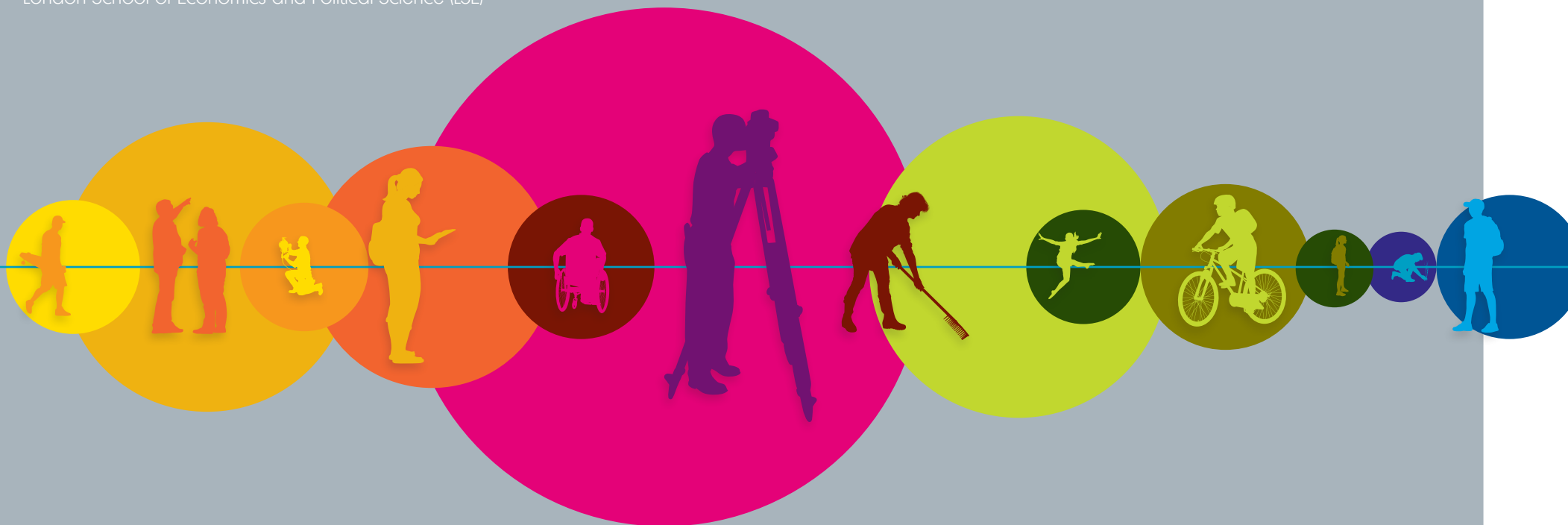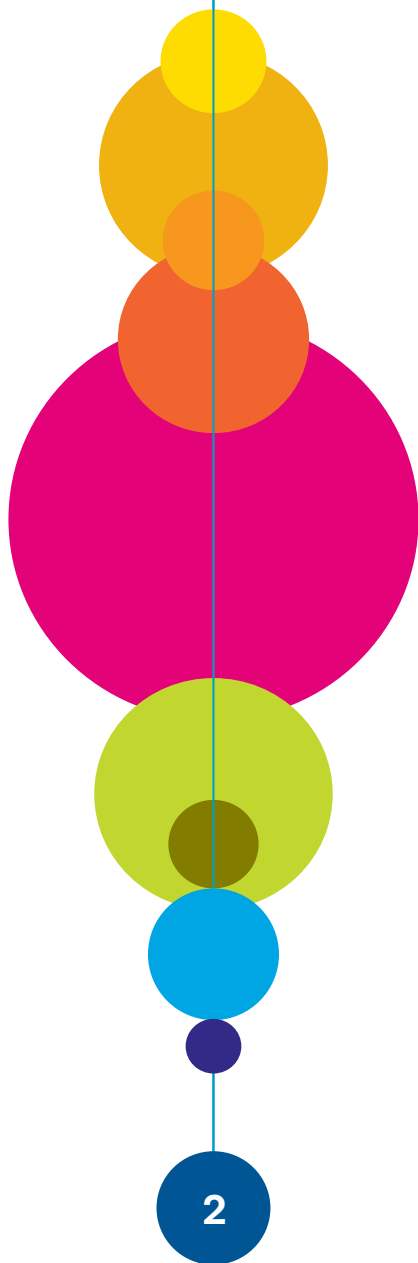# SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE, ISRAEL AND TURKEY
TRENDS, PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES IN STRENGTHENING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION AND SOCIAL COHESION

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PREFACE

This report presents a synthesis of the findings of a participatory action research (PAR) project with a focus on policies and practices for social inclusion and social cohesion in vocational education and training (VET) systems in nine case study countries. The research methodology was designed with a specific focus on three carefully chosen vocational schools and training centres in the case study countries to investigate the main barriers and potential opportunities for building inclusive VET systems. The research was conducted by a team of researchers from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) in conjunction with nine country case study teams in South Eastern Europe, Turkey and Israel from July to October 2013.

Social inclusion is analysed in relation to processes of social exclusion of individual students taking into account their entire school experience to identify potentially constructive national and school-level interventions at multiple stages of their educational experience. Social cohesion is analysed as a social process that involves the community in which a school is situated, to identify the contribution that vocational schools can make to the cohesion of communities with multiple social divisions.
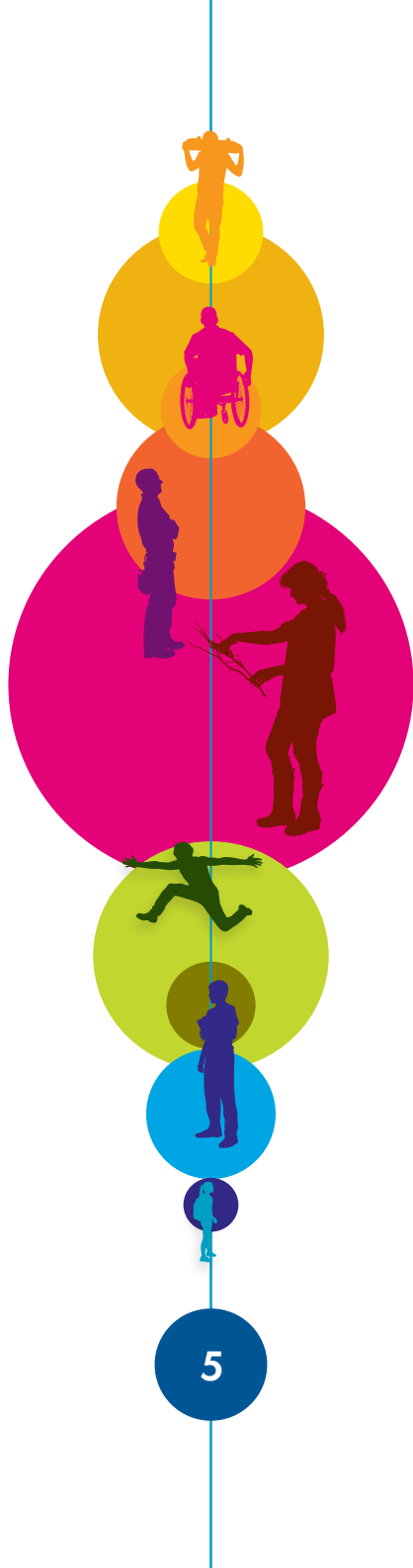
In Phase 1 of the project, teacher and student surveys were conducted in 27 case study schools in the region. In addition, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were organised in each of the nine countries with key policy makers, employers, representatives of job centres and NGOs at both national and local levels. Throughout the duration of the project, consultations were held with members of the advisory boards that had been established in each country. This combined approach enabled the subjects of the research to feed into the design, development and conduct of each stage of the project. It was an effective way to identify best practices and challenges to inclusive education in VET systems and identify opportunities for innovative practices and policy initiatives.

The report presents the findings from a cross-country analysis of the research findings derived from the nine country studies. The continued focus on PAR has been reflected in a series of dissemination events in each country included in the project, in which key policy makers, employers, representatives from NGOs and relevant international and regional organisations were able to discuss the results of the project. Continuous interaction between the policy makers involved in developing VET policy and socially inclusive practices with educators in schools and other relevant stakeholders has been a key theme of this project. It is hoped that the networks of cooperation that have been established among policy makers and practitioners will continue into the future with a view to effectively promoting inclusive education in the region. The originality of this project lies in its in-depth investigation of the challenge of social inclusion and social cohesion through its conceptualisation of social exclusion as a process taking place throughout the school experience of affected students and identifying potentially constructive national and school-level interventions at multiple stages of their educational experience.
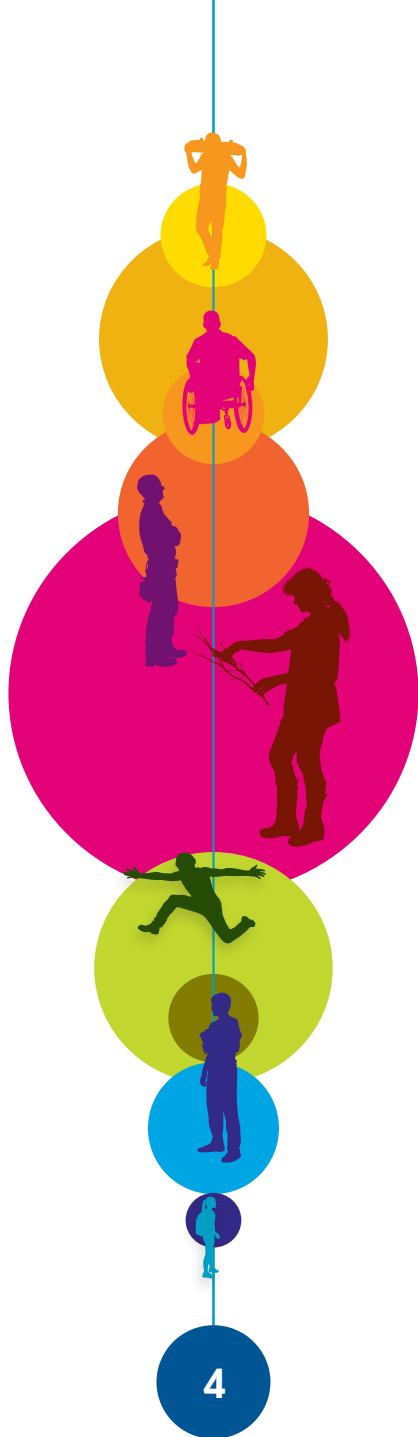
ACRONYMS

CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	Deutsche Internationale Gesellschaft fur Zusammenarbeit
IDI	In-depth Interview
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
LAB	Local Advisory Board
LFS	Labour Force Survey
NAB	National Advisory Board
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAR	Participatory Action Research
SCD	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SEN	Special Educational Needs
VET	Vocational Education and Training
UIS	UNESCO Institute of Statistics
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United National International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Aid

CONTENTS

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The overall objective of this research project has been to improve the impact of vocational education and training (VET) at secondary school level on social inclusion and social cohesion in the countries of South Eastern Europe, Turkey and Israel by deepening the understanding of the main barriers and potential opportunities for building inclusive and equitable VET systems in these countries. This report provides a synthesis of nine country case reports in the region carried out by local research teams based on a participatory action research methodology. This process engaged practitioners, policy makers and other key stakeholders in a reflective process of problem solving through in-depth interviews at national and local level, combined with student and teacher surveys in three upper-secondary level vocational schools in each country. In all, 84 in-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders and 223 interviews were held in schools and local communities. These, together with 745 teacher questionnaires and 2,862 student questionnaires, form the evidence base of this report. This synthetic report is intended to serve as a tool to inform policy makers and practitioners in the VET sector and employment services, social welfare and health services with the aim of supporting the development of inclusive education in the VET sector that formed the focus of the study.

VET policy: Modernisation of VET systems has been taking place at differing speeds in South Eastern Europe, Turkey and Israel with national priorities being set in line with European Union (EU) goals and objectives for VET as outlined in the EU Strategy 'Education and Training 2020' and the Bruges Communiqué of 2010. VET policy orientations in these countries vary between those that emphasise social inclusion and those that focus on adjustment to the labour market, but progress has been slow in terms of implementation. The establishment of horizontal institutional structures and legal frameworks including VET councils, occupational sector councils and national qualification frameworks facilitate a more participatory approach to the setting of VET policy. International donors have played a constructive role through targeted support to national reforms, providing platforms for regional capacity building and through the transfer of know how.

Selection and choice: Education systems are a powerful source for the transmission of social exclusion. Several country studies found evidence of the strong effect of social and family background on school selection and educational outcomes. Working class young people and students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be channelled into vocational school compared with children of middle class parents who are more likely to enter academic schools.

Experience at school: Although almost all the students recognised that success in school was critical for their future job prospects, the vocational school experience in many cases appears to reinforce the social exclusion of disadvantaged students. The cross-country analysis found evidence of poor physical conditions
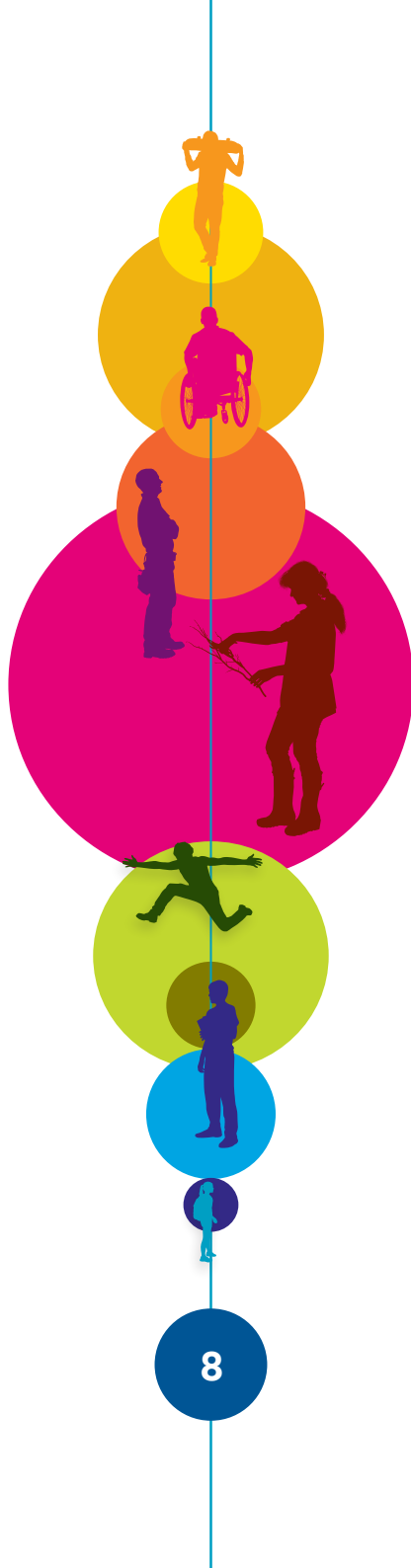
at the vocational schools as a result of: underinvestment in equipment and buildings; obstacles to effective learning by students due to out-dated curricula that have failed to adapt to changing labour market needs and poor teaching methods and; limitations in teachers' subject knowledge. Disabled students were significantly less happy with their school experience than were the others. Finally, it is also worth noting that students become progressively less happy with their schools as they move from their first to their final year and that few participate in extracurricular activities other than sport, thus excluding them from an important means of building social capital and fostering social cohesion in their broader communities.

With regard to practical training, it is evident that the hours spent in work placements in a company differ widely across schools and countries, and preference in access to apprenticeships tends to be given to the more advantaged students. On the whole, the current state of practical training is insufficient to provide many students with a sound basis of vocational knowledge and experience.

Dropping out: Young people most at risk of dropout in South Eastern Europe, Turkey and Israel, come predominantly from lower-level socio-economic groups or have certain so-called 'protected' characteristics. School dropout should be regarded as a process rather than a single occurrence resulting from a complex interaction of factors including socio-economic background, experience at school and the influence of parents and peers. In preventing dropout, schools are struggling to find an effective balance between positive developmental measures and sanctions.

Transition from education to work: At the point of transition from school to work, both school and familial factors play a strong role in South Eastern Europe, Turkey and Israel. The lack of adequate career guidance and counselling at vocational schools was a common theme in the country case studies as was the prominent role played by the presence or absence of family contacts in the search for a job, highlighting the importance of social networks and connections.

Overall conclusion: Taken together, there is strong evidence of the cascading effect of exclusion as students progress through school and beyond – in other words initial gaps in school performance already present upon entry into vocational schools may widen, increasing inequality in educational outcomes and leading to adverse effects on social cohesion in South Eastern Europe, Turkey and Israel.

In view of the research findings outlined above, the following key recommendations derived from the country reports should be considered and where possible implemented by national policy makers, local stakeholders and school directors and teachers:
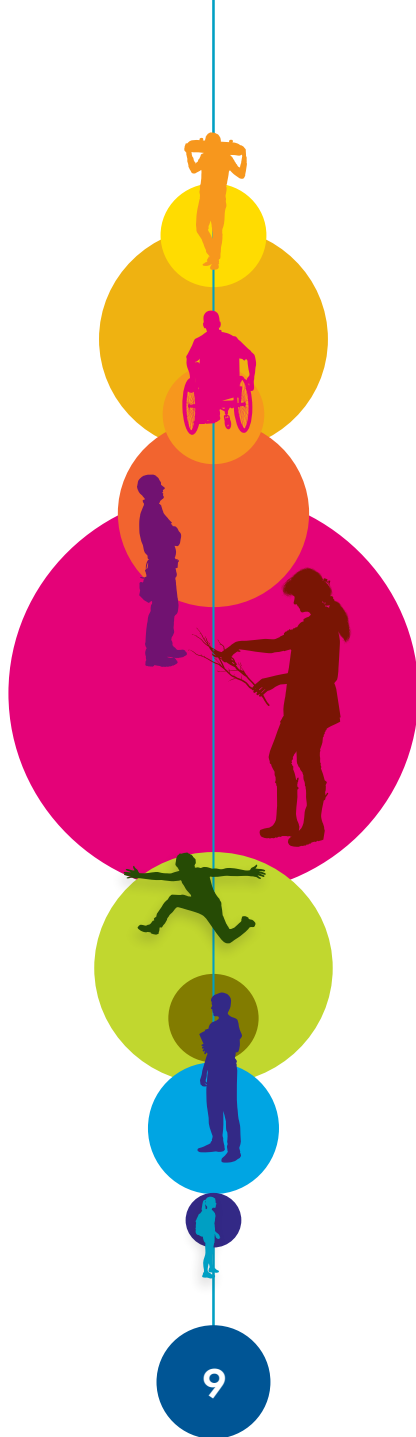
For policy makers

- Increased cooperation is needed between ministries and agencies involved in setting the policy and governance framework for inclusive VET systems;
- More engagement is needed by social partners and local self-government bodies in the policy debate.

For policy makers

- Policy makers should review the use of selection into upper-secondary schools that separate high achievers from low achievers into different schools. Placing students of different abilities together can have a variety of beneficial effects for both students and teachers. If the separation between vocational and general academic schools is maintained, vocational schools should be better resourced to provide appropriate skills for inclusion in the labour market.

For school directors

- Vocational secondary schools should improve cooperation with primary schools, municipalities and local employment offices to upgrade the selection of disadvantaged students;
- Schools should improve efforts to attract marginalised groups of students to vocational education, including students with disabilities and learning difficulties, students from rural areas and students from ethnic minorities.

For policy makers

- More resources should be provided to vocational schools to upgrade and improve the quality of the equipment and buildings. Governments should seek infrastructure loans to improve school buildings from the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) and other sources;
- The skills and professionalism of teachers should be improved though additional teacher training for competence in socially inclusive practices at school;
- Links between vocational schools and the business sector should be strengthened, for example by enabling local businesses to have a greater say in the design of vocational curricula.

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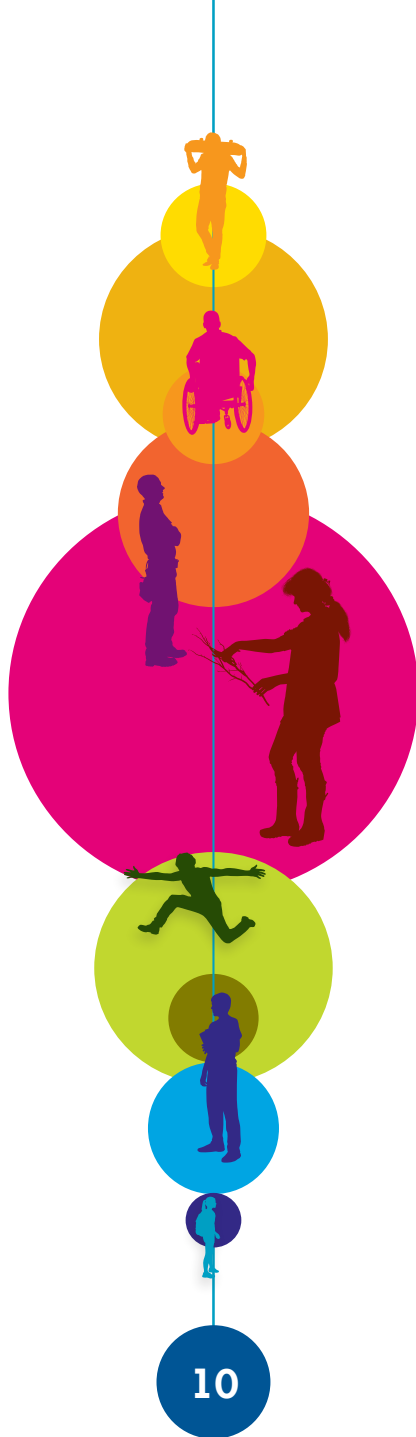
For school directors

- Teachers should take greater care of student-teacher relationships and make more efforts in dealing with socially excluded students;
- Parent representatives and social partners should play a stronger role in school governance so that their preferences and interests are properly reflected in educational practices.

For school directors

- Seek to reduce dropout by creating a more welcoming and friendly environment for all students;
- Offer individual counselling, study skills support and career guidance to students at risk of dropping out;
- Promote the targeted development, support and engagement of students throughout their educational progression;
- More actively involve parents in schools and in the learning activities of their children;
- Directly engage local employers and non-government organisations (NGOs) in vocational schools and in their integration into the local community;
- Upgrade the monitoring procedures of students in school as well as in the case of those who dropout.

For policy makers

- Ensure that the skills taught in vocational schools are more closely aligned to the needs of the local labour market by facilitating greater involvement of employers in curricula design and co-investment in schools;
- Ensure that more and better career guidance services are developed and funded to improve the social inclusion impact of VET.

For local communities

- Local employers should enhance their cooperation with schools in order to ensure appropriate and updated curricula, and to increase the number of practical classes out of school;
- Local NGOs including employers' associations should be more involved in the provision of apprenticeship training for students.

For school directors

- Carry out tracer studies of graduates of vocational schools as a matter of priority to identify the patterns of school-to-work transition.

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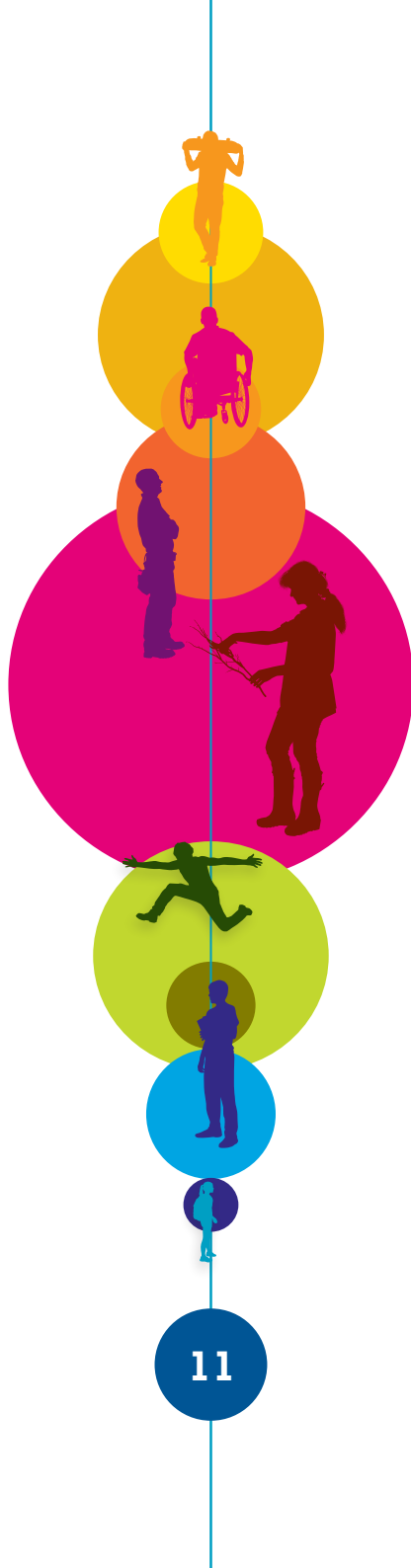
For policy makers

- Place greater emphasis on the formal institutions that support job searching for all students provided by the formal public employment services and by dedicated careers services either within schools or in the local municipality.

For school directors

- Schools should seek to support more extracurricular activities, including volunteer internships, voluntary work, and greater involvement with youth clubs and other community organisations;
- vocational schools should forge closer links with local communities especially with NGOs, CSOs and other voluntary organisations to develop a socially inclusive profile for vocational schools.

For local communities

- NGOs and CSOs should support the greater involvement of students in community activities.

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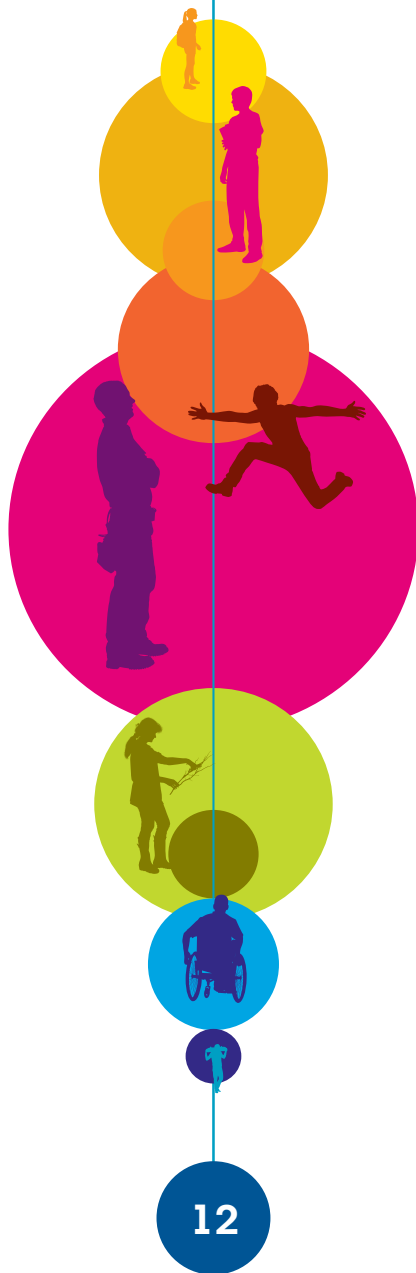
1.0 INTRODUCTION

Across the EU and the enlargement region, there are a range of experiences of VET systems. These differences reflect variations in institutional and policy frameworks and the historical development of education systems in these countries. Nevertheless, countries share a common and increasing concern about the role of education in supporting social inclusion and social cohesion and in providing equality of opportunity for children from all social groups within society. Recent studies have stressed how educational deficits, underachievement and skill gaps among vulnerable groups are both a cause and effect of unemployment, low incomes and other multiple deprivations and social exclusion (ETF, 2007, 2011, 2013; OECD, 2010).

Inclusive education has been high on the policy agenda in recent years. There have been two main interpretations of the concept of inclusion in the field of education and training. One has focused on the inclusion of students with special educational needs (disability or learning impairment) in mainstream schooling rather than in special schools that isolate these students. The other has been the idea of education for all, meaning that there should be no discrimination between children of different social backgrounds and that the education system should not perpetuate or accentuate the inequalities in society. In this report we take the latter view, while also being aware that children with special educational needs should have their needs met appropriately in mainstream school systems.

The global economic crisis has generated renewed policy interest in the potential of education and training systems to play an important role in re-establishing economic growth and promoting social inclusion and social cohesion. At a global level, the World Economic Forum has put forward a set of recommendations (WEF, 2009) while EU efforts to tackle the economic downturn saw a new policy effort to address skills gaps (EU, 2009). The OECD's latest Going for Growth report (OECD, 2013) recommends reforms to strengthen the vocational training systems as one of the most effective ways to fight structural youth unemployment and raise quality and inclusive access to education.
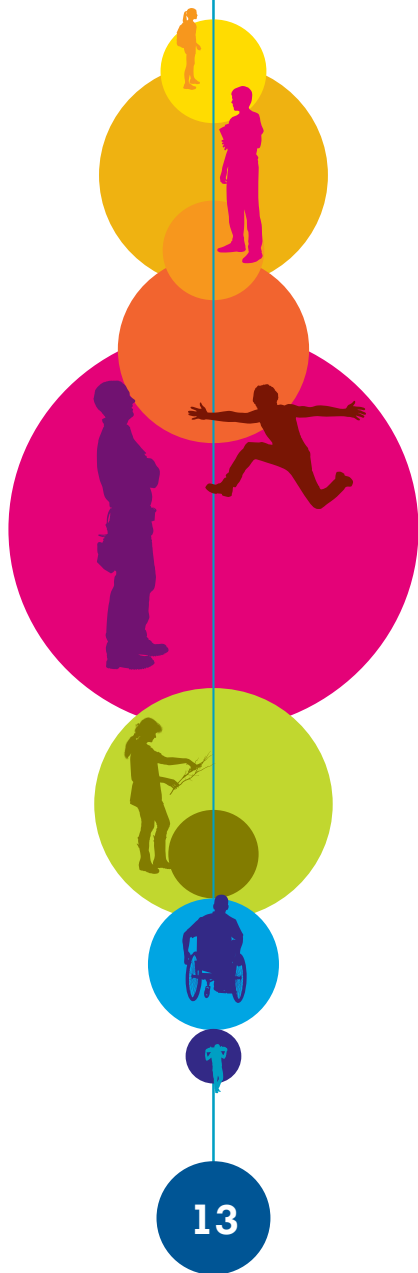
The role of VET in supporting the social inclusion of vulnerable groups has also become a key concern on the political agenda of the EU. The European Council conclusions of March 2000, commonly known as The Lisbon Strategy, emphasised the need for greater social cohesion and the inclusion of disadvantaged people in the employment, education and training policies of Member States. In 2009, the Council confirmed the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training 2020 to correspond with the Europe 2020 strategy (Council, 2010)[1]. The urgency of the issues facing the employability and social inclusion of young people was emphasised in a European Commission report that underlines how young people have disproportionately borne the impact of the global economic crisis, with unemployment hitting 15-24 year olds and reaching rates of more than 50% in countries such as Greece and Spain (European Commission, 2010).

These problems have also been reflected in the experience of education and labour markets in South Eastern Europe, Turkey and Israel. In recent years, profound changes have taken place in the transition economies of South Eastern Europe where entire industries disappeared following the creation of new states combining with years of armed conflict to spark intense labour market change (Bartlett 2008). As education systems have not changed sufficiently in response, employers in transition economies often report difficulty in finding prospective employees with the necessary technical skills (Sondergaard and Murthi 2012). Although there have been some attempts to introduce active labour market programmes (Arandarenko, 2004), labour market institutions have proved hard to reform due to the limited role of social partners, weak administrative capacity and the absence of policy coordination (ETF, 2007). The effects of the Eurozone crisis have led to high levels of youth unemployment in some South Eastern European countries. By 2012, youth unemployment had risen to 63.1% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, higher even than in crisis-struck Greece and Spain, while the rate of youth unemployment is above 50% in Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and above 40% in Croatia and Montenegro (see Figure 1). All of the countries surveyed, apart from Turkey, have rates of youth unemployment far above the EU average. School leavers in these countries thus face a challenging labour market situation when they leave school and seek work. Many try to postpone the challenge by continuing with further education, but for some this route is unavailable as pathways to further education are not available to all. The rise in youth unemployment also presents a major challenge to social cohesion in these societies, as young people who do not find employment are more likely to drift into the informal sector, into criminal activities and be susceptible to the influence of political forces that seek solutions to economic distress through the promotion of social conflict (CoE, 2012)[2].

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[1]The aims of the Education and Training 2020 Strategy are inter alia to 'improve the quality and efficiency of education and training' and 'promot[e] equity, social cohesion and active citizenship'.
[2]According to this report by the Council of Europe '[m]ore and more young people today suffer from social exclusion, depression, poor health and relatively high rates of crime, incarceration and suicide' (CoE, 2012: 8).
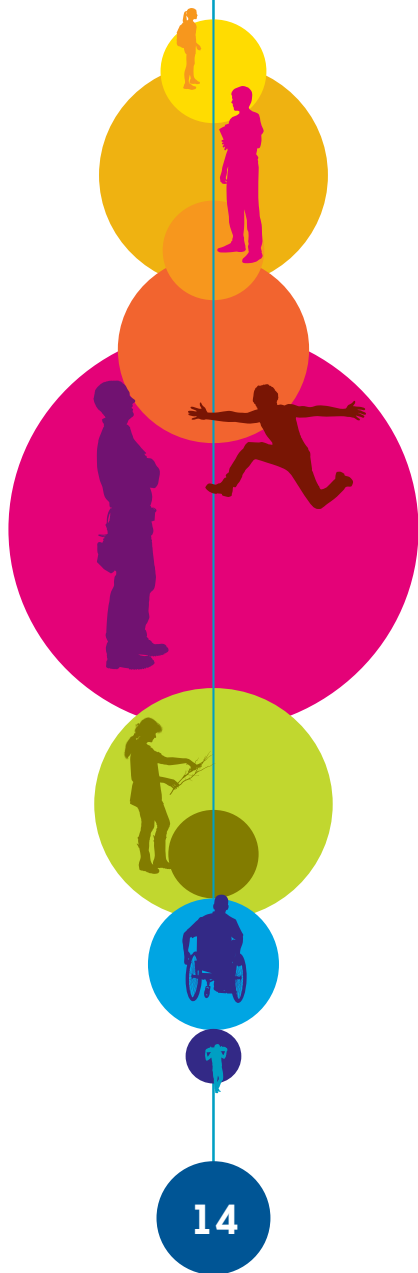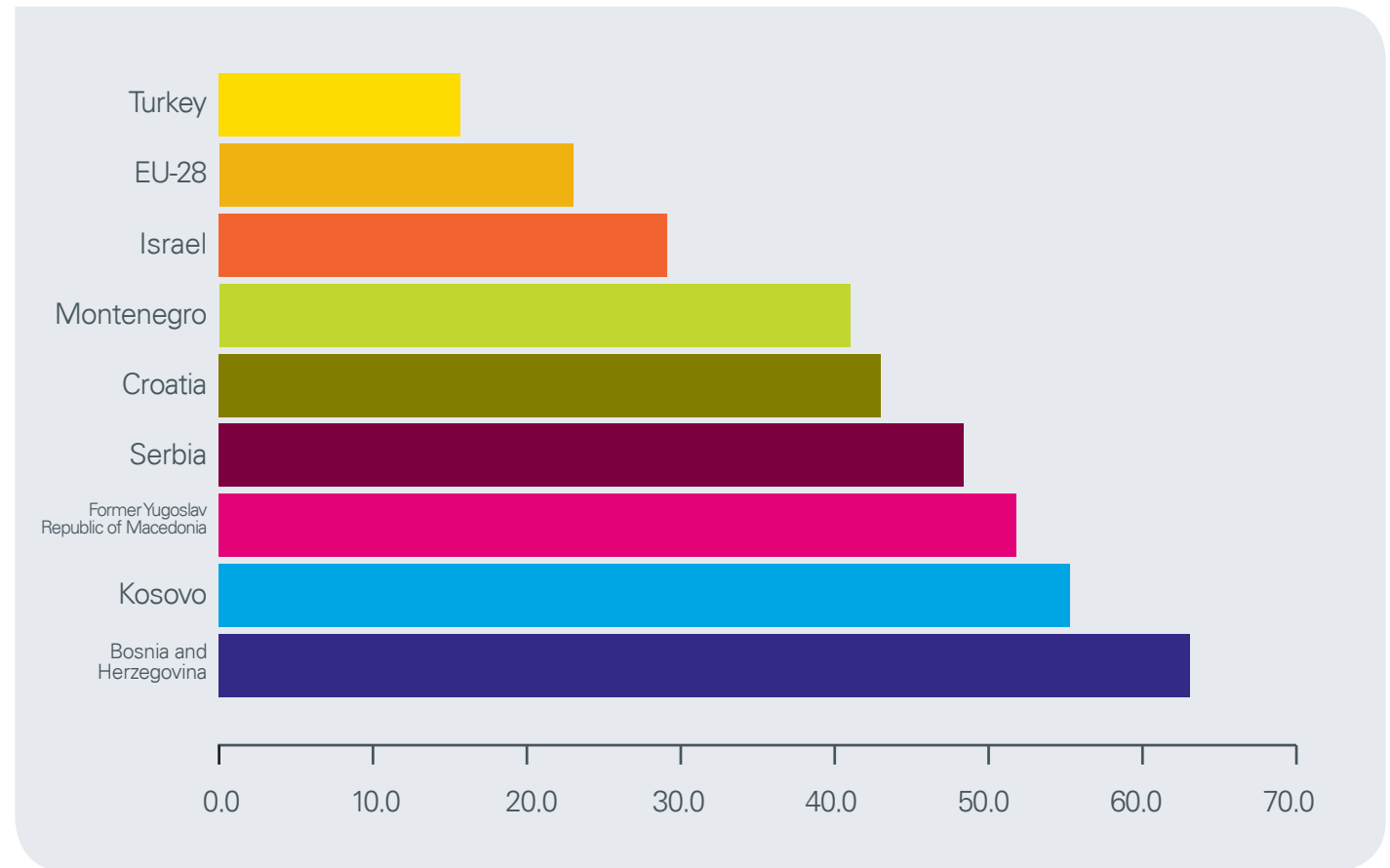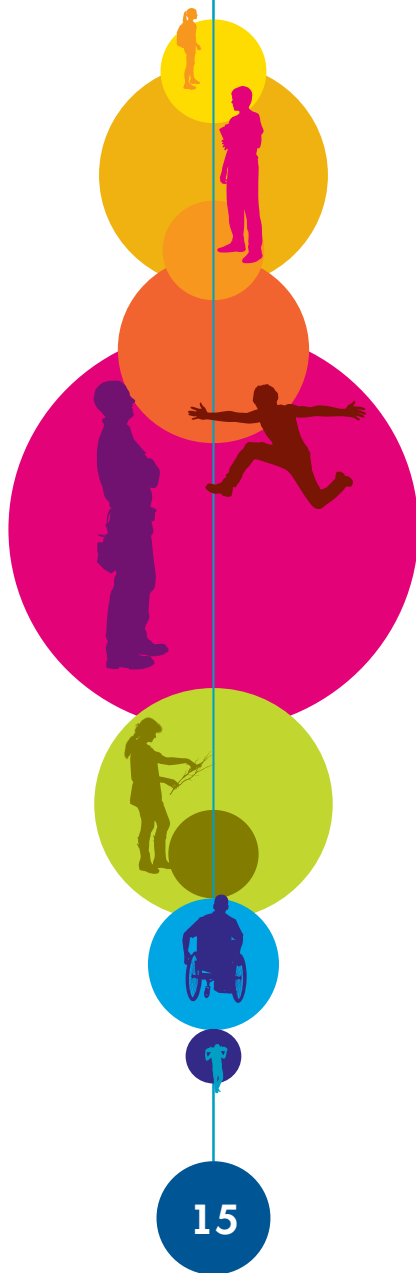
Figure 1: Youth unemployment rates in 2012 (15-24 year olds) (%)

Source: Eurostat and national statistical offices. All data based on Labour Force Surveys. Note: for Serbia data are for 20-24 year olds.

Although the countries of the study are ethnically and institutionally diverse, they nevertheless share similar problems: significant poverty and social exclusion, increasing area-based inequalities, problems of long-term unemployment, high youth unemployment, and the social exclusion of ethnic minorities, refugees and displaced persons. The World Bank (2012) reports that poverty rates in Albania, Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are among the highest in Europe, while between half and one third of young people in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, are neither employed nor studying (O'Higgins, 2010).

An inclusive and effective VET system is an important means to support social cohesion and limit the attraction of political extremism. Effective VET is associated with an increased probability of work integration and higher lifetime earnings, while inequalities in access to education, training and employment typically lead to the social exclusion of young people (Kogan and Unt, 2005). Effective provision of VET is increasingly seen as an important part of this process. From this perspective, VET systems have great potential to foster inclusive growth through increased competitiveness and social cohesion by improving the employment and career prospects of young people from the most highly skilled to those with the lowest level of qualification. Yet, to achieve these objectives, VET needs to have equal esteem and resources as general academic education in order to ensure the quality of provision and equality of opportunity for all social groups.

Some efforts to reform the VET systems have been introduced to better prepare students for the labour market, such as the broadening and revision of curriculum profiles. The Torino Process, supported by the ETF, finds evidence of slow policy progress in South Eastern Europe and Turkey toward improved VET systems and a growing awareness of the importance of VET as a policy area even though there are still gaps between policy progress and implementation (ETF, 2013). The Torino Process has identified several key messages for the future development of the VET systems. These include: a need for a comprehensive approach to education system development that overcomes existing divisions of responsibilities; a renewed focus on the employability of young people and adults; the adoption of broader and better targeted measures for vulnerable groups; improved teacher training capacity; the embedding of key competences in the VET curriculum and; greater involvement of social partners in VET with an emphasis on sector councils (ETF, 2013: 8).
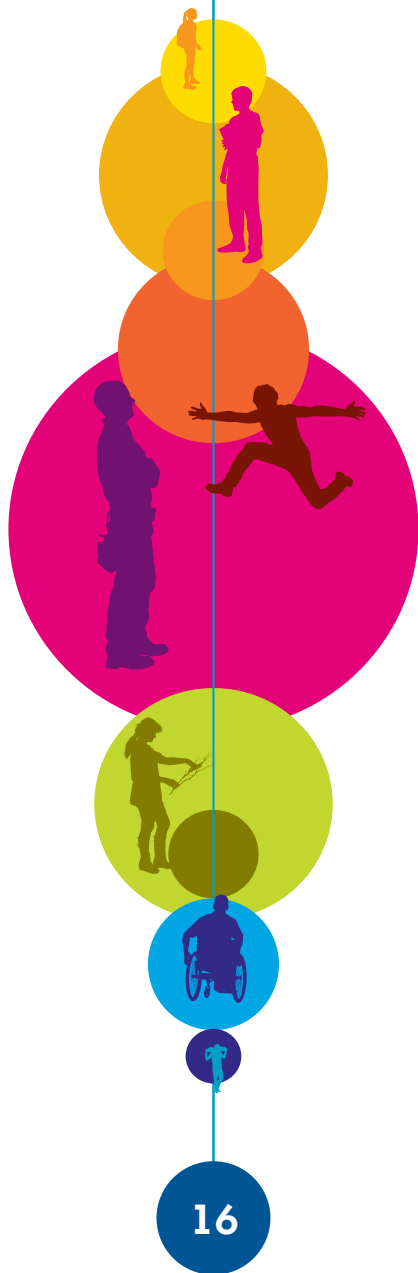
The rest of the report proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 sets out the concepts and methodology of the research project. Chapter 3 gives the policy framework and an outline of the governance of vocational education in the nine countries, identifying the modalities of social exclusion, social inclusion and social cohesion at various points in a student's progression through the VET system. Chapters 4 to 7, present a comparative analysis of the country case studies, making use of the analysis of social exclusion in the case-study schools and local communities covered by the country report. Chapter 4 covers the issue of selection, streaming and choice, Chapter 5 covers the school experience and work placement, Chapter 6 covers the issue of school dropout and Chapter 7 presents the findings on the transition from school to work. Chapter 8 presents an analysis of social cohesion drawing on national level interviews and comparative national data. Conclusions and policy recommendations are presented in Chapter 9, where we propose recommendations for policy makers and school directors, drawing on the comparative analysis of the nature and causes of social exclusion and on the evidence of best practice in promoting social inclusion within vocational schools and in the local communities where they are situated. The policy recommendations are tailored and grouped for the different target groups, e.g. central level policy makers, local level policy makers, employers, donor organisations and NGOs/CSOs.
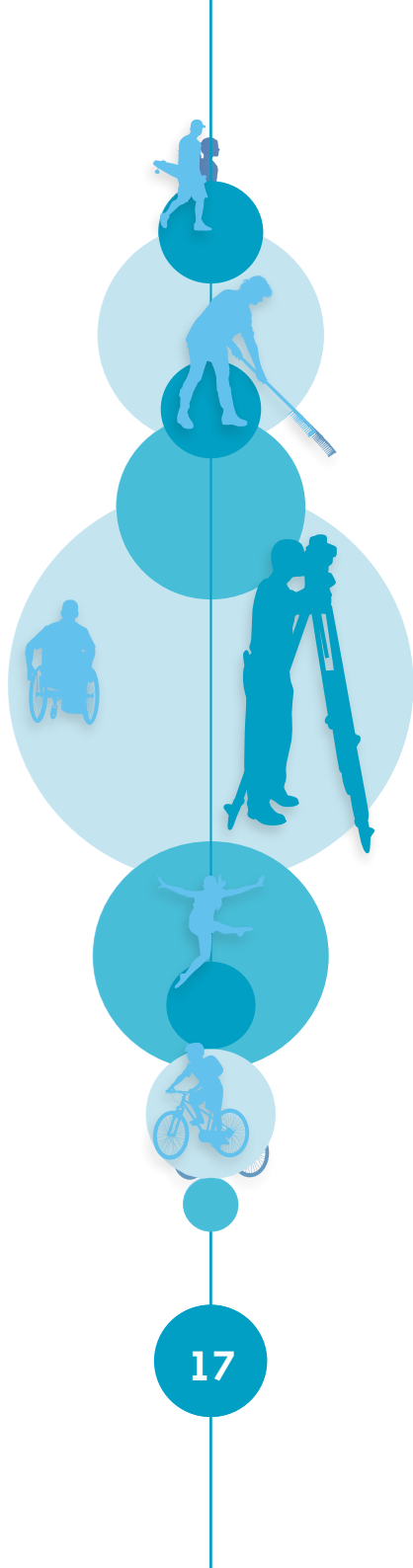
2.0 CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Social exclusion can be defined as a lack of access to economic and social resources at the individual and household levels. It is a dynamic process that takes place over time, occurring in a range of different areas such as education and the labour market (Burchardt et al, 2002). Policies and practices of social inclusion are designed to respond to this problem. Social inclusion in the VET system thus refers to the set of policies and practices to offset the existing or potential processes of social exclusion that face students in their pathway though the vocational education system and on into employment. It is important to have a good understanding of the nature and causes of social exclusion within VET in order to develop appropriate policies and practices for social inclusion within the system. These may vary from country to country and from place to place, but certain common features can also be identified that can serve as a baseline for comparative analysis and peer learning.

This report is based upon the idea that there are several critical points at which students may experience social exclusion from and within the VET system and in the subsequent transition to the labour market. In order to investigate these, we have established a three-stage model of social exclusion in upper-secondary VET education systems, based on the precept that social exclusion is possible at several different stages during a student's progression through the VET school system:

The first stage occurs on entry into the VET system where choices are made concerning academic versus vocational schooling or options are selected for certain programmes. At this point, family background may have already played an important role in determining educational performance at primary level and could limit the student's access to certain schools at secondary level in selective school systems.

The second stage occurs with the student's experience of exclusionary practices within vocational school and during out-of-school work placements. Exclusion may occur here through a lack of access to appropriate school equipment or suitable school buildings, poor teaching methods, unfriendly teachers and an unwelcoming school environment as well as other factors that limit a student's opportunity to develop to his or her full capacity and to acquire usable skills. This stage also covers a student's experience during work placements or apprenticeship periods outside the school within a training company. In some cases, exclusionary practices within schools may be so damaging that students drop out of school altogether, although it is recognised that such a decision by a student may be due to a range of factors in addition to the school experience.
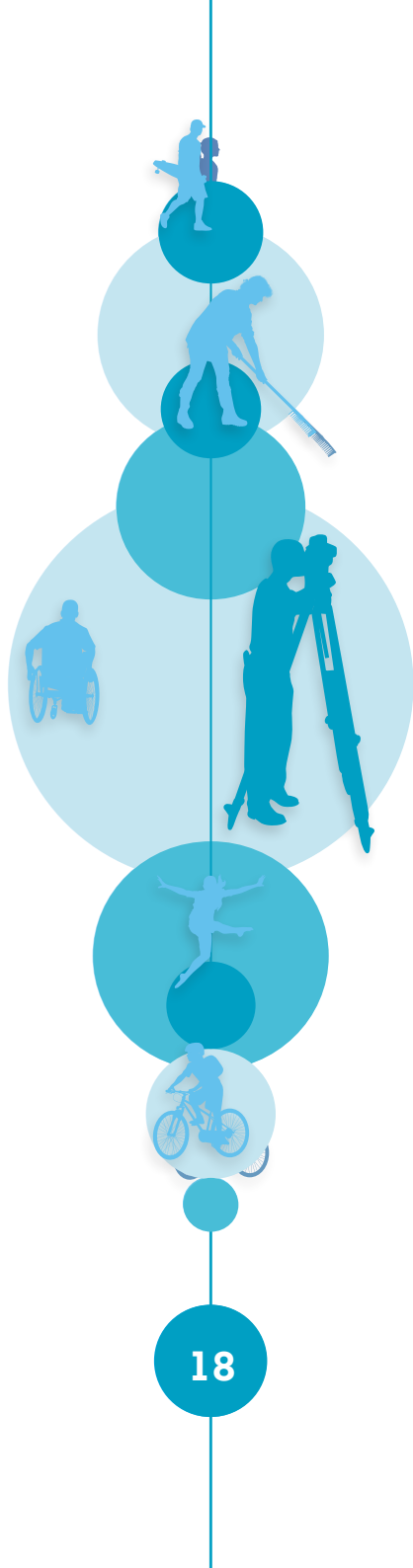
The third stage occurs at the transition from school to work or further education. At this point the student may face numerous obstacles to fulfil his or her post-school expectations including: discrimination in the labour market; a lack of support in finding work from careers guidance services within the school or the public employment services and the degree of reliance on family connections to find work or a place in further education. Some students may find themselves excluded due to their family background and poor social networks.

School directors and policy makers at both local and national levels must be bold and imaginative in introducing policies and measures to counteract the effects of potential exclusionary situations and practices that may affect disadvantaged students at these three points of social exclusion on the pathway through vocational schooling.

In addition to these potential points of social exclusion prior to entering the labour market, we also identify a broader dimension of exclusion relating to the position of the school within the local community. In practical terms, schools are not isolated institutions; they form an organic part of their communities, and many of the communities in the countries covered by this study are affected by social divisions on a basis of ethnicity, religion, social class or language. Vocational schools are therefore ideally placed to reinforce social cohesion in the community, forming connections between students from different social groups in a way that reinforces local social capital and enables students of all social groups to learn cooperative skills they can go on to use in the labour market. Such an approach can contribute to the local economy and act as a bridge between various social groups within the local community, bringing together employers, parents and students in a range of extracurricular activities and community events within the school.
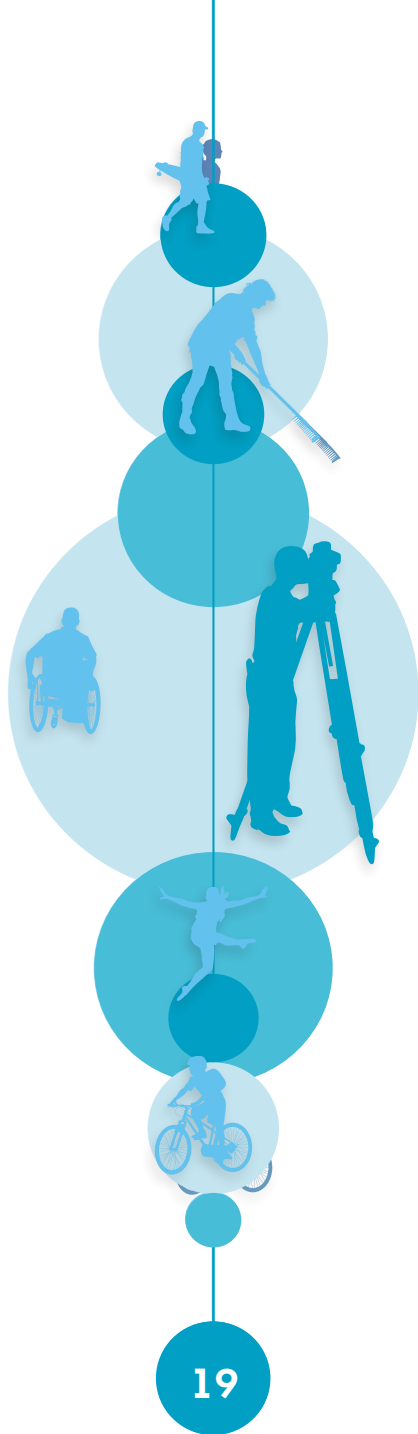
Figure 2: The three stages of social exclusion within the VET system

Selection and streaming	Experience at school and work experience	Transition from school to work or further education

Exclusionary practices:
Students from specific categories (e.g. disabled students, students with special needs, Roma students) are excluded from entry into their school of choice, or from any school. Parental social capital and family background influences opportunities for selection into the best schools. Students from disadvantaged family backgrounds receive less support from their family in making their choice of school and receive fewer resources from their parents in the form of home study support.

Exclusionary practices:
Students from disadvantaged backgrounds have a worse experience of school; there is an unfriendly school atmoshpere, teachers are unwelcoming; students are provided with poor equipment or inadequate school buildings; students experience bullying by other students. There is unequal access to work placement opportunities or apprenticeships. In the most extreme cases students may drop out of school altogether.

Exclusionary practices:
Disadvantaged students find it more difficult to progress to further education or find a job suited to their vocational qualification; there is a lack of effective career guidance which disadvantages students whose parents do not have good connections to the labour market; students from disadvantaged groups such as disabled students, students with special needs, Roma students and students from other ethnic or religious minorities Expereince discrimination on the labour market.

A review of the literature helped identify a set of key themes relating to the exclusionary processes and practices involved within the three stages of the students' pathway through the VET system:

1. Selection and choice[3]

    a. Selection processes;

    b. Family background;

    c. Student's choice of school or study programme.

2. Exclusionary experience at school

    a. Limitations on access to resources within the school;

    b. Teaching quality and methods;

    c. Relevance of curricula to the labour market;

    d. Skills mismatched to the labour market;

    e. Practical training, work placements and apprenticeship;

    f. Dropping out from school.

3. Transition from education to work

    a. Choice of destination after school;

    b. Access to career guidance services;

    c. Discrimination on the labour market.

Each of these themes is taken up in the analysis of the country reports presented below, along with short literature reviews that set out a summary of the knowledge base relevant to the analysis of policy and practice for social inclusion and social cohesion in VET systems in South Eastern Europe, Turkey and Israel.

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[3]'Selection' is defined here as the selection of a student by the school in selective school systems where the schools have a set of pre-defined criteria, such as performance at primary school, on which they base their admissions policies. 'Choice' refers to the decisions made by students (and their parents) on which type of school to attend – academic or vocational – and which particular local school to choose.
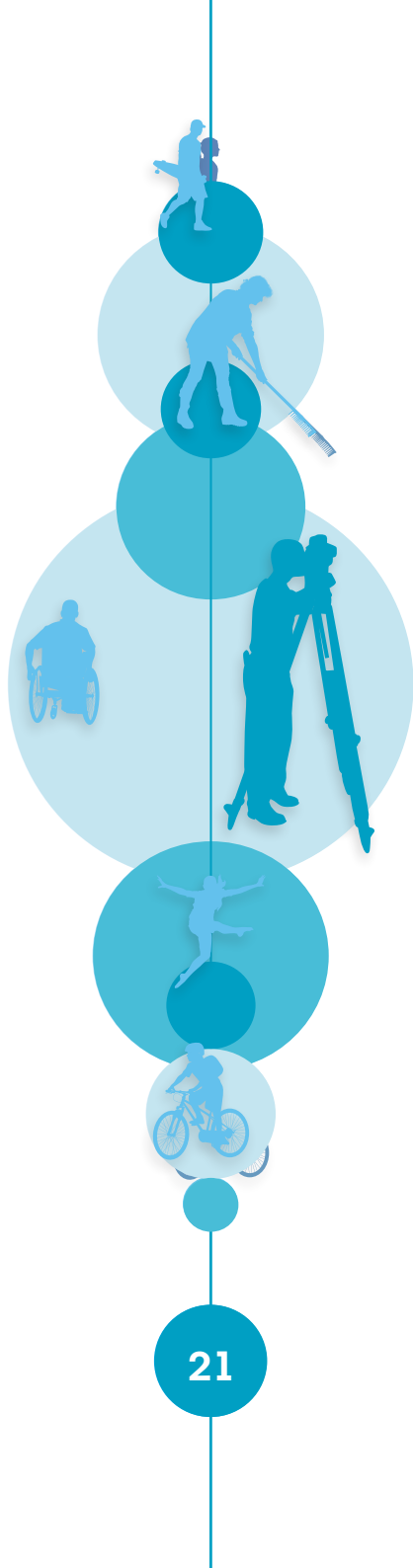
2.2 METHODOLOGY

The research was framed within the participatory action research (PAR) methodology, adopting a holistic approach toward inclusion in education. This involved researchers and the subjects of research in a joint endeavour to ensure the research findings were relevant and applicable. In order to implement this research method, key stakeholders such as school directors, teachers, students, employers, community leaders and others participated in an advisory and consultative capacity. National Advisory Boards (NABs) were established with the relevant key actors at national level, and Local Advisory Boards (LABs) were established at each case-study site around the three vocational schools in each country. The research teams in each country provided open and collaborative leadership for the advisory boards. This enabled the subjects of research to feed into the design, development and implementation of the project. It was an effective way to identify current practices and challenges to inclusive education in the VET system at both national and local level and to identify opportunities for innovative practices and policy initiatives.

Nine country case studies were completed in March 2013 and were published on the ETF website[4]. The findings were presented in seminars in each of the case study countries so that policy makers, schools directors, employers, NGO representatives and others could discuss and comment on the research findings. Continuous interaction and dialogue between the policy makers and educators and other stakeholders characterised the research project from inception through to the completion of this report. It is hoped that the networks of cooperation that have been established among policy makers and relevant practitioners as a fundamental part of this project will continue into the future with a view to the promotion of inclusive education and the overcoming of barriers to social inclusion in the region.

The vocational schools covered in the research were selected in discussion between the research team and the ETF from a list of schools identified through a prior round of consultations between the ETF and country stakeholders in the field of VET policy. Criteria applied to the selected schools related to various dimensions of social inclusion in the schools and local communities. Stakeholders in each country scored the criteria on a scale of 0-10, and the final selection of schools was made using the aggregated scores in combination with the judgement of country researchers. The criterion of school location was also used in making the selection of schools from the list. In a limited number of cases, country researchers selected schools from outside the initial list of schools where these reflected special circumstances deemed to be important to enhancing the validity of the research.

[4] The country case studies are available at: **www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/EV_2013_Mapping_of_VET_policies_and_practices_for_social_ inclusion_and_social_cohesion_in_the_Western_Balkans_Turkey_and_Israel_____?opendocument**
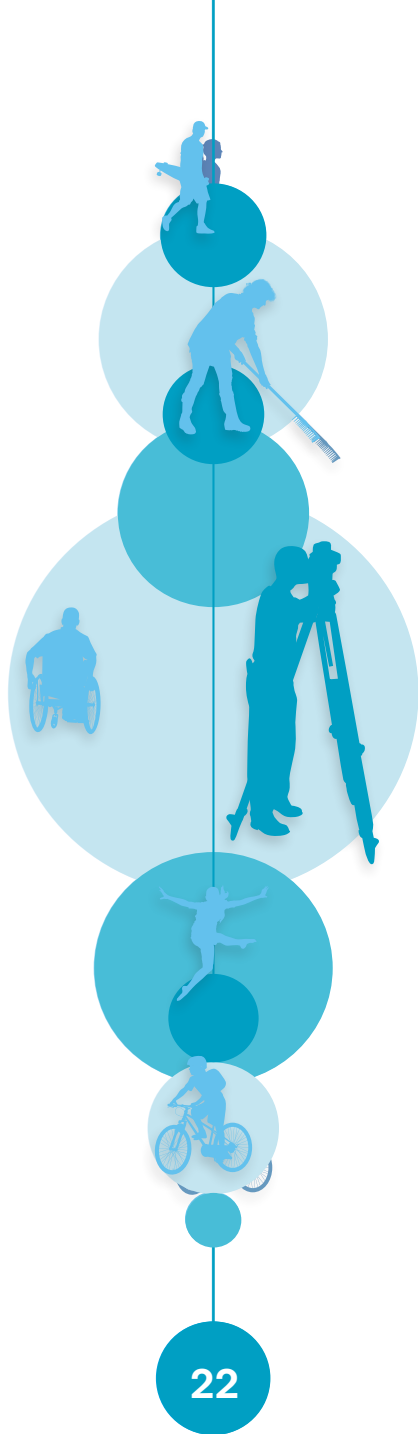
Each school provided responses to both a student survey and a teacher survey. This chapter reports on the student survey findings from the nine countries in the study. The surveys were carried out in each school in each country covering about 300 students per country. They were delivered to students from the first and final year classes within the school under the supervision of teachers. The surveys were designed by the central project team in collaboration with country team members and were identical in each country, apart from a few minor variations relating to local specificities. Overall, 2,830 students were surveyed in the nine countries. The survey contained about 30 questions with sub-questions providing 100 variables for analysis. The survey was divided into sections covering personal details, family background, reasons for the choice of vocational school, experience in school and plans for the future relating to choices over future employment or further education. The analysis reports the means for key variables across the whole sample, across the countries and across the individual schools. It also reports on findings relating to the various factors that determine student satisfaction with school experience as a key indicator of their level of social inclusion within the school. Some analysis is also provided relating to the effect of social background on the transition from school to work and further education. The cross-country comparisons should be treated with a degree of caution, however, as the schools were chosen according to a set of criteria relating to the degree of inclusiveness of their approach and other factors, including geographical location, rather than by random selection, meaning that the data are not technically representative. However, the findings do give a clear picture of the country differences between the case study schools.

