

TORINO PROCESS 2018–20

REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

NATIONAL REPORT (SUMMARY)

Disclaimer

Republic of Belarus - National Torino Process Report (NRF)

This report is prepared in the framework of the Torino Process 2018-20 by the relevant national authorities (*neither copy edited nor formatted by the ETF*). The contents of this paper are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ETF or the EU institutions.

CONTENTS

A. Country and VET overview	03
B. Economic and labour market environment	07
C. Social environment and individual demand for VET	13
D. Internal efficiency and operation of the VET system	17
E. Governance and financing of VET	20
ANNEX:.....	25

A. Country and VET overview

The Republic of Belarus is located in the centre of Europe. It is situated on the crossroads of major transport routes between the Commonwealth of Independent States and Western Europe. Belarus shares borders with Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Ukraine.

There are six oblasts in Belarus – Brest Oblast, Vitebsk Oblast, Gomel Oblast, Grodno Oblast, Minsk Oblast, and Mogilev Oblast. They are further divided into 118 regions.

By its ethnic composition, the Republic of Belarus is a multinational state with a predominance of indigenous people.

As of the beginning of 2019, the population of the Republic of Belarus was 9,475,174 with 78.4% of the Belarusians living in urban areas. The proportion of the population aged 0-15 years was 17.8%, of working age (men 16-61 years old, women 16-56 years old) - 57.4%, persons over working age - 24.8%.

The Republic is among the countries with aging population, a high educational attainment and employment rate, a low level of registered unemployment.

The guiding strategy document for the education sector is the State Programme on Education and Youth Policy for 2016–2020. It covers all education levels, including general, VET, and higher education. The programme envisages a collection of measures aimed at increasing the quality and accessibility of education according to the needs of the innovative economy, including the formation of a 'cloud' informational and educational environment containing quality resources and services that are based on modern information technologies. The government will draft and adopt the new education strategy in 2020 for the period of 2021-2025.

The Education Code of the Republic of Belarus (2011) provides for legal regulation of all levels of education and for continuing education. It not only regulates the learning process but also determines the distribution system and provides for the social protection of students, including the protection of the rights of people with a disability. The code is currently undergoing revision. The revised code will e.g. unify different types of public VET providers and will call them all as colleges. This is expected to pave the way for optimising and restructuring the VET provider networks as well as to improve their image among the population and learners.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) is the national body responsible for education at all levels. It has a Directorate for Professional Education which steers policy implementation in higher education, VET, and lifelong learning. The Information and Analytical Centre (GIATS) is a body under the MoE responsible for education statistics, information systems in the education sector, and the digitalisation of the education system.

The education system in Belarus includes formal, continuing, and special education. Formal education is divided into pre-school, general secondary (basic and secondary), vocational, secondary specialised, higher, and postgraduate education. After completing general secondary education, about 55% of graduates continue their studies in higher education, about 25% go to specialised (professional) secondary schools, and about 17% proceed to technical vocational schools. This two-level (pre-university) VET system explains the high participation rates in VET. The share of VET students in upper secondary education is high, at 41.7%. The share of tertiary education attainment continued increasing from 55.8% to 58.3% in 2018 in comparison to the previous year.

The country has a high average duration of education (12.3 years) and a high number of expected years of study (15.5). Its literacy rate is one of the highest in the world. The multi-indicator cluster survey of the status of children and women that was organised by the Belstat in 2012 suggests that the literacy rate of young people aged 15–24 years is 100%, irrespective

of place of residence, region, or social situation. The gross enrolment rates in both primary and secondary education are close to 100%.

Over the past five years, student enrolment numbers have been falling in both technical vocational (TVET) and secondary specialised education (SSE), as well as in higher education. This can be explained by the decreasing number of young people in the 15–19 and 20–24 age groups. At the same time, enrolment numbers have been increasing in pre-primary and general secondary education.

In 2018, Belarus for the first time participated in the new round of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA); results were announced in December 2019. The study involved 236 educational institutions and about 6 thousand students aged 15 years. The Republic of Belarus ranked 36th in reading, 38th in mathematics and 37th in science among 79 participating countries, which is assessed as a good result and an additional incentive to improving the quality of general and vocational education.

In general, the educational attainment of the adult population is high. In 2018, 54.3% of the active population aged 25+ had attained a high level of education (tertiary and secondary specialised), 44.2% a medium level (general secondary and vocational), and only 1.5% a low level (general basic and lower).

The Republic of Belarus has a wide network of VET institutions. In the republic there are 131 TVET institutions, 159 SSE institutions, among them 43 are affiliated to higher education institutions and 5 - to the Republican Institute for Vocational Education (RIPO). Out of the total number of VET institutions, 12 SSE institutions are private-owned educational institutions.

About 88% of TVET institutions implement educational programmes of vocational training for adults, 50 TVET institutions provide vocational training for people with special mental or physical development needs (people with SMPDN), particularly in inclusive training groups, 54 TVET institutions and 17 SSE institutions provide pre-vocational and vocational training for the students of general secondary education institutions at their own facilities.

During the 2018/19 academic year, 50.2 thousand people studied in TVET institutions (of which 16.3 thousand - girls, 33.9 thousand - young men), and 113.3 thousand people were trained in the educational institutions implementing the educational programmes of SSE (55.9 thousand - girls, 57.4 thousand - young men).

VET is state-regulated, and is managed by the MoE, other ministries, and state authorities or organisations at the national, regional, and local levels. The MoE governs the VET system through six regional departments of education and the Education Committee of Minsk City. RIPO is responsible for the development of national standards and training materials, research and analysis on VET, VET teacher in-service training, and other support and methodological work related to VET. It has a strong institutional and human resource capacity to support VET policy development and implementation.

The system of vocational education promptly reacts to the structural changes in the demand for staff. This is due to its close ties with customer organisations, a contractual form of training, as well as forming an order for the training of workers for a five-year period. Currently, more than 90% of young workers (in 2018, 91.1% of students were enrolled in full-time education programmes under contracts and on applications of customer organisations) attain TVET in accordance with concluded contracts and orders of enterprises and organisations.

In the Republic of Belarus, the VET unity and continuance is ensured by continuity of its levels and coherence of basic formal education programmes (Figure 1).

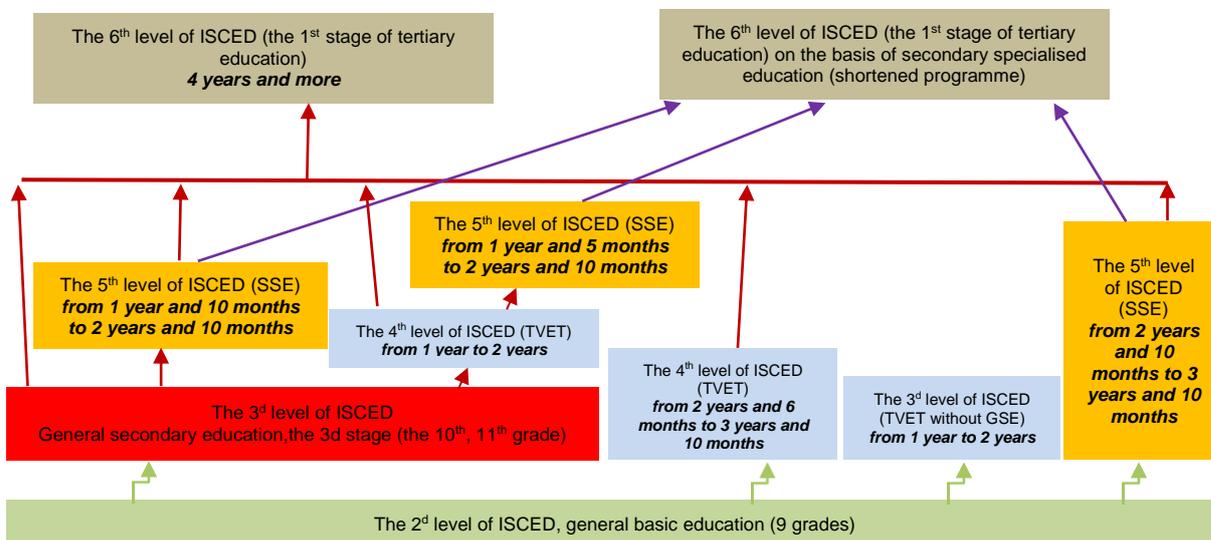


Figure 1. - Trajectories of professional education attainment

The youth distribution flows by level of education after attaining the basic and general secondary education are as follows: in 2018, more than 30 thousand were admitted at the level of TVET, more than 38 thousand - at the level of SSE (of which 7 thousand on the basis of TVET), 58.8 thousand (of which 26.7 thousand had SSE, notably 17.5 thousand graduated from SSE this year; 2.5 thousand had TVET) - at the level of higher education.

