How and Why Does the Private Sector Participate in Vocational Education and Training?
A Descriptive Case Study of VET Projects in Albania and Kosovo

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been a return in policy interest for innovative approaches in vocational education and training (VET). In the less theoretical, more pragmatic world of development cooperation, the most relevant directives for the development of successful VET building blocks include, among others, the engagement with the private sector, work-based learning, and the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders. By analysing the two cases of Albania and Kosovo, this thesis aims to answer the questions of how and why the private sector participates in VET projects. To achieve this, VET projects financed by donor countries with dual VET systems, namely Austria (ADA), Germany (BMZ), and Switzerland (SDC), are used as the central units of analysis. The research question is answered by using a qualitative research method and reference frameworks elaborated by Euler (2017) and Byers et al. (2016). This descriptive study seeks to systematically present the activities carried out within each area of engagement with the private sector and to outline the motivations and objectives of the private sector to participate in VET projects. The findings should broaden the “big picture” understanding of how the private sector can be incorporated as a strategic partner in VET projects and create momentum for further research projects.
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<tr>
<td>ADA</td>
<td>Austrian Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>Albanian lek</td>
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<td>art.</td>
<td>Article</td>
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<tr>
<td>AVETAE</td>
<td>Agency for VET and for Adult Education</td>
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<td>BMZ</td>
<td>German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBB</td>
<td>Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cedefop</td>
<td>European Centre for the Development of Vocational Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>CVETAE</td>
<td>Council of VET and for Adult Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCDE</td>
<td>Donor Committee for Enterprise Development</td>
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<td>DC dvET</td>
<td>Donor Committee for dual Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG DEVCO</td>
<td>Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECOSOC</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Council</td>
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<td>EPS</td>
<td>Engagement with the Private Sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>ETF</td>
<td>European Training Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIZ</td>
<td>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and communication technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTAT</td>
<td>Institute of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>KCF</td>
<td>Kosovo Curriculum Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>KESP</td>
<td>Kosovo Education Strategic Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEST</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Science and Technology</td>
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<td>MFC</td>
<td>Multi-Function Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLSW</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare</td>
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<td>MoSWY</td>
<td>Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAVETQ</td>
<td>National Agency of Vocational Education Training and Qualifications</td>
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<td>NQA</td>
<td>National Qualification Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>para.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBFI</td>
<td>Staatssekretariat für Bildung, Forschung und Innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDC</td>
<td>Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>SFIVET</td>
<td>Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNECOV</td>
<td>International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBC-RTI</td>
<td>Western Balkan Countries Research Technology Innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>WBL</td>
<td>Work-based learning</td>
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1 Introduction

The German-speaking donor countries Austria, Germany, and Switzerland play a prominent role in assisting developing countries in improving their vocational education and training (VET) systems. They hold a particular interest for policy-makers because they have strong and well-functioning VET systems (Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development [DG DEVCO], 2017, p. 16). This is partly due to the fact that dual VET systems successfully engage the private sector in VET. A dual VET system is understood as an organisational and institutional system as well as a pedagogical principle that combines “practical training at the workplace with classroom-based training in schools or training centres” (Jäger, 2016, p. 5). Moreover, “dual VET is a joint effort between private and public actors and requires respective ownership” (p. 6).

The statements from German-speaking donor agencies’ strategy papers highlight the importance and logic of targeting the private sector in their VET interventions. The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) states:

“Improving the quality of training and enhancing [VET] relevance to the labour market will help bring about the necessary change of attitude. This relevance can be ensured by suitably aligning courses with needs and linking them closely with labour-market demand. This therefore calls for greater cooperation with the private sector. Private business and industry should be involved in assessing needs, defining occupational profiles, developing curricula, setting up VET centres and financing continued (in-service) training. Stepping up on-the-job training will, for example, help improve quality. Also under discussion is cooperation and liaising contacts with enterprises in donor countries.” (ADA, 2014, p. 2-3)

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) argues:

“In order to ensure that VET meets the demand of the private sector as much as possible, representatives of the private sector should play a decisive role in shaping VET policy, defining occupational standards, implementing VET and assessing and recognising examinations. Ideally, responsibility for developing a VET system should be handed over to an independent VET agency, which includes representatives of the employer side, trade unions, the state and civil society.” (BMZ, 2012, p. 20)

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) proposes in its strategy 2016 – 2020 for VET the following line of intervention:

“Increasing labour-market relevance and the quality of VSD [Vocational Skills Development] through enhanced collaboration with the private sector and emphasis on practical learning to ensure that participants acquire the skills that the economy demands.” (SDC, 2017, p. 26)

The listed statements demonstrate that there is a broad consensus among these donors that the engagement of the private sector is necessary and a prerequisite for the development of dual VET elements and entire VET systems. Engaging the private sector in training partnerships is not only an important element within VET, but it also has strategic importance to improve other aspects, for example, the VET governance structure, the funding system, the development of labour market-based qualifications and curricula, and other overarching socio-economic development aspects (DG DEVCO, 2017, p. 16). Not only within VET systems, but in general within the field of development cooperation, the engagement with the private sector (EPS) has become a critical factor to achieve development goals. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) manifest in the 17th goal “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise
the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development” (UN General Assembly, 2015, p.14): “Achieving the ambitious targets of the 2030 Agenda requires a revitalised and enhanced global partnership that brings together governments, civil society, and the private sector, and […] other actors, mobilising all available resources” (ECOSOC, 2016, p. 22). The arguments promoting this goal include investment promotion, increased access to science, technology and innovation, capacity building, enhanced macroeconomic stability, and increased efficiency.

The idea to engage the private sector to achieve social goals is not a new one. The two world-renown business strategists Michael Porter and Mark Kramer introduced the concept of Creating Shared Value (CSV) in 2006. In 2011, they set the new goal of reinventing capitalism because companies are being increasingly viewed “as a major cause of social, environmental, and economic problems. […] Even worse, the more business has begun to embrace corporate responsibility, the more it has been blamed for society’s failures. The legitimacy of business has fallen to levels not experienced in recent history. This diminished trust in business leads political leaders to set policies that undermine competitiveness and sap economic growth. Business is caught in a vicious circle” (p. 4). Thus, their vision is not that companies should undertake Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, but they should create shared value by systematically linking for-profit thinking with social concerns, defined as “policies and operating practices that enhance the competitiveness of a company while simultaneously advancing economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates” (Porter & Kramer, 2011, p. 6).

In a nutshell, the cooperation with the private sector is not only a potential value-adding factor to consider when designing VET systems or intervention activities within VET programmes, but a goal in itself because partners can make use of complementary strengths. However, the experience with VET projects in development cooperation have shown that dual VET systems cannot be replicated from one country to another (Euler 2013, p. 12; Dell’Ambrogio, 2015, p. 12). The different elements of dual VET need to be adapted to the unique framework conditions and objectives in each country (Euler, 2017, pp. 8-13). Consequently, no panacea exists for how to collaborate with the private sector.

Given the strategic focus of the above-mentioned donor countries to engage the private sector, the question arises how do donor agencies and their implementation partners exactly engage with the private sector, and why does the private sector participate?

The objective of this thesis is to systematically present the various areas of engagement with the private sector as well as the reasons why the private sector does (or does not) participate in VET projects. To achieve this, VET projects financed by donor countries with dual VET systems, namely Austria (ADA), Germany (BMZ), and Switzerland (SDC), are used as the central units of analysis. Albania and Kosovo are selected as cases because they are priority countries of the donor countries and they have relatively pronounced school-based VET systems (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung [BIBB], n.d.-a, “Länderportal: Albania”; BIBB, n.d.-b, “Länderportal: Kosovo”). By using a qualitative and inductive research method, the relevant areas of engagement of the private sector are described as well as their reasons to engage in VET projects. They are elaborated from the perspective of businesses. The role of business-relevant stakeholders involved in VET are also incorporated: the VET projects, VET schools, society, and the governance actors. The frameworks developed by Byiers et al. (2016) and Euler (2017) will function as methodological reference points.

