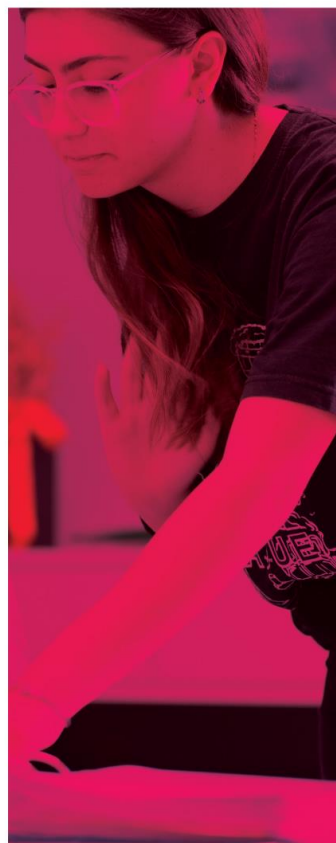
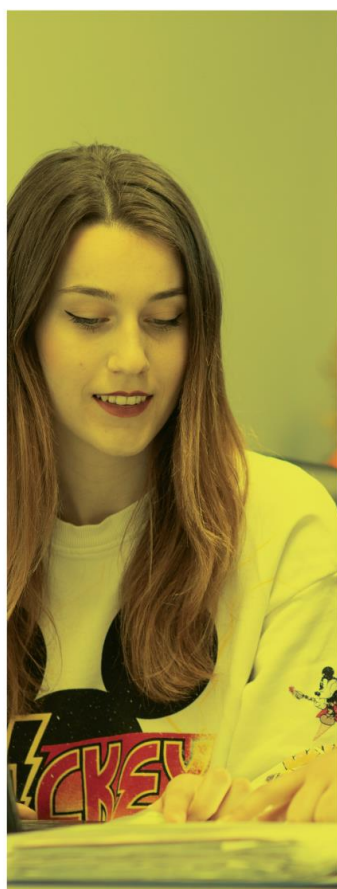
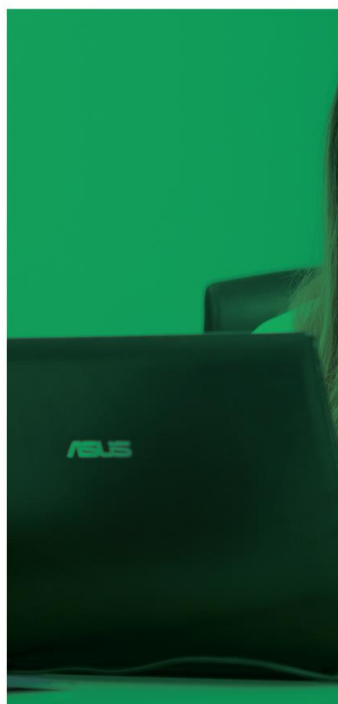
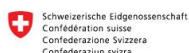


What Happens to Vocational Education Graduates after leaving School?

Findings from Tracer at
the Provider Level **2019-2020**



A project of the Swiss Agency for
Development and Cooperation SDC



Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

In partnership with:



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WHAT HAPPENS TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION GRADUATES AFTER LEAVING SCHOOL? FINDINGS FROM TRACER AT THE PROVIDER LEVEL

October 2021

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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.

Disclaimer

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Tracer 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 2021 Tracer Study covering the 2019-2020 cohort are summarized below:

What is the incidence of employment, self-employment, and further education among graduates?

- 63% of the 2020 graduates were employed or self-employed one year after graduation. There has been a continuous increase in employment rates of graduates since 2016.
- For the 2020 graduates the unemployment rate has gone down to 25% compared to 31% in 2019.
- 11% were attending higher education or further trainings upon graduation. Among the 2020 graduates attending further education, 84% were following Bachelor studies while 10% were attending professional courses. 68% reported that their current field of study relates to their previous education.

Do the labour market outcomes differ with respect to gender?

- For the 2020 graduates, 48% of females were employed or self-employed compared to 65% for men.
- 20% of females were students/trainees compared to only 9% for males.

Do the labour market outcomes differ with respect to the vocational direction?

- Tourism and Hospitality graduates have higher employment rates compared to major directions in all three cohorts. For the 2020 graduates, 68% of those in Tourism and Hospitality were employed or self-employed compared to 63% for those in Electro-technics, 56% for those in ICT, and 52% for those in Economy and Business.

¹ S4J is mandated by 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.

- ICT graduates (20% for the 2020 graduates) pursued postgraduate studies more than graduates in other directions, followed by graduates in Economy and Business (14% for that same cohort).

What are the waiting times for first employment?

- For the 2020 graduates, more than half or 54% transitioned to the labour market before graduation.
- The vast majority or 79% of the graduates entered the labour market for the first time within three months of graduation.

What are the means by which graduates acquire employment? How does the VET institution assist them through their transition?

- 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 11% of the graduates found first-time employment as a follow-up of their apprenticeships in businesses.
- 48% of the 2020 graduates stated that education/school was helpful in teaching how to apply and search for jobs

Are the present occupations of graduates related to their vocational education/training? How are the work tasks of graduates related to their study programme and their competencies?

- More than half or 54% of the 2020 employed graduates worked in occupations related to their education. This was a slight decrease from 56% reported by the 2019 employed graduates.
- When asked on the reasons behind this mismatch, 49% of the 2020 graduates reported that they did not find a job related to their studies.
- Tourism and Hospitality had the highest percentage of respondents that state that their job is related to their education. This stands at 72% followed by Electro-technics at 52%, Economy and Business at 46%, and ICT with 28% standing in last place.
- 39% of the employed graduates reported to use their knowledge either 'at a high' or 'very high' extent in their current jobs.

What are the economic returns on the received education/training?

- 36% of the 2020 employed graduates earned in the range of 35,001-50,000 Lek per month.
- Other 23% earned more than 50,000 Lek. Over time more graduates have earned more than 35,001 Lek reaching 59% for the employed graduates in 2020.
- 11% of 2020 graduates are paid more than 80,000 LEK, reaching the highest percentage among all the cohorts.

How secure/stable do graduates feel in their first-destination employment arrangement?

- Graduates typically felt secure and satisfied with their jobs one year after graduation. 56% of the 2020 employed graduates reported they felt stable at their job overall, with 38% reporting they felt stable and 18% reporting they felt very stable.

- Asked on perceived satisfaction levels with their current job, the 2020 graduates reported to be overall satisfied with their jobs at 64%, with 48% being satisfied and 16% being very satisfied. These levels were lower from those reported by the 2019 graduates.

What are some of the difficulties encountered by those graduates that have not been able to find relevant employment?

- The percentage of unemployed graduates looking for a job increased to 66% in 2020.
- Out of the unemployed, 29% perceived that they were unemployed due to lack of contacts in finding a job. Some 22% attributed their unemployment to the general job scarcity in the regions they lived, and 21% to job opportunities unrelated to the field of study. Moreover, 16% of the 2020 unemployed graduates declared lack of work experience as a main barrier to accessing the labour market.

How do graduates assess the relevance, usefulness and prospect of their vocational education and training?

- In retrospective, there was a growing perception among graduates that their schools need more improvements regarding their collaboration with the Employment Offices (64%) and the apprenticeships in businesses (48%).
- 84% of the 2020 graduates would again choose the same field of study, while 81% would also choose the same school.
- Tourism and Hospitality had the highest rate of respondents for the 2020 graduates who responded that they would choose the same field of study at 89%. This was followed by ICT with 83% of respondents, Electro-technics at 81% and lastly Economy and Business at 72%.

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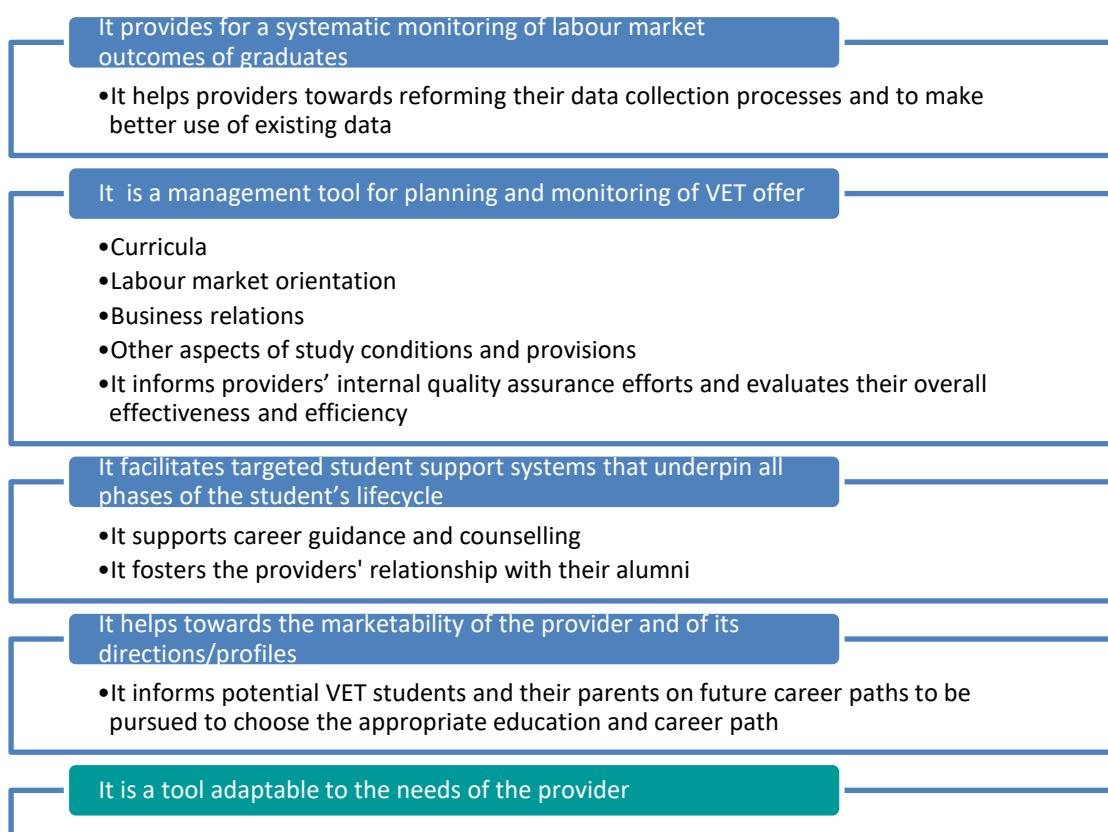
1. Introduction and Methodology

Monitoring of labour market outcomes of graduates is carried out using ‘tracer studies’ that trace or follow students or trainees once they have left the education or training provider. 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).

The successful implementation of a provider-based tracing brings the following advantages to the provider:

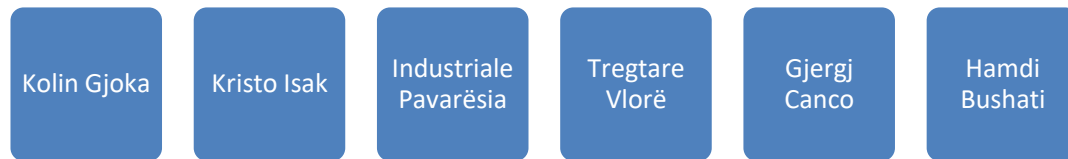


To this regard, the Skills for Jobs project (S4J) developed a specific methodology and piloted a provider-based tracer system as of September 2017. Tracer data in this report cover five cohorts of graduates (2015-2020) from 6 S4J VET partner providers in 5 regions of Albania.⁴ Below the map with the providers.

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 these schools.

