

TRACER AT THE PROVIDER LEVEL

A Comparison of Four Cohorts
of VE Graduates

TRACER AT THE PROVIDER LEVEL: A COMPARISON OF FOUR COHORTS OF VE GRADUATES

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About Skills for Jobs

'Skills for Jobs' (S4J) is a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by Swisscontact Albania.

S4J addresses the main challenges of the Albanian Vocational Education and Training (VET) system by focusing on ensuring systemic change, capacity development and empowerment of key actors. Based on this approach, S4J supports partner VET providers in Albania in terms of employers' and partners' relations, diversification of VET offer, new ways of inclusive learning and quality, work-based learning in cooperation with employers, and organisational development.

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SKILLS FOR JOBS S4J

Rruga Skënderbej, Vila nr. 49

Tirana, Albania, P.O. Box 2891

Tel: +355 42 231 850

e-mail: al.info@swisscontact.org

www.aftesiperpune.al

Highlights

9 Vocational Education (VE) schools in Albania, with the support of the Skills for Jobs (S4J) Project¹, are promoting annual VE offer decisions to be made on the basis of structured evidence and the involvement of their regional business sector. This approach aims to increase the relevance of their offer and contribute towards labour-market oriented skills development. This, in turn, will lead to faster labour market transitions for young men and women graduating from VE, more qualified employees and increased productivity for companies.

Tracer studies offer a better understanding of the performance of VE graduates in the labour market by measuring the productive employment that graduates find after education. They represent one of the sources for assessing and helping towards improving the quality and labour market relevance of VE. To this end, S4J has supported the implementation a provider-based tracer system in its partner providers as of September 2017.²

This report presents the results from the tracing of graduates in the 6 initial providers supported by S4J – starting with the 2015-2016 cohort. Some of the key findings from the 2020 Tracer Study covering the 2018-2019 cohort are summarized below:

- 51% of the 2019 graduates were employed or self-employed one year after graduation. 55% of the male graduates were in employment one year after their graduation compared to only a third of the females (33%).
- 31% of the 2019 graduates were unemployed. Out of the unemployed, 26% perceived that they were unemployed due to the situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some 16% attributed their unemployment to the general job scarcity in the regions they lived.
- 17% were attending higher education or further trainings upon graduation. Among the 2019 graduates attending further education, 87% were following Bachelor studies while 9% were attending professional courses.
- For the 2019 graduates, more than half or 54% transitioned to the labour market before graduation. Moreover, the vast majority or 72% of the graduates entered the labour market for the first time within three months of graduation.
- Personal connections of family members and friends was the most popular method through which graduates acquired first-time employment (67%). Concerning apprenticeships' impact on graduate recruitment, just 8% of the graduates found first-time employment as a follow-up of their apprenticeships in businesses.
- The most mentioned form of assistance by the schools was the guidance offered in teaching on how to search and apply for a job (in 35% of cases).
- More than half or 56% of the 2019 employed graduates worked in occupations related to their education. 39% of the employed graduates reported to use their knowledge either 'at a high' or 'very high' extent in their current jobs.

¹ S4J is a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by Swisscontact Albania.

² During its first phase (2016-2019), S4J supported 6 VE schools. In its second phase, S4J is supporting a total of 9 VE schools.

- 26% of the 2019 employed graduates earned in the range of 35,001-50,000 Lek per month. Other 24% earned more than 50,000 Lek. However, for only 45% of the employed graduates there was no change in income following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Half of graduates received lower incomes, while only 5% obtained higher salaries.
- Graduates typically felt secure and satisfied with their jobs one year after graduation. 59% of the 2019 employed graduates reported they felt stable at their job overall, with 42% reporting they felt stable and 17% reporting they felt very stable.
- In retrospective, there was a growing perception among graduates that their schools need more improvements regarding their collaboration with the Employment Offices (57%) and the apprenticeships in businesses (51%).
- 84% of the 2019 graduates would again choose the same field of study, while 86% would also choose the same school.

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1. Introduction and methodology

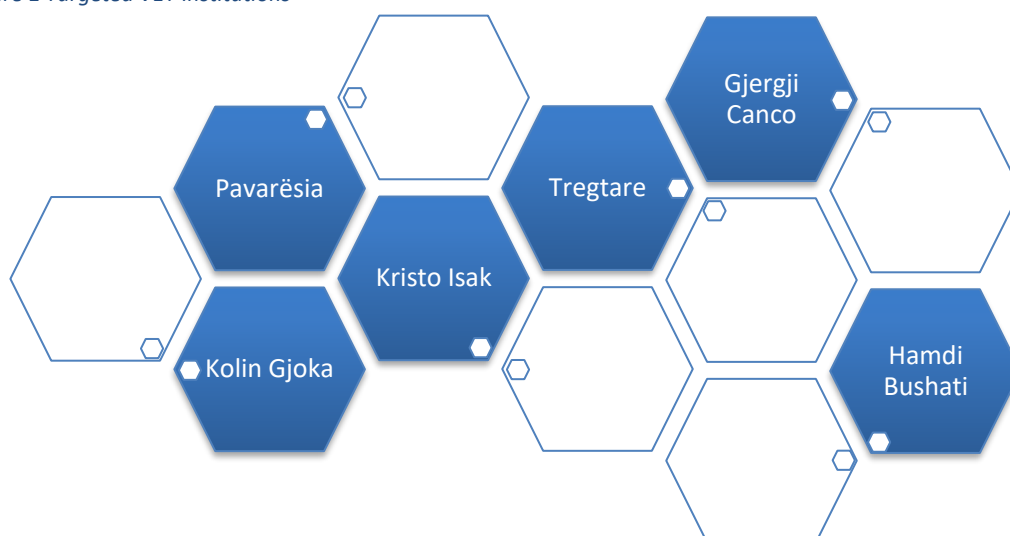
Provider-based tracing represents a convenient tool that serves as a basis for determining providers' capability in preparing graduates that meet the demands of the labour market. It also complements the tracing system at the national level.³

In line with these aims, the two major objectives of the provider-based tracer are:

- To determine empirically the labour market outcomes of VET graduates (objective indicators);
- To assess the horizontal link between education and work by graduates' retrospective evaluation (subjective indicators).

Tracer data in this report cover four cohorts of graduates (2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018) from 6 VET partner providers in 5 regions of Albania.⁴ Below the map with the providers.

Figure 1 Targeted VET Institutions

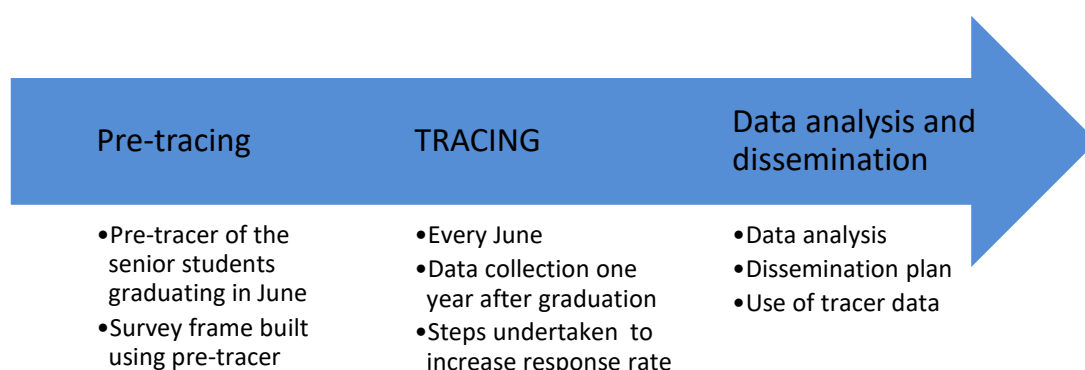


The implementation of the tracer studies for each provider entails three basic phases. During the first phase or the preparation phase, the target population (graduate cohort) and the time after graduation are determined. Next, the pre-tracer questionnaire is administered. The key objective of the questionnaire is to collect baseline data of future graduates regarding their subjective career plans and expectations, socio-demographic characteristics and contact information. Pre-tracing is conducted every May or approximately 3-4 weeks before the graduates leave their respective institutions.