This paper is structured as follows: In chapter 2, key terms are defined and the foundations to understand dual VET in development cooperation are laid. In chapter 3, the macroeconomic and policy frameworks that shape the Albanian and VET system are presented, followed by an introduction into the methodological procedure that structures this thesis. Chapter 5 covers the empirical findings that are based on interviews with representatives from international development cooperation agencies, companies, and other experts. In the last chapter, the possible generalisations are framed as hypotheses, which in turn provide avenues for future research, and as recommendations for further engagements with the private sector.
2 The Engagement of the Private Sector in VET

2.1 Definition of key terms

Various definitions of VET by UNESCO, UNEVOC and other organisations exist. However, for the purpose of this paper, VET is understood as “education and training which aims to equip people with knowledge, know-how, skills, and/or competences required in particular occupations or more broadly on the labour market” (Cedefop, 2008, p. 202). This definition is essential as it acknowledges the diversity of pathways and learning places in acquiring skills: formal, non-formal, and informal settings. No one-way model exists on how VET should be set up or embedded in the national education system as it depends on the unique framework conditions and national objectives in each country (Euler, 2013, p. 12; Dell’Ambrogio, 2015, p. 12). Nevertheless, different systemic building blocks can be identified that together constitute the VET value chain within a comprehensive VET system (DG DEVCO, 2017, p. 12).

Figure 1: Systemic building blocks in VET reform programmes (Source: DG DEVCO, 2017, p.12)

The figure demonstrates that the various building blocks and their interdependencies need to be considered when understanding a particular VET system. VET governance, illustrated in the first building block, relates to the five processes of selecting goals, making decisions, mobilising resources, implementing policies and generating feedback by the actors involved in VET (Pierre & Peters, 2005, pp. 16-17). The main actors in VET systems are governments (national, regional, local), the private sector (as employers and/or training providers), other training providers like VET schools, certificating bodies, communities, etc. To what degree each actor is involved in the VET system under consideration can vary strongly and is often a major entry point to reform VET systems.

The first building block is strongly linked to the second block, the funding system, as the leading question here is: To what degree is the financing of the VET system diversified across public and private sector actors?
This question strongly determines if the VET provision uses an input-driven approach (allocation of resources based on a number of teachers or students, previous year’s budget, etc.) or if more innovative and diversified funding mechanisms are used, such as funds or other shared financial contributions (DG DEVCO, 2017, p. 13). The funding system has a strong influence on the effectiveness, efficacy, equity, and accountability of VET systems.

The third block, the availability of reliable information systems, is key to VET planning as it allows the identification of skills needs and shortages that in turn improve the matching between VET skills and labour market needs (p. 14).

Curricula (building block 4) refers to the “design, organisation and planning of learning activities” (Cedefop, 2008, p. 56). Qualification on the other hand can be understood as the “formal outcome (certificate, diploma, or title) of an assessment and validation process” (Cedefop, 2008, p. 144) or as the “knowledge, aptitudes, and skills required to perform the specific tasks attached to a particular work position” (Cedefop, 2008, p. 144). Ideally, curricula and qualifications are oriented towards the labour market in order to avoid a mismatch between the skills provided by VET and the skills demanded by the labour market (DG DEVCO, 2017, p. 14). This is of particular importance to prevent a worsening unemployment situation.

The block 5, assuring VET quality and relevance, has become an increasingly important and challenging task. The quality in VET is dependent on the provision of modern and flexible curricula, innovative teaching methods, lifelong professional development for teaching staff, well-equipped facilities in VET schools, and further factors (DG DEVCO, 2017, p. 16).

Last but not least, partnerships between the public and private sectors (block 6) are the glue that links VET with employers and the labour market (DG DEVCO, 2017, p. 16). For the purpose of this paper, the private sector is defined in a broad sense, meaning that it involves “all private sector and state-controlled companies which act according to economic principles, and umbrella organisations such as business associations, federations, chambers, guilds, and employee representatives” (Euler, 2017, p. 2). The systematic building block that targets the private sector is a crucial component in many VET systems because a major goal within VET programmes is to provide students with a form of practical training and according skills that are crucial in their future career. These practical trainings may take place within VET schools (e.g. labs, workshops), in local businesses through work placements, or more formally as contracted apprentices within a training enterprise (Jäger, 2016, p. 5). Moreover, the private sector can be more or less involved in the other building blocks: the governance structure, funding system, curriculum development, etc.

The building block “training partnerships with the private sector” within the VET value chain varies strongly across countries and their respective VET systems. To simplify, on the one side of the spectrum, VET systems can be school-based, meaning that professional skills are learned within schools (Euler, 2017, p. 8). On the other side of the spectrum, VET systems can be characterised by a learning-on-the-job system, which can be understood as a system in which young people acquire their professional skills directly during the execution of a particular job, which is rather in an informal setting. Nevertheless, in reality, most systems have the shape of heterogeneous mixed systems (Euler 2013, p. 36; OECD, 2016, p. 372). Consequently, school-based VET systems can incorporate selective company-based practices, and learning-on-the-job VET systems can foresee selective standards in training, examinations, or certification (Euler, 2017, p. 8).

![Diagram](image)

Figure 2: Pure types of VET (Source: Euler, 2017, p. 8)
VET systems that place great value to both learning places, schools and on-the-job are considered as “dual VET systems”. As previously mentioned, “dual VET is a joint effort between private and public actors and requires respective ownership” (Jäger, 2016, p. 6). From this, it can be concluded that when applied to development cooperation, “the dual learning venues, business and classroom, are essential for dual VET [...]. Approaches without these two distinct venues should not be considered ‘dual’” (p. 6). Although both public and private sector actors should interact on an equal footing, it is crucial that the private sector feels a great sense of ownership for the VET programmes. Dual VET systems are prominent in countries like Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. In these countries, around 50 – 70% of young people opt for VET (Bliem et al., 2016, pp. 2 – 7).

The structural building blocks illustrated above should not be mistaken with the entirety of the system, given that other structural elements, in particular the interrelationships and shared responsibilities between the actors—such as VET students and parents, the government, employers and chambers of commerce—also need to be taken into account.

2.2 Dual VET in development cooperation

The track record of dual VET in development cooperation has experienced many ups and downs. Notwithstanding, there is a general understanding that VET is an important tool in reaching social, economic and individual development targets because it supports the creation of jobs and economic transformations, competitiveness, and increases the productivity of enterprises (Brewer, 2013 p. 1; Brown et al., 2013; Jäger, 2016, p. 8; UNESCO, 2012, p. 11). Furthermore, it contributes to social equality and integration, and improves the conditions, mobility, and employability of young adults. Against this background, VET programmes have a pivotal role in reaching the 4th SDG, on quality education, and the 8th SDG, on decent work and economic growth (UN General Assembly, 2015, p. 14).

In the recent years, there has been a return in policy interest for innovative approaches in VET. The reasons for this are manifold. Firstly, the Education for All (EFA) initiative in 1990 specifically focused on primary education, which led to a downturn on the attention and investments in VET in the subsequent years (UNESCO, 2015, p. 127). A consequence of this development is that the need to invest in skills of young people has become more urgent than ever, particularly given that young people make up nearly half of the world’s unemployed and are more at risk of performing unstable and poorly paid jobs (DG DEVCO, 2017, p. 6). On the global agenda, the urgent call for increased investments and increased international recognition of VET was institutionalised during the 3rd UNESCO TVET congress in 2012 and its outcome document, the Shanghai consensus. In the same year, the OECD stated that VET has become “the global currency of twenty first century economies” (2012, p. 6). Secondly, policy-makers have realised that VET needs to be demand-driven, learner-centred, inclusive, accessible, and flexible (DC DEVCO, n.d., para. “Overview”). Supply-driven and school-based traditional VET systems (“the more training the better”) are now perceived as insufficient to deliver VET competences that are demanded by employers and labour markets. Policy-makers, donor countries, and international organisations around the world are not only interested in the quantity, but also in the quality of VET.

German-speaking countries like Austria, Germany, and Switzerland played and still play an important role in VET as they always had VET as a focus point in their development cooperation activities, even during times when not considered a priority at a global level. This can be observed in their allocation of resources to VET. Between 2010 and 2016, the German development cooperation tripled its allocation of funds to VET – from €56 million to €190 million (BMZ, n.d., para. “German Activities”). In 2017, this commitment to VET interventions was increased to €192 million. This amount is bigger than the one allocated by the EU Commission and World Bank and positions Germany as the world-wide biggest donor for the promotion of VET. Switzerland also increased its engagement in this field of education by raising its financial commitment by 50% for
the period of 2017 – 2020, compared to the previous three years (SDC, 2017, p. 3). Austria commits 10 – 15% of its financial resources to education, of which 60% targets tertiary education and 25% secondary education (ADA, 2014, p. 5). Because of these investments and the well-structured dual-track VET approaches within German-speaking countries, these countries are perceived as attractive bilateral donor countries for developing countries that are eager to improve the quantity and quality of their VET systems. For some, the “apprenticeship model” and “dual systems” are considered as the “success model” (Gonon, 2014, p. 241). This perception is made on the basis that the dual VET systems provide to a large majority of young people, who are unwilling or unable to acquire academic qualification, the possibility to receive training and a qualification. Moreover, experts consider the dual VET systems a key contributor to the economic success and prosperity, including low youth unemployment rates, in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland (Eichhorst et. al., p. 22-23, 2012).