	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2018 as a % to 2016
Admitted, total	133.6	129.8	127.5	95.4
of which to:				
technical vocational education institutions	32.0	29.7	30.3	94.7
secondary specialised education institutions	38.9	38.3	38.4	98.7
higher education institutions	62.7	61.8	58.8	93.8

Figure 2. – Admission of pupils, students to technical vocational, secondary specialised and higher education institutions (at the beginning of the academic year, thousand people).

The development of lifelong education, strengthened integration between production, science and education system and development of the National Qualification System (NQS) are important priority areas of the national educational policy until 2030.

In the field of additional adult education (AAE), there are about 400 educational institutions of various status, departmental affiliations and patterns of ownership. Cultural institutions, public organisations and individual entrepreneurs are also involved in implementation of AAE programmes.

In 2017 – 2019, the consolidated budget expenditures for AAE amounted to 1.1% of the funds allocated for education.

The main categories of attendees are represented by workers, specialists, senior officials of organisations, the unemployed and unoccupied population placed for training by the employment service bodies, persons engaged in small business, citizens who have chosen the educational path for themselves. So, in 2018, 125,875 workers (employees) participated in AAE programmes, which amounted to over 10% of the total employed population. According to the State Programme on Education and Youth Policy for 2016–2020, it is necessary to ensure the proportion of employees of organisations trained in AAE programme to be at least 15 percent of all those employed in the economy.

In 2018, the retraining specialty "Adult Education" with the qualification "Andragog" was introduced into the National Classifier of the Republic of Belarus OKRB 011-2009 "Specialties and Qualifications" in order to improve the human resourcing. In 2019, the Decree of the MoE approved the educational standard for the above mentioned specialty. This is the first formal educational programme to train the teaching staff for adult education. Since 2017, the RIPO has been implementing an experimental project "Approbation of the Design Methodology of Educational Programmes for Retraining Executives and Specialists Using a Competency-Based Approach (by the example of the retraining specialty "Adult Education") (2017-2020).

The European Union is the key international donor in the field of vocational education development in Belarus. The international technical assistance project "Employment, Vocational Education and Training in Belarus" is one of the main projects supported by the European Commission. This project is funded in the framework of the Indicative Programme of the European Commission for 2014. The project implementation period for Belarus is 2018 – 2021.

The main objectives of the project are as follows:

- to strengthen the link between VET system supply and labour market demand to provide the innovative economy with required qualifications and to create conditions for their continuous development;
- to improve accessibility and ensure quality of VET via updating its content, introducing modern educational technologies, including distance learning, promoting its attractiveness, which in turn will enhance employability and assignment of graduates;
- to improve the mechanism for forecasting the labour market needs in order to modernize the VET system and promote employability of the population.

In 2018-2019, the ETF project "Professional Development of Managers, Vocational Teachers and Trainers" was implemented in Belarus in the framework of the Torino Process. In Belarus, education providers also participate in the European Union programmes MOST, ERASMUS +, cross-border cooperation programmes; establish direct contractual relations with foreign educational institutions and organisations (mainly with Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine): carry out training of foreign citizens (Russia, Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Nigeria, Poland, etc.) In total over 860 foreign students studied in vocational education institutions during the 2018/2019 academic year.

The training of foreign university students in applied qualifications in resource centres has developed in recent years. A close cooperation has been established with a number of universities of India and Nigeria. Members of the national World Skills teams of Kazakhstan and Russia also undergo internships in the resource centres.

B. Economic and labour market environment

Belarus is a country with an open economy. In the republic, a high level of employment is ensured by deliberate efforts of the state to preserve labour collectives, to provide social support for the redundant employees, the unemployed, as well as first-job guarantees for the graduates of vocational education institutions. In recent years, the economic situation in the republic is characterized by positive dynamics in the growth rates of the main socio-economic indicators (Figure 3). In 2017 - 2018, there was an increase in the key macroeconomic indicators.

	2017	2018
Gross domestic product	102.5	103.0
Industrial production	106.1	105.7
Agricultural production	104.2	96.6
Capital investments	105.1	105.1
Freight carried (without pipeline transport)	108	105
Retail trade turnover	104	108
Industrial producers price index	109.8	106.8
Consumer price indices	106.0	104.9
Export to CIS countries	119.0	107.0
Export to other countries	132.5	127.7
Import from CIS countries	127.3	115.3
Import from other countries	119.0	107.2

Figure 3. The main macroeconomic indicators of the Republic of Belarus

Trade, services, and the industrial sector are the main sources of the country's economic development. The priority sectors include machinery and metalworking, oil refining, the chemical and petrochemical industries, electrical power, consumer goods and food processing, and the timber and woodworking industry. In 2018, industrial production amounted to 31.5% of GDP, agriculture 6.4%, and services 47.7%.

Recently, Belarus has launched ambitious programs to increase the competitiveness of the national economy in the domestic and international markets, to achieve growth of economic development above the global average rate and create the basis for achieving GDP at the rate of \$ 100 billion by the end of 2025¹.

¹<https://belarus-economy.by/ru/economy-news-ru/view/top-10-zadach-dlja-pravitelstva-840/>

The State Programme on Social and Economic Development for 2016–2020 defines the priorities, directions, and goals for the social and economic development of Belarus with the aim of increasing the country's competitiveness and improving the quality of life for Belarusian citizens. As one of these goals, the programme establishes an annual employment target of at least 50 000 people in newly created jobs. A long-term goal is to change the sectoral structure of the economy by reducing the proportion of high-energy and material-consuming production, replacing inefficient production with processes based on high levels of technology, innovations and new materials, and improving the effectiveness of labour resources and workforce competitiveness in the labour market.

In order to achieve the objectives set forth, the country is modernizing large industrial enterprises, creating new industries in wood and metal processing, construction and textile industries, pharmaceuticals, food industry.

High-tech sectors are developing rapidly, for example the Industrial Park «Great Stone», High Technologies Park, free economic zones along with competitive growth of the traditional industries.

Particular attention is paid to innovative high-tech sectors, such as IT, bio- and nanotechnology, robotics, energy-saving technologies, etc.

In the republic, there are 11 regions for which regional development programmes have been developed. These programmes include measures aimed at creating conditions for the increase in the income of the population, ensuring a comfortable life through more efficient use of the industrial, agricultural, transport and logistics, tourism and natural resource potential, increasing the export of goods, intensifying entrepreneurial and investment initiatives. Creation of highly productive jobs is a priority. So in 2019, the Decree of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus approved a set of measures to implement the Programme of Orsha Region Development for the Period until 2023.