³ See Schomburg (2016) for a more detailed overview of institutional tracer studies.

⁴ For Gjergj Canco and Hamdi Bushati tracing data are available as of the 2017 cohort when the project started supporting the schools.

Figure 2 Phases of implementing a provider-based tracer



In the tracer phase, tracing data are collected. Tracing employs a cross-sectional research design and adopts a quantitative approach using a standardized questionnaire survey. Given that the target population size was small at the provider level, it was opted for a census rather than a sample survey. Kobo Toolbox is the data collection method used. It is implemented through Computer-Assisted Self-Interviewing (CASI) for the case of VET partner providers.

Following the data collection phase, quantitative data are analysed using SPSS and Microsoft Excel. Data processing includes descriptive findings along with relational statistics. Individual provider-based reports are prepared along with the comparative report. The reports are disseminated with VET providers in individual participatory workshops.

In total, 407 graduates of the 2018-2019 cohort from 6 partner provider schools participated in the fourth wave of tracing. Table 1 summarizes the response rates by VET providers. As shown, the sample size at provider level is relatively small and varies between providers.

Table 1 Coverage of the provider-based tracer

Cohort	Region	Provider	Respondents /Graduates	Response rate	% of total
2015-2016	Lezha	Kolin Gjoka	64/119	54%	49%
	Berat	Kristo Isak	40/49	82%	30%
	Vlora	Pavaresia	20/73	27%	15%
	Vlora	Tregtare	8/21	38%	6%
	SUBSAMPLE 1		132/263	50%	100%
2016-2017	Lezha	Kolin Gjoka	66/80	83%	18%
	Berat	Kristo Isak	8/8	100%	2%
	Vlora	Pavaresia	59/98	60%	16%
	Vlora	Tregtare	19/19	100%	5%
	Tirana	Gjergji Canco	121/201	60%	33%
	Shkodra	Hamdi Bushati	91/102	89%	25%
	SUBSAMPLE 2		363/508	71%	100%
2017-2018	Lezha	Kolin Gjoka	46/70	66%	11%
	Berat	Kristo Isak	70/72	97%	17%
	Vlora	Pavaresia	61/126	48%	15%
	Vlora	Tregtare	45/48	94%	11%
	Tirana	Gjergji Canco	121/201	60%	30%

	Shkodra	Hamdi Bushati	60/87	69%	15%
	SUBSAMPLE 3		403/604	67%	100%
2018-2019	Lezha	Kolin Gjoka	55/62	80%	14%
	Berat	Kristo Isak	22/23	96%	5%
	Vlora	Pavaresia	55/95	58%	14%
	Vlora	Tregtare	43/46	93%	11%
	Tirana	Gjergji Canco	176/241	73%	43%
	Shkodra	Hamdi Bushati	56/70	80%	14%
	SUBSAMPLE 4		407/537	76%	100%

Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%.

Table 2 lists the respective vocational directions of graduates in the sample. The most represented direction for the 2019 cohort is the Electrotechnics & Electronics direction that comprises 36% of the sample, followed by the Economy & Business direction with 19%.

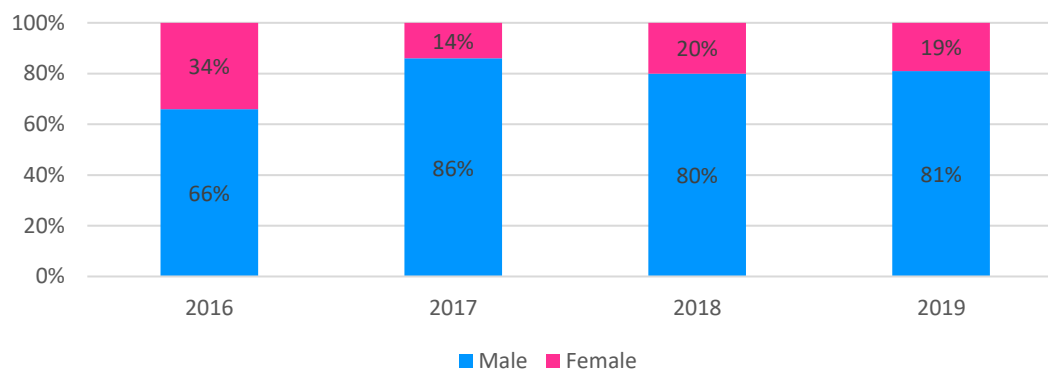
Table 2 Directions by sample size

Direction	2016	2017	2018	2019
Office administration	22%		2%	
Agriculture			5%	
Economy&Business	45%	25%	16%	19%
Electrotechnics & Electronics	6%	22%	25%	36%
Tourism&Hospitality	11%	14%	25%	16%
Thermohydraulic panels	2%	1%	1%	2%
Textile		4%	3%	3%
Mechanics	1%	4%	4%	3%
Transport Vehicle Services	3%	5%	5%	3%
Food technology			1%	
ICT	11%	18%	13%	17%

Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=132, N₂=363, N₃=403, N₄=407.

Regarding the gender composition of the sample, the sample for the 2019 cohort was composed of 19% females and 81% males.

Figure 3 Gender composition



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=132, N₂=363, N₃=400, N₄=407.

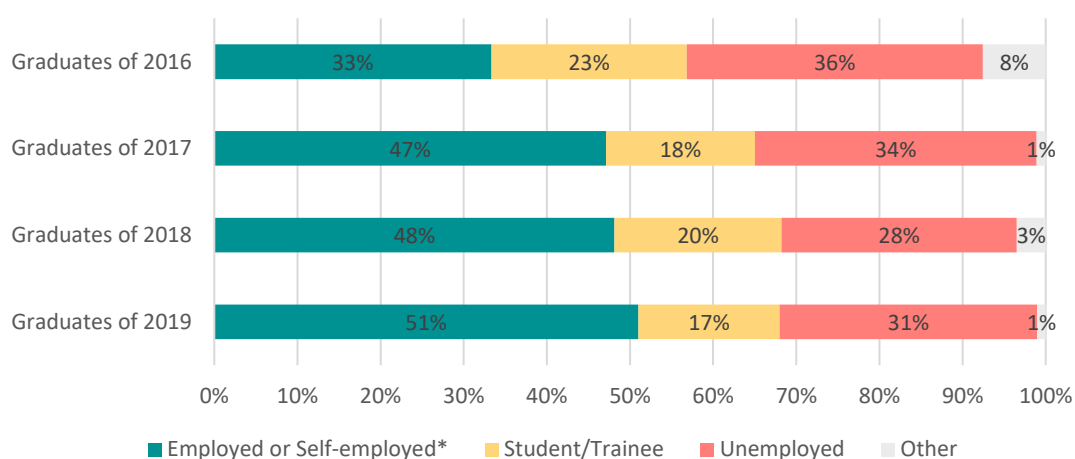
2. Results

The following is a summary of the most important results. This report focuses on the 2019 cohort, while also drawing comparison between the 2016-2018 cohorts. The descriptive statistics present only aggregate-level information from all providers. Individual providers have their own reports with specific information and further broken-down data. For the 2016 cohort, since data is available only for 4 partner providers, the analysis is limited.

2.1 Employment outcomes of graduates

The proportion of 2019 graduates in employment in 2020, or one year after completing their studies, was 51%. Although the proportion of employed or self-employed graduates has remained fairly stable over the past three years, this figure represents the highest proportion of graduates in employment one year after their graduation.

Figure 4 Labour market outcomes one year after graduation (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=132, N₂=363, N₃=403, N₄=407.