Over decades, the German development cooperation focused their strategic objectives in transferring the dual system to other countries (Langthal, 2015, p. 15). Austria only recently took over this approach, while Switzerland followed a more nuanced approach (with a focus on technical schools). At first sight, the impression may arise that the sophisticated VET systems from these developed countries can easily be transferred. However, numerous experiences demonstrated that a VET system transfer to other countries cannot be done that easily. For instance, the experience from a German development cooperation project in Burkina Faso showed that the “lack of ownership, weaknesses of planning and steering, and the dominance of donors” were major problems within their old VET strategy, which aimed at transferring the German system to Burkina Faso (Stockmann, 2014, p. 272). A broad evaluation of the SDC’s projects in VET also showed mixed success rates, which questions the transferability of VET systems (SDC, 2011).

Given these experiences and lessons learned, nowadays, there is a broad consensus that the dual system cannot and should not be transferred to other countries one-to-one, but only certain elements that are adapted to the according frame conditions and contextual settings in recipient countries (Euler 2013, p. 12; Dell’ Ambrogio, 2015, p.12; Langthal, 2015, p. 17). This is one of the main reasons for the founding of the Donor Committee for dual Vocational Education and Training (DC dVET), which is financed by the donor countries Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. This committee functions as a kind of think tank with the goal of strengthening the institutional exchange with each other, for example regarding best practices (2016, p. 1). Moreover, there are some recent academic studies that outline elements that contribute to the establishment of a dual VET system. For example, Gonon lists seven criteria for its successful implementation (2014, p. 244-248): the readiness of companies to train, the duality of learning sites (business and class room), the formalisation of the dual model, the incorporation of codified scientific knowledge, the cooperative model of governance including social partners, the vocational practice as main learning activity, and the career relevance.

### 2.3 The involvement of the private sector and areas of engagement

In the less academic, more hands-on real world of development cooperation, the most relevant directives for the development of successful VET elements include, among others, the engagement with the private sector, work-based learning (WBL) and the inclusion of all stakeholders (ADA, 2014, p. 2-3; BMZ, 2012, p. 16-20; SDC, 2017, p. 26). By including these elements, the above-mentioned academic criteria elaborated by Gonon can also be matched. The new approaches in VET, as presented in the introduction section of this paper, call for an explicit shift to the engagement of the private sector to facilitate VET activities in developing countries. The reasons for this are manifold. They are backed by the belief that company-based training can solve several problems that are found in countries with purely school-based VET systems. Globalisation, accelerated technological change, and a global competition for innovation progress are increasing the expectation of firms to adapt their know-how in a timely manner and, therefore, put pressure on the VET curricula (ILO,
2 The Engagement of the Private Sector in VET

2007, para. “Globalization places a high premium on education and skills”). VET systems that have trainings in enterprises as a main pillar in their educational approach are associated with lower likelihoods of mismatching qualifications (Cedefop, 2013, p. 49). Moreover, a practice-oriented training can motivate young adults as it provides them with a more beneficial working environment, and positively changes their attitudes vis-à-vis work, training, and education (King & Palmer, 2007, p. 56). Lastly, various studies have shown that young adults who benefited from company-based training make an easier transition to the labour market and have better access to jobs, often because of their practical experience or because they can remain in the training enterprise (Atkinson, 2016, p.8; Busemeyer, 2015, S. 177-214; Wolbers, 2007, p. 197). All these positive effects help breaking through the “low skill, low productivity, low wage, low investment” trap (ILO, 2007, para. “Breaking out of the low skill, low productivity, low wage, low investment trap”). In addition, as outlined in the previous chapter, engaging the private sector can increase the dynamism and create new interdependencies with other aspects of the VET value chain, such as the governance structure, the funding system or labour-market qualifications and curricula.

Nevertheless, involving the private sector is not a panacea for every VET system and faces numerous challenges. For example, the participation of private actors in VET systems is volatile, on one hand because businesses follow rather short-term business objectives, and on the other hand, training places in companies depend on the firm’s growth and productivity (Jäger, 2016, p. 9). Moreover, before considering collaborating with the private sector, the unique framework conditions and national objectives in each country need to be fully analysed in order to understand the environment that shape the private sector (Euler, 2017, p. 8). There are further factors that are specifically found in middle- and low-income countries that prevent a successful design and implementation of VET with workplace and classroom-based learning and thus effective education-private sector partnerships. Among others, these are a low membership of employers in organisations like chambers of commerce or trade unions, a very large percentage of micro and small enterprises that are less likely to provide training placements than larger ones, a large informal economy, or cultural factors like the low status of blue-collar work (ETF, 2014a, p. 11).

Against this background, there are no universal rules for the collaboration with the private sector. Based on this awareness, Euler developed on behalf of the DC dVET a list of possible areas of engagement for involving the private sector (2017, p. 15). They depend on the social, economic, and political/legal framework conditions in the country under consideration. In short, the following table illustrates where possible areas of engagement with the private sector exist. On the left side, the potential areas of engagement are listed within countries or sectors where the VET system tends to be school-based. On the right side, the various areas of engagement are presented that can be considered in countries where the VET takes place in informal settings or carried out as part of learning-on-the-job. This reference framework provides insight and inspiration to governments, donors, implementation agencies of VET projects, and other stakeholders on possible areas to involve private sector actors towards dual VET.
2 The Engagement of the Private Sector in VET

Areas of Engagement (1)

Engagement at training level
1.1. Implementation of company-based training phases
1.2. Cooperation in examinations and certifications
1.3. Qualification of (teaching and) training staff
1.4. Provision of equipment/teaching materials

Engagement at institutional/organisational level
1.5. Cooperation in governance – ambassadors of VET
1.6. Cooperation in curriculum development
1.7. Participation in financing

Areas of Engagement (2)

2.1. Periods of leave for “theory-related” VET stages
2.2. Cooperation in the development and implementation of training standards
2.3. Cooperation in the development and implementation of examinations and certifications

Figure 3: Reference framework for engaging the private sector in developments towards dual VET (Source: Euler, 2017, p. 15)
VET in the Albanian and Kosovan Context

The presentation of the macroeconomic and policy frameworks as well as the VET systems in Albania and Kosovo contribute to the understanding of each country’s unique framework conditions and objectives. The following sections outline the main characteristics that shape the two neighbouring countries.

3.1 Albania’s macroeconomic framework

Albania, an upper middle-income country with a per capita GDP of $4'125 in 2016 (World Bank, 2017), is making the transition to a modern open-market economy and towards increased European integration. Five years after applying for European Union membership in 2009, Albania received the status of candidate country for accession to the EU (European Commission, 2016a). This integration process is associated with a range of obligations that have to be aligned with EU standards. Albania is working towards the fulfilment of these obligations, such as developing a “functioning market economy”, for example, by formalising the economy, improving the budget balance, and increasing the capacity of the Albanian economy “to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union”, in particular, by improving higher and vocational education (European Commission, 2016b, p. 5).