Just over half of all the students surveyed were in their first year of study. Almost two thirds of the students were boys and just over one third were girls. About one in fourteen of the students had a disability. One of the questions in the survey asked the students: 'How happy do you feel in this school?' allowing for responses on a scale of 1 (very unhappy) to 10 (very happy). The average score across all of the countries was 7.4, ranging from 6.6 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to 8.4 in Kosovo. The degree of happiness measured was recoded into three broader subgroups ('unhappy' = 1-5, 'content' = 6-8, 'happy' = 9-10) in order to analyse the effect of certain variables on student satisfaction. Under the new groupings, 29.6% of the students came in as unhappy, 32.4% were content and 37.9% were happy. This looser classification is based on a value for 'contentment' expressed as the overall mean and is deliberately designed to help interpret results concerning the determinants of a student's subjective school experience. If we assume that the students who are unhappy at school are those that are more likely to be experiencing exclusionary processes within the school, then this variable can provide an insight into the nature of exclusion within schools in a way that constitutes a valuable guide for policy action to improve the learning experience of the most marginalised students.
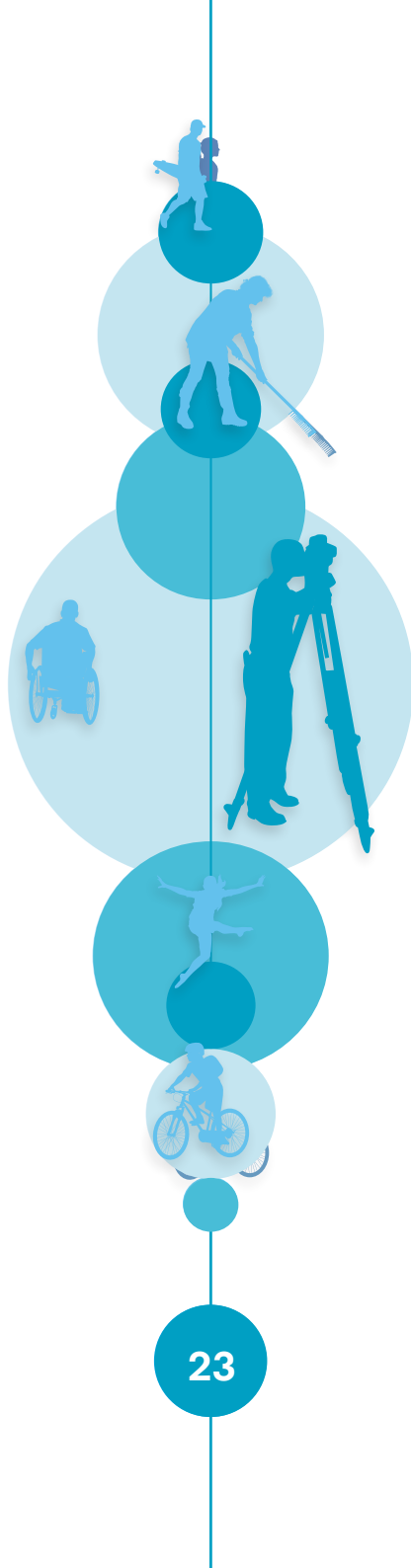
In addition to the student questionnaire, some 745 teachers responded to a teacher questionnaire, of whom 41% were men and 59% were women. Almost all (91%) had a university degree and 80% had a formal teaching qualification. About half of the teachers (49%) had experience working in the private business sector.

The concept of the three stages of social exclusion in a student's pathway through VET described in the previous section was embedded in a wider set of interlinked research objectives that provided the structure for the empirical investigation. The working objectives of the research project were finely defined to map and analyse:

1. Policies toward VET in South Eastern Europe, Turkey and Israel;

2. The influence of family background on selection and choice of vocational school;

3. The students' experience at vocational school and in work-based training;

4. The extent and causes of dropping out from vocational school;

5. The transition from vocational education to work;

6. The role of VET in promoting social cohesion in the local community.

These six research objectives were selected to structure the research process both through the qualitative research based on in-depth interviews and focus groups and through the quantitative research based on student and teacher questionnaire surveys.

3.0 POLICY AND GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORKS

This chapter focuses on the three key issues of VET reforms that we have classed as the most pressing: (i) the modernisation of the legislative frameworks for VET through the adoption of laws and strategic documents and through improved policies toward discrimination and exclusion of vulnerable groups; (ii) governance reforms including institutional reform at national level and; (iii) the delegation of authority to local governments. This is followed by a brief discussion of the role of external donors in improving VET reforms. Standard EU country codes are used to identify individual countries where appropriate.

3.1 MODERNISATION OF THE POLICY FRAMEWORKS

The countries of South Eastern Europe, Turkey and Israel have made substantial progress in several areas of VET policy reform at varying speeds depending on their existing policy configurations, although many initiatives are still in the preparatory stages (ETF, 2007, 2011, 2013). The leading catalysts in this reform process have been factors arising from: the transition process in the post-communist countries; the Europeanisation of policy associated with EU accession and pre-accession in South Eastern Europe and Turkey and; the political will to adapt VET systems to the needs of society and; external donor assistance. The situation in Israel is slightly different, however, for while VET is well developed and provides relatively good labour market outcomes for graduates, minorities such as the Arab-Israeli population still need to be better incorporated into the VET system (OECD, 2010).

Ensuring that VET systems are able to respond to new and emerging labour market needs has been a national priority in many of the countries in this study. Specific legislative reforms and strategies have been aimed at the development and implementation of National Qualification Frameworks in compliance with the European Qualification Framework (AL[*], XK[*], HR[*], ME[*], TR[*])[5]; the design of new professional standards/curricula (ME, MK); the planning or implementation of quality assurance mechanisms for VET (BE, HR, ME, RS[*]); and the modernisation of VET in relation to labour market needs (AL, HR, XK, MK). It is notable that most new legislative activity has taken place in South Eastern European countries in line with the Europeanisation of VET policy in their EU accession process. In contrast, both Israel and Turkey rely on legal frameworks that have been in place for far longer, since the 1950s in Israel or 1970s in Turkey. VET policy therefore has a much greater degree of continuity and coherence in these two countries than in the other countries in this study. Turkey is also a EU candidate country that is adopting EU-compliant reforms to the

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[5]Although these have not always been properly adapted to local circumstances and institutional heritage (see Kleibrink, 2012)

[*]AL - Albania, XK - Kosovo, HR - Croatia, ME - Montenegro, TR - Turkey, RS - Serbia
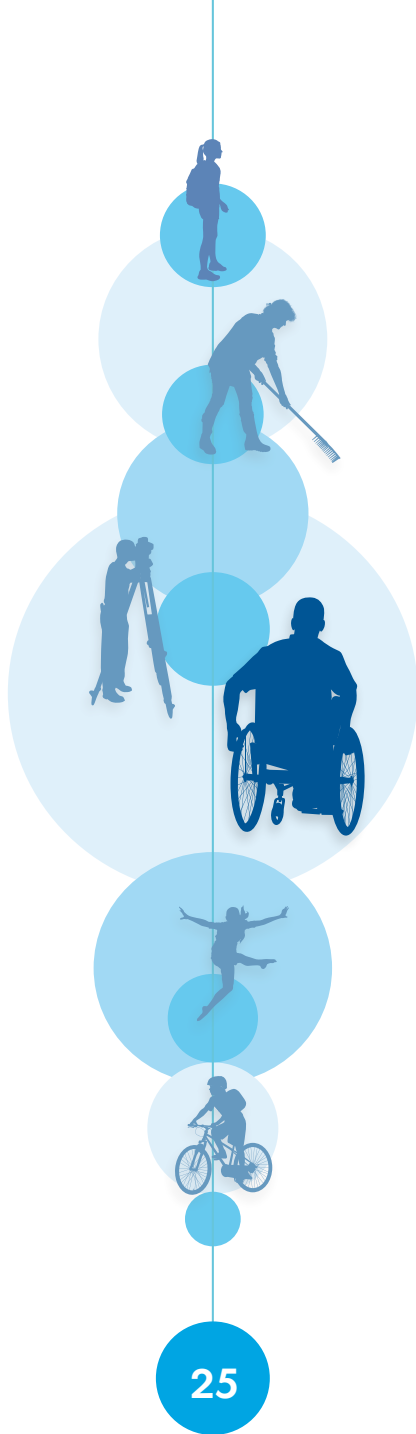
VET system with EU funding of EUR 58 million and associated technical support. Moreover, according to the country report: 'current debates for increasing the status of the VET system in Turkey centre around achieving this by adopting the German and Austrian VET systems as a model where commerce unions assume a big responsibility in the process' (Sayan and Yavçan, 2013). In Israel, the main areas of policy concern relate to long-standing issues of coordination between government ministries, course and programme development, and inclusion of the Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) and Arab community in VET (Yair et al., 2013). Currently, there is an active framework of government-led reform in the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labour (MOITL) and other government ministries and agencies, with plans to put VET on a statutory basis through legislation (OECD, 2012) and also to enhance cooperation between MOITL and the Ministry of Education (MoE).

In Croatia, which became an EU member in July 2013 during the course of this study, priorities for VET were aligned with EU goals and objectives through the adoption of the Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education 2008-2013 (2008); the Act on Vocational Education and Training (2009), in particular, introducing formal pedagogical standards and a National Qualification Framework aligned with the European Qualification Framework to ensure comparability and transparency of qualifications.

Elsewhere, VET pathways have been re-organised within the framework of comprehensive laws covering the entire education system. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina the 1998 Green Paper on VET Policy and Strategy marked the onset of a comprehensive VET reform that aimed for harmonisation with EU developments through the adoption of a Framework law on VET in 2008 and a Development Strategy of Vocational Education and Training for the Period 2007-13 (2007). Montenegro has launched a comprehensive reform of the education system where the 2002 Law on Vocational Education (amended in 2007) provides for the introduction of a dual form of school-based and parallel company-based VET. In Albania, the labour-market orientation of VET systems has been defined as one of the main objectives of the Act For Vocational Education and Training in Albania (2011) and the National Strategy on VET 2013-2020 (2012). Similarly, the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2011-2016 links education policy to national development priorities, aiming to make education and training systems more responsive to labour market needs.
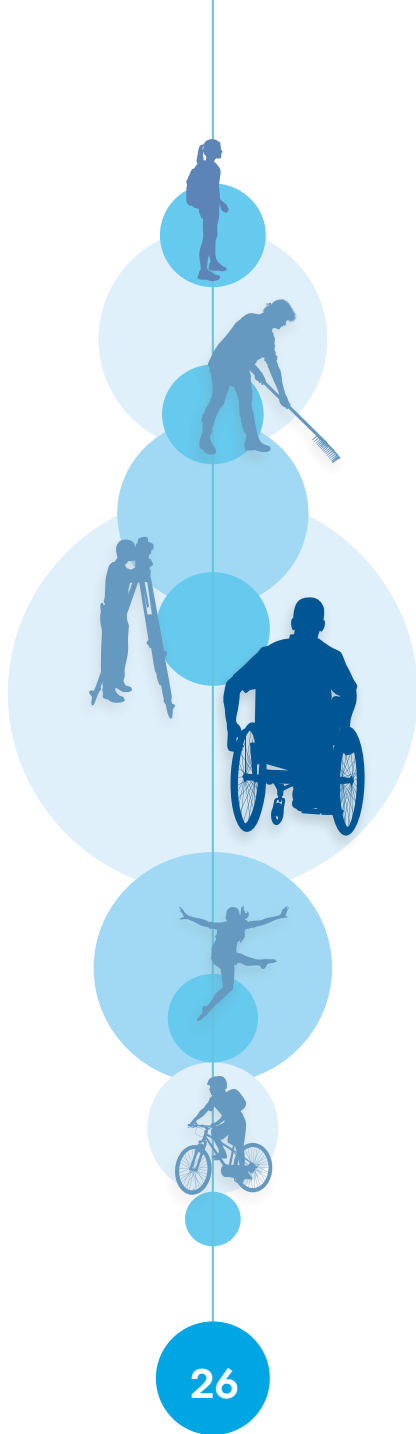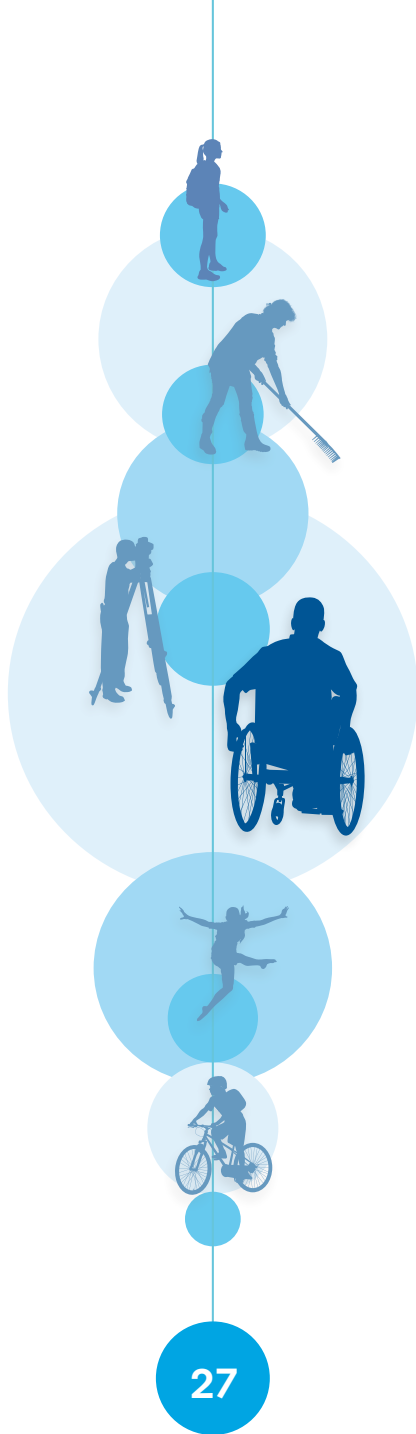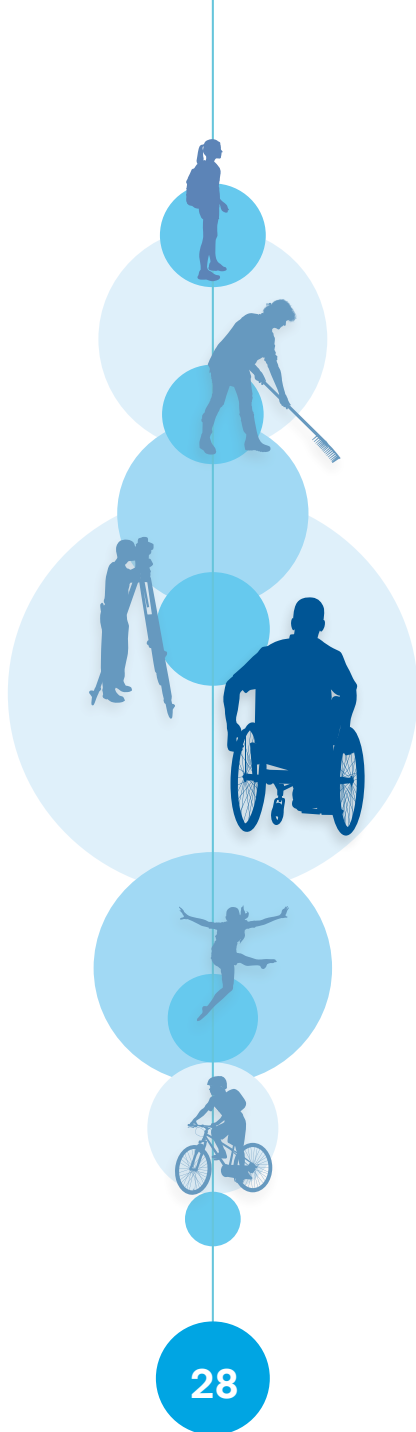
Table 1: VET policy frameworks

Albania	Vocational Education and Training Law No 8872 (2002)	National VET Strategy 2013-2020 (*draft* 2012) - addresses the role of VET policies for social inclusion and social cohesion in Albania, establishing that the vocational schools and centres should design school-based strategies for approaching the issues of social inclusion.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Framework Law on Primary and secondary Education in BiH (2003) Framework Law on Secondary Vocational Education (2008)	Development Strategy of Vocational Education and Training for the Period 2007-2013 (2007) - emphasises the role of VET in addressing the challenges facing the country in a lifelong learning context. Strategy for VET in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2007)
Croatia	Secondary Education Act no 19/1992 (amended in 1993, 1995 and 2003) - introduced new vocational schools, together with the right to establish private schools and dual education schools. Law on Public Institutions - made school public institutions. Act on Vocational Education and Training adopted (Official Gazette 30/09) in 2009 - defines the key competences as a set of knowledge and skills necessary to meet basic needs, developing social cohesion, democratic society and employment.	Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education 2008-13 (2008) - recognises the need for relevant competences and programmes and the involvement of employers in responding to changes in the labour market.

Israel	Apprenticeship law of 1953 and Youth Work law 1953 (revised in 1971) Employment Service Law 1959. The Ministry of Industry and Trade and Labour is in the process of drafting a law to include a Vocational Education and Training system for Youth, Adult Training, Practical Engineers and Technician[6].	No specific strategy document available.
Kosovo	Law on Vocational Education and Training (2006/02-L-42) amended in 2012 - regulates the national VET system in accordance with economic and social development needs. The Law also regulates the structure, organisation and management of institutions that provide VET. Moreover, the New VET Law No. 06/118 approved in March 2013 supports career development as an integrated part of lifelong learning and foresees the engagement of social partners in curricula development, occupational standards, economic cooperation with VET and system evaluation.	Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (KESP) 2011-2016 (2011) - links education policy to national development priorities, recognising that the education and training system must be more responsive to labour market needs.

[6]Source : Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor :
http://www.moital.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/D7591393-1E28-45CE-8078-EB734605E5B9/0/Cofereance2011BackgroundC3aENG.pdf

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Law on Secondary Education (1995) - an amendment in 2007 made upper-secondary education compulsory and free of charge.

Law on Vocational Education and Training (2006) (amended 2008) - provides benefits for companies providing practical training for students. Employers are allowed to propose changes to syllabi. | National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training (draft 2013) - acknowledges the need to improve the potentially inclusive role of vocational schools, and proposes some measures to improve social inclusion as well.

Strategy for Integrated Education (2010) - focuses on ethnicity-related integration issues of students from different ethnic backgrounds.
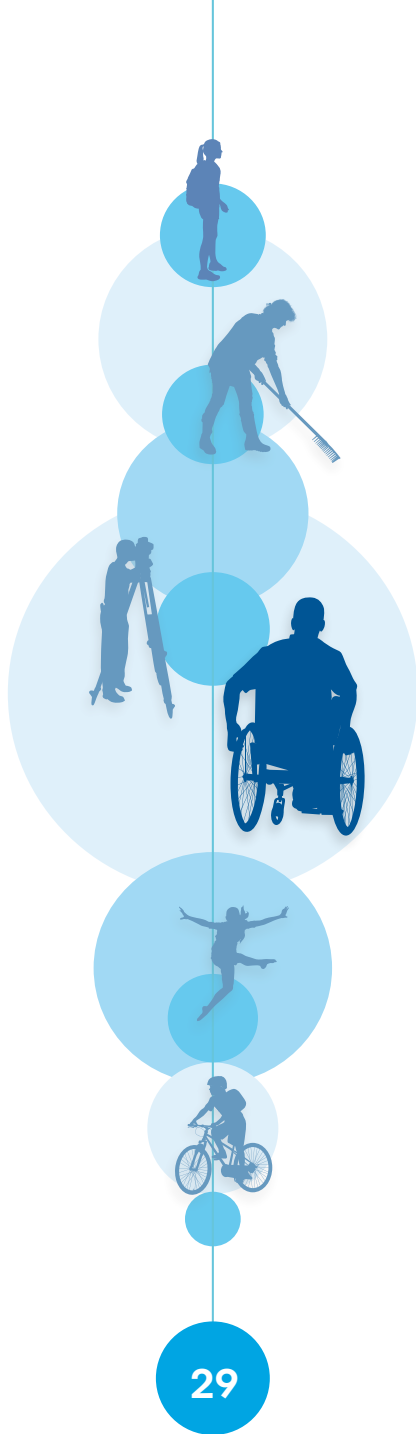
National Strategy for the Development of Education 2005-2015 (2005) - covers the issue of inclusion, through non-discrimination, improved physical access to schools, increasing participation in education through awareness-raising in ethnic communities. |
| Montenegro | Law on Vocational Education (2002) (amended in 2007) - provides for the dual form of school-based VET and parallel company-based vocational training. The latest amendment (2010) takes a step back and specifies that VET may be provided by schools alone or jointly with employers but with schools taking the lead role. | Strategy for Inclusive Education (2008) - aims to increase the inclusion of vulnerable groups such as Roma and children with special educational needs in mainstream education.

Strategy on Vocational Education (2010) - sets out priorities and goals up to 2016 including 'ensuring personal, social and professional development of every individual, encouraging fairness, social cohesion and active participation of citizens'. |

Serbia	Law on Secondary Education (No 23/2002). Law on the Foundations of the Education System (2003, replaced in 2009) – promotes a concept of inclusive education based on non-discrimination and freedom of choice in the language of teaching.	Strategy for Development of Vocational Education and Training (2006) – introduces the concept of social inclusion relating to persons with acquired and developmental disabilities and to people from underprivileged backgrounds and social groups. The strategy recognises their full right to quality education. Strategy for the Development of Education in Serbia 2012-2020 (draft, 2012) – focuses on lifelong learning and education based on quality and efficiency.
Turkey	Basic Law of National Education (1973) (amended 1997). Apprenticeship and Vocational Training Law No. 3308 (1986). Law on Vocational Qualifications Authority (2006). Private Education Law (1995) and Law on Private Educational Institutions (2007). Law no. 2916 on Children with Special Educational Needs (1983)	Tenth Development Plan (2014-18) (draft, 2013)[7] - aims to increase educational attainment and develop a lifelong education strategy to meet the requirements of a changing and developing economy and labour market.

[7]Source: OECD, 2013 (**www.oecd.org/edu/EDUCATION%20POLICY%20OUTLOOK%20TURKEY_EN.pdf**)
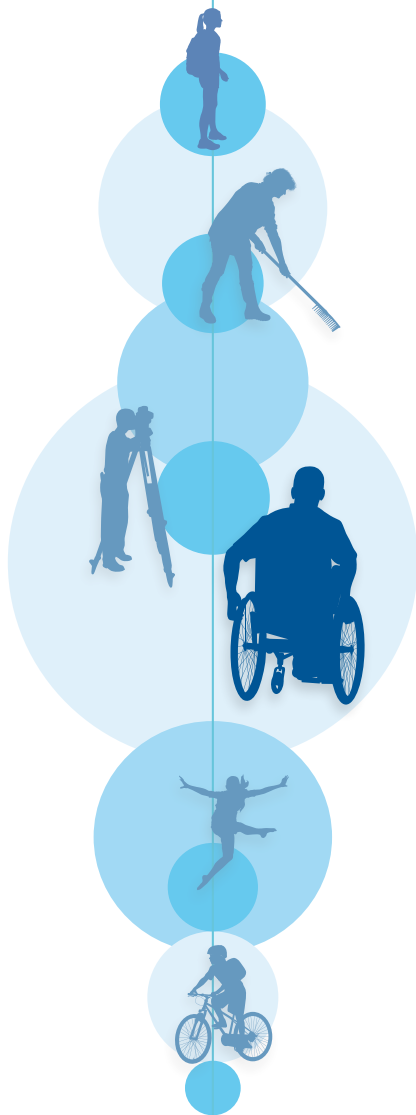
While most of these legislative innovations confirm a growing awareness regarding the pivotal role of VET for the development of skills of the workforce to underpin economic growth among key national stakeholders, some also reveal a focus on redressing disadvantage and supporting social inclusion. Specific strategies and associated action plans have been adopted in tandem with new laws to guide and enable implementation of the new legislative framework. VET strategies across the countries have been oriented toward two main goals: strategies that emphasise adjustments to labour market needs and strategies that emphasise social inclusion and social cohesion. The former strategy has been given greater weighting in the policy documents of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo and Turkey, while the latter strategy is more prominent in the strategies of Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia (see Table 1).

An important step toward the adoption of a more comprehensive concept of social inclusion has been made by Montenegro through its Strategy for Inclusive Education (2008), which introduced the term 'children with special educational needs', encompassing in the definition all children with physical and mental disabilities and those with development difficulties, including those caused by emotional, social, linguistic and cultural deprivation. VET laws were followed by the adoption of a Strategy on Vocational Education in 2010 that set out priorities and goals up to 2016 including 'ensuring personal, social and professional development of every individual, encouraging fairness, social cohesion and active participation of citizens'. At the institutional level, the Commission for the Orientation of Students with Special Needs (COSSN) supports the orientation of students with special educational needs and to promote the full integration of Roma students in the education system. Thus, in principle, the institutional framework of the country offers a good basis for social inclusion at all stages of a student's educational experience and may facilitate policy initiatives. However, the authors report that the implementation of policies in the schools faces some barriers, including a lack of teacher training and poor quality work by COSSN as the most critical issues to be addressed (Kaludjerović and Mirković, 2013).
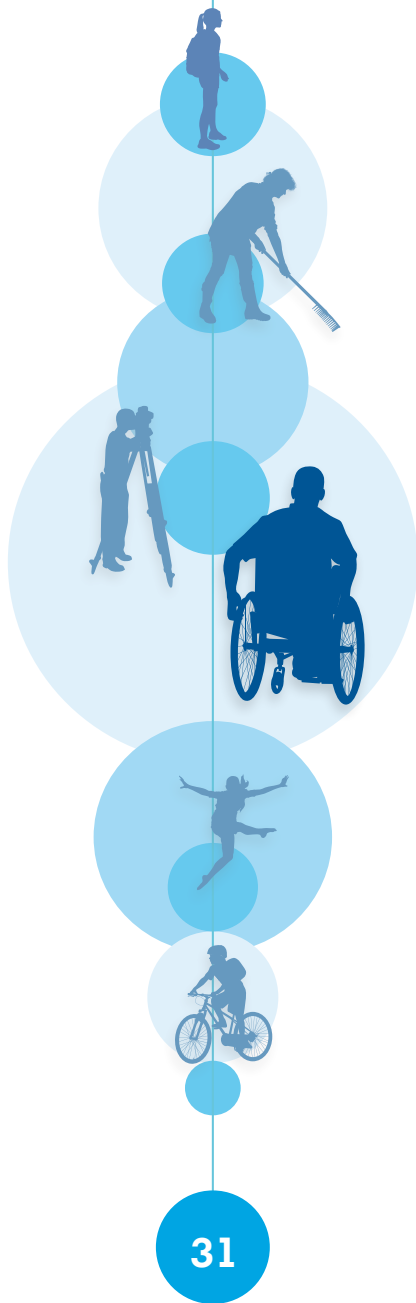
In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, policy focuses on the interaction and integration among ethnic groups. For instance, the Law on Secondary Education prohibits the display of religious and political party symbols in schools, bans social, political and religious discrimination and guarantees minority-language instruction. Moreover, the Strategy for Integrated Education (2010) promotes a solid basis for the integration of all ethnicities through the mitigation of language and cultural barriers. Despite these positive steps, however, there is an insufficient awareness of the concept of 'inclusive education' which is mainly understood to imply the inclusion of students with special needs or from ethnic minorities, overlooking the inclusion of other vulnerable groups (Mojsoska-Blazevski and Ristovska, 2013).

In Serbia, the vision of VET reform has been directed toward the creation of a VET system capable of meeting special educational needs and the needs of ethnic minorities. The promotion of inclusive education adheres to the principles of equal opportunities and accessibility and the concept of social inclusion has been fully integrated in the Law on the Foundations of the Education System of 2009. In 2010, the Serbian government established a Working Group on Social Inclusion, composed of representatives from government institutions and civil society. Obstacles facing the Working Group in ensuring more inclusive VET include: poor economic conditions, increasing unemployment, lack of restructuring of the network of vocational schools, demographic decline and a decline in the quality of education (Maksimović and Bratić, 2013).

However, when considering social inclusion policies in VET, there is evidence of a gap between reform intentions and their implementation. This is apparent from the opinions and concerns expressed by the stakeholders in interviews (see Box 1).
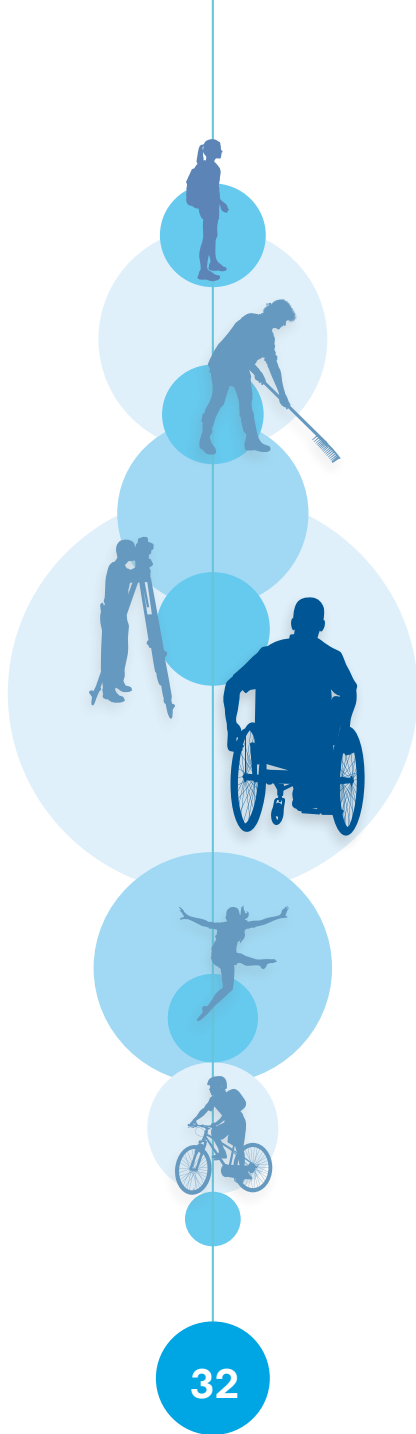
Box 1: Key messages from stakeholders

'The Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (KESP) 2011-2016 makes clear reference to social inclusion. However, the new draft of the VET Law does not indicate something specific related to social inclusion in VET. There is no coherence between the KESP and the VET Law. There is no interconnection between the social inclusion and lifelong learning which is a concept and practice that could promote social inclusion and respond to individual needs. There is also a need for more flexible and multi-dimensional policies that should be designed in cooperation with other ministries and other stakeholders'

(IDI, Kosovo)

'In most national interviews, social inclusion was defined as relating to the position of vocational schools on the labour market and employment, as relating to children with developmental difficulties and in only one interview as encapsulating challenges faced by students from lower economic backgrounds. These understandings of social inclusion are narrower than the ones advocated in this project and they are important in that they lead to a perception of actors responsible for social inclusion contributing to a reductive approach to policy design and implementation. The general impression obtained from the interviews was that social inclusion and in particular social cohesion are not frequently used terms; a conclusion reflected in answers to the question whether the issue of social inclusion and VET was represented in national policies. One interviewee said 'the social dimension is continuously being left out', another that 'inclusion escapes our focus'.

(Country report, Croatia)

'In terms of social inclusion it is again highlighted that the policy at the state level is good but the crucial question is its implementation. For example, the network of schools for children and youth with disabilities and special needs is not equally spread across all regions of Serbia. Another problem in the implementation of social inclusion is the lack of statistical procedures and methods of data collection. The number of students with special needs who are enrolled in the high school individual education programmes, is unknown'

(IDI, Serbia)
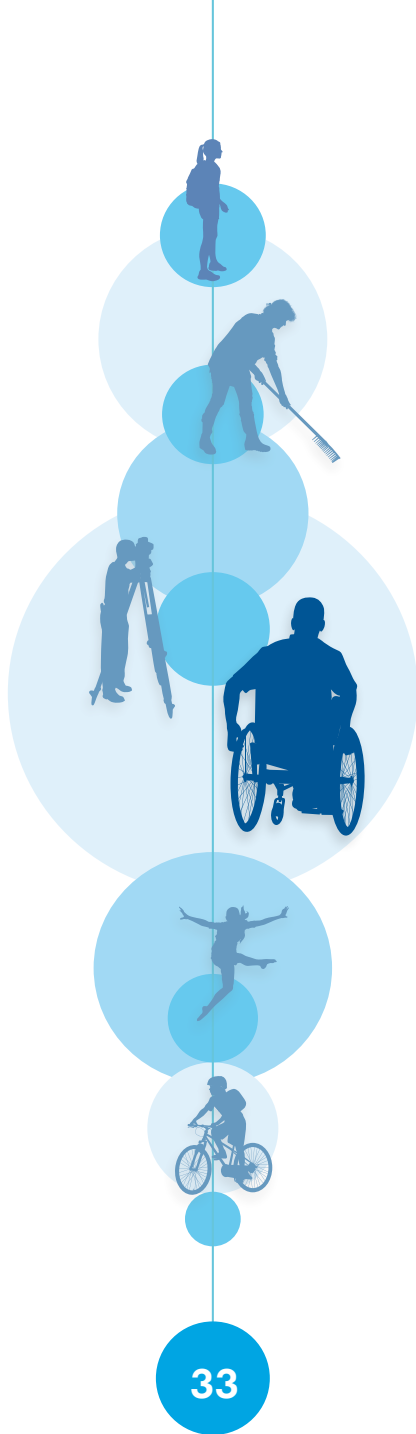
'The Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities collaborate in designing common strategies for VET as the main instrument for social inclusion and social cohesion. Inter-ministerial groups and focal points have been established in each ministry for integration of the programme. The problem is their implementation, for example in supporting disabled students with appropriate infrastructure in school, and with teachers for special education'

(IDI, Albania)

'We have been informed that currently the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) is in the initial phase of the revision of the Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion (2010-2020), therefore the information provided in respect of the Strategy might differ or might be changed during the revision process. Nevertheless, the interview indicated that the Strategy does not make specific reference to vocational education as a potential tool for increasing social inclusion and cohesion but refers to education overall. It has been noted that the MLSP is very interested on the findings from this study on VET and social inclusion and cohesion as they are willing to anticipate and incorporate some of the recommendations in the revised version of the strategy'

(Country report, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

As is clearly seen from the interviews, although legislative reforms and strategies have had some success in achieving awareness of the role of VET in social inclusion, the reform agenda is still incomplete and inadequately implemented. The concept of inclusive education focuses more on students with disabilities and has not been broadened to encompass all vulnerable groups. Finally, the lack of integration between education and social policies for vulnerable groups and the low level of cooperation between all the stakeholders involved in VET reform are also factors that impact negatively on the reform process.
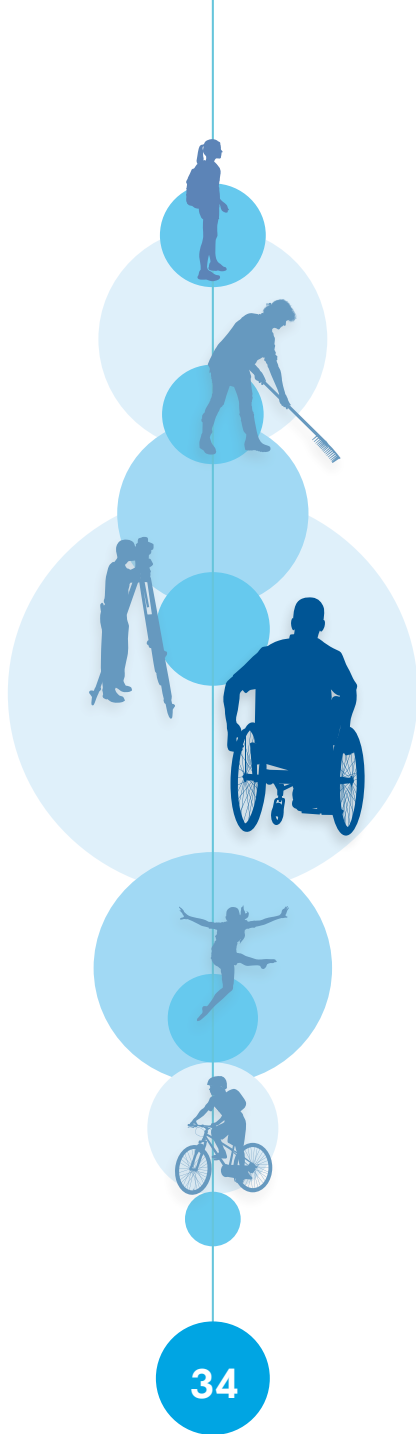
3.2 GOVERNANCE REFORMS

Most of the countries in the study have undertaken reorganisation of whole VET systems through the adoption of specific laws and strategies and they are also in the process of developing governance frameworks that foresee more cooperation and better synergies among the different stakeholders involved in VET planning, together with efforts to delegate responsibilities to lower levels of government such as the regions or municipalities[8]. Governance reforms face challenges in the form of: (i) poor coordination and administrative cooperation between the ministries involved in VET and other actors such as social partners and civil society and; (ii) the search for an appropriate scale and level for the decentralisation of VET.

Many countries have enhanced or restructured their VET departments within the ministries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Israel, Montenegro, Serbia) and VET is currently a responsibility of the Ministry of Education in most countries. In Israel, however, part of the VET system falls under the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labour (MOITL) and the new government that came to power in Albania in 2013 has announced its intention to transfer responsibility for VET from the Ministry of Education and Sports to the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a unique situation where VET system policy and governance falls to 15 different competent institutions at the State, Entity, district and canton levels. At the State level, the Ministry of Civil Affairs has a role restricted purely to coordination, while real decision-making power lies in the two Entities (the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina [FBiH] and Republika Srpska [RS]) and the single District of Brcko. Within FBiH, there are 12 Cantonal Ministries of Education with competence for VET in a way that raises issues relating to coordination. For instance, the Framework Law on Secondary Vocational Education and Training (2008) has been transposed into the legal system of RS but not by all of the Cantons in FBiH. Moreover, in the Cantons of FBiH, the VET system is usually regulated by the FBiH Law on Secondary Education. This fragmented form of governance limits cooperation among vocational actors, impacts negatively on the collection of information and statistics about VET and makes social inclusion policies heavily dependent on the capacities of the respective entity, canton, district or municipality.

In the region as a whole, governance is shared by a variety of national VET Agencies and Councils (see Table 2). Agencies are usually devolved institutions charged with the implementation of policy, while the Councils are multi-stakeholder advisory bodies that enable the some degree of effective involvement of social partners in VET governance with the aim of promoting a more participative approach to reforming VET systems (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia).

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[8]For an overview of decentralisation reforms in the region see Bartlett et al. (2012).
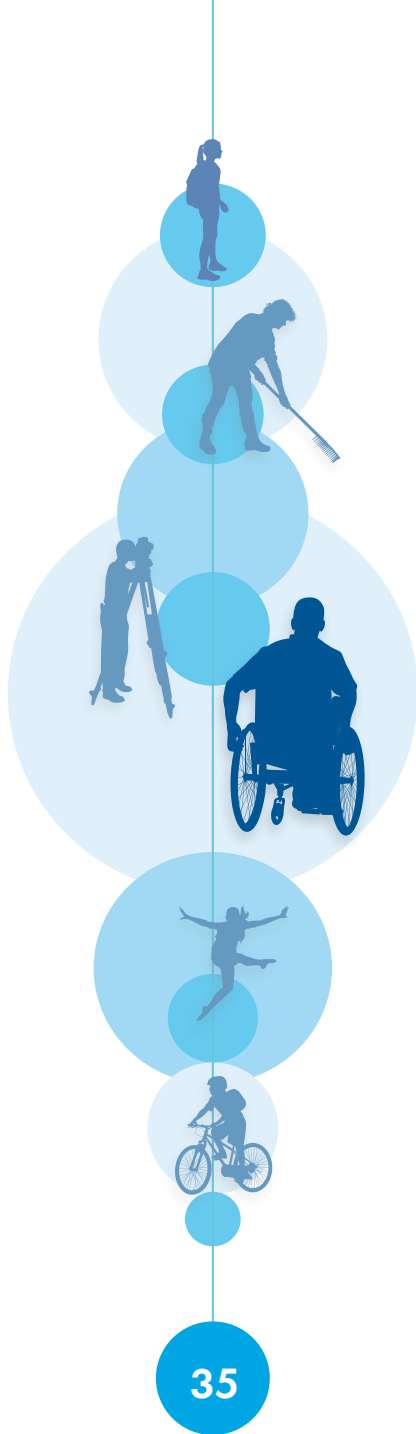
However, the agencies are rarely genuinely autonomous bodies responsible for VET systems and it is still uncertain whether they are functioning effectively. For instance, in Albania, the National Agency for Vocational Education established to assist both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour[9] is entirely financed by the Ministry of Education and has limited resources to devote to the vocational training courses managed by the Ministry of Labour. Similarly, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Agency for Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education that started operating on January 1, 2009 is reported to have a role restricted purely to coordination. In Kosovo, the Agency of VET and Adult Education (AVETAE) proposed by the Ministry of Education, is still in the process of completion, with no clear mandate and or functions for members yet established.

In Croatia, the Council for VET (2009) was set up to become a multi-stakeholder forum for discussion of VET policy and Montenegro created a National Education Council (merging together the Council for Vocational Education, the Council for Adult Education and the Council for General Education) including members from employers' associations, unions and students, while in Serbia the Council for VET and Adult Education (2010) was established to provide advice on VET issues such as monitoring, the proposal of educational profiles, qualifications frameworks, standards and curricula.

While the VET councils definitely represent a step forward toward the building of good governance for VET, several country reports clearly show that the role of the social partners remains rather marginal in terms of both decision-making power and their shallow representation in these bodies (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Croatia, Montenegro). Empowering these structures with technical and financial resources could strengthen multi-stakeholder cooperation and coordination to positive effect.

[9]These were re-established as the ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth respectively after the new government came to power in 2013.
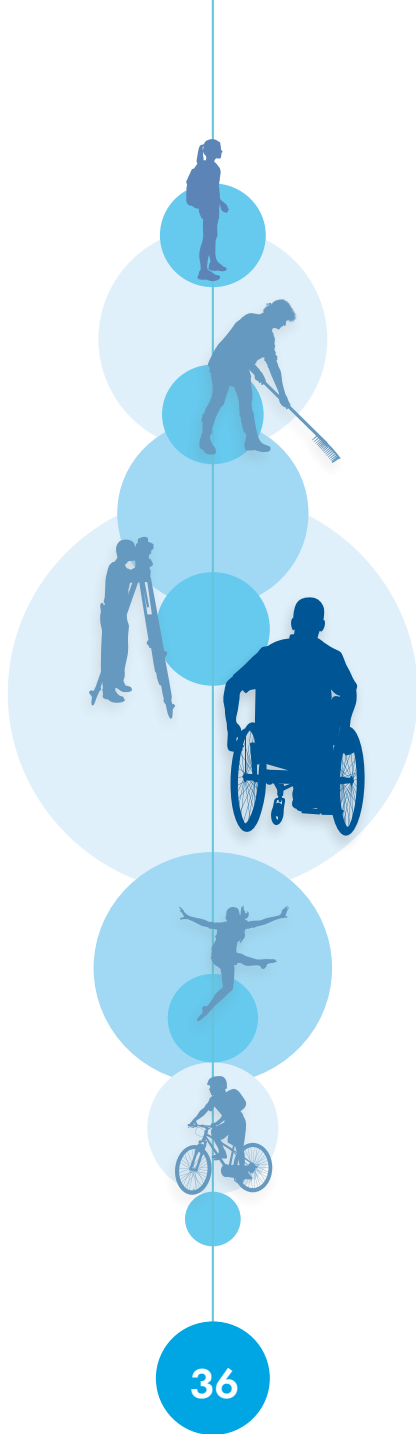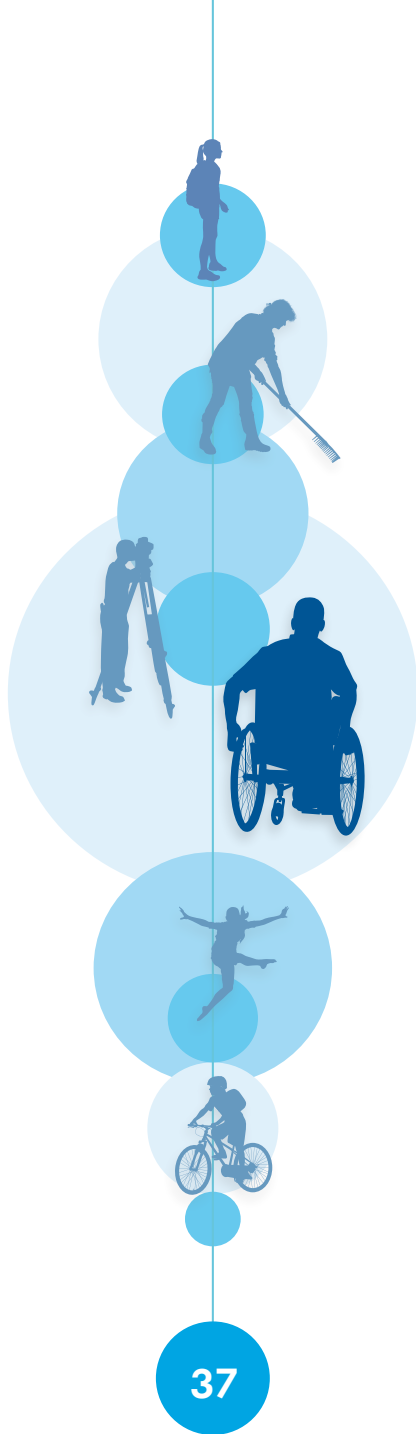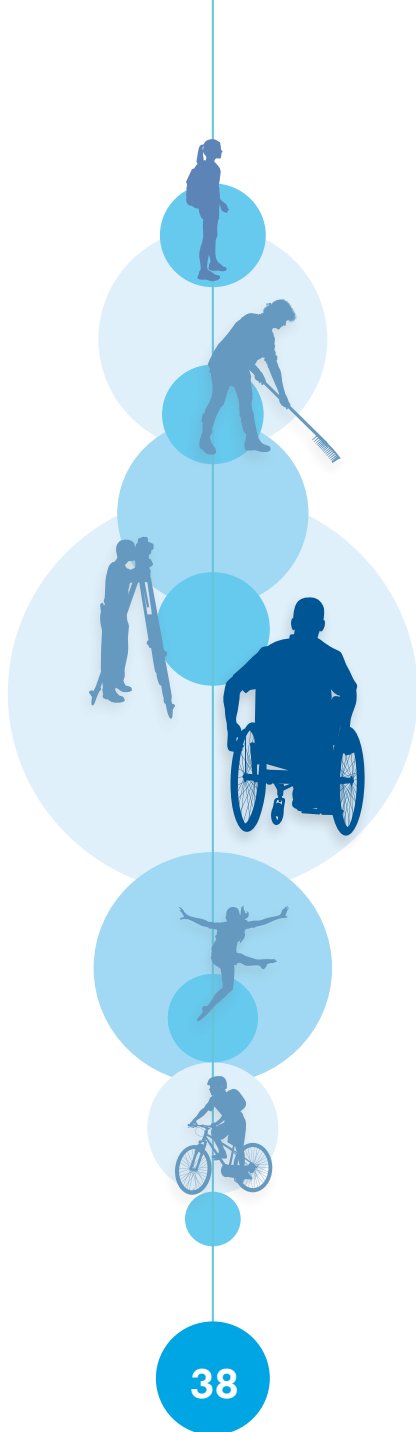
*BA - Bosnia and Herzegovina

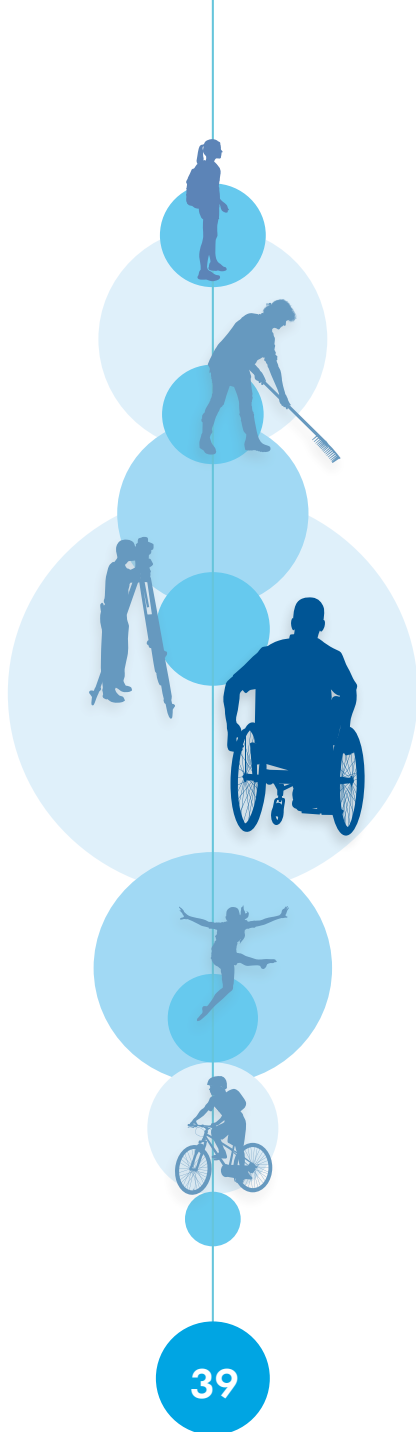**Table 2: Institutional frameworks for VET in South Eastern Europe, Turkey and Israel**

Country	Ministries	Agencies and Institutes	VET Council
Albania	**Ministry of Education and Science** (in 2013 Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth)	**National VET Agency** (2006) - responsible for development of curricula, certification standards, the qualifications framework. **Institute of Curricula and Standards**	Inter-ministerial body in charge of making recommendations on VET policies and development
Bosnia and Herzegovina	The **Ministry of Civil Affairs** coordinates plans of Entity authorities through the Department for Secondary Education. In FBiH, the **Federation Ministry of Education and Culture** coordinates ten cantonal ministries of education, science, culture and sport. In RS, the **Ministry of Education and Culture; the Department of Education** in the Brcko District	**Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education.** Eight **Pedagogical Institutes** are responsible for the monitoring and supervision of educational institutions, including curriculum development, adoption of new approaches and educational methods, and organising training for teachers and principals.	

Country	Ministries	Agencies and Institutes	VET Council
Croatia	**Ministry of Science, Education and Sports**	**Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education** (2005) - supports the development of the VET system. Plans, organises, monitors and evaluates the VET system, develops and modernises existing VET curricula based on VET qualifications, teacher training and cooperates with Sector Councils. **Education and Teacher Training Agency** (formerly the Institute of Education) (2006) - responsible for monitoring and improving the education system, participates in the development and implementation of the national curriculum, and implements in-service training of teachers. **The National Centre for External Evaluation of Education** (2004) - prepares tests, national exams and administers the *matura* (national school leaving examination introduced in 2010).	**National VET Council** (2009); Sector Councils

| Country	Ministries	Agencies and Institutes	VET Council
Israel	**Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labour; Ministry of Education**	No information	**Israeli Defence Forces and Manufacturers' Association of Israel Councils** (providing advisory role of VET issues)
Kosovo	**Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (VE); Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (VT)**	Agency of VET and Adult Education	**Council for Vocational Education and Training**
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	**Ministry of Education and Science**	**The Centre for Vocational Education and Training** - a professional body for the development of VET to meet the needs of economic and social development, carries out research on the labour market in cooperation with social partners and defines occupational standards and syllabi for VET. **The Bureau for Education Development** (previously the Pedagogical Institute) - part of the Ministry of Education and Science prepares the curricula and syllabi for the schools in collaboration with the Pedagogical Council.	**Council for Vocational Education and Training** provides opinions on strategies for VET development.

Country	Ministries	Agencies and Institutes	VET Council
Montenegro	**Ministry of Education and Sports** responsible for the development and financing of education. Municipalities are responsible for the implementation of laws, for financing the maintenance of school buildings, providing social care for pupils (transport, school meals, health care etc.) and co-financing investments and material expenses.	**Bureau for Educational Services** assesses the quality of educational services, monitors the development of the education system, defines standards for textbooks, assists in the process of curriculum development, conducts research and provides advisory services, organises in-service teacher training, is responsible for quality assurance and drafting of curricula	Council for Vocational Education and Training has been merged into the **National Council for Education** (2010)
Serbia	**Ministry of Education** (2001)	**Institute for Educational Quality and Evaluation** responsible for defining and proposing educational standards, monitoring students' learning achievements, evaluating the performance of teachers and educational staff. The Institute for the Improvement of Education has a **Centre for Vocational and Adult Education** - responsible for the development, monitoring and quality assurance of vocational and art education, and VET. **Institute for Educational Research** an independent scientific research institution founded in 1959.	**Council for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education** (2010)

Country	Ministries	Agencies and Institutes	VET Council
Turkey	**Ministry of National Education (MONE)** consists of central, provincial, overseas organisations and affiliated institutions. In each of the 81 provinces and 892 school districts (as of 2009) there are provincial and district national education directorates.	**Vocational Qualifications Authority** (2006) responsible for defining the national professional qualifications in technical and vocational areas. Also performs supervision, assessment, evaluation and certification.	The **National Council of Education** the highest consultative and decision making body of MONE. **Vocational Education Council** makes decisions on the planning, development and evaluation of VET including apprenticeship training. It consists of representatives from relevant ministries, trade and employers' unions, NGOs, higher education institutions and trade chambers. Provincial Employment and Vocational Education Councils take decisions and make recommendations on the planning, development and evaluation of vocational training programmes within their jurisdiction.

There is a common agreement in the country reports regarding the need to improve institutional cooperation between ministries and agencies involved in setting the policy and governance frameworks for inclusive VET systems. Coordination is reported as particularly problematic in Israel, where the two main ministries involved in VET are the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labour (MOITL) (Yair et al., 2013). While VET provided by the Ministry of Education enjoys a better status with the teaching of highly technical skills and the enrolment of students from more privileged social backgrounds, MOITL is left with the more daunting task of providing VET for students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds who have dropped out from MoE schools (see discussion in Section 6.1 on school dropout). Because MOITL schools have low prestige, they perpetuate the social exclusion of students. In addition, a comprehensive approach to VET is still missing and reflects several different views. According to one of the stakeholders interviewed, 'there is a need to create a system tailored to the various populations but one which promotes equality, one which promotes access to training and integration into the world of employment. In our minds it is difficult to see the entire Israeli society progressing. In Israel there is no 'round table', meaning that we lack a real forum that combines the state, industry and workers, because each actor has a different vision of what Israel will look like in 10 years. Each one imagines another solution and there is no uniformity, nor cooperation' (IDI, Israel).
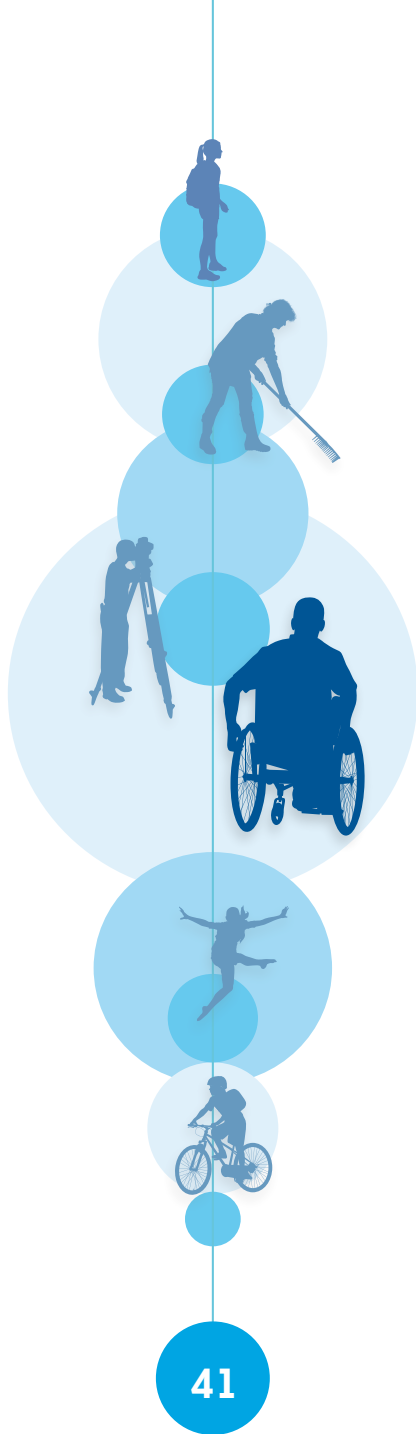
3.3 DECENTRALISATION

Decentralisation reforms throughout the region in recent years have covered several policy areas, with the education system as one of the leading elements (Bartlett et al., 2012). Decentralisation, in the form of the partial allocation of competences to local authorities, has either been introduced or planned in the VET systems of several countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Turkey). In Albania, municipalities are now the official owners of school buildings previously owned by the Ministry of Education and they are also responsible for school maintenance. However, school autonomy in budget allocation is low and school maintenance by local authorities is completely inadequate (Xhumari and Dibra, 2013). In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, competencies and responsibilities for the delivery of VET have been transferred to local self-government, even though the division of responsibilities between the central and local levels of government is unclear (Mojsoska-Blazevski and Ristovska, 2013), and Croatia has made similar advances in terms of the decentralisation of different VET functions to the county and school level (Matković, et al., 2013). Although wages are paid from the State budget in Croatia, investment expenses and scholarships are financed by the County budget and schools are run and managed by school boards that have the freedom to amend up to 15% of the vocational curricula, adjusting the teaching plans and programmes.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has the greatest degree of decentralisation mandated by the complex constitution. In fact, according to the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education, schools are permitted to design and implement activities appropriate to the needs of the local labour market. They may also conduct commercial activities, particularly if related to vocational training, and use the revenue in accordance with regulations. However, incomplete transposition of the law in all the cantons has a negative impact on school autonomy.

3.4 THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL DONORS

International donor agencies have greatly supported VET reform initiatives in South Eastern Europe through financial aid and technical assistance. The EU IPA and the German and Austrian aid programmes in particular have been active in promoting VET reform in South Eastern Europe. Bilateral donors such as USAID, German GIZ, ADC-KulturKontakt of Austria, SCD of Switzerland and Edu-Cluster of Finland have provided a platform for policy learning and capacity building involving local communities. International donors have also been widely engaged in training initiatives aimed at developing capacities and participatory experience in school management (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Turkey), they have sustained the provision of education services through the funding of school projects and delivery of training (Croatia, Kosovo, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and, finally, they have promoted the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the VET system (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro). However,
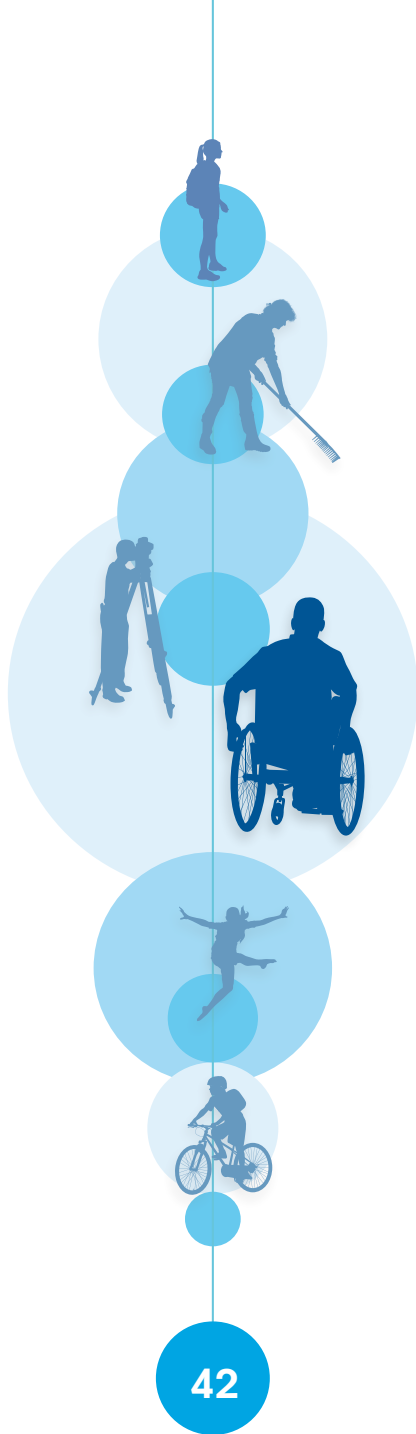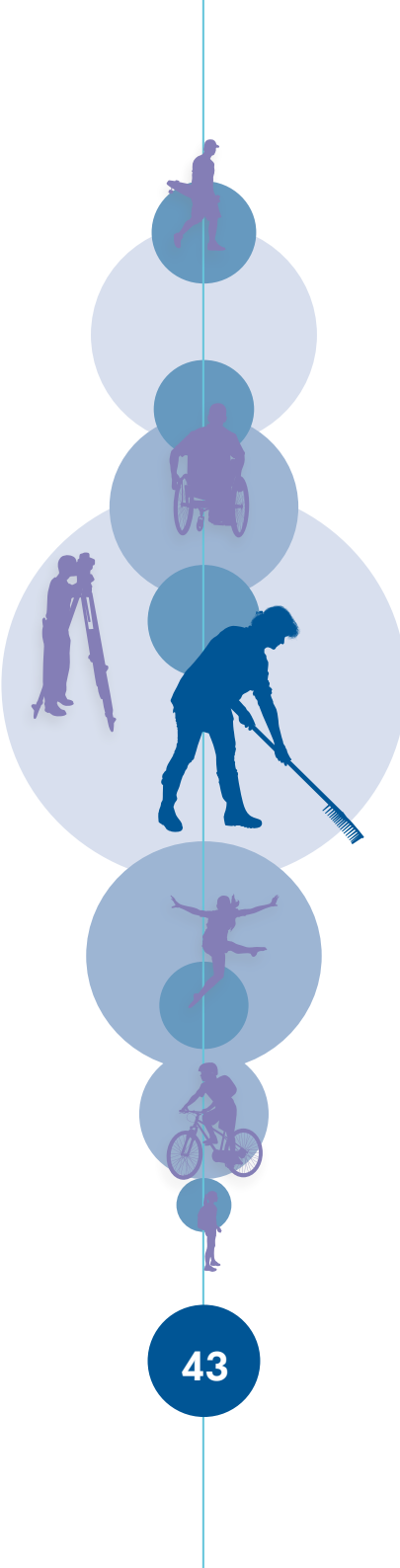
although donor initiatives have promoted the participation of social partners in VET policy, few countries have developed partnership approaches with businesses and employers with the notable exceptions of Croatia, Israel and Turkey.