Figure 1 Targeted VET Institutions

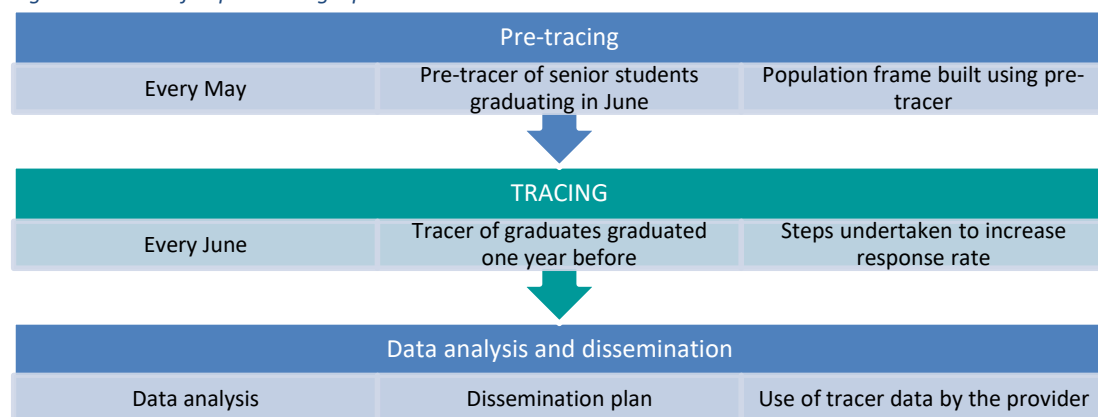


The implementation of the tracer studies for each provider entails three basic phases. During the first phase or the preparation phase, the target population (graduate cohort) and the time after graduation are determined. Next, the pre-tracer questionnaire is administered. The key objective of the pre-tracer 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.

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 is small at the provider level, a census rather than a sample survey is employed. Kobo Toolbox is the data collection method used. It is implemented through Computer-Assisted Self-Interviewing (CASI).

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.

Figure 2 Phases of implementing a provider-based tracer



In total, 554 graduates out of 643 of the cohort 2019-2020, with a response rate of 86% participated in the fifth wave of tracing. This is up by 10 percentage points from the fourth wave in 2018-2019 in which 407 graduates out of 537 from 6 partner provider schools participated. 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	Gjergj 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	Gjergj 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	Gjergj Canco	176/241	73%	43%
	Shkodra	Hamdi Bushati	56/70	80%	14%
	SUBSAMPLE 4		407/537	76%	100%
2019- 2020	Lezha	Kolin Gjoka	96/113	85%	17%
	Berat	Kristo Isak	39/40	98%	7%
	Vlora	Pavaresia	103/124	83%	19%
	Vlora	Tregtare	63/63	100%	11%
	Tirana	Gjergj Canco	165/208	79%	30%
	Shkodra	Hamdi Bushati	88/95	93%	16%
	SUBSAMPLE 5		554/643	86%	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. The most represented direction for the 2020 cohort is tourism and hospitality with 27% followed by electro-technics and electronics with 24%, ICT with 19% and economy and business with 17%. The lowest rates are for textile, thermos-hydraulic panels, mechanics and transport vehicle services. The rates range from 2-5%. In 2019, electro-technics and electronics had the highest rate of 36% followed by economy and business at 19% and tourism and hospitality at 16%. In 2020, tourism and hospitality appears to have taken over as the most frequent direction.

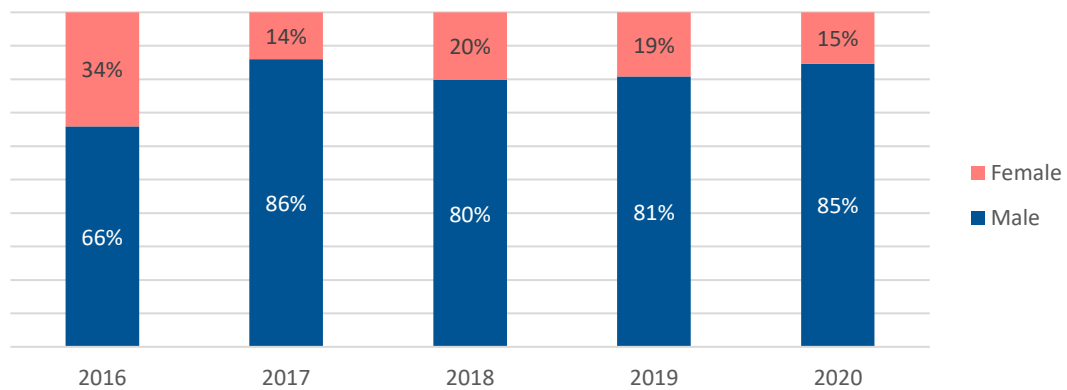
Table 2 Directions by sample size

Direction	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Office administration	22%		2%		
Agriculture			5%		
Economy&Business	45%	25%	16%	19%	17%
Electrotechnics & Electronics	6%	22%	25%	36%	24%
Tourism&Hospitality	11%	14%	25%	16%	27%
Thermohydraulic panels	2%	1%	1%	2%	3%
Textile		4%	3%	3%	2%
Mechanics	1%	4%	4%	3%	3%
Transport Vehicle Services	3%	5%	5%	3%	5%
Food technology			1%		
ICT	11%	18%	13%	17%	19%

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, N₅=554.

Regarding the gender composition of the sample, the sample for the 2020 cohort was composed of 15% females and 85% males. This reflects national trends of vocational education being predominantly male. Across years the gender composition remains quite stable with male being in the range of 66-86%.

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:** $N_1=132$, $N_2=363$, $N_3=400$, $N_4=407$, $N_5=554$.

The overwhelming majority of the 2020 graduates currently live in Albania at 89%. The remaining 11% currently live outside of Albania. The majority of the 2020 graduates are currently living in the same region in which their schools are located with 31% in Tirana, 24% in Vlore, 16% in Shkoder and 17% in Lezhe. The rest are distributed among the remaining regions.

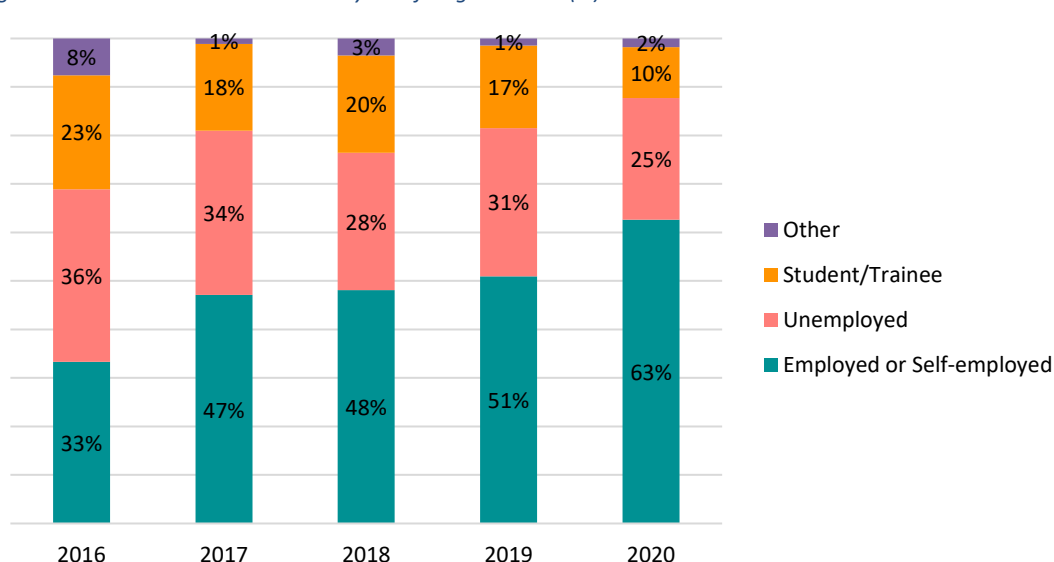
2. Tracer Results

The following is a summary of the most relevant results. This report focuses on the 2020 cohort, while also drawing comparison between the 2016-2019 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 comparative analysis is limited.

2.1 Employment outcomes of graduates

The proportion of 2020 graduates in employment or self-employment in 2021, or one year after completing their studies, was 63%. There has been a continuous increase in employment rates of graduates since 2016. The rates have increased from 33% in 2016 to 63% in 2020. For the 2020 graduates the unemployment rate has gone down to 25% compared to 31% in 2019. While the employment or self-employment rates have increased over time, the rates of continuing education have decreased from 23% in 2016 to 10% in 2020. More graduates were working while being students or trainees at the same time – 11% in 2020 up from 7% in 2019.

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



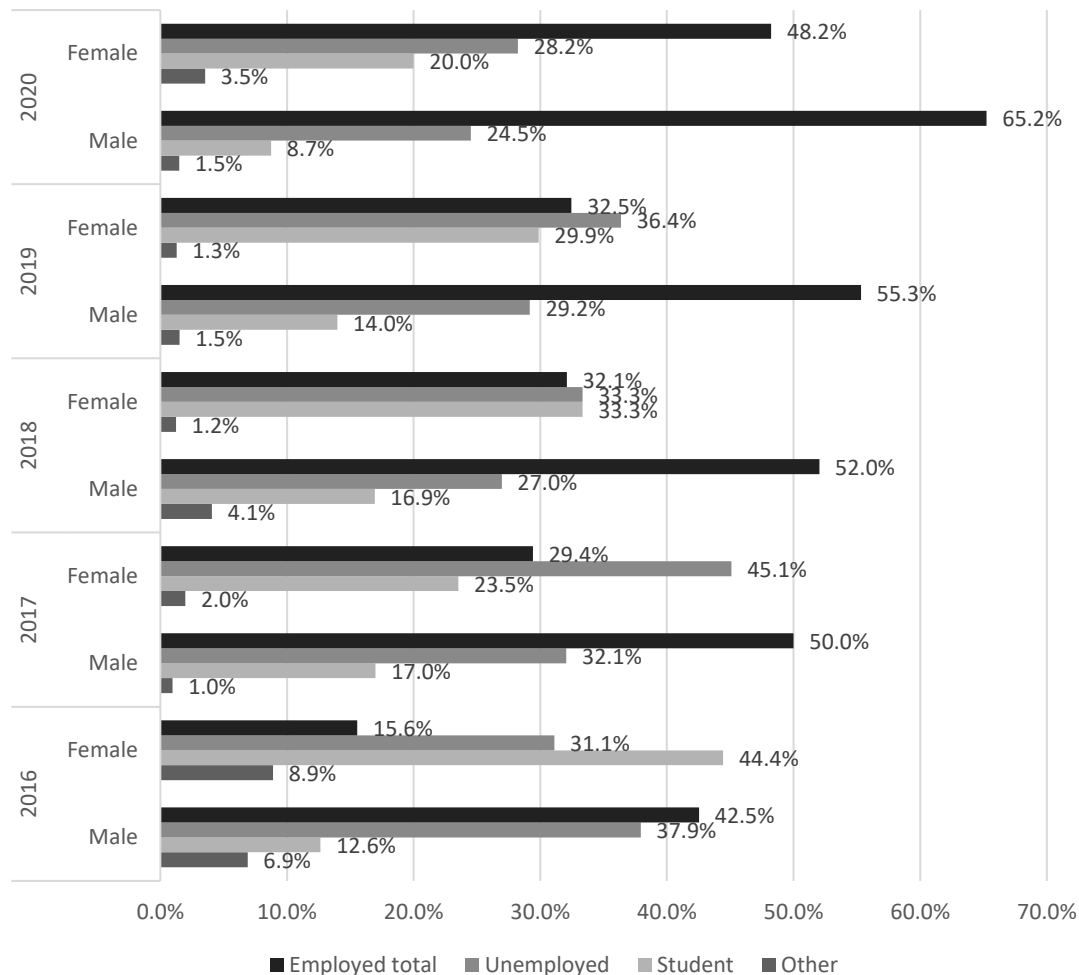
Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=132, N₂=363, N₃=403, N₄=407, N₅=554.

In terms of gender differences, the proportions of employed or self-employed graduates are higher for male graduates compared to female throughout the five cohorts. For the 2020 graduates, 48% of females were employed or self-employed compared to 65% for men. This result mimics the overall labour market outcomes for females and males in terms of employment differences. However, female graduates in the five cohorts have much higher rates of attending further education.

For the 2020 graduates, 20% of females were students/trainees compared to only 9% for males. This difference was even higher for the 2019 graduates, where 30% of females were

students/trainees compared to 14% for males. This result may mean that females continue to get more education due to increasing returns to education, but also because they may be facing less opportunities in the labour market for lower levels of education compared to their male counterparts.

