group head in the General Directorate of Vocational and Technical Education, head of department in the General Directorate of Private Education Institutions, and head of department in the General Directorate of Personnel of the Ministry of National Defense. After serving as the Country Representative of Türkiye Maarif Foundation in Afghanistan, he was appointed as the Director General of Vocational and Technical Education at the Ministry of National Education. Born in Mut, Mersin, Ali Karagöz is married and has two children.



**Prof. Dr. Mustafa Balcı**

*Delegation of the European  
Union to Türkiye | Education and  
Training Sector Coordinator*

Prof. Dr. Mustafa Balcı graduated from Higher Technical Teacher Training School in 1975. He received his master's degrees in Business Management from Gazi University and in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Bath, UK. He was awarded the title of doctor in Mechanical Engineering in 1986, and became an associate professor in 1987 and a professor in 1995. A faculty member at Gazi University for 29 years, Balcı was the founding president of the Ministry of National Education's Research and Development Center for Vocational and Technical Education between 1986 and 1993. Mustafa Balcı, who has been working on vocational and technical education in the UK, the USA and various European countries, has been working as the Education and Training Sector Coordinator at the Delegation of the European Union (EU) to Türkiye since 2002. Mustafa Balcı's area of responsibility includes universities, private and public schools, Ministry of National Education, Council of Higher Education, Vocational Qualifications Authority, Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Chambers of Tradesmen and Craftsmen and Organized Industrial Zones. Mustafa Balcı is the Education and Training Sector Coordinator of the Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye and coordinates the funds provided by the European Union to Türkiye to improve the quality of education and training in Türkiye. Balcı, who has also served as Dean and Head of Department, is married with 3 children and has many publications on automotive engineering and vocational education.



**Georgios Zisimos**

*European Training Foundation,  
EU Agency | Head of Policy  
Advice and EU Programming Unit*

Georgios Zisimos is an educator who joined the European Training Foundation in Turin in March 2014 as a senior expert on EU Education and Training Policy. He is currently Head of Policy Advisory and EU Programming Unit at the same organization. In February 2010, he was appointed member of the Cabinet of the EU Commissioner for education, culture, multilingualism, youth and sport in Brussels. In the Cabinet he oversaw the education portfolio. Prior to 2010, he was appointed by the Council of Ministers as a member of the Scientific Committee for Curriculum Reform in Cyprus. In 2005 he was elected Secretary General of the Cyprus Secondary Education Teachers' Union. He became a member of the Executive Committee of ETUCE (European Trade Union Committee for Education). Mr. Zisimos has taught in state schools in both the UK and Cyprus. He holds a Master's degree in Curriculum Development and is the author of numerous publications in the field of education and training.



**Lida Kita**

*European Training Foundation, EU  
Agency | Senior Human Capital  
Development Expert - Social Inclusion*

Lida Kita worked the European Training Foundation EU Agency in 2003 as Senior Human Capital Development Specialist. She started her career as a teacher and continued as a lecturer at the University of Tirana, textbook author, teacher professional development and curriculum specialist at the Albanian Ministry of Education and Science. Between 1992 and 2001, she worked as an education and social sector officer in the World Bank's Europe and Central Asia Department. She worked at the World Bank Office in Tirana, Albania. Mrs. Kita holds a Master's degree in Public Policy and Management from SOAS Center for Financial and Administrative Studies, University of London and a Master's degree in Development Management from ILO-Turin University. Kita's areas of expertise are public policy management on education, training and employment issues with a focus on social inclusion, employment and skills for inclusive growth.



**Prof. Dr. Mustafa Necmi İlhan**

*Vocational Qualifications Authority  
of Türkiye | Board of Directors and  
President of the Authority*

He graduated from Gazi University Faculty of Medicine in 1995. He completed his doctorate in Public Health (2001) and master's degree in Hospital Management (2014) at Gazi University and his doctorate in Occupational Health (2007) at Ankara University. He started his career at SSK Yozgat Dispensary in 1995. He worked at SSK Hasanoğlu Dispensary and SSK Health Department. İlhan, who started his academic studies as a research assistant at Gazi University in 1999, became a lecturer in the Faculty of Medicine, Department of Internal Medical Sciences, Department of Public Health in 2004, assistant professor in 2007, associate professor in 2009 and professor in 2014. He served as the Head of the Department of Labor and Occupational Diseases between 2014-2023. He took part in many boards, commissions and projects at the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, Social Security Institution, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Family and Social Services. İlhan was elected to the Board of Directors of the Vocational Qualifications Authority of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security and to the Presidency of the Authority on August 09, 2023.