The existing economic model has prioritized the development of state-owned enterprises. They continue to play an important role in the economy, benefiting from a preferential regime in terms of financial and other resources and limited regulatory obligations. In recent years, the Government of Belarus has been increasing its efforts to promote private-sector development, strengthen the position of small and medium-sized enterprises, and sustain growth, employment, and resilience. Noteworthy achievements since the previous 2016 Small Business Act for Europe assessment include the recent adoption of an SME development strategy 2030 and the elaboration of provisions for the establishment of an SME agency. In addition, the adoption of Presidential Decree “On the Development of Entrepreneurship” substantially simplified regulations for doing business as it includes provisions for minimizing state interference in business operations, presuming good faith of enterprises and banning the introduction of new taxes until 2020.

The state measures create necessary basis for the national economy development, which involves increasing the level of requirements as to the staff, as well as to the VET content in the republic.

The quantitative and qualitative imbalance of the labour supply and demand is the main problem of the labour market of the Republic of Belarus.

Currently, the labour force of the Republic of Belarus accounts for 5,745.6 thousand people, or 60.5% of the country's population. Creation of labour resources is taking place in the context of reduction in the number of people, an aging population, as well as an increase in the demographic burden on the working-age population. At the beginning of 2018, the share of a potential group of newcomers to the labour market, namely young people aged 15-24 years in

the total population aged 15-64 years old, amounted to 14.9% due to demographic processes, while at the beginning of 2016 it was 16.0%².

The national labour market is characterized by a short period of job search and employment. The average duration of the unemployment was 4.2 months in 2016 and 4.0 months in 2017³, the employment period amounted to 1.9 months. The citizens who need special measures of social protection and are unable to fully compete in the labour market account for about 20% of the total number of the registered unemployed. They are characterized by a longer period of job search and employment - 1.5 - 2 times more than the average.

Since 2015, there has been a gradual increase in the labour demand. For “blue-collar’ jobs, it amounted to 62.9% of the total number of vacancies. Thus, with the decrease in the number of the unemployed, the share of vacancies in ‘blue-collar’ jobs increases.

The coefficient of tension in the labour market decreased from 0.4 (as of January 1, 2018) to 0.2 (as of January 1, 2019) unemployed per one vacancy due to the increase in the number of vacancies and the decrease in the number of the unemployed.

As of January 1, 2019, the registered unemployment rate amounted to 0.3% of the labour force (as of January 1, 2018 - 0.5%)⁴.

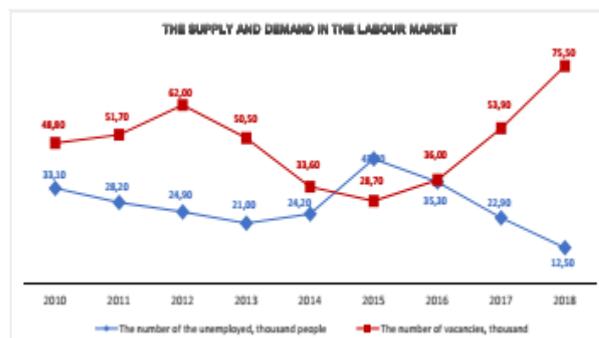
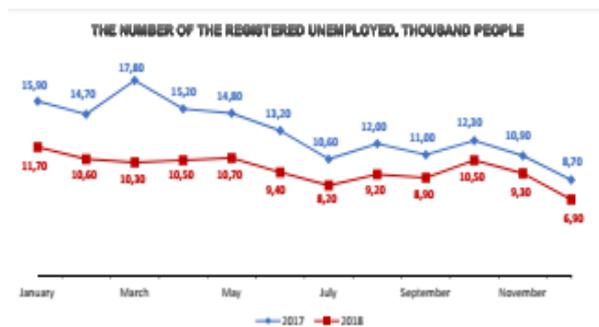


Figure 4. The number of the registered unemployed, thousand people

Figure 5. The supply and demand in the labour market

Inconsistency between the labour market and educational services market, as well as disproportions in staff training by vocational and qualification structure are among the main

² See Part 3: Annex 1.1, indicator TP 16.18.

³ See Part 3: Annex 1.1, indicator TP 16.34.

⁴ <http://mintrud.gov.by/ru/sostojanie>

reasons for the continuing imbalance of the labour demand and supply by vocational and qualification structure (Figure 5). The structural disproportions in the labour supply and demand are intensified by unjustified differences in wages by occupations and specialties, as well as by the outflow of skilled workforce abroad.

To solve the problems of imbalance of supply and demand in the labour market, the legislative base is being modernized in the republic, the structure of VET is brought into line with the needs of the socially oriented market economy.

Today, one can assess the nature and degree of conformity or inconsistency between the demand for professional skills and the supply in the country only indirectly. First of all, it can be determined by special surveys of employers. Some idea can also be obtained by comparing qualifications of the unemployed and vacancies claimed by organisations.

In 2018, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection carried out a survey of employers in order to analyse the supply and demand on the labour market in the Republic of Belarus as a whole and by regions. The survey of employers showed that 65% of the organisations surveyed (more than 2,000 commercial organisations operating in agriculture, hunting and forestry; manufacturing; production and distribution of electricity, gas and water; construction; transport and communications) were in need of staff and experienced difficulties with filling vacancies. The survey allowed us to discover vocational and qualification groups, in which employers felt a need for staff.

A high turnover of staff and expected natural outflow of employees due to planned retirement, maternity leave and parental leave were indicated as the main reasons of the staff demand.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus generates summary information on supply and demand by occupations and specialties biannually (as of June 1 and December 1) based on the information of the labour, employment and social protection authorities on the availability of jobs (vacancies). According to this information:

- 59.5 thousand vacancies were declared in urban areas, or 75.7% of the total number of vacancies, 21.5 thousand (36.2%) for specialists (employees) and 38.0 thousand (63, 8%) for 'blue-collar' jobs;
- 19.1 thousand vacancies, or 24.3%, were declared in rural areas, 6.2 thousand (32.3%) for specialists (employees), and 12.9 thousand (67.7%) for 'blue-collar' jobs;
- 5.5 vacancies account for 1 unemployed person (in Vitebsk Oblast- 3.1, Brest Oblast - 3.4, Gomel Oblast - 4.3, Mogilev Oblast - 4.6, Grodno Oblast - 6 , 2, Minsk Oblast - 6.9, Minsk - 15.3) for the Republic of Belarus as a whole as of December 1, 2018;
- the number of registered unemployed amounted to 14.2 thousand people, of which specialists (employees) made up 2.3 thousand people (16.3%), workers - 10.7 thousand people (75.2%), those who do not have a profession (qualification) - 1.2 thousand people (8.5%).

The Republic of Belarus is implementing the State Programme on Social Protection and Employment Promotion for 2016–2020, which aims to develop a system of social protection of the population by enhancing the efficiency of the employment policy, ensuring labour safety, preventing disability and rehabilitation of people with disabilities, creating a barrier-free living environment, ensuring the social integration of people with disabilities and older citizens. Particular attention is paid to employment promotion.

Implementation of the State Programme measures produced the following results:

- the employment rate of the unemployed people increased (58% of the number of people seeking employment against the target of 48.1%);

- 173.1 thousand people were assisted in finding employment (61.1% of those seeking employment), including 111.4 thousand of the unemployed people (58% of the unemployed in need of employment);
- in order to stimulate the labour mobility of citizens, assistance was provided to 136 families of the unemployed people in resettling to a new place of residence and work;
- more than 7.1 thousand unemployed people among those in need of additional job guarantees were employed on reserved jobs;
- 549 disabled people were referred for adaptation to labour activity with compensation of the incurred labour expenditures to employers; the employers' costs to create and maintain 39 jobs for the employment of disabled people were financed and compensated;
- temporary employment was provided for 31.2 thousand schoolchildren, pupils and students during non-study time (129.5% of the expected result);
- assistance was provided in organising entrepreneurial, craft activities, as well as activities related to farm tourism services with financial support to 1,845 unemployed people via granting subsidies, in organising private unitary enterprises – to 16 unemployed people, in organising peasant (farm) households - to 11, craft activity – to 286, in the field of farm tourism services – to 15 unemployed people⁵.