Figure 5 Labour market outcomes one year after graduation by gender (%)



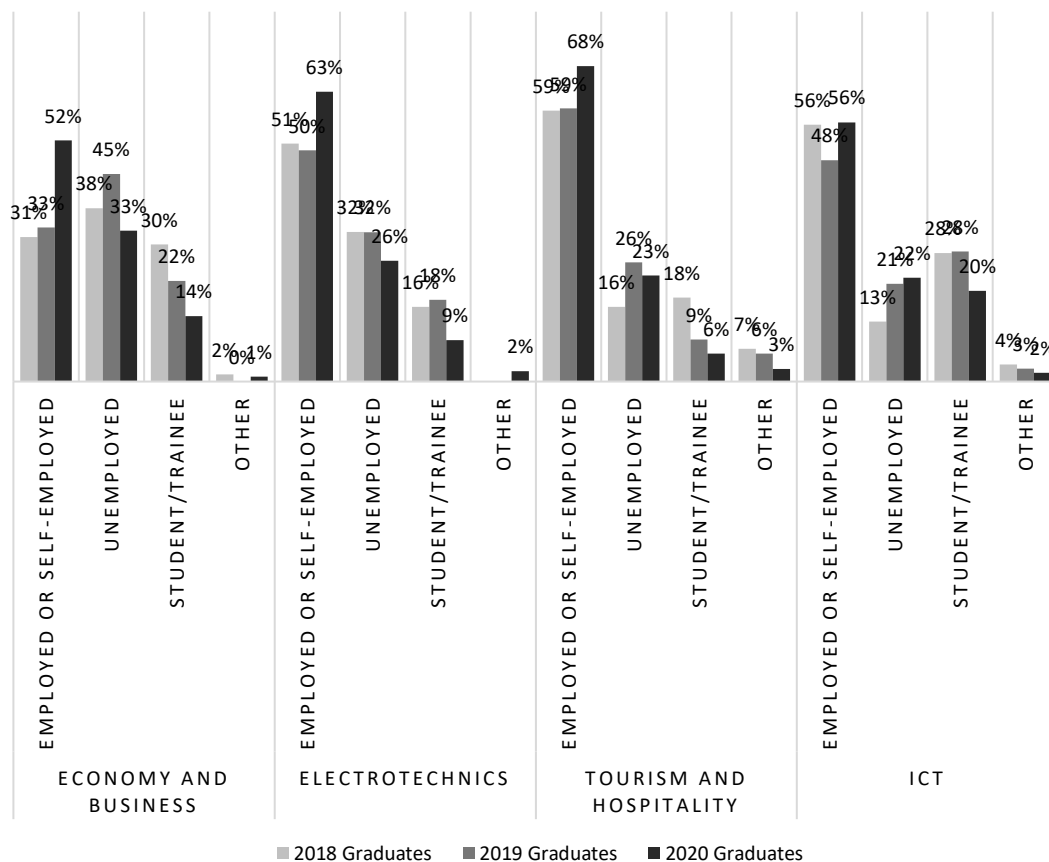
Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N1=132, N2=363, N3=400, N4=406, N5=554.

Regarding employment outcomes differentiated by vocational direction, in general, the percentages of employed or self-employed graduates are high for all major directions and show an increasing trend from year to year. Tourism and hospitality graduates have higher employment rates compared to major directions in all three cohorts. For the 2020 graduates, 68% of those in tourism and hospitality were employed or self-employed compared to 63% for those in electro-technics, 56% for those in ICT, and 52% for those in economics and business.

ICT graduates (20% for the 2020 graduates) pursue postgraduate studies more than graduates in other directions, followed by graduates in Economics and Business (14% for that same

cohort), Electro-technics (9% for that same cohort) and Tourism and Hospitality (6% for that same cohort). However, such percentages show a decreasing trend for all directions.

Figure 6 Labour market outcomes one year after graduation by direction (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. N1=132, N2=335, N3=400, N4=406, N5=554.

2.2 Status of employed graduates

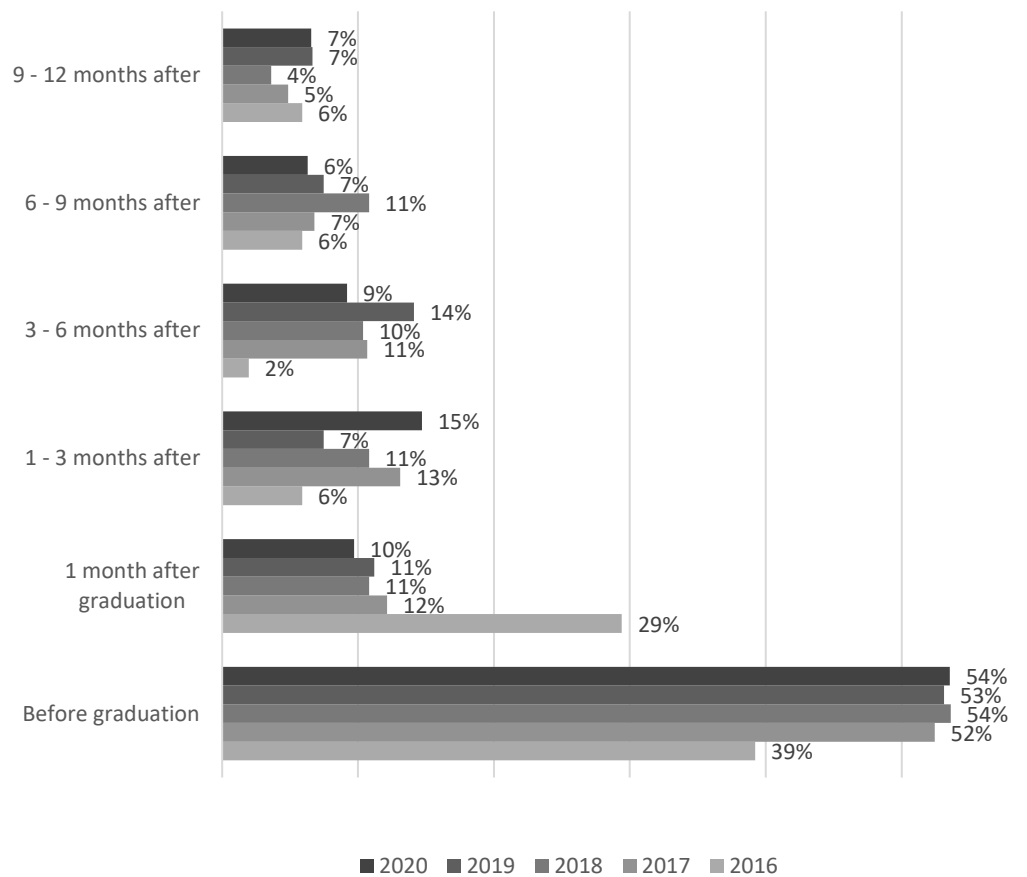
The following sub-sections explore more in detail the status of employed graduates. They cover topics of their experience with transitioning to the labour market, work arrangements and work conditions, salary ranges, and insights into the matching of their jobs with the field of their studies.

2.2.1 Patterns of labour market transition

The following graph shows the results of the length of school-to-work transitions across the five cohorts. With the exception of 2016, over half of the graduates have transitioned to the labour market before graduation. From 2017-2020 the range of the transition has been between 52% and 54% for 2020. The vast majority of the 2020 graduates have transitioned in the labour market within 3 months of graduation at 79%. Similarly, 72% of the 2019 graduates have transitioned in the labour market within 3 months of graduation. The rates of the graduates who took longer than 6 months to transition in the labour market are much lower. For the 2020 graduates this was at 6% for those who transitioned between 6-9 months after

graduation and 7% for those who transitioned between 9-12 months after graduation. These rates have stayed relatively stable over time.

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, N₅=381. Data include employment, self-employment and those unemployed at the moment but with previous job experience.

Regarding job-search and finding the first-employment after graduation, personal connections of family members and friends remains the most pervasive form throughout the years. In 2020 as in 2019, the rate has stayed at 67%. This rate has varied between 77% in 2016 to 67% in 2020. Other forms of job-search include apprenticeship in the business at 8% in 2020, direct contact with employer at 7%, and job advertisement at 10%. These rates have also been quite stable through the years with slight variations. In 2020, the rate of direct contact with the employer has remained the same from 2019, while apprenticeship in the business and job advertisement have increased from the 8% and 7%, respectively in 2019.

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)	
2020	Personal connections (67%) (n=211)	Apprenticeship in the business (11%) (n=34) Through contacting directly the employer (7%) (n=21) Job advertisement (10%) (n=31)	

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, N₅=316.

Being asked on how education helped them find their first job after graduation, 48% of the 2020 graduates stated that education/school was helpful in teaching how to apply and search for jobs. The other cohorts reported lower levels for education/school was helpful in teaching how to apply and search for jobs. For the 2019 graduates this was reported at 35%, whereas for the 2018 graduates it was reported at 28%, and for the 2017 graduates it was reported at 29%. The 2016 graduates represent the lowest percentage (6%) in terms of school assistance in their preparation to search and apply for a job, representing a very significant difference compared to other cohorts. Almost the same proportions of five cohorts' graduates responded that education/school helped in providing guidance on job opportunities, with the highest rate (39%) in 2016 among all cohorts. One third of graduates in 2016 stated that education/school facilitated the contacts with potential employers. Few graduates in the following cohorts confirmed this facilitation, with rate of 2017 graduates being the lowest at 9%. Nearly one third of the 2017, 2018, and 2019 graduates stated that education/school barely helped in finding a job. The percentage decreased to 17% for 2020 graduates being consistent with the finding that more graduates in 2020 believed that education/school help in finding a job.

Figure 8 Effects of education on job placement

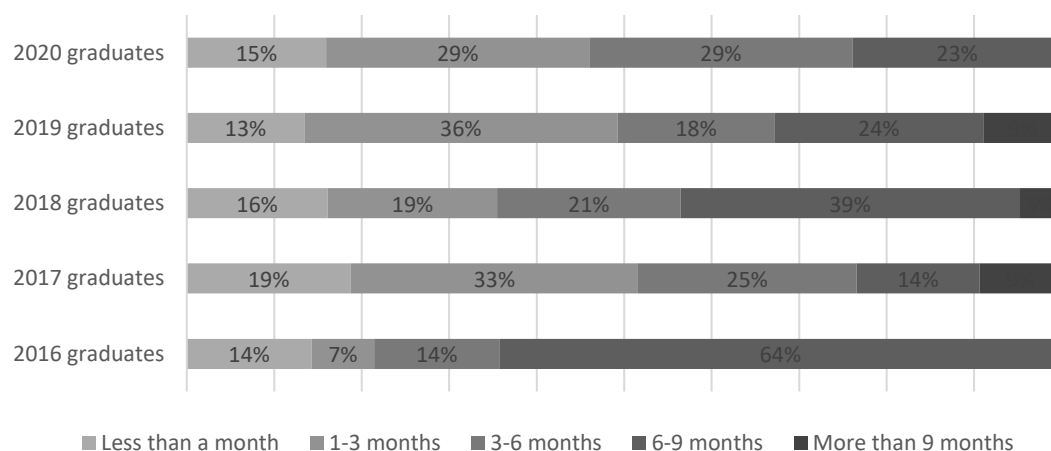


Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=44, N₂=206, N₃=192, N₄=241, N₅=347.

2.2.2 Work conditions

Data on the duration at the actual job for the 2020 graduates showed an almost even division between 1-3 months, 3-6 months, and 6-9 months. In this respect, 29% have been at the actual job between 1-3 months, 29% have been at the actual job between 6-9 months, and 23% have been at the actual job between 6-9 months. Thus the overwhelming majority of the 2020 graduates have been at the actual job for more than 3 months. Only 15% of the 2020 graduates have been at the actual job for less than one month. There have been slight variations across years of graduation, with the largest difference being in 2016, where 64% of the graduates were employed in the actual job between 6-9 months.

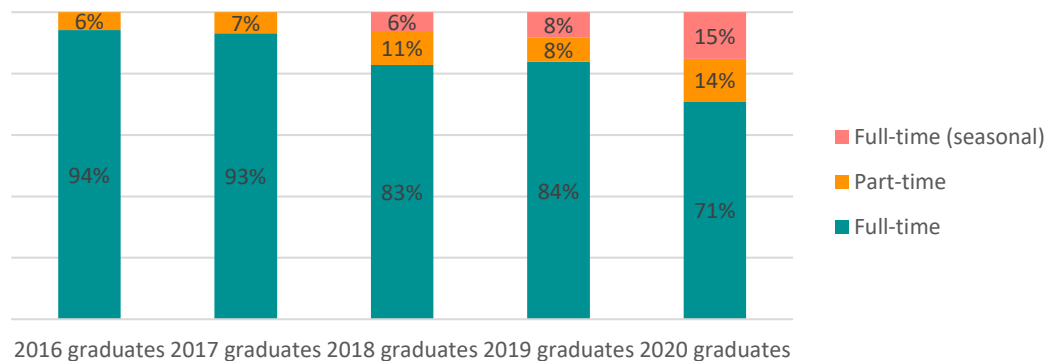
Figure 9 Months at the actual job (%)



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, N₅=118.