**Prof. Dr. Feyza Arıcıoğlu**

*Higher Education Quality Board  
| Board Member*

Prof. Dr. Arıcıoğlu graduated from Istanbul University Faculty of Pharmacy in 1986. She started her career as a medical specialty student in the Department of Pharmacology and Clinical Pharmacology, Istanbul University, Istanbul Faculty of Medicine. She completed her master's degree in 1988 and her doctorate in 1993 in the same department. She became an assistant professor in Marmara University Faculty of Pharmacy, Department of Pharmacology in 1994, associate professor in 1998 and professor in 2004. She simultaneously worked as a visiting or tenured faculty member in the Departments of Neuroscience at Cornell University School of Medicine, Psychiatry at the University of Mississippi School of Medicine, Pharmacology at Temple University School of Medicine and Psychiatry at the Max-Planck Institute. Her main research area is neuropsychopharmacology. She is the founding head of Marmara University Faculty of Pharmacy Psychopharmacology Research Unit (1996), founding and chief editor of the Journal of Clinical and Experimental Health Sciences (2011-2015, 2018-), academic editor of Psychiatry and Clinical Psychopharmacology (2020-) and Psychiatry and Behavioural Sciences (2020-). She is currently the Director of Marmara University Institute of Health Sciences (2012-2015, 2018-), Ambassador of the Organization for Doctoral Education in Biomedicine and Health Sciences in the European System (ORPHEUS), Türkiye (2013-), member of the Education Commission of the International Neuropsychopharmacology Association (CINP). Since January 2022, she has been serving as YÖKAK Board Member on behalf of YÖK. She chairs the YÖKAK Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Commission.



**Murat Hazıroğlu**

*İstanbul Chamber of Commerce  
| Board Member*

He was born on October 24, 1972 in Trabzon. He completed his high school education at Bağcılar Industrial Vocational High School and his higher education at Sakarya University, Mechatronics Department. In 1989, he started his business life in the IT sector. Murataziroğlu, who is currently a manager in a company operating in the IT sector, served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Anatolian Lions Businessmen's Association between 2004 and 2008, and served as IBB Assembly Member, Audit Board Member and Chairman of the Tariff Commission of the Municipal Assembly between 2004 and 2009. Murat Hazıroğlu, who served as a Member of the Assembly in the Information Technologies Professional Committee of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce between 2018 and 2022, is still a Member of the Assembly in the same Professional Committee and continues to serve as a Member of the Board of Directors of the İstanbul Chamber of Commerce for the 21st Term. Mr. Hazıroğlu is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Economic Development Foundation.



**Doç. Dr. Ümit Güneş**

*İLKE Foundation | Vice  
Chairman of the Board of  
Directors*

In 2011, he received his bachelor's degree from Yıldız Technical University, Department of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering. During his undergraduate education, he was a visiting student at FH Düsseldorf for one semester and FH Kiel for one semester. In 2013, he received his master's degree from the same department of Yıldız Technical University. In August 2019, he received her master's degree titled "Performance and Dimension Relationship of Moving Systems: Structural Development Theory" in August 2019. Between January 2017 and April 2018, he was a visiting researcher at Duke University, Department of Mechanical Engineering and Materials Science as a TÜBİTAK researcher. After working as an R&D engineer at İstanbul Ulaşım Aş. between 2011-2012, he worked as a research assistant at Yıldız Technical University, Department of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering between 2012-2019. As of June 2020, he has been working as an Assistant Professor in the same department, and between 2021 and 2022, he was a visiting professor at Duke University, Department of Mechanical Engineering and Materials Science as a TÜBİTAK researcher. He has been a member of the board of directors of İLKE Foundation since January 2019.



# REFERENCES

---

Bozgeyikli, H. (2019). *Mesleki ve teknik eğitimin geleceği*. (İLKE Geleceğin Türkiye'si Analiz Raporu 02). İstanbul: İLKE Vakfı. Retrieved from <https://ilke.org.tr/mesleki-ve-teknik-egitimin-gelecegi>

Countries Türkiye. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/where-we-work/countries/turkiye>

İLKE Vakfı. (2023). *Mesleki ve teknik eğitim*. (İLKE Politika Önerileri 2). İstanbul: İLKE Vakfı. Retrieved from <https://ilke.org.tr/ilke-politika-onerileri-2--mesleki-ve-teknik-egitim>

MEB. (2023). *Millî eğitim istatistikleri örgün eğitim*. Retrieved from [https://sgb.meb.gov.tr/www/icerik\\_goruntule.php?KNO=508](https://sgb.meb.gov.tr/www/icerik_goruntule.php?KNO=508)

National Qualifications Framework – Türkiye. (2023). Retrieved from <https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-08/TU%CC%88RKI%CC%87YE%20%281%29.pdf>

OECD. (2021). *Vocational education & training (VET)*. Retrieved from <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/IndicatorExplorer?query=47&indicators=C004>

OECD. (2022). *Education at glance 2022*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1787/3197152b-en>

TÜİK. (2023). *Eğitim durumuna göre temel işgücü göstergeleri*. Retrieved from <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Search/Search?text=E%C4%9Fitim%20durumuna%20g%C3%B6re%20temel%20i%C5%9Fg%C3%BCc%C3%BCstergeleri>

Vocational Excellence. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/what-we-do/vocational-excellence>

# 2<sup>nd</sup> İstanbul Education Conference Final Report



## For other EPAM publications:







Aziz Mahmut Hüdayi Mah. Türbekapı Sk. No:13 Üsküdar/İstanbul  
t +90 216 532 63 70 f +90 216 532 63 71 e bilgi@ilke.org.tr  
www.ilke.org.tr



ilkevakfi