In the republic, labour shortages are exacerbated by labour migration, which is stimulated by the pay gap in Belarus as to neighbouring countries. The Department of Citizenship and Migration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus takes into account migrant workers who enter and leave the country to work on the basis of signed agreements and contracts.

At the level of legislation, an integrated system has been created that combines the order for staff training, the volume and structure of training, as well as the employment of specialists, workers, employees, trained out of public funds. In addition, the Republic of Belarus has created an automated information system “Preparation of the Estimated Admission Quotas and Formation of the Order for Skilled Staff Training by the State Administration Bodies”. Currently, an active work is underway to improve this system, taking into account the experience of its operation.

The National Council on Labour and Social Issues is functioning in the republic, which makes it possible to attract representatives of economic sectors and private business to determine the vocational and qualification structure of staff training in vocational education institutions, as well as the necessary requirements for the quality of training.

At the same time, it should be recognized that the number and quality of graduates still do not fully meet the real needs of employers. Entering the labour market, young workers and specialists possess the knowledge, skills and abilities which do not always meet the employers' needs. The problem is due to untimely updating of qualification profiles and obsolete requirements.

In 2018, the Strategy for Improving the National Qualification System (NQS) was developed in order to solve this problem in the Republic of Belarus. In accordance with the Programme of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2016 - 2020, this strategy is designed for the medium and long term. The document provides an assessment of the current state of the NQS, substantiates the need for its improvement, and defines the objective, goals and stages of its improvement, the organisational and legal mechanism of its functioning. In

⁵ Report on the state programme.

2019, the Council on the Qualification System Development was created to ensure its functioning

As of 1 October 2019, 10 sectoral qualification councils were created in the republic. Systematic work is underway to develop occupational standards.

An interaction procedure has been established between the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, and the Ministry of Education in accordance with the Decree of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus “On Some Issues of Forecasting the Staff Demand of the Economy”, adopted in 2017 in order to further increase the efficiency of using the labour potential of the Republic of Belarus and to ensure the balance of labour demand and supply.

The Republic of Belarus has the State Programme on Social Protection and Employment Promotion for 2016–2020. The Law of the Republic of Belarus “On Employment of the Population of the Republic of Belarus” systematized and secured the duties of the unemployed, which makes it possible to consolidate the system of relations (co-responsibility) of the labour, employment and social protection authorities, employers and the unemployed in resolving employment issues for the unemployed.

The portal of the Public Employment Service is operating in the Republic of Belarus in order to disseminate forecasting results; the Republican Vacancy Bank is located here.

C. SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT AND INDIVIDUAL DEMAND FOR VET

The government continues implementing the State Programme on Social Protection and Employment Promotion for 2016–2020, which aims to develop a system of social protection of the population by enhancing the efficiency of employment policy, improving the conditions of labour protection, and ensuring the social integration of people with a disability and older citizens. The programme includes funding and measures on active and passive labour market policies, occupational safety and health, and specific measures targeting vulnerable groups, particularly people with disabilities, and their social inclusion.

In the implementation of the state programme, particular importance is given to establishing an effective system for identifying individual demand for VET in accordance with the corresponding social right, as well as to equal employment opportunities for youth and adults from socially deprived marginalized groups of population.

Support for employment is provided for by conceptual approaches to the education system development of the Republic of Belarus until 2020 and for the future until 2030 through implementation of the following measures:

- development of a multi-stage system of vocational training;
- an active inclusion of children and youth in various types of socio-cultural activities;
- provision of a link between implementation of an additional education programme for children and youth and career guidance of students according to the labour demand of the regions;
- improving the consistency and effectiveness of the education quality evaluation, creating a system of independent assessment of the quality of education;
- establishment of a single information and educational space and its management;
- improved functioning of educational institutions;
- bringing the content of educational programmes in accordance with occupational standards;
- creation of an effective system of quantitative and qualitative labour market forecasting.

The Decree of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus and the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus approved the Concept of Career Guidance Development for the Youth in the Republic of Belarus.

The Concept aims to ensure the development of the state system of career guidance for youth in accordance with the priorities of the state socio-economic policy, the world experience and the situation on the labour market, as well as to create a single system covering all levels and types of career guidance, ensuring development and improvement of the regulatory framework and favorable conditions for effective use of the labour potential and raising the prestige of 'blue-collar' jobs.

At present, career guidance takes various forms, for example, information in educational institutions, for young people at risk, in higher education, for disadvantaged groups, for unemployed adults, for working adults or for older people, taking into account demographic trends. The guidelines appear to be applied mainly at the level of educational institutions, which are represented primarily by teachers and, to a lesser extent, by employment services or counselling centres of bodies under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. For career counselling, job opportunities and career opportunities are highlighted at the levels of technical vocational and secondary specialised education. Appropriate measures are being taken

regarding the sixth school day, aimed at helping to choose an occupation, including psychometric testing.

A new impetus to the development of systematic career guidance activities was given by an additional Decree of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus “On Certain Issues of Additional Adult Education”, adopted in 2018, which provides for the implementation of vocational training programmes for schoolchildren on the sixth school day in ‘blue-collar’ and white-collar jobs based on institutions of general secondary, special, technical vocational, secondary specialised and higher education, institutions of additional education of children and youth. (Picture. 6)



Figure 6. Pre-vocational and vocational training of schoolchildren

Career guidance is usually provided by qualified specialists working in educational institutions of various levels and generalists working in the Public Employment Service (PES). In the early stages of training, career guidance activities include both individual counselling provided by consultants and vocational training, which is included in the curriculum.

PES career counselling services are one of the types of activities offered to assist individuals in finding work. In Belarus, other PES functions include providing information on the labour market, holding a labour exchange (registering job seekers and vacancies, as well as selecting employees for vacancies), managing active labour market programmes; and partial management of the unemployment insurance programmes.

Employers play a number of key roles in career guidance. First, they play a role in relation to their own staff. By investing in the education and training of their employees, employers invest in enterprise development. Secondly, employers act as a vocational education resource for their community. Working in partnership with local authorities in the labour market, educational institutions and public organisations, enterprises help inform the local population about what jobs exist and what qualifications are needed. However, such social partnership model is being only formed in Belarus. Trade unions still do not take a significant part in provision of career guidance services on a large scale. In cases where they are involved in this process, this is most likely related to provision of advisory services and retraining in the event of dismissals or relocation of individual employees of enterprises.

To increase the effectiveness of career guidance work in Belarus, it needs to be structured and systematized, as it covers currently a number of disparate measures.

Career guidance should accompany the person during implementation of the lifelong learning concept, which is not limited to one stage of the education system, but guarantees continuity and permeability at all stages and at any age. In the current Belarusian context, career guidance services are provided in the network of educational, governmental and partially public organisations. Improving the services provision in Belarus should be based on coordination of personnel working with different levels of training, in different organisational conditions with different target groups and different levels of resources.

In the Republic of Belarus, an integral part of the vocational education development is increasing its accessibility for various categories of citizens, including those who need special social care and support. Over the years, the number of people with SMPDN and people with disabilities has remained approximately the same and amounted to 3,000 - 3,500 people in TVET and SSE institutions. Moreover, they have a different nature of disorders: hearing, vision, musculoskeletal disorders, severe speech disorders and people with intellectual impairments.