The economy expanded in 2016 with an economic growth rate of 3.4% (World Bank, 2017). This reflects the general trend of the Albanian economy in the last decade, which was marked by limited but positive growth. The agricultural sector contributes only one fifth to Albania’s GDP, but provides employment to over 40% of the population (CIA Factbook, 2018a, para. “Economy: Labour force – by occupation”). Over the last two
decades, Albania transformed towards a service-oriented economy, in which nearly half of the work force is employed (around 48%). Telecommunications, financial intermediation, personal care, insurance, transport, and tourism are the key service sectors contributing to the Albanian economy (Madani et al., 2013, p. 556). Other strong sectors are energy, construction, mining, as well as the food and textile industry (INSTAT, 2017a, p. 84). The most common form of enterprises that structure the Albanian economy are microenterprises (1-9 people employed) and small enterprises (10-49 people employed) (INSTAT, 2015, p. 3). 94.8% of enterprises belong to the former category and 4.2% to the latter. Only 0.1% of the companies are big enterprises. These structures are part of the cause why the private sector is poorly organised. While certain aspects of the economy have improved, multiple challenges remain: high public debt, a weak judicial system, high levels of corruption, poor enforcement of contracts, and property rights contribute to a weak business environment and a limited appeal to foreign direct investments (CIA Factbook, 2018a, para. “Economy: Overview”). In the last years, the new government took measures to increase tax compliance, to reform the judicial system, and to strengthen the rule of law. Furthermore, the size of the informal economy is substantial, and is still considered a significant job provider (European Commission, 2016b, p. 53). No reliable data exists on the exact dimension, but according to Buehn et al. the informal economy accounted for around one third of the GDP over the period 1999 – 2007 (2010, p. 454).

Unemployment remains a main challenge facing Albanians, and in particular its youth society. In the last quarter of 2017, the official unemployment rate of people older than 15 years decreased by 1.1 percentage points compared to the previous year and stands at 13.4% (INSTAT, 2017b, p. 1). The official rate of unemployed people between 15 and 24 years old in 2016 was 33.6% (World Bank, 2017). The percentage point difference between young female and male unemployed converged towards each other the last decade (INSTAT, 2017b, p. 5). Nearly half of the youth (15 to 29 years old) were economically active in 2017 (p. 2). Of those not economically active, two-thirds are students or are pursuing training. The rest are not in employment nor in education. 6% of those not participating in the labour market are classified as discouraged workers. A further important indicator to understand the context of the Albanian society is that according to the World Bank (2017), 34% of the Albanian population lived with less than 5 dollars a day or less in 2016. Remittances from Albanians, mostly residing in Greece and Italy, accounted for 8.7% of Albania’s GDP, which provided income to its 2.88 million inhabitants in 2016. Moreover, migration remains a challenging issue for the country. According to the Gallup poll on migration, 56% of Albania’s population was willing to leave the country in 2016 (Esipova et al., 2017). This indicator increased by 20 percentage points within six years and places the country on the second rank world-wide for this index. This puts a lot of pressure on the demography of the country, that is steering towards a country with an ageing workforce, on the economy as its human capital decreases, but also on the government to take measures in a timely manner.

### 3.2 Overview of the Albanian VET system

One fifth of the Albanian students in upper secondary education were enrolled in vocational education in 2016 (INSTAT, 2017c, p. 12). This percentage increased by 5% points within six years (ETF, 2017a, p.4). Moreover, the number of graduates of vocational education increased substantially by the factor 1.6 between 2012 and 2016 (INSTAT, 2017a, p.47). The reasons for this are primarily due to the improved image of VET. Traditionally, VET was and is still viewed as a less attractive option for pupils enrolled in upper secondary education and regarded as a second option if a student could not make it into academic education. Another reason for the bad reputation of VET is that VET teachers are much less paid than gymnasium teachers, which in turn limits the ability of VET institutions to attract highly qualified teachers and trainers (ETF, 2017c, p. 4). However, this image is changing, particularly because VET graduates find it easier to find jobs (Dhëmpo et al., 2016, p. 12) and because the Albanian government pledged to increase teacher’s salaries on an annual basis (Government of Albania, 2017). Moreover, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MoSWY), made
VET a top priority. For example, the MoSWY ran a major awareness campaign with TV spots and job fairs about the benefits of VET in order to attract young people into VET (European Commission, n.d.-a, para. “Awareness raising campaign for making VET an attractive alternative for youth and adults”). Vocational schools have also been encouraged to enrol more VET students (ETF, 2017c, p. 4). Nevertheless, the VET student population remains relatively low compared to other Western Balkan countries: Montenegro, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia register percentages between 58-75% (ETF, 2017b, p.10). The Albanian VET system is deeply rooted in the formal education system, leading to a system in which professional training is rarely acquired in informal settings or companies (ETF, 2017b, p.12). Students mostly enrol in VET after completing the 9th grade (See graphical representation of the structure of the education system in figure 5). Most VET programmes last two to four years and are divided in three types (MoSWYY, 2014, p. 10). The first type is structured in three levels (2+1+1 years). The second type has two levels (2+2 years) and the third type that has one level, so four years. After every level, the VET student receives a certificate.

The curricula contain many general education lessons, but have a compulsory training component that should take place during the third year. However, there are no work-based learning components and respective learning outcomes or assessment instruments previewed in these programmes (ETF, 2017b, p.12). The training component usually takes place in the schools. Consequently, the curriculum remains fully school-based and there is a weak labour market orientation. There is no law that obliges companies to take apprentices or inters. Company-based learning is most common in donor funded-projects.

Figure 5: General structure of the education system in Albania (Source: MoSWY, 2014, p. 10)
The programmes are offered by 52 public VET providers, out of which 10 offer short-term vocational courses (Dibra & Xhumari, 2013, p. 16). The VET providers are vocational schools and vocational training centres like industrial schools, construction and carpentry schools, economic or agricultural schools. The Kamza Multi-Function Centre (MFC) is a pilot multifunctional centre that offers five professional directions and short-term vocational courses (Dhëmpo et al., 2016, p. 27). Within a couple of years, it increased the numbers of VET students by five times. It is characterised by a superior infrastructure and better trained teachers compared to the general VET schools. It is generally planned by the public authorities in charge of VET to duplicate this model.

In contrast to the German or Swiss tradition of learning a profession, VET students in Albania choose from 44 professional directions (for example, hospitality, economy, mechanics, or construction) that are divided in 110 profiles (Dhëmpo et al., 2016, p. 26). The profile is usually chosen after two years of an introductory phase into the professional direction. There has been a shift in preferences from professions in the manufacturing sector towards those in the service sector, such as tourism, ICT (information and communications technology), and business.

Studies that contained qualitative interviews with actors involved in VET stressed the set of challenges that the VET system faces. The low level of qualification by VET graduates, and consequently, the lack of skilled labour is a major issue raised by companies (ILO, 2014, p. 12). Concretely, VET graduates lack the “necessary skills to use the materials, machineries and instruments, good communication, and team work skills”. Companies consider these issues as a major obstacle in doing business (p. 12). Another issue raised is that the system remains fully state-driven, meaning that the ownership and financing lies entirely in the hands of the public sector which results in a costly and ineffective VET system (Kehl & Nano, 2014, p. 7). Given that the costs per student is three times as high as in general education, the financial pressure and demands for efficiency in VET are high. Furthermore, no systematic cooperation with the private sector exists. The study conducted by the ILO investigated the number of firms that collaborate with the VET system and found that 70% of the firms do not undertake any form of cooperation (2014, p. 88). Out of the over 1000 surveyed firms, one fifth reported that they offered practice placements in the firms or had instructors or staff invited to VET schools/centres.

### 3.3 VET policy frameworks and legislation in Albania

With a strong orientation towards the European Commission guidelines and the national priorities set in 2015, the reform measure 14 in the National Economic Reform Programme 2016 – 2018 states that the objective is to “improve the quality and coverage of VET while ensuring linkages with the labour market” (Government of Albania, 2016, p. 88). For this, various measures are foreseen, ranging from the development and implementation of an Albanian Qualifications Framework by 2018, the adoption of VET law, and the establishment of linkages with the private sector for implementing company-based training schemes (p. 89). In terms of strategy, the key policy document governing Albania’s VET system is the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2014 – 2020, which is the output of a VET reform programme that was initiated in 2012. One of the final strategic objectives is to offer quality vocational education and training (MoSWY, 2014, p. 49). The means to reach this goal are, among others, to strengthen the linkages between learning and work by “organising links between VET institutions and businesses [and the] organisation of elements of a dual system approach, including internships of VET students as part of the VET curriculum” (MoSWY, 2014, p. 54).

By the end of 2015, 42 out of 52 actions previewed in the National Employment and Skills Strategy were initiated, which include public-private partnership agreements of VET as well as school-business agreements that regulate internships (ETF, 2017c, p. 2; ETF, 2016, p. 1). The VET reform is highly relevant given that only 30% of VET students get a job after graduation.
The VET law passed in 2016 and the new Law on Crafts are the main documents that define the Albanian legislative framework for actors involved in VET (ETF, 2017c, p. 6). The aim is to bring all parties under one legal framework and to ensure better coordination in the VET system. One of the main changes that the new VET law envisages is that VET providers have the opportunity to raise and spend their own financial resources which increases their financial autonomy. Further legislative changes include the assignment of new functions to regional bodies as well as a stronger orientation towards EU policies. The new Law on Crafts envisages the setting up of a Chamber of Crafts as well as a dual training system in the crafts sector. However, by the beginning of 2018, they have not been put in place yet.