3.5 CONCLUSIONS

In the last decade, the VET systems of the post-communist countries of South Eastern Europe covered by this study have been partly modernised through legislative and institutional reforms that have aimed to adapt structures to the needs of their relatively new market economies. Moreover, national priorities have been established in keeping with EU goals and objectives for VET as a consequence of the EU integration processes. Despite these advances, however, the participation of vulnerable groups and minorities in VET systems still represents a key challenge to be addressed. Turkey and Israel, with a longer continuity of VET education, face a rather different set of challenges oriented mainly around promoting the social inclusion of the minorities and disadvantaged groups within their societies.

While policies have focused on the role of VET for building human capital and promoting employability, the development and implementation of integrated strategies to enhance the inclusion of students and protect them from exclusion and discrimination has been limited in most countries. There is little awareness and understanding of the concept of social inclusion in the policy discourse of most countries, an element that is reflected in the partial integration between VET policies and social policies for vulnerable groups. The main focus of policy in most instances is on the inclusion of students with special educational needs rather than on embracing all vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Moreover, the lack of information and statistical evidence on vulnerable groups negatively impacts on the policy-making process in this field. Some efforts have been made to improve institutional cooperation and the decentralisation of competences from central to local authorities through the establishment of institutional structures that have allowed a more participatory approach in VET matters. However, the level of participation of all the relevant actors in the implementation and development of social inclusion strategies within VET is rather limited. International donors are influential in supporting reforms though capacity building and the implementation of projects aimed at promoting social inclusion. Nevertheless, there is a risk that these measures lack sustainability, with only partial national and local ownership. On the basis of this evidence we make the following policy recommendations:

- Increased cooperation between ministries and agencies involved in setting the policy and governance framework for inclusive VET systems;
- More engagement by social partners and local self-government bodies in the policy debate.

4.0 ENTRY INTO VOCATIONAL SCHOOL: SELECTION AND CHOICE

This chapter addresses the stage of entry into vocational school and the mechanisms of selection and choice adopted in the countries included in the study. Section 4.1 summarises some similarities and differences between the school systems, showing that most countries have similar pathways of progression. Section 4.2 focuses on the selection processes of these school systems, showing that some have more selective systems than others. Section 4.3 analyses the relationship between selection and social exclusion, showing how student characteristics and family background both contribute to the division of applicants between schools, forming a basis for social exclusion in the school entry processes. Section 4.4 analyses the relationship between students' choice of school and shows the importance of family and friends in selecting both the type of school and the specific school within the local community, as well as the main reasons behind such choices. Finally, section 4.5 presents some conclusions and policy recommendations.

4.1 SCHOOL SYSTEMS

VET is offered at different levels and varies according to the mode of organisation of the local labour market. In most cases, it can be classified into two basic systems: school-based education and training and the 'dual' education system. School-based VET follows a formal curriculum combining general skills with occupation-specific education. The practical training is based on in-school workshops that provide a simulated work environment to develop practical skills, usually including an in-company placement of limited duration. Dual education combines workplace experience and training through apprenticeship in a company with vocational education at school in an integrated course of study, usually within a particular occupation or work sector (Cedefop, 2008). A further differentiation can be made between apprenticeships in which the student has 'worker' status i.e. a contract with an employer and remuneration, and arrangements in which the student has a 'learner' status, with neither contract nor salary. Under the dual system, which is also sometimes called an 'alternance' scheme, the alternation between school and work may take place on a weekly, monthly or yearly basis. This arrangement is often also referred as an 'apprenticeship' where systematic, long-term training is provided with alternating periods between the workplace and an educational institution (Cedefop, 2008).
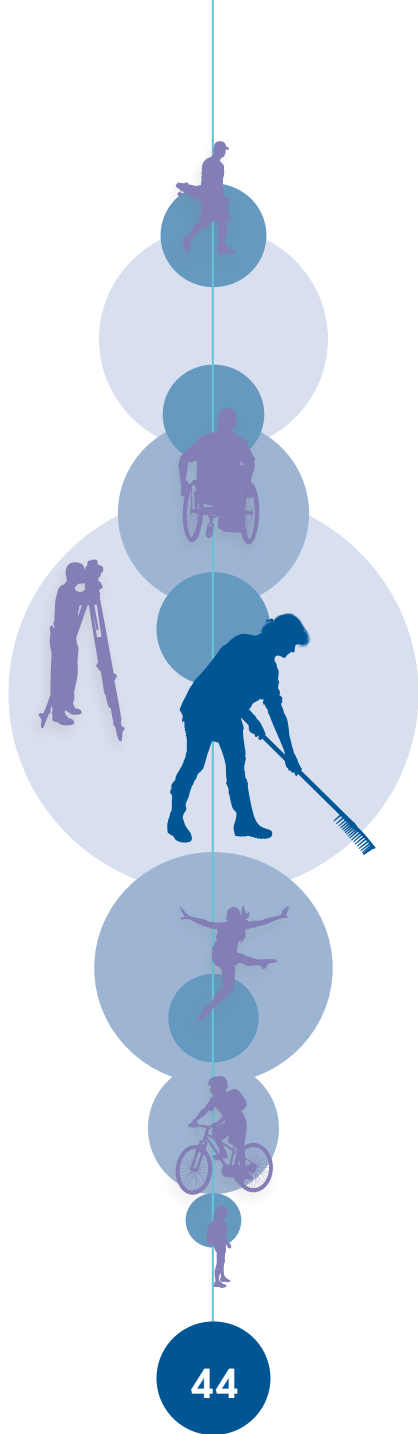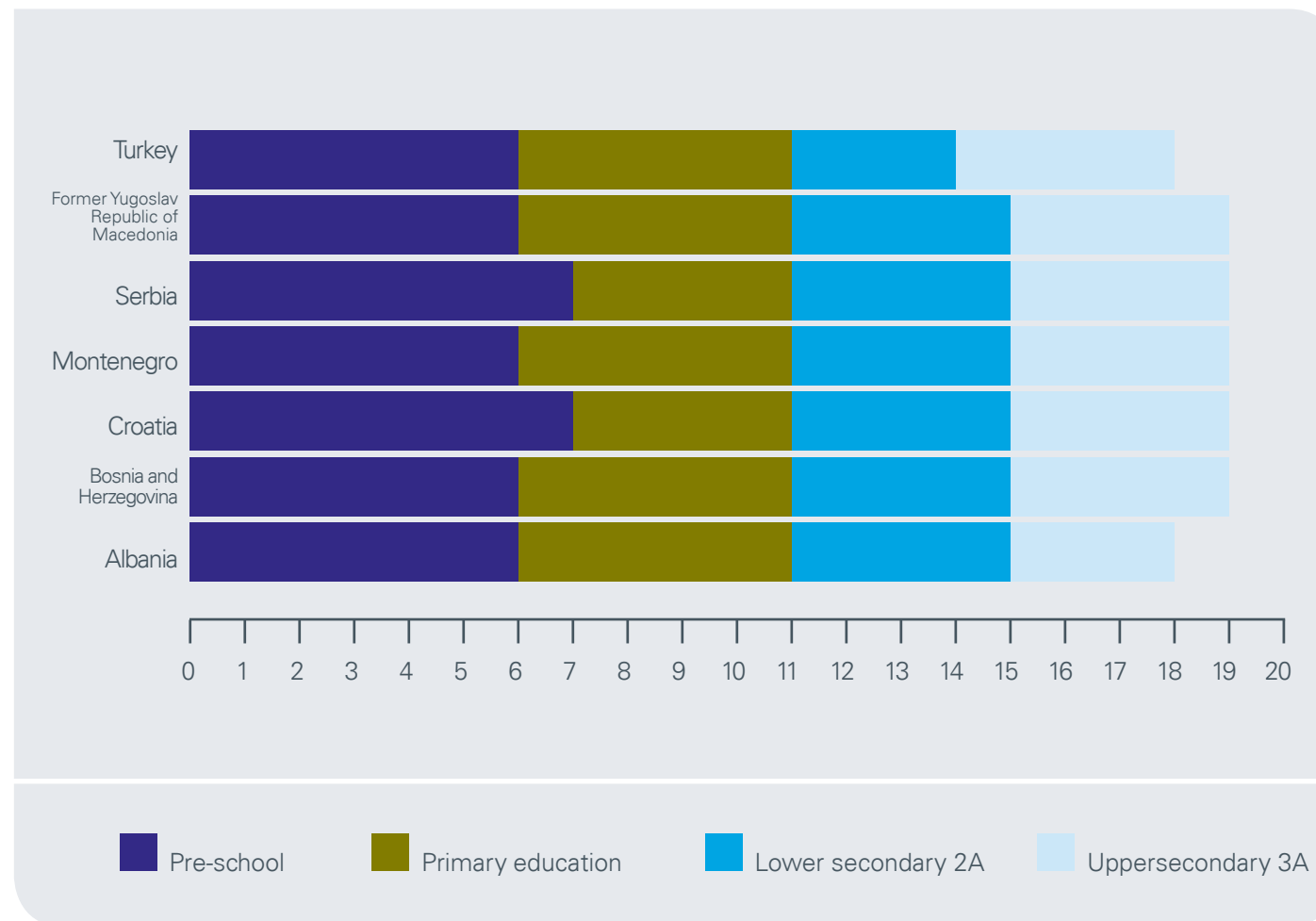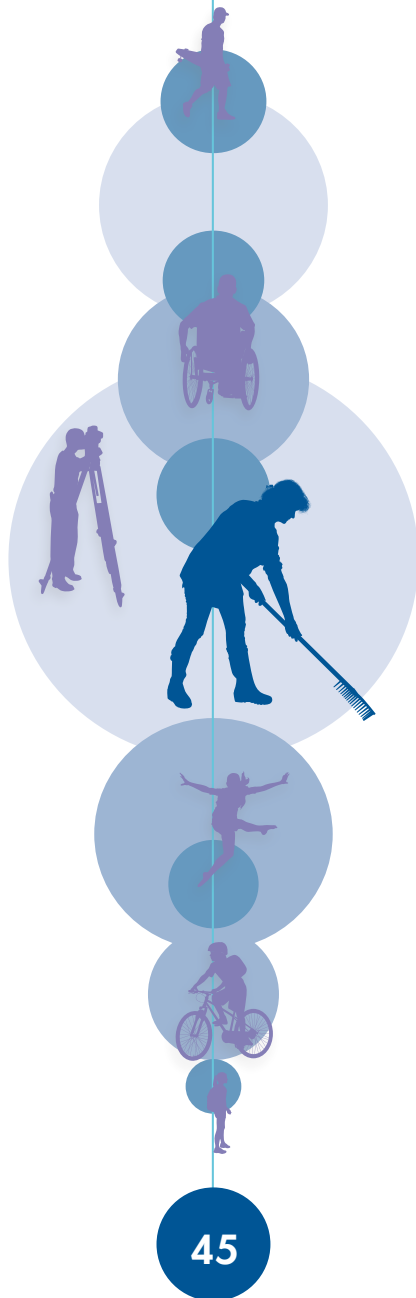
Figure 3: School systems: duration of schooling segments by age and country

Legend:
- Pre-school
- Primary education
- Lower secondary 2A
- Uppersecondary 3A

Source: UNESCO UIS online database

Most countries in this study provide comprehensive primary education from the age of six to fourteen and do not allow selection before upper-secondary education. The entrance age for upper-secondary education is 15 in all of the countries except Turkey, where it is 14 (see Figure 3). The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is the only country in the study in which upper-secondary education has been made compulsory.

4.2 SELECTION PROCESSES AND ENROLMENT IN VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

Countries in the study differ in the degree to which they select students into academic and vocational schools, or vocational programmes within schools. In Albania, selection into upper-secondary education was abolished in 2009, and there are no longer any set criteria for entry into either the gymnasia or vocational schools other than the minimum pass rate for the matura examination at the end of compulsory education (Xhumari and Dibra, 2013). However, secondary schools in the countries of the Former Yugoslavia continue to select students on the basis of ability as measured in performance tests at primary school which often leads to the allocation of the brightest students to gymnasia, the best vocational schools and the most popular courses (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia). Conversely, students with lower scores are allocated to the worst schools and to three-year vocational courses in preference to the four-year courses, although some exceptions apply. In Croatia, children of war veterans have privileged access to courses in a way that avoids any ability test, while disabled pupils and those with learning difficulties are enrolled directly into assisted places.

Positive discrimination is also applied to Roma pupils in some countries. In Croatia, Roma pupils are awarded additional points, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia they have a 10% discount on the required entry points, while in Serbia, the required number of points to enter 'pilot courses' in some vocational schools is higher than for some gymnasia.

The selection process is rather different in Albania and Turkey. In Albania, selection on the basis of ability was suspended recently and all students under 17 years of age who have completed compulsory education are entitled to attend secondary school. In Turkey, schools are required to accept all applicants, leading to excessive class sizes in some schools although a quota system limits this effect, as schools do not have to admit pupils above their quota. The 'elite' Anatolian schools select students on the basis of a national entrance exam, while technical schools admit students on the basis of their scores at primary school.
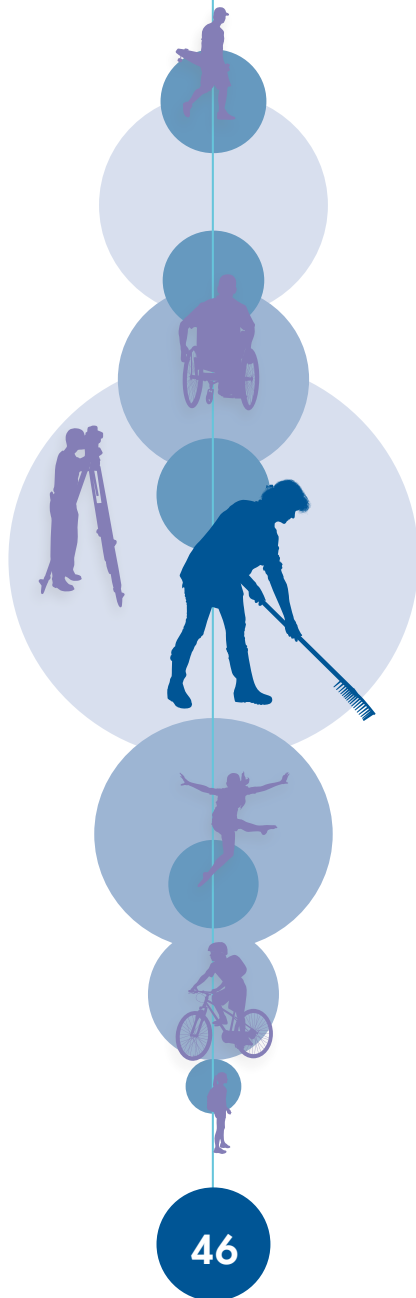
Box 2: The selection process in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

'The selection of the students is based on national enrolment criteria (minimum acceptable points). Students are ranked on the average grades in primary education, average grades in mother tongue and second language subjects and from two specific subjects relevant for the education stream in which they want to enrol, diplomas (1st, 2nd, 3rd place) from international and national competitions in the specific subjects and average score in terms of student school behaviour. The minimum enrolment criteria are set for each specific education programme, where the minimum criteria are highest for medical schools (min. 70 points), gymnasia (min. 60 points) and vocational schools (min. 60, 35 points for 3-year programmes).'

Source: The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Country Report, ETF (2013)

Enrolment in upper-secondary VET education is falling in most of South Eastern European countries, partly due to population decline, while enrolment has been increasing in Israel, Kosovo and Turkey (see Table 3).
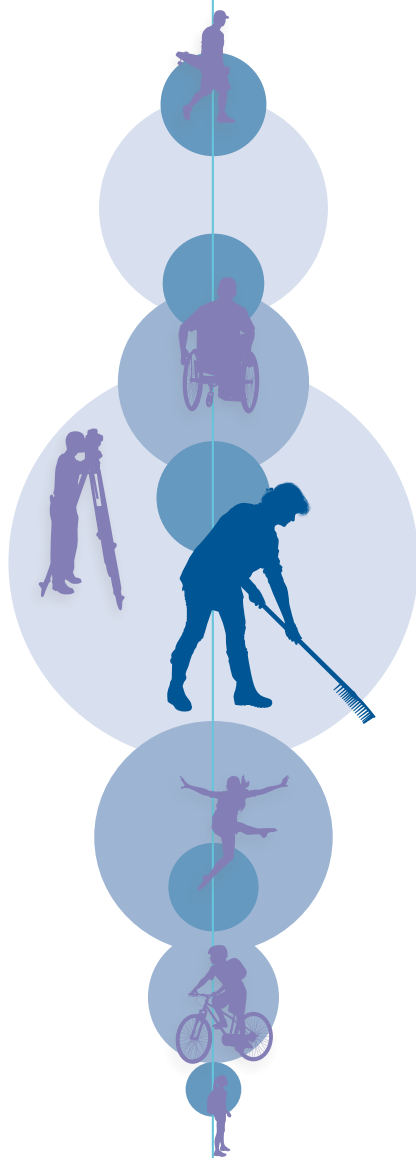
Table 3: Enrolment in upper-secondary vocational and technical programmes, public sector

Country	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Albania	26,956	27,841	27,288	19,831	18,467	17,346
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-	-	-	-	108,538	112,050
Croatia	137,694	135,810	132,416	129,872	128,211	-
Israel	123,500	122,741	124,842	129,196	130,288	-
Kosovo	-	-	51,988	17,767	59,512	-
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	-	57,844	56,627	55,688	56,962	-
Montenegro	-	-	-	21,495	21,695	21,794
Serbia	222,330	219,754	218,621	217,327	216,809	214,131
Turkey	1,111,286	1,171,119	1,176,204	1,417,720	1,638,453	-

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics online data; for Kosovo: Kosovo Agency of Statistics

While total enrolment in upper-secondary VET is falling in South Eastern Europe, the gross enrolment ratio[10] appears to be increasing due to the even faster fall in the numbers in the relevant cohort due to population decline. Thus while total enrolment levels in Serbia in vocational and technical upper-secondary education fell by over 8,000 between 2006 and 2011, the enrolment ratio in all upper-secondary education increased from 80.6% to 85.7%. There is evidence from Serbia that enrolment in three-year courses has been falling, while enrolment in four-year courses has been increasing (Maksimović and Bratić, 2013). The gross enrolment ratio is increasing over time in all countries apart from Israel (with the highest gross enrolment ratio) and Turkey (with the lowest). The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has the lowest gross enrolment ratio among South Eastern European countries.

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[10]The gross enrolment ratio is the number of students in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education. The gross enrollment ratio can be greater than 100% as a result of grade repetition and entry at ages younger or older than the typical age at that grade level.
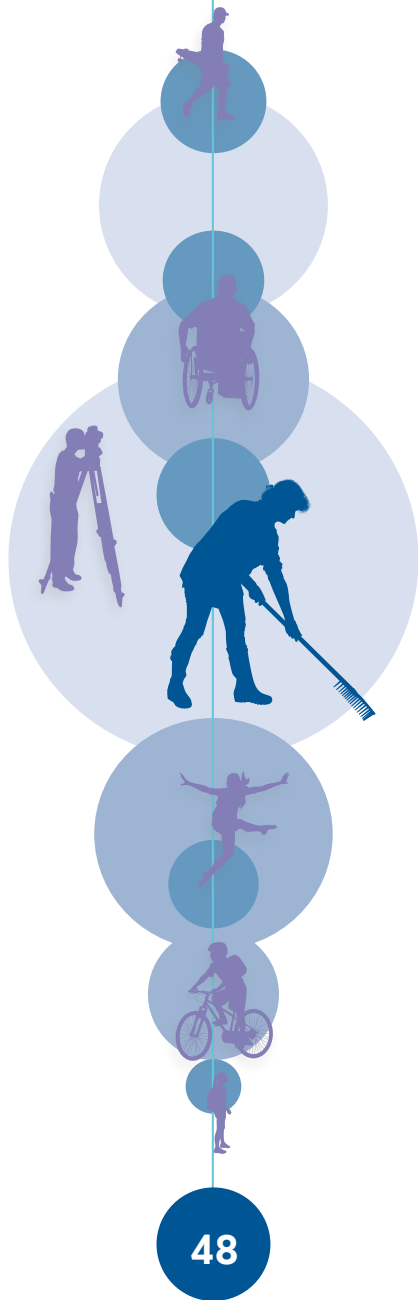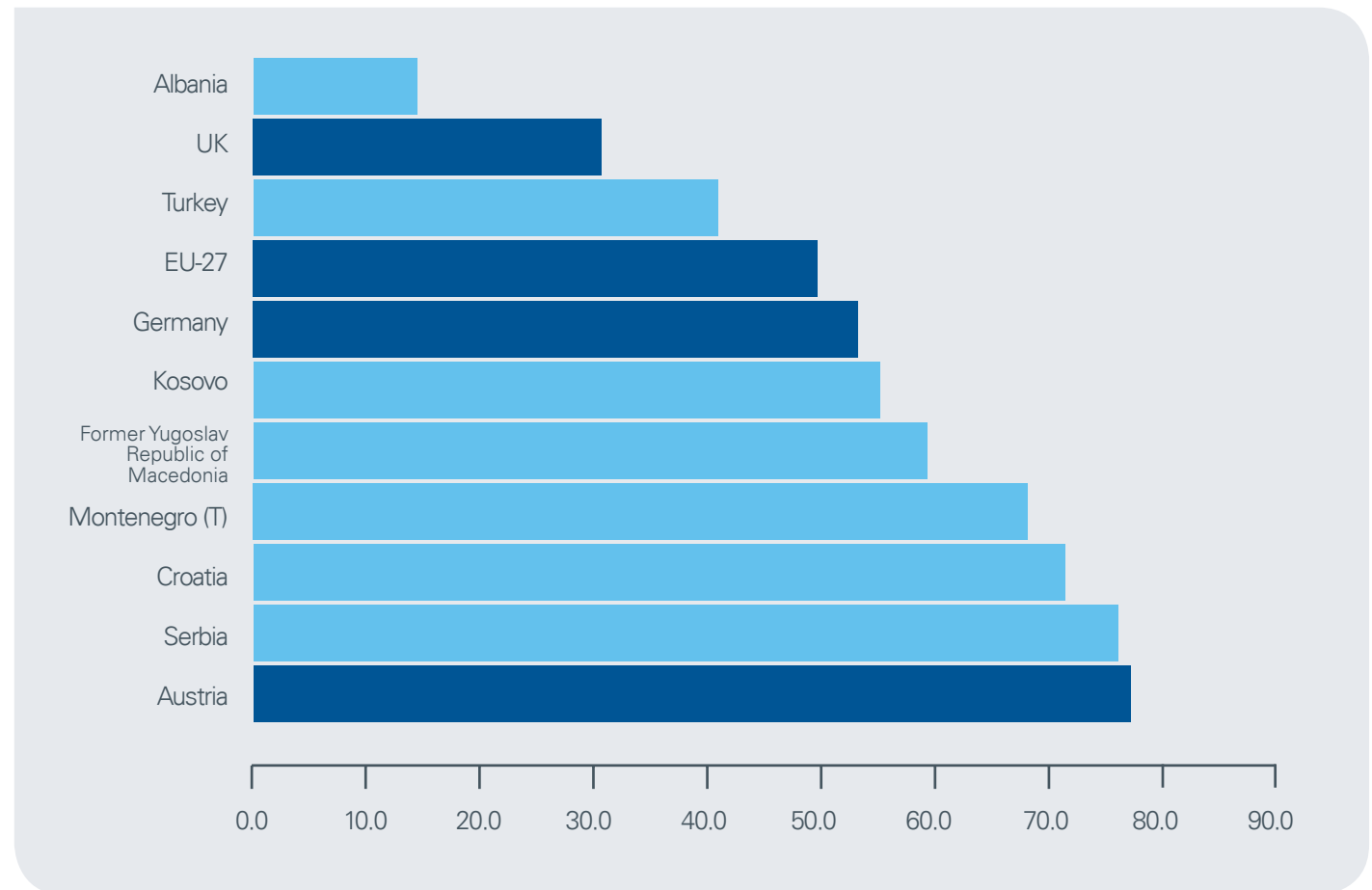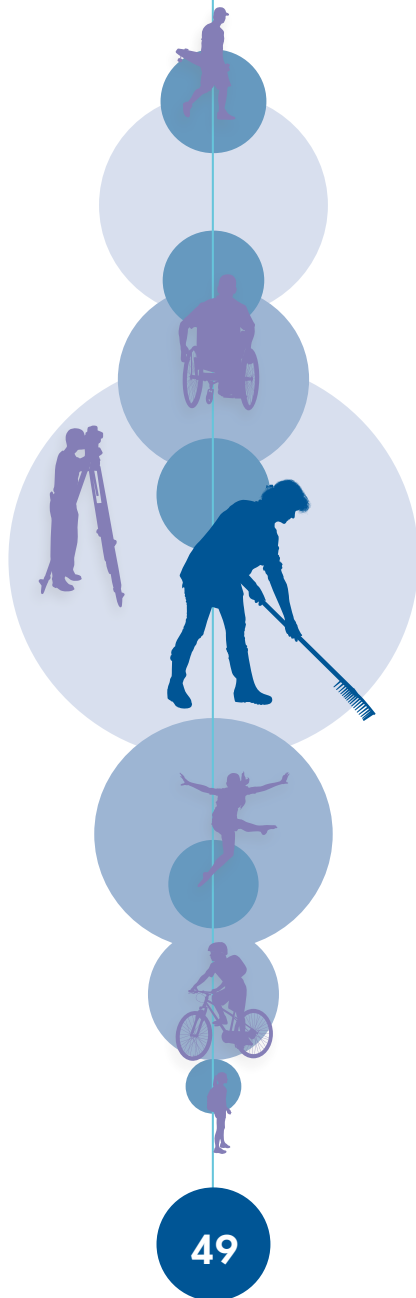
Figure 4: The share of students at ISCED level 3 in vocational programmes

*Source: Eurostat and Unicef Transmonee database*

There is a large variation in the share of those who are following VET programmes. Figure 4 shows this proportion for a range of countries included in this study in comparison with a number of EU countries. The data show that the share of students following vocational programmes is very low in Albania, where the VET system that existed under the communist regime collapsed with the onset of transition in the 1990s.

Box 3: Increasing enrolment in Albanian case study schools

In order to promote equal access for all in the VET system in Albania, eligibility criteria have been limited to the possession of a diploma for students completing the compulsory 9-years of education; a part-time programme without age limits has been introduced; scholarships have been provided for disadvantaged students, e.g. for those who live more than 5 km away from their chosen school, students from poor families, orphans, Roma and Egyptians, individuals with some categories of disability such as visual impairment, and those enrolled in specific profiles such as IT, forestry, veterinary science and construction. In order to increase community awareness of the advantages of VET in employment, the Ministry of Education and Sports and vocational schools carried out promotional campaigns for pupils in primary education, held school open days with students, teachers and business representatives, distributed flyers and school brochures, and held open days for training firms. The new policy initiatives led to a doubling of enrolment in vocational schools during the 2012-2013 Academic Year in the two pilot schools in the study.

Source: Xhumari and Dibra (2013)

In contrast, Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro have maintained their vocational system and have relatively high shares of students enrolled in vocational programmes. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has a somewhat lower share of three fifths of upper-secondary students in vocational programmes, while about two fifths of upper-secondary students follow vocational programmes in Turkey. These data can be compared to the EU-27 average where about a half of upper-secondary students follow vocational programmes.
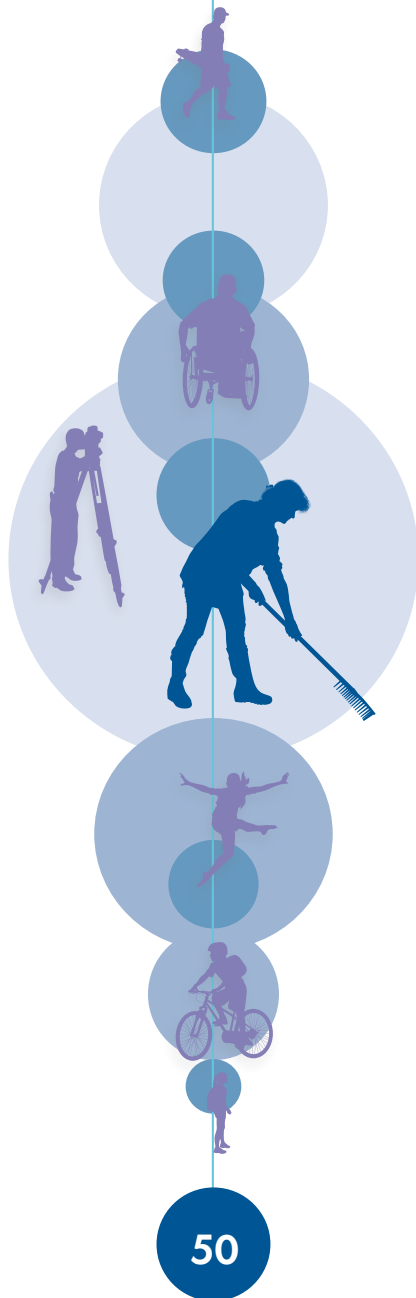
4.3 SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND SELECTION INTO VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

Two types of exclusion can be identified at entry to vocational school: categorical exclusion and selection by ability. The first is based on categorical criteria such as disability or ethnicity. Examples of this seem to be rare. Indeed, a contrary example of positive discrimination was noted in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where Roma children are given an additional margin of 10% on the primary school scores needed to enter secondary school (Mojsoska-Blazevski and Ristovska, 2013). Elsewhere, this form of discrimination was hard to identify. It may be, paradoxically, that this is in fact a pervasive phenomenon; for while few schools admitted to discriminating between students on entry, there was a relatively low participation in VET by Roma and disabled students in most of the schools in the study.

The second form of social exclusion is based on selection by ability in the form of primary school scores, or achievement, or on national entry criteria for all students in some cases. While apparently offering equal opportunity to all students, individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds may be more likely to fail such selection processes and be directed toward schools with lower entry criteria where their social and family background have influenced their achievement in primary school. Often it is the general academic schools that have the higher entry criteria and vocational schools that have lower entry criteria. This can give rise to a social division between general academic schools and the often less well-resourced vocational schools.

Selection into different types of school or different programmes within schools can be a source of social exclusion, reinforcing the social differentiation established by the strong influence of parental background on academic success in primary education. Because of this, children of middle class parents are more likely to enter academic schools, while children of working class parents are more likely to enter vocational schools. In many countries, vocational schools are less well-resourced than academic schools, leading to poorer quality education for lower ability groups, compounded by the fact that the best teachers may avoid teaching in deprived schools (OECD, 2007). Consequently, initial gaps in student performance may widen in streamed systems, increasing inequality in educational outcomes. All this suggests that social exclusion may occur at entry into secondary school and that this may lead to the intergenerational transmission of inequality.[11]

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[11] In addition, within vocational schools, social exclusion may affect disadvantaged groups such as disabled children and students with special needs, as identified in the section on 'experience at school'.
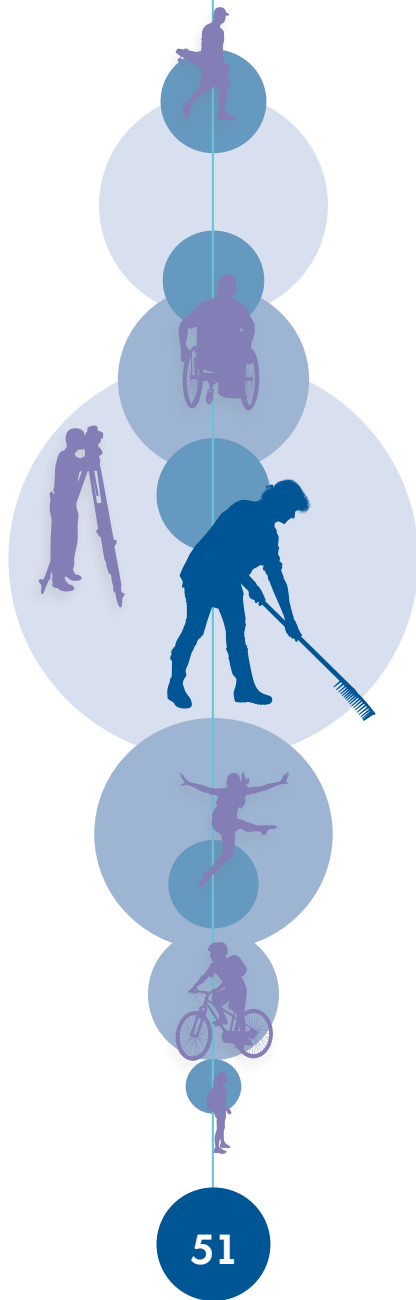
Academic researchers have investigated the extent of intergenerational transmission of inequality in selective systems and much of the evidence supports the view that selection is associated with social exclusion. Meghir and Palme (2005) show that education reforms in Sweden in the 1950s, which replaced selection at age 12 with a comprehensive system, led to improved results for students with unskilled fathers. Selection between schools is nevertheless promoted in some quarters for the benefit it provides to students through interaction with others of equal ability and through the supposed benefits of specialisation (Brunello and Checchi, 2007). Recent research has suggested that school systems that separate students into academic and vocational programmes, whether between or within schools, may better adapt the learning environment to student needs, improve learning by focusing the curriculum, improve achievement where students perform better in groups of similar ability and improve the allocation of school leavers in the labour market (Bol and Van de Werfhorst, 2013). This more positive view of selection into academic and vocational programmes places emphasis on peer group effects and the advantages of specialisation. In this view, disadvantaged young people may benefit from effective VET more than they would from comprehensive education.

In this research project, several country studies found evidence of the effect of social and family background on selection (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia). In Croatia, most of the students in the vocational schools studied were from low-income families, with low parental education, a history of family problems and juvenile offences, often coming from minorities such as Roma or having learning problems or disabilities (Matković, et al., 2013). One in six students in Croatian vocational schools reported having substantial financial difficulties. The report concluded that underprivileged students are concentrated in VET leading to low motivation and low learning outcomes. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, many students on the more practical three-year courses had a parent running a craft business (Branković and Oruc, 2013) and many students are in financial difficulty. In Mostar, for example, the school raises charitable funds to assist students in need. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia also reported that students from poorer families are more likely to enrol in vocational schools (Mojsoska-Blazevski and Ristovska, 2013). In Montenegro, students in more prestigious four-year technical courses tend to come from richer families than those who enrol in the less prestigious three-year courses (Kaludjerović and Mirković, 2013). The authors put the matter succinctly: 'the social background of students is one of the reasons for their low performance in primary schools, which then presents a main barrier for enrolment in certain vocational courses (the more popular four-year courses)'.

In addition, parental education experiences are often passed on to their children. Most often both father (40%) and mother (34%) have secondary VET, while a substantial minority of fathers (21.6%) and mothers (29.6%) have only primary education or less (see Figure 5). Just over one in ten of both fathers and mothers have a university degree. However, the motivation for choosing to attend a vocational school has more to do with material factors than social persuasion (see section 4.2 below).

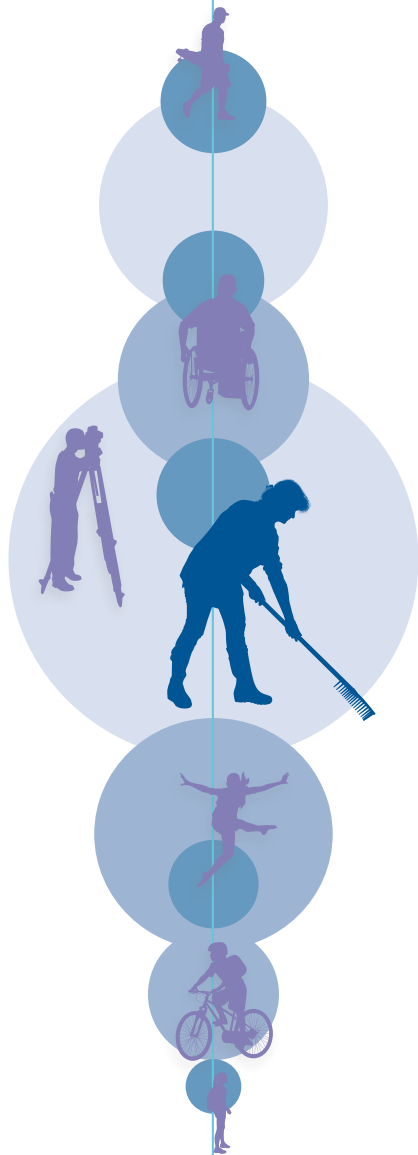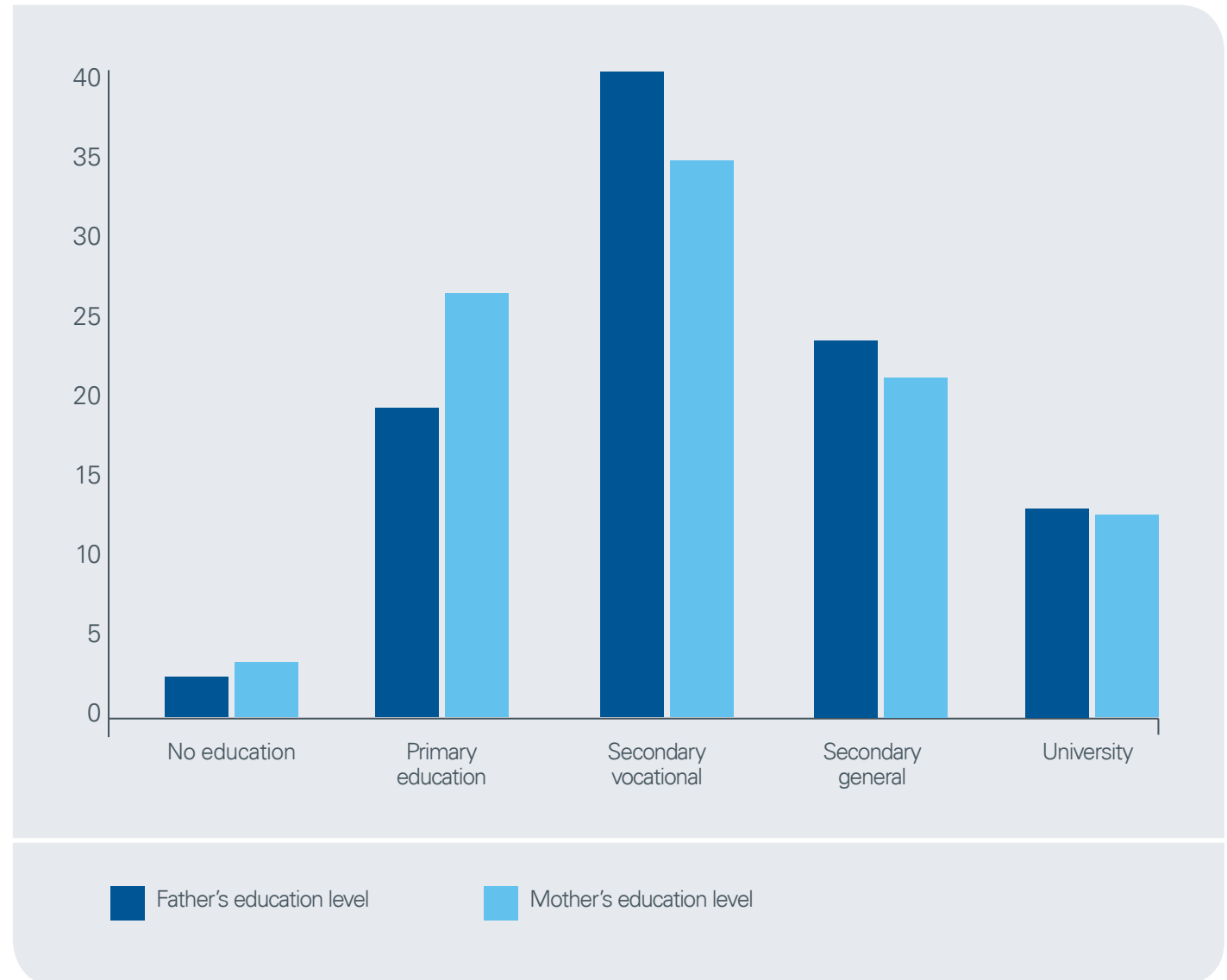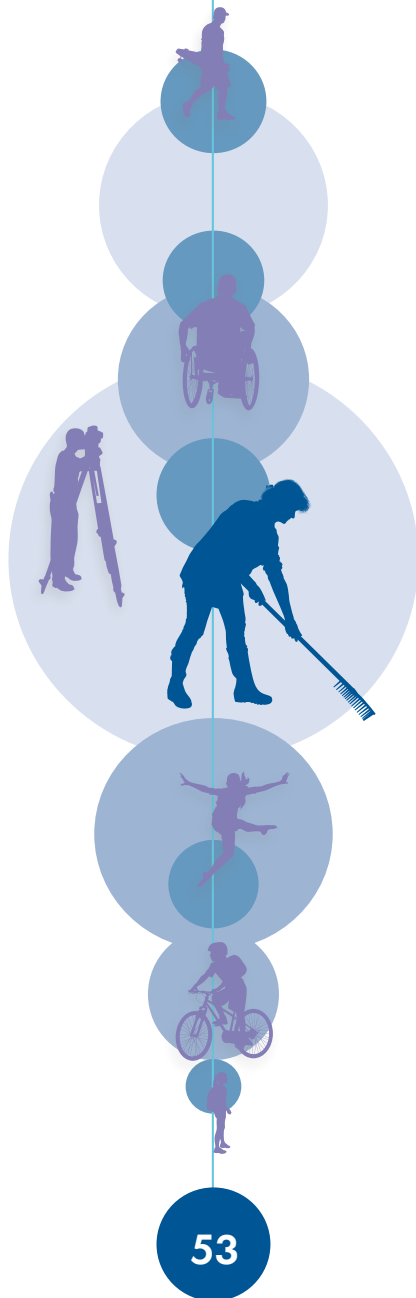**Figure 5: Parental level of education (% of respondents)**

Legend:
- Father's education level (dark blue)
- Mother's education level (light blue)

Categories: No education, Primary education, Secondary vocational, Secondary general, University

There seems to be some evidence of a differential effect from mothers' and fathers' educational experiences. In Israel, students whose mother attended higher education had greater career expectations from VET education, while having an unemployed father was associated with less family pressure to attend vocational school, indicating perhaps a preference for the child to go out to work.

In poor rural regions suffering from demographic decline, there are often empty places in vocational schools and, in such cases, selection by ability is often suspended and all students who apply to such schools are accepted (HR, ME). In Kosovo, schools are less likely to select girls, students with disabilities and students with learning difficulties. However, within schools, since there is no formal system of streaming into ability groups, all students have equal opportunities to participate in the courses offered.

Children with special educational needs are also sometimes selected into separate special schools for disabled children or children from minority groups and these are sometimes under-resourced. Inclusive education seeks to combat this process by including such children in mainstream schooling. Some examples of inclusive education policies have been observed in our case study countries, often with limited success due to underfunding of support services, while children with special educational needs (SEN) often continue to be taught in special schools. Tomlinson (2012) observed that the scope of those defined as having special educational needs has varied at different times in history and that those defined as having special needs are almost always from the lower classes or minority groups. Middle class parents have managed to avoid their children being stigmatised as SEN children, and have fought, often successfully, for additional funding in mainstream schools to deal with such cases.

Gender biases are apparent in several countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia). In Albania, less than one in six students is female, as many courses are considered to lead to 'male occupations'. Similarly, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is a bias toward boys, with two of the three schools in the study having mainly male students. In Montenegro, some courses are typically considered as 'male' or 'female', which has an influence on a student's choice of course. In Serbia, only one third of students on three-year courses are female, while there are equal numbers of boys and girls in four-year courses.
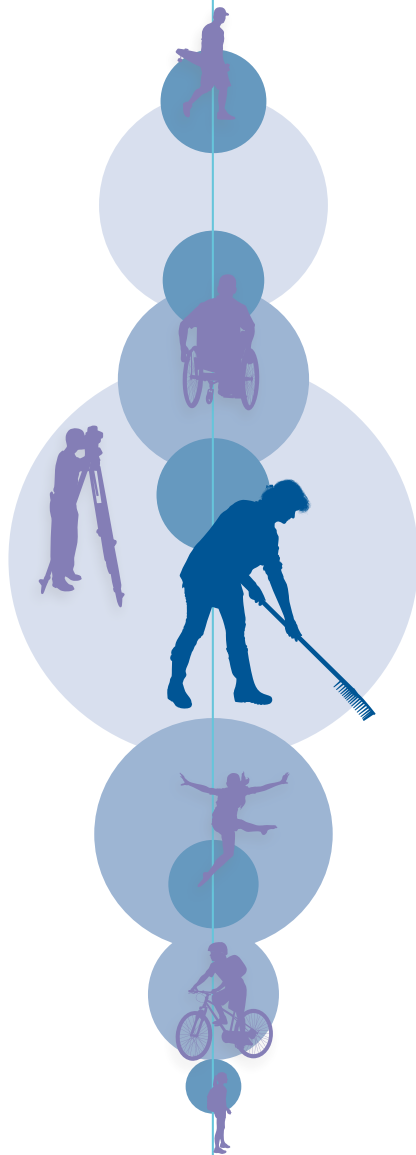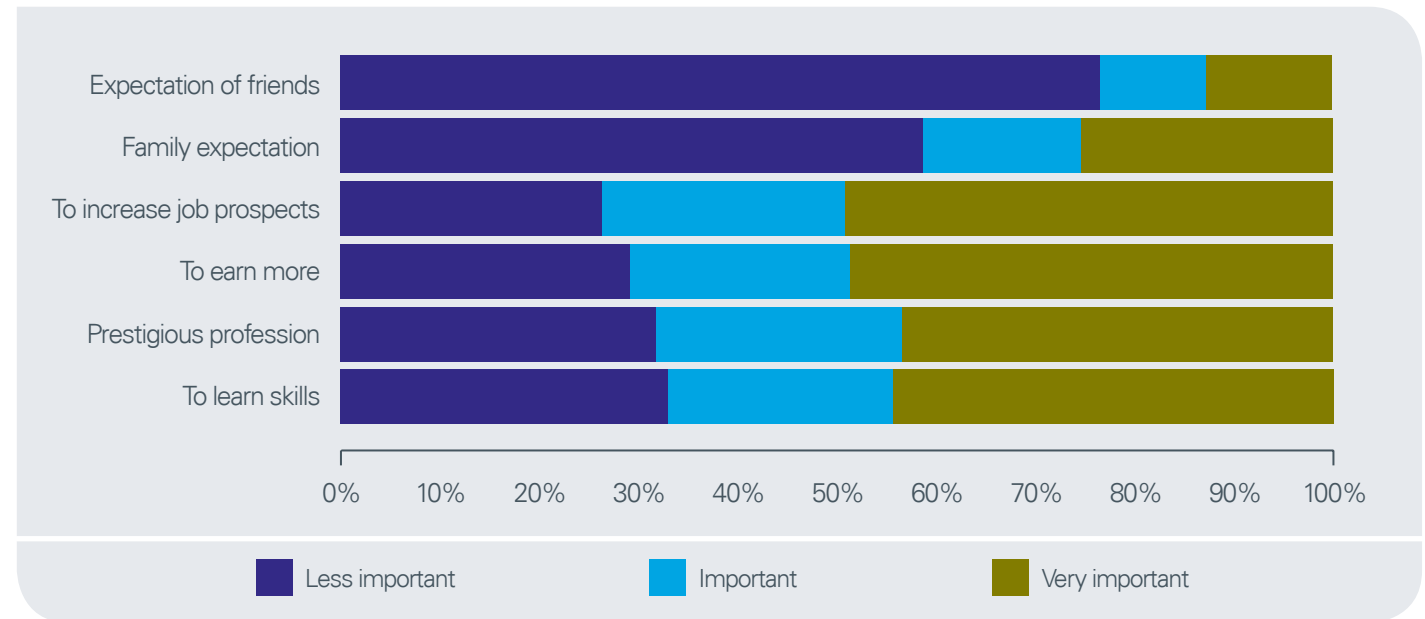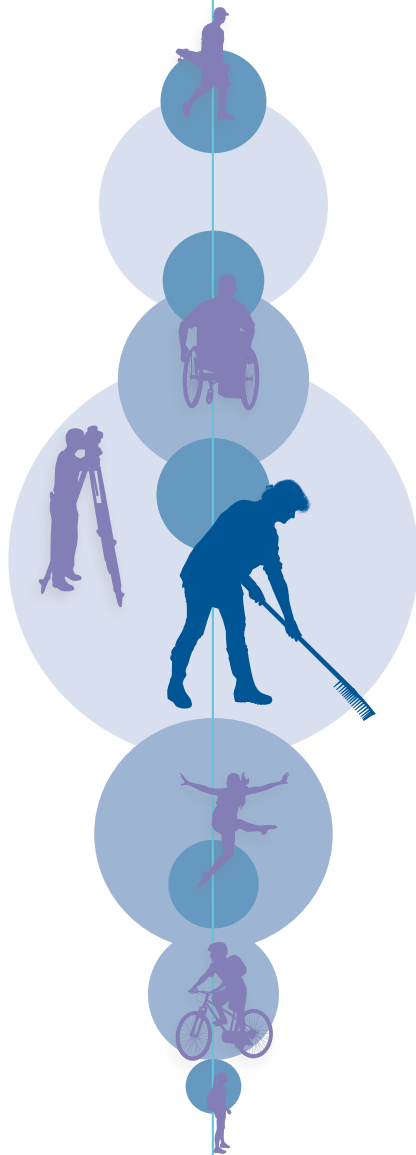
4.4 CHOICE OF SCHOOL TYPE

Despite the constraints of selection by ability into school type, students and their families often have a choice of which type of school or programme to attend. Students seem to make clear choices about the type of school they wish to attend and the type of courses that they wish to follow. However, as was shown above, the actual choice is often determined by success at primary school, which is in turn related to social background in many cases.

Students choose schools for a variety of reasons. The student survey revealed that the most important reason cited by students for attending vocational school was to earn more money in the future and to increase the chance of finding a job; these were cited as 'very important' or 'extremely important' reasons by almost a half of students, while about two fifths said that obtaining a prestigious profession and learning skills for a future job was very or extremely important (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Importance of reasons for choice of vocational school**

Note: responses are recoded with less important combining responses of 'not at all important', 'a little important' and 'quite important'.

Choice of school attended

Students exercise choice in the selection of their school. The survey asked about the students' choice of the school they attended. The reasons for the choice of the specific school attended were varied, with the most important being future employment opportunities, which half of all students cited as being extremely important for them, while 47% cited further study opportunities (see Figure 7). Just under two fifths said that liking the courses on offer was extremely important for their choice. In contrast only one fifth said that the reputation of the school was extremely important, and just over one tenth said that the cost of travel or distance to travel to school was extremely important.

Figure 7: Importance of reasons for choice of school attended (importance of various reasons, %)
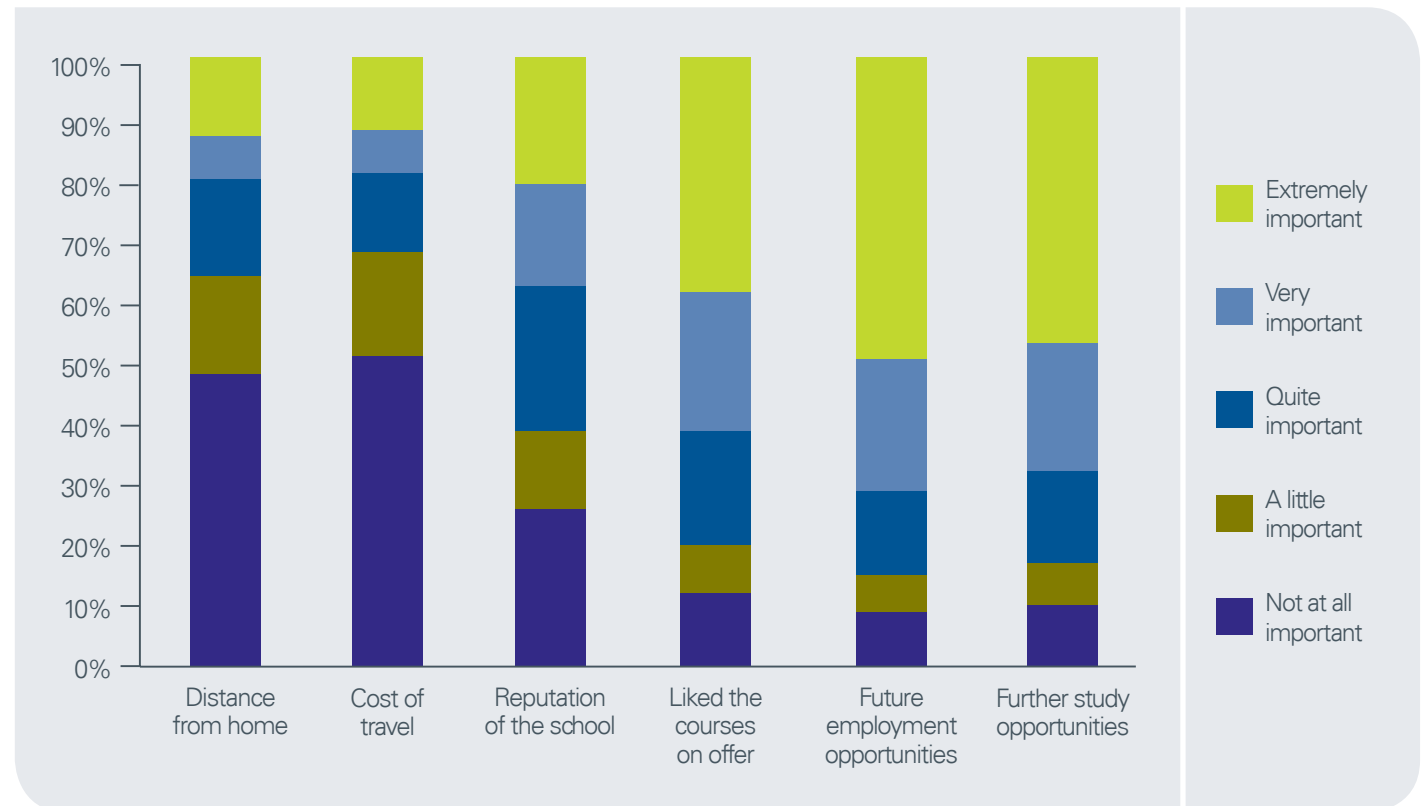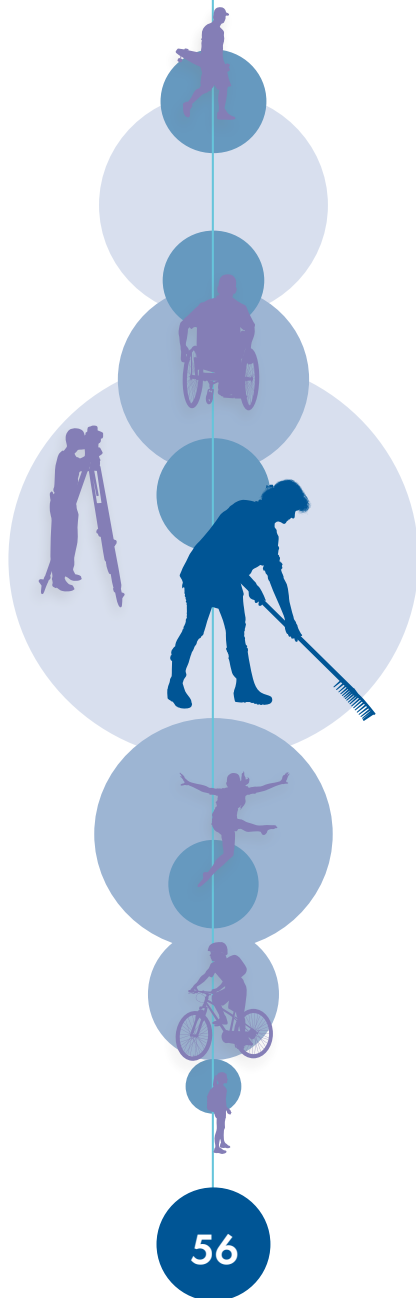
There are also substantial differences across countries in the reasons for the particular school attended. The greatest difference is related to further study opportunities with a mean score for this reason being highest in Kosovo and lowest in Croatia. In both Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, students scored higher on employment opportunities than study opportunities.

Students sometimes choose their school in a joint decision that included their family or friends, and sometimes on their own. Overall, the student survey reveals that just over two fifths of students chose their school on their own (43%) while almost one fifth of cases the choice was made only by the family with no say by the student (18%). A similar proportion of students (17%) made the choice of school jointly with the family, while just over one tenth also involved their friends in their choice. The degree of support that students have in choosing their school has a significant impact on their school experience. Students who make their choice together with their family or friends are more likely to be happy at school than others. Over two fifths (43.8%) of students who chose in this way are happy compared to 36.8% who made the choice on their own (χ^2=32.4, p<0.01). The effect of social background on choice of school seems to be quite widespread. For example, Dustmann (2004) found poor parents in Germany were more likely to direct their children to vocational schools, leading to intergenerational immobility in educational achievement.

The social influences on the choices that students made in deciding which particular school to attend differ across countries. Students are much more likely to choose a school on their own in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and least likely to do so in Albania and Israel (see Figure 8).
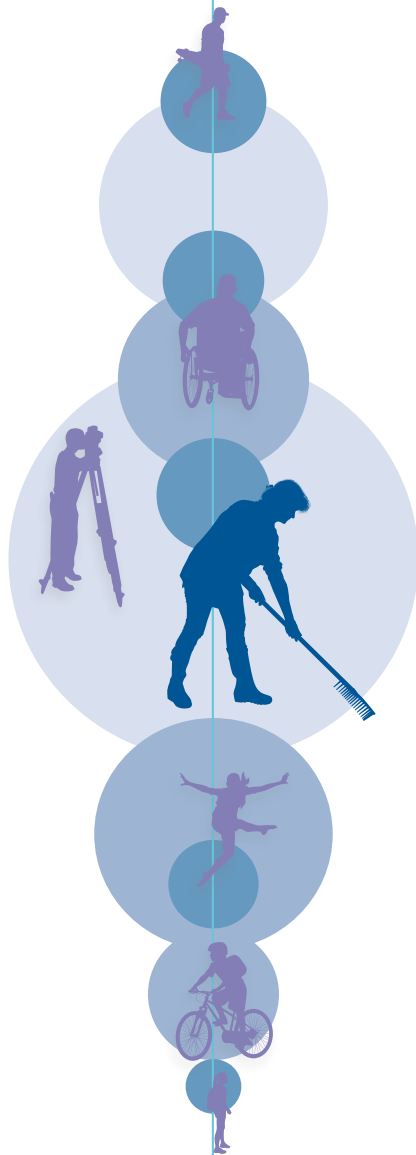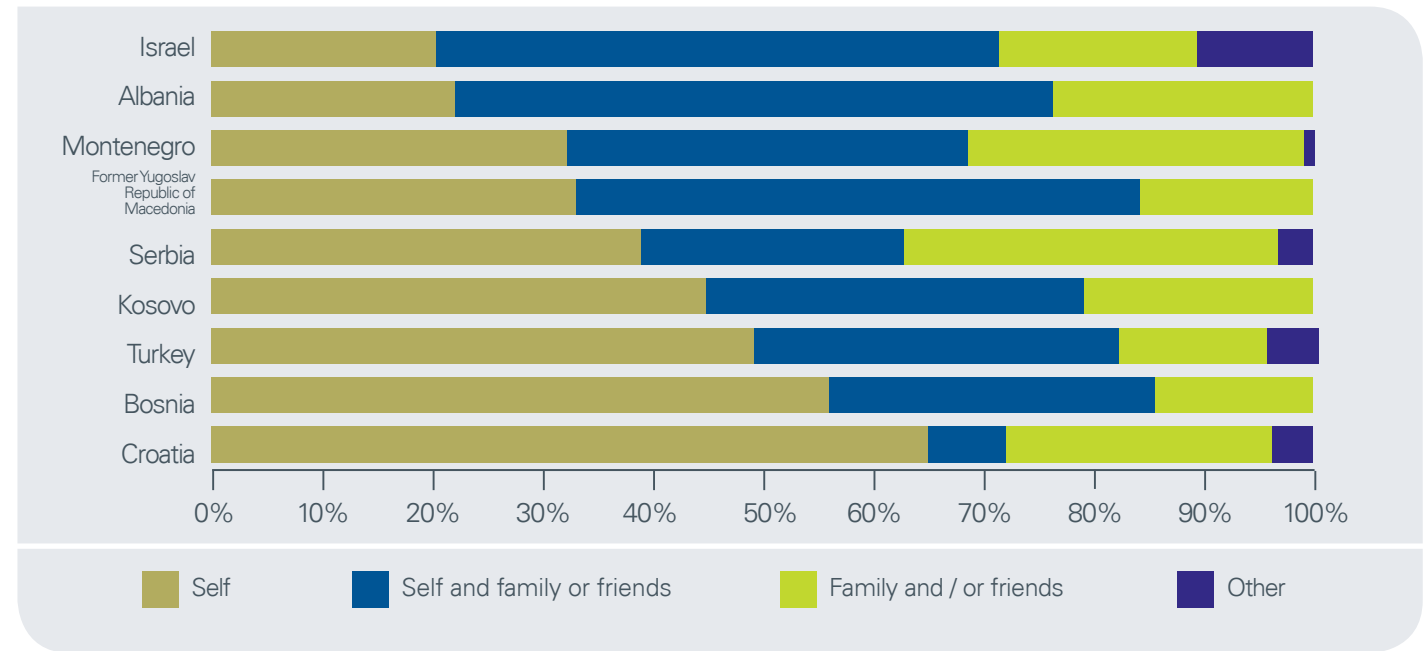
Figure 8: Choice of school by self or with help of family and friends by country

The country case studies also provided revealing findings in this respect. In Israel, Haredi students seem to have stronger preferences in choosing their specific school and courses (Yair et al., 2013). They are more likely to actively choose vocational school than are the general students. Demand for a place at some vocational schools is strong due to their excellent results, and there is competition for places at such popular schools. In Israel, 'General' students saw academic schools as more likely to support their career, while Haredi students tend to choose a vocational school to learn skills for their future career. In Turkey, there is especially high demand at the Boys' Industrial High School in Istanbul and Girls' School in Ankara (Sayan and Yavçan, 2013). Schools that are less popular attract students who fail to enrol in the more popular schools, and are often seen as providing low quality education.

In Montenegro, as in other former Yugoslav countries, students tend to choose four-year courses over three-year courses, as the former allow them the possibility to continue their studies at university (Kaludjerović and Mirković, 2013). Correspondingly, enrolment in three-year courses tends to be relatively low, even though they may provide the practical skills that would enable a student to find employment at the end of the course.
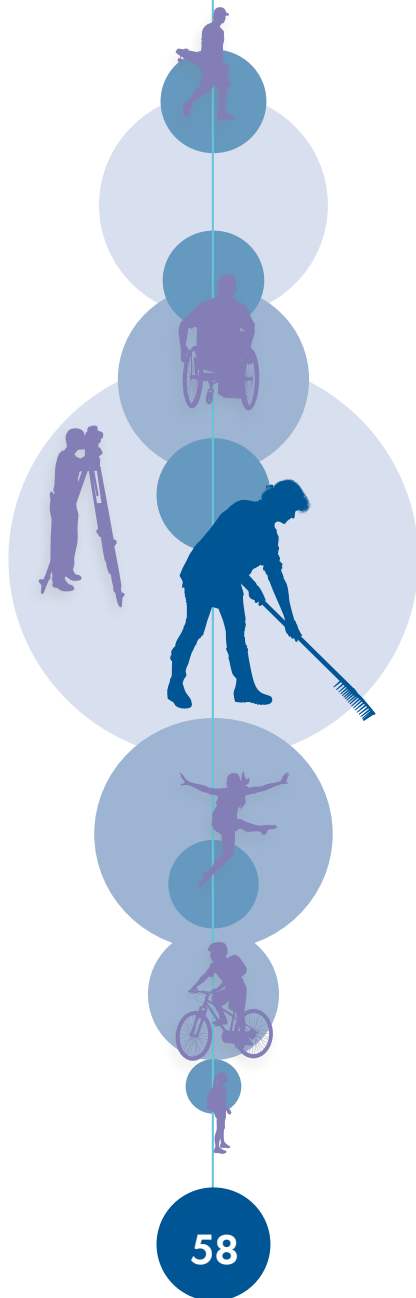
In Croatia, student choice is driven by 'fashion' and the popularity of the school or course (Matković, et al., 2013). Only 30-50% of students on courses for tailors, horticultural workers and bakers claimed these were their first choice compared to between 65-88% for other courses. In Bosnia it was reported that children without parental care are often 'guided' into VET (Kaludjerović and Mirković, 2013).

4.5 CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Enrolment in upper-secondary VET education is falling in most of South Eastern European countries partly due to population decline, while enrolment has been increasing in Israel, Kosovo and Turkey. In most countries, entry into upper-secondary education is selective. Selective education systems are thought to provide a powerful opening for the transmission of social exclusion. Several country studies found evidence of the strong effect of social and family background on school selection and choice on educational outcomes. Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be channelled into vocational school compared with children of middle class parents who are more likely to enter academic schools. Vocational schools tend to be less well-resourced than academic schools, leading to a low quality education that may widen initial gaps in student performance, increasing the inequality in educational outcomes. Gender biases in the choice of school or the choice of course are apparent in several countries. Although some constraints are placed on selection by ability into the type of school, students and their families often have a choice as to which type of school or programme to attend. Students seem to make clear choices about the type of school they wish to attend and the type of courses that they wish to follow. Where they have a choice, the student survey revealed that the most important reason cited by students for attending vocational school was to earn more money in the future and to increase the chance of finding a job. Students also exercise choice in the selection of their school. Students sometimes choose their school together with their family or friends, and sometimes on their own. Students who make their choice together with their family or friends are more likely to be happy at school than the others.

A number of recommendations for policy and practice follow from the findings derived from the country reports and student surveys.

- Vocational secondary schools should improve cooperation with primary schools, municipalities and local employment offices to improve the selection of disadvantaged students;
- Schools should improve efforts to attract marginalised groups of students to vocational education, including students with disabilities and learning difficulties, students from rural areas and students from ethnic minorities;
- Selection into upper-secondary schools in a way that leads to separate institutions for high achievers and low achievers should be dispensed with. Putting students of different abilities together has a variety of beneficial effects for both students and teachers.
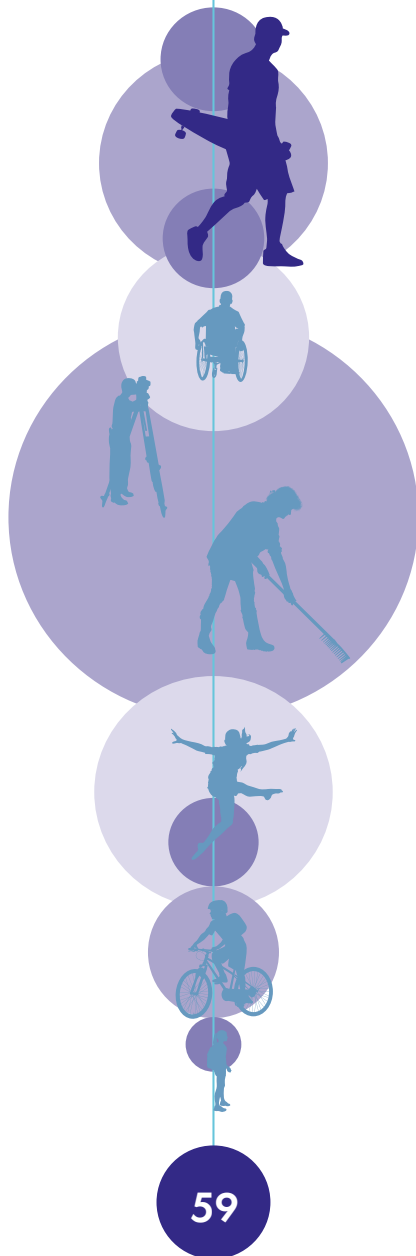
5.0 EXPERIENCE AT SCHOOL

This chapter concentrates on the second stage of social exclusion within VET systems, in the form of the student's experience at school and in the work placement or apprenticeship. After a brief review of the literature on school effectiveness, section 5.1 summarises the findings of the student survey relating to their characteristics and family background, emphasising the influence of family circumstances on student involvement in the learning process. Section 5.2 addresses the issue of the limited resources available to support student learning in some schools. Section 5.3 analyses teaching quality and teaching methods, showing how deficiencies in these negatively affect the learning experience of some students. Section 5.4 shows that vocational school curricula are often out of date and lag behind improvements in technological changes in the work environment, while section 5.5 addresses the issue of the appropriateness of the skills taught in vocational schools. Finally, section 5.6 analyses the problem of access to work experience or apprenticeships in training companies, which is shown to be seriously inadequate in some countries.

'School effectiveness' has been explored extensively in the literature, assessing the extent to which schools add to the knowledge and skills of the student over and above the effect of social background and natural ability (Goldstein, 1997; Teddlie and Reynolds, 1999), but only rarely do such studies adopt a whole-school approach that views schools as political and cultural systems in interaction with the local community and the local skill development system. This broad whole-school approach recognises a range of issues including: the importance of teacher-pupil relations and pupil-pupil relations; behavioural approaches to discipline and school-wide approaches to the resolution of bullying and the promotion of student well-being, happiness and social inclusion; the relationship of the school with local businesses; the living conditions and social background of students; mechanisms of school governance that involve the wider community including parents and; the labour market connections of vocational schools (Gorard, 2010).
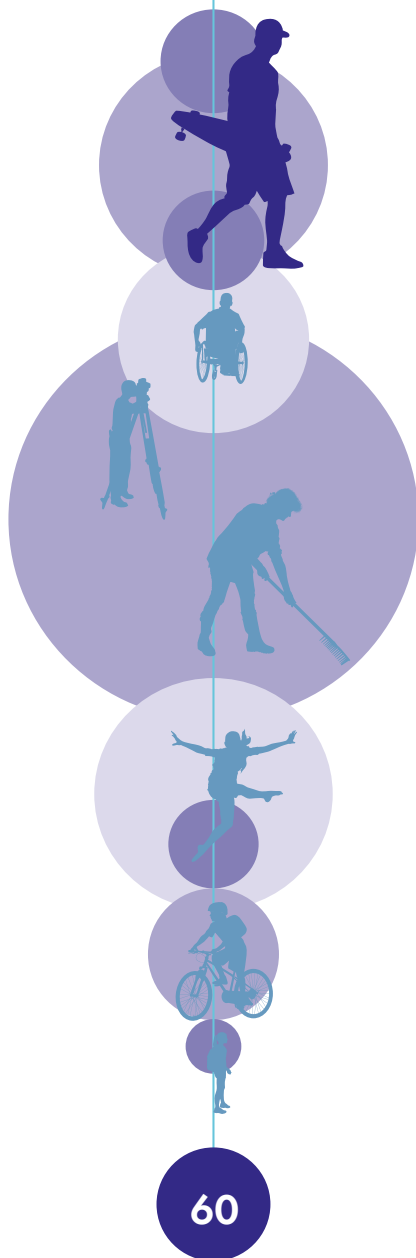
The resources to which a vocational school has access are likely to be an important determinant of the student's educational experience, as are teaching quality, teaching methods and teacher subject knowledge and experience of working in the occupational area, all of which can affect the student's experience at school (Chevalier et al., 2005). Teacher quality seems to be more closely related to the length of teaching experience than to initial teacher training, although the quality of formal training in the subject being taught is also critical (Harris and Sass, 2011). The importance of teachers' experience suggests that policies designed to improve the retention rates of young teachers could be an important way to improve teaching quality. Other evidence suggests that teacher quality may be higher in schools with students from wealthier families than those with students from poor families (Sass et al., 2012) due to the self-selection of good teachers into 'better' schools. This suggests that policies that support and encourage the transfer of more experienced teachers to schools with poor students may be an effective way to raise teacher quality in such schools. Poor teaching practices may demoralise students and affect their learning processes. The issue is especially important in vocational schools, which tend to have more students from poor families than other schools. The experience of schooling is also related to the way in which the school is ordered and managed. Sugai and Horner (2002) emphasise the importance of a preventive, whole-school approach to the behavioural problems of difficult students.

The way a vocational school is governed also affects the general atmosphere and ethos of the school and hence the schools ability to offer an inclusive educational experience. Preston and Green (2008) recommended that representatives from socially excluded groups should be included in VET governance structures. More generally, countries have engaged in tackling the issue of governance by building partnerships. Leney et al. (2004) found positive benefits from partnerships between VET stakeholders, including VET institutions, companies, Chambers and sectoral bodies, social partners and regional and local government in many EU countries. However, disadvantaged social groups such as migrants and people with disabilities rarely participate in VET governance (McCoshan et al. 2007: 154-156) and there are few instances of teachers and students being included either. Reinforcing institutional links between schools, employers and social agents is considered one of the key governance challenges in building effective VET systems (World Bank 2005). In Bosnia and Croatia, Pavlović and Sarić (2012) found that parents hold negative attitudes toward inclusive education due to a combination of insufficient appropriate information, a lack of initiative and resources in schools and the unwillingness of teachers to adopt inclusive education approaches. They conclude that there is an urgent need to provide more inclusive education in view of the evident benefits to students.
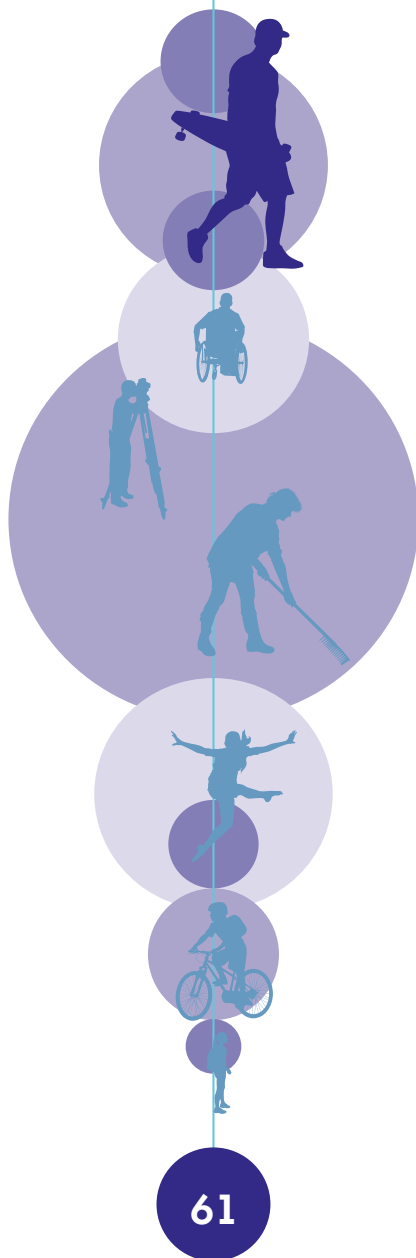
5.1 STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

The student survey revealed that almost all students live in the parental home with only a small minority living elsewhere (dormitory places are available in some countries for students who would have a long way to travel). About one in ten students are from a single-parent family, mostly living with their mother. In just over four fifths of cases, one or both parents go out to work. Most often this is the father (45% of students reported this), but one fifth of students also stated that their mother goes out to work, while just over one third (36%) reported both parents working. Of the parents not going out to work, just over half of both mothers and fathers were unemployed. Most of the other fathers were classed as 'retired' (44% of those who do not go out to work), while most other mothers were 'homemakers' (38%). A significantly higher number of students (44.4%) with parent(s) who do not go out to work (χ^2=8.5, p<0.05) reported being happy at school compared to those whose parents do go out to work (36.7%), suggesting that the support of the parent at home may be an important factor in success at school.

Secondary vocational students commonly expect to receive study support from their parents as well as having formal education at school. The student survey showed that most students have a desk at which they are able to study at home and other forms of home study support (see Figure 9). However, almost one fifth do not have their own room in which to study, while over one quarter do not have another quiet place to study. One fifth of students do not have any books for homework, while just over one tenth do not have access to a computer at home. While a proportion of VET education is essentially practical and takes place in workshops at school or in work placements or apprenticeships in a training company, there is nevertheless an important element of traditional study that requires the use of traditional study periods for more theoretical learning. Although this approach is perhaps more significant for students studying at general academic schools, it is also relevant for students studying at vocational schools, especially for those who are experiencing exclusion within the school as a result of inadequate equipment, buildings and teaching methods.
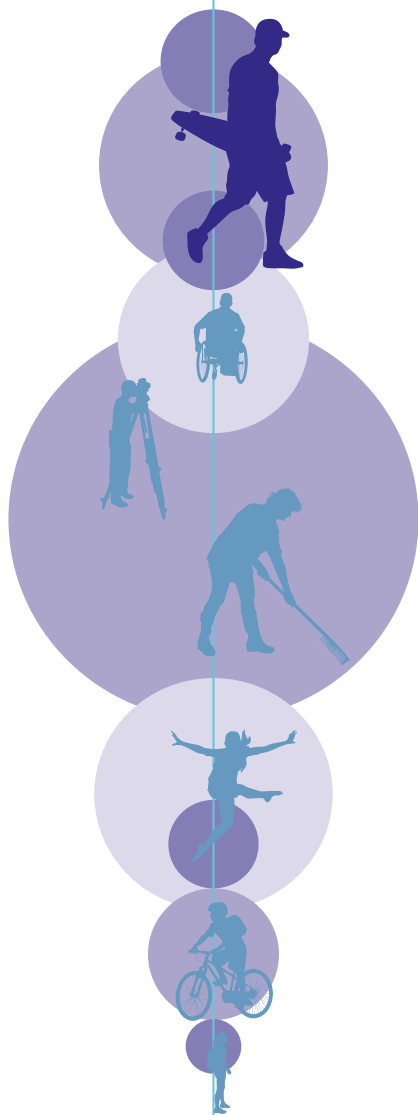
Figure 9: Home study support

	Has a desk to study	Has own room	Has another quiet place place to study	Has books to help with school work	Has a computer to use for school work
No	9%	18%	28%	21%	13%

Legend: Yes (light blue), No (dark blue)
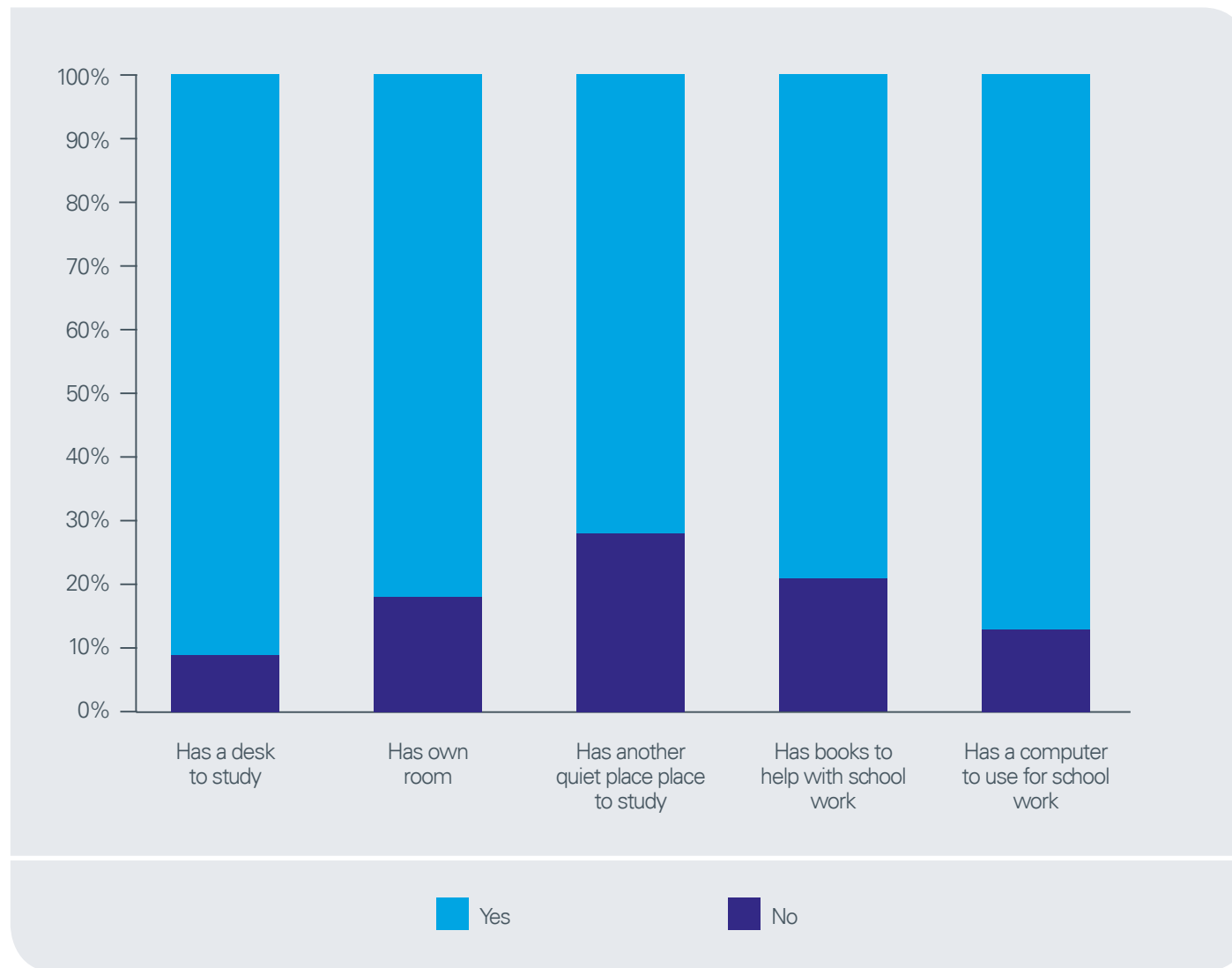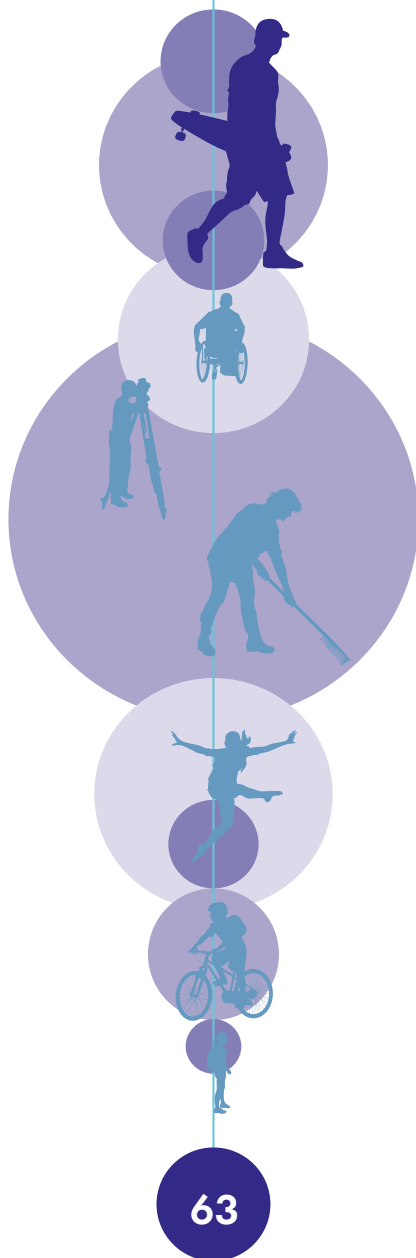
The student survey revealed significant differences in the level of home study support between countries (see Figure 10). Over one quarter of students in Turkey and over one fifth of students in Israel and Bosnia and Herzegovina do not have their own room in which to study. In Turkey and Croatia over two fifths do not have a quiet place to study at home, a problem that affects more than one fifth of students in most other countries too. In Kosovo, over two fifths of students do not have their own books to support their studies and the same is true for over a quarter of students in Croatia, Israel and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In Albania, a quarter of students do not have their own computer and two fifths have no internet connection at home; a figure nearly equalled by Turkey (27%).

Table 4: Home study deprivation by country (%)

Country	No room	No desk	No quiet place	No books	No computer	No internet
Kosovo	13%	10%	22%	43%	9%	9%
Croatia	19%	8%	42%	28%	15%	15%
Israel	22%	10%	23%	28%	18%	13%
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	16%	17%	32%	24%	7%	12%
Turkey	27%	13%	44%	18%	17%	27%
Serbia	10%	5%	27%	14%	13%	15%
Bosnia	23%	6%	20%	14%	4%	4%
Montenegro	15%	7%	27%	9%	11%	12%
Albania	14%	3%	11%	7%	25%	40%
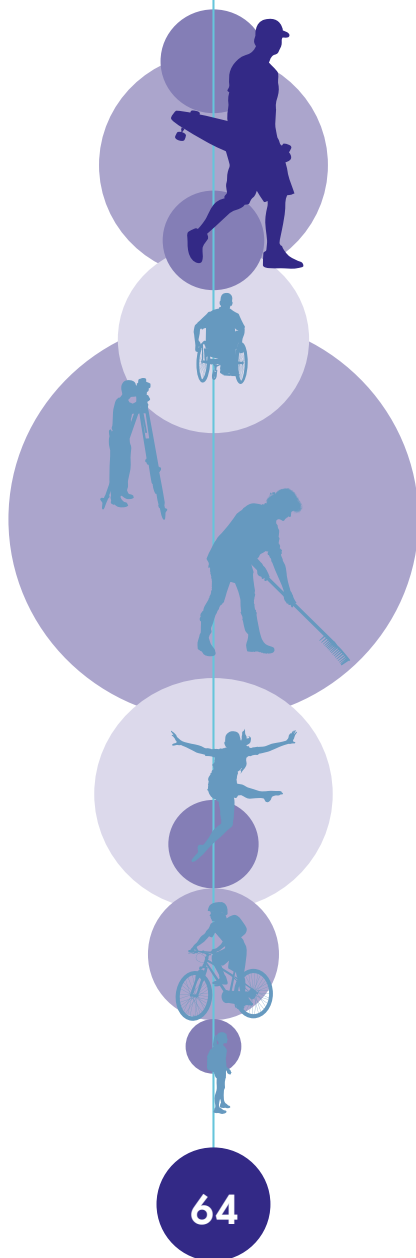
When analysing social exclusion as a characteristic of social background, we identify students who have neither parent going out to work. Children of such parents are significantly deprived in their study support at home. Over a third of such students do not have a quiet place to study compared to a quarter of those whose parents do go out to work (χ^2=6.3, p<0.05). Over a quarter of such students (27.1%) do not have access to an internet connection at home compared to just one in seven (14.0%) of students whose parents go out to work (χ^2=37.2, p<0.01) and similar proportions do not have an internet connection.

Figure 10: Parental work status and lack of home study support


Parents do not work Parents work
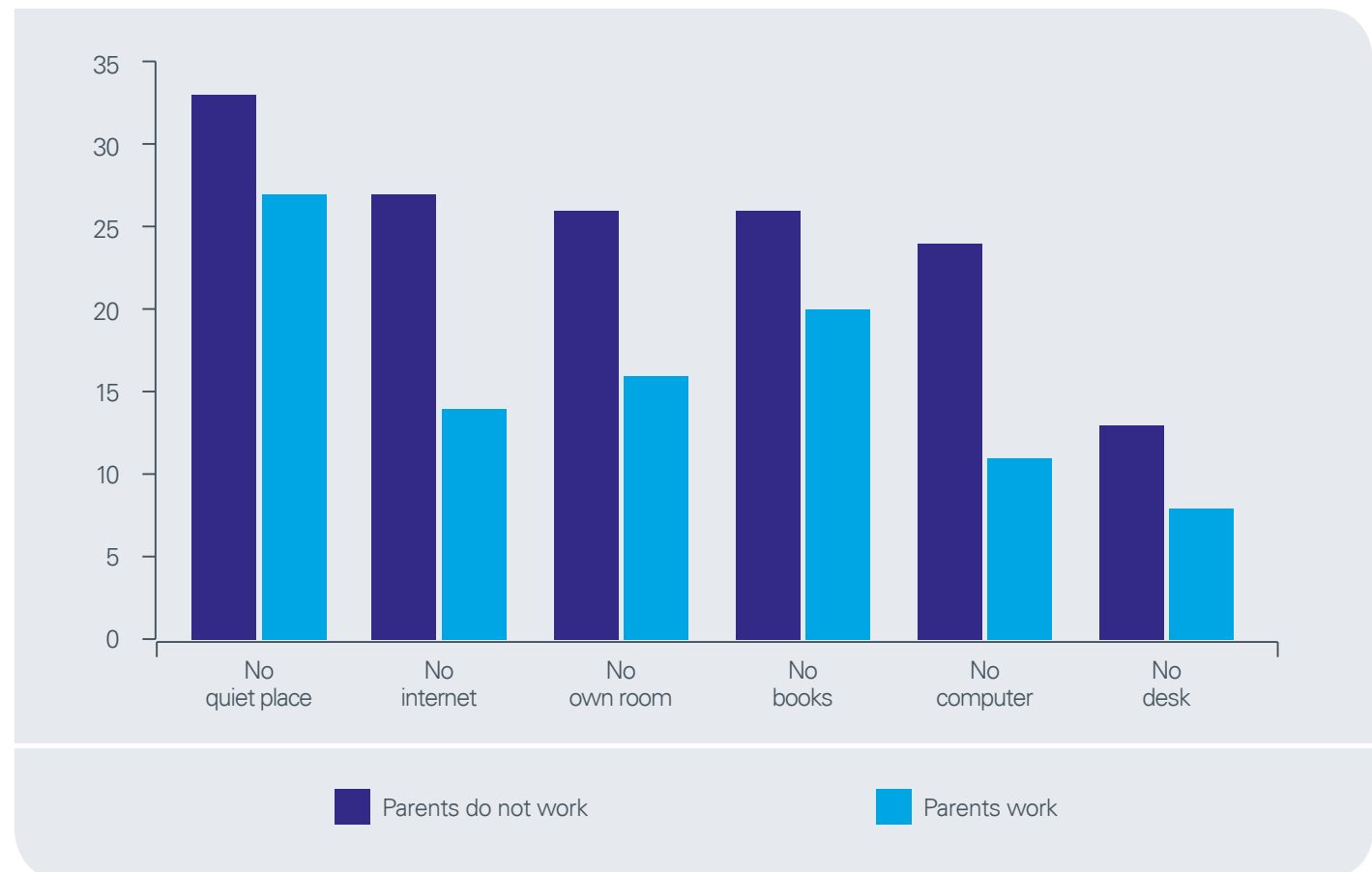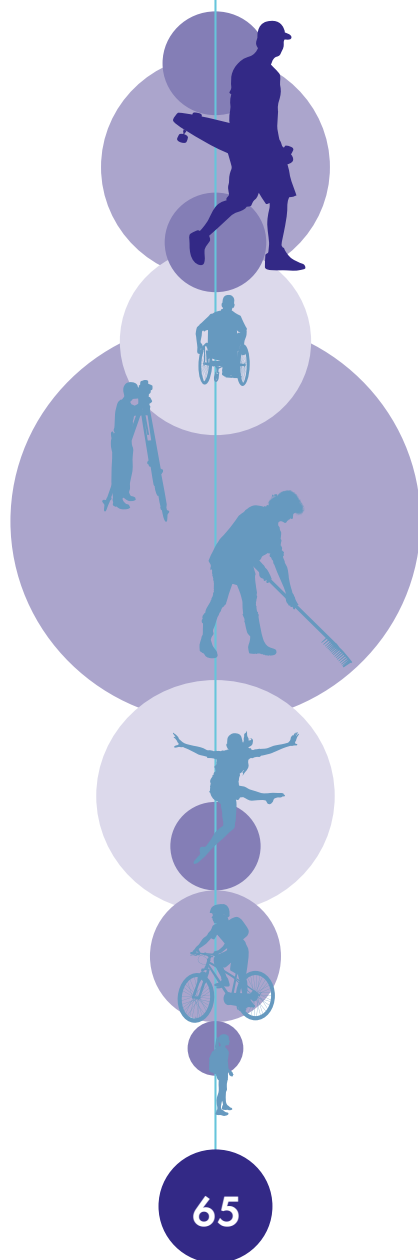
Home study support has a significant effect on school experience (see Figure 11). Significantly more students without a home study desk report being very unhappy with their school (36.6% compared to 28.8% with a home study desk 16.8% [χ^2=7.1, p<0.05]). Similar effects are found in relation to whether a student has a quiet place to study (χ^2=19.5, p<0.01) or has books to help with schoolwork (χ^2=8.0, p<0.05).

Most students in the case study schools seem to be broadly satisfied with their vocational education. On a scale of 1 to 10, the mean score on a question about happiness in school was 7.0, with a range from 8.4 in Kosovo to 6.4 in Turkey. Satisfaction with the school experience varies quite strongly across schools. Some schools stand out as well-performing: 77% of the students at the 11 Marsi school in Kosovo report that they are happy with their school, compared to just 16% of the students in the Ankara boys' school in Turkey.

5.2 SCHOOL RESOURCES AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

On the whole, most schools in the case study seemed to be working with out-dated and inadequate equipment apart from a few exceptional schools that are highly regarded in terms of status, learning opportunities and labour market outcomes (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia). Schools lack the financial resources to deal with this situation. On the whole, students are not very impressed with the quality of school buildings or equipment provided. Almost three fifths of the students say that 'much' or 'very much' improvement is needed in school equipment (58.7%), while almost a half (45.7%) say the same for school buildings. The condition of school buildings is an important factor in student satisfaction. Two fifths of students who say that 'no' improvement is needed in school buildings are happy, compared to just over one third of students who say that 'very much' improvement is needed (χ^2=41.3, p<0.01).

In Albania, donor organisations have stepped in to provide some equipment in the absence of state resources (Xhumari and Dibra, 2013) and buildings are also inadequate, especially in relation to access for disabled students. A similar situation was reported in Serbia (Maksimović and Bratić, 2013)> One school in Albania stated it did not have any form of heating. At the other end of the scale, some schools in Bosnia have been able to equip several smart classrooms with up-to-date computer technology (Branković and Oruc, 2013) and the Secondary Electro-Technical School in Sarajevo has sufficient modern technology for students to gain practical experience and be competitive in the labour market after graduation. Students are well aware of the deficiencies in buildings and equipment. In Serbia, more than half of all respondents to the student survey considered that 'much' or 'very much' improvement is needed to school buildings, while more than two thirds saw a great need for the improvement of the equipment they use. Schools lack the financial resources to deal with this situation. In the former Yugoslav Republic of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, schools have no financial power to provide equipment on their own meaning that they are reliant on the support of the central or local government, which does not always come on time, and on donor support. One school in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has devised an ingenious way to circumvent this situation (see Box 4).
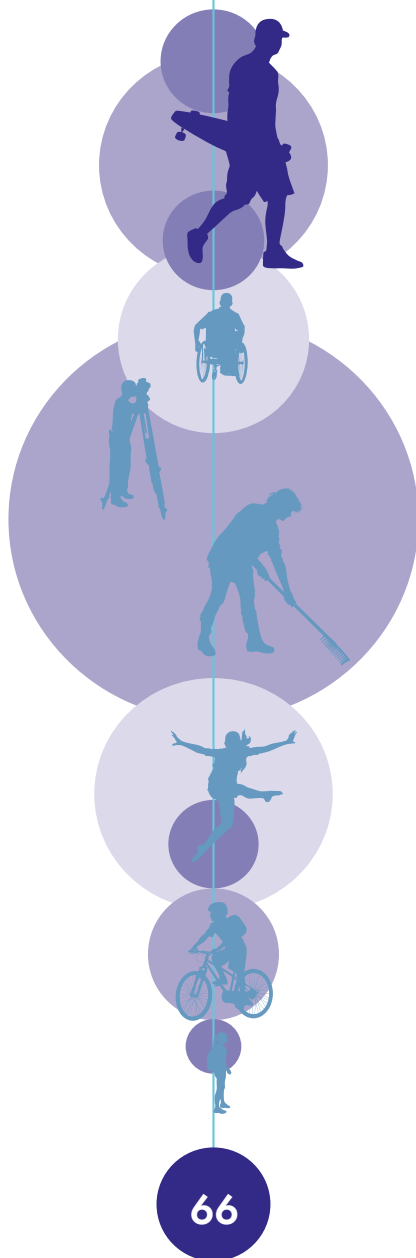
Box 4: Boro Petrusevski school

The Boro Petrusevski school is running several of its own businesses so that the students can experience work in real businesses even in the case where there is lack of interested companies to take on the students for practical lessons. This is considered to be an advantage by the school as in addition to the education role that they provide for the students, their income-generating role gives the school greater financial independence, so that it can invest more in infrastructure, teacher training, student activities and developing new projects and programmes, thereby creating a more suitable, open-minded and motivated school environment. The practice of income generation is rare among the secondary schools in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. A USAID project 'from virtual to real business' supported attempts to develop similar school businesses and provided them with proper training and with appropriate and up-to-date equipment. However, when schools tried to convert their virtual businesses into real ones, in most cases they faced legal barriers and were unable to complete the projects.

Source: Mojsoska-Blazevski and Ristovska (2013)

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, special attempts have been made to integrate the Albanian minority into secondary education, although the school practices adopted to foster multiculturalism are mainly funded through donor projects and are approached through extracurricular activities. In practical terms however, these attempts at a multicultural approach to inclusion are often declarative rather than substantive (Mojsoska-Blazevski and Ristovska, 2013).
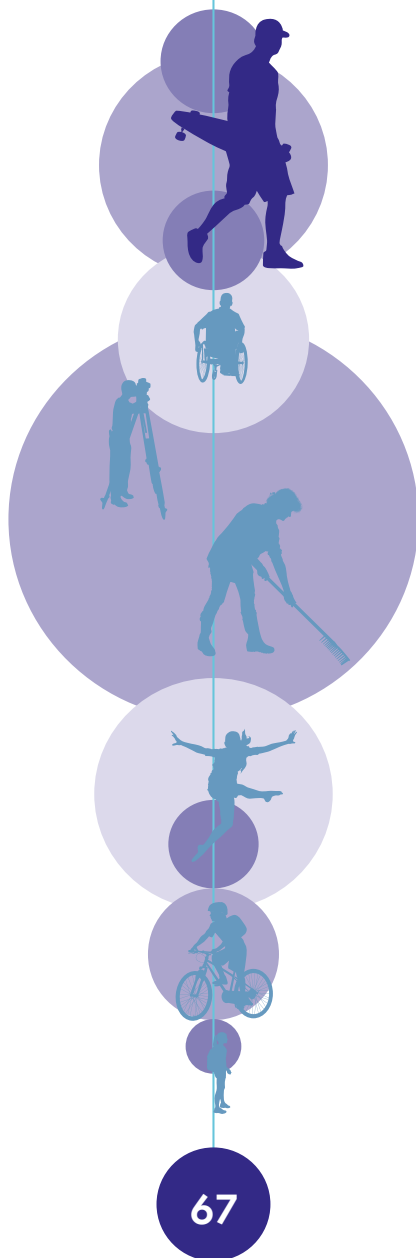
5.3 THE LEARNING PROCESS

Most students in the case study schools seem to be broadly satisfied with their vocational education. In Croatia, although there are occasional conflicts in schools (for example bullying of those from rural areas) there is a general perception that the case study schools are relatively safe environments where bullying ranked as the least prominent of pupil-related issues in the teacher questionnaire (Matković, et al., 2013). In Serbia, almost two thirds of students are more than moderately satisfied with how much they learn at school and believe that it constitutes a good foundation for the future, while most students believe that the knowledge they gain at school will be useful for them in finding a job in the future (Maksimović and Bratić, 2013).

On the whole, interpersonal relationships in schools are good. The student survey showed that most students found teachers welcoming and generally friendly when they began their schooling, but a minority of just over one fifth of students did not (22.3%) and a fifth of students also experienced some form of bullying at school (20.3%)[12]. Teachers were reported to be friendly or very friendly by two thirds of students (63.5%) while a small minority (17.6%) found teachers to be 'unfriendly' or 'very' unfriendly. Most students classed other students as more friendly than teachers, with almost two thirds saying other students are 'friendly' or 'very friendly' (61.6%) while only 15% find other students to be 'unfriendly' or 'very unfriendly'. Bullying has a significant effect on student satisfaction with the school (see Figure 11), for while two fifths of those who do not experience bullying are happy at school, only a quarter (25.7%) of those who experience bullying are happy (χ^2=78.2, p<0.01). Conversely, the friendliness of other students is a good predictor of student satisfaction at school, with almost a half (49.3%) of students who find other students 'very friendly' being happy with their school, against only a quarter (26.7%) of those who find other students 'very unfriendly' (χ^2=179.9, p<0.01). Some aspects of school atmosphere differ between countries. The friendliest relations between students are found in Kosovo and the least friendly in Croatia and Montenegro. The proportion of students experiencing bullying behaviour is greatest in Croatia (28%) and lowest in Montenegro (11%).

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[12] In France, Richard et al. (2012) find that the quality of student-teacher relationships is closely linked to the problem of bullying.
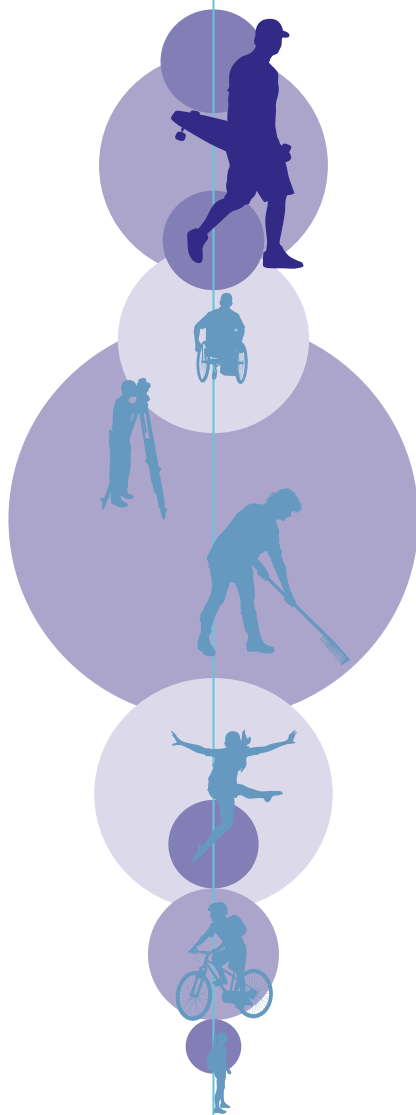
Figure 11: Bullying related to happiness at school
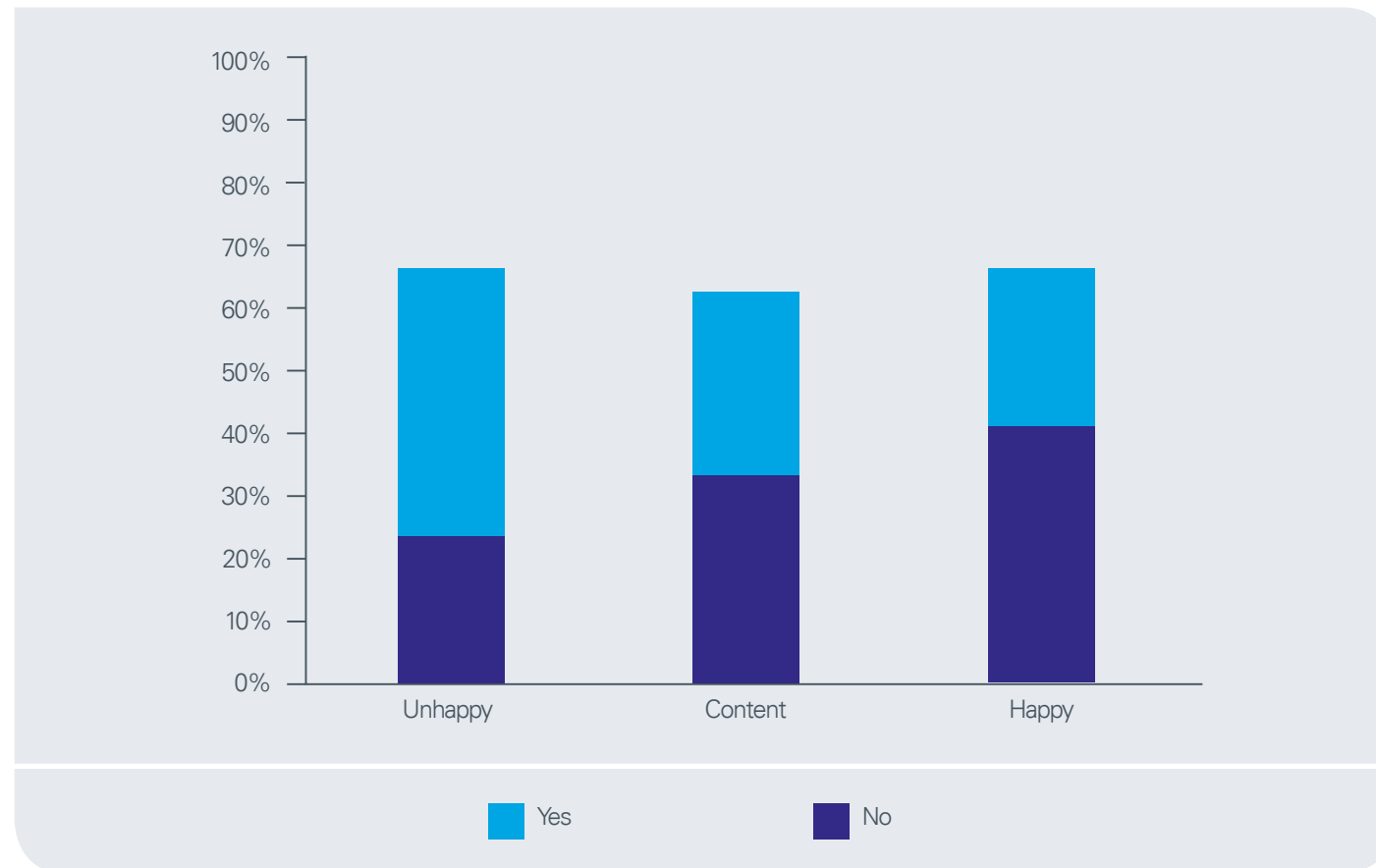
Finding teachers welcoming on school entry has a significant effect on student satisfaction with the school. More than two fifths (44.4%) of students who report that teachers are 'welcoming' are happy, compared to just over one fifth (17.2%) of those who find the teachers 'not welcoming' (χ^2=263.3, p<0.01). Similarly, more than half of the students who say teachers are 'very friendly' are happy (55.0%), while just over one quarter (28.0%) of students who say that teachers are 'very unfriendly' are unhappy with their school (χ^2=301.0, p<0.01) (see Figure 12).
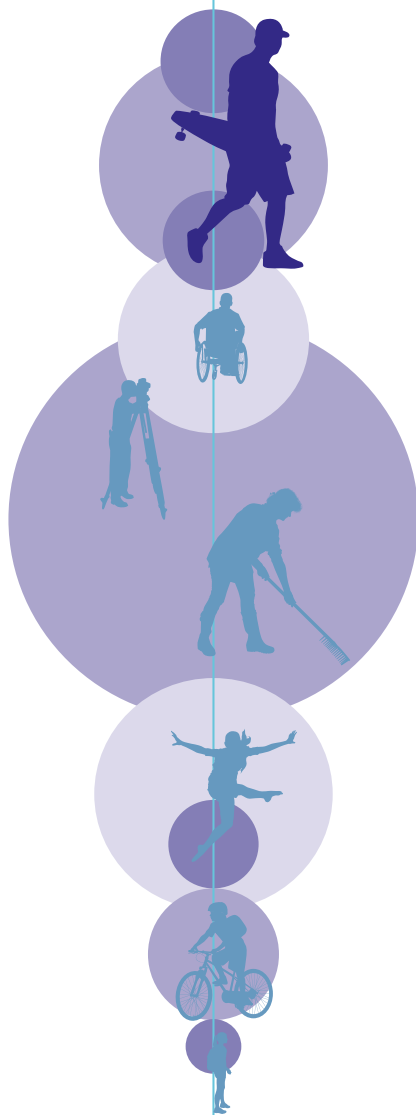
Figure 12: Friendliness of teachers and student happiness at school
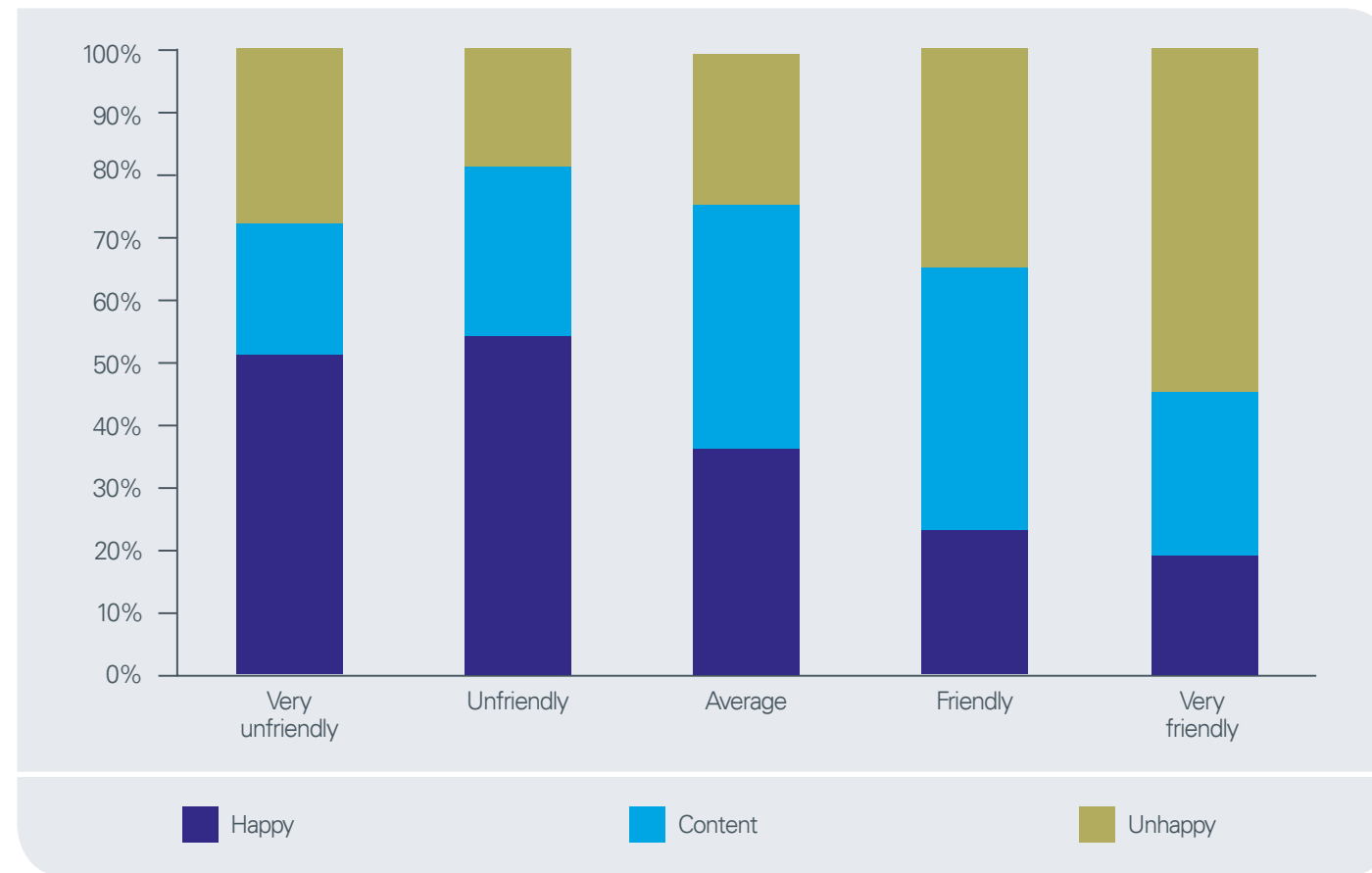
Chart showing percentages for Very unfriendly, Unfriendly, Average, Friendly, Very friendly with categories Happy, Content, Unhappy.

Students become progressively less happy with their schools as they move from their first to their final year. Disabled students were significantly less happy with their school experience than others: while two fifths (40.4%) of students without a disability are happy at school, only one fifth (18.6%) of those with a disability are happy (χ^2=29.9, p<0.01). Motivation to study is associated with school experience. Two fifths (44.6%) of those who say that doing well at school is very important for them are happy compared to only a fifth (22.3%) of those who say that it is not at all important to them to do well at school (χ^2=198.2, p<0.01).
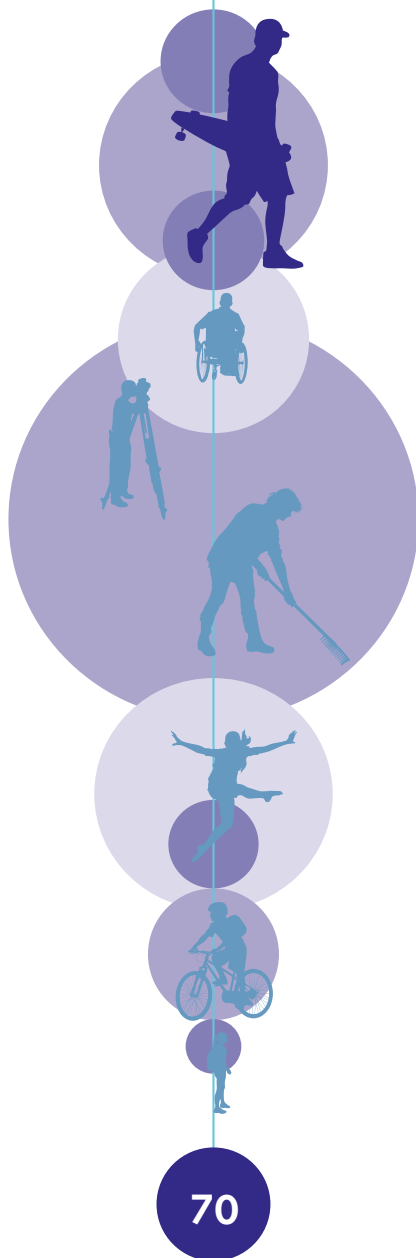
These are worrying findings, suggesting a highly differentiated experience within a school for different groups of students, where a small minority experience intense social exclusion.

Students in small rural schools seem to have a strong sense of identity with the school, and such schools seem to play an important role in the local community and in generating local social cohesion. One example of such a school is the Beco Pasic secondary mixed school in Plav, in northeast Montenegro (see Box 5).

Box 5: Secondary mixed school 'Beco Pasic', Plav, Montenegro

Plav is a small town in the mostly poor rural northeast region of Montenegro with a population of 13,000 people. Students from Plav are generally happy with their school, with an average 'happiness' score in the student survey of 8.6 out of 10. One reason for this satisfaction, besides active school management and teaching quality, could be that Plav is a very small community in which social and cultural life is modest in comparison with Podgorica and Bar. That could be why school life and everything it offers presents a main source of communication, social life, cultural activities and fun for the students. The school in Plav has a majority of students from ethnic minority groups and has programmes in two languages. It provides the best example of school life, of communication with parents and the community, and of support to vulnerable groups and communication among students. In addition, students from this school are happier than those in the other two schools in Montenegro. The competence, motivation and dedication of the school principal seem to be an important factor in achieving a high degree of school effectiveness, including support to students from vulnerable groups

Source: Kaludjerović and Mirković (2013)

Students are on the whole ambitious. Almost all (84%) realise that it is very or extremely important for them to do well at school for their future job prospects, while 86% say it is important for their family and 81% for themselves personally. However, many students spend insufficient time on homework. Most students spend between 1-5 hours per week on homework (54.5%) while 18.4% spend more than 5 hours on homework weekly. However, almost a quarter spend no time at all on homework during the week (24.8%). Hours per week spent on homework are greatest in Kosovo and lowest in Croatia, perhaps due to the higher level of practical work carried out in companies in Croatia. Time spent on homework also varies enormously between schools. In addition, absenteeism from school, lack of motivation and poor discipline are significant problems in some countries. In Serbia, two thirds of teachers think that lack of motivation is the biggest problem, while over three fifths of teachers consider that student discipline is a major problem.
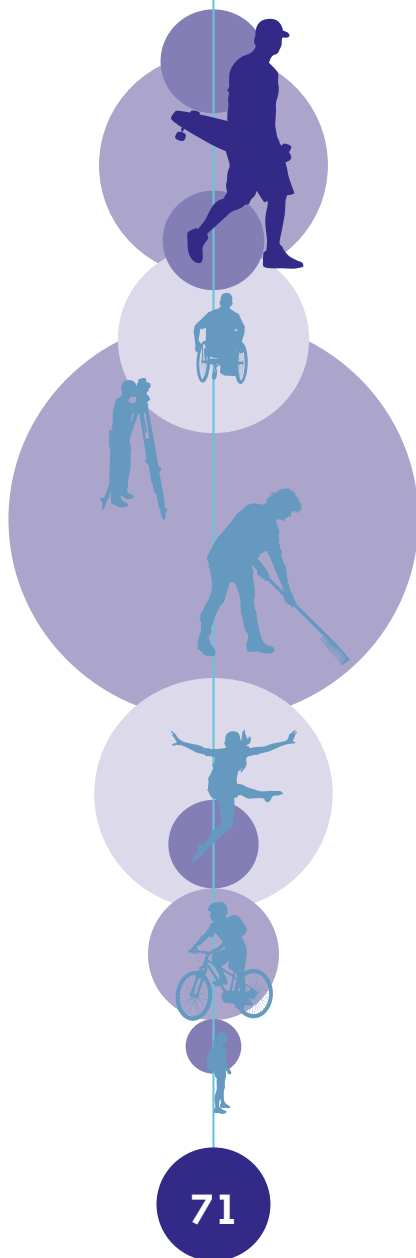
Few students participate in extracurricular activities, other than sport. While more than half of students in the case study schools engage in sport, only one fifth engage in either voluntary work or attend youth clubs. Since extracurricular activities are an important way of building social capital, the lack of engagement in such activities is a worrying sign that vocational schools are not fulfilling their potential to build social cohesion in their communities. Over a half of students engage in sports (57%) and over one quarter in paid work (28%), while just over one fifth engage in either voluntary work (23.8%) or attend youth clubs (21.1%). The degree of participation in sports activities varies strongly across countries. Over two thirds of students in Turkey participate in sports (68%) compared to just over one third in Croatia (39%). Similarly, hardly any students in Croatia participate in voluntary activities outside school (6%) compared to over half (45%) of students in Turkey. Turkish students also have the highest participation in youth clubs (33%) while participation in youth clubs is lowest in Serbia (11%) with Croatia almost as poor at 15%. However, Croatian students are most active in paid work outside school (49%) while only one tenth of students in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia do this (11%).

5.4 TEACHING QUALITY AND METHODS

Teaching methods and teacher skills appear to be quite poor on many of the case study sites (HR, ME, RS, XK). In Serbia, three fifths of respondents to the student survey reported that teachers have average, poor or very poor knowledge of their subject, while half of students reported that teaching methods are average, poor or very poor. In Croatia, the lack of professional training for teachers was reported to be a problem, as most vocational subject teachers have not received initial teacher training (Matković, et al., 2013). In one school, teachers were observed to assert their authority by regulating aspects of student conduct, placing special emphasis on 'classroom discipline' with minimal deference to teacher status and 'paying attention' as is usually expected in traditional classrooms, whereas in the other two schools, relations were governed less by rules and more by cooperative student-teacher relations in a way that contributed to a more open school environment and a better sense of social integration. There were also differences in the support provided by teachers to disabled and disadvantaged students. In Montenegro, teachers from the school in the capital city, Podgorica, provided more support to disadvantaged and disabled students than did teachers from other schools (Kaludjerović and Mirković, 2013).
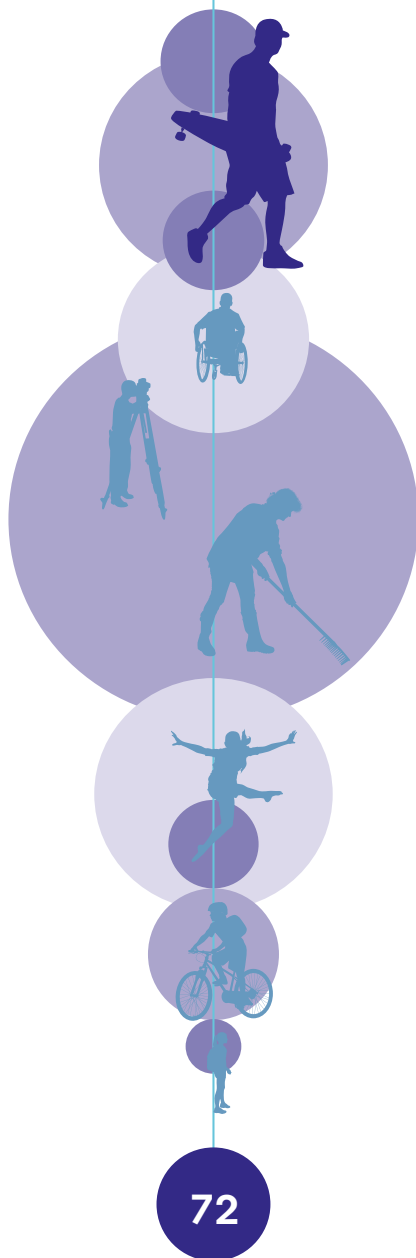
The country research teams typically found that the competence, motivation and dedication of the school principal is one of the most important factors for vocational school achievement in all areas, especially in supporting students from vulnerable groups, yet, schools often have only limited autonomy to introduce new practices. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, school-level interventions related to social inclusion are bound to national policies with little incentive for schools to pilot or test measures that would increase equality of access or student experience and performance at school (Mojsoska-Blazevski and Ristovska, 2013). This aspect might be related to the low financial power of schools and the lack of motivation of teachers and managers.

The student survey revealed that students were rather ambivalent about the quality of teaching received at school. Only one fifth of students (22.6%) rated teaching methods as 'very good' while 7% found them 'very bad' and a further 8% found them to be 'poor'. Almost two fifths of students (37.3%) reported that teachers' knowledge of their subjects is 'very good' and almost one third (31.3%) that it was 'good', while 6.8% found it to be 'very bad' and a further 6.6% found it to be 'poor'.

There are substantial differences between countries on a range of teaching and learning practices at case study schools. Students gave the highest rating to teaching methods in Kosovo and the lowest in Croatia, with a similar pattern concerning teachers' subject knowledge, how much students learn from their course, and whether the knowledge acquired will help in finding a job in the future.
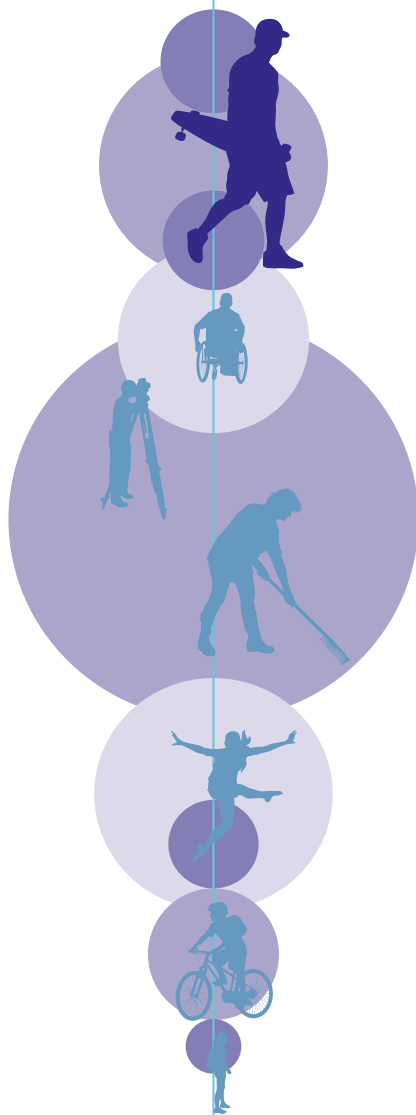
Figure 13: The relation between learning experience and happiness at school
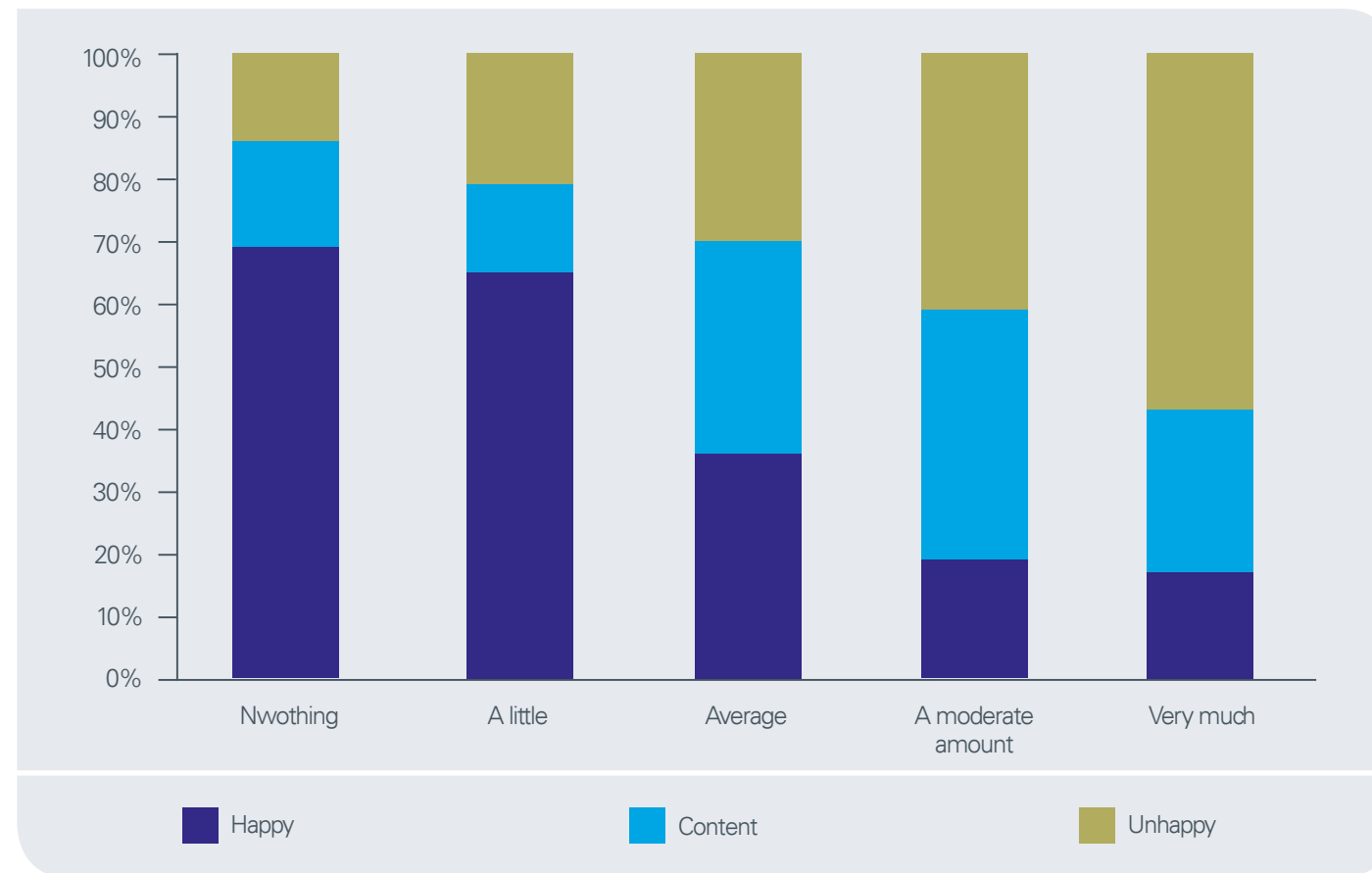
Note: The horizontal axis reflects the extent of learning that students say they acheive at school measured on a scale of 1-5 where 1= 'Nothing' to 5 = 'Very much'. For each category the vertical bar presents the proportion of students who say they are 'Happy', 'Content' or 'Unhappy'.

A good learning experience is strongly associated with happiness with the school (see Figure 13). More than half (58%) of those who feel they learn 'very much' from their course of study are very happy, while only one in seven (14%) of those who say they learn 'nothing' from their course of study are happy with their school
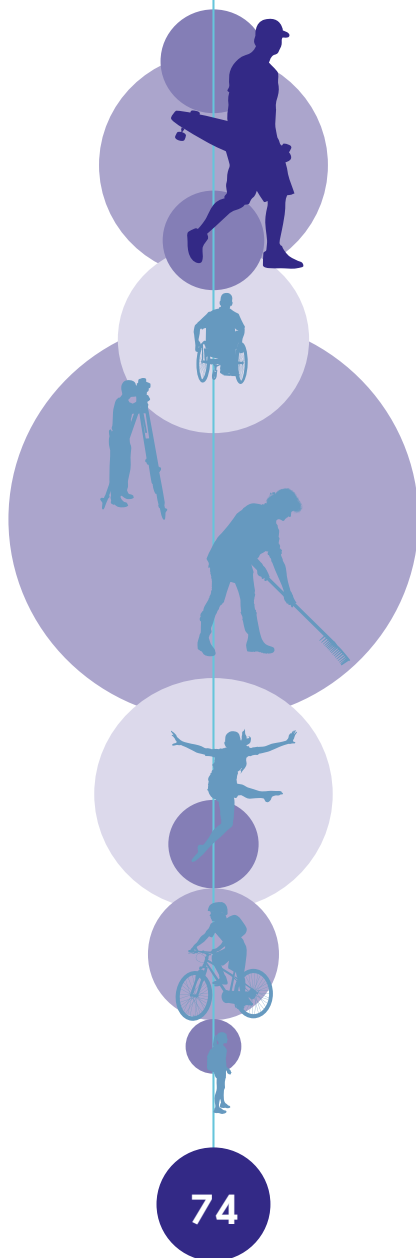
(χ^2=354.3, p<0.01). Similarly over half (52.2%) of students who think that the knowledge they have acquired at school will help them 'very much' to find a job in the future are happy, while only one in six (17.1%) of those who think that the acquired knowledge will be of no help in finding a job are very happy (χ^2=365.8, p<0.01).

Teaching methods are also associated with student satisfaction: three fifths (60.7%) of students who say the teaching methods at the school are very good also say they are happy at school, compared to just three tenths (29.7%) of those who say the teaching methods are very bad (χ^2=350.0, p<0.01). Similarly, more than half of students (51.5%) who rate teachers' knowledge as 'very good' are happy at school, compared to only three tenths (29.5%) of those who rate it as 'very bad' (χ^2=166.5, p<0.01) (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Teachers' subject knowledge and student happiness at school
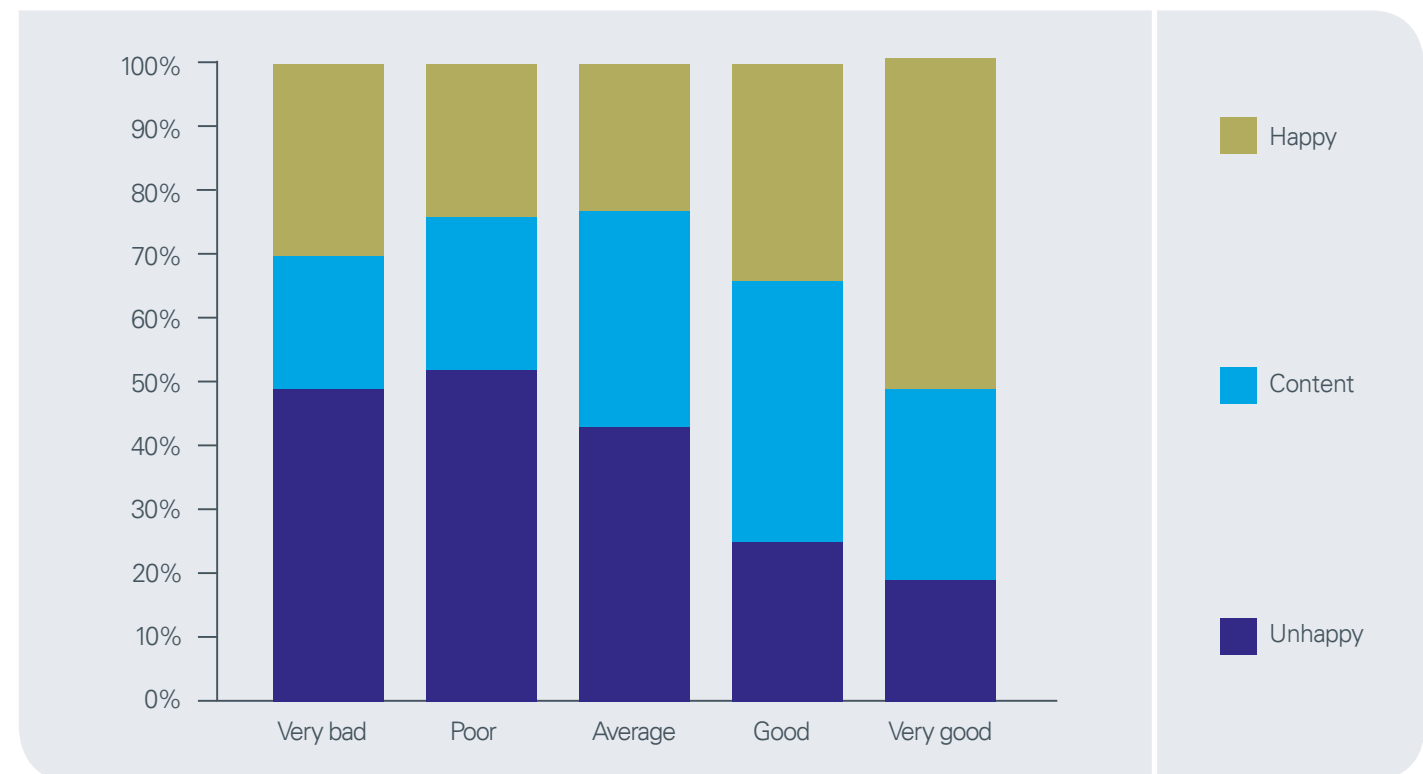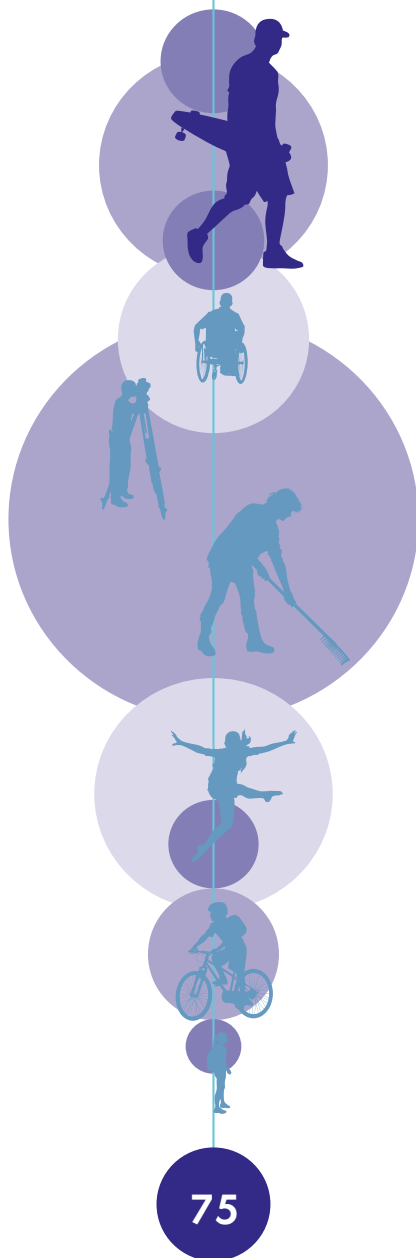
5.5 CURRICULA

A further problem is the lack of appropriate practical skills and competences taught in many vocational schools in the region as a consequence of the out-dated curricula. This is largely a reflection of issues related to the school systems, rather than to individual schools, although the system problems are naturally reflected in the responses provided by teachers and directors in specific case study schools. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, the representative from a large retail group Konzum reported that the local school had never contacted them to discuss curriculum development (Branković and Oruc, 2013), perhaps because schools have little autonomy in the design of a curriculum that is established at country level[13] (Magill, 2010:35). In Kosovo, VET curricula do not reflect labour market needs, and no labour market needs analyses have been carried out to identify the professions most in demand or the skills most required by employers (Gashi and Serhati, 2013). Students in two out of three case study schools in Kosovo have limited opportunities to learn practical skills as they lack the workshops and equipment needed for practice. They also have few opportunities for placements at local enterprises for professional practice so they are not adequately prepared for the labour market either. This leads to them finding employment below their level of qualification or in jobs outside their field of study, while the issue of finding employment is even more difficult for disabled people and those with learning difficulties. Vocational schools in Kosovo seem to be less effective in providing employment opportunities for girls than boys as many plan to continue their education, and few plan to look for a job. The level of qualification and the reputation of the school were found to be the main barriers to future employment, highlighting the crucial importance of vocational schools in the employability of graduates. Almost three quarters of students (72.7%) reported that the skills they have gained at school will be of 'very much' or 'much' use to them in finding a job, while a small minority of just under one tenth said that the skills they have acquired will be of only a little or no use to them (9.8%).

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[13]For example, the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BiH (2003) provided for a common core curriculum for all schools. Teachers have relatively little autonomy to be involved in the design of the curricula (Magill, 2010: 35).
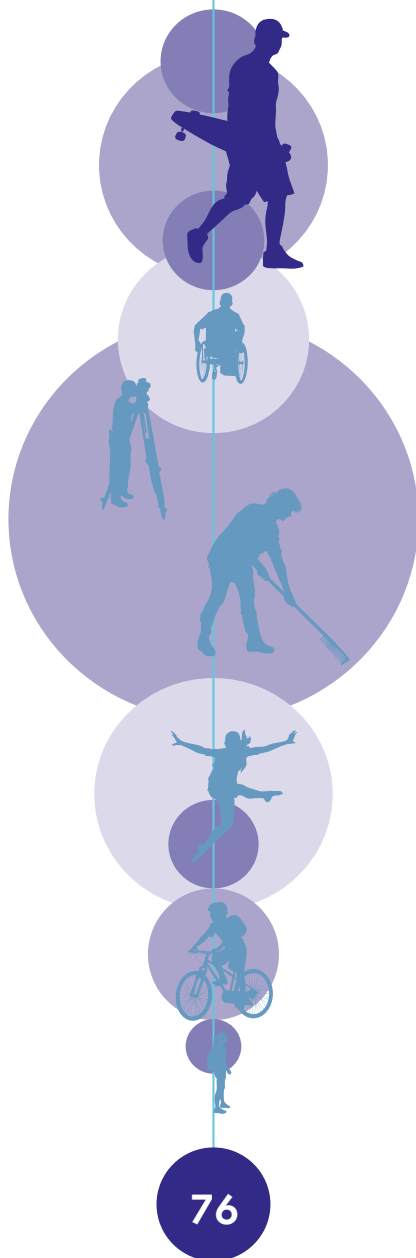
Box 6: Curriculum development in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The curricula for certain subjects have not been changed since 2003 (IT) and for some even since 1994. The school is allowed to change only 10% of its curriculum independently, while the responsible ministry establishes the rest through extensive bureaucracy. In the case of vocational schools specialised in technology, like Sarajevo or Mostar, an ever-changing subject, there is a need to adapt the curriculum to modern developments on a regular basis. Despite the pressing need to update the curricula, teachers are often not in favour of changing the teaching program because they fear that they might lose their job as their field becomes out-dated.

Source: Branković and Oruc (2013)

More progress has been made in Montenegro, where new VET curricula were introduced in the 2009/10 school year (Kaludjerović and Mirković, 2013). Curricula are being modularised in order to raise the quality of VET and to better align it with the needs of the labour market. The new curricula consist of small modules that will be certified and recognised by employers. This approach works in favour of social inclusion, as students will receive a certificate for all of the modules completed, thus receiving a formal qualification even if only one of a partial nature.
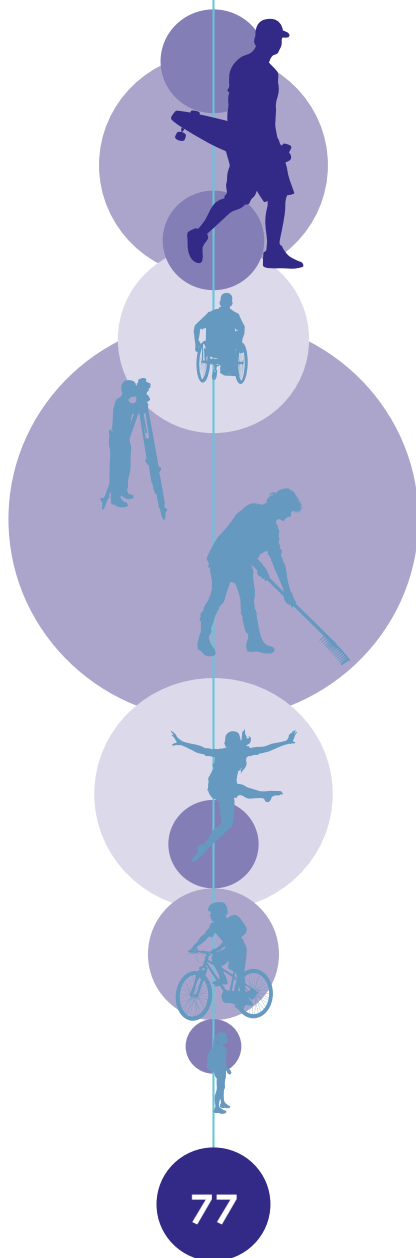
5.6 SKILLS FOR THE LABOUR MARKET

A critical problem in designing policies and practices to favour social inclusion is the lack of appropriate skills taught in many vocational schools in the region. This is partly a consequence of the out-dated curricula and is partly related to a lack of equipment and resources. In most countries in the region, the skills provided by vocational schools have not kept up with the changing labour market needs. Employers often identify out-dated vocational courses as a barrier to the ability of school leavers to find a job. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, most of the companies interviewed complained that job applicants from vocational schools do not have the skills needed to perform the job they should be qualified for, meaning that they require at least six months to train each new worker (Branković and Oruc, 2013). In Croatia, most employers identified the out-dated vocational content as a barrier to young people entering the labour market, stating that graduates of vocational schools are not equipped with the appropriate competences (Matković, et al., 2013). In Kosovo, the lack of professional practice was stated as one of the reasons why vocational students are unable to gain the skills required in the world of work (Gashi and Serhati, 2013). In Montenegro, employers stated that students lacked appropriate practical skills and could not be offered a job as there is often a gap between what they learn at school and what are they expected to do at work (Kaludjerović and Mirković, 2013)[14]. In Serbia, graduates of vocational schools often lack the additional competences needed to satisfy the requirements of employers (Maksimović and Bratić, 2013).

The findings from the qualitative research studies are backed up by the results from the surveys. The student surveys revealed that while students are broadly satisfied with the quality of the skills that they learn at vocational schools, a substantial proportion do not seem to acquire a high level of skills. Overall, although just over half of the students in the surveys reported that they learn 'very much' or 'much' from their course of study, just under half (48%) say that they learn only a 'moderate' amount or even 'little' or 'nothing' at school. Figure 15 shows that the distribution of responses varies substantially across countries.

[14]An exception in Montenegro was found among students who finish specialised courses related to mechanical engineering relating to ships or as nautical technicians.
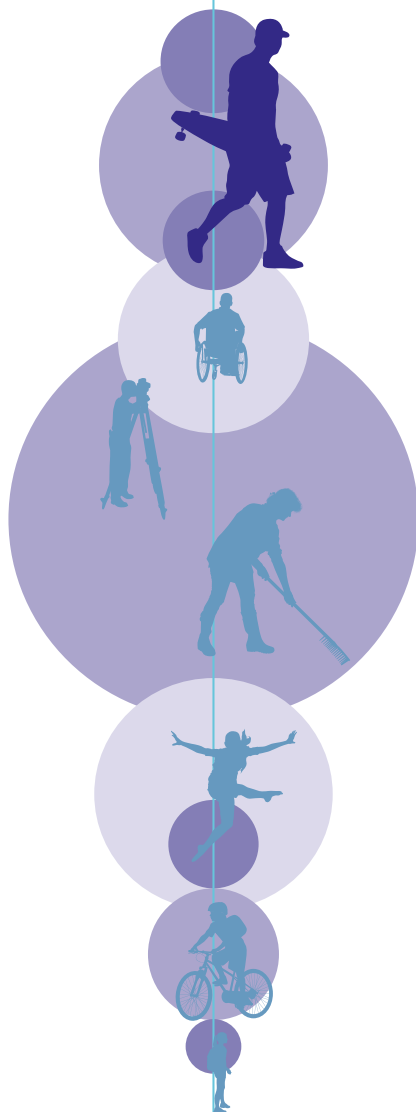
Figure 15: How much students learn at vocational school by country

Legend:
- Nothing
- A little
- A moderate amount
- Much
- Very much

Countries (top to bottom): Kosovo, Israel, Serbia, Turkey, Montenegro, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania
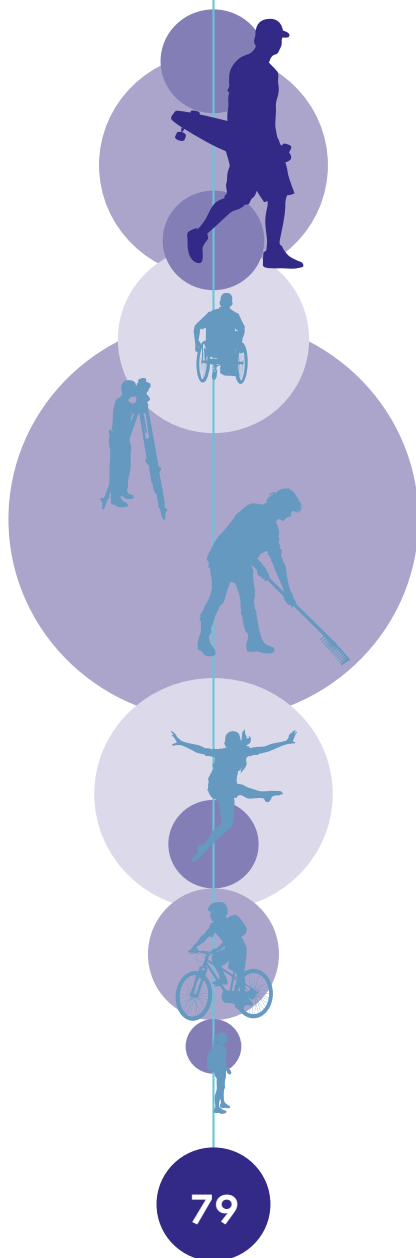
X-axis: 0% to 100%
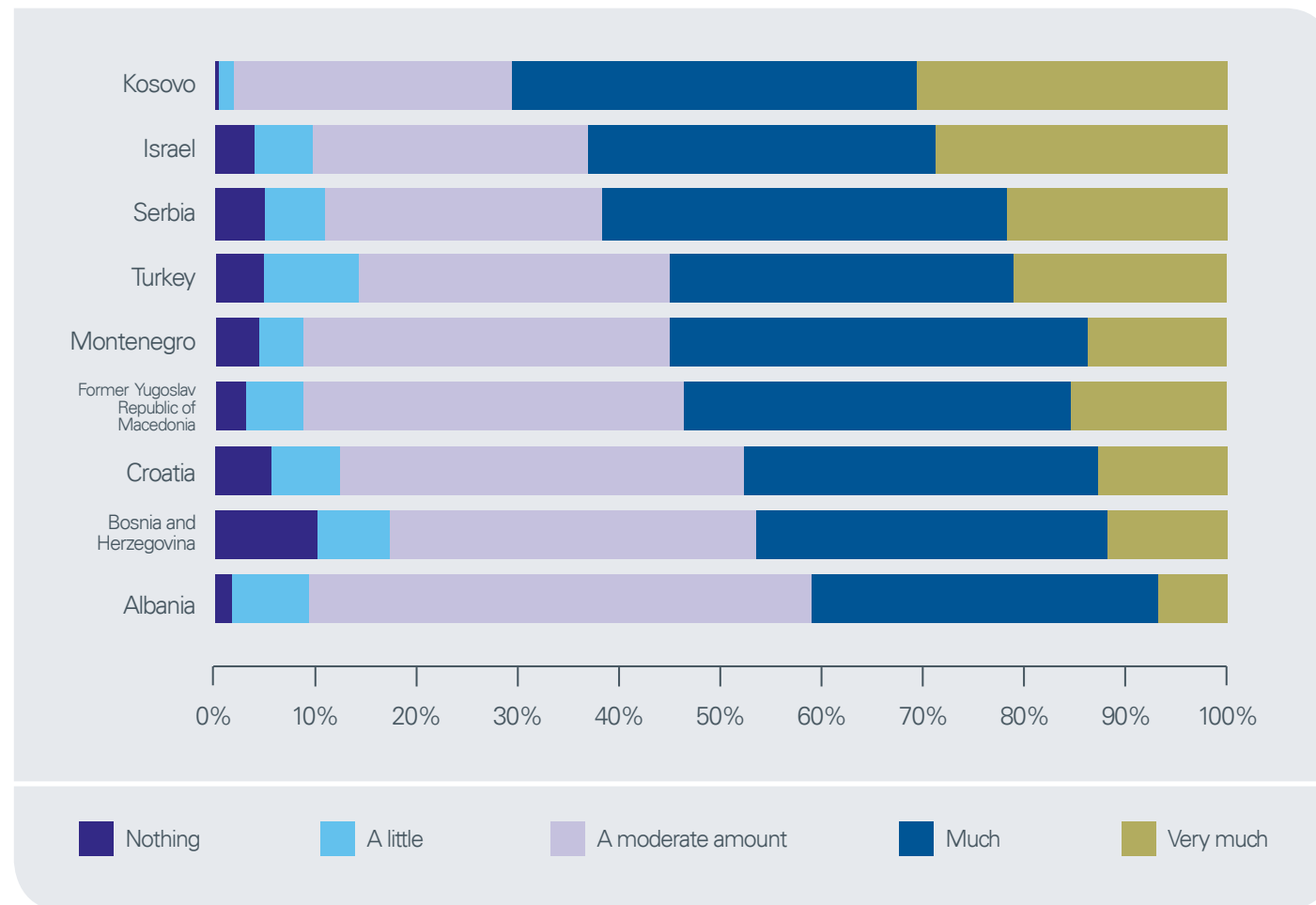
Figure 15 shows that in six countries, over half of all students learn either 'much' or 'very much' at vocational school. However, in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, less than half the students reported that they learn either 'much or 'very much' at school. The schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina appear to be particularly problematic as they also have the highest proportion of students saying that they learn 'nothing' or just a 'little' at school (making a total of 17.2% of all students in the three case study schools in the country).

Many factors contribute to the level of skills learned by students at school, including those elements of the school experience discussed above (resources, quality of equipment and buildings, curricula design, teaching methods and teaching skills, and students' family background and support), all of which help determine the extent to which students are provided with appropriate skills for the labour market. A further critically important aspect lies in the extent and quality of the practical studies provided both within the school and through work placements or apprenticeships outside the school in local businesses.

5.7 PRACTICAL STUDIES, WORK PLACEMENTS AND APPRENTICESHIPS

A key element of the student experience is good quality of training that imparts practical skills of use in a future career. The form of practical training within VET systems varies between countries. Practical training, whether within the school or in local businesses through work placements or more formally as contracted apprentices within a training enterprise, forms an important part of most VET programmes. However, in most of the countries in the study, this aspect of the educational experience was not sufficiently developed to provide students with a sound basis of vocational knowledge and experience (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro).

The use of practical lessons varies across countries. Students in Croatia spend substantially more hours per week in practical lessons in both school and companies, while students in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia spend the least time in practical lessons in school and students from Montenegro in practical lessons in companies. According to both the student survey and the teacher survey, students spend on average 7 hours per week on practical lessons within school. The number of practical hours spent in school varies across countries with the most in Turkey (12 hours per week according to the student survey, 16 hours according to the teacher survey) and the least in the former Yugoslav Republic of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (just under two hours per week according to both surveys).

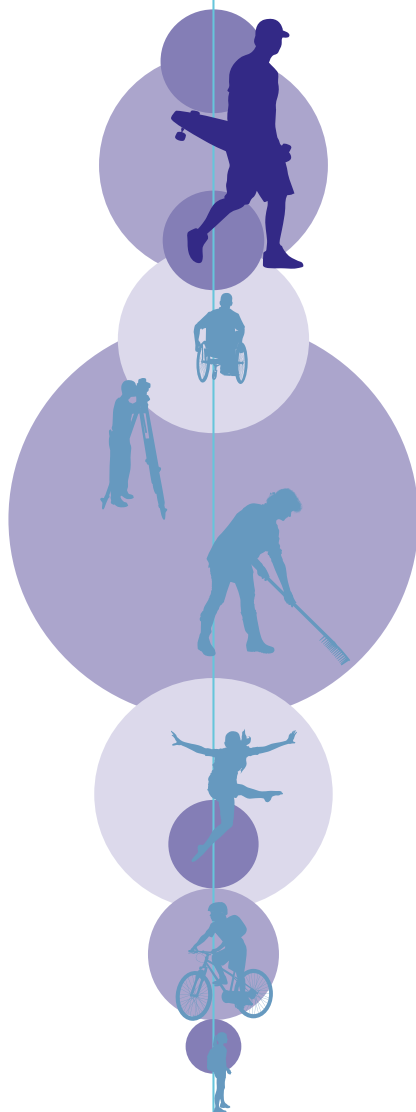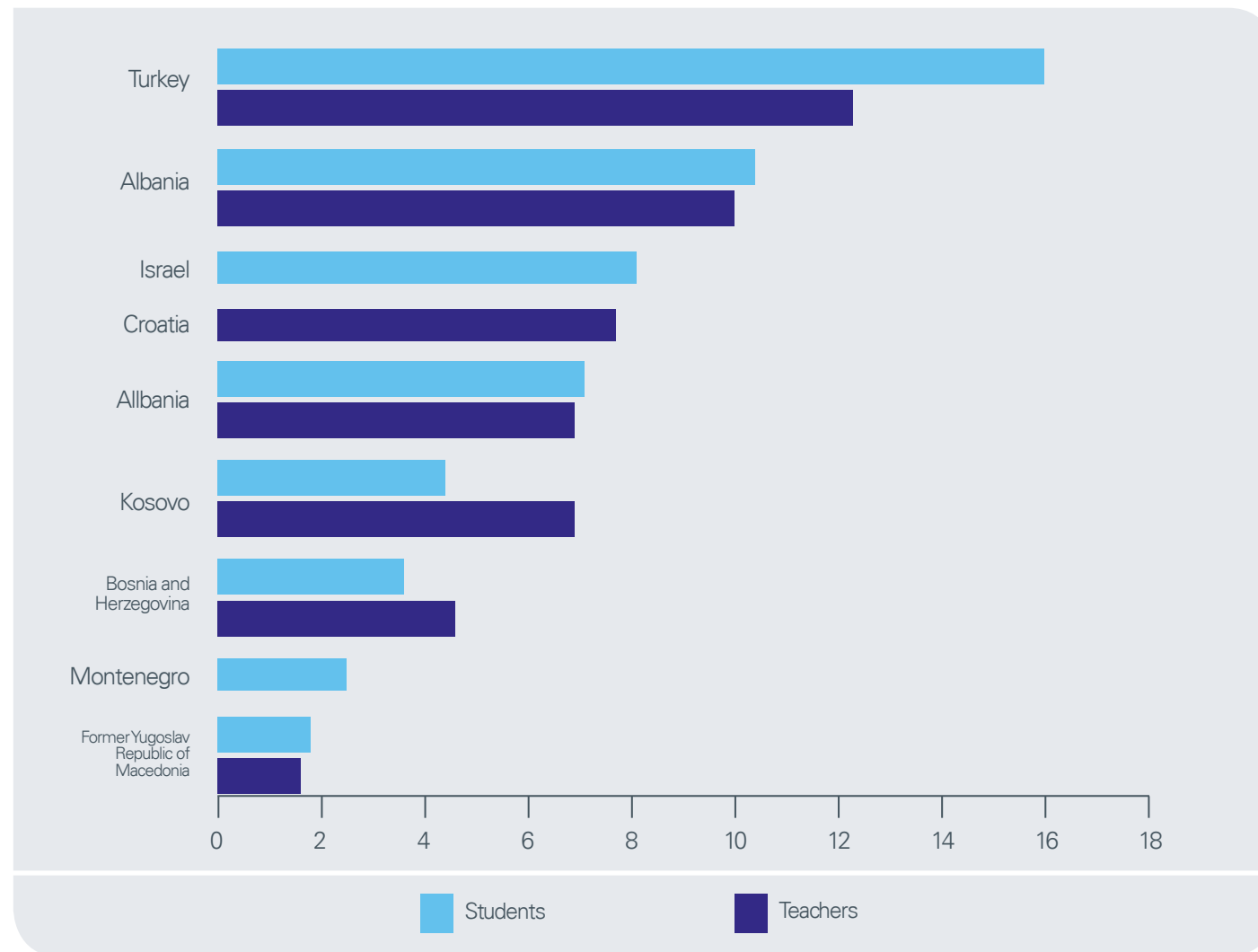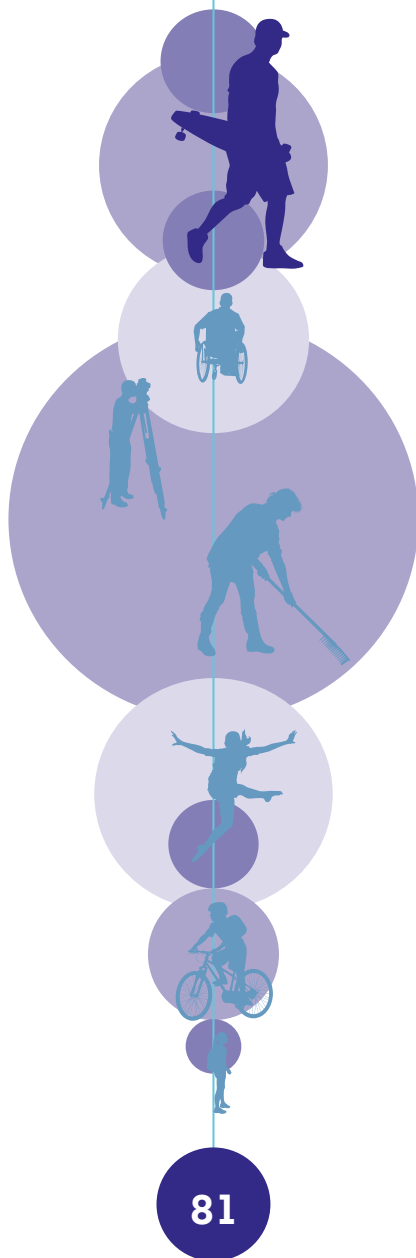**Figure 16: Hours of practical lessons (comparison of student and teacher survey responses)**

Students ▢ Teachers ▢

Note: data for the student survey are not available for Israel, while for the teachers survey data are not available for Croatia or Montenegro

Croatia, Israel and Turkey stand out as countries in which apprenticeship systems have been introduced (ETF, 2012). In Croatia this is linked to the important role of the Chamber of Trades and Crafts, which has sponsored an apprenticeship-oriented model of VET in the craft sector (Matković, et al., 2013). The Chamber is an important partner to vocational schools as it is responsible for quality assurance for training in craft firms, administering scholarships for craft occupations and generally promoting craftsmanship. In addition, the Chamber organises 'master craftsman' exams and participates in exam commissions in three-year craft VET programmes. However, cooperation between schools and institutional and non-governmental actors is not systematic and schools lack a long-term vision of the importance of cooperation. According to one interview carried out in Croatia: 'At the institutional level, vocational schools interact with county education departments, social protection providers, county branches of the Chamber of Trades and Crafts and other actors whose resources are needed. However, inter-institutional cooperation can be described as unilateral or bilateral, rather than systematic collaboration within the network of interdependent actors,' (IDI, Croatia).

There are, however, some difficulties with this approach. Teachers complained about difficulties in combining the large number of practical hours with the school programme and the weak teaching skills of employers who offer apprenticeships to students (Matković, et al., 2013). Employers were often reluctant to follow the curricula for practical training, partly because both employers and students considered that much of the prescribed curriculum did not match up to real work practices. Moreover, inadequate quality assurance and legal protection governing the apprenticeship system were reported, while training in workplaces was often described as sub-standard, with schools having little influence over training quality. Students from ethnic minorities, with disabilities, travelling from remote rural areas and with lower socio-economic status have more difficulty in finding a practical training place in a way that can affect their learning outcomes and lead to social exclusion. Nonetheless, students in Croatia on the whole seem to prefer apprenticeship placements to school-based training, perhaps because of the direct link to a potential future job. This finding also suggests that the training offered in schools is less than adequate, compared to that offered by employers.

In Israel, MOITL is seeking to improve its apprenticeship programme by collaborating with local businesses in the provision of apprenticeships to students and by establishing connections to the Manufacturers Association of Israel (Yair et al., 2013). As a result, some schools are now integrated with factories, providing students with more opportunities for apprenticeships, and employers and industry associations work actively with MOITL to develop and update curricula.

In Turkey some local businesses actively cooperate with vocational schools in promoting job training courses, seminars for teachers, acquisition of materials and machinery for practical workshops. Box 7 shows the UMEM (Specialised Vocational Course Centres) project reported by Sayan and Yavçan (2013) as a good example of fruitful public-private partnership.
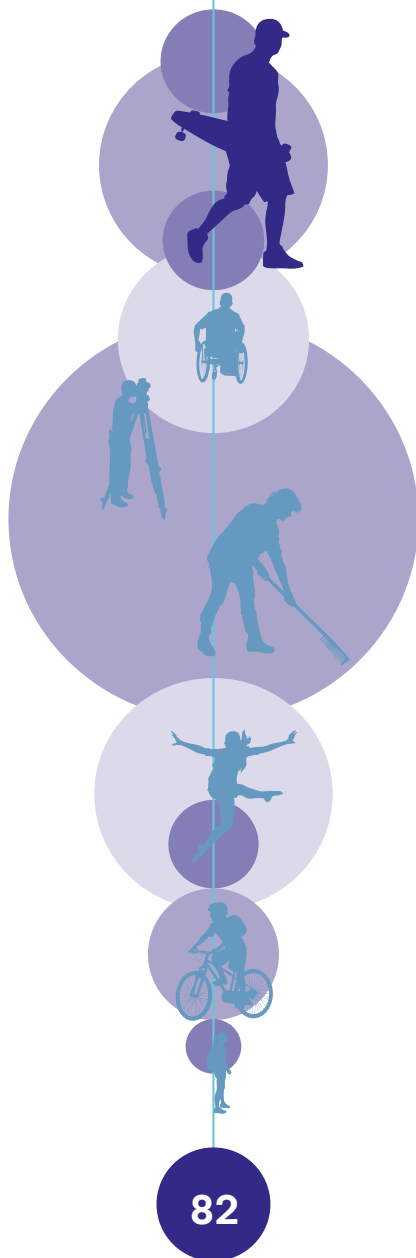
Box 7: The UMEM project

The UMEM project was launched in 2010 and involves the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB), the Ministry of Education, TOBB ETÜ/Centre for Social Policy Research and the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR). The project offers vocational training courses to unemployed people registered with İŞKUR; there is also significant investment for the renewal of infrastructure at vocational schools and tax reductions (in the form of the employer's share of social security premium to be financed by İŞKUR) to incentivize private sector actors to hire UMEM trainees. In the 18 months since the beginning of implementation, about 25,000 unemployed people were included in the labour force. Schools indicated that their participation in this skills training programme allowed them to expand their network – especially regarding the industry, learn about the specific needs of the industry, train their teachers further and update their equipment.

Source: Sayan and Yavçan (2013)

Countries in which apprenticeship systems have not been developed rely on the goodwill of local businesses to provide work placements for students. These countries have a mixed experience in providing practical training in local businesses for vocational students.

In Montenegro, all students have practical classes in school and experience practical work in companies. While classrooms for practical lessons appear well equipped (Kaludjerović and Mirković, 2013), teachers reported that mentors in the training companies have a low level of pedagogical skills, that there is a lack of quality assurance in company-based training and that communication between schools and companies is poor. Communications between the school and the training companies was also cited as a reason for the lack of work placements in several country studies (Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro).

In Kosovo, the situation regarding practical training is more difficult. There is a lack of workshops in schools, equipment is out-dated and there are few chances of finding a place for professional practice in a company (Gashi and Serhati, 2013). Together, these limitations mean that little practical training takes place. In Djakova, one employer with whom the Kadri Kusari economics school cooperates stated that there is a high demand for professional practice places but only few places available. In some cases, students with work placements in the company were not assigned actual tasks but simply operated as observers.
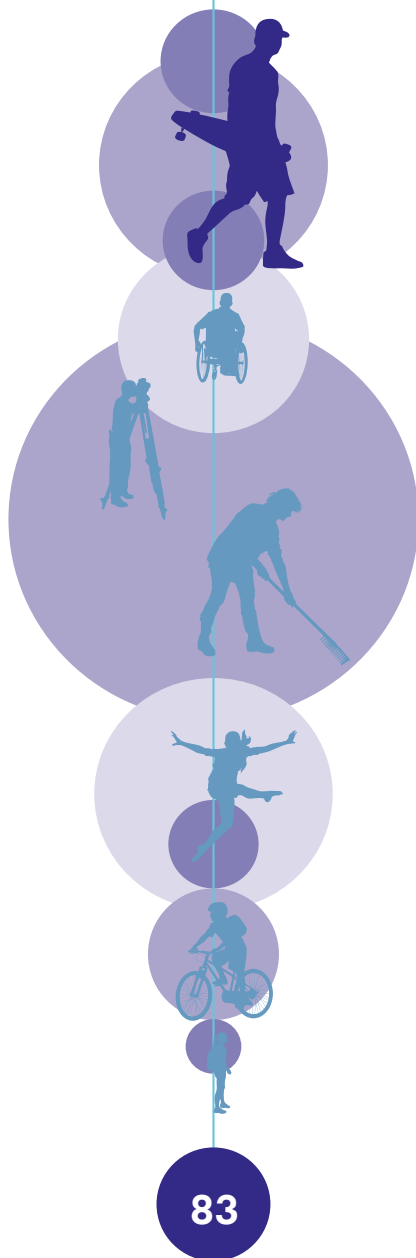
Students with disabilities and special needs had the greatest difficulty in finding work placements for practical experience in companies.

In Albania, the curricula of vocational schools have recently been reformed and more emphasis is now put on practice hours carried out in work experience placements in companies (Xhumari and Dibra, 2013). In order to compensate for an absence of available work experience places in local businesses, some schools have developed 'virtual firms' on their own premises. However, the Regional Vocational Training Centre in Elbasan reported that students are required to pay for their own insurance, which imposes a serious barrier to participation in work experience especially for students from poor families (Xhumari and Dibra, 2013).

Box 8: Economic School, Tirana

In the Economic school in Tirana, students are organised in groups and manage virtual firms connected to a wider international network of training firms of schools in other states. Once a year, these training firms organise a fair and the best training firm (selected by the school administration and teachers of professional subjects) participates in international fairs for training firms.

Source: Xhumari and Dibra (2013)

The Beqir Cela School in Durres also provides an example of good practice. The school has a curriculum that is 50% practice, as is reflected in the high number of hours reported by the students. Businesses have a positive attitude to practical training and welcome students for practice. The Beqir Cela school provides a good example of building links between schools and local communities with the support of international donors (see Box 9).
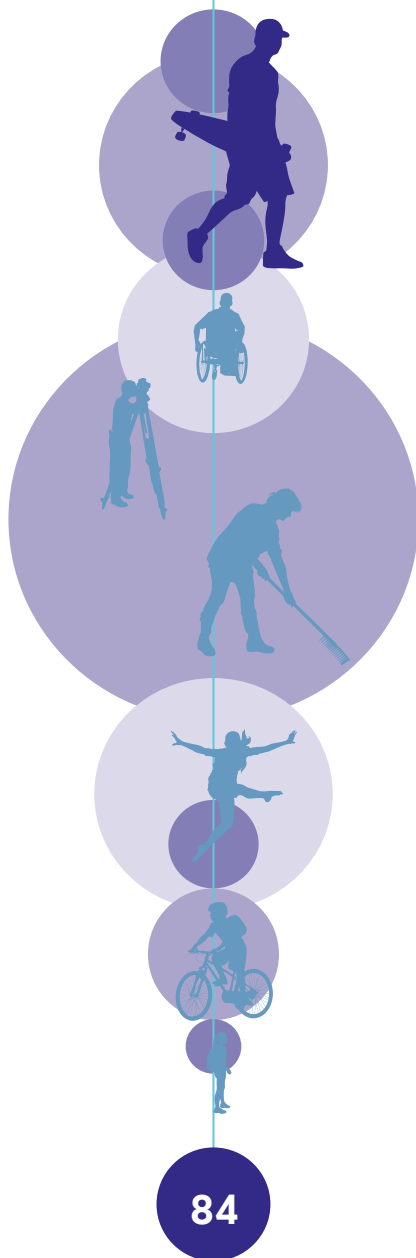
Box 9: The Durresi district and Beqir Cela school

The District of Durresi has an institutional framework for projects and activities addressed to vulnerable groups. At District level, it operates a Committee for the Protection of Children's Rights with representatives from all stakeholders, led by the Head of the District Council. In addition, a Committee for Vulnerable Groups, with representatives of associations of Roma, Egyptians, and blind and disabled people, is trying to coordinate the work of different organisations in the district.

The Beqir Cela school is located in the neighbourhood of Shkozet, in Durres. This school operates in the building of an ex-agricultural engineering school that was closed in 1990. The school has an IPA project for VET that is managed with the participation of social partners, NGOs and international donors such as UNDP, Swiss Contact, and Albvet. The project aims to improve school profiles and curricula on the basis of assessment of regional labour market demand and the funding of new laboratories, with the goal to increase the employment of vulnerable groups, such as Roma and returned emigrants from the Durresi region. The District Council actively cooperates with the school and is preparing an assessment and forecast of economic needs to better orient the vocational school curricula. As a senior representative of the District Council stated: 'for example, we are planning to pilot new profiles in Beqir Cela school, such as tourism, fishery and electro-auto, which will increase the interest of the community in this vocational school. Vulnerable groups and pupils with little interest in the school are more likely to enrol in this school and they will be better prepared for the labour market after completion of the school. It is time to create a regional structure for VET reform, which is considered a priority' (IDI, Albania).

A proposal to create a regional structure for VET reform made by a representative of one District is currently[15] under discussion in the Ministry of Welfare and Youth as part of a wider reform proposal to transform vocational schools into multifunctional centres in order to increase access and integration of vulnerable groups in the labour market.

Source: Country report Albania (2013)

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[15] Interview, October 2013
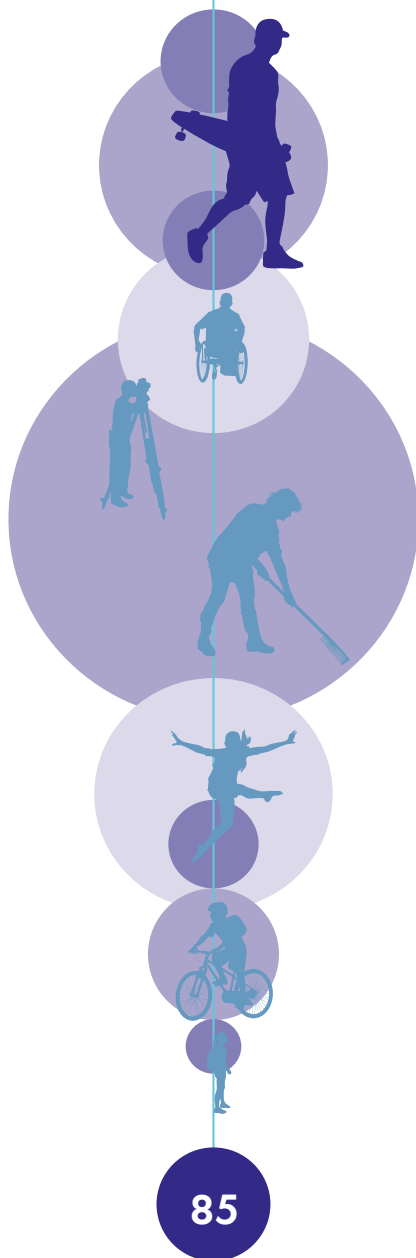
Overall, some positive experiences of collaboration with the local business community have been observed in the case study reports. In Bosnia, an example of good practice was observed in Foča where the school employs professors as practical education coordinators who visit the businesses where students receive practical training, evaluate their performance, maintain contact with the relevant persons in the company, advise students as to which form of practical training would best suit them, arrange the transfer of students between apprenticeships if needed, file progress reports and determine the grade of a students' practical education. As a result, an employer from Foča notes that students often stay longer hours than their practical education component stipulates in order to learn more on their own initiative (Branković and Oruc, 2013).

Apart from the above-mentioned exceptions, business and industry play a rather weak role in the development of VET curricula and assessment of skills. Most country reports recommend that links with industry need to be strengthened through better job placement and apprenticeships. Moreover, several interviews report the need for stronger incentives for employers to take on apprentices (Croatia, Israel, Kosovo, Turkey). Finally, some countries see the creation of stronger social partnerships as an opportunity to encourage the donation of training equipment to schools or the renovation of existing institutions, the development of training programmes for teachers and the provision of materials to students (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, Kosovo).

5.8 CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Although almost all students recognise that success in school is critical to their future job prospects, the vocational school experience in many cases appears to reinforce the social exclusion of disadvantaged students. The cross-country analysis found evidence of poor resources at vocational schools as the result of underinvestment in equipment and buildings. Obstacles to effective learning exist in the out-dated curricula that have failed to keep up with changing labour market needs, and poor teaching methods and limitations in teachers' subject knowledge. Only half of all students learn much or very much from their programme of study. The unwelcoming attitude of teachers experienced by a fifth of students at the start of school is associated with student unhappiness at school. A fifth of students also experienced some form of bullying at school. Disabled students were significantly less happy with their school experience than their non-disabled peers. It is also apparent that students become progressively less happy with their schools as they move from their first to their final year. The qualitative evidence also shows that practical training, either within school or in a local company as an intern or apprentice, is insufficient to provide a sound basis of vocational knowledge and experience. The amount of hours spent in work placement in a company differs widely across schools and countries.
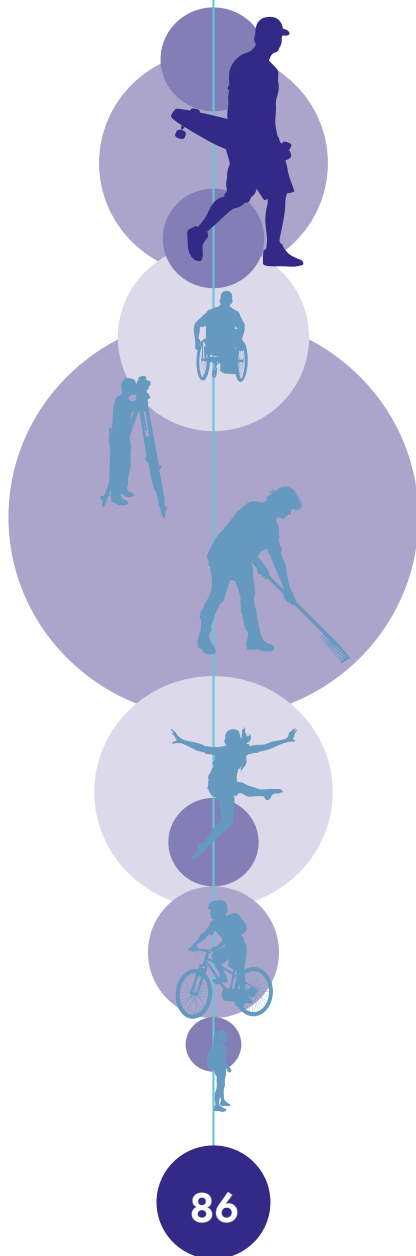
On average, students spend about seven hours a week in practical lessons in school. However, there is a huge variation in weekly hours spent in practical lessons between-schools and cross-countries with far more hours of experience in Turkey, Albania and Israel than in the former Yugoslav states of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Apprenticeship systems are used in Croatia, Israel and Turkey, but have not been established in other countries. Countries with more developed apprenticeship systems provide more practical lessons in school and more structured opportunities within local training companies. In countries without formal apprenticeship systems, students rely on the good will of employers and the strength of links between schools and the business sector for work placements, and while there are some positive examples, students in several countries are not well provided with practical training or work experience. Overall, the business sector plays a rather limited role in the development of vocational schools in the form of curricular development or practical training, with some notable exceptions. In order to compensate for an absence of available work experience places in local businesses, some school have developed 'virtual firms' on their own premises.

Evidence from the country case studies, in the form of both qualitative research among teachers and local community stakeholders and through the student and teacher surveys, suggests several recommendations for policy and practice:

- More resources should be provided to vocational schools to upgrade and improve the quality of the equipment and buildings. Governments should seek infrastructure loans to improve school buildings from WBIF and other sources;

- The skills and professionalism of teachers should be improved though additional teacher training for competence in socially inclusive practices at school;

- Teachers should take greater care of student-teacher relationships and in dealing with socially excluded students;

- Links between vocational schools and the business sector should be strengthened, for example by enabling local businesses to have a greater say in the design of vocational curricula;

- Parent representatives and social partners should play a stronger role in school governance so that their preferences and interests are properly reflected in educational practices.

6.0 DROPPING OUT

This chapter provides a short survey of the academic and policy-oriented literature on the complex issues of school dropout, before going on to discuss the research findings. Section 6.1 focuses on the extent of dropout highlighting the varied picture that emerges from the country case studies. Section 6.2 profiles the socio-economic position of vocational school dropouts. Section 6.3 reviews what the case studies reveal about the causes of dropout from vocational schools in the region, demonstrating that while there are multiple causes, dropping out generally reflects a combination of difficult family circumstances, the effect of peer pressure, and the lack of resources that vocational schools have at their disposal to provide effective and attractive learning environments. Section 6.4 focuses on the measures adopted to prevent students dropping out from vocational schools. The resulting policy recommendations follow in section 6.5.

Four key points on the issue of school dropout stand out from the literature: (i) there is widespread recognition of significant variation in the prevalence of school dropout across time and place and different communities; (ii) school dropout should be understood as a multi-dimensional phenomenon rather than searching for single risk factors that could predict dropout (APA, 2012), it should be viewed as an interaction of three sets of factors external to the school setting and experience (individuals, families and communities) and a fourth set of factors internal to the school (De Witte et al., 2013); (iii) dropping out is not a single event but rather 'a process where a range of supply-demand factors interacts to influence schooling access' (Hunt, 2008: v) and; (iv) widely differing definitions of what constitutes dropout are used when measuring levels of school dropout.

Hunt (2008) points to a number of external factors that influence dropout and retention including household income, financial circumstances and poverty. In the USA in 2009, students from low-income families were five times more likely to drop out of high school than students from high-income families, depending on school location (APA, 2012). In poor families, children are subject to greater pressure to leave school and contribute to family income (Hunt, 2008). The literature also highlights the negative impact of school fees and the indirect costs of schooling, as well as income shocks that may destabilise school access. Family and household contexts also play a significant role in shaping decisions around staying in or dropping out of school. Liu (2004) highlights parental education and siblings' experience of education as strong predictors of the risk of school dropout. A sudden change in family circumstances through bereavement, unemployment or migration may also push some children to withdraw from school. While there has been less research on the effect of the school experience on students' propensity to drop out , students' experience of the initial transition and induction into school has been identified as an important moment in the schooling process. Children who struggle early on are more likely to entrench patterns of failure that may contribute to the decision to drop out. Some research has been done on the impact of organisational characteristics
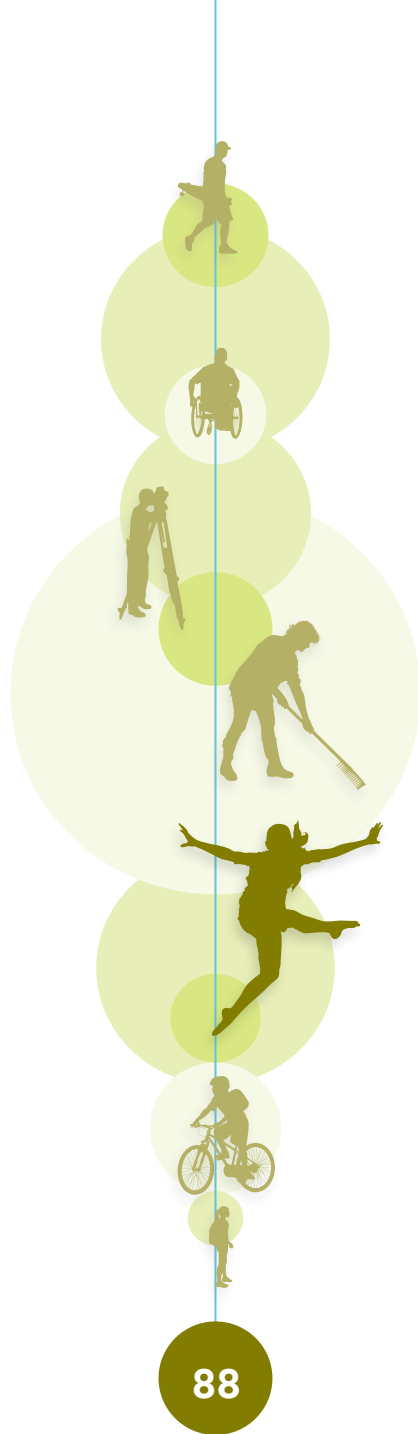
such as school size and approaches to discipline in schools, while the issue of school quality remains under-researched (Werblow and Duesbery, 2009; Rumberger, 1995). There is also evidence to suggest that students who participate in academic and extracurricular activities, i.e. who are more actively engaged in the educational process, are more likely to stay in school (Audas and Willms, 2002).

In the countries of South Eastern Europe, dropout from school is particularly prevalent among the Roma ethnic minority. The literature on Roma school dropout forms part of a broader exploration into the Roma education experience but to date there has been limited research on the experience of Roma students in vocational schools (UNDP, 2013). The broader academic and policy literature focuses on a range of factors including the limited access of Roma children to preschool programmes, the low attendance rates of Roma children in secondary and tertiary education, and the continuing practice of placing Roma children in specialist schools for children with learning difficulties or segregating them within mainstream school settings. No more than 12-20% are enrolled in secondary school in South East Europe and less than 1% in tertiary education across the region except in the case of Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (UNICEF, 2007). Stegelin (2004) highlights the critical importance of preschool education and suggests that children who commence school late are more likely to drop out before they finish the cycle. Socio-economic factors have also been identified as affecting the experience of Roma young people in education (Orgovanova, 2012). The gendered cultural expectations around future family roles and employment patterns of Roma young people are also a risk factor for dropping out – with girls expected to assume domestic responsibilities at a comparatively young age boys experiencing an apparent lack of connection between what is taught at school and the casual labour they are likely to occupy.

The rest of this section focuses on four key issues that contribute to a clear understanding of the process of school dropout in South Eastern Europe, Turkey and Israel including: (i) the extent of dropout; (ii) the profile of those most at risk of dropout; (iii) the causes of school dropout as well as; (iv) measures being undertaken to stem school dropout and thus lessen the likelihood of social exclusion.

6.1 THE EXTENT OF DROPOUT

It is hard to generate an accurate comparative picture of the extent of dropout from VET education in South Eastern Europe, Turkey and Israel. This is in part due to the fact that the data on dropout cited in the reports is not directly comparable. The use of differing definitions and methodologies in measuring the phenomenon has been recognised in the academic and policy literature (Jugovic and Doolan, 2013: 364). In addition, the student surveys inevitably only cover those attending school, not those who have dropped out from VET. The challenge of accurately assessing school dropout is further exacerbated by the lack of systematic attempt to trace the future trajectories of those who dropout from school. Thus, it is not possible to accurately identify which young people have left education altogether, which have transferred to another school and which have entered the labour force.
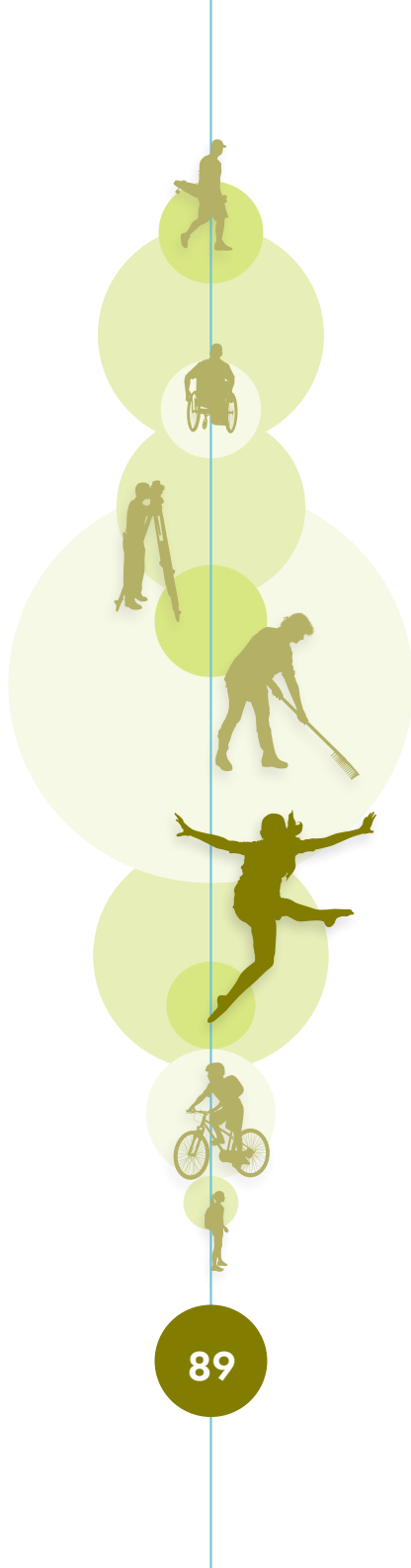
A varied picture emerges of the extent of school dropout both within and across the nine countries in this study. In Albania, for example, the dropout rate in the Economic School in Tirana is less than 1% whereas at the school in Beqir Cela in Durres, which was awarded the prize for being the best vocational school for two years in a row, the dropout rate is 5% (Xhumari and Dibra, 2013). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are wide discrepancies in the data on dropout rates. Research studies reviewed by Branković and Oruc (2013) point to unacceptably high dropout rates, whereas officials in Republika Srpska and the Sarajevo canton paint a rather different picture: 1.1% in Republika Srpska and 2.2% in the Sarajevo canton. In Croatia, the report's authors draw on data from the Labour Force Survey to suggest that dropout rates oscillated between 13-17% for the 2003-2013 period.

6.2 MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY, TRADE AND LABOUR (MOITL)

In Israel, appraising the extent of school dropout is made more complicated by the fact that there is a dual understanding of dropout that encompass both: (i) young people who have dropped out from the mainstream schools which fall under the remit of the Ministry of Education (MoE) to be channelled into the vocational schools run by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labour (MOITL) and; (ii) those who are at risk of dropping out of the MOITL-run schools (Yair et al., 2013). In the words of Yair et al. (2013): 'Dropout is a tautological oxymoron, since all vocational students attend MOITL schools, and all MOITL students are classified as dropouts since they dropped out of MoE schools.' In terms of numbers, 7% of Israeli students drop out of MoE schools and 60% of these are integrated into MOITL schools.

The school principals and teachers interviewed in the Kosovo schools pointed to a fairly consistent dropout rate of 4-5% from 2009-2012 which was not considered a major issue of concern (Gashi and Serhati, 2013). What was of greater concern, however, was the fact that these dropouts were disproportionately concentrated in grade 10, i.e. the first level, which seems to suggest either that the students have been wrongly advised to enter a particular form of vocational education in the first place or that the schools themselves are not doing enough to support their students during their transition between the levels of education and into vocational education in particular.
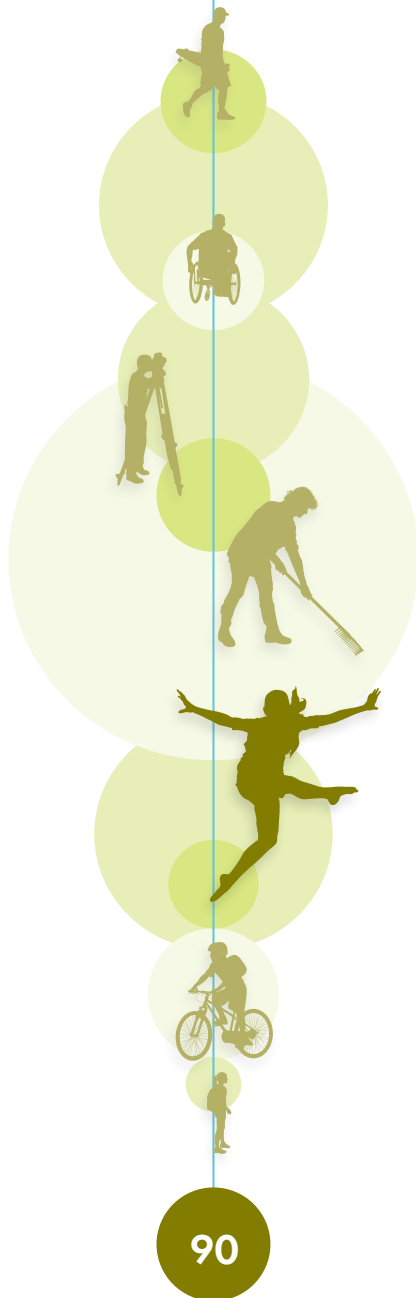
In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the introduction of mandatory secondary education and a series of supporting measures has led to a significant reduction in the number of dropouts from VET, with a decreasing trend in the number of dropouts between 2007 and 2011 (Mojsoska-Blazevski and Ristovska, 2013). The dropout rate in the three chosen schools ranged from 0.6-4.3%, although the authors of the report stress that many of the dropouts occur in the first year with the majority of students opting to change school. The very low dropout rate of 0.6% at the Nikola Stejn vocational School is attributed to the fact that it offers a medical programme which is the most attractive study programme in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In Montenegro, the general school dropout rate including VET appears to be somewhere between 2.3 and 3.2% depending on different surveys that have been carried out. The authors of the case study attributed the low levels of dropout not to the quality and inclusiveness of the education system, but to the ease of obtaining a school diploma and the option open for failing students to take a special exam to re-enter general secondary education at the end of the school year (Kaludjerović and Mirković, 2013). So, for example, in the school in Plav, while the overall official dropout rate is only 1%, over the course of the school year, the actual dropout rises much higher. Around 95% of these students return to education at the end of the school year, after taking the special exam.

The Serbian report identifies higher levels of dropout rates for students undertaking three-year than four-year VET programmes, a point also made in some other case study reports (MOESTD, 2009/2010), suggesting that the three-year programmes are a less attractive option for students (Maksimović and Bratić, 2013). Finally, the authors of the Turkish case study acknowledge that while dropout rates are relatively low in their chosen case study schools, in Vocational and Technical High Schools in Turkey as a whole, these rates are higher than those of all other types of school (Sayan and Yavçan, 2013: 19). The authors highlight a considerable difference between the low level of dropout at the Ankara Girls' school and the higher level of dropout at the Boys' School in Ankara where the selection procedures are less rigorous and there are more high-risk students.

The majority of case study reports point to a lack of systematic attempts to monitor future trajectories of students after they leave school. This is something that merits further attention in order to gain more accurate data on the students who drop out of school and to provide appropriate anti-dropout measures for vocational schools.

6.3 THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DROPOUTS

It is important to differentiate between those who drop out of vocational schools and leave the education system altogether and those who drop out of one vocational school to enter another educational setting. The country case reports reveal that students who drop out from VET share many of the socio-economic characteristics identified in the broader research on this area and discussed in the literature review above. It is evident that dropout in secondary education, vocational schooling included, is closely linked to the financial standing of the family. Students may drop out of school in order to seek employment and help support their families.
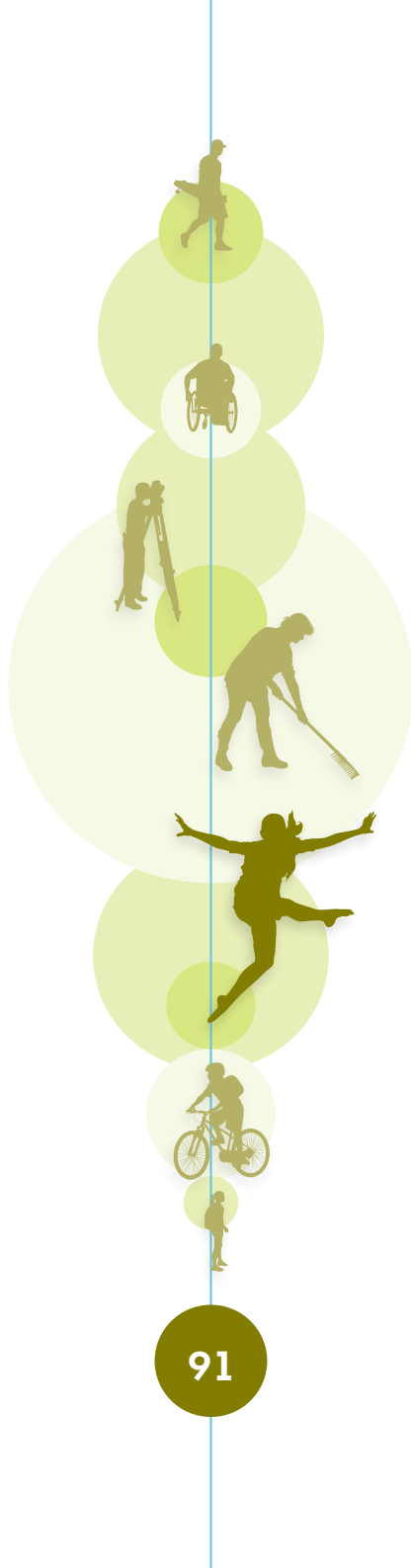
In addition, the risk of dropout is highest among children of parents without upper-secondary education and in the lowest income decile (Matković, et al., 2013). The case study reports point to relatively higher percentages of dropouts among vulnerable groups in society, including children from dysfunctional families, minority groups such as the Roma and those with disabilities. Moreover, children from rural areas are also at greater risk of dropping out (Israel, Kosovo, Serbia, Turkey). The data on gender is unequivocal. Thus, in Turkey male dropout is higher than female dropout for all school types, in Montenegro more boys dropout of vocational schools than girls, whereas in Kosovo the opposite is the case with higher dropout rates among female rather than male students. Finally, religious and cultural practices among different minority groups may also heighten the likelihood of dropout. So, for example, there is some evidence of higher rates of dropout among Roma pupils *inter alia* due to their propensity to marry young (Gashi and Serhati, 2013), although, of course, this may also be due to the prevalence of discriminatory practices, an aspect that was not directly explored within the framework of the current study.

6.3 THE CAUSES OF DROPOUT

It is evident that those students more at risk of dropout from VET education in South Eastern Europe, Turkey and Israel share certain common socio-economic characteristics particularly in terms of having deprived socio-economic backgrounds and there is a definite preponderance of young people with this profile in VET. However, the extensive body of research on school dropout discussed in the literature review above underlines the fact that there is a range of other factors at play. These relate to the student's experience of school and the involvement of parents in their children's schooling, both of which play an important role in the decision to drop out or remain in school. In addition, the institutional framework in which the schools are embedded shapes the capacities of school directors and teachers to support and develop those students who may be struggling.

Students who were generally happy with their schooling identified 'interesting courses' and the 'development of professional skills' as the key contributing factors to their happiness with their respective institutions (Xhumari and Dibra, 2013), while 'cost' was identified as a problem factor for many pupils who travel to school from remote areas. Others identified the 'school environment', the 'welcoming' quality of the environment and 'teaching methods' as important factors that influenced decisions over dropping out (Gashi and Serhati, 2013). It is also evident that some students arrive at vocational schools with low educational achievement due to the shortcomings in their primary education, and this is a particular issue for students from rural areas in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. This creates an additional educational challenge for the vocational school teachers who lack resources to adequately support these students in a way that raises further barriers to their learning (Mojsoska-Blazevski and Ristovska, 2013). There is strong evidence of a correlation between poor performance at school and the likelihood of dropping out (Branković and Oruc, 2013). Finally, there appears to be little established good practice on stemming absenteeism and preventing dropout across the case study schools, where a wide range positive and negative sanctioning systems and support mechanisms are in place. These will be discussed further in the section on measures to prevent dropout (Gashi and Serhati, 2013).
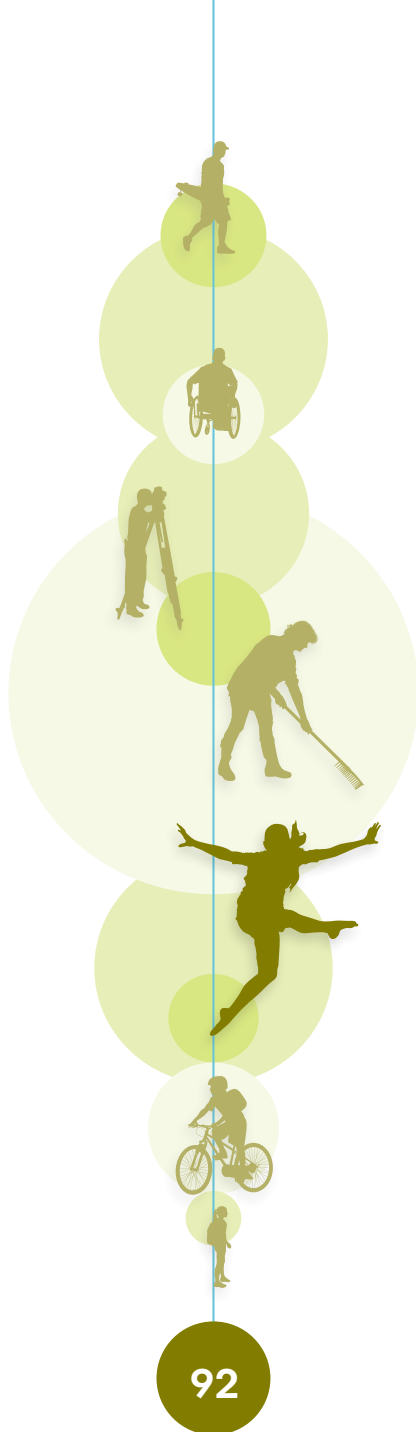
The parental role in students' decisions to remain in school or to drop out was highlighted as a key issue by respondent teachers in Croatia. They also acknowledged that parents who condone their children's absences, may be contributing to the eventual expulsion or dropout of their child (Matković, et al., 2013). The country researchers from Turkey stressed the importance of social networks and peer pressure in influencing students' decisions to drop out on the basis of data collected in focus groups with former students who had dropped out (Sayan and Yavçan, 2013). These students emphasised the strong effect of peer pressure in the decision to drop out of school alongside the socio-economic factors. It has long been reported that a student's peer group becomes more influential as they move up through the education system into secondary level education (Ryan, 2001).

Students enter VET education for a variety of reasons - some will have fallen short of the grades required for the academic schools, while others will be seeking qualifications for a particular form of employment - and these will also influence whether they are more motivated to stay in the system or to drop out. In the Albanian case study schools of Beqir Cela in Durres and the Economic School in Tirana, dropout rates are low as students must complete all levels of the vocational school to either enter university or find a job (Xhumari and Dibra, 2013). In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonian case study, in comparison, the lack of guidance given to students selecting a vocational pathway and the poor evaluation of their aptitudes prior to starting may also influence their decision to stay or drop out of school (Mojsoska-Blazevski and Ristovska, 2013).

In conclusion, several institutional factors have a negative impact on the effective functioning of vocational schools. In Kosovo, administrative mechanisms put in place to prevent school dropout have not been translated into the additional resources needed to establish prevention and response teams within schools, while local municipalities also lack the necessary capacities (Gashi and Serhati, 2013: 7). In Israel, vocational students are caught in the middle of an institutional struggle between the two key ministries responsible for secondary education (Yair et al., 2013). Many of the students in the MOITL schools, having already dropped out of the MoE schools, need greater psychological, economic and social support but find it difficult to access these services due to the feud between the ministries. Funding difficulties also limit the number of students who can enter MOITL schools at the beginning of the year and there is no mechanism in place for those who may dropout from MoE schools in the course of the academic year.

6.4 MEASURES TO PREVENT SCHOOL DROPOUT

'The socio-economic background of the students is not always related to their performance; some of the poor children are highly motivated to achieve more. We must all work on increasing student motivation' (Parent, School Council of Parents, quoted in Mojsoska-Blazevski and Ristovska, 2013).
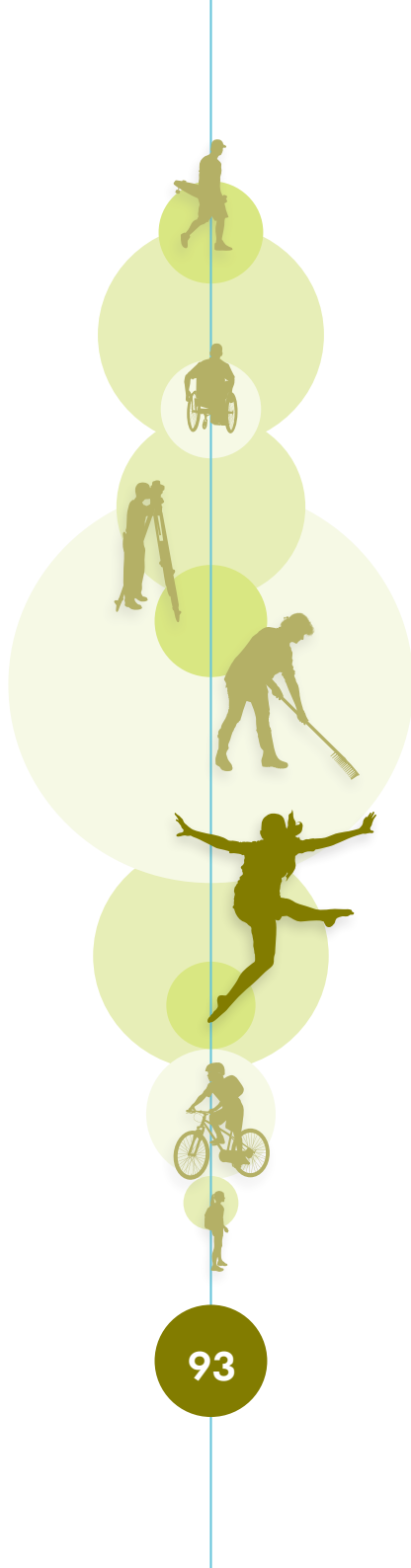
There is a general consensus among the country reports that once students drop out they become 'lost to the system' and are at ever greater risk of social exclusion (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo). Due to limited resources, schools and local authorities focus support on assisting students to remain in the system rather than assisting those who have dropped out. In the words of the researchers from Croatia: 'Once students leave education they become invisible to the education system' (Matković, et al., 2013).

A range of mechanisms combining differing degrees of positive developmental measures and sanctioning actions have been put in place to stop students dropping out of school. It is worth noting that our case study reports show the main approaches to reducing dropout have focused more on measures to support children in schools, including the greater involvement of parents, and less on measures to develop and support the teachers. Some concerns remain about the quality of teaching and leadership in a number of the case study schools.

In Albania, the Beqir Cela vocational school in Durres has organised assessment exams for first year students in mathematics, physics and chemistry so that teachers can identify those students most in need of additional teaching (Xhumari and Dibra, 2013). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, schools monitor students' academic performance and absences from school, as these are considered to be the main causes of dropout, and they have defined procedures for communicating with parents, students and doctors (Branković and Oruc, 2013). At the same time, the authorities have increased the number of non-attendance days accepted during the school year, but parents may be subject to legal sanctions in cases of negligence and irresponsible behaviour. The number of allowed unexcused student absences permitted prior to expulsion varies from school to school. In Sarajevo, a student is allowed 45 unexcused absences, while the limit in Mostar has been placed at 25 following a trend of unexcused absences.
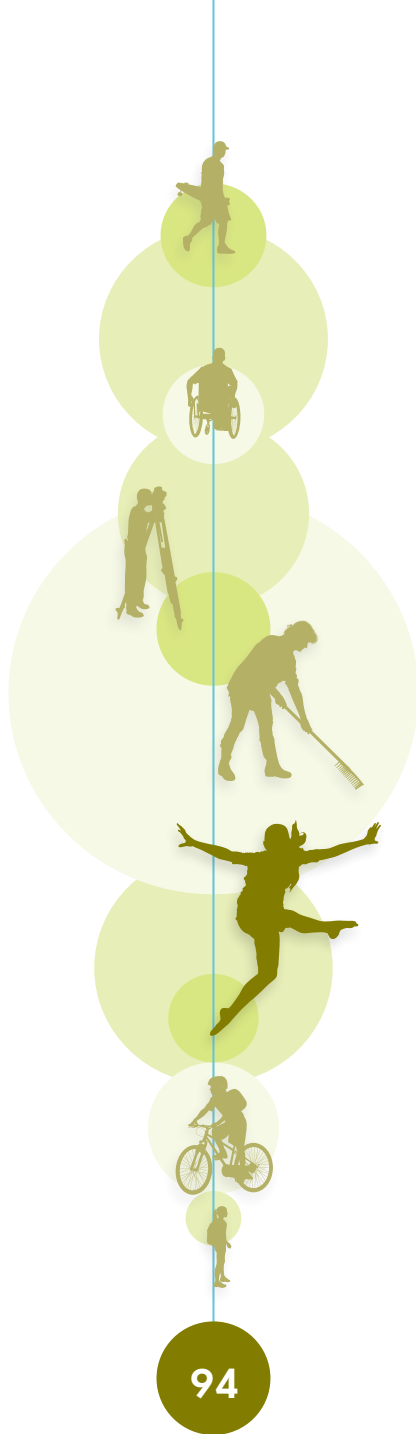
Box 10: Monitoring Academic Performance and School Attendance in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Sarajevo, the school contacts the parent if a student has five or more negative grades or has missed several classes in a row. A meeting is held with the parents and the student, and issues are discussed openly. Additional extracurricular classes are organised to improve the students' academic performance, but it has provided difficult to ensure that students attend such classes. To stem absenteeism, which often leads to delinquent behaviour on the street, the school has instituted the practice of verifying excuse notes. Following two or more such notes, the teacher will contact the parents and doctors to determine whether the absences were justified.

In Foča, if constant absences are observed, the school contacts the health centre to identify whether the student has a chronic condition. Parents are asked to sign an agreement declaring that they will pay special attention to their children's academic performance and absences. The school also involves the pedagogue[16], psychologist, the school board, and the teachers' council, the Centre for Social Services, the Red Cross and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Students are also given the possibility to transfer into a lower level programme of studies if the one they are currently in is too challenging.

Source: Branković and Oruc (2013)

In Croatia, there is strong institutional effort to prevent dropout (Matković, et al., 2013). There are a number of possible exclusion points which pose a risk for dropout throughout the learning process and students who fail a year, attend classes irregularly or skip practical training face possible disciplinary measures including exclusion. However, it is common practice for students faced with problems to be streamed into a less demanding educational programme. A 'grace' period of three months is usually prescribed before any decision is taken to permanently exclude a student. In such cases, teachers will often set lower criteria, provide additional instruction and repeat exams in order to help students pass, making the passage through education easier for students who lack motivation or sufficient capacities. This practice decreases the incidence of dropout. Furthermore, if a decision is made within a prescribed time frame, dropouts are allowed to return to school or enrol in a different school programme.

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[16]A psycho-pedagogue is a teacher of pedagogy and psychology, a professional educated at the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology, University of Sarajevo, with a professional competence from the field of pedagogy an psychology. Their role in the schools is close to what in other places is called a school psychologist. In 1989 the title was changed as the Department of Psychology started to educate psychologists rather the psycho-pedagogues.
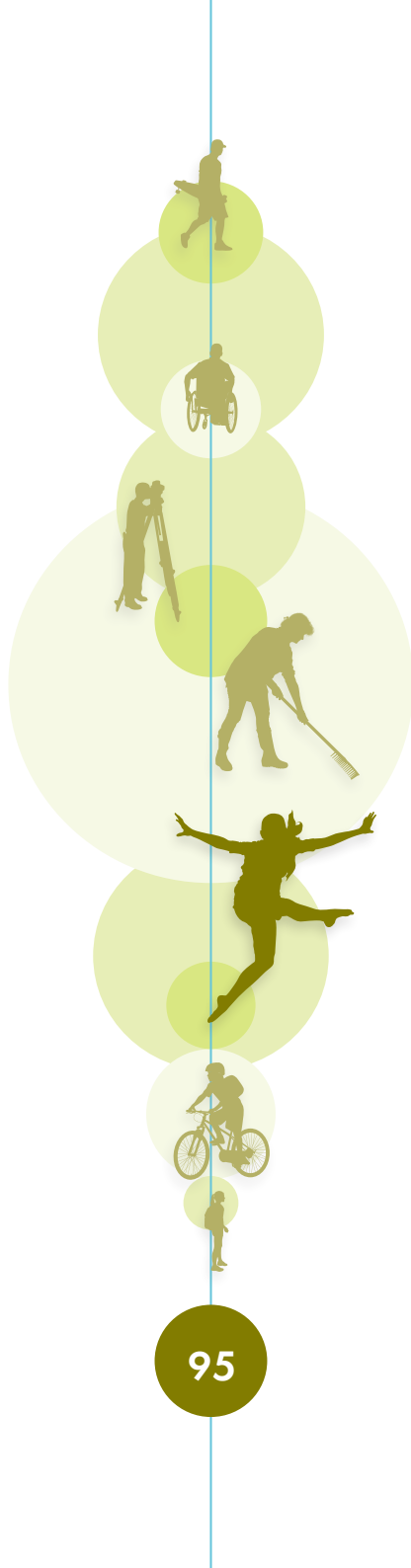
In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, both positive incentives and sanctions are used to reduce levels of school dropout (Mojsoska-Blazevski and Ristovska, 2013). Positive support and developmental measures include free books and transport to allay the financial constraints on poor families, in-school counselling for at-risk pupils and their parents as well as mentoring for students with lower levels of attainment. Conditional cash transfers and financial payments have been made available to families in receipt of social assistance whose children attend school regularly, scholarships have been provided for talented Roma students on the condition of continued good performance, and the mentoring and tutoring of Roma pupils have also been introduced. Moreover, since 2010, the role of the State Inspectorate of Education (SEI) has been strengthened in order to enforce measures for those students who drop out or who are not enrolled in secondary education. There is now a mandatory procedure that obliges schools to report all dropouts to the SEI including a statement of the reasons for the action.

In addition, a range of systems have been put in place at the school level in the country. These include several mechanisms to track student absenteeism and support students with low attainment levels such as: student and parent consultations; follow-up meetings with psychologists or pedagogues and; additional classes in subjects where they have poor attainment. The ASUC Boro Petrusevksi school has established a mentoring system for low-performing students, where 16 mentors work with the students and monitor their progress. Furthermore, a three-pronged strategy for preventing dropout has been developed, concentrating on the aspects of student professional development, education and upbringing. The activities concentrate on student professional development from the first year of study, on-going review and reform of study programmes to reflect changes in the labour market, student inclusion in extra-curricular activities, visits to international and local fairs and volunteer work.

A number of procedures are in place to decrease dropout rates in Montenegro (Kaludjerović and Mirković, 2013) including a system to monitor students are at risk of leaving school before the end of the programme and counselling for students who decide to leave school early. Pedagogues and teachers continually monitor student's grades and progress and develop cooperative relationships with parents, informing parents of their child's progress.
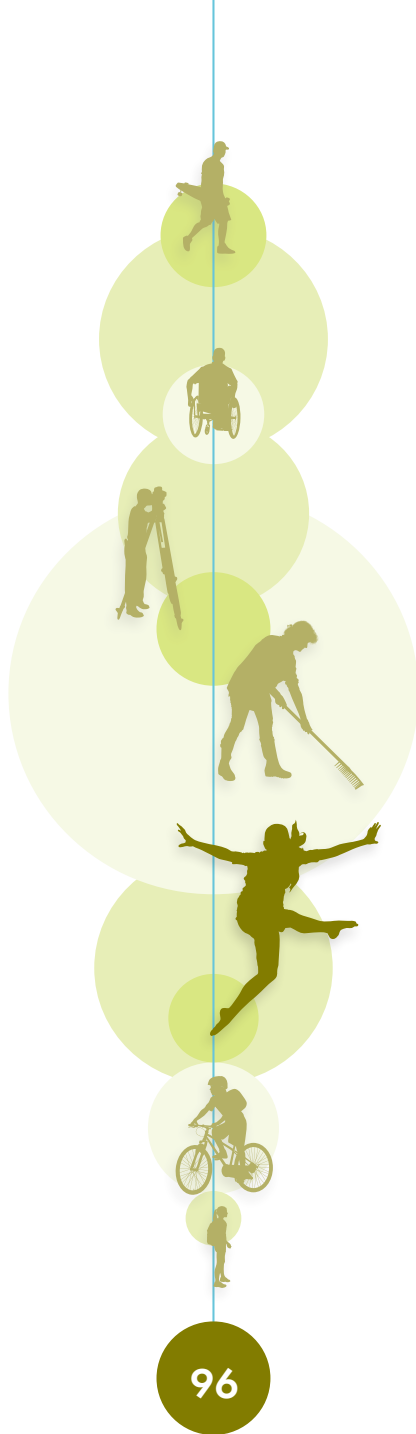
Box 11: Keeping records on students' progress in Plav in Montenegro

The vocational school in Plav creates 'social cards' for all students in cooperation with the Centre for Social Work that enable the school to monitor the students during their education. The 'social card' consists of information about the student: the number of family members, the employment status of the parents, possible problems in the families and the health situation of the parents. Additionally, teachers visit parents at home in order to discuss the problems facing the students and prevent them from dropping out of school.

Source: Kaludjerović and Mirković (2013)

In Serbia, in order to stem dropout rates, particularly in three-year programmes, the government has implemented a number of measures to extend free education so that students over 17 years-old are able to acquire at least an initial qualification (Maksimović and Bratić, 2013). The new legislation allows schools to increase the number of educational programmes on offer and to develop programmes of varying duration delivered within the formal system, including: two-year work training programmes offering lower VET qualifications; vocational training programmes of up to one year; labour market training programmes of up to one year, after which the trainees receive a certificate of training for specific jobs in the labour market and; specialist and craft education programmes.

The Ministry of Education in Turkey has sponsored a guidance booklet on the issue of school dropout but the officials interviewed reported a lack of rigour in policy approaches to preventing school dropout (Sayan and Yavçan, 2013). Teachers and counsellors in schools acknowledged the importance of the issue, but underlined the lack of both resources and policy direction from the government. Although counselling interventions are recognised as critical in preventing dropout, the schools in Turkey find it hard to fill such posts. Some instances of positive experiences were reported for institutions such as the Ankara Girls' school. Here, the incidence of dropout in is very low as the friendly environment at the school plays an important role in building the institutional attachment of students and, when a case of a pupil at risk of dropping out does arise, the school takes an active approach to preventing this.

Box 12: Teacher coaches at the Industrial Boy's School in Istanbul

Despite limited resources, the Industrial Boys' School in Istanbul has set up a coaching scheme to support struggling students. Toward the end of each semester, high-risk students are identified in all grades and each student is allocated a teacher coach who volunteers to participate in the programme. For each high-risk student they coach, each teacher is also matched with a high performing student. An evaluation made based on the students' grades showed that 60% of the students in the programme improved their performance. The programme is now being extended in a pilot area in Istanbul.

Source: Sayan and Yavça (2013)

In contrast to the positive examples given above, Kosovo has no preventive methods to deter dropout despite the apparently supportive legislation. The 28 Nentori school in Pristina even adopts a penalty-based system that results in the dismissal of badly behaved students without recourse (Gashi and Serhati, 2013).
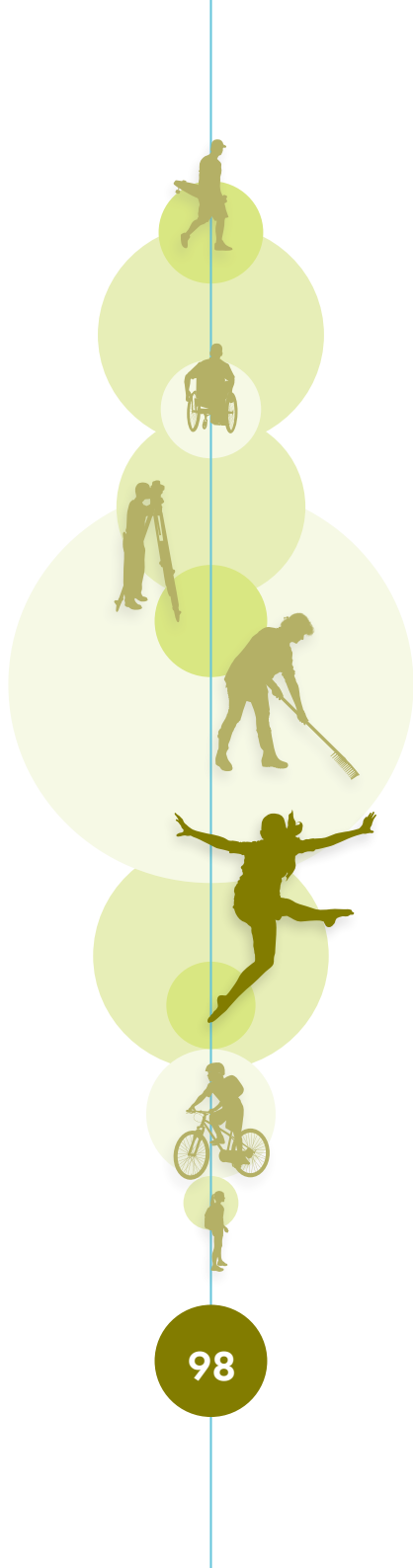
6.5 CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this section are consistent with the drivers of school dropout in other countries, demonstrating that while socio-economic background may be a strong predictor of school dropout it is not the sole cause of the phenomenon. Although students who are most vulnerable to school dropout tend to come from predominantly lower level socio-economic groups and other disadvantaged groups, students' experience at school and parents and peers also play important roles.

These policy recommendations aim to stem the risk of dropout through improving the experience of students at school in the following ways:

- Reduce drop out by creating a more friendly environment for all students;

- Offer individual guidance to students at risk of dropping out;

- Promote the targeted development, support and engagement of students throughout their educational progression;

- Involve parents more actively in schools and in the learning activities of their children;

- Directly engage local employers and NGOs in vocational schools and in their integration into the local community.
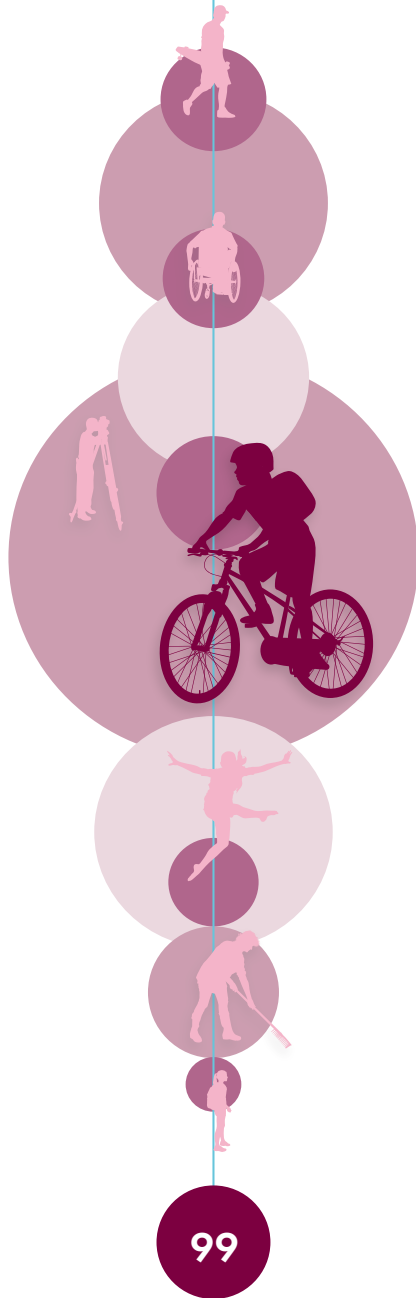
7.0 TRANSITION FROM EDUCATION TO WORK

This chapter focuses on what happens to vocational students after they leave school and the extent to which their learning experience provides them with the skills appropriate to ensuring their inclusion in the labour market. After a brief literature review of research on this issue, mainly in EU countries, Section 7.1 turns to the analysis of students' destinations after leaving school. Section 7.2 analyses their access to the labour market. Section 7.3 reviews arrangements for providing career guidance to vocational students, or the lack of these, while Section 7.4 presents some findings on suggested ways to improve the job prospects of vocational students. Section 7.5 sets out some conclusions and policy recommendations.

On completion of their vocational schooling, graduates face the choice of continuing on to higher education, if their chosen track allows this, or of making the transition to the world of work. In the former Yugoslav states, the vocational system is split into four-year programmes that permit continuation to university studies and three-year programmes that do not. Turkey and Israel have more complex secondary education structures that involve different types of schools catering to the various ethnic and religious groups (Arab and Haredi schools in Israel, Imam Hatip schools in Turkey) as well as divisions between schools of a more academic orientation and those with a more vocational orientation leading graduates straight into the world of work (the Anatolian high schools and vocational high schools in Turkey).

Students will make the decision over their destination after school, into the labour market or on to higher education on the basis of an interplay of various factors. Their decisions are partly constrained by the structure of the education system and initial selection into different streams of schooling and partly by further choices they make for themselves. Their decision will be affected by their perceptions of prevailing conditions on the labour market, where the potentially lengthy waiting times before finding a first job push increasing numbers of students to attempt further studies at universities or other tertiary education institutions.

Evidence from the United States (Bishop and Mane, 2004) shows that graduates who have participated in school-based VET and who enter the labour market directly from vocational school can perform equally well or better in terms of employment and wages than high school graduates. These authors therefore concluded that young people benefit from choosing VET in terms of both employment and wages. In contrast, academic education in the UK leads to higher returns, and unemployment rates from 2003 to 2005 were lower among those with general education backgrounds than among those with vocational education in the EU and the OECD countries (OECD, 2006).
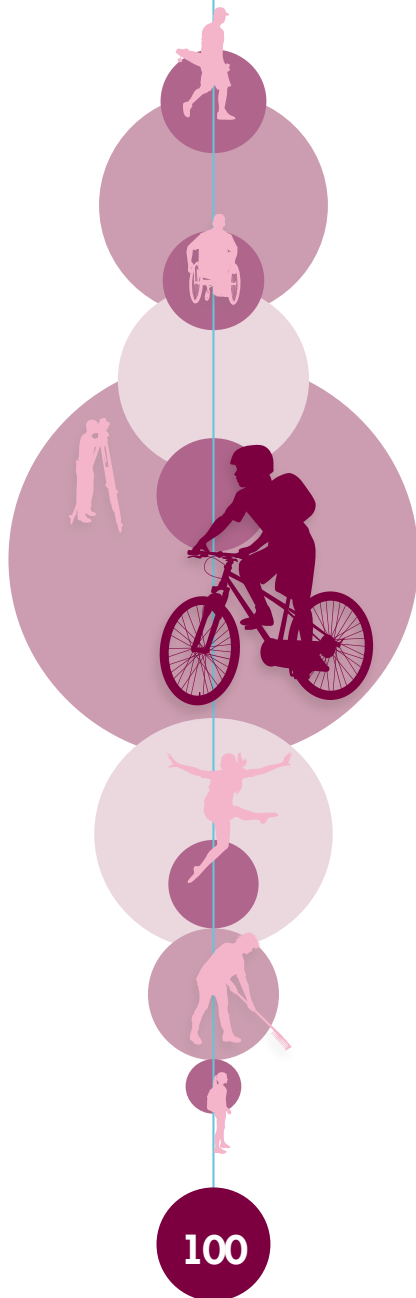
These positive results are sensitive to the type of VET obtained. Schlotter et al. (2011) showed the greatest benefits arise from VET when there is a good match between the training and the employment occupation. Similarly, Neuman and Ziderman (1999), in researching the differences in returns to vocational versus academic schooling in Israel, also stated that the main benefit of VET only arises when a good match is established between VET and the occupation of employment, with a vocational qualification as a nurse or a teacher providing the highest returns in public employment. Hanushek et al. (2011) compared employment rates for people with general and vocational education using micro data from the International Adult Literacy Survey for 18 countries. They found strong support for the hypothesis that the relative labour-market advantage of VET decreases with age, a pattern that is most pronounced in countries with apprenticeship programmes.

Cross-country studies of apprenticeship find that the dual system used in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland provides a much smoother transition from school to work, low rates of youth unemployment, of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) and below average repeated unemployment spells than other systems (Quintini, et al., 2007). Winkelmann (1996) shows that participation in the dual apprenticeship system in Germany improves early labour market attachment and provides faster and more structured integration into the labour market. Adda et al. (2013) find that participation in formal, work-related training through the dual apprenticeship system in Germany leads to overall higher wages and a stronger labour market attachment than pure on-the-job training, compensating workers for initially low wages during apprenticeship training.

However, countries with well-established apprenticeship systems also have higher unemployment among older people, suggesting that their education and training did not provide them with adaptable skills (see Ryan, 1998). This finding is consistent with other studies that show VET may boost the initial labour-market access of young people, but that the positive effect diminishes at later career stages (European Commission, 2007: 119). Employers tend to discriminate in favour of apprentices with good school achievement and less-qualified young people consequently often require a period of remedial education after compulsory schooling (ILO, 2012: 23) and, also, the choice of apprenticeship occupations for young women have remained focused primarily on the business and service sectors despite campaigns to attract them into predominantly male occupations (ILO, 2012). Ainsworth and Roscigno (2005) found that VET may increase the chances of entering employment in the US context, but that students who are poor, minority and female students may not benefit from this protection.
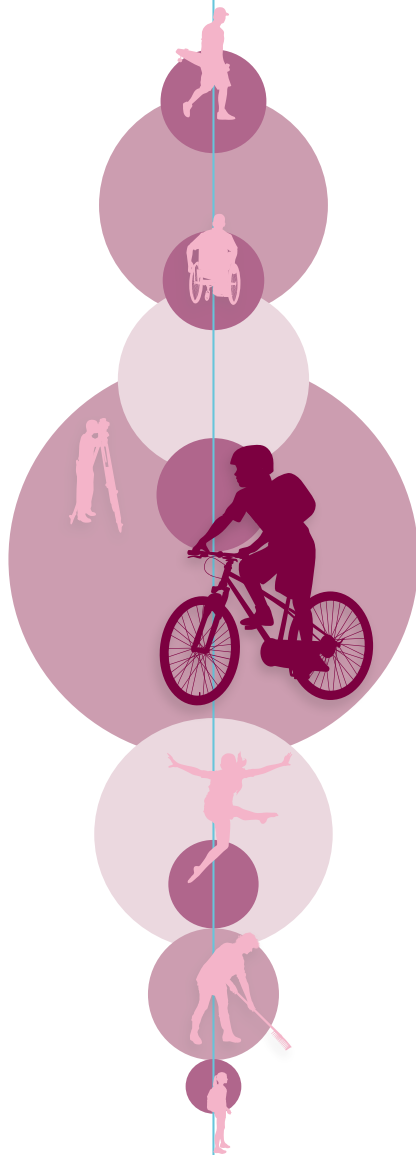
Career guidance systems can play an important role in successful transition to work or further education for students. Yet in many cases, career guidance is simply not available to vocational students or is not of sufficient quality for them to take an informed decision. In Turkey, Gazioglu et al. (2007) found that guidance counsellors place greater importance on educational than vocational guidance and that the vocational guidance provided was not effective due to high student numbers. In the Netherlands, Meijers et al. (2013) found that career guidance contributed substantially to the effectiveness of VET by improving student motivation, their selection of courses and the fit with work placement and internship choices. Careers guidance is thus an important element of the overall student experience in the transition from school to work.

One of the reasons for the difficulties encountered by many graduates of vocational schools in their transition to work is that the curricula in vocational schools are often unsuited to labour market needs. In the transition countries for instance the curricula inherited from the previous communist system were unsuited to the development of a service-oriented market economy (Commander and Kollo, 2008). Many countries have still not upgraded their vocational curricula to reflect the new occupations in the service sectors and high technology industries (Murthi and Sondergaard, 2010) and the skills taught in vocational schools are often specialised in obsolete occupations (Fetsi, 2007: 82). Education methods are frequently out-dated, depending more on rote learning than problem solving and there is a deficit of education in the 'soft' transferable skills. Skill mismatches on the labour market have been widely linked to the poor quality and irrelevance of education provision.

The experience of students in their job search or access to further education after leaving school is a third and final point of social exclusion for young people in the pathway through upper-secondary VET. Many students face difficulties in finding work and prefer to continue with further education, yet access to further education may also be restricted for many students due to their poor performance at school or financial considerations. The pattern of effects differs across countries and between schools.

Very little data is available on the destination of students after they finish vocational schools in any of the case study countries; a problem that is explicitly mentioned by four of them (Croatia, Kosovo, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro). As a general observation, students in all countries have difficulty finding work due to the poor economic situation throughout the region.
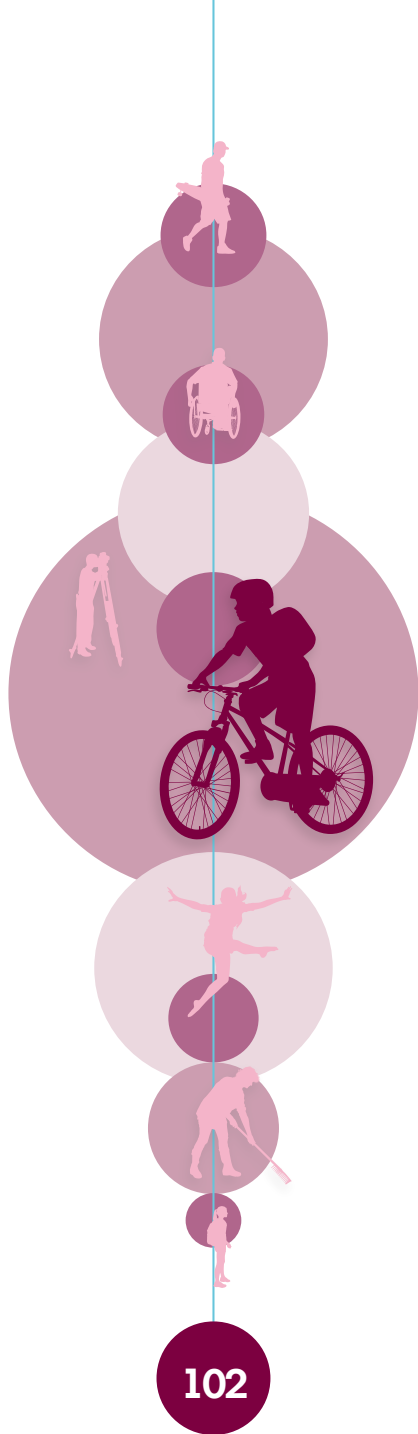
7.1. DESTINATION AFTER SCHOOL

Figure 17 shows that students have a variety of strategies after leaving school and most consider either looking for paid work or applying for university. Many choose to follow several of the paths concurrently.

Figure 17: Student intentions after leaving school
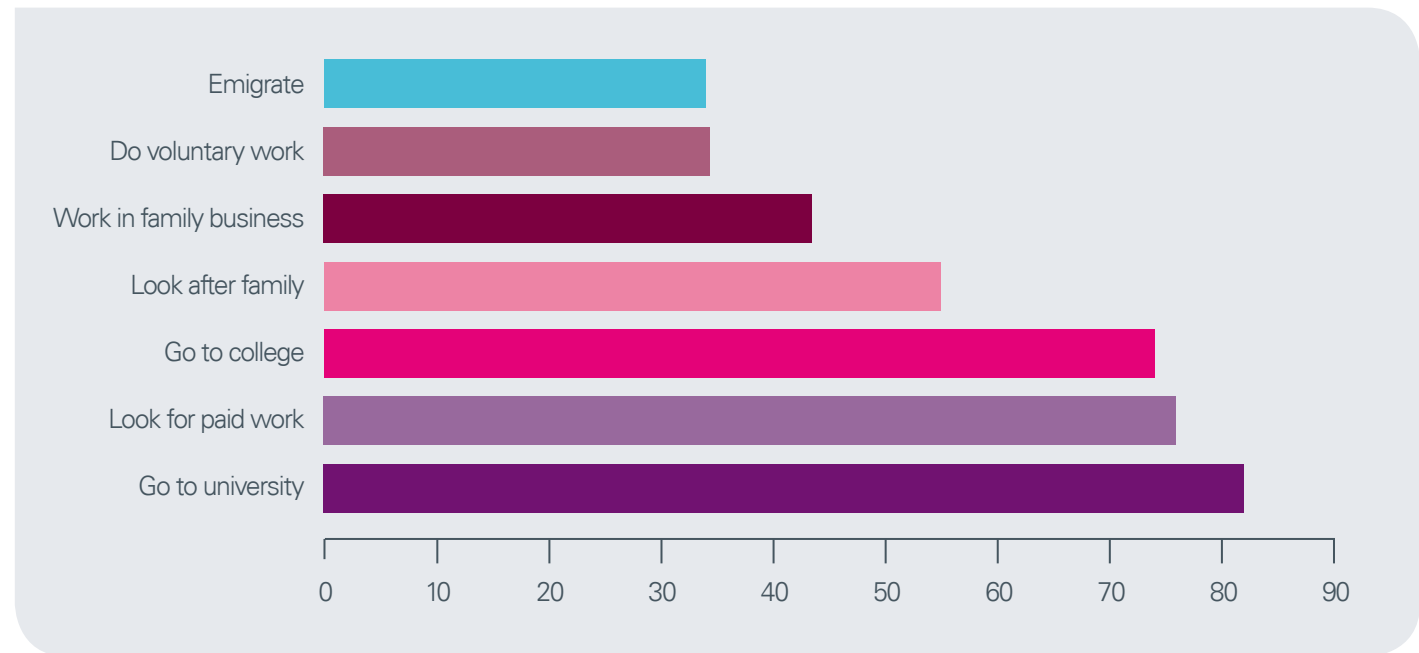
Note: The horizontal bars show the proportion of respondents to the student survey who answered 'yes' to a range of questions on their intentions after leaving school. Multiple answers to this question were allowed.
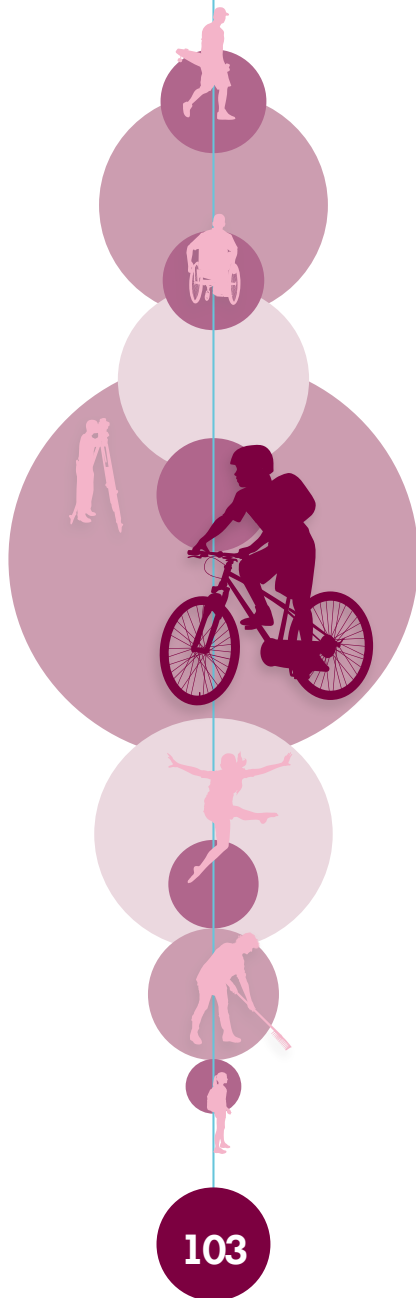
The most common strategy, adopted by one third of students (35.5%), is to simultaneously look for paid work, apply for university and look after their family. The next most common strategy, adopted by one fifth of students (18.9%), is to combine looking for paid work with applying for a place at university, while a significant proportion (16.9%) also plan to apply only for a university place. One tenth (9.6%) plan to look for a job and look after their family.

The intention of looking after the family is the element that varies most from country to country, with three quarters (73%) of students in Kosovo expecting to look after their family compared to only one in seven (14%) in Croatia. A similar pattern is seen in these two countries in relation to working in a family business. Perhaps unrealistically, 93% of students in Kosovo intend to apply for university, whereas students in the Croatian schools are most likely to seek a job (86%). More than half of students from Kosovo intend to do some voluntary work compared to just one fifth in Montenegro, while over a third of students from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia would consider emigrating compared to just one tenth in Croatia.

In Albania, about one tenth of graduates from all vocational schools continue their education at university, whereas in Tirana, almost all (nine tenths) of the graduates of the Economic School proceed to further studies at university level and almost a quarter of vocational school graduates in Croatia continue on to university. In the former Yugoslav countries, graduates of four-year courses are more likely to find a place at a university and about three quarters of students on such courses in Montenegro continue on to university.

Student background seems to have a significant effect on some aspects of aspirations after leaving school. Those with a disability are significantly less likely to apply for a place at university: only just over half of those with a disability (54.3%) compared to almost nine tenths of those without (82.2%) (χ^2=17.5, p<0.01). Mothers' education is also related to aspirations. Students whose mother attended university are less likely to look for a paid job (χ^2=29.4, p<0.01), less likely to look after their family (χ^2=16.7, p<0.05) and more likely to seek a place at university (χ^2=19.5, p<0.01). Students whose father attended university are also less likely to look for a paid job (χ^2=19.8, p<0.01), less likely to look after their family (χ^2=25.9, p<0.01) and more likely to seek a place at university (χ^2=30.2, p<0.01).
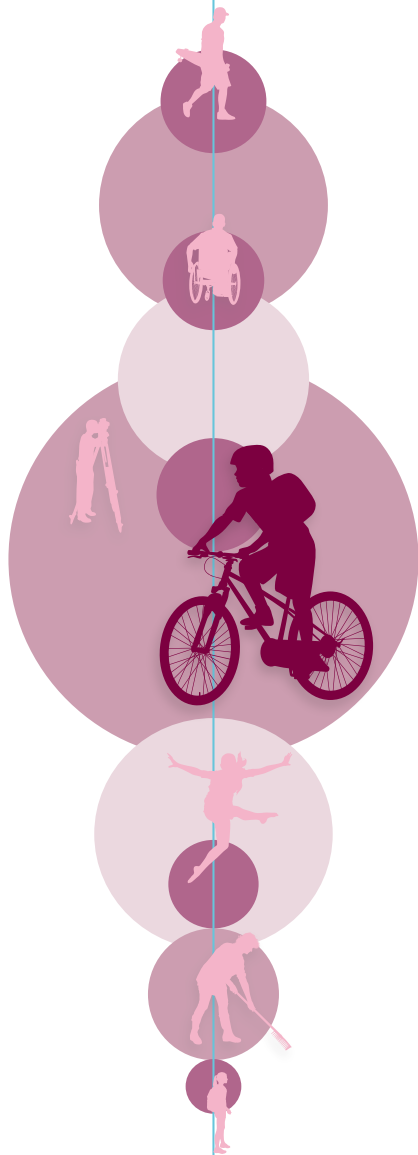
Figure 18: Parental work patterns related to family help in finding a job

Legend: Parent without job (dark) / Parent(s) have a job (light)

Category	Parent without job	Parent(s) have a job
No	~24%	~76%
A little	~22%	~78%
Somewhat	~17%	~83%
Much	~14%	~86%
Very much	~14%	~86%
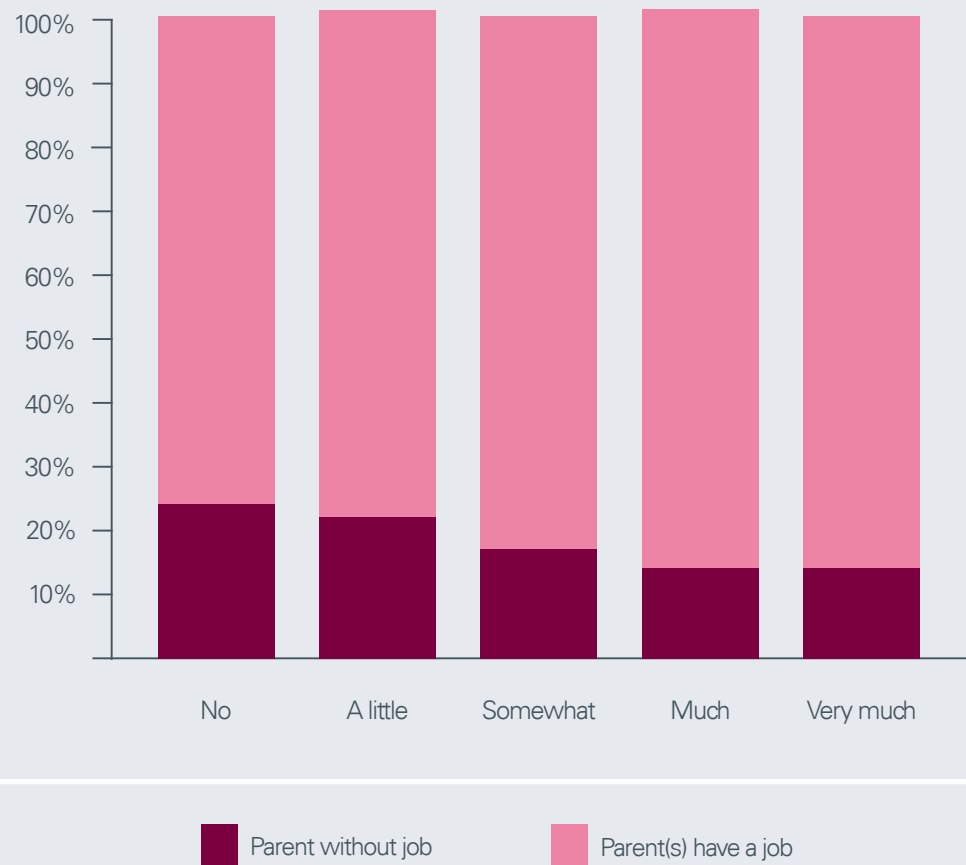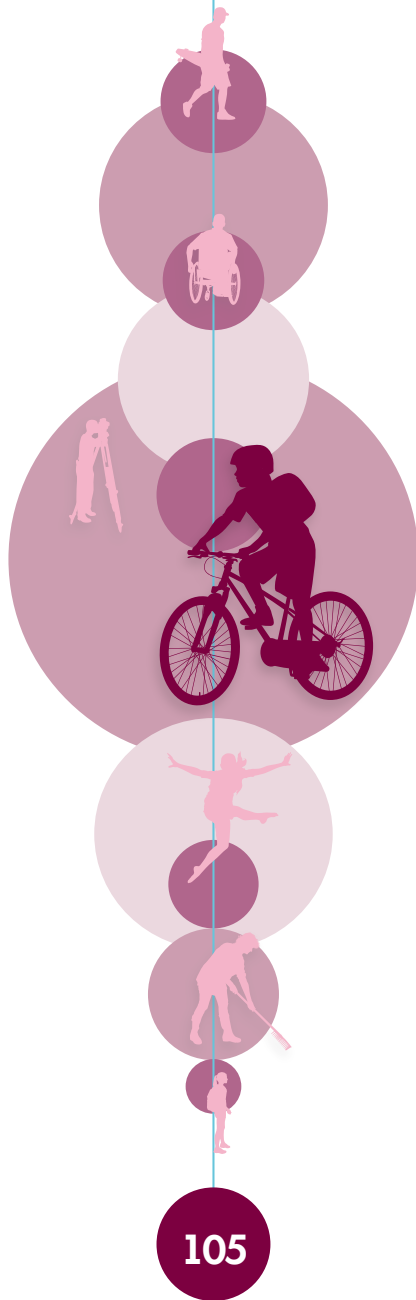
Students from socially excluded families in which the parents do not go out to work plan to rely less on the assistance of their family in finding a job than those with a parent in work ($\chi^2=12.9$, $p<0.05$). This shows the importance of social networks and connections in finding a job in South Eastern Europe, Turkey and Israel and suggests that much more attention should be given to fostering links between schools and parents as a means of improving educational outcomes.

Overall, whether a student plans to attend university or seek paid work depends positively on their happiness within school and their mother's level of education and negatively on whether the student has a disability and the number of hours spent in practical education in a company.

7.2 ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET

Students who do not manage to find a place at a university seek work on the labour market. While most students say the skills they have gained at school will be useful to them in their job search, about one in ten say that the skills they have acquired will be of only a little or no use to them. Students whose parents do not go out to work are more likely than others to plan to look for paid work after leaving school. Students from such socially excluded families plan to rely on the public employment services in finding a job far more than those with a parent in work.

In Albania, the prospects are somewhat better than in other countries as this state escaped the worst effects of the recession. In Durres, two thirds of students find employment in jobs related to their field of study after leaving vocational school (Xhumari and Dibra, 2013). The best students are able to find jobs in large companies. Students leaving training centres have worse prospects, however. In Elbasan, only one third of the training centre graduates manage to find a job after graduation. Students with the lowest job prospects often find work in a family business or become self-employed. In Kosovo, the employment prospects of graduates are very poor (Gashi and Serhati, 2013). One fifth of students believe it would take over a year to find a job. One school director thought that the employment rate of graduates from his school to be very low and that graduate students were even less likely to find a job related to their field of study. In Prizren, one third of students find a job but this is not necessarily in their field of study. In Gjakova, the principal of the Kadri Kusari school remarked that 'the school does not monitor employment of students - but we know that it is a rate close to zero'. Even those who find a job often take a long time in the job search process. In Serbia, most students think it would take them over a year to find a job, while about two fifths think expect to find a job within six months of graduation.

Students who manage to find an apprenticeship are at a relative advantage in obtaining employment. In Croatia and in Serbia, getting a job placement under an apprenticeship scheme often leads students straight into employment after finishing school (Matković, et al., 2013; Maksimović and Bratić, 2013). However, the
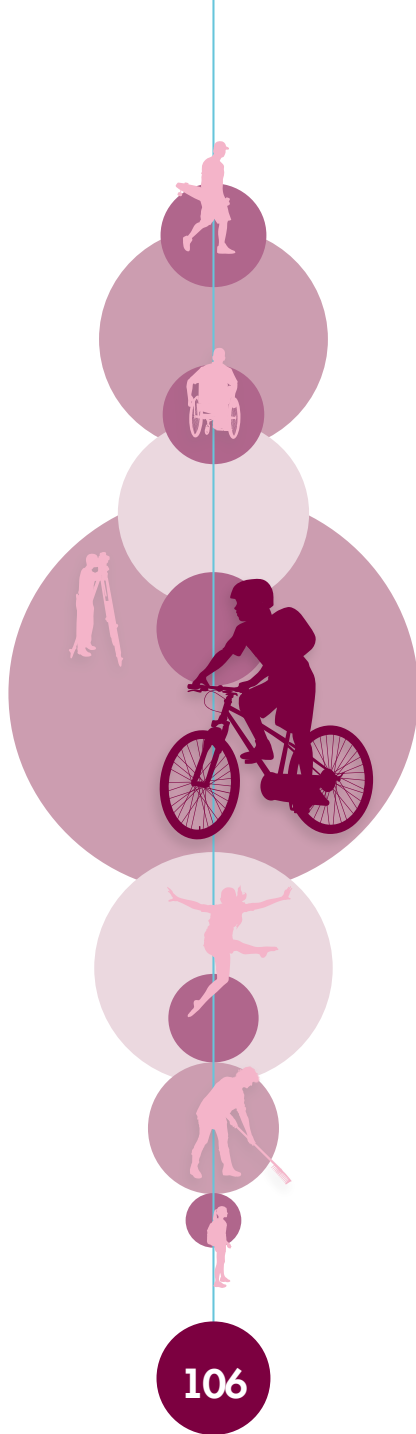
Croatian study found an increasing unwillingness of employers to provide apprenticeship training. This is unfortunate since the Croatian case stands out as one of the few in which apprenticeship training has been adopted as an important model in VET education. The reasons given for this unfavourable trend were financial difficulties among employers, a lack of student motivation, the time needed to train students and their inadequate skills in dealing with customers.

The student survey revealed that students are on the whole not worried that they will face discrimination in finding a job when they leave school. However, 15% think that they will face 'much' or 'very much' discrimination due to their ethnicity, 13.2% due to a disability, 13.4% due to gender and 13.1% due to religion. Over one third of students (34.6%) think they will have difficulty finding a job due to poor grades achieved and one third of students think they will have difficulty finding a job simply because of the school they attended (33.8%).

The student survey showed substantial differences between countries in the expected difficulty of finding a job due to various forms of discrimination. Gender discrimination is most expected in Kosovo, while ethnic discrimination is most expected in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Vocational students from Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania have the highest expectations of discrimination due to disability. In Montenegro, despite the subsidies paid to employers who take on staff with disabilities, more than a tenth of students consider disability would be a barrier to finding a job after leaving school. Furthermore, the qualitative research interviews in both Croatia and Serbia showed students who finish education in special schools or within special programmes often have difficulties in finding a job simply because employers are not willing to hire students from these schools (Matković, et al., 2013; Maksimović and Bratić, 2013). However, students expected the greatest problems in finding a job in relation to the qualifications obtained and to the school attended, both of which figure prominently in students' concerns in Albania and Kosovo.

A further insight into the difficulties some students experience in accessing labour markets was derived from the teacher survey. This revealed that teachers find great difficulty in placing disabled and special needs students in work. Overall, more than two thirds of teachers reported that it was 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to place disabled students in a job, and three fifths reported the same level of difficulty for special needs students.

Roma students and students from minority groups have specific difficulties in finding a job due to discrimination. In both Croatia and Serbia, the research identified prejudice as a reason why Roma students have difficulty in gaining employment (Matković, et al., 2013; Maksimović and Bratić, 2013). According to the teacher survey results, about half of all teachers reported it is 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to place a Roma student in work after leaving school.
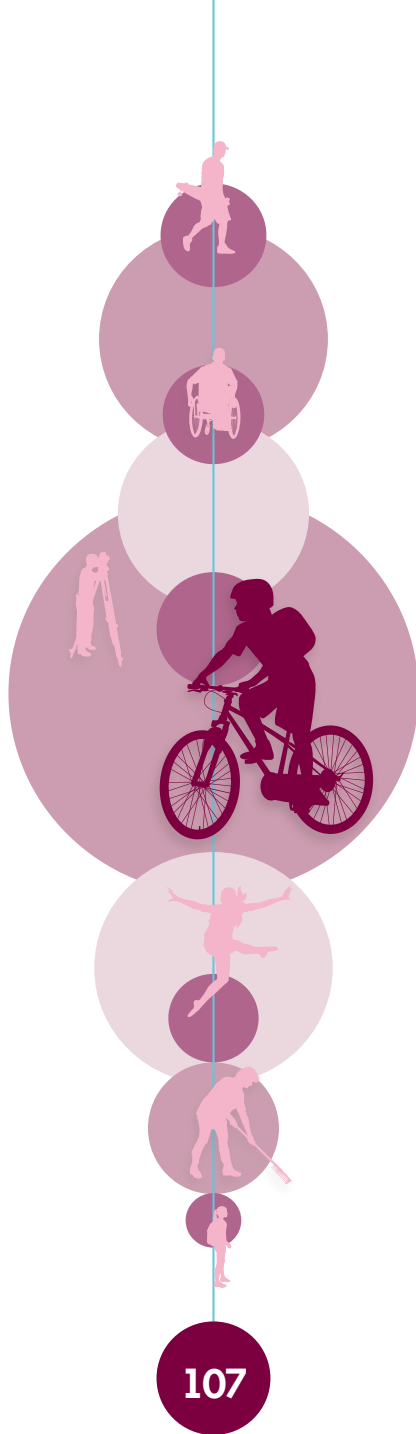
7.3 CAREER GUIDANCE

A major hindrance to students in their attempts to find a job is the pervasive lack of career guidance and counselling reported in all countries without exception. In Albania, most schools provide only basic career guidance on the type of available jobs and professions, but they do not provide support to students in choosing their future professions (Xhumari and Dibra, 2013). In Croatia, there is no formal guidance on labour market opportunities in schools, so students lack knowledge about career options or possible paths to employment (Matković, et al., 2013). In Kosovo, none of the schools had a career guidance service, meaning that students do not have the necessary information on which jobs are available or how to apply for them (Gashi and Serhati, 2013). The situation was slightly better in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia where each case study school had a careers centre (Mojsoska-Blazevski and Ristovska, 2013). However the centres lack sufficient staff capacity, reducing their ability to provide in-school guidance and counselling services. International organisations and local NGOs try to fill the gap in most countries by providing project-based guidance programmes, but these tend to lack sustainability. One example mentioned in the Albanian case study was the UNICEF 'YES' programme in Elbasan that helps students to produce a CV and provides them with advice on how to run their own business.

Links with employment offices are very weak. In Albania, the links to the employment offices in Durres and Elbasan are stronger than in Tirana. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonian report noted that school-based career centres lack any formal links with local employment agencies. Links with the business community are also reported to be weak in several of the country case studies (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo).

In most of the study countries, family ties were found to be a major factor in a successful job search for graduates from vocational schools. Family ties are more important than employment offices in finding a job in Albania, while family assistance is clearly the most important factor in finding a job in Montenegro. In Kosovo, students must have personal connections with decision makers within a company in addition to family links in order to find employment after graduation and students with a family history of craftsmanship in Croatia are often expected to join the family business.

The student survey shows that students expect to access multiple sources of help in searching for a job. Many expect to receive help from family or friends, while many also expect to have help from the public employment service. Far fewer expect any help from their school, a school career guidance centre, their teachers or a youth centre.
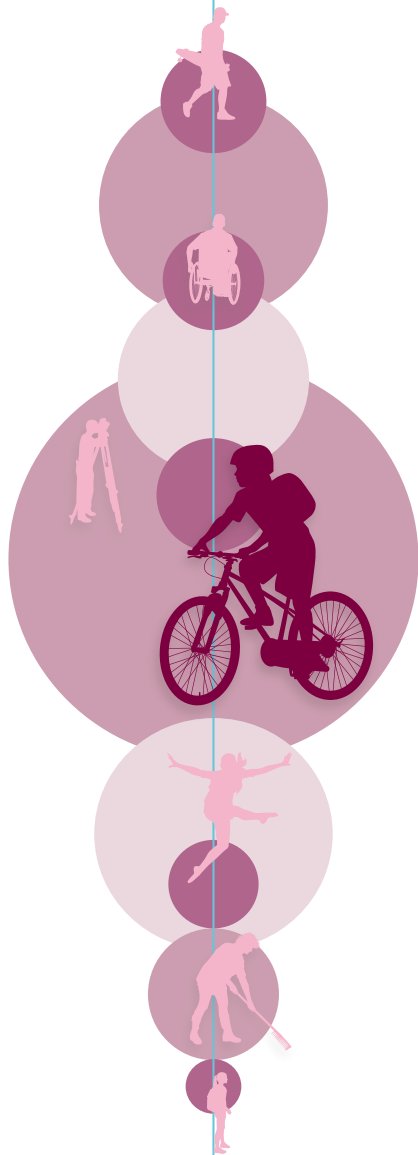
Figure 19: Expectations of sources of help in finding a job
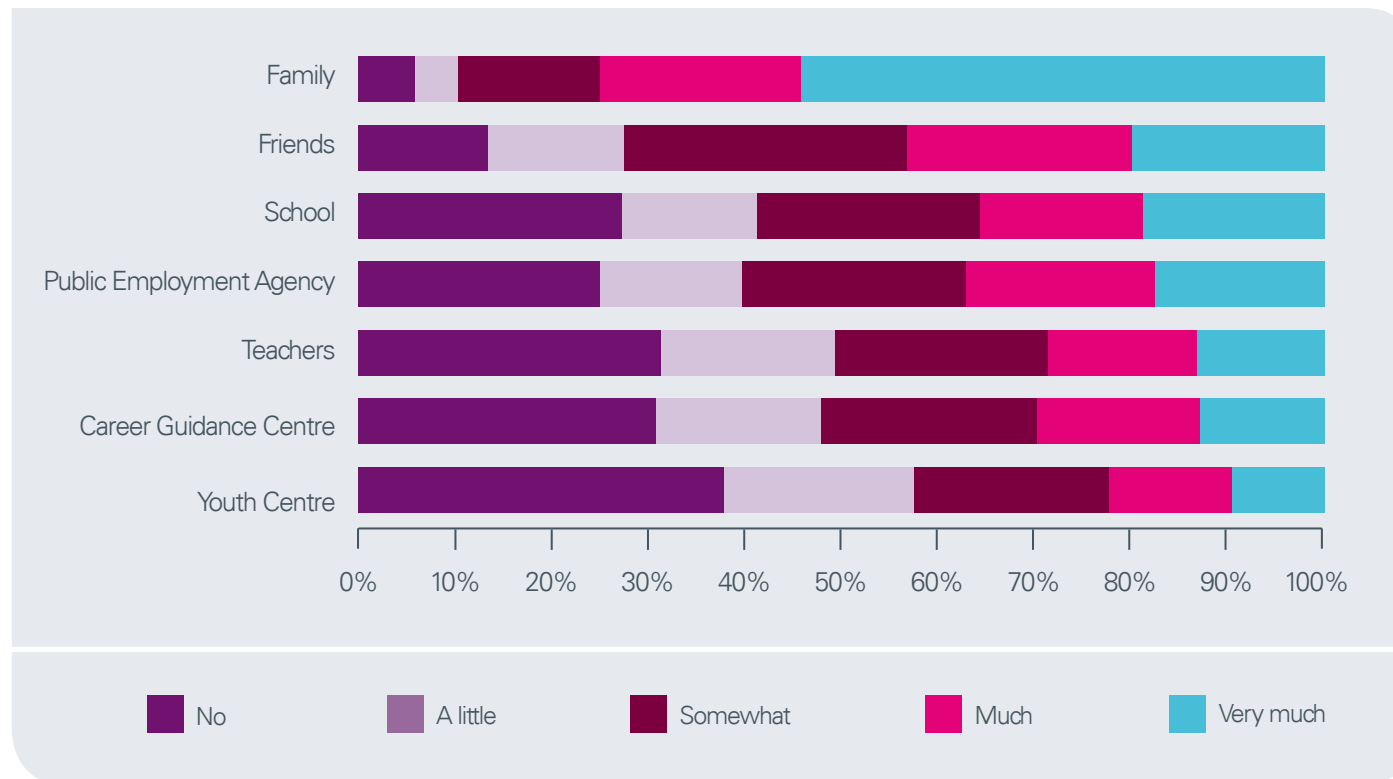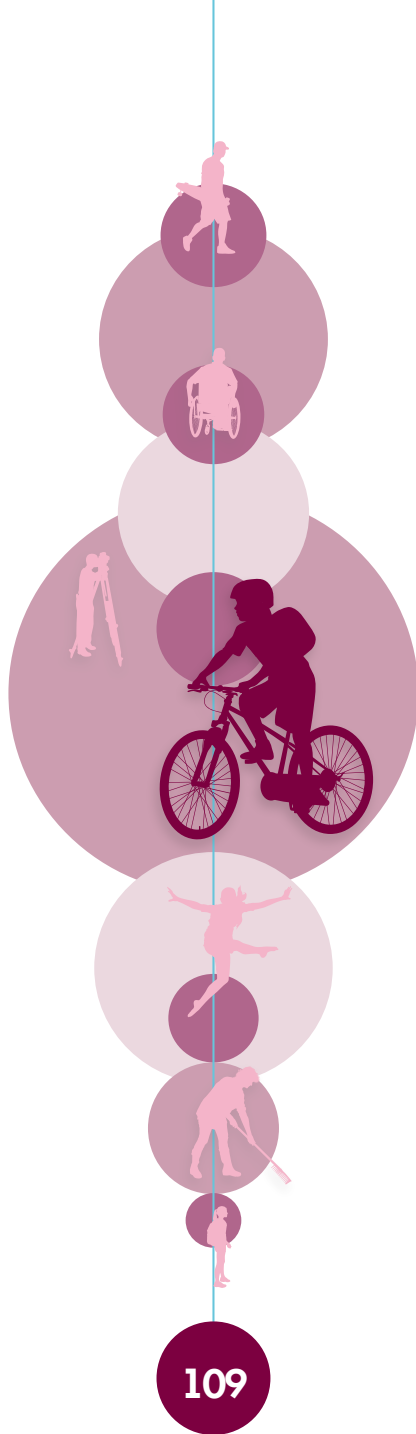

Legend: No | A little | Somewhat | Much | Very much

Categories: Family, Friends, School, Public Employment Agency, Teachers, Career Guidance Centre, Youth Centre

X-axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Over three quarters expect to receive 'much' or 'very much' help from their families (75.2%), while just over two fifths (43.2%) expect to receive 'much' or 'very' much help from friends. Just over one third (37.1%) expect similar levels of help from the public employment service. Just over one third (35.7%) expect to have similar level of help from their school and three tenths (30%) from a school career guidance centre, from their teachers (28.2%) or from a youth centre (22.3%). The help expected from the various parties differs across countries. The most important source of help is family and friends, with the help of friends being especially important in Croatia. School guidance centres appear to be most effective in Kosovo. Public Employment Services also figure highly in student expectations, scoring highest in Kosovo and lowest in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The school is expected to provide an effective source of help in Kosovo, while youth centres score highest in Croatia.

Students in Kosovo are most optimistic about the value of the skills learned at school in finding a job, while students in Croatia are the most pessimistic in this regard. The expected length of job search does not differ significantly between countries.

The case studies revealed that a major hindrance to students in their attempts to find a job is the pervasive lack of career guidance and counselling. Most schools lack a career guidance service, and those that have one lack sufficient capacity to perform their role effectively. International organisations and local NGOs try to fill the gap in most countries by providing project-based guidance programmes, but these tend to lack sustainability.

7.4 IMPROVING JOB PROSPECTS

More than half (55.3%) think that better equipment at school would make a large or very large contribution to their ability to find a job after leaving school, while almost half (48.8%) think the same about having better buildings. Almost two thirds of students (63.8%) think that better access to computers at school would make a large or very large a difference to their job prospects, while almost two thirds (61.3%) consider that better teaching methods would be an important factor, as would a more relevant curriculum (56%). Three fifths (62.6%) of students think that better job counselling would make a large or very large contribution to their job prospects, and just under a half (46%) think that better out of school training in companies would do so.
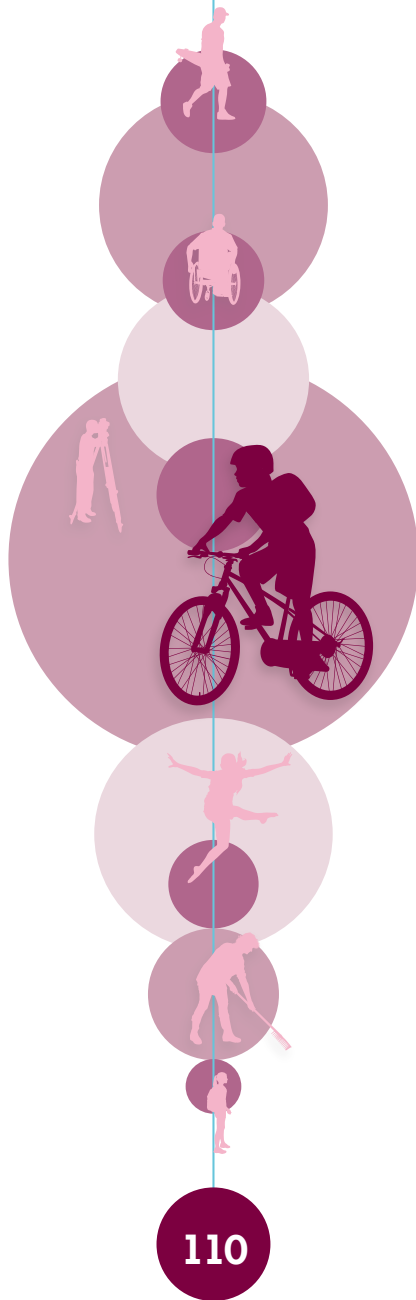
7.5 CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

At the point of transition from school to work, both family and school related factors play a strong role in the countries covered in this study. It is rather worrying to find that almost one tenth of students say that the skills they have gained will be of only a little or no use to them. A key problem in the region is the lack of appropriate skills taught in many vocational schools as a consequence of the out-dated curricula. The absence of adequate career guidance and counselling at vocational schools is another major hindrance to students in their attempts to find a job. The presence or absence of family contacts in the search for a job highlights the importance of social networks and connections in gaining access to the labour market. Over three quarters expect to receive help from their families, while relatively few rely on career guidance services within vocational schools or formal public employment services outside school. Students whose parents do not go out to work rely less on the assistance of their family in finding a job than those with a parent in work. This suggests the importance of social networks and connections in finding a job and the strong influence of family background on ensuring access to the labour market and the avoidance of social exclusion for vocational school graduates. When taken together, these factors provide strong evidence of the cascading effect of exclusion as students progress through school and beyond – in other words initial gaps in school performance already present upon entry into vocational schools may widen, increasing the inequality in educational outcomes. Several policy recommendations arise from this evidence on the transition from vocational school to the world of work:

- Ensure that the skills taught in vocational schools are more closely aligned to the needs of the local labour market;

- Ensure that more and better career guidance services are developed and funded to improve the social inclusion impact of VET;

- Enhance cooperation between schools and local employers in order to ensure appropriate and updated curricula, and to increase the number of practical classes out of school;

- Involve local NGOs, including employers' associations more in the provision of apprenticeship training for students;

- Prioritise tracer studies of graduates of vocational schools to identify the patterns of school-to-work transition.
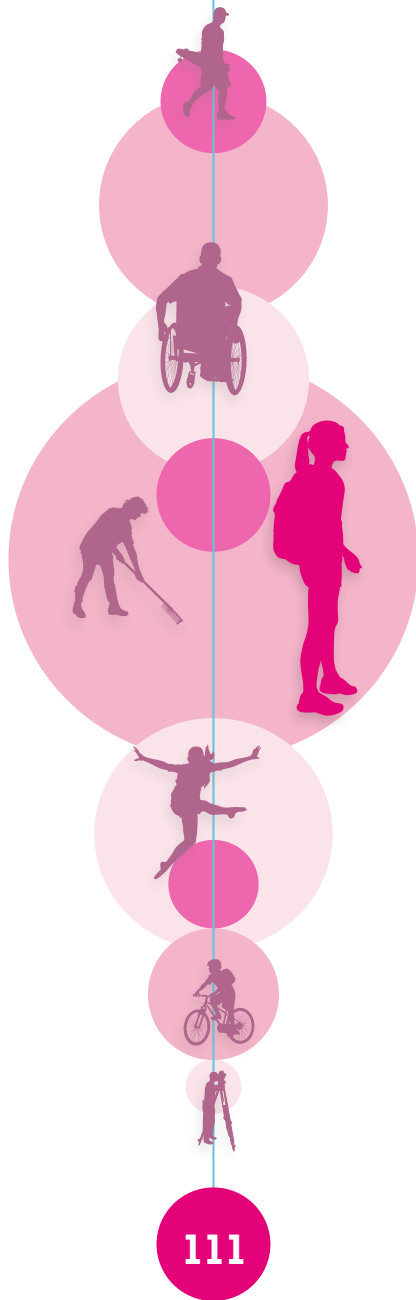
8.0 SOCIAL COHESION

The study of social cohesion has a long tradition in the social sciences and has been enriched in recent years through debate on the role of social capital in community development. A succinct definition of the nature of social cohesion and social capital and their relation to social inclusion has been provided by Oxonby (2009) who defines social cohesion as 'a characteristic of society which depends on the accumulated social capital', while social capital is defined as 'an individual's sacrifices (time, effort, consumption) made in an effort to promote cooperation with others' (p. 5). According to Oxonby, the incentive of an individual to invest in social capital is related to the extent of his or her access to social institutions such as education, health services or employment, i.e. to the extent of social inclusion. If individuals are excluded from such institutions, they are likely to have less incentive to invest in building their social capital, i.e. in spending time and effort in building social relationships. Socially included individuals on the other hand have greater incentives to invest in building their social capital and in cooperating with others. When cooperative activity is increased in a community in this way, the community has a greater chance of being a socially cohesive community. In this respect, the contribution of VET to social cohesion can be seen in the way that it contributes to the incentives of its students to invest in building social capital, i.e. in cooperating with others in their communities. If students are excluded from educational opportunities, if they have to engage in learning using inadequate equipment and in inadequate buildings, taught by teachers who use inappropriate teaching methods before encountering difficulties in accessing work when they leave school, it is not surprising that they will have little incentive to invest their time and effort in the types of cooperative community-building activities that would support a cohesive society.

This view is supplemented by the work of Green et al (2009), who identify the characteristics of a cohesive society as including: shared values and goals; a sense of belonging to a community; tolerance and respect for cultures; interpersonal and institutional trust; civic cooperation; active civic participation and; law-abiding behaviour. On the basis of these definitions, 'social cohesion' actually refers to two broad, intertwined features of society: (i) the absence of latent social conflict in the form of inequalities in income or wealth and; (ii) the presence of strong social bonds measured by levels of trust and norms of reciprocity, an abundance of associations that bridge social divisions and the presence of conflict management institutions.

It is often claimed that greater educational equality of opportunity is associated with greater social cohesion and that education is correlated with several indicators of social cohesion such as civic engagement, life satisfaction, a reduced level of criminality, increased political stability and democratisation (Campbell 2006; McMahon 1999; OECD 2006). Several authors have distinguished between the quantity and the quality of education in relation to social cohesion.
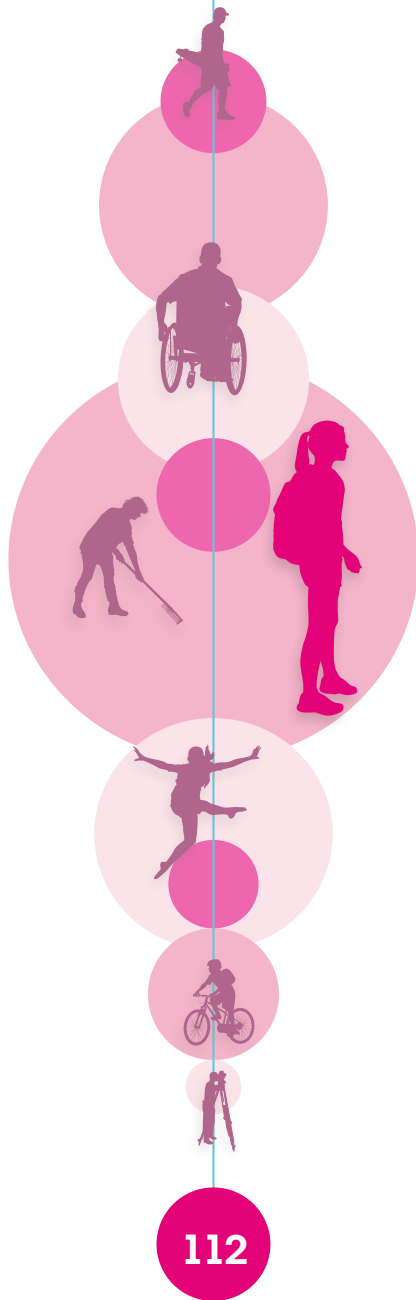
McMahon (1999) found that the quantity of education as measured by years of schooling or measures of educational inputs correlates significantly with human rights, political stability and democratisation, and indirectly with economic growth. An increase in primary and secondary enrolment was found to have a significant correlation with lower levels of poverty and violent crime after a 20-year time lag (an effect which is produced indirectly through lower unemployment and income inequality). In respect of the second aspect, Gradstein and Justman (2001) found evidence of a positive effect of education quality in terms of numeracy and literacy skills on the level and distribution of social outcomes.

VET education seems to have an especially important role in reinforcing the link between educational opportunity and social cohesion. Studies by the Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning have shown the positive effect of vocational learning on social capital, political attitudes and health. Using data from the European Values Survey, Preston and Green (2008) find a positive relationship between VET and greater educational equality and between greater educational equality and improved civil and political liberties. They argue that this evidence supports their statement that VET has an important role in promoting social integration and social cohesion.

Very little research has been carried out on the relationship between VET and social cohesion in transition countries and virtually none in the countries included in this study. One exception is a study from Bosnia and Herzegovina into the sources of social capital in that country (UNDP, 2009). A key finding of the study was the pervasive importance of social connections and networks in providing access to a range of services including education and employment. The ability to access resources through systems of personal connections rather than through formal arrangements or legal contracts is known as štela. This seems to be a common characteristic of social interactions in many of the countries included in this study although it has not always been well documented. The phenomenon appears to be especially relevant in relation to the importance of family connections in assisting vocational school graduates to find a job, as shown in the previous section.
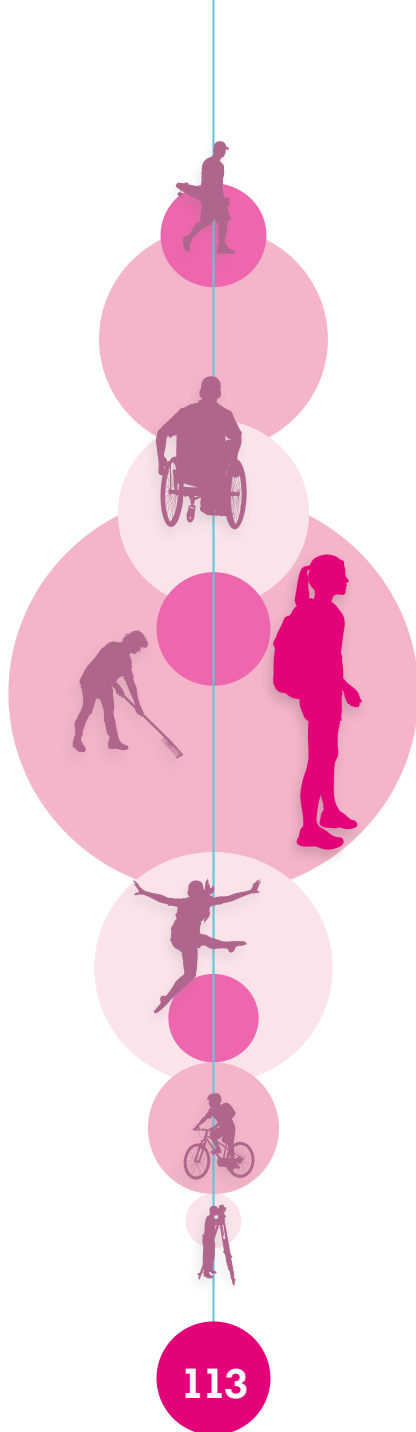
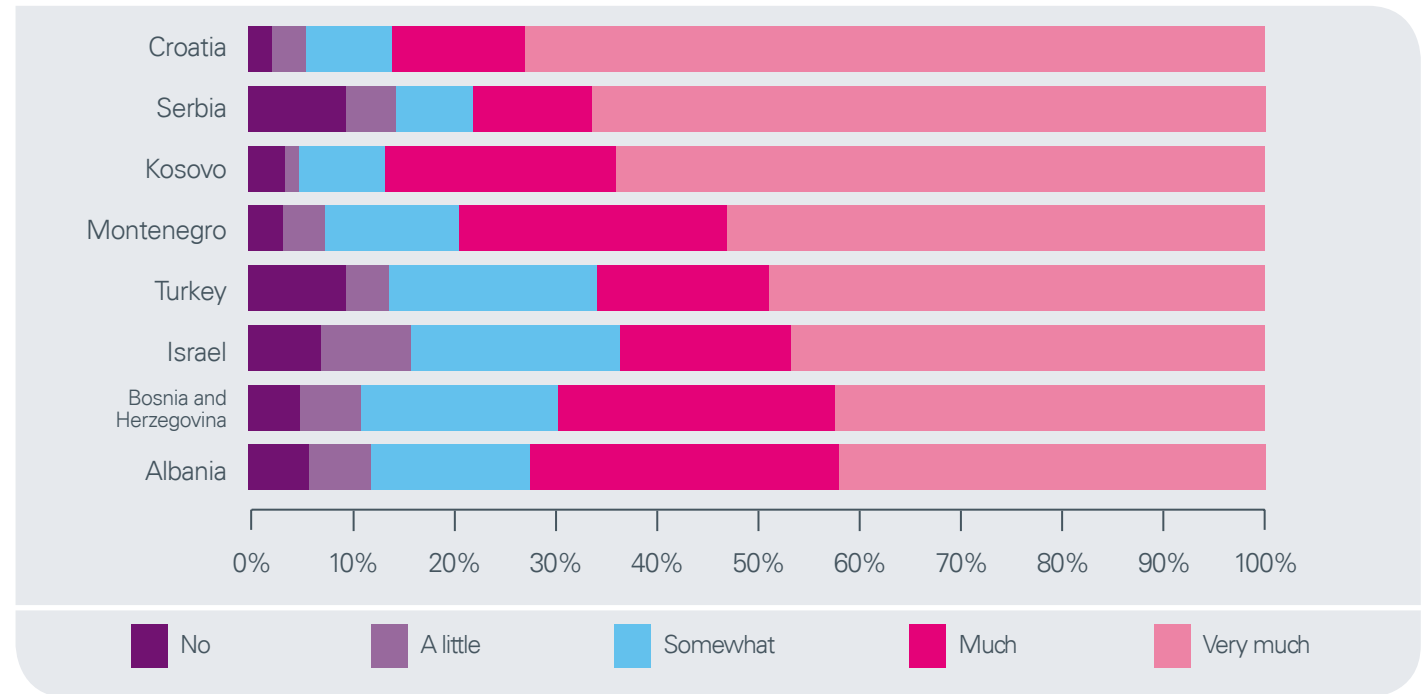**Figure 20: Family help in finding a job by country**

Figure 21 shows the variation in the extent of family help in finding a job by country. Family connections are highly important in all countries, but seem to be most important in the former Yugoslav countries of Croatia, Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro. When taking the responses of 'much' and 'very much' family help in finding a job together, it becomes clear that the lowest importance of family connections is found in Israel, presumably as a reflection of the more effective formal mechanisms available to access the labour market there.

A similar picture is found in relation to the help from of friends in finding a job (see Figure 22). The greatest use of such connections are found in Croatia, Serbia and Israel, which suggests that the 'capital of connections' may be a valuable resource for vocational students in their job search even in Israel. When considering the responses of 'much' and 'very much' help from friends together, Albania comes out as third most reliant on these connections after Croatia and Serbia.
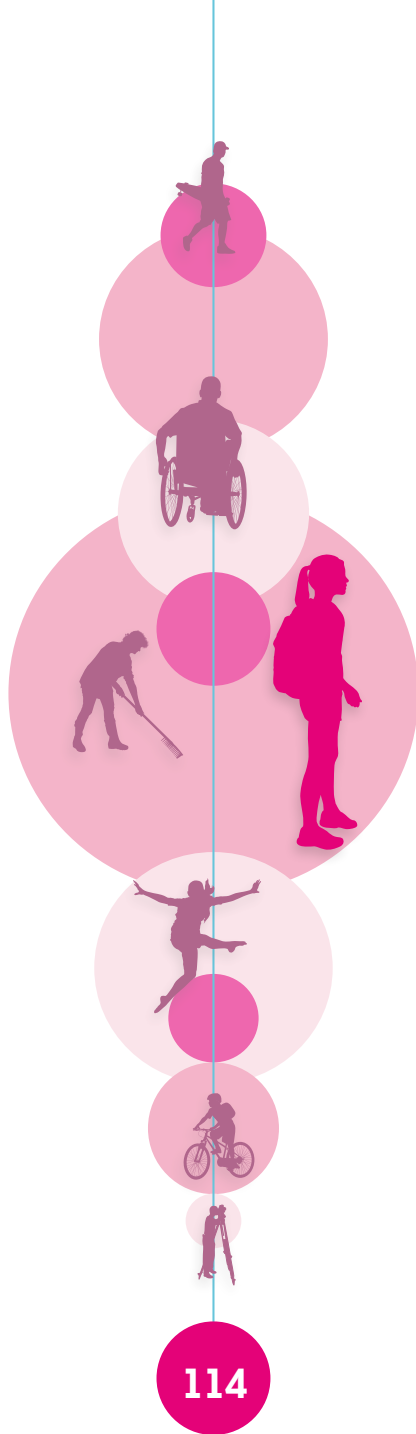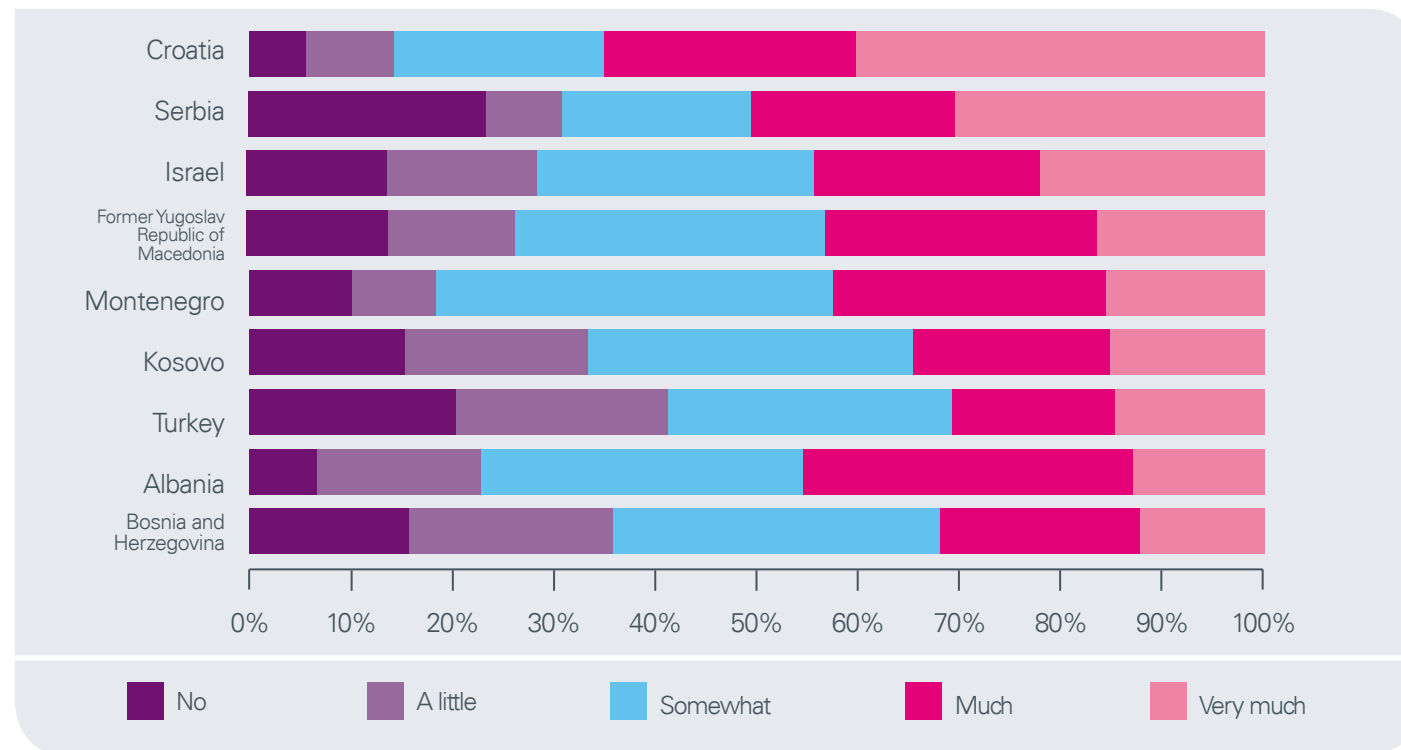
Figure 21: Help of friends in finding a job by country

	No	A little	Somewhat	Much	Very much

In the present study we further identify the effect of vocational schools on social cohesion by investigating the extracurricular activities of students. Such activities serve to build the social capital that underpins social cohesion in local communities. Figure 23 shows how the respondents to the student survey in the case study schools mostly participate outside school in sports activities followed by smaller responses for voluntary activities or youth clubs. Extracurricular activity is most common in Turkey and Albania and least common in Croatia and Serbia and the student survey results overall suggest that the vocational school contribution to building social capital through extracurricular activities is considerably lower in the latter two countries. Since extracurricular activities are important in building social capital, the lack of engagement in such activities gives a worrying indication that vocational schools are not fulfilling their potential to build social cohesion in their communities.
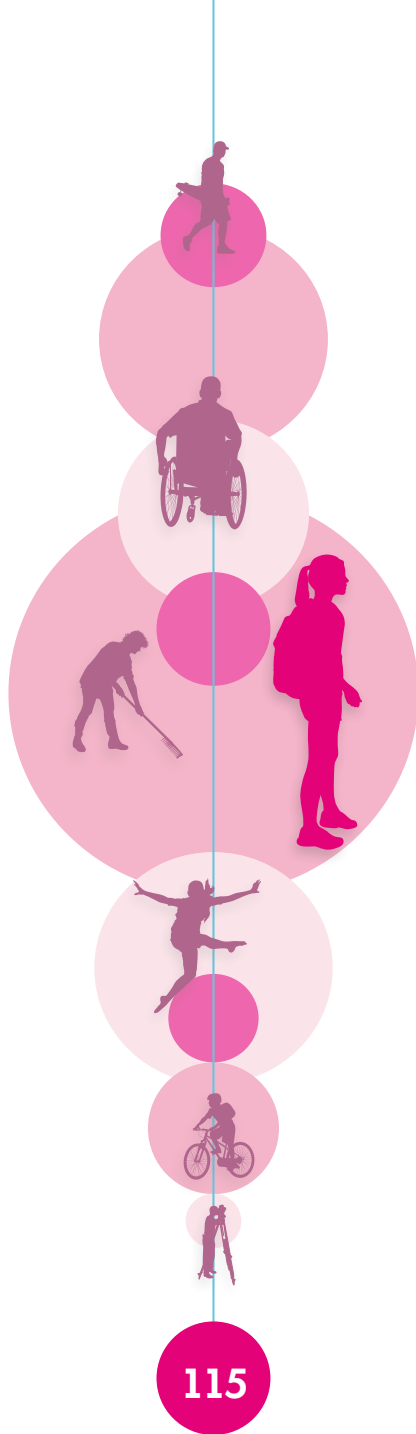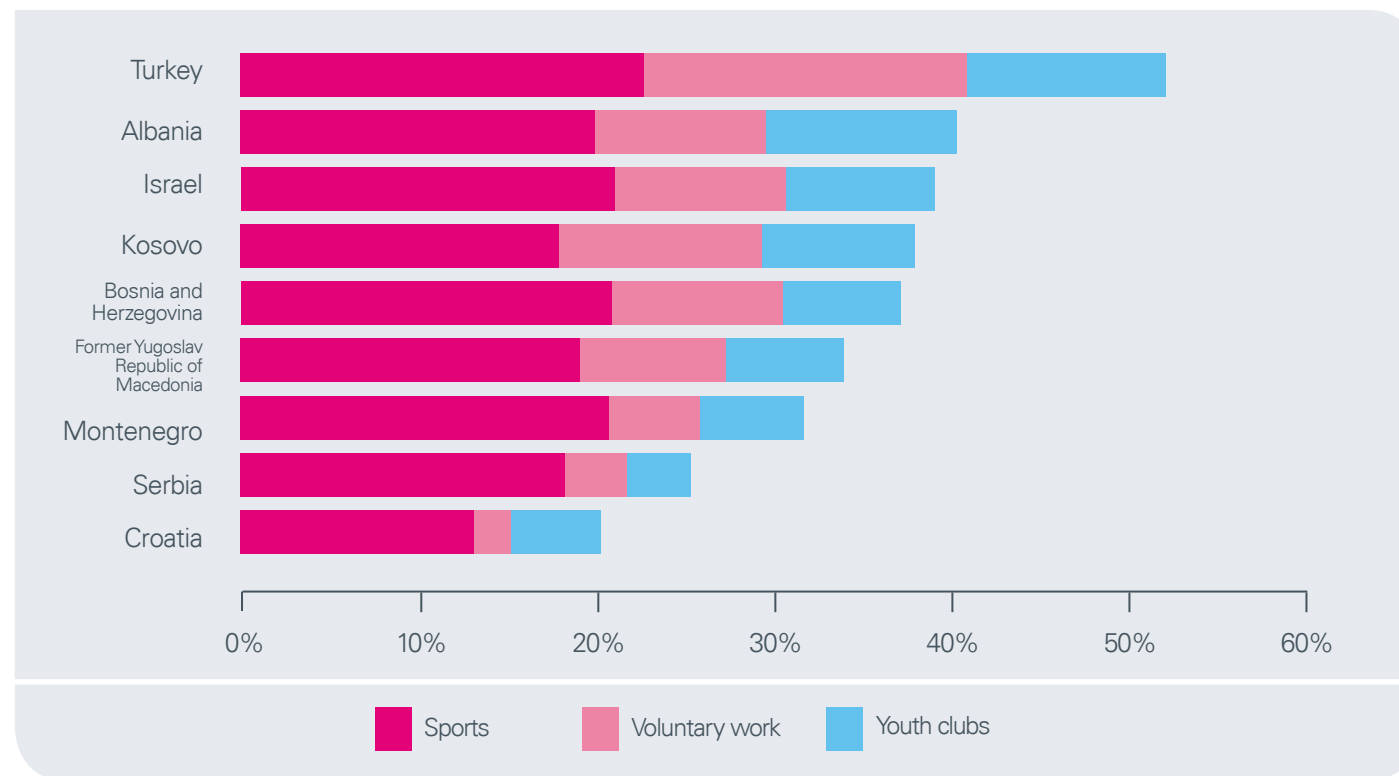
Figure 22: Student involvement in extracurricular activities

Sports | Voluntary work | Youth clubs

Note: The proportions obtained in answer to each of the three options (sports, voluntary work, youth clubs) were summed and then divided by 3 to restore the totals to a scale of 0%-100%.

Some examples of the effective use of extracurricular activities are discussed in the country case studies. In Montenegro, all three schools organise extracurricular activities including debates, presentations and workshops in physics, biology, chemistry, and entrepreneurship (Kaludjerović and Mirković, 2013). In Kosovo, the vocational school in Prizren provides a good example of the role of VET in supporting the local community (Gashi and Serhati, 2013). The school puts a great deal of effort into responding to minority needs, developing talents in various fields and supporting a high level of voluntary work and community services among its students.
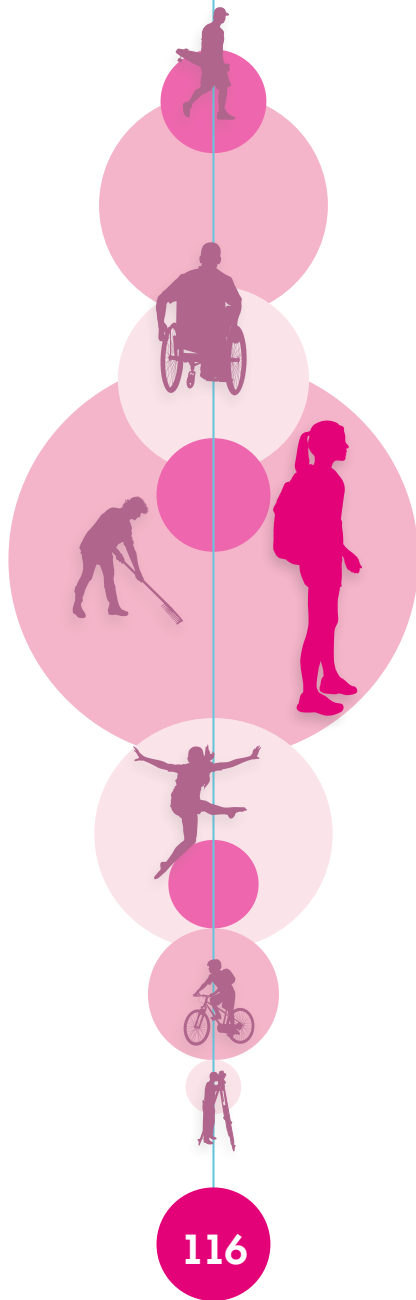
Many schools make substantial efforts to involve their local communities. The teacher survey reveals that almost half of all teachers (47%) report special 'school days' being held for the community. However, some schools do not engage in such activities with about a fifth of teachers reporting that their school does little or nothing of this sort.
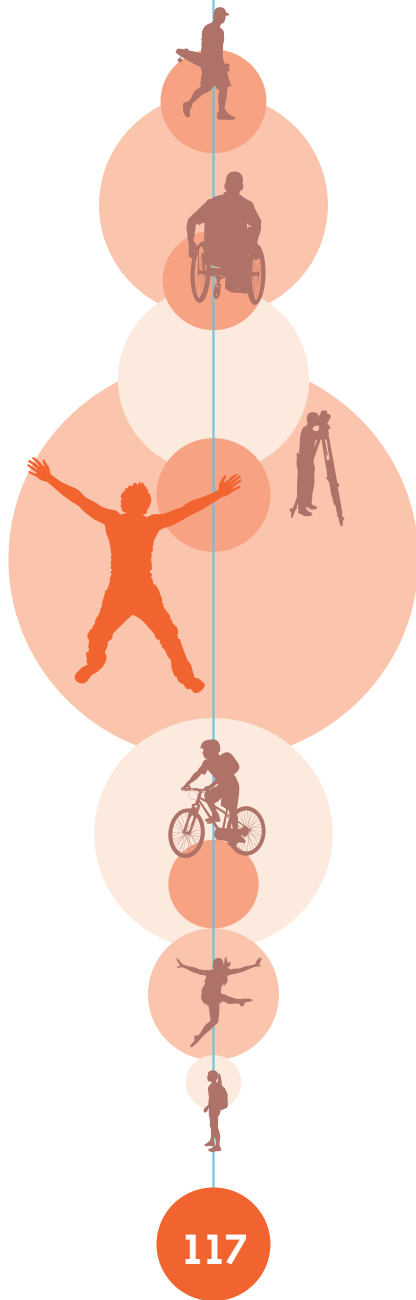
8.1 CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Building social capital is a fundamental activity for the creation and maintenance of social cohesion in a society. vocational schools can make a significant contribution to building social capital by adopting policies and practices on social inclusion that could go some way toward overcoming sources of social exclusion within the education systems of the countries in this study. All of the recommendations provided to reduce social exclusion at the three stages of the pathway through VET are likely to contribute to the development and maintenance of social cohesion and social stability. In this section we have specifically focused attention on the role of social connections in access to the job market and on social capital built through extracurricular activities. However, it should be noted that these are not the only ways in which social cohesion is related to the policies and practices within the VET system and other ways addressing social inclusion in all its forms will also indirectly contribute to social cohesion.

This chapter has found that social capital plays an important role in assisting students to access the labour market through connections made with family and friends. These findings support those of the UNDP in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where social connections were identified as an important element in building social capital. The importance of extracurricular activities has also been highlighted, although relatively few students participate in extracurricular activities other than sport, thus becoming excluded from an important means of building social capital and of fostering social cohesion in the wider communities.

The policy recommendations that stem from this analysis are:

- Place greater emphasis on the formal institutions to support job searching for all students, providing help through the formal public employment services and dedicated careers services either within schools or provided by the local municipalities;

- Encourage schools to support more extracurricular activities, including volunteer internships, voluntary work and greater involvement with youth clubs and other community organisations;

- Foster NGO and CSO support for the greater involvement of students in community activities;

- Encourage vocational schools to forge closer links with local communities especially with NGOs, CSOs and other voluntary organisations in order to develop a socially inclusive profile for vocational schools.

9.0 SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS FROM THE COUNTRY REPORTS

This chapter provides a summary of the policy recommendations presented in the country reports and the action points for schools. The summary is necessarily brief and readers are recommended to consult the country reports for further details and justification of the recommendations from the research findings. The summary is organised into sections that correspond to the main research questions covered by the project. The specific recommendations are referenced in relation to the country reports where the associated points are set out in greater detail. Standard EU country codes are used to identify individual countries where appropriate.

9.1 POLICIES RELATING TO VET

Recommendations for the improvement of VET policy in terms of better social inclusion and social cohesion have tended to be very idiosyncratic in nature, largely dependent upon the existing institutional and policy configuration within each country, making it difficult to generalise and summarise recommendations in this dimension although some general points do occur repeatedly in the region. It is generally clear that greater cooperation between the ministries and agencies involved in setting the institutional and policy framework for VET would be constructive and, in effect, more joined-up policy making in relation to VET is essential (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). For VET to have a greater impact on social inclusion and social cohesion, more attention should be placed on the integration between education and social policies for vulnerable groups, with better coordinating policies and action plans between the various ministries. Social partners and local government institutions should also be more engaged in the policy debate and in the formulation and implementation of policy toward VET (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia).

Another critical issue lies in VET funding. In many countries, the vocational schools have a 'Cinderella' status where they are underfunded in comparison to both secondary academic schools and tertiary institutions, especially in view of their need for continual updating of equipment. VET is generally considered to be underfunded and our respondents stated that governments should allocate greater resources to this sector (Albania, Kosovo). Changes could also be made to the funding formulae in accordance with the specific needs of each school profile (Kosovo). Various recommendations are available on this issue including: greater autonomy for schools to earn and retain revenue through income-generating activities (Bosnia and Herzegovina) or allowing them to link funding to the rate of student dropout (Israel). As many vocational students come from lower socio-economic backgrounds or have special needs, such policies would allow vocational schools to expand their services to those students who need them most (Israel). These measures would need to be carefully regulated and monitored in order to avoid the 'moral hazard' of schools deliberately presenting a less attractive profile to students in order to reduce dropout rates.
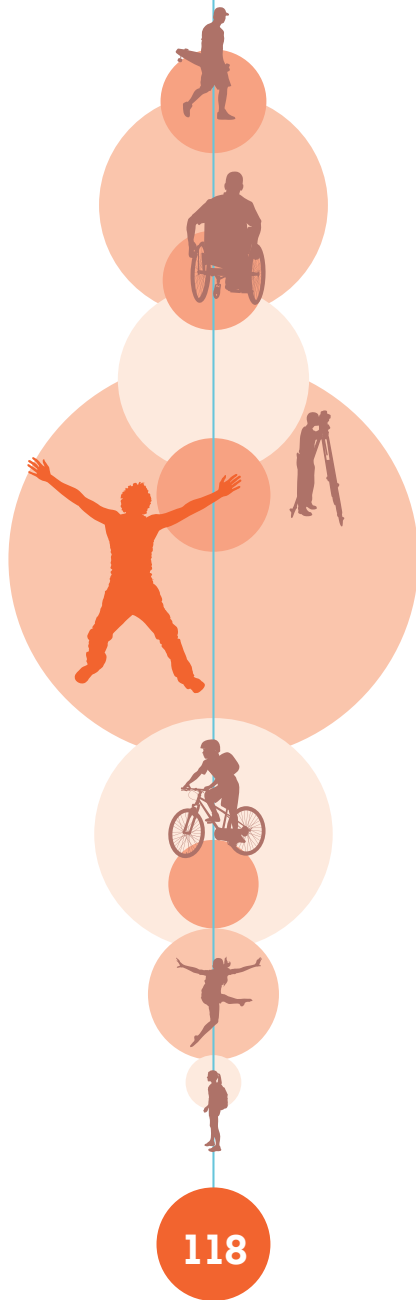
Improved policy-making processes could be brought in through the adoption of evidence-based policy making practices (ME). There is currently a dearth of appropriate analytical studies into the efficiency and effectiveness of VET systems in the region, especially in relation to social inclusion and social cohesion, and it is hoped that the current study will make a significant contribution to filling this gap.

In Croatia, a specific policy dimension has arisen from entry to the EU on 1 July 2013, meaning that Croatia is now receiving structural and cohesion funds to support efforts to foster higher social and economic development. It was suggested that these funds should be used support innovative community-based approaches to integrating three-year vocational schools and their students into key social structures and processes. The European Social Fund (ESF) could be used to support firm-based training to provide an incentive for key stakeholders such as schools, employers and the Chamber of Economy and to make more socially sensitive provision for the disadvantaged students enrolling in three-year VET programmes. Access to ESF resources could also give rise to more robust local employment partnerships, providing a framework for permanent dialogue among key stakeholders on further VET development and its links to the labour market, accompanied by enhanced career and educational guidance for vocational students. Funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) could be used for investment in infrastructure to support a more comprehensive approach to social inclusion and cohesion policy complemented by locally and regionally targeted ESF provision. This approach could employ new Croatian Employment Service staff, youth and community workers to provide a more individualised approach to students from the three-year VET programmes, thus reducing their risk of social exclusion and putting their valuable competencies to good use.

9.2 SELECTION AND CHOICE

Recommendations on selection and choice for schools cover a wide variety of issues. Generally, they focus on arrangements to promote the entry of marginalised groups including students from rural areas (Serbia), marginal ethnic groups (Israel), students with disabilities and learning difficulties (Albania, Kosovo) and, more broadly, put more effort into attracting students to vocational schools (Montenegro). There were also proposals for more female-oriented programmes (Albania), the introduction of entry tests to place students in the most appropriate course of study (Turkey) and the provision of educational (as opposed to career) guidance at an early stage (Bosnia and Herzegovina). Cooperation with primary schools, municipalities and local employment offices were also seen as important elements in the improved selection of students to vocational schools (Montenegro, Kosovo).

Various measures were proposed that could make vocational schools more attractive to a wider range of students than is presently the case. The provision of free and more up-to-date textbooks was seen as an important issue by some country teams (Albania, Israel, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and another suggested abandoning the streaming systems that separate high achievers from low achievers in separate tracks (Israel). It is argued that mixing students of different abilities will have a variety of beneficial effects for both students and teachers.
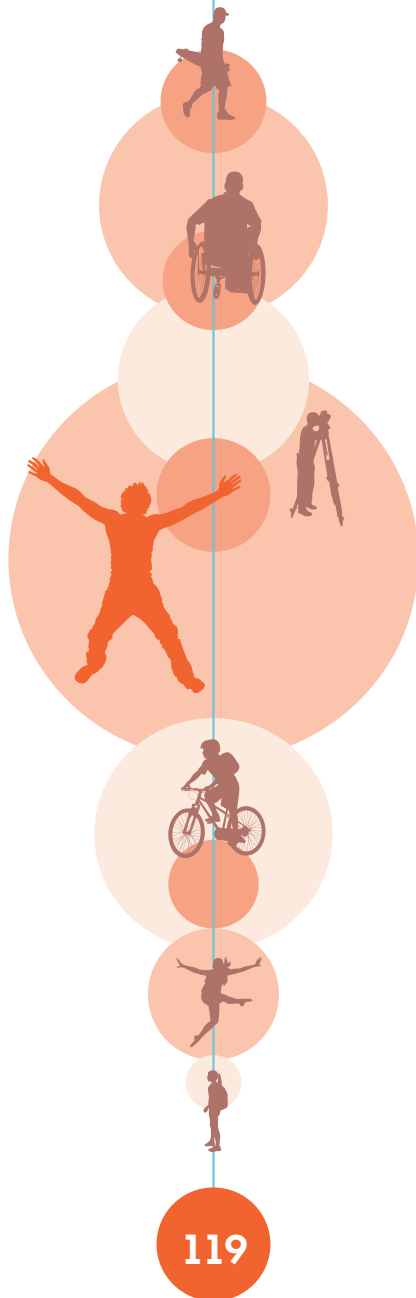
9.3 DROPOUT

The issue of dropout was difficult for the research teams to deal with, as dropout students are difficult to trace due to the very nature of this status. The project approached this issue through interviews with teachers and local community representatives, a review of documentary evidence and the consultation of national policy makers and experts. Only the Turkish team were able to conduct interviews with dropout students, and they recommended that schools should discourage dropout by creating a more friendly environment for students, training teachers in counselling and using more counsellors to address the high number of disciplinary issues. A further recommendation from Albania to forge better links between theory and practice, offering individual treatment to students at risk of dropping out in order to enhance their motivation to continue with their studies. There was some evidence that dropout tends to occur in the early stages of VET, leading to the recommendation for schools to focus preventive mechanisms on the first level of vocational schooling (Kosovo). Given the relative lack of information on this issue, there is an urgent need for schools and local institutions to improve their monitoring of dropout and its causes (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

9.4 EXPERIENCE AT SCHOOL AND WORK PLACEMENTS

Parents should be encouraged to join school governing boards in countries where this is not already the established practice (Albania) in order to improve school governance. The crucial role of mothers in determining student intentions further suggests that such efforts should focus on the inclusion of mothers in particular in governing boards. Local authorities (local self-government institutions) should also play a stronger role in the governance of vocational schools than they do at present (Albania, Croatia, Kosovo). Greater social partner involvement is needed, including both employers and trade unions in governing boards (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia), and all these institutions should be involved in the selection of school directors to ensure that the person appointed has the correct set of managerial and applied knowledge needed to improve the school capacity to deliver high quality VET to all students (Kosovo). All of these bodies should also be closely involved in the development of new curricula and the adaptation of existing curricula to the changing local labour market needs (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Several authors pointed to the need to improve school buildings and equipment, including physical access for disabled students (Bosnia and Herzegovina, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia). Schools should be more innovative in seeking the financial resources they need to fund these improvements, while better use could be made of existing resources by opening schools at weekends (Kosovo). A further recommendation suggested some form of early testing for students to ensure they have made the correct choice of stream or subject specialisation (Albania).
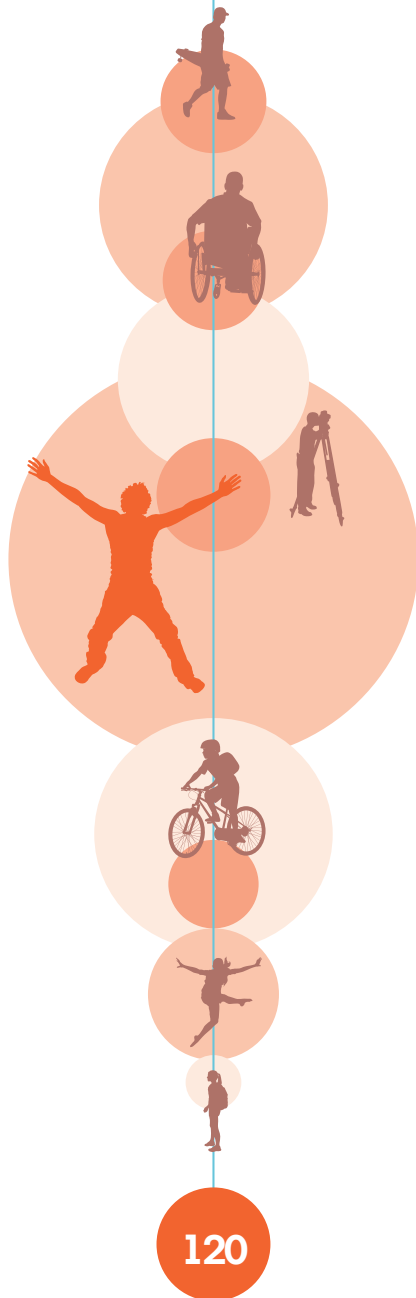
Teaching methods and teaching quality were also a focus of concern and more effort should be put into the improving the skills and professionalism of teachers through better and additional teacher training (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro). Teachers should be better trained in student-teacher relationships and in dealing with socially excluded students, while further capacity building should be provided for teachers and school directors on social inclusion issues or other priority issues for the school. Such initiatives could be supported by donors with an interest in in social inclusion and cohesion such as the European Commission through IPA funding, KulturKontakt Finland through Edu-Cluster and GIZ through its VET and Basic Education projects.

Another key issue is the way in which governments view the status of disadvantaged groups. Very often, specific groups are singled out for special treatment and the needs of all students for a social inclusion policy are downplayed. This leads to the development of 'competitive victimization' systems (Croatia) in which disadvantaged groups compete against each other for limited additional resources. The alternative recommendation is for VET to be better funded for all students, its status improved and measures adopted to reduce or eliminate the stigmatisation of disadvantaged students (Croatia, Kosovo). Proposals for specific measures have included a significant increase in the number of scholarships for VET studies and a general policy to link funding with citizenship rights rather than the membership of specific disadvantaged groups (Croatia). Closer links between vocational schools and their local communities, especially with NGOs, CSOs and other voluntary organisations, would also be a major step forward in reducing stigmatisation and developing a socially inclusive profile for vocational schools in all countries (Albania, Croatia). The diversity of regional needs should be addressed through a fairer distribution of VET providers across the territory, as rural students are more likely to enter VET. Sporadic NGO training projects in suburban and rural areas focused on vulnerable groups such as Roma, disabled or young unemployed should be sustained with the support of regional and local community stakeholders, not only international donors.

Most country team recommendations focused on the relationships between the school and the local community and, more especially, with employers (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Turkey). Recommendations focused on enhanced cooperation with local employers, in order to: ensure appropriate and updated curricula; increase the number of out-of-school practical classes; provide more work experience in the business environment and; establish systems of apprenticeships in cooperation with local employers where this was not already an established practice (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel). Some country teams recommended subsidies for employers who take on apprentices (Israel, Kosovo) and the improvement of mentoring and coaching during out-of-school placements (Kosovo). NGOs and CSOs, including employers' associations, could also be more involved in the provision of apprenticeship training for students (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo).
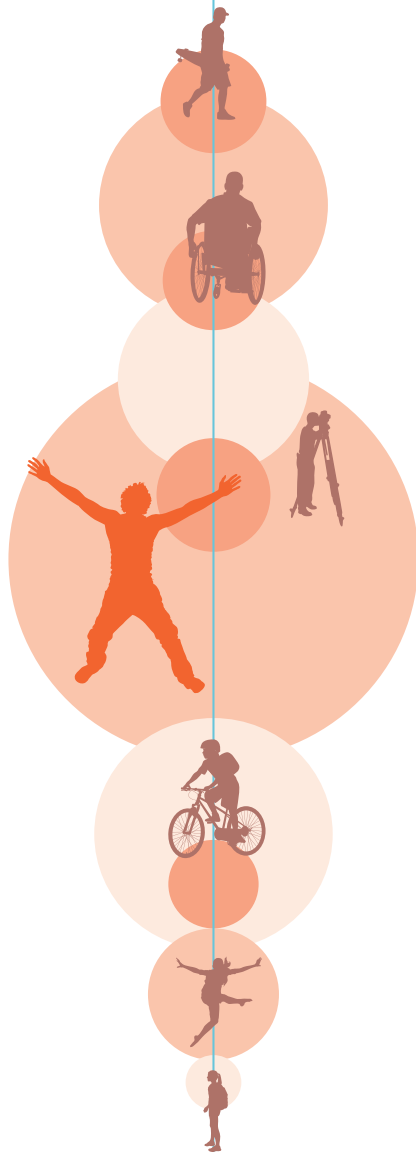
Links with local NGOs were seen as being very important, as many NGOs are committed to the social inclusion of at-risk groups (Albania). Several country reports suggested that the creation of local tripartite councils could compensate for the low national capacity to deal with social inclusion issues. They suggested that other organisations, particularly local CSOs and NGOs familiar with the issues of education and social inclusion, should become more involved in the development of new curricula, service provision and participation. Several country teams recommended an improvement to schools' provision of extracurricular activities, citing mechanisms such as volunteer internships, voluntary work and greater involvement with youth clubs and other community organisations (Albania, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia). The involvement of NGOs and CSOs could be especially important in supporting the involvement of students in community activities in some countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Israel, Kosovo, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). More resources should therefore be directed toward promoting initiatives that could increase the impact of vocational schools on social inclusion and social cohesion in their local communities.

Vocational schools should also foster improved links with trade unions and associations for disabled people (Albania). Donor organisations have been active in supporting the needs of disadvantaged groups in some countries and could contribute further to building capacity in VET in relation to social inclusion issues (Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro). EU presence in the region can also provide major strengthening of VET and should promote the social inclusion benefits of this sector (Croatia).

This recommendation was extended to suggest bringing community volunteers into schools to work with students, sharing their experience and knowledge (Israel) and stronger links with parents, especially mothers, are also recommended. Schools themselves should be more open to the local community, hosting events to engage parents and members of the local community within the school and fostering links with the community and local employers (Israel).

Schools should also form closer links with other schools in order to share experiences, information and knowledge and to benefit from peer-learning networks. They could perhaps also establish groups to approach the cooperative purchasing of equipment and materials, reducing the costs of these through economies of scale (Montenegro).

Links with the broader international community could also be more developed through twinning projects with schools in other countries and through study tours for school directors and teachers as in the Austrian initiative sponsored by KulturKontakt (Albania).
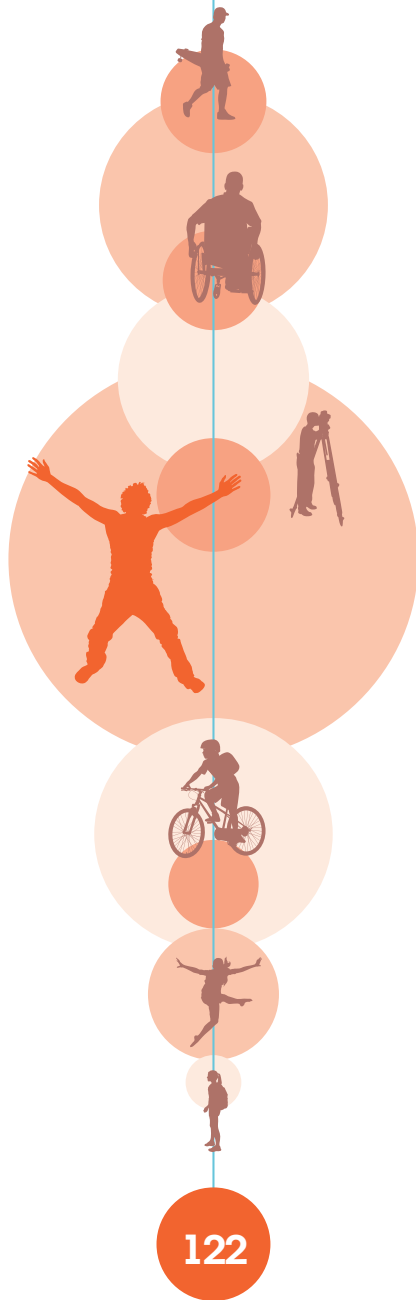
## 9.5 THE TRANSITION FROM VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TO WORK

Recommendations to improve the school-to-work transition centred on the need for much improved career guidance services, while also recognising that the main constraint in many countries at present is the lack of demand from employers due to the economic crisis. Nevertheless, the provision of more and better career guidance services was seen as an important contribution in improving the social inclusion impact of VET in many countries (Albania, Israel, Kosovo, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey).

The modalities proposed for this differed somewhat between countries, with some teams recommending greater reliance on the public employment services (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia), some calling for specialised NGOs working in this field (Israel), some on more involvement and improved training for teachers in providing careers guidance (Israel, Serbia, Turkey), others on better direct links and cooperation between schools and employers (Albania, Kosovo, Serbia) and yet others on improving specialised careers guidance centres within schools (Kosovo, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro). There was also a call for improved funding for careers guidance services and especially for better incentives for trained counsellors to work in these schools (Turkey). Career guidance services should provide a better service for students with disabilities, from minority groups and girls, and the Vocational curricula should include greater consideration of labour market needs.

Some reports prioritised improved statistical data and tracer studies of vocational school graduates in order to identify patterns of the school-to-work transition and to provide evidence relating to social inclusion in this aspect (Losovo, Montenegro).

Vocational students should be integrated with a wider range of companies and schools. The 'study plant' model, in which schools are integrated with businesses, could be further established. Such schools would increase the efficiency of VET training by providing all students with apprenticeships and closer association with working professionals, who can serve as both mentors and educational advisors for curriculum development.

Further suggestions along these lines were for schools to develop specific plans to attract students with disabilities and learning difficulties into the profiles suited to these two groups and to develop better plans to place such students in suitable companies for work experience placements. Additionally, virtual firms set up within schools should address the individual needs of such students. Furthermore, all students need improved systems of mentoring and coaching in the practical part of vocational schooling. This practice could perhaps best be piloted in existing in-school virtual firms before being further expanded into the work placements undertaken in actual companies outside the schools.
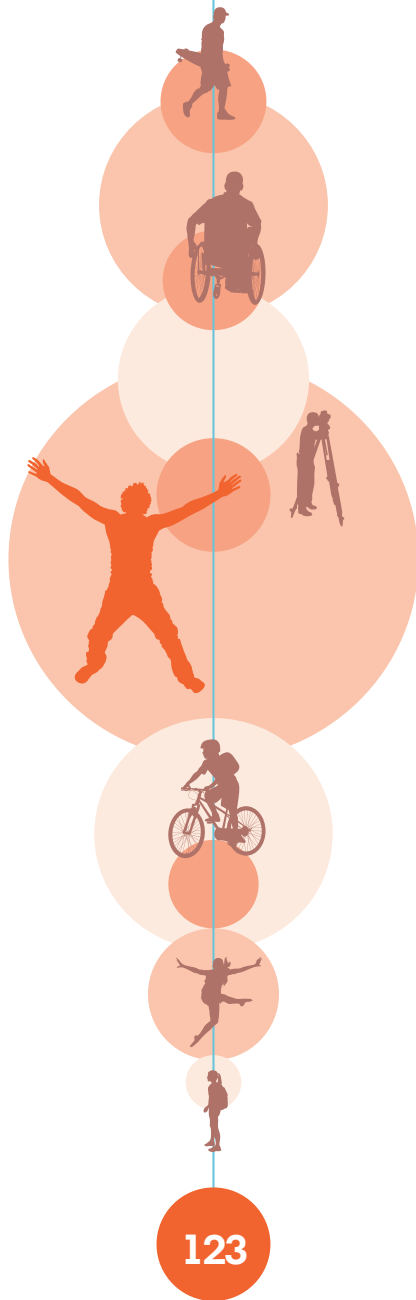
9.6 SOCIAL COHESION

Social cohesion is, by nature, an issue that affects many institutions within a society in addition to vocational schools. While the school undoubtedly has some impact on social cohesion, it is only one of many influences and it is therefore difficult to identify specific evidence of the effects in a study of this type. Policy recommendations have been limited accordingly and the evidence gathered has been treated with appropriate caution, meaning that the country teams have respected the injunction to provide recommendations only where these can be justified by reference to specific research evidence identified as a result of the current research.

One key issue relating VET to social cohesion is the role of the education system in perpetuating a vicious cycle of disadvantage down the generations. This simply means that children of low-income and disadvantaged parents are more likely to be selected into vocational schools than the children of more advantaged groups. If vocational schooling is underfunded or less likely to lead to well-paid employment, then these children in turn enter the ranks of the disadvantaged. Vocational schooling in such a system creates a barrier to upward mobility. The social polarisation that this process entails leads to diminishing levels of social cohesion. Some country teams have made recommendations as to how such vicious cycles of deprivation and disadvantage can be avoided, or at least reduced, by changes to the way VET systems function. For example, one suggestion is for the pathways to further education to be open to all vocational students, not just those enrolled in the four-year courses common in the successor states of the former Yugoslavia. Students must be given additional assistance to enable them to find work in the field of study they pursued at school rather than just taking the first low-paid job that comes along (Israel). Trade unions should be involved in providing resources to vocational schools and monitoring the working conditions of students employed as apprentices or engaged in work experience programmes linked to vocational courses (Israel). Governments should work to improve the status of professional vocational qualifications (Israel, Montenegro).
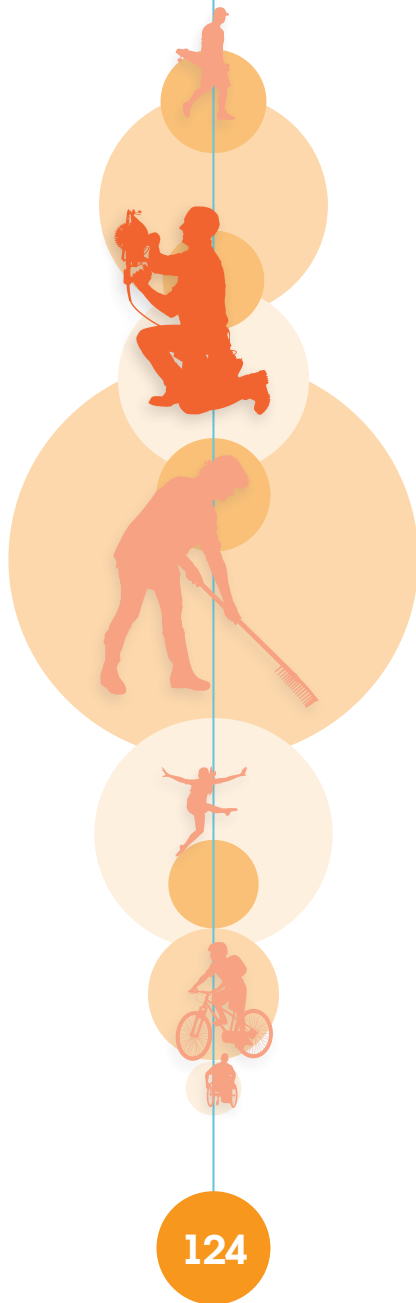
10. OVERALL POLICY CONCLUSIONS

Education systems have a powerful role in the transmission of social exclusion. Several country studies have found strong evidence of the effects of social and family background on educational outcomes. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be channelled into Vocational school than are other children.

Throughout South Eastern Europe, but less so in Israel and Turkey, the modernisation of VET systems has occurred in line with EU goals and objectives for VET as part of the EU accession process. Policy orientations vary between those that emphasise social inclusion and those that focus on adjustment to the labour market, but progress has been rather slow in terms of implementation in both cases. The establishment of horizontal institutional structures and legal frameworks including VET Councils, occupational sector councils and National Qualification Frameworks have facilitated a more participatory approach to VET policy.

Although almost all of the students recognised that success in school was critical for their future job prospects, the vocational school experience in many cases appears to reinforce the social exclusion of disadvantaged students. The cross-country analysis found evidence of underinvestment in equipment and buildings, out-dated curricula failing to keep up with changing labour market needs, poor teaching methods and limitations in teachers' subject knowledge. Disabled students were significantly less happy with their school experience than were the others. Finally, it is also significant that students become progressively less happy with their schools as they move from their first to their final year and that few participate in extracurricular activities other than sport, thus excluding them from an important means of building social capital and fostering social cohesion in their wider communities.

With regard to practical training, it is evident that the number of hours spent in school practical lessons and in work placements in training companies differs widely across schools, within countries and between countries. At the same time, there is some evidence that preference in access to apprenticeships tends to be given to the more advantaged students. On the whole, the current state of practical training is insufficient to provide many students with a sound basis of vocational knowledge and experience.

The young people most at risk of dropout are predominantly from the lower socio-economic groups or are otherwise disadvantaged. School dropout should be regarded as a process resulting from a complex interaction of factors including socio-economic background, experience at school and the influence of parents and peers, rather than a single occurrence. In preventing dropout, schools are struggling to find an effective balance between positive developmental measures and sanctions.
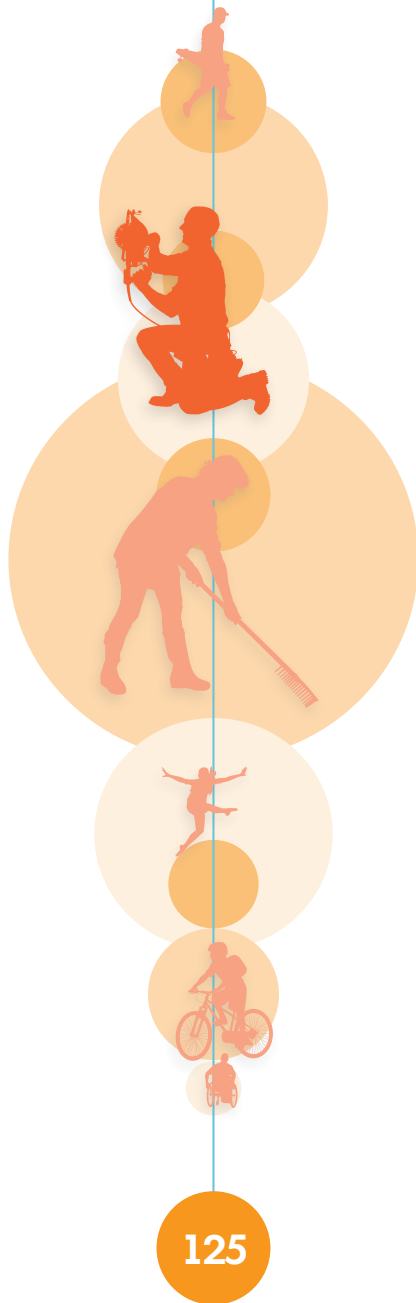
At the point of transition from school to work, both school and familial factors play a strong role. The lack of adequate career guidance and counselling at vocational schools was a common theme in the country case studies as was the prominent role played by the presence or absence of family contacts in the search for a job, highlighting the importance of social networks and connections. The low level of extracurricular activities other than sports also contributes, with some exceptions, to the low impact of vocational schools in building social capital and contributing to social cohesion in their communities.

Taken together, there is strong evidence of the cascading effect of exclusion as students progress through school and beyond, meaning that the initial gaps in school performance already present upon entry into vocational schools may widen, increasing inequality in educational outcomes and leading to adverse effects on social cohesion in the South Eastern Europe, Turkey and Israel.

A number of measures can be implemented by policy makers, school directors and local communities in order to address these issues.

Policy makers

First of all, increased cooperation is needed between the ministries and agencies involved in setting the policy and governance framework for inclusive VET systems, and more engagement is needed in the policy debate from social partners and local self-government bodies. Policy makers should review the use of selection into upper-secondary schools that separates high achievers from low achievers into different schools. Placing students of different abilities together can have a variety of beneficial effects for both students and teachers. However, if the separation between vocational and general academic schools is maintained, vocational schools should be better resourced to provide appropriate skills for inclusion in the labour market through upgrading and improvement of the quality of equipment and buildings. Assistance is available from EU sources to achieve this, and governments should seek development loans from the WBIF and other sources to improve school buildings.

The skills and professionalism of teachers should be improved though additional teacher training for competence in socially inclusive practices at school. Links between vocational schools and the business sector should be strengthened, for example by enabling local businesses to have a greater say in the design of vocational curricula. Policy makers should ensure that the skills taught in vocational schools are more closely aligned to the needs of the local labour market by facilitating greater employer involvement in curricular design and co-investment in schools. They should also ensure that more and better career guidance services are developed and funded to improve the social inclusion impact of VET, and that greater emphasis is placed on the formal institutions that support job searching for all students. These can be provided by the formal public employment services and dedicated careers services either within schools or provided by the local municipality, thus mitigating against the advantage of the better-off minority who benefit from the unequal endowment of social capital within local communities.
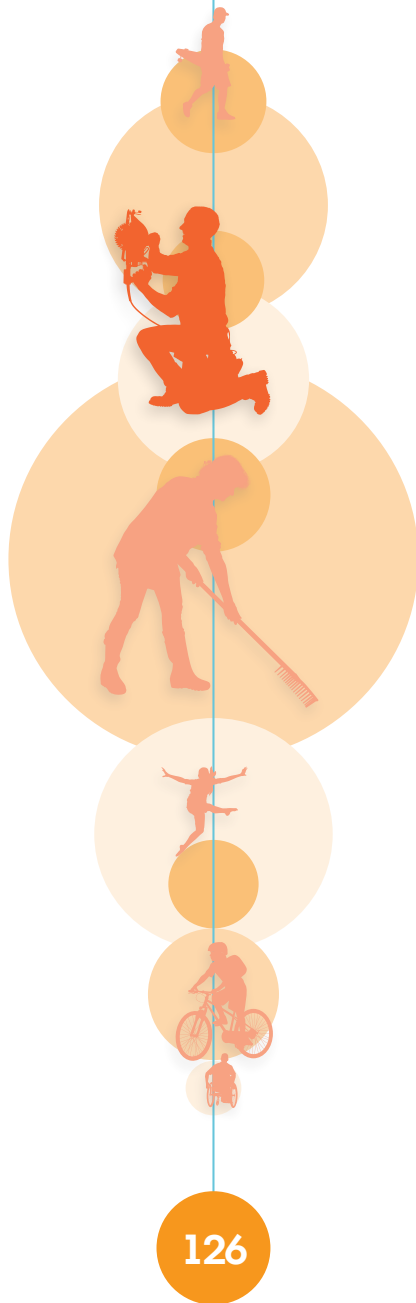
School directors

Directors of vocational secondary schools should improve cooperation with primary schools, municipalities and local employment offices to improve the extent to which disadvantaged students are included in upper secondary education. These efforts should include marginalised groups of students such as those with disabilities and learning difficulties, from rural areas, Roma and other ethnic minorities. Teachers should take greater care with student-teacher relationships and should make more effort in dealing with socially excluded students. Parental representatives and social partners should play a stronger role in school governance to ensure that their preferences and interests are properly reflected in educational practices. School directors should seek to reduce dropout by creating a more welcoming and friendly environment for all students. Those at risk of dropping out should be identified and offered individual counselling, study skills support, and specialised career guidance. Parents should be more actively involved in schools and in the learning activities of their children. Similarly, local employers and NGOs should be more involved in the activities of vocational schools and in curricular design and work placement of students. Monitoring of students at risk of dropping out should be improved and tracer studies of VET graduates should be carried out to identify patterns of school-to-work transition. School Directors should provide more support to extracurricular activities, including volunteer internships, voluntary work and greater involvement of vocational students with youth clubs and other community organisations. School directors should also forge closer links with local communities especially with NGOs, CSOs and other voluntary organisations to develop a socially inclusive profile for vocational schools in the local community.

Local communities

Finally, local employers should enhance cooperation with schools in order to ensure appropriate and updated curricula are available and to increase the number of practical classes out of school. Local NGOs including employers' associations should be more involved in the provision of apprenticeship training for students and should support the greater involvement of students in the types of community activities that promote social cohesion.
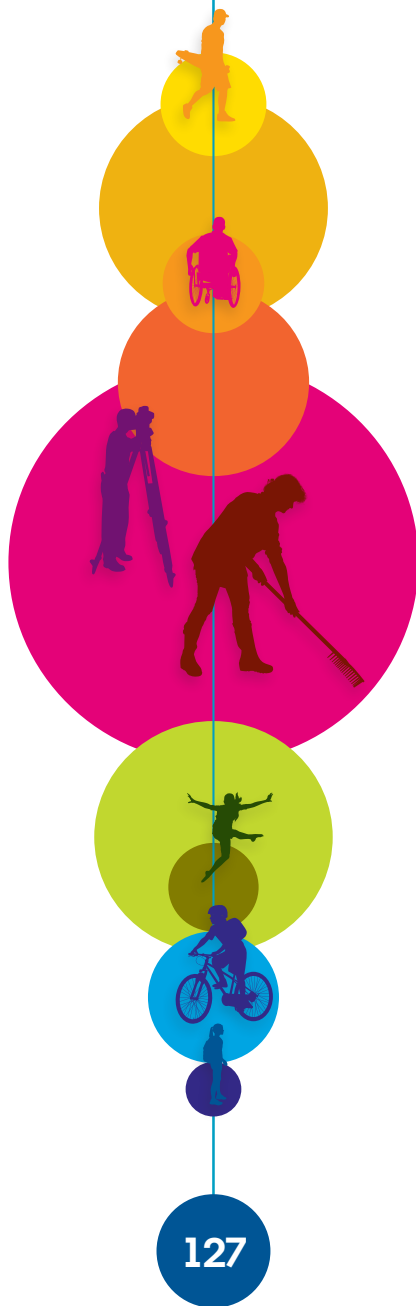
APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

The fieldwork combined several distinct but mutually reinforcing and complementary approaches, as described below.

DESK RESEARCH

This consisted of literature reviews on policies and practices in vocational education in each country, highlighting the situation concerning: (i) the relationship between vocational education, skills mismatches, social exclusion and social cohesion at national level; (ii) the institutional framework for vocational education at national level and, where appropriate; (iii) the extent and nature of the decentralisation of competences and responsibilities to local level and; (iv) the policy process and policy debate relating to vocational education, social inclusion and social cohesion. The detailed findings regarding these issues are set out in the separate country reports.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

A series of face-to-face interviews were held with key decision makers in the area of VET, social inclusion and social cohesion, including policy leaders at the following levels:

1. Central government level - within the respective ministries of education, employment, social policy, economy and other relevant ministries, VET agencies, education agencies, public employment services and welfare agencies.
2. Local government level - with representatives of regional and local governments in the case study areas. This was especially important where competencies for vocational education have been decentralised to this level.
3. At national level - with non-governmental actors from employers' associations, chambers of commerce, trade unions and NGOs/CSOs working in fields related to vocational education, social inclusion and social cohesion.
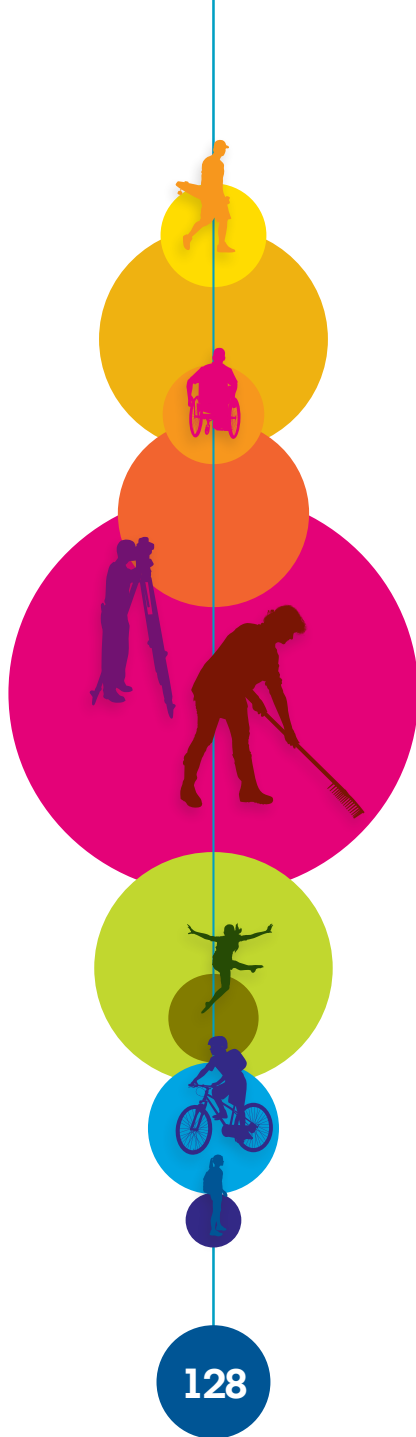
The interviews were designed to investigate the relationships between VET policy and practice, social inclusion and social cohesion from the perspective of the different actors in the system. The multi-faceted nature of the collection of interviews provided a whole-system view of the inter-relationship between VET policy and practice, social inclusion and social cohesion in each country. The topics included in the semi-structured interviews were agreed with the country research teams and are set out in this Appendix. Other policy areas were included following consultation with the country researchers and the Local Advisory Boards. A brief summary of each interview has been provided to the central LSE research team for use in the second stage of the research and in the preparation of the comparative report. In all, 84 interviews were carried out at national level as follows:

Table A1: In-depth interviews at national level

| Country	Number of Interviews
Albania	12
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5
Croatia	10
Kosovo	7
Israel	8
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	15
Montenegro	9
Serbia	5
Turkey	13
TOTAL	**84**
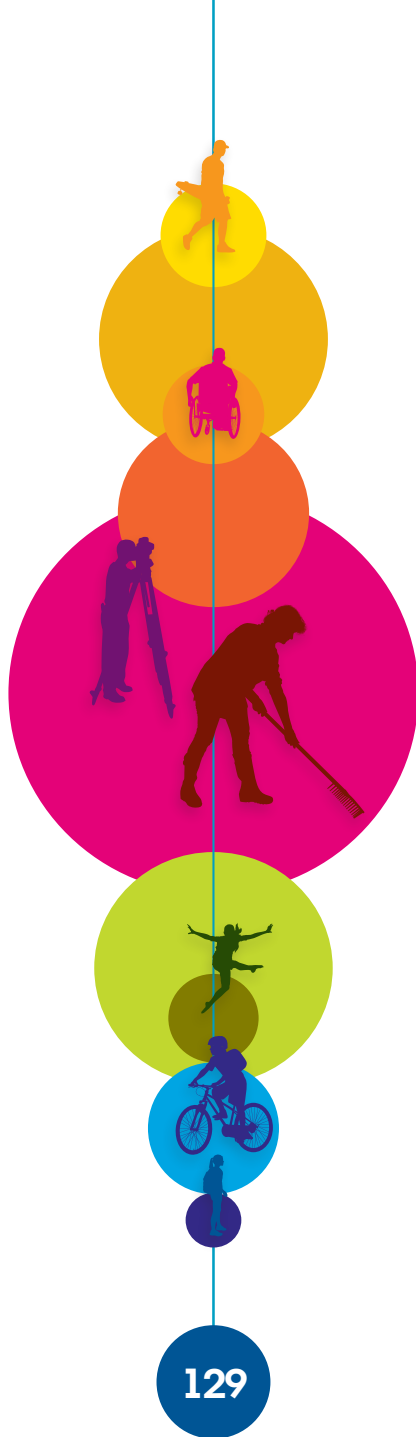
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS AT CASE STUDY SITES

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were carried out with the directors, other managerial personnel and teachers in the 27 vocational schools and with key informants in the local community including local employers, trade unionists, community leaders and NGO/CSO representatives. The topics for inclusion in the semi-structured interviews were agreed with the country research teams and are set out in this Appendix. The final wording of the topic guide was made in consultation with the Local Advisory Boards in each case study site as explained above. A brief summary of each interview was provided to the central research team for use in the second stage of the research. In all, 223 interviews were carried out at the local case study sites as follows:

Table A2: In-depth interviews at local level

| Country	Number of Interviews
Albania	30
Bosnia and Herzegovina	15
Croatia	30
Kosovo*	17
Israel	26
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	40
Montenegro	30
Serbia	5
Turkey	30
TOTAL	**223**
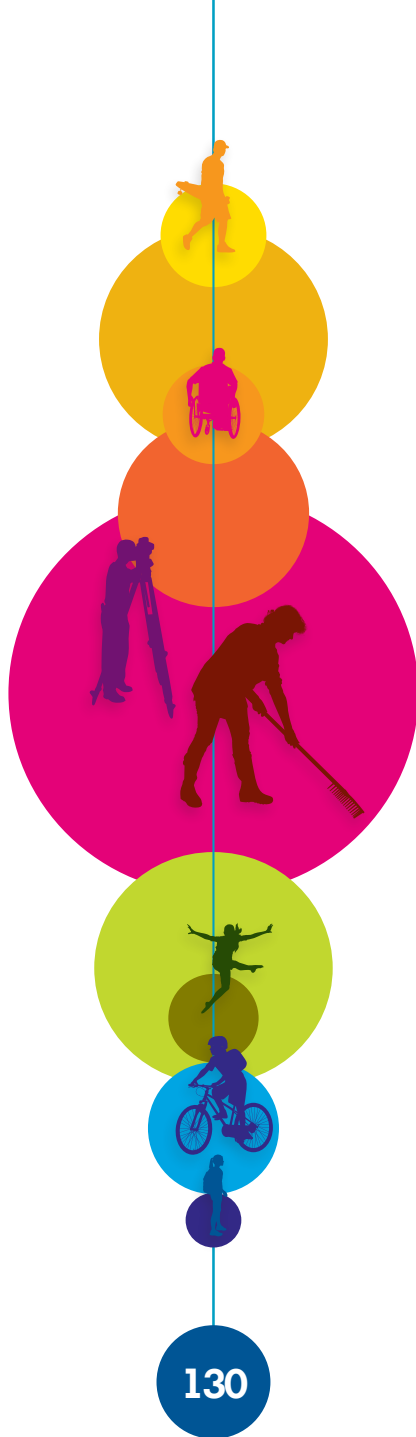
FOCUS GROUPS

Focus group sessions were held in countries where these were deemed to be relevant to support other modes of data collection. At national level these involved the participation of key policy makers and policy advisors including representatives of relevant government ministries and agencies, social partners and representatives of CSOs. At the local level, these included various combinations of teachers, students, parents and other key informants and stakeholders from the local community.

The aim of the focus groups was to identify and validate the key issues relating to social inclusion and social cohesion. The findings were presented to the research advisory boards for consideration in the formulation of the key research questions. The focus groups were chaired by the lead researcher for each country accompanied by a research assistant who recorded the debate and produced a summary of the main issues discussed and views expressed. In all, 21 focus groups were organised at national and local levels. The number of focus groups was adapted to the needs of the research in each country, in line with the advice of the national and local advisory boards.

Table A3: Focus groups Structured questionnaire for teaching staff and students

Country	Number of focus groups
Albania	4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1
Croatia	4
Kosovo*	3
Israel	1
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	0
Montenegro	4
Serbia	4
Turkey	0
TOTAL	**21**
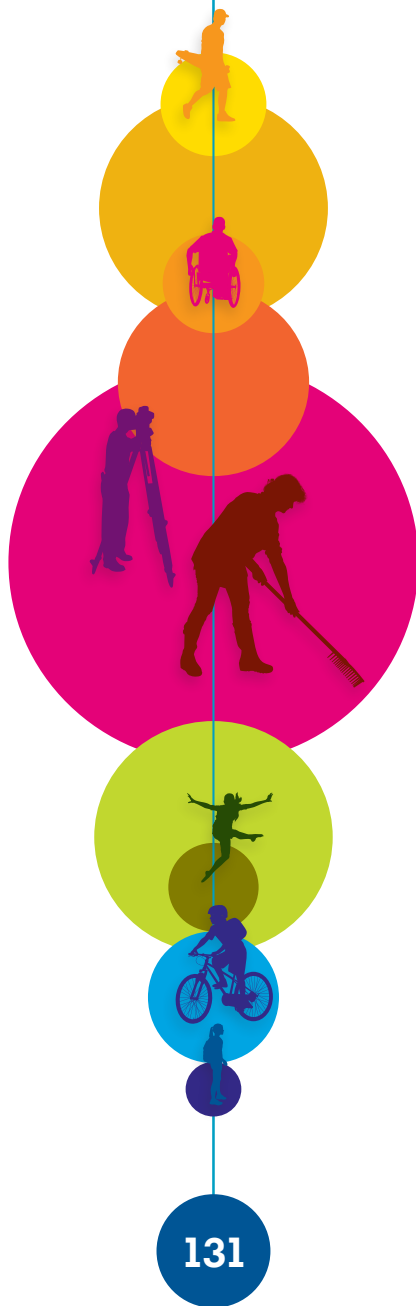
STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHING STAFF AND STUDENTS

While depth of research was achieved by in-depth, face-to-face interviews and focus groups, breadth was achieved by a pair of questionnaire surveys conducted in each case-study school one directed at students in the first and final years and the other at teachers. Issues covered by the student questionnaire included characteristics of the student such as age, gender, year of study, courses enrolled, educational and social background, reasons for choice of vocational school, experience in the school, aspirations and plans for the future. Issues covered by the teacher questionnaire included personal characteristics such as age, gender, years of experience, level of educational attainment, as well as courses taught, problems experienced in teaching practice and views about improvements needed to teaching practices and resources. The teacher and student questionnaires are available in English upon request.

The questionnaire design was centrally coordinated by LSE with inputs from the country research teams. Questionnaires were designed to be as short as possible and have standard coding across countries. They were translated into the respective languages and implemented in the 27 case study schools. The data have been analysed by the country research teams to investigate the relationship between education practices and social inclusion in the three school communities involved in the study. Data in Excel file format in English have been returned to LSE where they will be analysed to investigate the relations between VET practices and social inclusion variables on a cross-national basis in the second phase of the research. In all, some 745 usable replies were achieved for the teacher questionnaire and 2,830 for the student questionnaire across all countries.
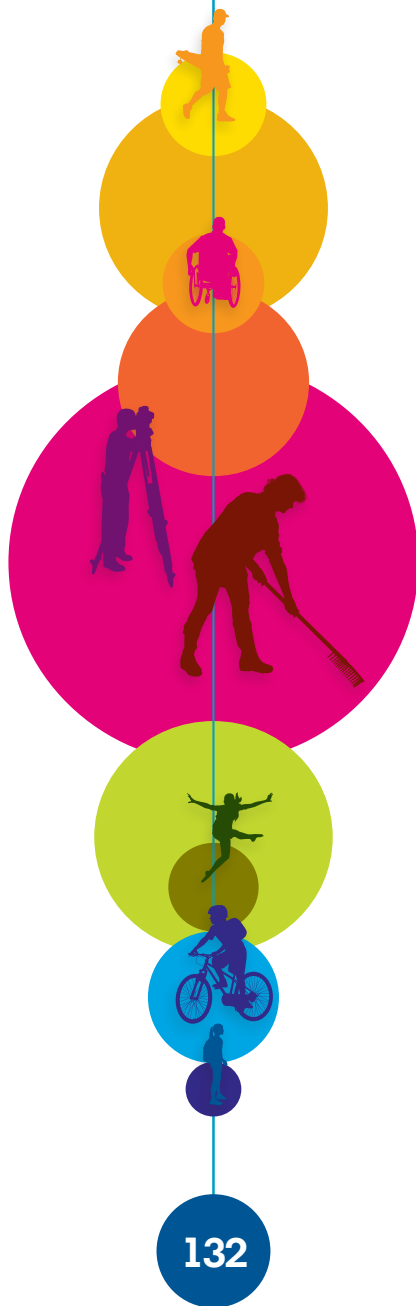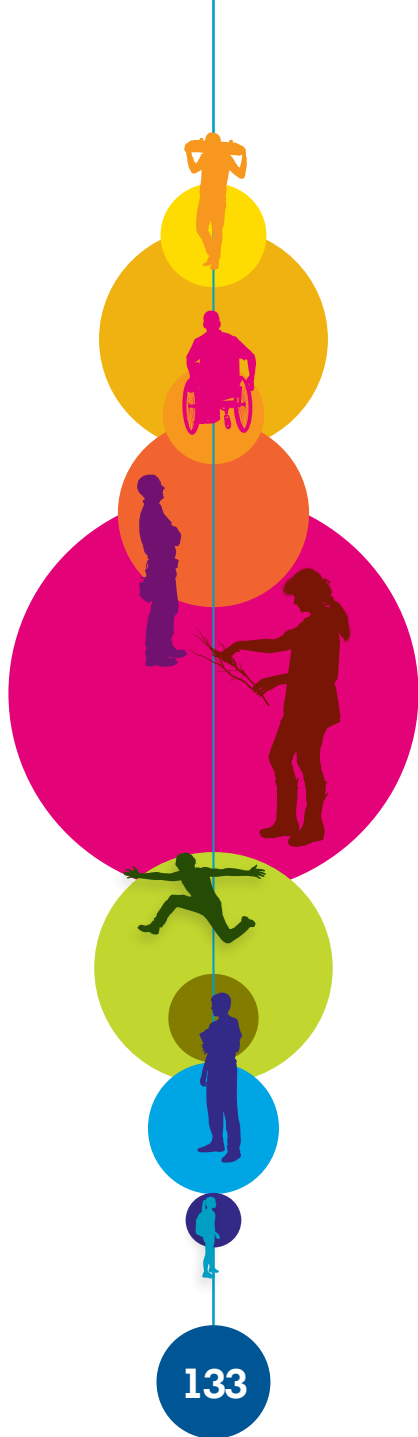
Table A4: Survey responses

Country	Number of respondents, teacher questionnaire	Number of respondents, student questionnaire
Albania	84	245
Bosnia and Herzegovina	71	274
Croatia	66	363
Kosovo*	79	392
Israel	80	288
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	100	321
Montenegro	86	317
Serbia	89	330
Turkey	90	300
TOTAL	**745**	**2,830**

APPENDIX 2: SCHOOLS INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Schools involved ACRONYMS

Country	School	Town or City
Albania	Shkolla e Mesme Teknike Ekonomike (Technical Economic High School)	Tirana
Albania	Shkolla e Mesme Profesionale Beqir Cela (Vocational High School Beqir Cela)	Durres
Albania	Qendra rajonale e e Formimit Profesional (Regional Vocation Training Centre)	Elbasan
Bosnia	Srednja elektrotehnička škola (Secondary Electro-technical school)	Sarajevo
Bosnia	Elektrotehnička škola Ruđera Boskovića (Electro-technical school)	Mostar
Bosnia	Srednjoskolski centar (High school centre)	Foča
Croatia	Mješovita industrijsko - obrtnička škola (Mixed industrial-craft school)	Karlovac
Croatia	Gospodarska Škola (Economics school)	Cakovec
Croatia	Graditeljska škola za industriju i obrt (Construction school for industry and crafts)	Rijeka
Israel	Ort Adivi	Ashkelon
Israel	Amal Rahat	Rahat
Israel	Yeshiva of Kfar Zetim	Kfar Zetim
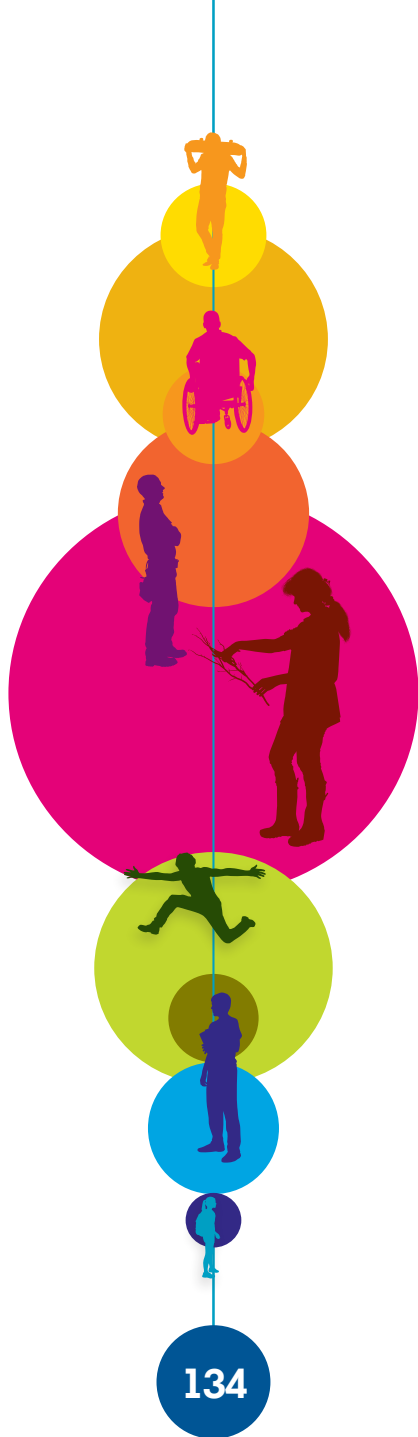
Kosovo	28 Nentori, Technical School	Pristina
Kosovo	Gani Cavderbasha, Technical school	Prizren
Kosovo	Kadri Kusari, School of economy	Djakova
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Riste Risteski-Ricko	Prilep
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Nikola Stein Vocational school	Tetovo
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	ASUC Boro Petrusevski	Skopje
Montenegro	Ing. Marko Radevic Secondary School of Civil Engineering	Podgorica
Montenegro	Agricultural High School	Bar
Montenegro	Beco Pasic Secondary mixed school	Plav
Serbia	Uros Predic Chemical, Food-processing and Textile School	Zrenjanin
Serbia	Tehnoart School of Mechanical Engineering and Art Crafts	Belgrade
Serbia	School of Design, Textile and Leather	Novi Pazar
Turkey	Keçiören Technical and Industrial Vocational High School	Ankara
Turkey	Atatürk Technical and Vocational High School for Girls	Ankara
Turkey	Küçükyalı Technical and Industrial Vocational High School	Istanbul
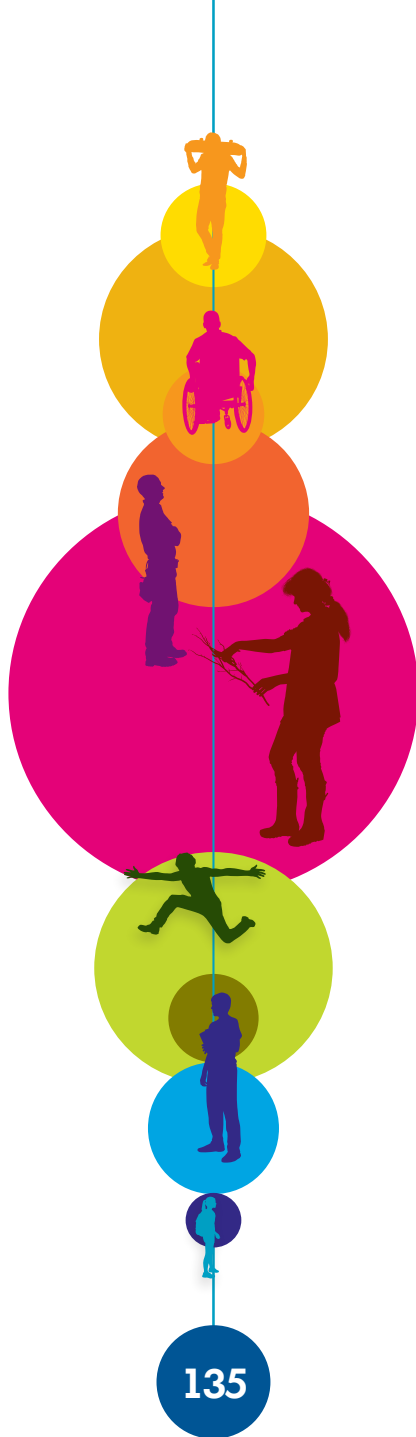
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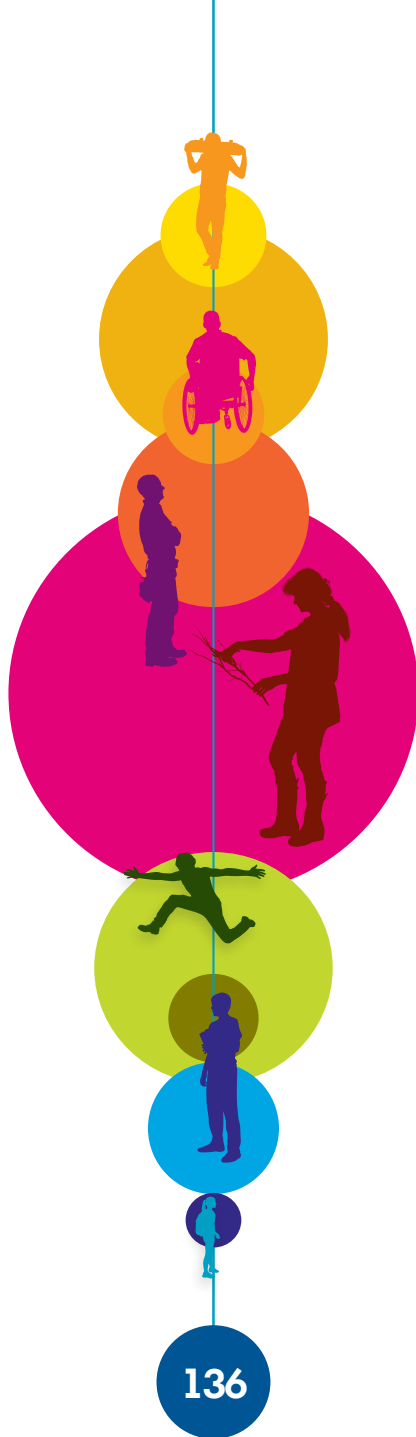
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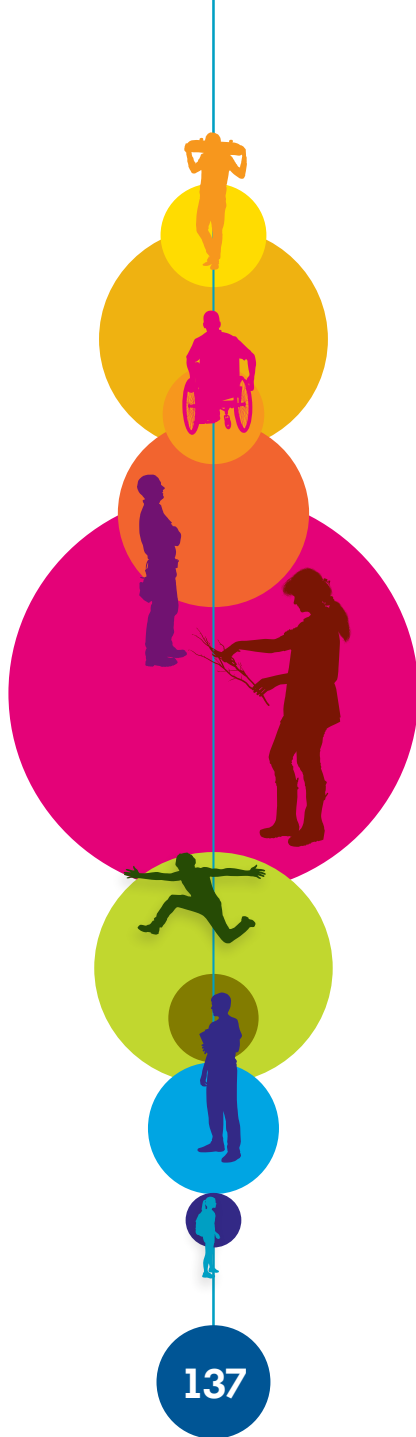
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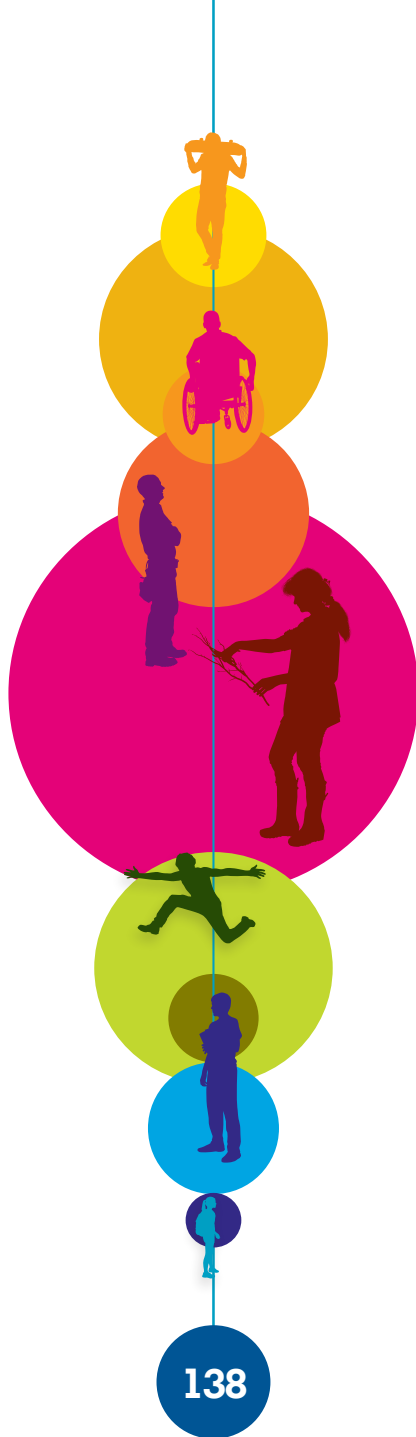
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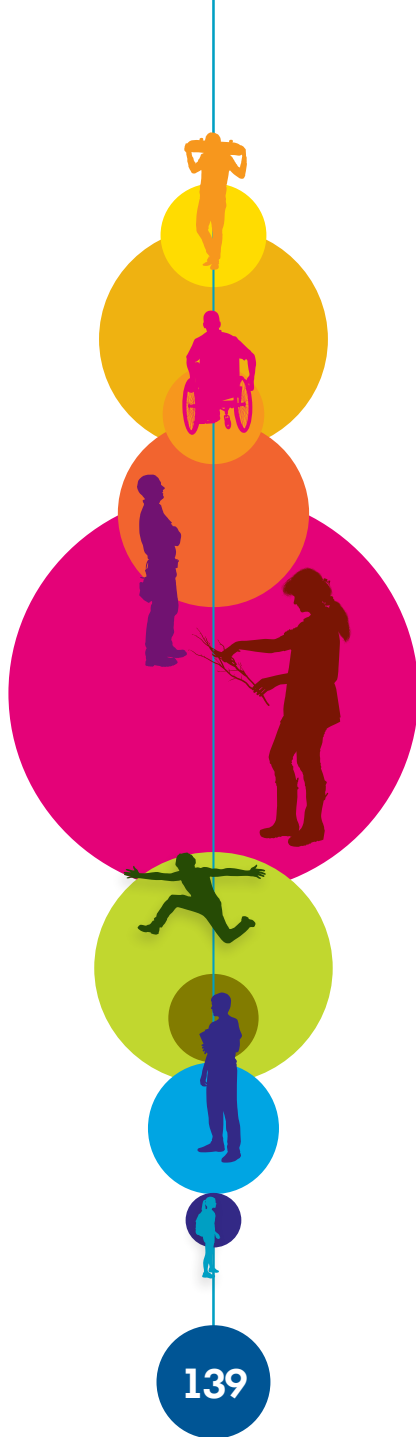
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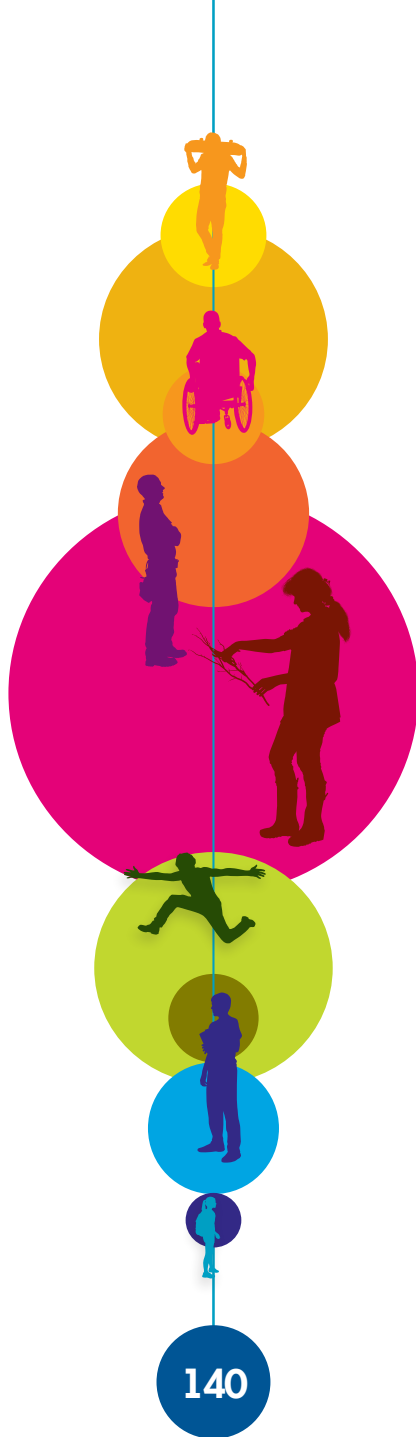
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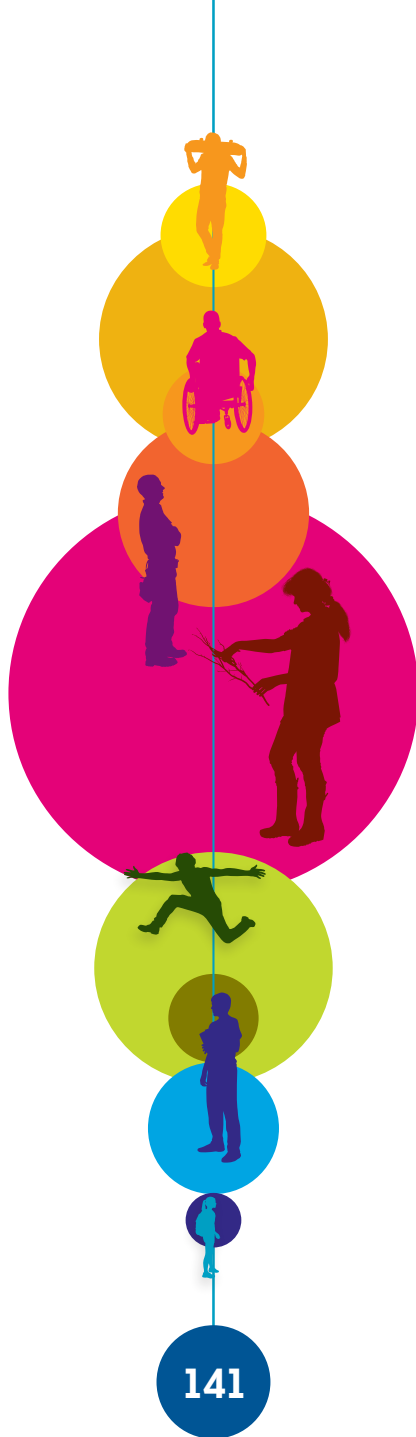
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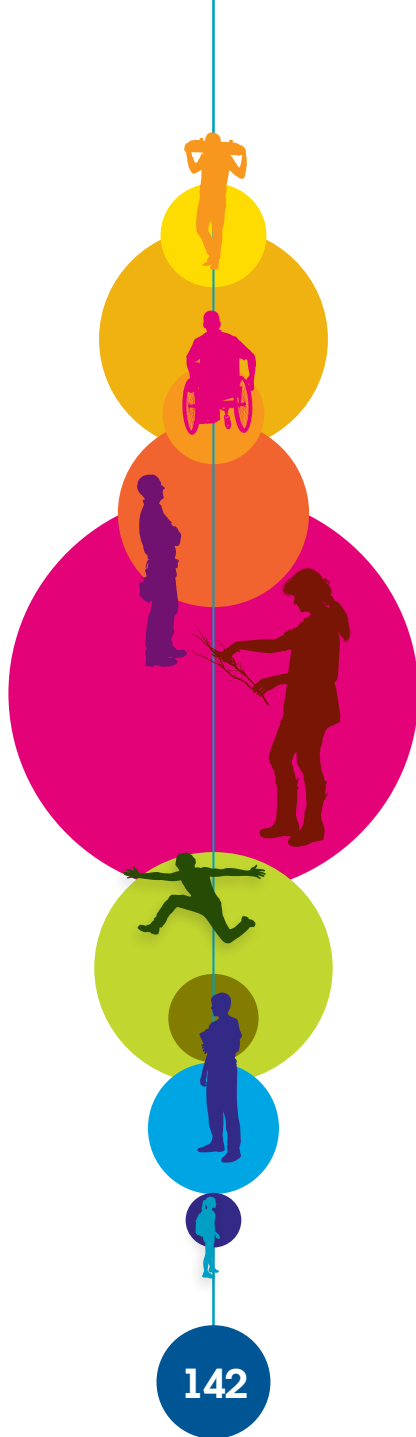
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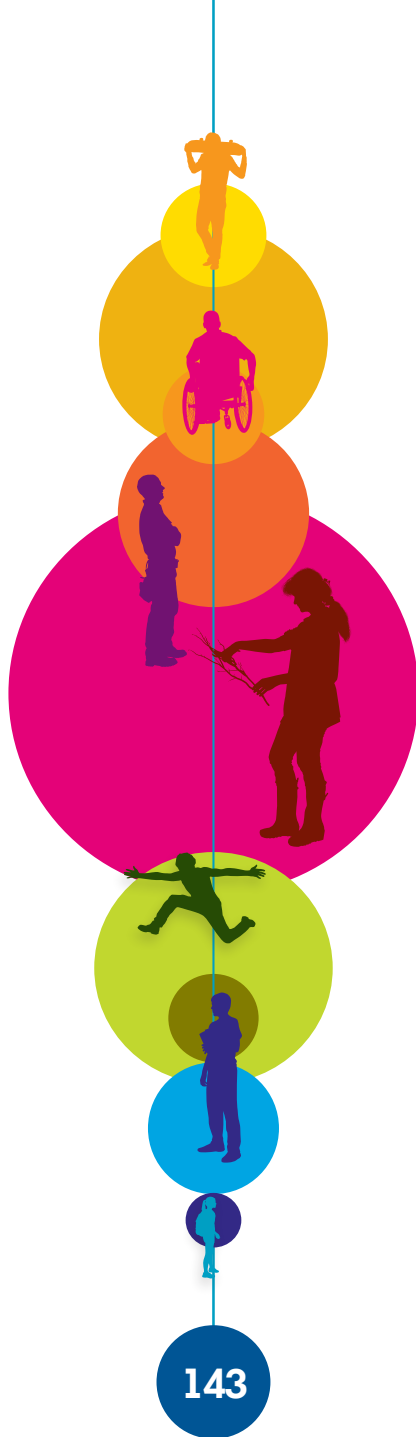
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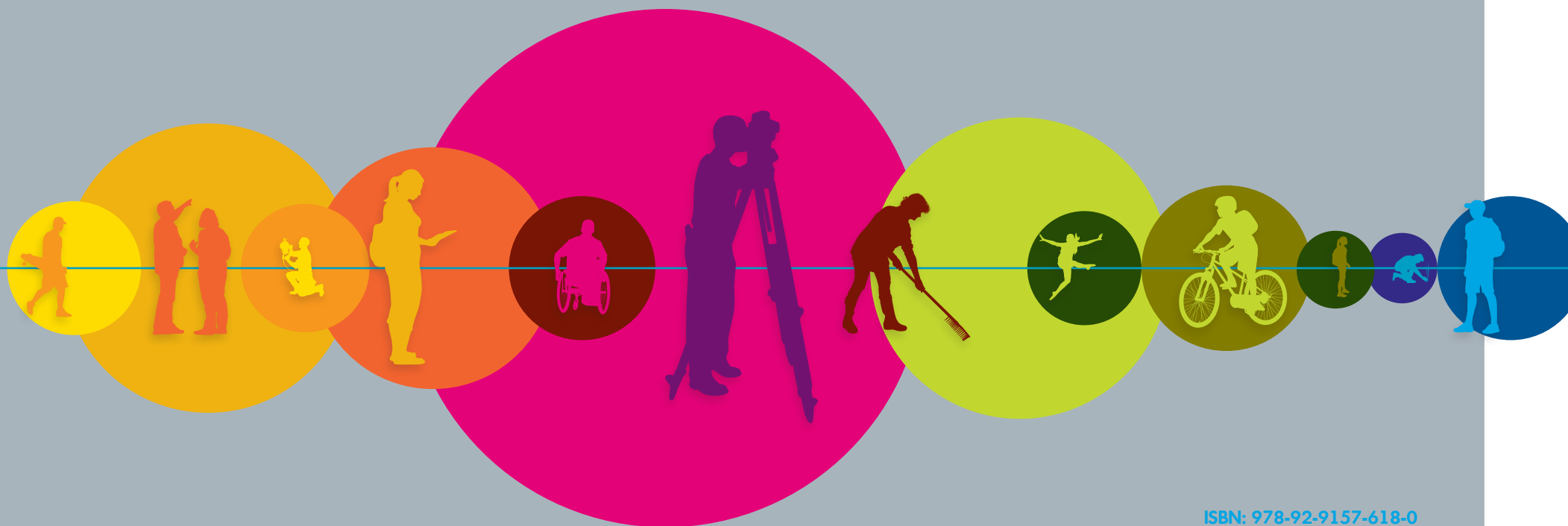
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Yair, G. et al., European Training Foundation, 'Country Report: Israel', report prepared for the project 'Mapping of VET Educational Policies and Practices for Social Inclusion and Social Cohesion in the Western Balkans, Turkey and Israel', ETF, Turin, 2013

This ETF report focuses on policies and practices for social inclusion and social cohesion in vocational education and training systems in South Eastern Europe, Turkey and Israel. The research methodology concentrated on three carefully chosen vocational schools and training centres in each country to investigate the main barriers and potential opportunities for building inclusive vocational education and training systems.