The training of this category of students is carried out both in study groups in which the educational process is organised only for people with SMPDN, and in study groups together with other students. In the republic, a home-based training is organised (according to an individual curriculum) for students who are temporarily or permanently unable to attend TVET institutions due to medical reasons. The use of distance technologies allows for an individual approach to home schooling planning and implementation for people with SMPDN. In order to create special conditions for vocational education attainment, vocational and social rehabilitation centres and special departments for people with SMPDN are being created in TVET and SSE institutions (as structural units). The activities of the centres (departments) are aimed at organising differentiated and individual training, implementation of vocational adaptation of such students.

The Concept of Inclusive Education Development for People with Special Mental or Physical Development Needs in the Republic of Belarus (approved by the MoE in 2015) states that inclusive education in TVET and SSE institutions should rest upon creation of an adaptive educational environment in which people with SMPDN can master the content of relevant educational programmes (in this case, TVET and SSE), taking into account the peculiarities of their psychophysical development and in absence of medical contraindications.

For the inclusive education development:

- the necessary level of education is provided and quality control of education is carried out in educational institutions in the context of inclusion.
- the existing scientific and methodological provision of the educational process is being improved.
- an inclusive culture is being formed in the society.
- a psychological and pedagogical support for this category of people is being provided.

Moreover, encouraging tolerance among all participants of the educational process is a separate task. Inclusive creative, sports, fitness and health recreation events are held with participation of students with SMPDN (with special educational and health needs) and their legal representatives. Further training on inclusive education is provided for teachers. The inclusive education development is financed from local budgets, including creation of a barrier-free, adaptive educational environment; attraction of other financial sources is provided as well. The interaction is being maintained with public associations representing the interests of persons with disabilities and with the parents' community.

Still, the most important barrier to the independent life of people with disabilities and SMPDN is in many cases caused by unreadiness of the education system to develop and implement individual educational programmes within the framework of an inclusive model. Training is difficult for many people belonging to this category due to the lack of a specially prepared barrier-free environment in educational institutions, insufficiently developed infrastructure, and physical inaccessibility of educational institutions. Many of them are still not equipped to move and train people with disabilities. One of the most acute problems is caused by the complexity of moving this category of people from their place of residence to their place of study. Another problem that impedes the implementation of inclusive education is related to staffing problems, as it requires training of relevant specialists.

D. INTERNAL EFFICIENCY AND OPERATION OF THE VET SYSTEM

Numerous initiatives have recently been taken and concrete measures have been undertaken to modernize and improve the internal efficiency of the VET system as a whole and the rational use of pedagogical and material resources in each individual vocational education institution to solve the strategic tasks of the country's economic development in providing a sufficient quantity and quality of skilled workforce.

The internal effectiveness of VET in the Republic of Belarus is determined by the degree of demand for graduates of vocational education institutions in the labor market, the relevance of the curriculum content and teaching materials, the level of professional and psychological and pedagogical qualifications of teachers and instructors, as well as the level of their salaries for attracting to pedagogical work, especially in rural areas. The vocational education system is still forced to solve the challenges of image and attractiveness, while the majority of young people tend to enter in higher education programmes.

In order to increase the internal effectiveness of the VET system, in the last two years a number of specific measures have been taken:

- normative legal basis has been created for the development of forms of networking between educational institutions, which increases the accessibility to innovative technologies for large number of students;
- republican information educational environment has been created;
- blended and distance learning is being introduced;
- measures to attract young specialists to teaching and ensuring required level of qualification are being taken.

A regulatory legal framework has been created in the republic that regulates the use of modern pedagogical technologies in the educational process of vocational education institutions. Corresponding changes are introduced to the new edition of the Code of the Republic of Belarus about Education; the Concept of digital transformation of education is approved. Distance learning received formal legal status.

In 2019, by the order of the Minister of Education, the Concept of Digital Transformation of Education, which identifies the creation of the Republican information educational environment, the active introduction of distance and blended technologies in the educational process, was approved. Every year, about 15% of teachers and instructors in the republic undergo advanced training in the application of interactive and digital technologies in the educational process, and in the examination of best pedagogical practices.

An important role in ensuring the effectiveness of learning and teaching is allotted to the subject of providing the educational process with modern teaching aids. The state programme "Education and Youth Policy" for 2016 - 2020 provides for the annual publication of textbooks and study guides for new academic disciplines. The publication of textbooks is carried out by the Republican Institute for Vocational Education, which also creates author groups that include scientists and practitioners. These events provide educational institutions with modern teaching aids.

According to a sociological survey conducted in 2018 according to the ETF⁶ methodology, active and interactive teaching methods are widely used by teachers. For example, group methods are used by 63% of teachers, case studies - 66%. 76% of teachers use tasks with different levels of difficulty. Special importance in teaching is given to practice: 70% of teachers require practical tasks to be completed by students, 79% combine the study of theory with the practical development of skills in the classroom, and 86% combine the study of theory with professional internships.

RIPO has developed the conceptual basis for introducing a modular approach to training. In 2018, a pilot project "Testing the methods for selecting and structuring the content of educational programmes based on the modernization of the National Qualifications System (NQS) is being implemented in five branches of RIPO.

At the beginning of 2018/2019, 15 047 people worked in the vocational education system, 12 173 of them were teachers, 2874 were instructors.

The age composition of pedagogical workers (teachers and instructors) is distributed as follows: up to 30 years - 21.6%, 30-50 years old - 52.35%, 50 - 59 years old - 15.2%, over 60 years old - 10, 85%. In general, there is a rejuvenation of pedagogical staff. Over the past few years, there has been a rejuvenation of the staff and a decrease in the number of teachers of pre-retirement and retirement age. Although it should be noted that a tenth of the teaching staff is people of retirement age. More than one third of women work in the vocational education system.

78% of VET teachers have been teaching for more than 5 years, 32% have been teaching for 6 to 15 years, 30% from 16 to 25 years, 16% for more than 25 years, 29.64% of respondents have been working in the current educational institution for 5 years and less, 35.23% - from 6 to 15 years, 24.05% - from 16 to 25 years, 11.97% - more than 25 years. More than half of VET teachers (53%) do not have work experience in that field or industry (37% of them are teachers of special disciplines) for which the educational institution trains staff; 37% of teachers have more than 3 years of industry experience. The smallest group (8% of the total) consists of teachers with work experience from 1 year to 3 years.

Issues that deserve special attention in the development of staffing for vocational education are the lack of practical experience at enterprises of teachers of special disciplines (37%), and 8% of teachers have no pedagogical education.

In 2019, a resolution of the Ministry of Education on the establishment of industry-wide allowances for pedagogical workers of budgetary institutions and the mandatory advanced training of pedagogical workers once every five years was adopted.

In 2019, the Sector Qualifications Council was established under the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus. Its functions include the identification of policies in the field of professional development of pedagogical staff. In 2019 - 2020, it is planned to develop a sectoral qualifications framework and approve professional standards for teachers. At the moment, professional standards for a general education school teacher and vocational education teacher have been developed.

In the Republic of Belarus, the main quality assurance mechanism at the VET system is the traditional, centralized, and prescriptive approach, with a focus mainly on inspection and control. More recently, however, a number of measures have been taken to organize processes and procedures aimed at managing and ensuring the quality of VET. These

⁶ Continuous professional development of teachers, instructors and heads of vocational education institutions of Belarus. ETF, 2019

measures relate to the development and implementation of quality standards using common principles, criteria, and indicators.