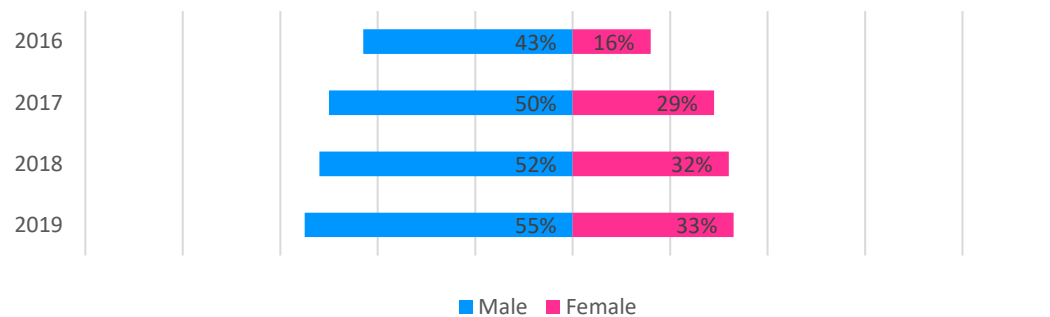
The slight increase in employment was not accompanied by a corresponding decrease in

unemployment. 31% of the 2019 graduates reported to be unemployed one year after their graduation – 3 p.p up from the 2018 graduates.

For the past four cohorts, around 2 in 10 graduates, on average, decide not to enter the labour market but to pursue further studies and qualifications instead. In 2020, for the 2019 graduates 17% were students or trainees, down from 20% for the 2018 graduates and 18% for the 2017 graduates.

Analysis with respect to gender shows that labour market outcomes differ for males and female graduates pointing towards a gender employment gap. For the 2019 graduates, only 33% of the females were in employment compared to 55% of the males. Data over the three past years show that this is a constant trend – with only around a third of female graduates employed one year after graduation compared to more than half of their male counterparts.

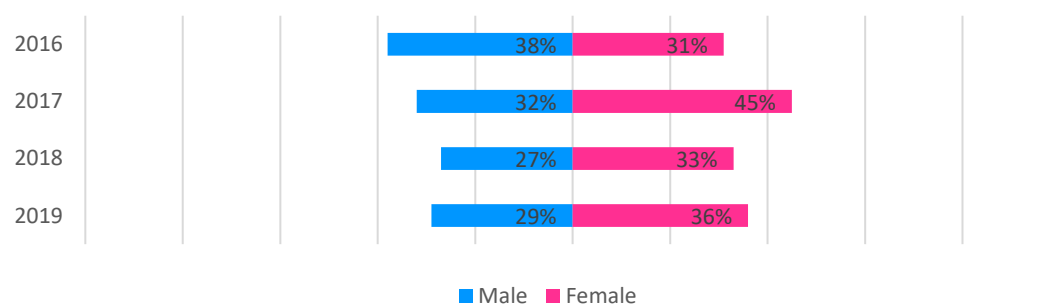
Figure 5 Gender sensitivity of (self)employed graduates (%)



Base: N₁=132, N₂=363, N₃=400, N₄=406.

In similar fashion, the proportion of unemployed graduates is also higher among the female population of the sample. 36% of the females were unemployed compared to 29% of the males for the 2019 cohort. However, analysis by cohorts shows that female unemployment was the highest for the 2017 cohort – with 45% surveyed who declared themselves unemployed. On the other hand, female graduates tend to pursue further qualifications after graduating more than their male counterparts: 30% of the 2019 cohort were students or trainees compared to only 14% of the males.

Figure 6 Gender sensitivity of unemployed graduates (%)



Base: N₁=132, N₂=363, N₃=400, N₄=406.

Nevertheless, data segregated by gender requires cautious interpretation due to the small sample size of the female population. Over the past three cohorts, more than 80% of the sample was male mirroring low female enrolments in historically male-dominated VET providers. For the 2019 cohort, 81% of the surveyed graduates were male and 19% female.

2.2 Status of employed graduates

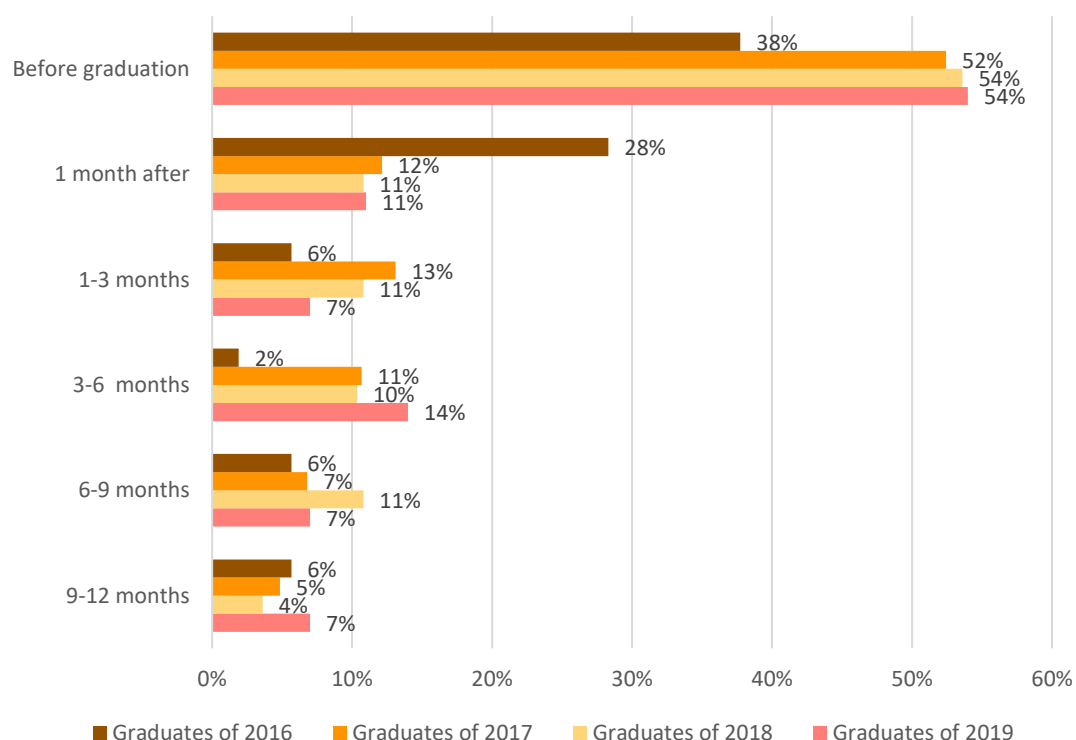
The following sub-sections explore more in detail the status of employed graduates. They cover topics of their experience with transitioning to the labour market, work arrangements and work conditions, salary ranges, and insights into the matching of their jobs with the field of their studies.

2.2.1 Patterns of labour market transition

The following graph shows the results of the length of school-to-work transitions across the four cohorts. For the 2019 graduates, more than half or 54% transitioned to the labour market before graduation. Moreover, the vast majority or 72% of the employed entered the labour market within three months of graduation. Just 7% of the 2019 employed graduates had the longest transition or 9-12 months after the graduation.

There were no notable changes across the last three cohorts. Data show that the graduates' transition to the labour market was relatively faster – with 64%-66% starting their first job at most one month after graduation.

Figure 7 Duration of school-to-work transition (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=53, N₂=206, N₃=222, N₄=237. Data include employment, self-employment and those unemployed at the moment but with previous job experience.

Regarding how they found first-time employment, data showed no notable differences between the means or channels used across cohorts. The most popular or significant way graduates found their first-destination jobs upon graduation was through personal connections of family members and friends. 67% used personal connections among the 2019 cohort compared to 65% for the 2018 cohort and 69% for the 2017 cohort. Concerning apprenticeships' impact on graduate recruitment, just 8% of the graduates found first-time employment as a follow-up of their apprenticeships in businesses. Other 7% relied on job advertisements and contacting directly their employers, respectively.