### 3.4 Kosovo’s macroeconomic framework

Kosovo is a small, land-locked, and lower-middle income country and represents, like Albania, one of the poorest countries in Europe (World Bank, 2017). Nevertheless, since its declared independence in 2008, it has witnessed continued economic growth (in 2016 at a growth rate of 2.6%). Kosovo’s GDP per capita grew from $1’088 in 2000 to $3’641 in 2016. Its economic growth has largely been inclusive for its 1.82 million inhabitants, but has not managed to sufficiently create enough jobs for the one third of the population that is unemployed (national estimate). Of the two-thirds of the population that are at working age, only 39% are economically active.

Unemployment is particularly pressing among Kosovo’s relatively young population. In 2017, 42% of the Kosovan people were younger than 25 years (CIA Factbook, 2018b, para. “Population: Age structure”), and half of them are unemployed (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2017, p. 24). According to the most recent Labour Force Survey data, the employment rate of young people (15-24 years old) was only 11% in 2017 (p. 14). The unemployment rate is the highest in Southeast Europe and five times higher than EU average. This has put a lot of pressure to the government to provide education, training, and jobs. The pressure is even larger for young women, of which 65.4% are unemployed. Over 60% of the registered unemployed refer to the educational level “unqualified” (MLSW, 2016, p. 11). Overall, the percentage of young adults who are neither employed nor enrolled in education or training is around 28% (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2017, p. 30). This indicates that a third of the young people are not just unemployed, but are also not developing their skills and knowledge.

Until now, the country is struggling to transition to an open-market economy in which the state is not the principle provider of employment (SDC, 2016, p. 1). The government has made efforts to stimulate local production such as the industrial metal, minerals, and construction materials production in order to improve its negative trade balance (Government of Kosovo, 2017, p. 13). But these sectors, which were once the backbone of the Kosovan industry, have declined due to out-fashioned equipment, and low and unproductive investments, which in turn limit the capacity of this sector to generate jobs (p. 69). The most important sector that contributes to GDP growth is the service sector, namely the sector of travelling and tourism, communications and ICT, and other business services. The agricultural sector faces many structural obstacles. The small size of farms, fragmentation of agricultural land, and aging farm technologies prevent any possible economies of scales and weakens the competitiveness of farms. Because of this, Kosovo remains one of the largest importers of food per capita in Europe (p. 68). Microenterprises and individual businesses are the dominant form of firms. This is an additional factor limiting the capacity of the private sector to provide jobs and professional training places. 98% of all firms employ less than nine people (mostly family members), and provide around 80% of all employment in the private sector (Government of Kosovo, 2011, p. 17).

The current growth model relies to a large degree on remittances from the diaspora to accelerate consumption (14.8% of GDP in 2016; World Bank, 2017). Kosovo is also dependent on the international community for financial and technical assistance. International donor assistance accounts for nearly 10% of the GDP
(CIA Factbook, 2018b, para. “Economy: Overview). With this assistance, the government privatised a major-
ity of its state-owned enterprises. Government officials estimate that around 30% of the economy is informal
(Tota, 2017, para. 1). This large informal economy decreases the government’s ability to raise revenues and
provide public services (Government of Kosovo, 2014, p. 6). Moreover, it distorts fair competition and lowers
competitiveness between companies.
However, the low level of government debt (IMF, 2017, p. 8) and the strong banking system (p. 12) are just
some of Kosovo’s macroeconomic strengths. Capital ratios are well above regulatory minima and banking’s
profitability is high. Compared to other Balkan countries, the young population constitutes a major competitive
edge.
The Kosovan government acknowledges these development challenges and developed various strategic
development documents and according action plans. For example, a strategy for private sector development
strategy to fight the informal economy 2014 – 2018 have been developed. All strategy papers are oriented
towards further European integration (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2013, p. 13; Government of Kosovo,
2016, p. 4; Government of Kosovo, 2018a, p. 5). An important milestone in this process was reached in 2015
when Kosovo signed the Stabilisation and Association agreement with the European Union (Stabilisation and
Association agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the
one part, and Kosovo, of the other part, 2016). This agreement seeks to push for economic, political, and
administrative reforms in exchange for increased integration.

3.5 The Kosovan VET system
VET is part of the upper secondary education and targets young people between 15 and 18 years old (See
graphical representation of the structure of the education system in figure 6). VET can be equated to voca-
tional schools as vocational training is largely school-based. Practical phases take principally place in learning
workshops (Government of Kosovo, 2018b). VET is divided in nine different directions: technical, agricultural,
economic, medicine, music, trade, theology, art, and centres of competence (MEST, 2016a, p. 11).

Figure 6: General structure of the education system in Kosovo (Source: MEST, 2016, p. 20)
Centres of competence are “better-equipped” VET institutions that are supported by development partners. Their aim is to prepare young adults for the labour market by following a competency-based curriculum and offering tertiary VET. In the end, they should serve as a model for vocational schools in Kosovo (MEST, 2016b, p. 31). However, it is not clear if this is still the case and if these centres play a key role in VET. The percentage of people attending VET in 2015 was 18.6% (MLSW, 2016, p. 10). They are distributed across more than 30 programmes in over 70 vocational schools (Gashi & Serhati, 2013, p. 25).

It is intended that students should enter the labour market as semi-qualified or as qualified workers after completing the 2-3 years education programme (Government of Kosovo, 2018b). There is also the option of obtaining a vocational matura that opens the path to university or of completing a fourth year which leads to the qualification as a technician. Apart from the official VET system, students can also enrol in the non-formal system, where public or private institutions offer alternative forms of adult learning (Gashi & Serhati, 2013, p. 20). Student enrolment in upper secondary education is nearly split half-half between general and professional education. 48% of all registered students (gymnasium and vocational education) attend VET (MEST, 2016a, p. 20). Around 40% of those attending VET are female (p. 27).

However, the skills profile of the young people and the outcome of the education system does not help fight the high unemployment in Kosovo (ETF, 2017d, p. 3). VET graduates struggle to find a job; one third remain unemployed. One fifth of the adult population is low-skilled, but there are few vacancies for this skills group. In addition, only half of the students attending VET actually pass the final exams and receive a “transcript of the grade”.

The VET system faces numerous challenges. The most pressing concerns are the weak systematic link between the VET system and the economy, and how to bridge the gap between the education system with the needs demanded by the labour market. This is for example reflected in the fact that 30% of vocational school specialise in trades for which there is little skills demand (Government of Kosovo, 2016b, p. 26). Many schools operate programmes that have no occupational standards, meaning there are no standards that define what theoretical and practical competences are needed for a certain occupation. Moreover, 40% of all VET students do not undergo any professional practice throughout their three-year education (MEST, 2013, p. 9). Consequently, these students struggle to find employment as they are perceived as low-skilled. Other additional obstacles that prevent a link between the VET system and the labour market are the general insufficient quality and quantity of practical teaching, the weak cooperation between VET schools and enterprises, the lack of necessary equipment for the implementation of practical learning, and the weak transition from content-based to competency-based curricula oriented towards professional standards (MEST, 2016b, p. 27). Furthermore, job matching and career guidance service are inefficient and ineffective so that people with adequate skills are not always discovered by companies.

A series of in-depth interview studies with employers showed that more than 50% of enterprises do not employ vocational school graduates due to: “(i) lack of quality among graduates; (ii) inappropriate or insufficient machinery and equipment for practical training and lack of experienced teachers and trainers; (iii) graduates/trainees are not sufficiently qualified; (iv) mismatch between skills required and those available (mainly reported deficits in practical skills and technical competences)” (Gashi & Serhati, 2013, p. 21).