Measures to ensure VET quality are undertaken at the macro, meso and micro levels. At the highest levels, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection is currently responsible for the professional standards, the National Qualifications System (NQS), and the Ministry of Education is responsible for educational and evaluative standards, exams, and certification.

The Ministry of Education shares responsibilities in various cases with regional executive committees (regional authorities). VET providers perform self-tests, including a comprehensive analysis of educational activities. They involve stakeholders in the management of educational activities based on the feedback surveys of students, parents, employees, employers, and other bodies on the effectiveness of educational programmes. Feedback is used to improve the educational process.

The mechanisms for assessing and certifying teaching staff in the field of VET include an exam, assessment of the practical results, interviews and expert assessments, which ultimately allow assigning one or another qualification category. Various forms of training are available for new teachers in the field of VET. Every year, the Ministry of Education makes order to improve the professional qualifications of education personnel, including staff in the field of VET. Regular external audits are conducted in accordance with ISO 9001-2009.

In shaping a modern model for ensuring VET quality, great importance is attached to the development of resource centres as Centres of Excellence in ensuring the quality of professional education. A resource centre is usually understood as an object or organization that provides leadership, best practices, research, support, and /or training for a specific field of activity. Resource centres are associated with certain sectors of the economy; they implement industry-related courses for initial training, advanced training, and retraining of specialists working in vocational and secondary specialized education institutions on new educational technologies using modern equipment, materials, and technologies.

To date, 48 such providers of vocational education have been established in the country, and only in the academic year 2018-2019, 14.5 thousand students were trained in the main educational programmes of vocational, secondary specialized and higher education. The main idea of establishment of resource centres for vocational education institutions is the need to organize anticipatory training of qualified personnel, optimize budget funds for education, modernize the educational sector, and introduce new forms and methods of the educational process. High-value innovative material and advanced educational resources are combined and concentrated in the resource centres, which enable to train qualified specialists and respond to the requirements of the economy. On the basis of the resource centres, quality assurance mechanisms and procedures which could be applied in the VET system of the Republic of Belarus are tested.

E. GOVERNANCE AND FINANCING OF VET

In the Republic of Belarus, the governance of the VET industry is basically still the prerogative of the state. The goals of VET governance are to implement state policy in the field of VET, to improve and develop the VET system, and to implement VET educational programmes.

Currently, VET governance in the republic is characterized by centralization and decentralization tendencies at the same time. The most pronounced tendency is decentralization (the transfer of many functions of the Ministry of Education to regional bodies and educational institutions). The decisive factor of authority delegation to lower levels of government was the use of regional budgets instead of republican budget for financial support for VET institutions, as well as the transfer of republican ownership to the regions. Today, the oblast level of governance is the subject of ownership and financial VET resources. The VET institution itself is the manager of the funds and ownership allocated to it.

Educational institutions are independent in the organization of educational process, carrying out financial, economic, and other activities within the norms established by legislative acts, standard regulations on educational institutions and their charters. They also interact with organizations, regional and local labour markets, develop admission plans in professions and specializations, organize business and commercial activities, and administration of ownership.

In the past three years, taking into account the influence of socio-economic factors, approaches and grounds for decision-making in the field of educational policy and the governance of VET have changed significantly.

Governance in the field of education is becoming more and more state-public. All the most important governance decisions are made taking into account the conclusions of the Public Advisory Council, established under the Ministry of Education, specialized trade union, the Republican Board of Directors, leading scientists and specialists in the field of education, representatives of parents and students. The most important problems were considered with the participation of the President of the Republic of Belarus at the Republican Pedagogical Council.

Currently, new approaches to the governance of VET system, redistribution of functions in relation to forecasting staffing requirements, modernization of the quality management system, involvement of business and employers to participate in the educational process, related to the Strategy for Improving the National Qualifications System approved by the Government of the Republic of Belarus (hereinafter - Strategy)⁷ are being developed.

This Strategy defines the goals, objectives, stages of improving the National Qualifications System of the Republic of Belarus, as well as the organizational and legal mechanism of its functioning. This Strategy was developed for the medium and long term in accordance with the Programme for the Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020, the Code of the Republic of Belarus about Education, the Labour Code of the Republic of Belarus, and other acts of labour and education legislation.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the Ministry of Education are the republican government bodies that regulate and implement this Strategy.

The need to develop this Strategy was due to the ongoing significant discrepancy between the structure and quality of vocational education and the labour market needs for staff. Learning outcomes often do not meet the qualification requirements for employees.

⁷ <http://www.government.by/upload/docs/filec51922002717043d.PDF>

In turn, the education system does not have information about the real labour market needs for staff, expressed in quantitative and qualitative indicators of personnel. There is no information on the spheres and scales of training, retraining and advanced training required for the economy.

In the context of rapid technological development, it is becoming increasingly important to acquire knowledge and skills throughout the entire period of a person's labour activity both directly in educational institution and outside of it. Moreover, in the Republic of Belarus there is no system for recognizing the qualifications achieved by an employee outside the educational institution.

The purpose of the Strategy is to ensure consistency between the needs of the economy for staff and quantitative and qualitative indicators of their training. The following tasks will be undertaken to achieve this goal:

- development of mechanisms and forms of interaction between organizations of the real sector of the economy and the public sector with educational institutions in order to identify the needs of the economy for staff;
- formation of the legal framework and institutional structures for the functioning of the NQF, the establishment of a body that determines the priorities and main tasks in the field of improving the NQF, coordinating the interaction of all stakeholders in this process;
- reorientation of the education system to quantitative and qualitative vocational training in accordance with the needs of innovative development of the economy;
- creation of conditions for the recognition of knowledge, skills and abilities gained through non-formal learning throughout a person's life;
- formation of an independent assessment and certification system for qualifications.

The strategy for improving the NQS provides for the introduction of a number of new elements, such as the National Qualifications Framework, the Sectoral Qualifications Council, the professional standard, the sectoral qualifications frameworks, and the independent assessment and certification qualifications system.

Currently, the regulatory legal framework for the consistent implementation of the Strategy is being formed. The Provision on the Sectoral Qualifications Council, as well as the Guidelines for the development of professional standards was approved.

The introduction of new elements of the National Qualifications Framework will ensure the interaction of the labour market and the education system, the compliance of the principles of its functioning with international requirements.

During 2016-2018 sectoral councils have already been created and are functioning under the Ministries of Industry, Architecture and Construction, Housing and Communal services, Economy, Labour and Social Protection.

The introduction of the NQS led to the need for substantial changes of approaches to the governance of VET, to the development of educational standards, to the staffing and funding, etc.

The implementation of the objectives is supposed to be carried out in two stages.

At the first stage (2018-2020), the legislative framework is being formed and relevant organizational work is being carried out to introduce new elements of the NQS. At the second stage (2021-2025), it is planned to introduce new elements of the NQS in the areas of labour and education.

In order to implement the Strategy, a special set of measures for 2018-2025 was developed and approved at the state level.

To ensure a systematic work on the implementation of the Strategy, a National Council for the Development of the Qualifications System was created under the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, which is designed to determine priorities and main tasks in the field of improving the NQS for the near future, to coordinate the formation of sectoral qualifications councils, the development of professional standards, and the formation of an independent assessment and certification qualifications system. It included representatives of republican government bodies and other state organizations, employers and trade unions.

An effective financial policy of the state contributes to the provision of quality professional education. Its effectiveness is determined, on the one hand, in attracting the maximum possible number of additional alternative sources for financing vocational education along with budget costs, and, on the other hand, in the rational distribution and efficient use of available funds and providers of vocational education.

The financing mechanism has a complex structure and includes legal regulation, system of state financial administration authorities, as well as state control and audit of educational institutions.