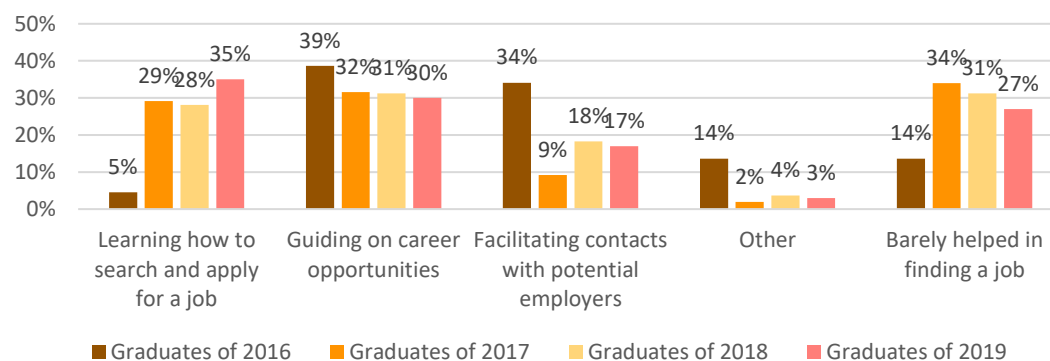
Table 3 Ranking of means of acquiring first-time employment

2016	Personal connections (77%) (n=33)	Job advertisement (9%) (n=4)	Apprenticeship in the business (7%) (n=3) Through contacting directly the employer (7%) (n=3)
2017	Personal connections (69%) (n=124)	Job advertisement (9%) (n=16) Through contacting directly the employer (9%) (n=16)	Apprenticeship in the business (6%) (n=11)
2018	Personal connections (65%) (n=124)	Through contacting directly the employer (13%) (n=25)	Apprenticeship in the business (9%) (n=17)
2019	Personal connections (67%) (n=136)	Apprenticeship in the business (8%) (n=17) Through contacting directly the employer (7%) (n=16) Job advertisement (7%) (n=16)	

Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=43, N₂=180, N₃=192, N₄=204.

Those who had found employment were asked how their educational institution assisted them in finding their first job. The most mentioned form of assistance for the 2019 cohort was learning how to search and apply for a job (in 35% of the cases). There was an increase from the previous cohorts – from 29% of cases in the 2017 cohort to 35% in the 2019 cohort. Furthermore, this was accompanied with a steady decrease in graduates reporting that their school barely helped them in finding a job – from 34% of cases in the 2017 cohort to 27% in the 2019 cohort.

Figure 8 Modes of assistance of the VET institution (%)

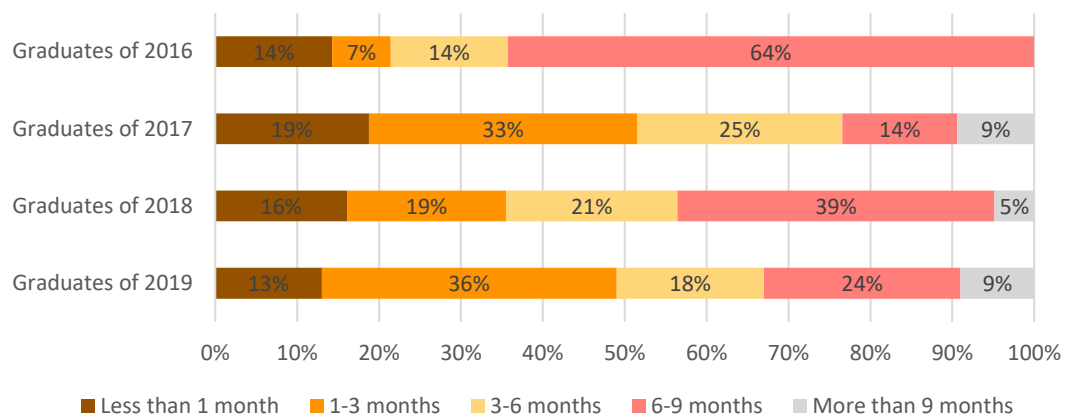


Note: This is a multiple response question. Percentages do not add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=44, N₂=206, N₃=192, N₄=241.

2.2.2 Work conditions

Less than 1 in 10 employed graduates, or about 9%, had been working for more than 9 months with their current employer. 24% had only worked for 6 up to 9 months at their present job, while 18% for 3 up to 6 months. On the other hand, more than a third, or 36%, had 1 up to 3 months at their job.

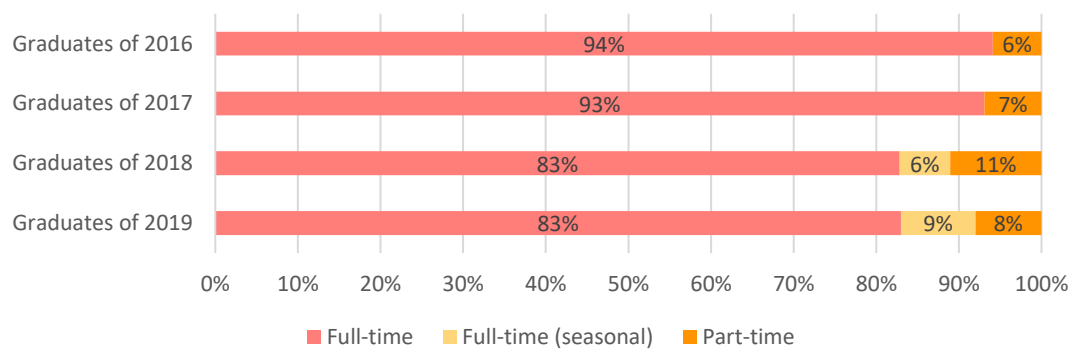
Figure 9 Months at the actual job (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=14, N₂=64, N₃=62, N₄=67.

Across all cohorts the vast majority of employed graduates, or more than 90%, worked full-time. Focusing on the 2019 graduates, 92% of the employed graduates worked full-time – out of which 9% were seasonal full-time workers. On the other hand, just 8% worked part-time. Working time arrangements trends have been stable over the past four cohorts.

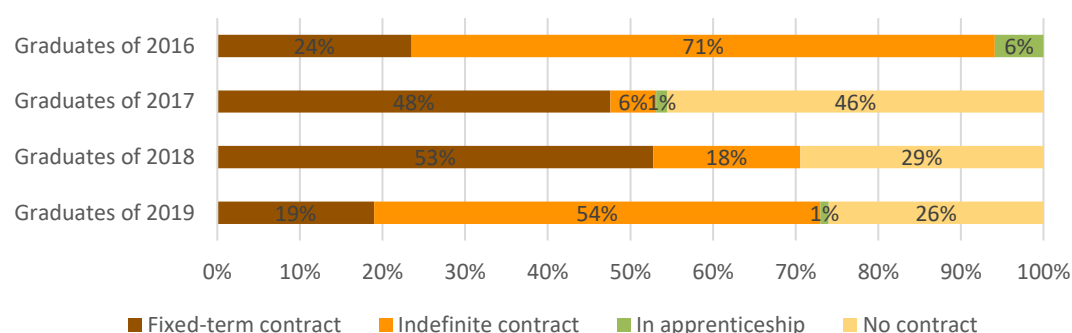
Figure 10 Full-time vs. part-time employment (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=34, N₂=145, N₃=163, N₄=167.

74% of the 2019 employed graduates reported to have a work contract with their employer, whilst 26% reported to have no written contract. The proportion with no contract of employment has decreased over the past three years – from 46% in the 2017 cohort to 26% in the 2019 cohort. Regarding the type of employment contract, more than half or 54% of the 2019 cohort had an indefinite-term employment contract, while 19% had a fixed-term contract. For the 2018 cohort, these proportions appeared reversed with more graduates who had fixed-term contracts compared to indefinite-term ones.