Across all cohorts the vast majority of employed graduates, worked full-time/full-time seasonal. However, there is a decrease in the percentage of graduates working full-time for the 2019-2020 cohort from 84% for the 2019 graduates to 71% for the 2020 graduates. The percentage of full-time seasonal employment has increased for the 2020 graduates from 8% for the 2019 graduates to 15%. The remaining 14% of the employed 2020 graduates worked part-time. Overall, for the past cohorts, over 90% have been full-time/full-time seasonal employed.

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

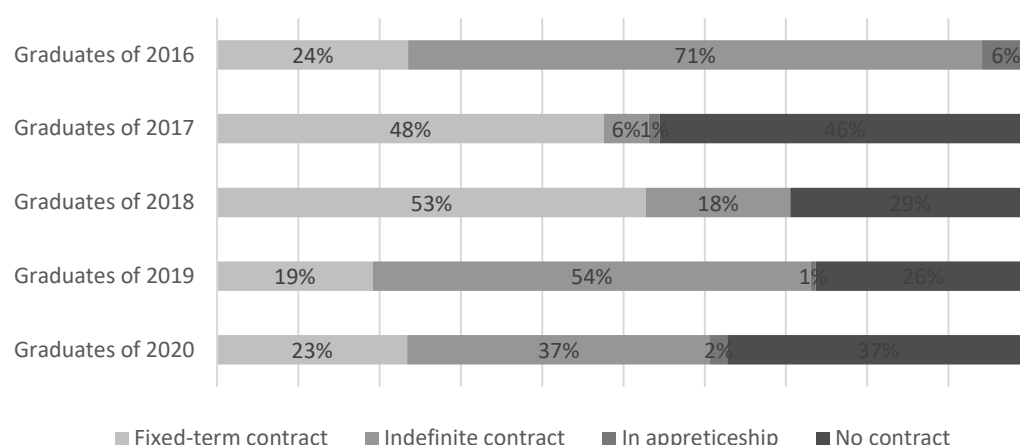


Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=34, N₂=145, N₃=163, N₄=167, N₅=282.

The situation of employed 2020 graduates shows that 60% of them have a work contract with their employer, while 37% report to have no work contract. The latter percentage has gone up 11 percentage points compared to the 2019 graduates.

Compared to the 2019 graduates, a lower percentage of the 2020 graduates have indefinite work contract. This percentage has gone down from 54% for the 2019 graduates to 37% for the 2020 graduates. Meanwhile, the percentage of graduates with fixed-term employment contracts have gone up for the 2020 graduates from 19% for the 2019 graduates to 23%. For the 2018 cohort, these proportions appeared reversed with more graduates who had fixed-term contracts compared to indefinite-term ones. 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 from 46% for the 2017 cohort to 26% in the 2019 cohort, and then increased for the 2020 cohort to 37%.

Figure 11 Type of contract (%)

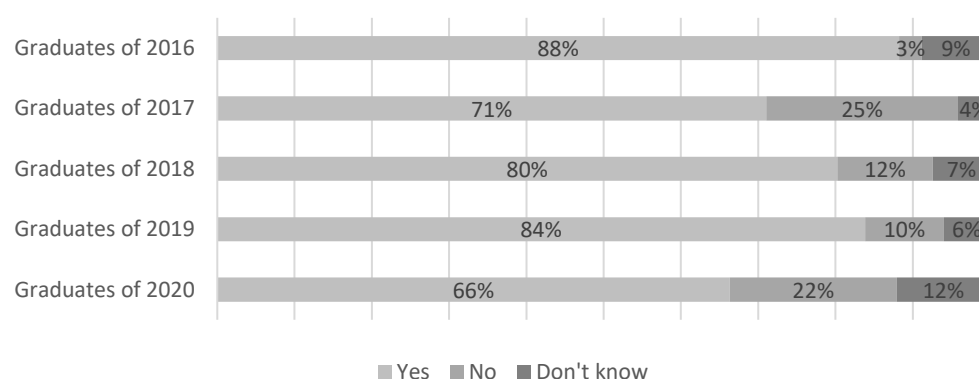


Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** $N_1=34$, $N_2=145$, $N_3=163$, $N_4=167$, $N_5=282$.

As a proxy for capturing informal employment, graduates were asked about their awareness on the payment of social and health insurance by their employers. The level of awareness appears the lowest for the 2020 graduates. For the 2020 graduates, the rates of employed graduates not being paid any contributions considerably increased to 22% from 10% for the 2019 graduates. Moreover, a lower percentage of graduates in 2020 stated that they are being paid the contributions, and these constitute a considerable decrease (to 66%) from past cohorts, which ranged between 84% for the 2019 graduates to 88% for the 2016 graduates.

Furthermore, more employed 2020 graduates reported to not being sure whether any contributions were paid, being the highest percentage (12%) among 2016-2020 cohorts. For the 2019 employed graduates, 84% 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 their current employer did not pay the employer's contributions.

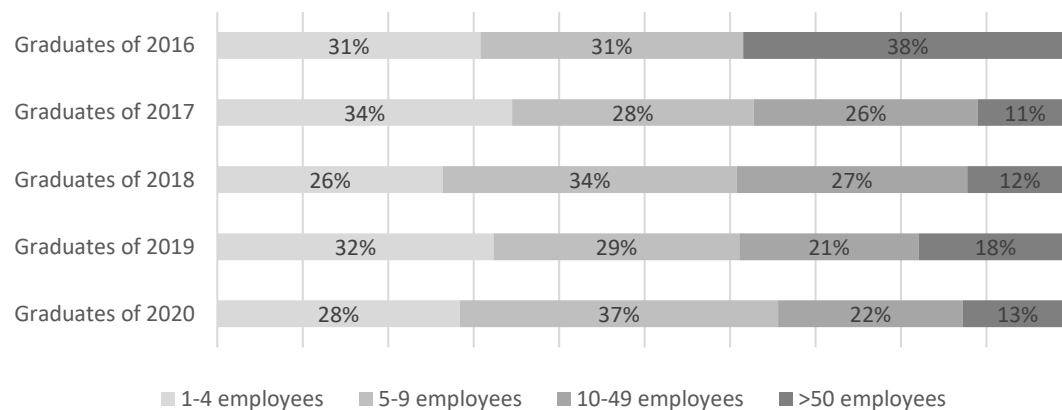
Figure 12 Awareness if employers pay contributions (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** $N_1=34$, $N_2=145$, $N_3=163$, $N_4=167$, $N_5=282$.

Asked on the size of the company where they work, across cohorts the majority worked in small size businesses of up to 9 employees. This percentage is the highest for the 2020 cohort with 65%. Across the cohorts, this proportion varied from 62% for the 2016 cohort, 62% for the 2017 cohort, 60% for the 2018 cohort, and again to 62% for 2019 cohort. Medium size enterprises employed almost the same proportion of 2019 and 2020 graduates with 21% and 22%, respectively. In 2020, this proportion of graduates employed in large businesses with more than 50 employees decreased to 13% from 18% for the 2019 graduates. The percentage for the 2020 graduates was close to that of the 2018 graduates of 12%.

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, N₅=282.

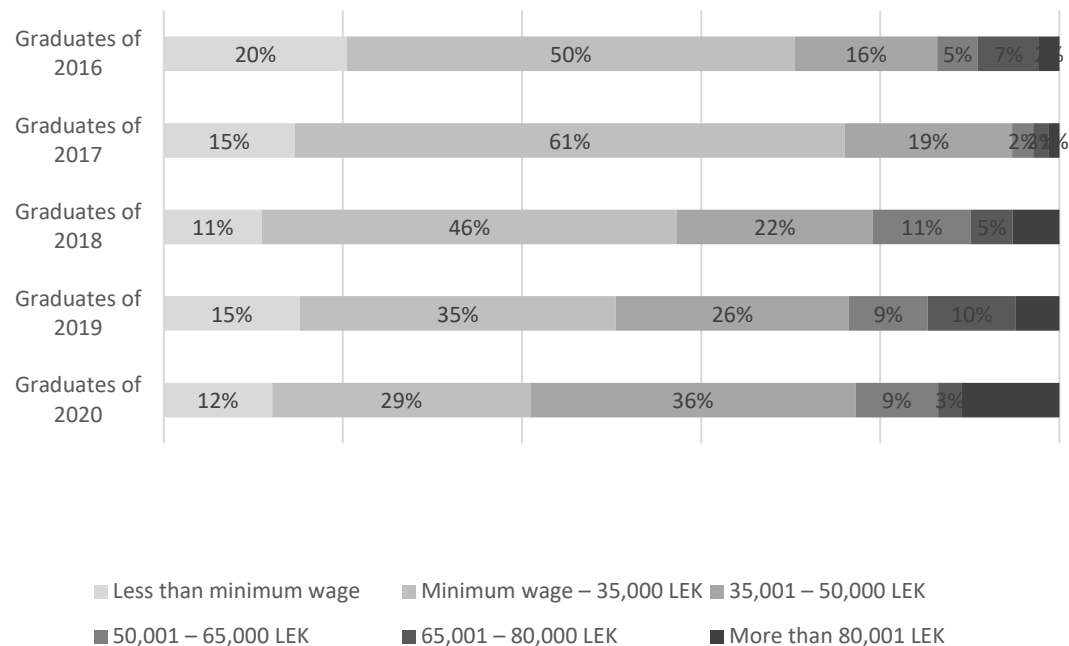
2.2.3 Salary range

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.

A larger percentage of the 2020 graduates earned between 35,001-50,000 Lek per month compared to the 2019 graduates. For the 2020 graduates, 36% of the employed graduates earned in the range of 35,001-50,000 Lek per month, 29% earned in the range of minimum wage-35,000 Lek per month, and 23% earned more than 50,000 Lek per month. For the 2019 graduates, 35% earned in the range of minimum wage-35,000 Lek per month, 26% earned in the range of 35,001-50,000 Lek per month, and 24% of 2019 employed graduates earned more than 50,000 Lek. Furthermore, data show that over time more graduates have earned more than 35,001 Lek from 30% for the employed graduates in 2016 to 59% for the employed graduates in 2020. 11% of 2020 graduates are paid more than 80,000 LEK, reaching the highest percentage among the cohorts.

Lastly, the proportion of graduates with salaries less than the official minimum wage has shown a decreasing trend over the years ranging from 20% for the 2016 graduates to 12% for the 2020 graduates.