The source of funding for vocational education in Belarus is currently the consolidated budget. The components of the consolidated budget are: funds for education envisaged by the state budget; financial investments of institutions; funds received from income-generating activities of vocational education institutions, grant (sponsorship) assistance of legal entities and individuals, individual entrepreneurs; international grants; procurement of educational services for the population; other sources permitted by law.

In general, expenditures of the consolidated budget on financing the entire education system exceed 5.6 billion roubles in 2018, or about 4.6% of the gross domestic product (Figure 7).

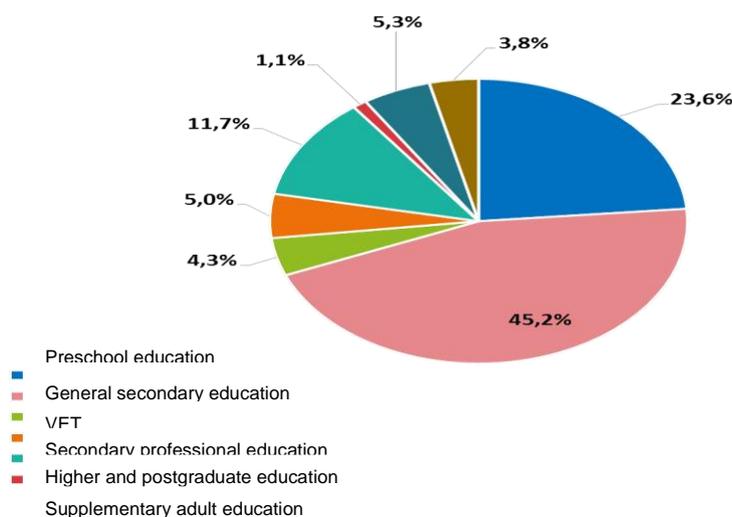


Figure 7. Expenditures of the consolidated budget for education for 2018

Financing of vocational education is planned and calculated for a five-year period. In the current period, it is approved by the State programme "Education and Youth Policy" for 2016-2020. As the consolidated budget is implemented, depending on the circumstances, the financing is annually analysed and adjusted.

The budget development process consists of three successive stages:

- 1) Vocational education institutions based on applications for training, expenses in previous years, on the basis of development programmes or developed business plans, etc. make budget estimates, which are compiled at the regional level.
- 2) Based on the budget estimates, the budget of the Ministry of Education is made.
- 3) Regional educational authorities and vocational education institutions are being provided with updated budgets for each current calendar year.

Figure 8 shows the amount of financial resources expended from the consolidated budget for VET and secondary specialized education in 2018.

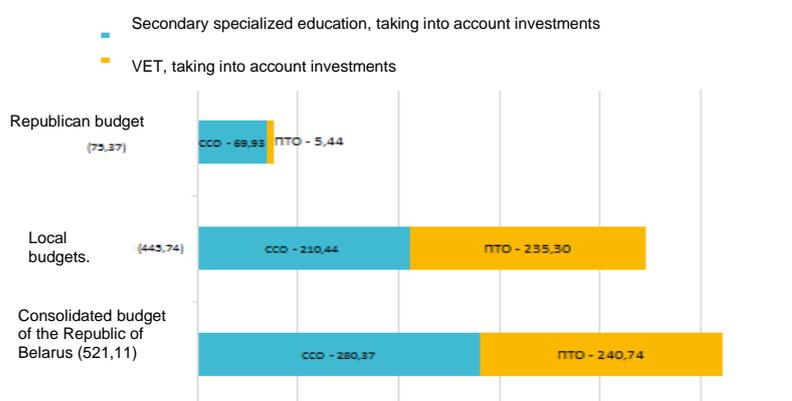


Figure 8. Financing of VET and secondary specialized education from the budget of the Republic of Belarus in 2018, million roubles

Since 2014, the education system of the Republic of Belarus is making headway in normative financing of educational institutions. Adoption of a new model of financial support was undertaken in many regions of the country at the preschool and general secondary education levels.

The advantage of such financing system is the increased interest of educational institutions in their performance.

The Decree of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus “On the implementation of a pilot project on approving the normative financing of educational institutions implementing educational programmes of VET and secondary specialized education” (hereinafter - the project) provides for the implementation of a pilot project on normative financing in 2020 on the example of educational institutions implementing VET and secondary specialized education programmes in the Mogilev oblast. The objectives of the pilot project to test the normative financing of educational institutions implementing educational programmes of VET and secondary specialized education are: to enhance transparency and fairness in deciding on budget allocations for financing VET and secondary specialized education; to increase the efficiency of educational institutions; to improve the material and technical support of the educational process.

The project envisages that budget funds will be allocated for financing based on:

1. the minimum budget for spending on vocational education per capita in educational institutions implementing educational programmes of VET and secondary specialized education, and correction coefficients applied to the basic standard, and enrolment rate;
2. expenditure needs in upkeep of property of educational institutions implementing educational programmes of VET and secondary specialized education (acquisition of equipment and other fixed equipment, renovation and repair of buildings and premises, utility costs) within the limits of the oblast budget, allocated for VET and secondary specialized education;
3. guaranteed and targeted support for implementing measures for the social protection of students in accordance with the law within the limits of the budget, allocated for VET and secondary specialized education.

The basis for calculating the basic standard of budget for spending on training and education per capita per year is educational standards, standard curricula in the specialties, legislative norms and standards that ensure the functioning of VET and secondary specialized education system in accordance with a preset quality.

Providers of educational services get more opportunities to independently manage the finances, guided by the general legislation. Traditionally, strict external control over the spending of budgetary funds by educational institutions tends to be replaced by control over the execution of the state order for training personnel and other contractual obligations, as well as ensuring the transparency of financial flows.

The state and development problems of the vocational education in Brest Oblast, Grodno Oblast and Orsha region of Vitebsk Oblast of the Republic of Belarus

BREST OBLAST

In the Brest oblast there are 16 districts, 21 cities. Centre is the city of Brest. The largest cities of the region with a population of more than 50,000 people: Brest, Baranovichi, Pinsk, and Kobrin. As of January 1, 2018, 1,384,476 people live in the Brest oblast, the urban population is 976,440 people (70.5%), and the rural population is 408,036 people (29.5%).

About 220 large and medium-sized industrial enterprises operate in the oblast. The leading place in the manufacturing sector is occupied by food and beverage industry (55.3%), mechanical engineering (9.3%), textile and sewing industry (5.9%), furniture production (5.2%), production of construction materials (4.4%)⁸.

The oblast's agriculture specializes in meat and dairy farming, production of grain, sugar beets, flax fibre, potatoes, and vegetables.

In the vocational education system of Brest oblast there are 45 educational institutions of various forms of subordination and ownership. At the same time, 29 educational institutions implement educational programmes of VET (the indicator has remained unchanged over the past 3 years), and educational programmes of secondary specialized education - 31 educational institutions (in 2017 - 30 educational institutions).

As of the beginning of the academic year 2018/2019, almost 25 thousand students were enrolled in vocational education institutions of the Brest oblast: under vocational education programmes (9.7 thousand students) and under SSE programmes (14.4 thousand students). There is negative growth of the number of students. Over the past two years, the total number of students has decreased by almost 2000 people. A similar tendency is observed for the indicators of enrolled and graduate students.

Training is provided in 94 blue-collar jobs and in 34 specialties of the secondary specialized education.

About 1.3 thousand teachers and instructors are engaged in the training of workers, almost 70% of them have the higher and first qualification categories. 68.8% of engineering and teaching staff have higher education and 30.8% of teachers have specialized secondary education. 63% and 26.7% of teachers, respectively, have an engineering and pedagogical education.

Educational programmes of specialized secondary education are implemented by about 1,200 teaching staff.