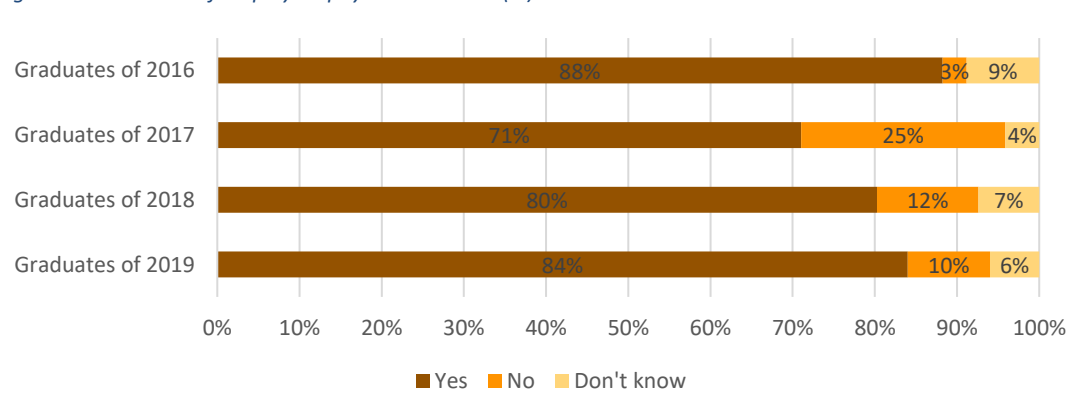
Figure 11 Type of contract (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=34, N₂=145, N₃=163, N₄=167.

As a proxy for capturing informal employment, graduates were asked about their awareness on the payment of social and health insurance by their employers. 84% of the 2019 employed graduates stated that their employer paid them insurance, a proportion 10 p.p. higher than those reporting to have a contract with their current employer. 6% were not sure whether their employer was paying any contributions. However, 10% reported that they current employer did not pay the employer's contributions. Over the past three cohorts, the situation has shown slight improvements.

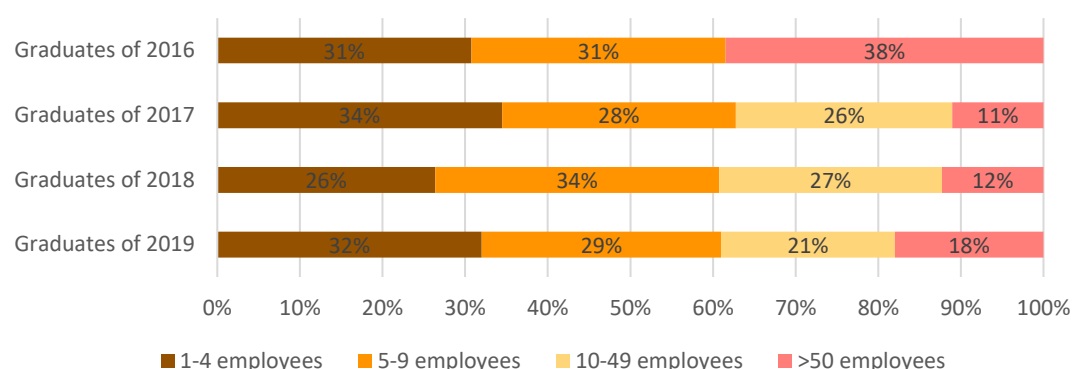
Figure 12 Awareness if employers pay contributions (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=34, N₂=145, N₃=163, N₄=167.

Asked on the size of the company where they work, the majority or about 6 in 10 employed graduates (61%) worked in small size businesses of up to 9 employees. Across the cohorts, this proportion varied from 62% in the 2016 cohort, 59% in the 2017 cohort and 60% in the 2018 cohort. Medium enterprises employed 21% of the 2019 graduates. Only 18% worked in large businesses with more than 50 employees – up from 12% for the 2018 graduates.

Figure 13 Company size (%)



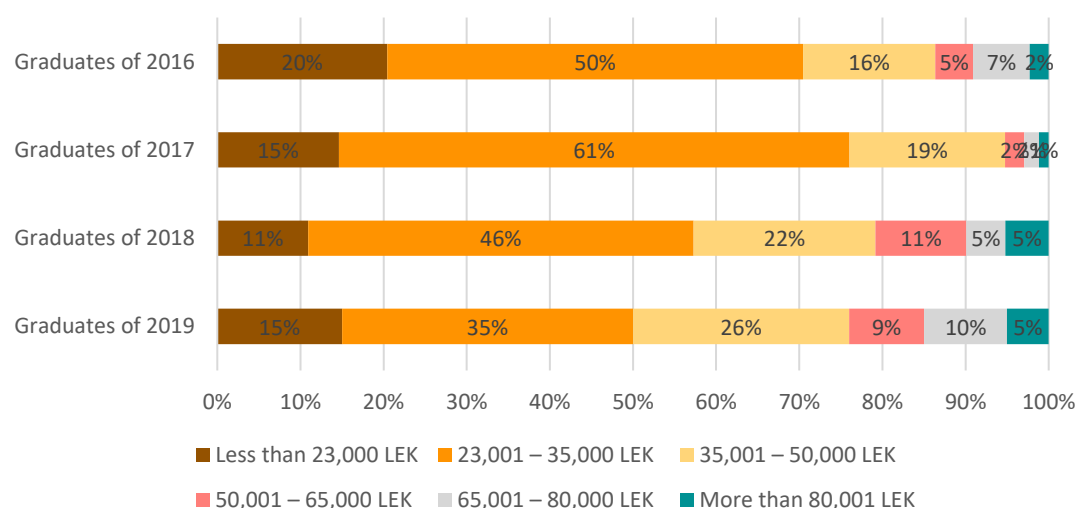
Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=26, N₂=145, N₃=163, N₄=167.

2.2.3 Salary range

The following graph shows the salaries for employed graduates across all cohorts. Reporting of graduate salaries includes both graduates in employment and in self-employment. 35% of the 2019 employed graduates earned in the range of 23,001-35,000 Lek per month. 26% earned in the range of 35,001-50,000 Lek per month. Only 24% of 2019 employed graduates earned more than 50,000 Lek.

Data show that more graduates have earned more than 35,001 Lek over the past three cohorts – up from 24% for the employed graduates in 2017 to 50% for the employed graduates in 2019. Furthermore, the proportion of graduates with salaries less than the official minimum wage has shown a decreasing trend over the years. However, 15% of the 2019 graduates earned less than 23,000 Lek per month.

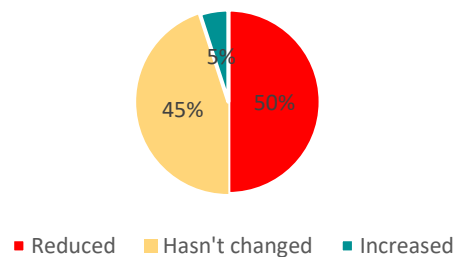
Figure 14 Net monthly income (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=44, N₂=171, N₃=192, N₄=204. Data include both employment and self-employment.

Since the tracer survey was administered in June 2020, new questions were added to assess the potential impact of COVID-19 on the income of employed graduates. Data show that for only 45% of the employed graduates there was no change in income. On the other hand, half of graduates received lower incomes post-COVID-19, while only 5% obtained higher salaries.

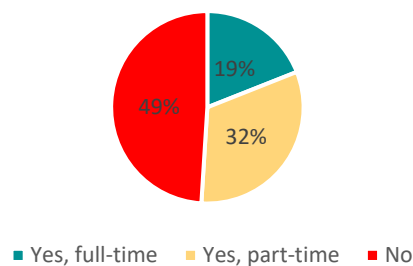
Figure 15 Change in income due to the COVID-19 pandemic (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=204.

In the period of March-May 2020, during the COVID-19 lockdown period imposed by the Government of Albania, 49% of the employed graduates did not work. 19% worked full-time, while 32% worked part-time.