Figure 14 Net monthly income (%)

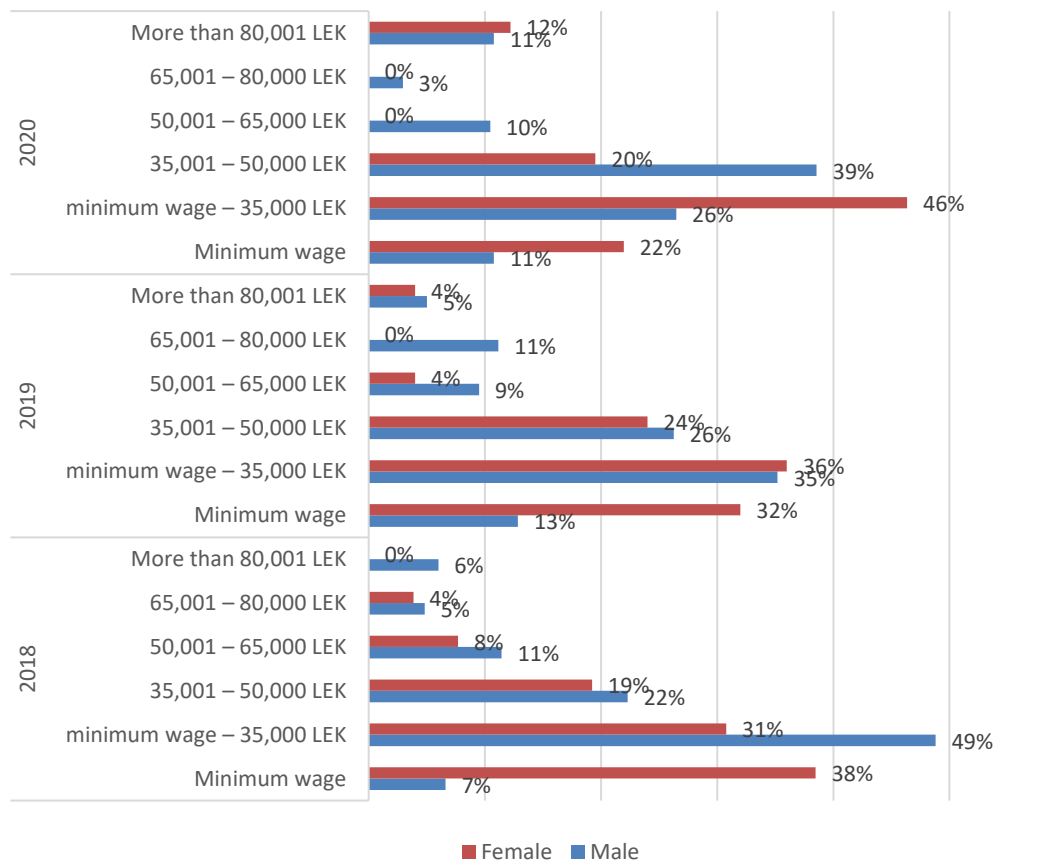


Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=44, N₂=171, N₃=192, N₄=204, N₅=347. Data include both employment and self-employment.

Overall, female graduates have lower wages than male graduates. The percentage of male graduates that receive minimum wage is less compared to female graduates in the three cohorts. For the 2020 graduates, 22% of females receive minimum wage compared to 11% for males. For the 2020 and 2019 cohorts, females fall in the range of minimum wage-35,000 Lek per month at 46% and 36% respectively, representing higher percentages compared to male graduates that stand at 26% for the 2020 cohort and 35% for the 2019 cohort.

Regarding the ranges of 50,001-65,000 lek and 65,001-80,000 lek of the monthly salary, the percentages for male graduates are higher compared to female graduates in the three cohorts. Further, there are no females in the 2020 and 2019 graduates that receive monthly salary of 65,001-80,000 lek. More male graduates are being paid more than 80,001 Lek compared to female graduates in 2018 and 2019. The situation reverses in 2020, where more female graduates have salaries higher than 80,001 Lek.

Figure 15 Net monthly income by gender (%)



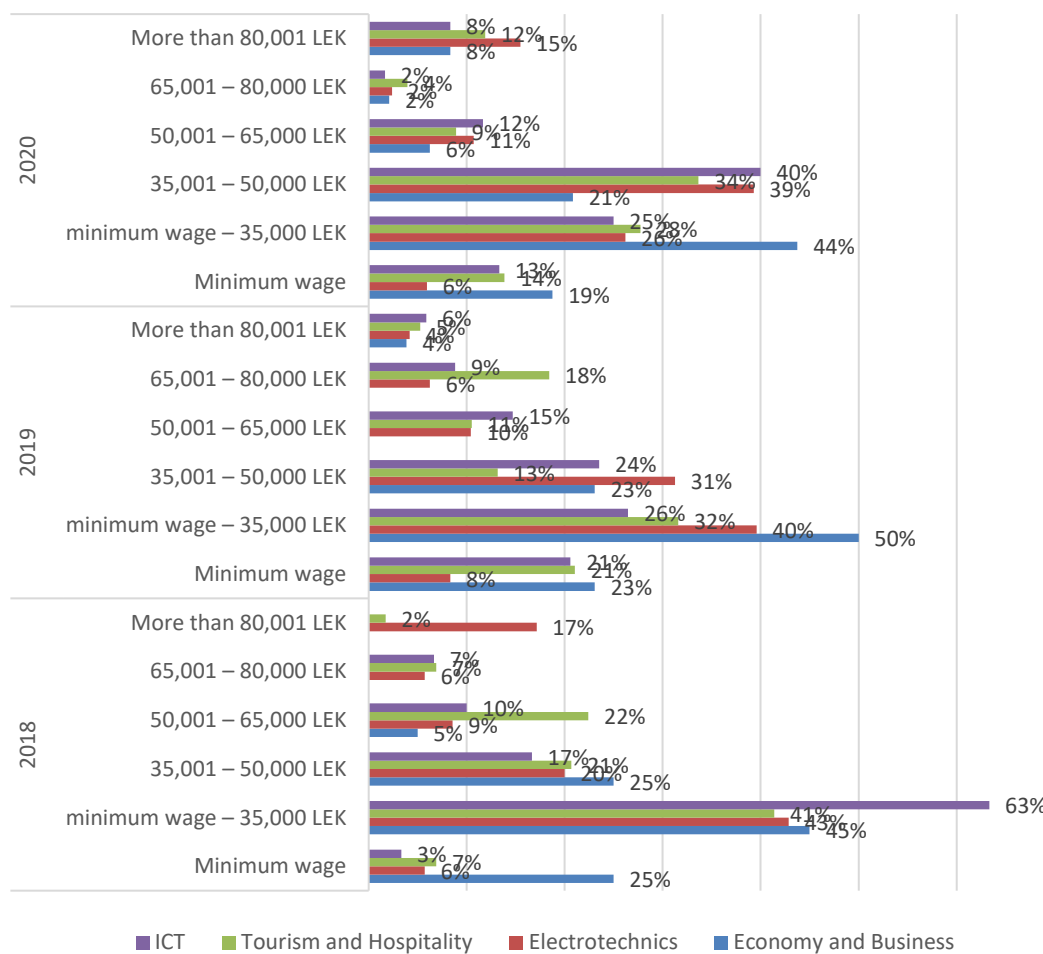
Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=192, N₂=204, N₃=347. Data include both employment and self-employment.

Differences in income by direction shows that for the 2020 cohort, economy and business has the highest percentage of minimum wage recipients at 19%, whereas electro-technics has the lowest level of minimum wage at 6%. Economics and business also has the highest percentage of recipients for the 2020 graduates in the category minimum wage-35,000 Lek at 44% compared to the other directions that fall in the range of 25-28%.

As the wages increase, the differences gets smaller between the directions. For the category 50,001-65,000 Lek, ICT has the highest percentage with 12% for the 2020 cohort. For the category 65,001-80,000 Lek, tourism and hospitality has the highest rate of 4% for the 2020 graduates, whereas the other directions stand at 2%.

Lastly, for the 2020 graduates, electro-technics has the highest rate of 15% for the category more than 80,001 Lek followed by tourism and hospitality at 12%, and the other two directions (Economy and Business and ICT) standing at 8%. Similar patterns are present also in the previous cohorts.

Figure 16 Net monthly income by direction (%)

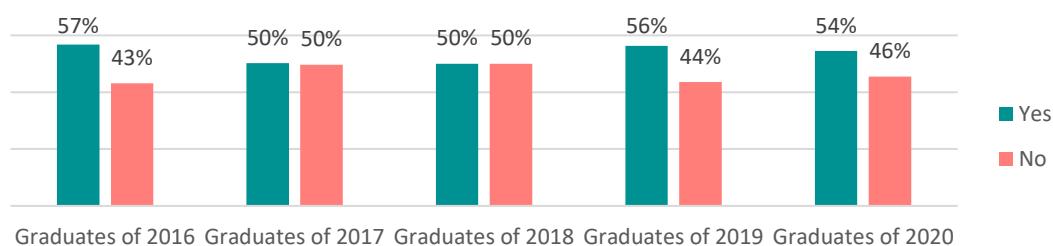


Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** $N_1=192$, $N_2=204$, $N_3=347$. Data include both employment and self-employment.

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. For the 2020 graduates, 54% of the employed graduates reported that their job was related to their field of study. This was a slight decrease from 56% reported by the 2019 employed graduates. The 2019 graduates reported the highest level of their job being related to their studies. Only half or about 50% of both the 2017 and 2018 employed graduates stated that their current job was related to their education.

Figure 17 Job related to education (%)



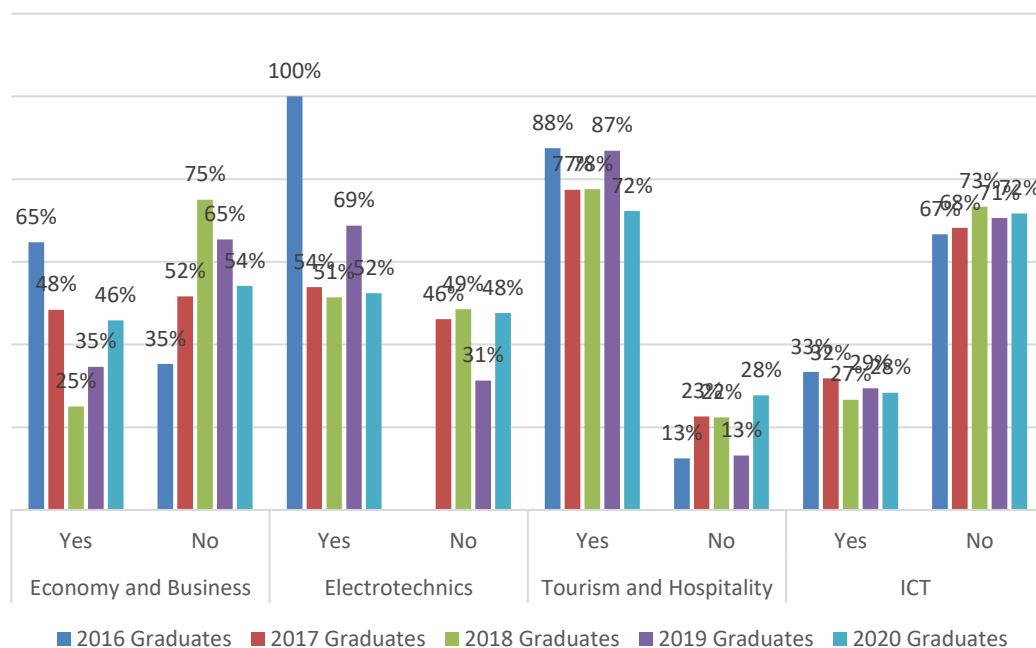
Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=44, N₂=171, N₃=194, N₄=204, N₅=347. Data include both employment and self-employment.

To get more insight regarding the mismatch between labour market demand and supply, the proportion of employed graduates that do not work in jobs related to their fields of study is also analysed by the direction.

In this regard, for the 2020 graduates, Tourism and Hospitality has the highest percentage of respondents that state that their job is related to their education. This stands at 72% followed by electro-technics at 52%, economics and business at 46%, and ICT with 28% standing in last place.

Throughout the cohorts, ICT has had the lowest reported levels of job being related to education, whereas Tourism and Hospitality has consistently had the highest rates, with the exception of the 2016 graduates that have reported at 100% for electro-technics.

Figure 18 Job related to education by direction (%)

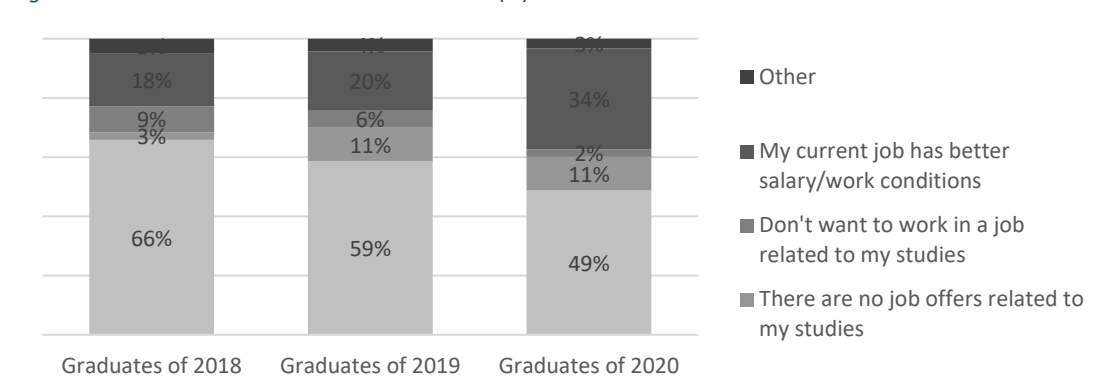


Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=33, N₂=110, N₃=143, N₄=146, N₅=293.

When asked on the reasons behind this mismatch, 49% of the 2020 graduates reported that they did not find a job related to their studies. This is the lowest reported percentage compared to 59% for the 2019 graduates and 66% for the 2018 graduates. Furthermore, 11% of the 2020 employed graduates claimed that there were no jobs related to their studies, which is at the same level for the 2019 graduates and a large increase from the 3% for the 2018 graduates – pointing towards problems of the labour-market relevance of the VET offer.

Lastly, 34% of the 2020 graduates reported that they were in a job not related to their education since it offered them a better salary and work conditions. This is a considerable increase from the reported 20% for the 2019 graduates and 18% for the 2018 graduates.

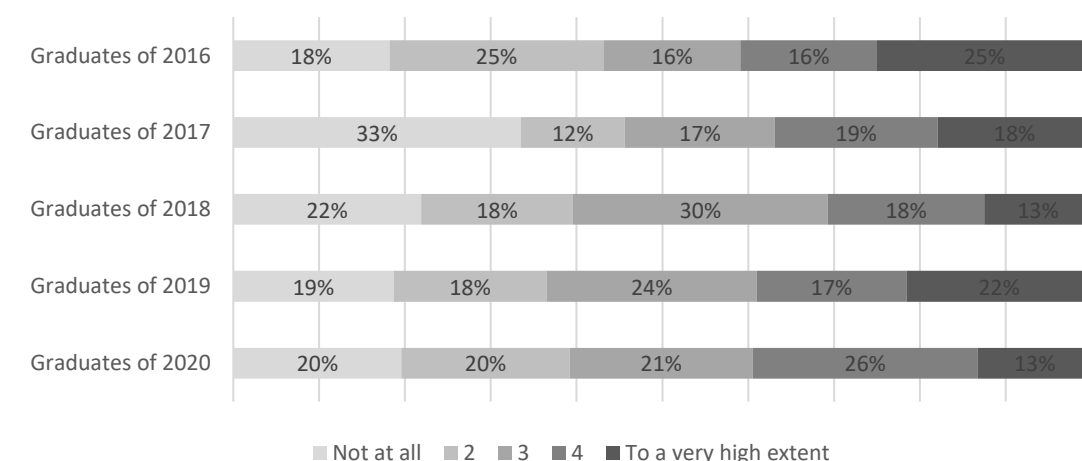
Figure 19 Perceived reasons behind the mismatch (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=79, N₂=70, N₃=123

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 stayed at the same level for the 2020 cohort as for the 2019 cohort at 39%. This is an increase compared to the 31% for the 2018 cohort. A slightly higher percentage of the 2020 graduates compared to the 2019 graduates reported to have used 'very little' or not used 'at all' the acquired knowledge while exercising their job. The reporting was at 40% for the 2020 graduates compared to 37% for the 2019 graduates. 21% of the 2020 employed graduates showed a neutral perception on this issue compared to 24% for 2019.

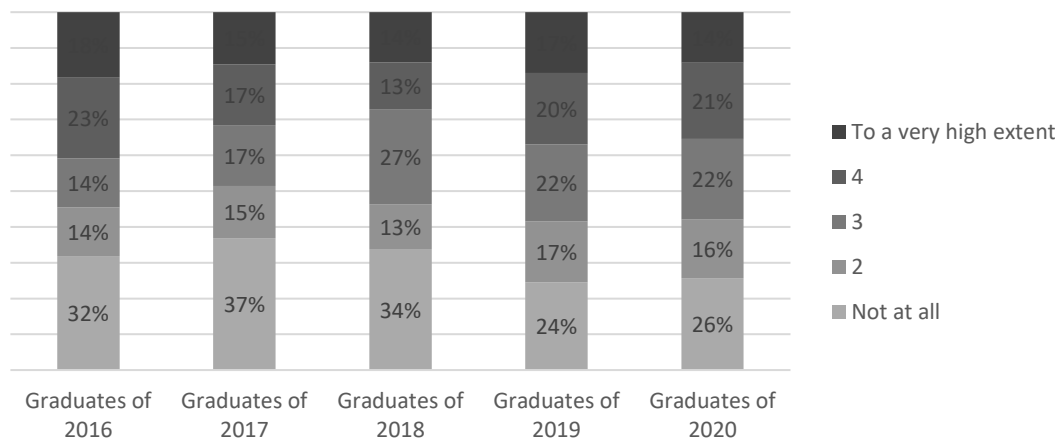
Figure 20 Extent of utilization of knowledge acquired during studies (%)



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, N₅=347.

Regarding the degree to which the actual job position is related to their field of studies, 35% of the 2020 graduates reported that it is related to a 'high' or 'very high' extent. This is a slight decrease from the 37% reported by the 2019 graduates. However, the percentage of graduates for this cohort that reported that their actual job is 'not at all' related to their field of study is relatively high at 26%. This is an increase from the 24% reported by the 2019 graduates. The 2017 graduates had the highest level of reporting that their actual job was not at all related to their field of study at 37%.

Figure 21 Extent of relatedness of job position and studies

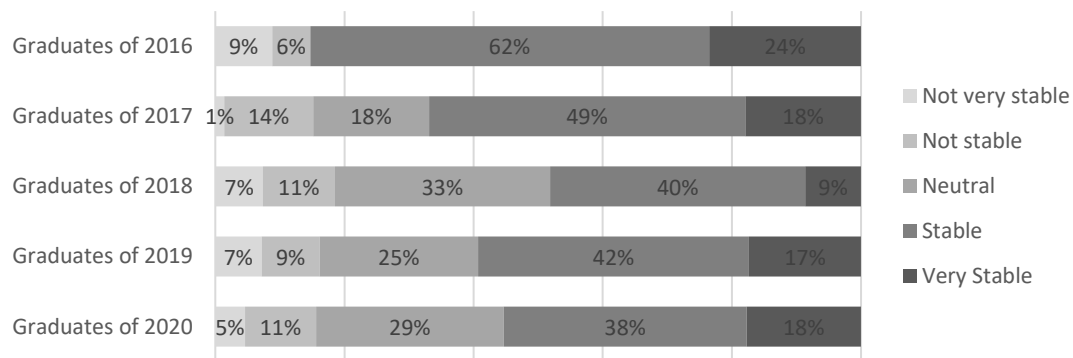


Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=44, N₂=206, N₃=192, N₄=241, N₅=347.

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 a stable proportion of employed graduates reporting a perception of their job as 'stable or secure'. For the 2020 graduates, 56% of them reported overall stability at their jobs. Although this percentage is lower compared to the 59% for the 2019 employed graduates, it should still be considered a satisfactory level given the pandemic situation. Within the 56%, 38% of the 2020 graduates reported that they felt stable and 18% reported to feel very stable at their jobs. This is compared to 42% of the 2019 graduates reporting they felt stable and 17% reporting they felt very stable in their jobs. This proportion marks an increase of 10 p.p in comparison with the evaluations of the 2018 graduates. Furthermore, the 2020 graduates reported the same levels of job instability as the 2019 graduates at 16% reporting that they felt 'not very stable' or 'not stable' at their job overall. 29% of the 2020 graduates compared to 25% of the 2019 graduates held neutral perceptions.

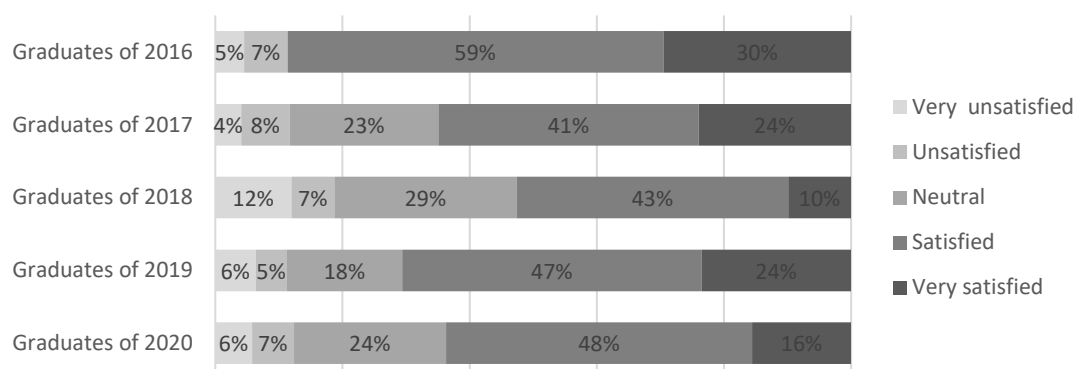
Figure 22 Perceived stability of the current job (%)



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, N₅=282.

In general, job security is a significant determinant of job satisfaction. Asked on perceived satisfaction levels with their current job, the 2020 graduates reported to be overall satisfied with their jobs at 64%, with 48% being satisfied and 16% being very satisfied. These levels are lower from those reported by the 2019 graduates. The 2019 graduates reported at 71% that they were satisfied with their job overall, with 47% reporting they were satisfied and 24% reporting they were very satisfied. The 2019 graduates reported higher evaluations as compared to both the 2019 and 2018 graduates. 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. 'Unsatisfied' and 'very unsatisfied' percentages remain low for the 2020 graduates at 13% compared to 11% for the 2019 graduates, generally following a decreasing trend since 2018.

Figure 23 Satisfaction with current job (%)



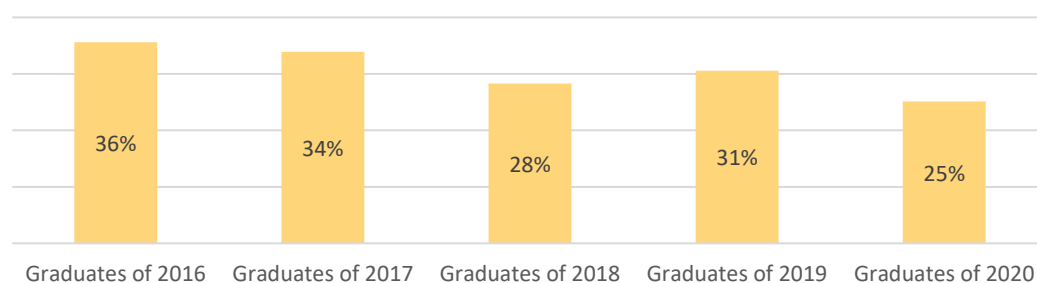
Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=44, N₂=171, N₃=192, N₄=204, N₅=347

2.3 Status of unemployed graduates

The level of unemployed graduates one year after their graduation has gone down for the 2020 graduates compared to the 2019 graduates. The level of unemployment for the 2020 graduates has decreased to 25% from 31% for the 2019 graduates. The unemployment for the 2019 graduates was 3 p.p greater than that of the 2018 graduates, which was at 28%.

The percentage of unemployed graduates looking for a job increased to 66% in 2020, while the unemployed graduates that were not looking for a job remain at 34%, the lowest percentage of the 5-year cohort. Among these, 45% was planning to leave the country.

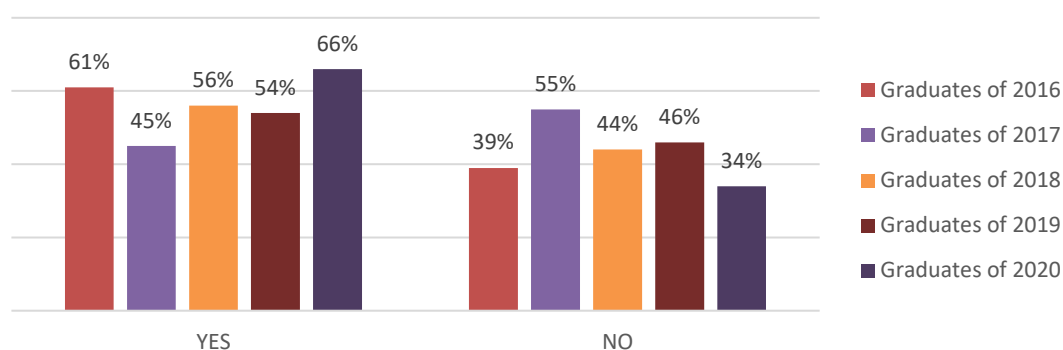
Figure 24 Unemployed graduates (%)



Base: N₁=132, N₂=363, N₃=403, N₄=407, N₅=554.

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 25 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, N₅=139.

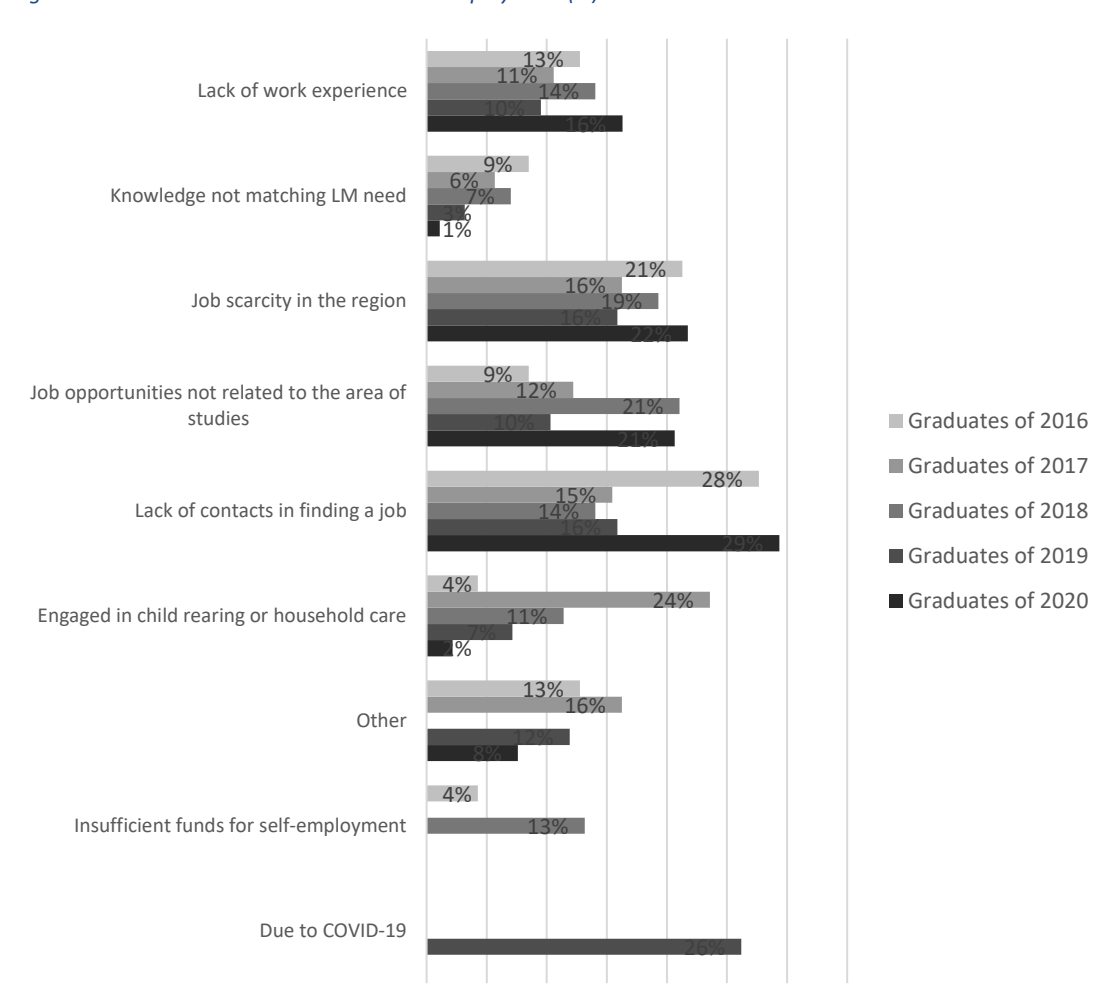
When asked on the perceived reasons behind their unemployment, graduates' opinions over the past five cohorts appear diverse and don't converge. For the 2020 graduates among the main reported reasons of unemployment are lack of contacts in finding a job reported at 29%, followed by job scarcity in the region at 22%, and job opportunities unrelated to the field of study at 21%.

Moreover, 16% of the 2020 unemployed graduates declared lack of work experience as a main barrier to accessing the labour market. For the 2019 graduates, 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%, and then increasing back to 29% for the 2020 graduates.

Figure 26 Perceived main reasons behind unemployment (%)

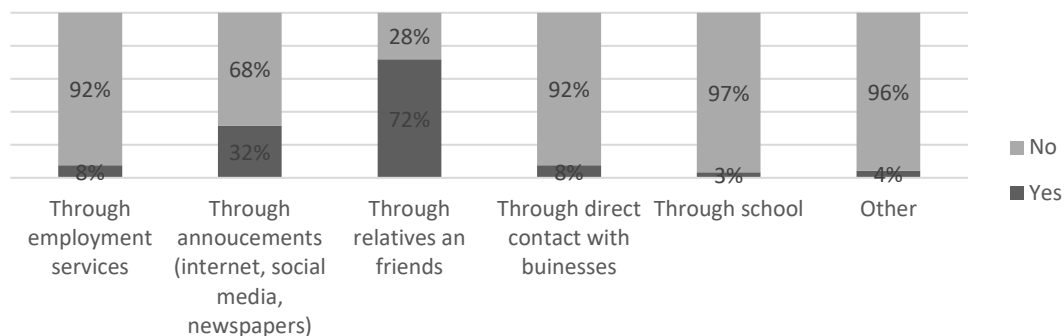


Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=47, N₂=123, N₃=114, N₄=126, N₅=32.

The percentage of graduates reporting to have never had a job since graduation increased for the 2020 graduates to 75% from 70% reported by the 2019 graduates. Also 25% of the 2020 graduates reported that they had been employed at least once since graduation, compared to 30% for the 2019 graduates. The percentages remain roughly the same for the 2017 and 2018 cohorts. 2016 marks the highest percentage of graduates (80%) that have never had a job since their graduation. Personal reasons remain the main reason for leaving their last job for the graduates. This reason is reported at 44% for the 2020 unemployed graduates and 35% for the 2019 unemployed graduates. The second main reason is termination of the working contract at 15% for the unemployed 2020 graduates, and the situation triggered by COVID-19 at 24% for the unemployed 2019 graduates. For the 2020 unemployed graduates, the COVID-19 reason has decreased at 12%, being in third place.

In regards to the job-search channels, for the 2020 cohort, relatives and friends remain at the top with 72% of the respondents reporting to use this channel. The second job-search channel is that of announcements through internet, social media, newspapers, etc. with 32% of respondents. The rest of the channels vary between 8% through direct contact with businesses and 3% through school, which also has the lowest reported level.

Figure 27 Job search channels



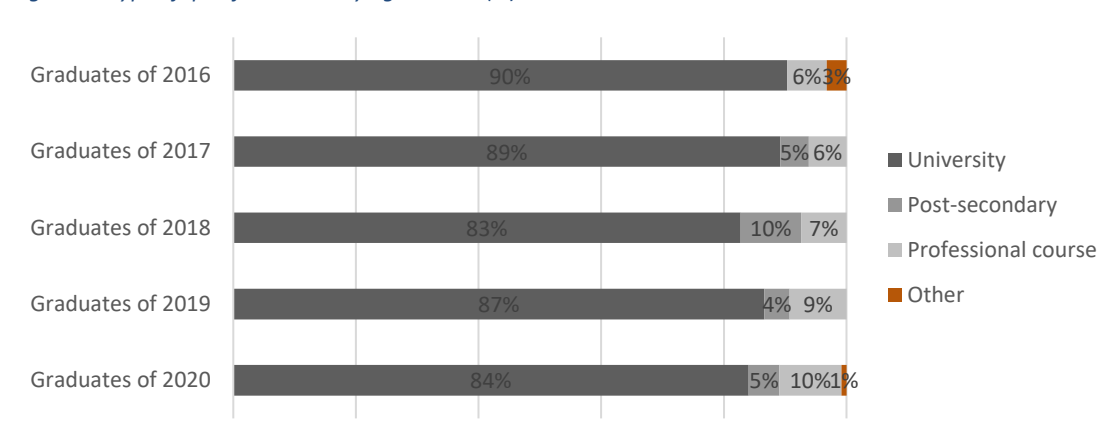
Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. N₁=92.

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. This is no longer the case for the 2020 graduates, who were working while being students or trainees only at 11%. For the past cohorts, 17% of the 2019 graduates were students or trainees, down from 20% for the 2018 graduates and 18% for the 2017 graduates.

Over half (56%) of the 2020 graduates that are furthering their education are in public universities, while the remaining 44% are in private universities. For this cohort, 68% report that their current field of study relates to their previous education. The vast majority of those attending further education and professional development attended Bachelor studies at the university level ranging 83-90% with the highest percentage of 90% for the 2016 cohort. For the 2020 graduates attending further education, 84% were attending Bachelor studies, 5% were attending post-secondary education, and 10% were attending professional courses. Among the 2019 graduates attending further education, 87% were attending Bachelor studies, 9% were attending professional courses, while 4% post-secondary qualifications. Among the graduates, 2018 graduates have the highest percentage (10%) of attending post-secondary qualifications. On the other hand, among the five cohorts, 2020 graduates have the highest percentage (10%) on attending professional courses, followed by 2019 graduates.

Figure 28 Type of qualification studying towards (%)

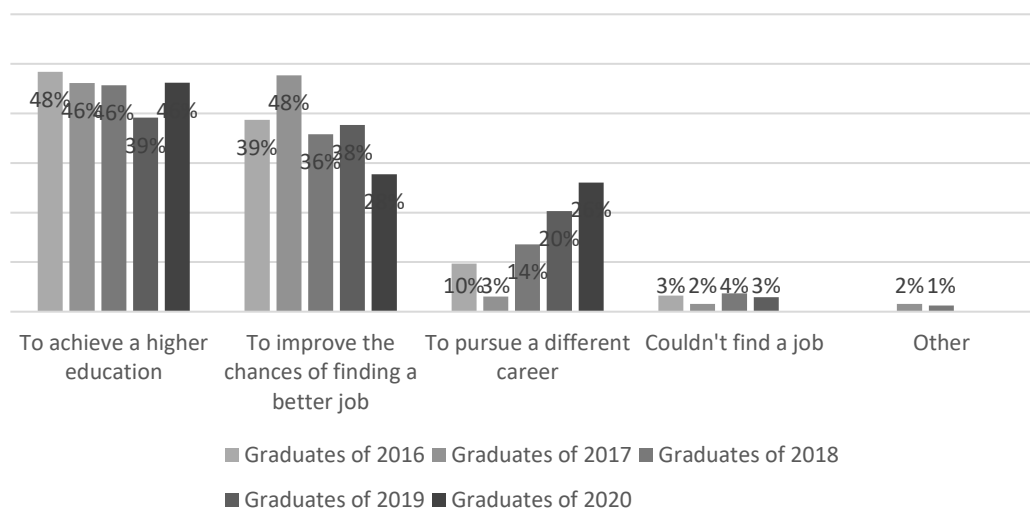


Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=31, N₂=65, N₃=81, N₄=97, N₅=119.

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 2016-2020 cohorts between 46-48%. For the 2020 graduates this percentage was at 46%, whereas for the 2019 graduates, it was at the lowest level among cohorts at 39%. There were more 2017 graduates who were attending further studies to improve the chances of finding a better job (48%), and the lowest percentage (28%) showed in 2020 graduates.

In contrast, there were more 2020 graduates who were attending further studies to pursue a different career instead (26%). Percentages of graduates that stated that they were attending further studies because they couldn't find a job remain at low levels throughout the years 2016-2020.

Figure 29 Reasons behind pursuing further education (%)



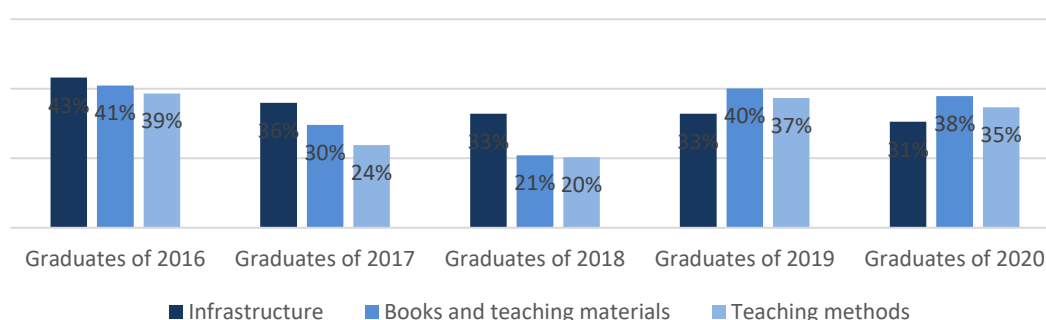
Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=31, N₂=65, N₃=81, N₄=69, N₅=119.

2.5 Retrospective evaluation of the provider

The respondents were asked for a Likert scale assessment of various aspects of schooling that need to be improved for a better integration in the labour market. 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%, 33% and 31% for the 2018, 2019 and 2020 cohort, respectively. 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, and a slight decrease to 38% in 2020 compared to the 40% in 2019. Furthermore, in regards to teaching methods, there has been a decrease for the 2020 graduates who reported that they required improvement ‘to a high or very high extent’ from 37% in 2019 to 35% in 2020. The 2017 and 2018 cohorts have the lowest reported levels of 24% and 20%, respectively.

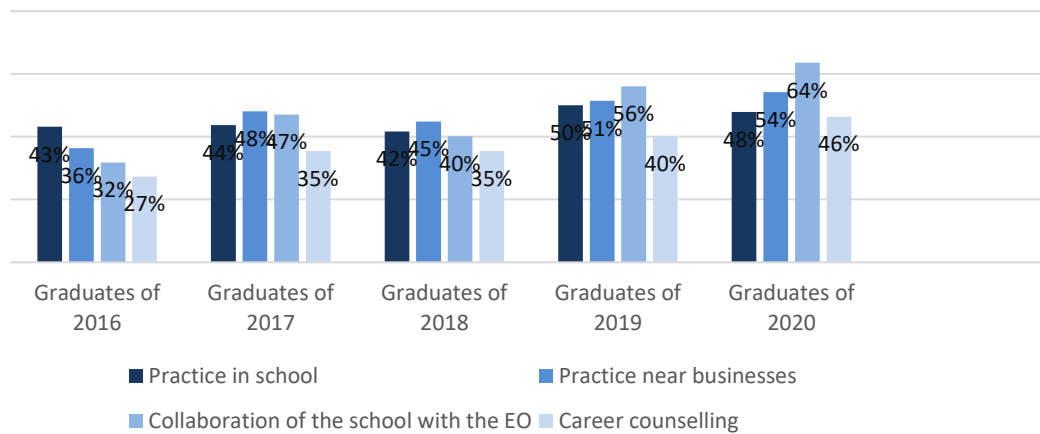
Figure 30 Area needs improvement “to a high/very high extent” (%)



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, N₅=554.

However, when asked on other aspects of the school, the situation does not appear improving. The percentage of graduates who reported that apprenticeships near businesses needed improvement ‘to a high or very high extent’ slightly increase to 54% in 2020 from 51% for the 2019 graduates and 45% for the 2018 graduates. The percentage of graduates who reported needed improvement ‘to a high or very high extent’ concerning the collaboration of schools and employment offices, increases to 64% for the 2020 graduates from 56% for the 2019 graduates and 40% for the 2018 graduates. Moreover, the percentages of graduates who reported that practice at schools needed improvement ‘to a high or very high extent’ show mixed trends, from 43% in 2016 to 48% in 2020, with the highest increase by 8 pp from 42% in 2018 to 50% in 2019. Concerning the needed improvement ‘to a high or very high extent’ in career counselling, the percentages of graduates showed an upward trend during 2016–2020, with the highest percentage (46%) achieved in 2019.

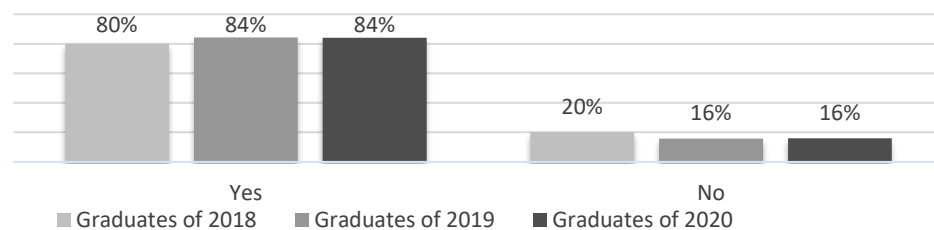
Figure 31 Area needs improvement “to a high/very high extent” (%)



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, N₅=554.

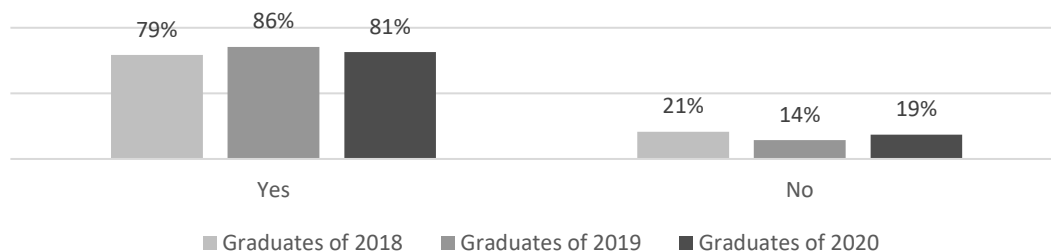
The vast majority of graduates over the past three cohorts would choose the same field of study if they had the chance exceeding 80%. The 2020 percentages show the same pattern as in 2019 with 84% of the graduates that would choose the same field of study. Compared to 2019, 81% of 2020 graduates would choose the same school. 84% of the 2019 graduates would choose the same field of study, while 86% would choose the same school.

Figure 32 Choosing the same field of study (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=400, N₂=407, N₃=554.

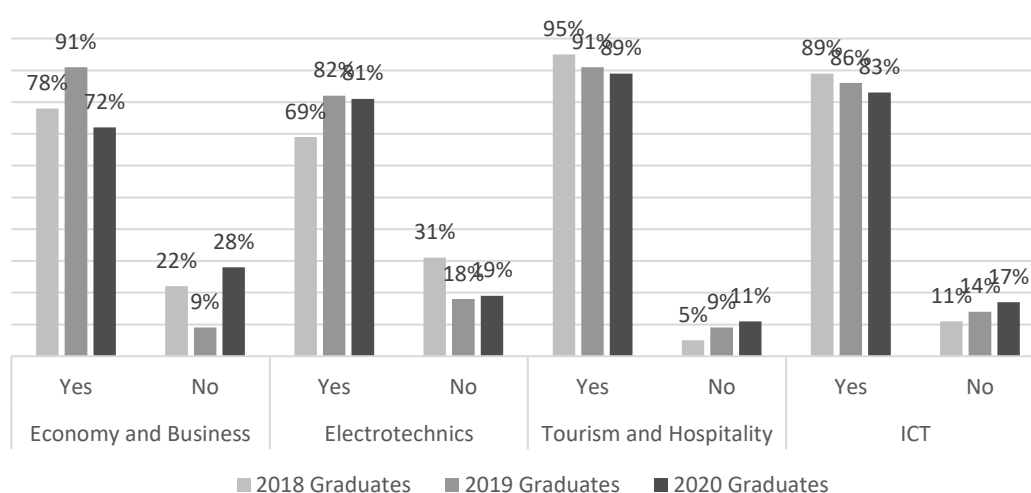
Figure 33 Choosing the same school (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=400, N₂=407, N₃=554.

When seen through the different directions, Tourism and Hospitality has the highest rate of respondents for the 2020 graduates who responded that they would choose the same field of study at 89%. This is followed by ICT with 83% of respondents for the 2020 graduates responded that they would choose the same field of study, Electro-technics at 81% and lastly Economics and Business at 72%. Throughout the cohorts Tourism and Hospitality has had the highest rates reaching 95% for the 2018 graduates. Economics and Business has had the highest rate for the 2019 cohorts with 91%. The rates for Electro-technics have increased from 69% for the 2018 graduates to 81% for the 2020 graduates.

Figure 34 Choosing the same field of study by direction (%)



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=285, N₂=311, N₃=481.

Employment as captured by being employed in their field of study (34%), being self-employed (31%), and being employed (19%) make up the vast majority of the responses by the 2020 graduates in regards to what they want to achieve within the next two years.

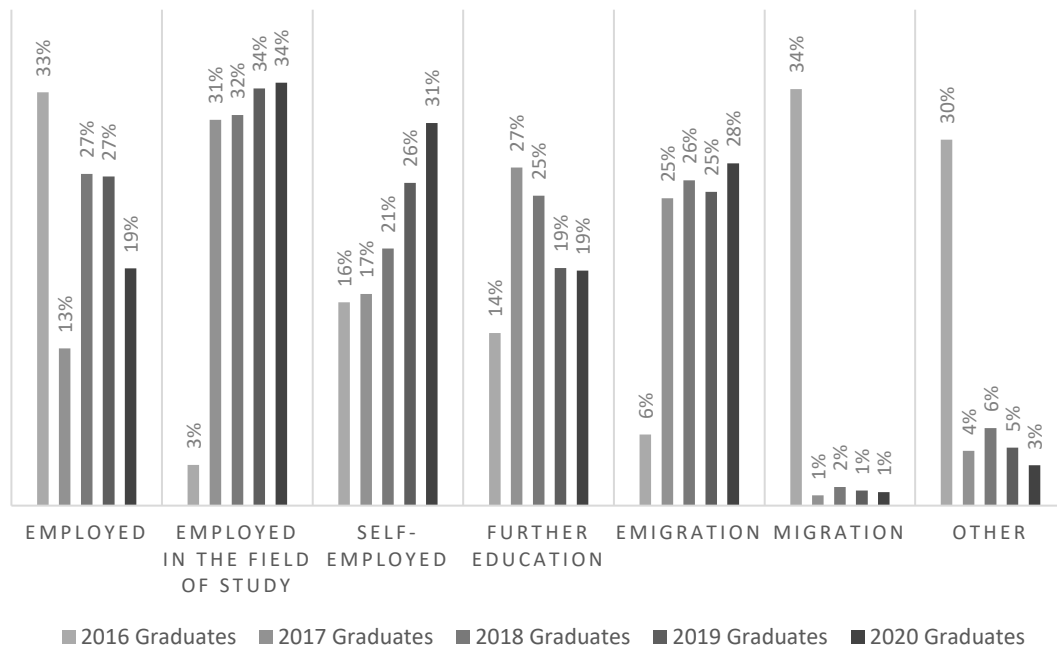
Furthering their education and migration stand at 19% and 28%, respectively for this cohort. On this same question, 33% of 2016 graduates want to have a paid job, which represents the highest rate among all cohorts. After a decrease to 13% in 2017, more graduates (27%) in 2018 and 2019 want a have a job within the next two years. The percentage decreased to 19% for the 2020 cohort. One third of 2017-2020 graduates want to have a paid job in their field of study, compared to a very low proportion of 3% of graduates in 2016 that want to have a job related to their field of study. Percentages of graduates that want to be self-employed within the next two years show an upward trend from 2016 to 2020.

Moreover, data show an upward trend of graduates from 2016 to 2017 that want to pursue further education, with a slight decrease in 2018 and 2019 at 25% and 19%, respectively.

Only 6% of 2016 graduates preferred to emigrate abroad compared to nearly one fourth of 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 graduates. Furthermore, only 1% of graduates in 2017-2020

wanted to migrate to another city within the country. At a very high percentage compared to other cohorts, 34% of 2016 graduates wanted to migrate within the country.

Figure 35 Desired accomplishments within the next two years



Note: Results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. **Base:** N₁=122, N₂=363, N₃=400, N₄=407, N₅=554.

3. Conclusions

The mismatch between labour market demand and supply represents one of the biggest challenges and 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. Furthermore, this information should also be insightful for employment services, which serve as intermediaries in the labor market between employers and jobseekers.

Informed decision-making considering the situation of graduates as well as their perceptions regarding the labor market, job stability, job search, usefulness of curricula, and ways of improvement should serve for the bettering of policies getting closer to the labor market needs and the needs of the graduates.