A further major challenge stressed by stakeholders is the weak stakeholder’s involvement in policy-making as well as a lacking understanding of shared responsibilities for VET, which in turn results in a weak coordination and implementation of strategies (ETF, 2014b, p. 54). This is not only the case between ministerial branches, but also between the government, chambers of commerce, employers, social actors, and parents. Consequently, VET governance remains centralised and the engagement of non-state actors is basically neither influential nor effective (ETF, 2017e, p. 3). Other obstacles include the lack of information available because of missing data and labour market monitoring and the insufficient quality of education due to weak investments (ETF, 2014b, p. 26). Lastly, a further challenging aspect is that the proportion of young people at upper secondary school who "choose" vocational training is relatively small and consists almost exclusively...
young people who do not manage to enter general education (the gymnasium). This contributes to the fact that vocational training at this level remains, like in Albania, a second option and is not highly regarded by companies, parents and pupils themselves (Gashi & Serhati, 2013, p. 26).

3.6 VET policy frameworks and legislation in Kosovo

Kosovo, partly with donor assistance, made efforts to put a modern and democratic legal framework and national and sectorial strategies in place that are of high quality. Overall, Kosovo’s main purpose in terms of VET is to prepare the VET students for the labour market. Currently, the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (KESP) 2017 – 2021 represents the foundation for Kosovo’s education policy. It was developed in strong connection with the economic and social development needs outlined in the national development strategy 2016 – 2021. One of the four main priorities of the national development strategy is to improve Kosovo’s human capital by attracting investment and increasing the relevance of education to labour market requirements (Government of Kosovo, 2016a, p.10). Moreover, the KESP also considered other cross-sectorial strategies such as the Communication strategy and Kosovo innovation strategy 2016 – 2020 (MEST, 2016b, p. 8-9). The KESP has a strong international orientation because it attempts to take into account the four common EU objectives to address challenges in education and training systems by 2020. These are, among others, “making lifelong learning and mobility a reality” and “improving the quality and efficiency of education and training”, as well as enhancing entrepreneurship at all levels of education and training (Council of the European Union, 2009, p. 119/3).

The Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation (MEST) set seven strategic objectives for its education strategy until 2021, of which the sixth one is: “Harmonising vocational education and training with labour market requirements in the country and abroad” (2016b, p. 37). This goal should be reached by “improving the relevance of school programmes to labour market needs, the development of a VET specific core curriculum, aligned to the KCF [Kosovo Curriculum Framework], the systematic provision of high quality work experience and professional practice, and, specific to the Kosovo context, ensuring the sustainability of the Centres of Competence and their further development” (p. 37). A wide range of activities are proposed across four pages, which in turn should contribute to the expected results to ensure achievement of the above-mentioned strategic objectives (p. 84-87).

In addition to the KESP, the Strategy for improvement of professional practice 2013 – 2020 provides insights into the logic of how the MEST wants to follow the mission of developing a “mutually beneficial and supportive partnership between VET schools and businesses” (MEST, 2013, p. 14). Their vision is to develop by 2020 a VET system that “aspires to have a high-quality competency-based professional practice which supports business growth and gives for all students the knowledge and skills they need in safe and healthy work environment” (p. 14).

The measures and actions that should insure the realisation of this mission include: the introduction of an employer toolkit, the implementation of incentive mechanisms and rewarding instruments for firms, the development of promotional materials to make professional practice better understood by employers, the creation of a national register of enterprises that provide professional practice, the implementation of awareness campaigns that communicate the benefits of professional practice to relevant actors, and the development of a financial model for financial support mechanisms (p. 24-28).

In addition to the strategy policy documents, the legal documents framing and governing the VET system need to be taken into account in order to understand Kosovo’s VET system and its relation to the private sector. The main legislative provision that sets the foundation for VET is the new Law on Vocational Education and Training passed in 2013. An important but rather vague declaration can be found in art. 11, which defines VET educational programmes as programmes consisting of a “general theoretical part, a professional theoretical part and modules of professional practice” (Law on Vocational Education and Training of 2013). The
law states that examination commissions should be put in place that are put together by one representative of the employers and two teachers of a vocational education institution (art. 21). These commissions are responsible for holding the exam of a specific occupation in vocational education institutions. In addition, the law states that enterprises should be stimulated to host VET students by lowering their taxes (art. 33). Another important legal regulation is the new Labour Law of 2010 which states that practical work of interns with secondary education shall not exceed six months (Art. 16). Moreover, the law holds that employers can engage interns without paying a salary.

### 3.7 Concluding remarks

After shortly presenting the policy and legal frameworks that determine Albania’s and Kosovo’s VET visions and goals, the impression can arise that the strategic documents are very (or even too) ambitious. This is partly because the documents seek to incorporate all political aspects around education and set numerous strategic objectives that potentially dilute the actual focus of the according governments. Moreover, it is widely known that strategy documents may be of good quality, but that the fundamental problem is the poor or lacking implementation of them, and that, consequently, the strategic and legal documents do not qualify as specific actions towards an improved educational system. In both countries, the approaches remain rather centralised and top-down due to the low involvement of all stakeholders. Nevertheless, in both cases, the strategic policy documents were to a certain degree developed with the assistance of development partners and working groups. They remain strategy papers that function as working tools for the actors involved (like employees, state institutions or academia) and should ensure that everybody is working towards the same goal. Most importantly, they highlight that the Albanian and the Kosovan government acknowledge the necessity to collaborate with the private sector in VET. It is not within the scope of this paper to assess to what extent the strategic documents influence the strategic considerations and planning activities of VET actors, or to what degree the according measures are implemented. The aim of this study is to deepen the understanding of the progress of VET reforms by capturing and analysing parts of the educational reality. This reality is captured through the perception of VET stakeholders.
4 Methodology

4.1 Thesis objective and choice of research approach

Given the previously outlined framework conditions in Albania and Kosovo, the present thesis aims to answer the questions: How is the private sector engaged in VET projects in Albania and Kosovo that are financed by ADA, BMZ, and SDC? And why does the private sector participate in these forms of cooperation? More particularly, this thesis seeks to systematically present the activities carried out within each area of engagement with the private sector as well as to outline the motivations and objectives of the private sector to participate in VET projects. For this, VET projects financed by German-speaking donor countries, namely Austria (ADA), Germany (BMZ), and Switzerland (SDC) are used because these donors particularly target the private sector in their VET intervention logics (ADA, 2014, p. 2-3; BMZ, 2012, p.20; SDC, 2017, p. 26). The countries Albania and Kosovo build the cases for the present analysis. The reasons for this are manifold. Firstly, school-based VET systems are pre-dominant in Balkan countries, meaning that skills are to a great extent acquired in VET centres or professional schools (BIBB, n.d.-a, “Länderportal: Albania”; BIBB, n.d.-b, “Länderportal: Kosovo”). Consequently, the business sector is mostly excluded from VET. As previously mentioned, a major objective in these countries is to expand the company-based activities (Euler, 2017, p. 8; Government of Albania, 2016, p. 88 – 89; MEST, 2016b, p. 37). Secondly, Albania and Kosovo constitute priority countries for development cooperation in the field of VET for German-speaking donor countries. This is for example seen in the fact that the Donor Committee for dual Vocational Education and Training (DC dVET), that is financed by the donors Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein and Switzerland, held their first regional workshop in Tirana, Albania (DC dVET, 2017). The study by Bartlett et al. concluded that the European, German, Austrian, Swiss, and Finnish Assistance were exceptionally involved in promoting VET reforms, providing platforms for policy learning and in capacity building in the South-Eastern part of Europe (2014, p. 40). Moreover, Albania’s and Kosovo’s national VET strategies put a strong emphasis on adjusting their VET systems to labour market needs, in comparison to other Balkan countries like Montenegro or Serbia, which rather emphasise social inclusion and social cohesion in their VET policy documents (p. 29). However, Albania and Kosovo, compared to countries like Croatia and Turkey, have not yet developed key partnership approaches with businesses and employers. Lastly, Albania and Kosovo are relatively similar in terms of their society, culture, and economy compared to other Balkan countries. This facilitates the deduction of generalisable results.