Figure 16 Work during the lockdown period (%)

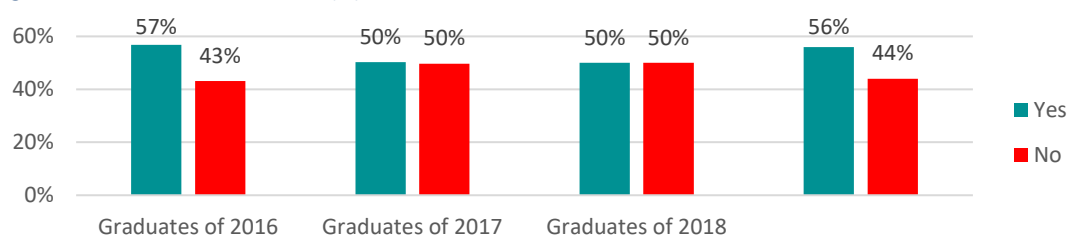


Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=204.

2.2.4 Matching level of study

The proportion of employed graduates that do not work in jobs related to their fields of study represents an indicator of the mismatch between labour market demand and supply. Only half or about 50% of both the 2017 and 2018 employed graduates stated that their current job was related to their education. However, there was a slight improvement for the 2019 employed graduates – 56% stated that their job was related to their education.

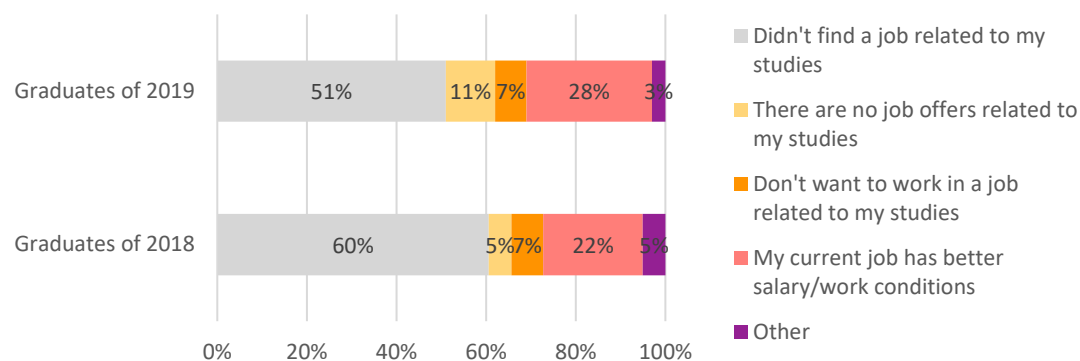
Figure 17 Job related to education (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=44, N₂=171, N₃=194, N₄=204. Data include both employment and self-employment.

When asked on the reasons behind this mismatch, more than 50% of both the 2018 and 2019 graduates stated that they did not find a job related to their studies, whilst 5% and 11% respectively claimed that there were no jobs related to their studies – pointing towards problems of the labour-market relevance of the VET offer. 22% of the 2018 graduates and 28% of the 2019 graduates were in a job not related to their education since it offered them a better salary and work conditions.

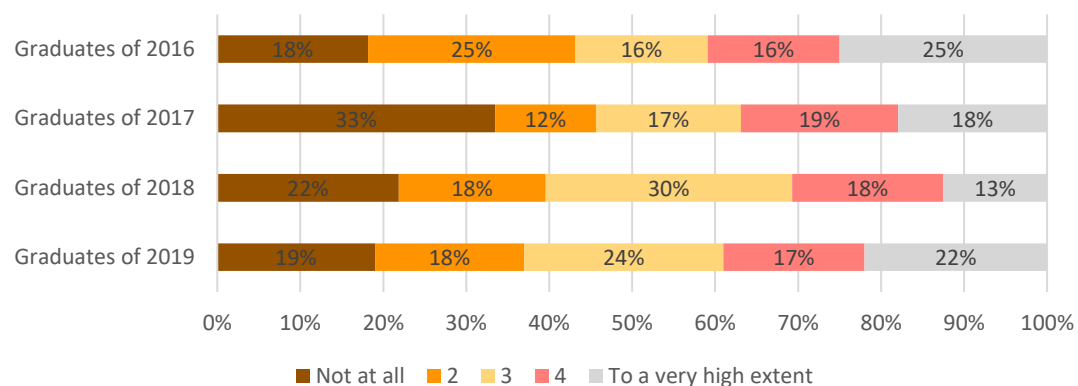
Figure 18 Perceived reasons behind the mismatch (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=96, N₂=90.

The proportion of graduates reporting they are not utilising their skills or education in their current job is an indicator of the underutilisation of skills. In terms of whether the graduates were using their knowledge, the proportion of graduates reporting to use their knowledge either 'at a high' or 'very high' extent in their current job increased for the 2019 cohort as compared to the 2018 cohort – from 31% to 39%. On the other hand, 37% of the 2019 employed cohort did not use their acquired knowledge 'at all' or used it 'very little' compared to 40% for the 2018 cohort. 24% of the employed graduates reported a neutral evaluation.

Figure 19 Extent of utilization of knowledge acquired during studies (%)

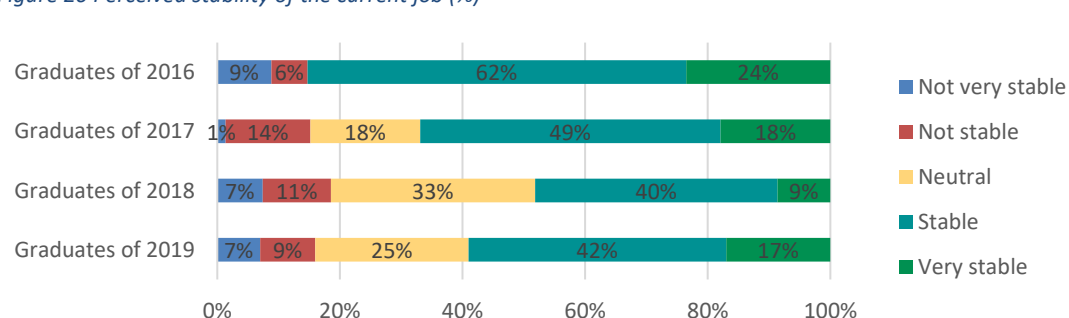


Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=44, N₂=206, N₃=192, N₄=241.

2.2.5 Perceived job stability and satisfaction

Employed graduates were asked about their perceptions of stability and satisfaction at their current jobs. Data showed that, despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, there was an increased proportion of employed graduates reporting a perception of their job as 'stable or secure'. 59% of the 2019 employed graduates reported they felt stable at their job overall, with 42% reporting they felt stable and 17% reporting they felt very stable. This proportion marks an increase of 10 p.p in comparison with the evaluations of the 2018 graduates. On the other hand, 25% of the 2019 graduates held neutral perceptions. Nevertheless, 16% reported having a 'not very stable' or 'not stable' job – down from 18% for the 2018 graduates.⁵

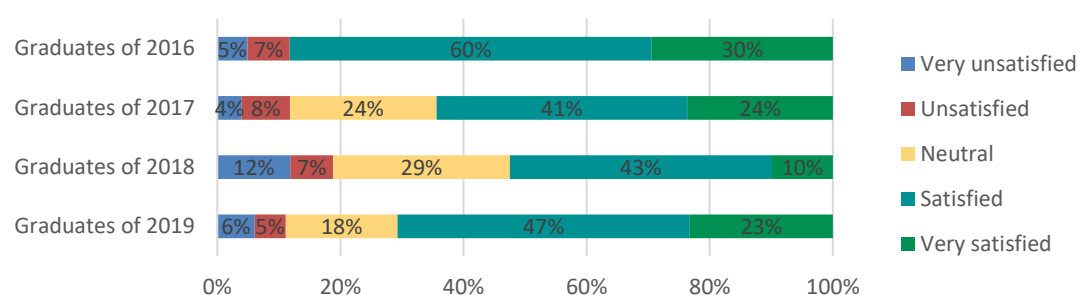
Figure 20 Perceived stability of the current job (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=34, N₂=145, N₃=162, N₄=167.