Significant attention in the oblast is given to advanced training. There are specialized resource centres where workers and specialists in 15 professions are being trained using high-tech equipment on the basis of 7 educational institutions in 5 cities.

As a result of the work of the focus group in June 2019 with the participation of representatives of vocational and secondary specialized educational institutions, employers, the Republican Institute for Vocational Education, the European Training Foundation, the following priority areas for the development of professional education in the Brest oblast were identified:

⁸ The population as of January 1, 2019 and mid-year population for 2018 in the Republic of Belarus by regions, districts, cities, urban-type settlements - NQS, 2019.

- Involvement of industrial specialists in training activities.
- Improving the status of pedagogical activity in vocational education institutions.
- Improving the mechanisms of interaction between customers and vocational education institutions.
- Allocation of responsibilities of enterprises and educational institutions for the quality of training.
- Improving the mechanisms of career guidance, the formation of positive motivation for blue-collar jobs.
- Improving the employment mechanisms of vulnerable population (persons with SMPDN, pregnant women and others) at the enterprises of the republic.
- Creating favourable conditions at enterprises to provide sponsorship to vocational education institutions.
- Providing greater autonomy to educational institutions in the development and adaptation of the vocational education content and the organization of the educational process.

GRODNO OBLAST

There are 17 districts and 15 cities in the Grodno oblast. Centre is the city of Grodno. The largest cities in the oblast with a population of more than 50,000 people are Grodno and Lida.

As of January 1, 2019, the population of the oblast is 1,039,278 people, including urban population - 790,491 people (76.1%), rural population - 248,787 people (23.9%).

In January-October 2018, enterprises of the oblast produced 10.1% of the volume of republican industrial production. The oblast specializes in the production of caprolactam, nitrogen fertilizers, ammonia, tillage machines, cord fabric for tires, cement, wood-fibre and wood-chip boards, paper and cardboard, and hosiery products.

There are 42 educational institutions that implement educational programmes for vocational, secondary specialized and higher education in the Grodno oblast:

- 20 institutions of vocational education.
- 20 institutions of secondary specialized education.
- 4 institutions of higher education.

As of the beginning of the academic year 2018/2019, almost 20 thousand students were enrolled in institutions of vocational and secondary specialized education in the Grodno oblast: 7 thousand students under vocational education programmes and 12.6 thousand under SSE programmes. There is negative growth of the number of students. Over the past two years, the total number of students has decreased by almost 1,500 people⁹.

At the same time, vocational education institutions of the Grodno oblast are trained in more than 85 TVET qualifications and 60 SSE specialties.

In recent years, “hyper production” of specialists with higher education has been observed. In 2018, the oblast reduced the higher education enrolment for 8 specialties.

In 2018, oblast offer training in new 3 SSE specialties and 8 TVET specialties in accordance with oblast requirements for qualifications.

⁹ Tables 4.14, 5.25, Education in the Republic of Belarus. Statistical Compendium. - Minsk, 2019. –p. 103, 128.

Vocational education institutions provide vocational training for schoolchildren. In 2018, about 2,000 schoolchildren studied at TVET and SSE educational institutions.

About 900 teachers and instructors are engaged in the training of workers (60.4% teachers and 27.8% of instructors have an engineering and pedagogical education).

Training in resource centres is carried out using forms of networking, which allows attracting the maximum number of students (both youth, adults and even schoolchildren) to training advanced industry technologies, as well as contributing to the maximum workload of equipment.

The main mechanisms for improving the material and technical base of institutions in the oblast are: interaction with enterprises in need of staff, investment programmes and extra budgetary funds.

As a result of the work of the focus group in June 2019 with the participation of representatives of the Grodno Oblast Institute of Education Development, the Main Department of Education of the Grodno Oblast Executive Committee, vocational and secondary specialized education institutions, employers, the Republican Institute for Vocational Education, the European Training Foundation, were identified the following priority areas in the development of vocational education in the Grodno oblast:

- Improving the mechanisms of career guidance, the formation of positive motivation for the professional activities of workers. In the oblast, staff loss (approximately 5%) is annually observed, caused by migration, wrong choice of profession, etc.

- Increasing the attractiveness of the qualifications demanded by the labour market. A number of qualifications are in demand in the region, for example, meat grinder, grain storage, and processing, comprehensive building maintenance that are not attractive to young people.

- Strengthening the profiling of educational institutions, avoiding duplication of the same specialties at a number of educational institutions.

- Improving the system of interaction between vocational education institutions and regional employment services.

- Improving the staffing of the vocational education system by organizing internships for instructors at basic enterprises.

- Improving the training system for engineering and pedagogical staff, as often graduates of engineering and pedagogical faculties do not possess the required practical skills. And vice versa, instructors with secondary specialized education do not have the corresponding theoretical training.

- Improving the status of pedagogical activity in vocational education institutions. It is advisable to start professional selection for engineering and pedagogical specialties and improve the status of this type of work, integrate the functions of a teacher and instructor.

- Providing on - the- job training in a real production environment, starting from the first year of training.

- Providing greater autonomy to educational institutions in improving educational programmes.

VOCATIONAL AND SECONDARY SPECIALIZED EDUCATION SYSTEM OF ORSHA REGION IN VITEBSK OBLAST

For the reference.

Orsha region is a support centre of the intra-oblast region, which includes Orsha, Tolochin, Dubrovna regions.

Orsha region

The population of the region in 2019 is 154 949 people (in 2017 - 157 526).

In 2018, 15.5% of the population of the region was under working age, 56.7% - in working age, 27.8% - above working age.

By 2030, the demographic situation is expected to deteriorate: region population reduction of 9.1% compared to 2015, significant rural population reduction of 32.4%¹⁰.

Lack of effective employment can be found in the presence of involuntary partial employment and staff turnover, including due to the migration outflow of the population outside the region (negative migratory balance for 2017 - 425 people), and in imbalance between supply and demand for jobs in qualified occupational groups.

The introduction of new technologies, the modernization of production in the Orsha region will require staff development and retraining of employees, and additional measures to promote employment.

Industry specialization of national significance of the Orsha region is the linen industry. The regional economic complex, being highly diversified in structure, operates in close connection with the industrial complexes of Vitebsk and Minsk. The region anticipates developments of neighbouring regions; therefore, the influx of additional human resources is possible.

The region has multifunctional specialization. The economic complex has an agro-industrial and industrial focus. The region plays a high role in the production of food products, building materials and constructions, and textile products. There are excellent prospects for the creation and development of transport and logistics infrastructure.

The developed entrepreneurial sector, micro and small organizations have a larger share in terms of industrial production in the region - 7.4% in 2014, with growth in their number. The main types of production are building materials and constructions, engineering products, textile materials and products, dairy products.

The decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus dated December 31, 2018 "On the development of the Orsha region in the Vitebsk oblast" determined a number of targets in the development of the region:

The development of the city of Orsha as an industrial centre requires the creation of an integrated educational, scientific, and entrepreneurial environment, increasing the volume of vocational training in the most popular specialties in the regional labour market. In order to strengthen the material and technical base of the education system, it is planned to provide vocational education institutions with modern equipment (from 30 to 100 percent).

The development of the vocational education system is aimed at meeting the economy's needs of the region in qualified personnel.

For these purposes, it is envisaged:

- to form of a multidisciplinary, multi-level and multi-functional network of vocational and secondary specialized education institutions ;
- to create 2 resource centres on the basis of educational institutions in the city of Orsha in order to master new equipment and technologies in the field of agriculture and mechanical engineering (created in 2019).

¹⁰ The concept of the territorial-oriented development of the Orsha region / EU Project / Local Development Assistance in the Republic of Belarus, MINSK, 2016