

CASE STUDY

Upskilling Vocational Teachers through Workplace Training



Training teachers in the workplace provided them with additional skills and better understanding of businesses. Photo credit: Ministry of Education, Montenegro.

Montenegro has made industry placement of teachers a national program to better match vocational education and training with market demand.

Overview

The Government of Montenegro, a country in the Balkans, is making vocational education and training more practical and better oriented toward the workplace. It regards professional development as a key tool to bring about improvements in teaching and learning to achieve this goal.

In a bid to improve teachers' understanding of the labor market and innovations in the workplace, the European Training Foundation assisted in conducting a pilot industry placement program for teachers in Montenegro. Placements in industries help teachers to teach their subjects in a practical and work-based manner because they can draw on these to design learning experiences, which are authentic and engaging—both for the learners and the teachers.

Following the pilot project—conducted between 2015 and 2016—the Government of Montenegro developed this into a national program, which now forms part of the national in-service training requirements. It also mobilized good will and commitment from the teachers, employers and national agencies, and improved the national provision of continuous professional development.

Project snapshot

Dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• April 2015: Start date• December 2016: Close date
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• €20,000
Institutions and Stakeholders	<p>Financing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• European Training Foundation <p>Implementing agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ministry of Education, Government of Montenegro• Centre for Vocational Education. Montenegro• Chamber of Economy of Montenegro

Challenges

There is a shortage of labor skills that meet the demands of the businesses and industries. Vocational training is a national priority, but there is a need to improve teacher training—particularly on their exposure to the industries so they can gain expertise in their respective fields and provide better knowledge transfer to their students.

It was challenging to conduct the project due to the following concerns:

- Workplace trainings needed to fit the teachers' teaching schedule with their placements.
- There was a need to find the appropriate and accessible companies for some teachers' placements.
- Cooperation between vocational schools and employers for teacher training was lacking.

Solutions

With funding and expertise provided by the European Training Foundation, the Montenegro Ministry for Education with the Centre for Vocational Education and the Chamber of Economy of Montenegro conducted a pilot project, Continuous Professional Development of Teachers and Instructors in the Montenegrin Vocational Education, which aimed to encourage stronger cooperation and exchange of knowledge between vocational teachers and employers, and improve compatibility between the education system and the labor market.

The European Training Foundation oversaw the project and provided advice on program design and execution as well as design policy and documentation. The Ministry of Education coordinated with school-based coordinators, prepared guidance on the selection of teachers and placements, set objectives, and helped prepare teachers. The Ministry also visited and monitored teachers during the training period. The Chamber, meanwhile, talked to their members and encouraged them to offer their businesses for the training program.

Results

Take-up at ground level has been strong because it responded to a need for additional teacher training. Among the industries that agreed to the workplace training were from the electronics, mechanical engineering, healthcare, hospitality, telecommunications, agriculture, textiles, trade, culinary, technology, and accounting sectors.

In 2016, 20 vocational teachers were placed for 3 to 5 days each across five businesses.

In 2017, the program was expanded to include 98 vocational teachers and practical instructors from 12 vocational training schools nationwide.

In 2018, the pilot project was formally recognized by the government and adopted as a national policy. It is now part of the required 40 hours of continuous professional development of vocational teachers. In Montenegro, where a system of licensed teachers was introduced in 2014, vocational school staff must pass legally defined training courses every 5 years in order to remain in the profession.

Lessons

Teachers and employers will **engage in new experiences** if they believe the program has real value.

The project demonstrated the **readiness of employers** to provide learning opportunities for teachers while teachers were often motivated to give up their time to participate in the placement program.

Donors and development agencies should **use a partnership approach**—working closely with stakeholders and providing support for them to lead and act—to maximize impact.

Publication of tools such as application and debriefing documents, delegation of coordination responsibilities to schools, and a formal national recognition of the program will **help sustain the program**.

Government ownership facilitates a rapid rollout of the program and provides a higher media profile. The Ministry of Education was able to contact schools and persuade them to adopt and implement the program quickly.

Most teachers believe the **5-day training period is not enough** to become familiar with all the

segments of the job and proposed to extend the training for at least 2 weeks.

Teachers should be **relieved of their classes during training** because training represents a workload of 8 hours daily. While some schools succeeded in getting teachers out of the classroom during the workplace training, other teachers spent those 5 days both at school and at the employer.

There are small towns that do not have the right employer fit for the teachers. In this connection, it is essential for these teachers to be **provided employers from developed cities**.

Teachers need to be included in **choosing employers for the training** because there are instances when coordinators do not know in advance what kind of practical workplace experience teachers need.

The program's survival depends largely on the **commitment of employers and the national and school coordinators**. The national coordinators provide guidance and support to school coordinators and organize communications and coordination between stakeholders. The school placement organizers communicate with businesses, request placements, identify and prepare places, visit teachers on placement, and prepare and debrief teachers.

European Training Foundation Director Cesare Onestini presented "Making Teachers Development Work: The Experience of the ETF" during the Innovative Models of Teacher Development in TVET session at the 8th International Skills Forum: Future of Skills and Jobs in the Age of Digital Disruptions, an event organized by the Asian Development Bank in Manila.

Resources

[European Training Foundation \(ETF\).](#)

ETF. [Vocational Teaching and Learning.](#)

ETF. 2019. [The Power of Demonstration. Supporting Reform of Professional Development for Vocational Teachers and Trainers.](#) Italy.

ETF. 2019. [Montenegro: Teacher Training in the Spotlight.](#) News article. 27 May.



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