In general, job security is a significant determinant of job satisfaction. Asked on perceived satisfaction levels with their current job, 2019 graduates reported higher evaluations as compared to the 2018 graduates. 70% reported they were satisfied with their job overall, with 47% reporting they were satisfied and 23% reporting they were very satisfied. This percentage marks the highest level of satisfaction over the past three cohorts and is 17 p.p higher than the evaluation of the 2018 cohort. On the other hand, just 1 in 10 employed graduates were 'very unsatisfied' or 'unsatisfied' with their current job.

Figure 21 Satisfaction with current job (%)



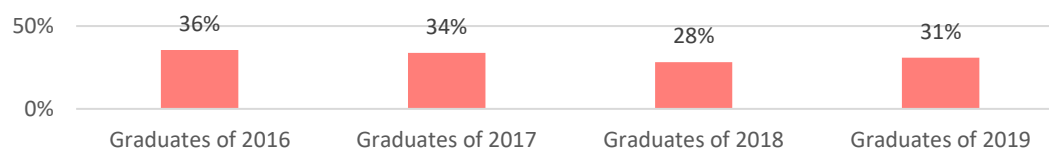
Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=44, N₂=171, N₃=192, N₄=204.

⁵ Evaluation of job stability and job satisfaction in a scale from 1 (min) to 5 (max) was transformed to a 4-point scale in the second tracer. The mid-scale option (Neutral) was added in the second tracer questionnaire in each of the questions.

2.3 Status of unemployed graduates

31% of the 2019 graduates were unemployed one year after their graduation – 3 p.p up from the 2018 graduates.

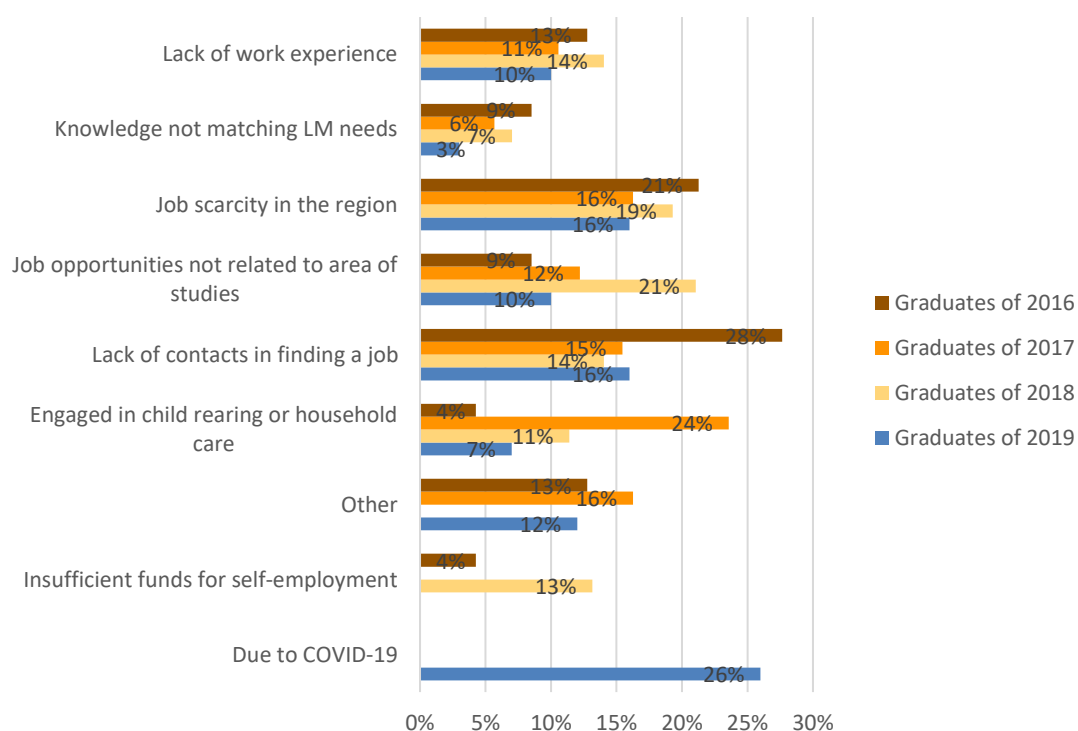
Figure 22 Unemployed graduates (%)



Base: N₁=132, N₂=363, N₃=403, N₄=407.

When asked on the perceived reasons behind their unemployment, graduates' opinions over the past four cohorts appear diverse and don't converge. For instance, 26% of the 2019 unemployed graduates perceived that they were unemployed due to the situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Next, 16% attributed their unemployment to the general job scarcity in their regions, while other 16% to the lack of contacts in finding a job. Perceptions of less than 1 in 3 of the 2018 unemployed graduates pointed toward problems of the labour-market relevance of their study programmes. 28% of them perceived that they were unemployed either because job opportunities were not related to their area of studies (21%) or that their knowledge did not match labour market needs (7%). While for the 2016 graduates lack of contacts in finding a job had the highest importance behind unemployment (28%), it has been decreasing for the 2017-2019 graduates to 14%-16%.

Figure 23 Perceived main reasons behind unemployment (%)

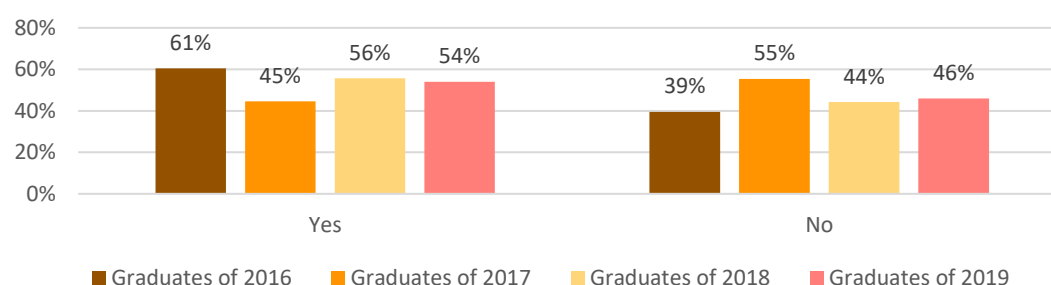


Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=47, N₂=123, N₃=114, N₄=126.

70% of the 2019 unemployed graduates had never been employed since graduation, while 30% had been employed at least one time since their graduation. For this sub-group, the main reason for leaving their last job was for personal reasons (35%), due to the situation triggered by COVID-19 (24%), followed by the termination of their job contract (11%).

Out of the unemployed graduates, only slightly more than the half of the 2019 graduates (54%) were actively looking for a job in the past 4 weeks before the tracer interview. Out of those not actively looking for a job (46%), 38% were planning to leave the country.

Figure 24 Looked actively for a job in the past 4 weeks (%)



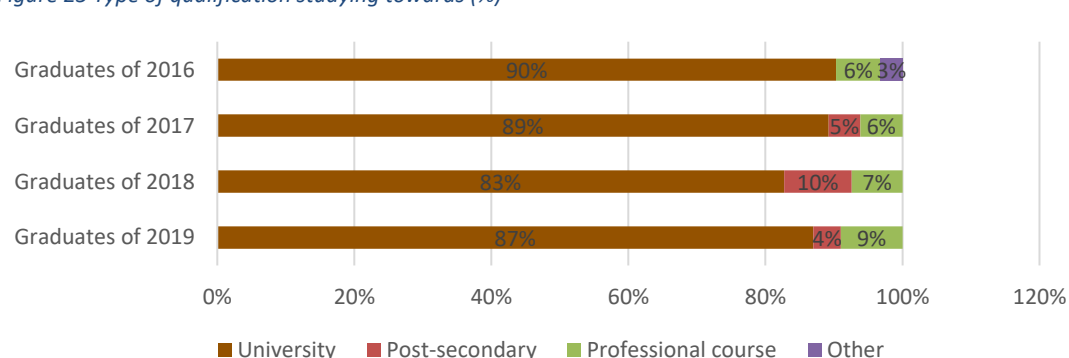
Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=38, N₂=121, N₃=113, N₄=124.

2.4 Graduates pursuing further qualifications

For the past four cohorts, around a fifth of graduates, on average, decide not to enter the labour market but pursue further studies and qualifications. Out of the 2019 graduates 17% were students or trainees, down from 20% for the 2018 graduates and 18% for the 2017 graduates.

The vast majority of those attending further education and professional development attended Bachelor studies at the university level (83-90%). Among the 2019 graduates attending further education, 87% were attending Bachelor studies, 9% were attending professional courses, while 4% post-secondary qualifications.

Figure 25 Type of qualification studying towards (%)

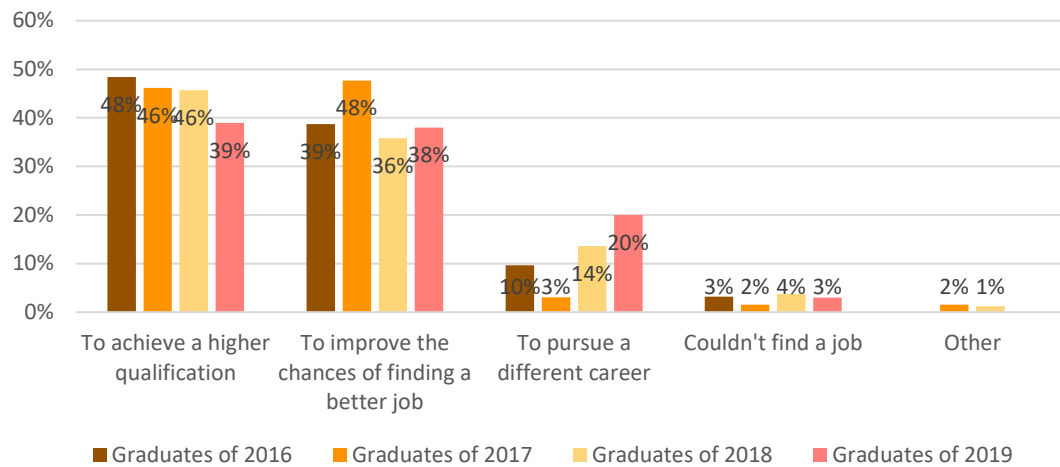


Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=31, N₂=65, N₃=81, N₄=97.

Asked on the reasons behind pursuing further education, the proportion of those attending further education in order to achieve a higher qualification remained stable for the 2016-2018

cohorts (46-48%). However, there was a lower proportion among the 2019 graduates – 39%. In contrast, there were more 2019 graduates who were attending further studies to pursue a different career instead (20%).

Figure 26 Reasons behind pursuing further education (%)

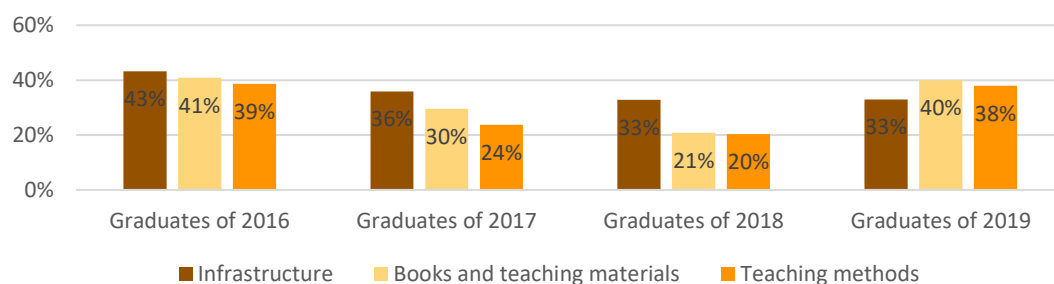


Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=31, N₂=65, N₃=81, N₄=69.

2.5 Retrospective evaluation of the provider

In retrospective, there is a growing perception among graduates that their schools need less improvements regarding infrastructure. Whilst 43% of the 2016 graduates reported that infrastructure required improvement 'to a high or very high extent', this proportion has dropped to 36% and 33% for the 2018 and 2019 cohort. On the other hand, there was an increase in the need for improvement with regard to books and teaching materials and teaching methods among the graduates of 2019 in comparison to previous cohorts. Around 40% reported that they required improvement 'to a high or very high extent' – around 20 p.p up from the evaluations of the 2018 graduates.

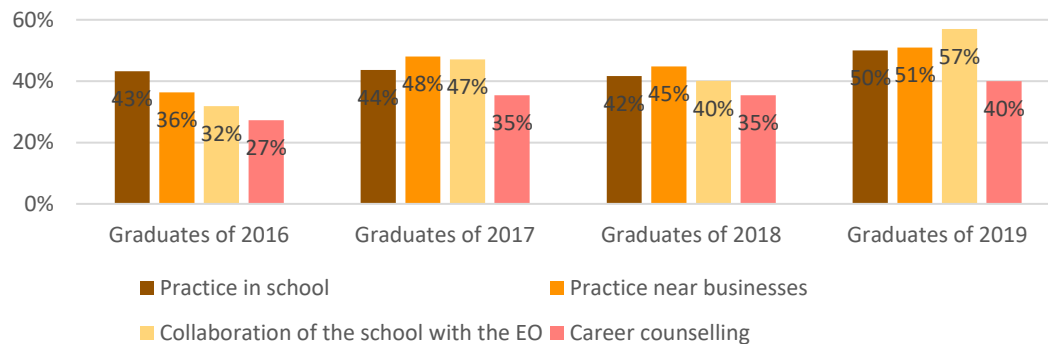
Figure 27 Area needs improvement "to a high/very high extent" (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=44, N₂=206, N₃=192.

However, when asked on other aspects of the school, the situation does not appear improving. 51% of the 2019 graduates and 45% of the 2018 graduates reported that apprenticeships near businesses needed improvement 'to a high or very high extent'. Furthermore, 57% of the 2019 graduates and 40% of the 2018 graduates reported that the collaboration of the schools with the employment offices needed improvement 'to a high or very high extent'.

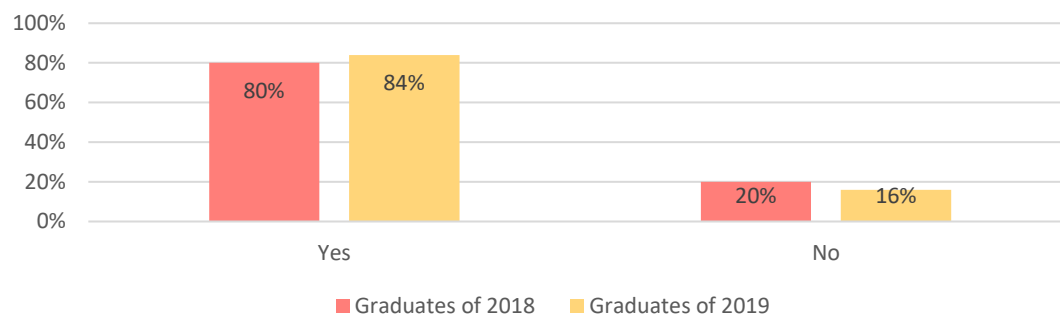
Figure 28 Area needs improvement “to a high/very high extent” (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=44, N₂=206, N₃=192, N₄=241.

Notwithstanding these evaluations, the vast majority of graduates over the past two cohorts would choose the same field of study if they had the chance. 84% of the 2019 graduates would choose the same field of study, while 86% would choose the same school.

Figure 29 Choosing the same field of study (%)



Base: N₁=400, N₂=407.

3. Conclusions

The mismatch between labour market demand and supply represents one of the biggest constraints to the employability of VET graduates. Timely and labour-market oriented policy responses to this regard should not be constrained by the lack of empirical data and information on the productive employment of recent graduates. To this regard, tracing of graduates serves as a tool for ensuring the quality of education and the relevance of skills to regional labour market demands. VE providers, though at different levels of development and usage of provider-based tracer systems, should be encouraged to orient their annual VE offer decisions based on evidence – either from tracer results or from other complementary information.