The donor countries Austria, Germany, and Switzerland finance various projects in Albania and Kosovo that are realised by different implementation partners. The following table shortly summarises the VET projects undertaken by the donor’s implementation agencies.
### Project List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project country</th>
<th>Project name</th>
<th>Donor</th>
<th>Implementation partner</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>Standards and quality in the metal refining industry</td>
<td>ADA</td>
<td>AIEx</td>
<td>NIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>Strengthening of dual training in the textile industry</td>
<td>ADA</td>
<td>Herbert Naber e.K.</td>
<td>2014 - 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>Promotion of quality and access to tourism education and training (Al-Tour)</td>
<td>ADA</td>
<td>KulturKontakt Austria</td>
<td>2016 - 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>Sustainable economic and regional development, promoting employment, vocational education and training in Albania (ProSEED)</td>
<td>BMZ</td>
<td>GIZ</td>
<td>2017 - 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>Fund for VET and Employment MFC Kamza</td>
<td>BMZ</td>
<td>KfW</td>
<td>NIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>Skill Development for Employment Programme (TEP2)</td>
<td>SDC</td>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>2014 - 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>Skills for Jobs (S4J)</td>
<td>SDC</td>
<td>Swiss Contact</td>
<td>2015 - 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>Aligning Education with Labour Market Needs (ALLED)</td>
<td>ADA</td>
<td>KulturKontakt Austria</td>
<td>2015 - 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>Youth Unemployment and Skills (YES)</td>
<td>BMZ</td>
<td>GIZ</td>
<td>2017 - 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>KfW Development Bank Kosovo (Challenge Fund)</td>
<td>BMZ</td>
<td>KfW</td>
<td>NIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>Enhancing Youth Employability (EYE)</td>
<td>SDC</td>
<td>Helvetas</td>
<td>2017 - 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NIA = No Information Available

Table 1: List of all VET projects in Albania and Kosovo financed by Austria, Germany, and Switzerland in the beginning of 2018 (Sources: See bibliography “Overview of VET project sources”)

The according online project descriptions mention different activities to engage the private sector. However, donors and their implementation agencies do not decide alone or carry out activities in an autocratic top-down manner, but rather act as facilitators and bridge builders between the public and private sector. Consequently, there are many factors that are outside the control of VET projects. Thus, as in many projects, there is always a discrepancy between theory and reality. Project descriptions function as guidelines, but do not necessarily reflect the reality. By talking with donor representatives, project staff, private sector actors and experts, this thesis aims to answer the following sub-questions:

- What kind of private sector actors are involved in VET projects in Albania and Kosovo financed by the BMZ, ADA, and SDC?
- What are the exact activities in which they are involved in and can these activities be categorised according to the different areas of engagement proposed by Euler (2017)?
- Which are the most dominant forms of areas of engagement with the private sector?
- What was the initial motivation for the private sector to get involved?
- What potential and challenges does the engagement with the private sector in VET in Albania and Kosovo hold for the future?

The findings should broaden the “big picture” understanding of how the private sector can be incorporated as a strategic partner in VET projects. They will provide an overview of the activities, motivation, context, strengths, and challenges involved within the engagement of the Albanian and Kosovan private sector. In addition, key outcomes shall offer valuable insights to donors and other VET actors on how the private sector
engagement can be implemented. Lastly, the systematised findings should create momentum for further research projects.

4.2 Research strategy
In order to answer the questions of “how” and “why” private sector actors participate in VET projects, the causal-process tracing (CPT) approach was used (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). The goal of this approach is to reveal “the temporal interplay among conditions or mechanisms that lead to specific outcomes” (p. 27) across different cases. Moreover, the CPT approach in comparison to other case-study approaches strives for “possibilistic generalisations”, meaning that the findings of the study should reveal knowledge about causal configurations that make the specific outcome in each country possible, and does not aim to make any “statistical generalisations” similar to those made in large-N studies. This is crucial because the frame conditions in each country determine the VET system and the characteristics of the private sector in each country. Moreover, the study is of qualitative nature, meaning that only a small part of reality is captured. Consequently, it should be remembered that the findings need to be interpreted with caution and cannot be transferred one-to-one from one country to another.

Two frameworks served as a basis for the investigation of the research question. The first one is the framework developed by Euler on behalf of the Donor Committee for dual Vocational Education and Training (DC dVET), and the second one is the framework generated by the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED). This choice was made because these frameworks boast theory-based foundations that were applied to the real contexts that development cooperation programmes are settled in. In addition, they manage to take account of the fact that there is no one-way model of how VET or the engagement with the private sector are shaped. The next paragraphs provide the leading working steps and frameworks that were used as tools for the document analyses, as well as for the choices of interview partners and the formulation of interview questions.

The activities undertaken within the VET projects in Albania and Kosovo were structured according to Euler's list of areas of engagement that apply to mainly school-based VET systems (2017, p. 15). To review, Euler's possible areas of engagement for increased cooperation with the private sector in school-based VET system are the following (See figure 3):
1. Implementation of company-based VET phases
2. Cooperation in examinations and certification
3. Qualification of (teaching and) training staff
4. Provision of equipment and teaching materials
5. Cooperation in governance – Ambassadors of VET
6. Cooperation in curriculum development
7. Participation in financing

The first main goal of this study is to describe the different activities in which the private sector participates in VET in a systematic manner and to group them according to the above-mentioned areas. In order to categorise and map the findings of how the private sector engages in VET projects, the activities were structured according to the elements of engagement elaborated by the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) (2017), which is a slightly expanded version of the framework presented by Byiers et al. (2016). The DCED, based on Byiers et al., proposes seven areas for analysis, which link structural factors, institutional incentives, and actor’s interests with the various dimensions of a partnership (relation of engagement to core business, degree of partner’s engagement, partnership’s activities, and governance structures). Thus, each area of engagement was broken down to the different activities and then structured according to the analytical framework presented in the next table. This helped dealing with the large amount of gathered text from project documents and transcriptions, and to group together the text sections that are thematically linked together and are to be integrated in the context of this research question.
4 Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Nature of engagement activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Advocacy, sponsoring, financing, training, designing, etc.; together or apart; cooperation required or only desirable; visibility of the engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Engagement origins</td>
<td>History of the engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Initiator and main initial motivation, objectives, etc. of the engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>External factors</td>
<td>Effect on engagement of factors external to the engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The way that location, market dynamics, outside actors, institutions, and authorities affect the engagement design and processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Type of engagement</td>
<td>Whether a charitable, philanthropic, or strategic engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Balance of development/commercial goals, alignment with core business, corporate social responsibility, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Type of partner</td>
<td>Whether an investment fund or financial institution, a for-profit business (large, small, local, international), a social enterprise, or philanthropic arm of a company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Linked to the type of engagement, donors and their implementers may choose to work with different types of private entities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Degree of engagement</td>
<td>Frequency, type of interactions, resources brought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Arm’s length (indirect) or strategic joint decision-making and implementation (direct); levels and types of resources (such as financial, skills) brought by each organisation; power balance between the actors; one-off or ad-hoc versus often.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Mechanisms to define and shape roles and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formal MoUs, contracts, handshake, etc. on roles, objectives and governance of the ‘engagement’; and informal practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Elements of engagements according to Byiers et al. (2016, p. 9) and the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED, 2017, p. 6).

Within each element of engagement, there are more variance and interdependencies. For example, the strategic choice of how deep the engagement with the private sector is depends on the other elements of engagement. It can take the following forms:

![Diagram of engagement depth](source)

Figure 7: Depth of engagement (Source: Donor Committee for Enterprise Development, 2017b, p. 7)

The work done by Byiers et al. as well as its expanded version by the DCED helped assessing the partnerships for VET development. Their frameworks provided the foundation for formulating the semi-structured interview guide, which laid the basis for the interviews with donor and project staff, private sector actors and experts (See samples of the used semi-structured guidelines in Appendix A). Using a qualitative research approach and thus combining different lines of sight allowed the researcher to obtain a better and more substantive picture of the engagement of the private sector in Albania and Kosovo and the according realities shaping the two VET systems. Ultimately, the empirical findings of how the private sector engages in VET are first presented in a descriptive manner. In the second part, a rather analytical approach is used to explore the reasons why companies engage in VET by looking at their internal and external environment. In a last step, the key findings are formulated as hypotheses and recommendations that lay the groundwork for further research projects and potentially provide inspiration for VET actors.

4.3 Data collection and analysis

The main source of primary data were 16 in-depth interviews that were conducted with 19 different people (See list of interview partners in Appendix B). Three interviews took place with two people at the same time.
The goal was to speak with at least one donor or VET project representative of ADA, BMZ, and SDC in each country and with a handful of companies from different sectors. The reason for this choice of interview partners was the fact that VET projects are the main drivers behind VET programmes aiming at engaging the Albanian and Kosovan private sectors. In addition, this study aims at discussing the research question from a development perspective, and not from a political, economic, business management, or pedagogical point of view. Consequently, the cooperation between the private sector and the educational system that might take place outside of development projects was not considered. It should be further noted that the choice of interview partners was not random, but was strongly dependent on the main contact published on each project’s website. In the case of companies, the choice of interview partners was based on the contacts recommended by the VET project staff.

Overall, the interview partners can be grouped as follows:

In Albania
- One representative of ADA
- One representative of a VET project funded by BMZ
- One representative of a VET project funded by SDC
- Two business relationship specialists from a VET project funded by SDC
- One representative of a foreign umbrella organisation
- One company representative from the hotel industry
- One company representative from the restaurant industry
- One company representative from the ICT industry
- One company representative from the textile industry

In Kosovo
- One representative of a VET project funded by ADA
- One representative of a VET project funded by BMZ
- One representative of a VET project funded by SDC
- One representative of SDC
- One representative of a Kosovan umbrella organisation
- One representative of a research institute focussing on VET
- One representative of a VET school
- One company representative from the retail industry
- One company representative from the mechanical engineering industry

Three of the interviews were conducted via Skype, the rest on-site in Albania and Kosovo. This was important as a personal contact allowed for a much more dynamic exchange between the interviewer and the respondents. However, there were factors that were outside of the control of the interviewer that influenced the interview processes and are therefore important context information to consider. Firstly, the time scheduled for the interviews was generally one hour. However, company representatives were in some cases very restrained with time and were only available for 15-30 minutes. Secondly, in three instances an interpreter was needed, as otherwise the language gap would have greatly impacted the quality of the interview. Two VET project staff members kindly took over this function. As Monroe & Munroe (1986, p. 120) stress, there is always a discrepancy between the translation of “equivalent meaning” and literal translation. In addition, without any specific training in this field, it is difficult for the interviewer to rapidly react to the feedback and, if necessary, adapt the questions. These factors decreased the capability to compare the outcomes in a one-to-one manner. It should be further noted that anonymity of interviewees was assured. Moreover, the goal of this paper is not to assess the projects against each other, consequently, the author assigned a random letter in the cases where projects are presented next to each other.

Generally speaking, the respondents command system-internal expertise that is accumulated through their everyday experiences and participation in activities that are relevant to the subject of this thesis (Froschauer & Lueger, 2013, p. 37). Moreover, project staff have access to different actors. Given their positions, their
perspectives are very heterogenic and do not necessarily entail reflective and abstract knowledge, but provide the interviewer with knowledge about what successful actions are needed in specific areas of their respective social systems (p. 38). The problem-oriented semi-structured interview guide allowed to systematically discuss the specific subjects outlined in the previous sections, but also permitted the participating interview partners to speak freely and to elaborate the investigated topics. This was important as it enabled a certain consistency and comparability across the responses, but also allowed the interviewer to adapt a more dynamic approach and to take new paths based on the instant feedback received. Further data such as legislative documents, project sheets and project data, and relevant literature were integrated throughout the inductive research process, particularly as the scarcity and the language of web-based information posed a challenge when collecting data on the engagement of private sector actors. This approach allowed to change the line of inquiry and to choose new directions as more information and a better understanding of the relevant data sources were acquired. Given the great quantity of texts, the topic analysis by Froschauer & Lueger (2013) provided the basis for the analytical working steps. A further reason for this choice of interpretation approach was that the statements (like opinions and assessments) of respondents were in the centre of attention, and not the exact wording or latent structure (p. 158). Consequently, the transcriptions of the interviews were linguistically adjusted and non-verbal features were not considered. The topic analysis allowed to gain an overview of topics, to summarise them in their key statements and to explore the context of their appearance (p. 158). For this form of analysis, the text-reducing method was used (p. 160). This means that in a first step, related text passages for a topic were categorised based on Euler’s (2017) and the DCED’s (2017) frameworks, then the important topics and their context and characteristics within the passages were identified. In a third step, the sequence of issues raised were analysed and the extent of differences in topics within or between conversations were derived. Lastly, the particular thematic characteristics were put into the context of the research question. This method allowed the researcher to read out differences in the respective text passages. It should be kept in mind that based on the literature review, the examination of the engagement of the private sector in the Albanian and Kosovan VET system is still in its early stages. Consequently, this thesis is a rather descriptive and explorative case study. Because of this, and because the thesis aims at being reader-friendly to the development cooperation community, the style of this thesis resembles more a study and less a scientific paper.

4.4 Limitations

Qualitative case studies are far from being a perfect vehicle for research. There are major limitations that need to be considered that relativise the research method and the key findings. They were mainly identified during and after the research process. Firstly, a major issue during the process was that the subjective perspectives of interviewees were generally complex in nature and translating that complexity into realistic pictures and probabilistic generalisations was very challenging. Only a small part of the reality could be reflected. Secondly, mostly only one person from a particular organisation was interviewed. Thus, there is a risk of personal bias as the respondents may be overall positive about their own involvement and engagement in the project or only have limited information regarding the different topics of the interview. The opposite was also observed: In some instances, the questions were quickly answered, and then an extensive description of the numerous challenges followed, that the interviewee faces in his/her social system. In some cases, this was contrary to the expectations of the interviewer, in particular given the project descriptions. In other cases, it can also be said that the VET project staff could not see the wood for the trees, meaning they did not see their achievements because of the numerous difficulties. Notwithstanding, by taking different lines of insight into consideration, namely the perspectives of donors, implementation agencies, and the business perspective, this risk was slightly diminished. Thirdly, when performing the data analysis, knowledge and insights
previously gained throughout the literature review and during the stay on-site might have influenced the construction of the topics and reduced the openness to new ideas. Lastly, the results and quality of the interview depended widely on the interview partner, for example, if he or she works at a strategic level, like a representative of a donor, or at the operational level, like a business relationship specialist. This made it difficult to quickly react and to steer the interview towards the micro-level of the project. However, eventually, any feedback is key because they reflect the subjective realities in different VET contexts. This issue is closely linked to the difficulty of the chosen framework. The framework was highly valuable for the formulation and structuring of interview questions, in particular follow-up questions, for thinking in categories and for considering different aspects of development cooperation. In reality, no interview was conducted exactly according to the interview guide, mainly because the cooperation in the field of VET is still in its early stages. Nevertheless, the framework will certainly be very useful for future quantitative large-N studies that are more standardised in their nature. In a couple of years, the VET projects will probably have generated extensive data that can be used for such endeavours.
5 Empirical Findings

5.1 The participation of the Albanian and Kosovan private sector in VET

5.1.1 Implementation of company-based VET phases

“Theory is when you know everything but nothing works. Practice is when everything works but no one knows why” – with this known saying, the representative of a research institute focussing on VET in Kosovo summarised the logic why VET should include dual elements (personal communication, March 7, 2018, see Appendix C, p. 73). Students experience different learning processes, which are “systemically structured learning at schools and order-based learning in real organisational cultures” (Euler, 2017, p.18). This enables VET students to gain the appropriate theoretical and professional competences for a future career. The company-based VET phases contribute to a win-win situation. Among many advantages, the learner gains deep professional experience and builds skills required to operate at a workplace, and the company experiences a positive impact on its supply of qualified labour and on its productivity. Furthermore, the attractiveness of VET programmes increases, and the society gains a skilled labour force that responds better to labour market needs (European Commission, 2013, p. 8).

The forms, degree, and formalisation of these company-based VET phases vary across the different systems. In school-based VET systems, ideally, the company-based learning gradually takes the form of alternance schemes or apprenticeships, which are understood as “systematic, long-term training alternating periods” (p. 6) at the company and at the school. This form is typically found in dual systems. Further forms are on-the job-training periods like internships, work-placements, traineeships, company visits, or practice projects.

According to the VET project staff and the VET researcher in Albania and Kosovo, the common practice in Albania and Kosovo until recently was that companies would occasionally invite students to get an insight into their daily business. The companies usually have connections to a school director and are willing to do the director a kind of “favour” by exposing the teenagers to the professional world. In both countries, there is still no systematic involvement of the private sector in the delivery of practical learning that is outlined in the curricula, but with the presence of donor-funded VET projects, this practice is gradually changing. The following figure and sections aim at presenting the degree of involvement of companies in providing company-based VET phases.

![Figure 8: Deduction of possible degrees of engagement in providing company-based VET phases (own representation)](image-url)

1. No engagement
2. