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SDG 4 – EDUCATION 2030

PART III

UNESCO STRATEGY FOR TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET) (2016-2021): MID-TERM REVIEW

SUMMARY

UNESCO's Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (2016-2021), adopted by the Executive Board at its 199th session, foresees a mid-term review to assess progress and to adapt the Strategy as required and in accordance with the situation and operating context, if necessary. A mid-term review of the Strategy was carried out in 2019 and the Director-General hereby reports on its conclusions.

Any financial and administrative implications related to the present document will be borne within the framework of document 40 C/5.

Decision required: paragraph 26.



I. Introduction

1. UNESCO's Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (2016-2021), approved by the Executive Board in 2016 by 199 EX/Decision 6. The Strategy aims to support the efforts of Member States to enhance the relevance of their TVET systems, to equip all youth and adults with the skills required for employment, decent work, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning, and to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a whole. The Strategy has three priority areas: (i) fostering youth employment and entrepreneurship; (ii) promoting equity and gender equality; and (iii) facilitating the transition to green economies and sustainable societies. It also outlines three cross-cutting intervention areas focusing on: (i) skills anticipation and assessment; (ii) skills and qualifications recognition within and across borders; and (iii) monitoring progress towards SDG 4 and partnerships towards SDG 4 and related targets.

2. As foreseen by the Strategy, UNESCO launched a mid-term review in 2019 to assess progress and to adapt the Strategy as required. The review consisted of the following components: (i) an external review, whereby an external consultant conducted an analysis of main documents and of exchanges with members of the TVET community and interviews of UNESCO's partners, including members of the Inter-Agency Group on TVET; (ii) an internal review, comprising an extensive consultation within the UNESCO TVET community. The mid-term review was further informed by the monitoring of the implementation of the 2015 Recommendation concerning TVET for the period 2015-2019, the results of which were presented to the General Conference at its 40th session.

3. This document therefore reports on: (i) the progress in the implementation of the Strategy against its overall objective and expected results, (ii) the actuality and relevance of the Strategy in view of recent developments, and (iii) the necessity for any modifications to the Strategy and the resulting implications for programming and resources.

II. Progress in the implementation of the Strategy

Priority Area 1 – Fostering youth employment and entrepreneurship

4. UNESCO provides on-demand support to Member States to conduct participative and comprehensive national TVET policy reviews and provides related policy recommendations to transform TVET systems. During the 2016-2019 period, UNESCO conducted 14 such reviews to assist countries in policy development and in their efforts towards achieving SDG Targets 4.3 and 4.4. The implementation of the Strategy has also been supported through a number of extrabudgetary projects, including:

- **Better Education for Africa's Rise II (BEAR II):** Supported by the Republic of Korea, the second phase of BEAR aims to strengthen access to decent employment and generate self-employment for young people, by improving the quality, relevance and perception of the national TVET systems in the five beneficiary countries in East Africa.
- **Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET (BILT):** Funded by Germany, the project aims to enable exchange of experiences and peer learning across the UNEVOC Network in the thematic areas of greening, digitalization/industry 4.0, entrepreneurship and migration.
- **Capacity Development for Education (CapED):** The programme is currently funded by extra-budgetary contributions from Sweden, Norway and Finland, and targets seven beneficiary countries, focusing on the transformation of their TVET systems. CapED interventions support a wide range of capacity development activities, including the development of national TVET policies and plans, youth employment, reinforcement of TVET governance mechanisms, public-private partnerships, national qualifications frameworks and the recognition of prior learning.

- **Youth Employment in the Mediterranean (YEM):** A three-year regional initiative funded by the European Union in seven countries in the Middle East and North Africa, aiming to support youth employment through improved skills anticipation and assessment systems, improved TVET pathways including mainstreaming digital and entrepreneurial skills and work-based learning.

5. UNESCO has also designed and continues to implement large-scale capacity development programmes to address TVET leadership skills gaps. The UNESCO-UNEVOC TVET Leadership Programme has been rolled out since 2016 at global, regional and national levels and similar capacity development initiatives are being prepared by the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning's (IIEP) Pôle de Dakar and Buenos Aires office.

Priority Area 2 – Promoting equity and gender equality

6. This priority area includes policy support, operational interventions, research and advocacy. At national level, all UNESCO policy reviews and technical support systematically address equity, inclusion and gender equality challenges. These include, among others, analyses of barriers for disadvantaged groups to access TVET and transition to the labour market, disaggregated data collection and analysis by sex, ethnic minorities and geographical location.

7. Furthermore, specific extrabudgetary activities also aim at reaching disadvantaged groups. For example, the YEM project focuses on the attractiveness of TVET for girls and women, while the “*Skills and Technical Education Programme*” (STEP) in Malawi supports the technical, entrepreneurial, vocational education and training (TEVET) sector in becoming more equitable and gender-balanced. In partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and UNDP, the CapED Programme aims to strengthen 17 vocational training centres and offers out-of-school rural youth in Madagascar vocational training in areas relevant to the job market, with around 3,000 young people having been trained so far. UNESCO also supports Jordan’s Response Plan for the Syria Crisis, with funding from the Republic of Korea, and has supported 250 scholarships for vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian refugees to undertake quality training programmes.

8. At global level, UNESCO-UNEVOC also contributes to gender equality, including through a study on gender equality in STEM-related fields in TVET (2019-2020) which involves ten UNEVOC Centres. UNESCO also conducted global advocacy work in partnership with Handicap International through the co-organization of an international conference on skills and employment for disabled people and the preparation of a policy brief on skills for persons with disabilities.

Priority Area 3 – Facilitating the transition to green economies and sustainable societies

9. UNESCO’s policy reviews and support systematically address issues such as inclusive economic growth, environmental and climate change challenges and the skills requirements in specific sectors such as agriculture, energy and construction. Certain extrabudgetary activities aim at responding to the specific needs of greening economies, such as BEAR II, which targets skills needs in environmental technology and agriculture, the CapED programme, which supports the set-up of skills councils in the agriculture and construction sectors, or YEM, which addresses skills anticipation challenges in other sectors related to the environment such as tourism and transport.

10. At global level, UNESCO-UNEVOC promotes the greening of TVET institutions through its practical guide, which advocates the greening of the campus, curriculum, research, community and workplace approaches. Twenty-four UNEVOC Centres have started implementing related initiatives, and can serve as role models or references for greening practices to other institutions that are considering similar actions. The UNEVOC Network was also a key partner of the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and will actively contribute to its follow-up ESD for 2030 framework.

Cross-cutting intervention 1 – Skills anticipation and assessment

11. UNESCO is working at different levels to support Member States in developing appropriate systems and related capacities in skills anticipation and assessment. This includes actions at national level to examine the availability of big data on skills development and employment, to analyse these data and use the results for policy-making. Other activities, particularly in the context of the BEAR II and YEM projects, aim to reinforce capacities of Member States in skills assessment and projection and in the use of the results to inform policy-making.

Cross-cutting intervention 2 – Recognition of skills and qualifications

12. UNESCO has various strands of work that aim to help countries strengthen their qualification systems, improve recognition mechanisms and assist them in their efforts to compare and benchmark their qualifications with those of other systems. At global level, UNESCO has been engaged in leading the process of development of a set of World Reference Levels of Learning Outcomes (WRL) in collaboration with external partners. In addition to the development of technical tools, the work aims at connecting key regional and international organizations¹ working in the field of recognition of qualifications as well as at developing common language in this area. The main output of the group's work has been the development of WRL, including a prototype digital tool to facilitate their use.

13. At regional level, UNESCO and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission launched a new initiative in 2018 to strengthen ECOWAS countries' capacities in reforming their qualifications systems while adopting a combined national and regional perspective. A similar process started in Latin America and Caribbean in 2019. Countries in the Asia Pacific region took part in a study comparing the quality assurance mechanisms of TVET qualifications and produced a set of regional guidelines in this area. Meanwhile, a similar initiative on quality assurance mechanisms for TVET qualifications is underway in East African countries. At national level, four countries are currently benefitting from UNESCO's support in developing national qualifications frameworks underpinned by quality assurance frameworks and the recognition of prior learning.

Cross-cutting intervention 3 – Monitoring progress and partnerships towards SDG 4 and related targets:

14. The collection of TVET related data on SDG4 Targets 4.3 and 4.4 is conducted in the context of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics' (UIS) SDG 4 Data Digest. In addition, UNESCO TVET policy review guidelines provide resources regarding TVET indicators, while extrabudgetary projects such as BEAR II, CapED and YEM support beneficiary countries in developing TVET management information systems, observatory functions and the collection of TVET and labour market data.

15. Global partnerships and cooperation are reinforced through the UNEVOC Network and the Inter-Agency Group on TVET as well as new partnerships in the context of SDG 4. The UNEVOC Network is contributing to UNESCO's clearing house function and facilitating international cooperation in TVET. UNESCO-UNEVOC has enhanced and expanded its online services and has established a centrally managed database that allows Network members to identify potential partners and collaborators based on common or complimentary interests and expertise.

16. Since 2008, UNESCO has been leading an Inter-Agency Group on TVET (IAG-TVET) to promote knowledge sharing and a common understanding of key matters on TVET as well as to ensure effective coordination of activities by international organizations involved in TVET policy advice, programmes and research. Among others, during the 2016-2019 period, the IAG-TVET produced two advocacy leaflets to support common understanding and key messages on work-based learning as well as on career guidance. UNESCO will strengthen governments' capacities to

¹ Key organizations that have participated in the group are: ASEAN, the European Commission, Cedefop, ETF, ILO, SADC, Caricom, the Pacific Community, WorldSkills as well as a countries with strong interests in this area (Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, United Arab Emirates)

develop and adapt policies on TVET for inclusion and establish mechanisms for assessing and recognizing prior learning

Lessons learned from implementation

17. Overall, UNESCO has implemented the Strategy with effectiveness and efficiency, despite significant challenges in human resources. In addition to effective implementation, as outlined in the previous sections, UNESCO has also demonstrated efficiency in promoting partnerships and cost-sharing modalities where possible, and successfully mobilized around US \$43 million since 2016 in extrabudgetary resources. In addition, UNESCO TVET experts are increasingly acting as a “TVET community” within a coherent framework of actions and using common guidelines for policy reviews and approaches for capacity development. The combination of knowledge development and dissemination, advocacy, national interventions, networking and cooperation, allows UNESCO to be a key global player in TVET and at the same time work directly with countries, stakeholders and developing partners to support TVET developments in countries.

18. Providing upstream policy support, mobilizing agents of change and supporting structural reforms is a resource-intensive intervention requiring fieldwork and long-term engagement with national stakeholders. It is also sensitive to the policy context and commitment. Furthermore, moving from policy recommendations to implementation requires leveraging resources and support. Consequently, scaling up interventions to respond to demands for support from Member States necessitates stronger internal capacity in TVET including new recruitments of experts and secondments from Member States.

19. The progress made regarding the reorientation of the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre as a centre of expertise in TVET, the implementation of operational projects for reinforcing TVET institutions and the further development of the UNEVOC Network deserves continued strengthening, including the recruitment of additional expertise.

III. Review of the actuality and relevance of the Strategy

20. Overall, the Strategy remains relevant and actual, with a clear agenda and valid overall objective and strategic priority areas. Its three priority and cross-cutting areas have proved valuable and flexible enough to accommodate diverse needs and evolving agendas. This mid-term review therefore concludes that they should be maintained. While all Member States should benefit from UNESCO’s actions, direct policy support will be provided as a priority to African countries, least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing States (SIDS), and countries in fragile situations.

21. The results of the consultation on the 2015 TVET Recommendation, presented to the General Conference at its 40th session, show that there is a need for a more holistic approach towards TVET policies that combines economic growth, social equity and sustainability concerns in a balanced and strategic manner. In addition, TVET policies need to be harmonized with policies from multiple sectors of the economy, and the specific nature of the informal economy should be recognized in TVET policies. More attention should be given to governance and to the particular challenges faced by conflict and fragile states.

IV. Modifications to the Strategy and implications for programming

22. In view of the significant challenges in advancing SDG 4, including Targets 4.3 and 4.4, and the outcomes of the consultation regarding the 2015 TVET Recommendation, some adjustments to the Strategy are required. Under strategic priority 1, certain TVET topics will require further attention, including TVET teachers, governance, employer engagement in TVET and informal apprenticeships. Another emerging topic in recent years is the contribution of TVET to innovation and excellence. Under strategic priority 2, UNESCO will increase its attention to disadvantaged groups, notably women and girls, and will support host countries’ capacities in improving the quality of, and

increasing access to, TVET services for refugees and internally displaced people. This will be conducted among others in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and International Labour Organization (ILO). Under strategic priority 3, the importance of TVET for all SDGs will require further attention. The digitization of labour markets and its implications for TVET will require the development of new approaches regarding the readiness of TVET systems to respond to the new challenges. This will be conducted in synergy with the forthcoming UNESCO Strategy for Innovation and ICT in Education.

23. In addition to policy support, operational interventions, normative work, research and advocacy, UNESCO will explore the potential of new global initiatives to unleash the innovation potential of TVET institutions and to develop global public goods for youth and adult skills development for work and life. For example, UNESCO will examine policy initiatives to establish Centres of Vocational Excellence and to understand how TVET institutions can contribute to innovation. Another global initiative will examine enhancing the quality, relevance and future development of informal apprenticeships including off-the-job learning.

24. Significant challenges remain regarding human resources. UNESCO Regional Offices with substantial TVET work in sub-Saharan Africa, such as the Harare and Abuja offices, as well as the Bangkok Regional Bureau are lacking TVET specialists. The TVET Section at Headquarters, with only two fixed-term regular programme TVET specialists in addition to the Chief of Section, is lacking the necessary human resources to scale-up activities and support to Member States and provide necessary backstopping to staff in the field. The reinforcement of the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre also requires the mobilization of additional TVET expertise.

25. An evaluation of the Strategy will be conducted during the last year of its implementation in 2021. It will take into account the findings of an independent study on the impact of the 2015 Recommendation concerning TVET.

Proposed draft decision

26. In light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 199 EX/Decision 6 and 40 C/Resolution 87,
2. Having examined document 209 EX/6.III,
3. Expresses its satisfaction with the mid-term review of the Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (2016-2021), and acknowledges the progress made, lessons learned and implications for further implementation in 2020-2021;
4. Acknowledges the continued relevance of the Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (2016-2021), its overall objective, priority areas and cross-cutting intervention areas;
5. Invites Member States and development partners to reinforce UNESCO's work in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) through extrabudgetary funding, the secondment of experts, and knowledge sharing;
6. Invites the Director-General to present to the Executive Board at its 212th session a proposal regarding the follow-up to the Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (2016-2021).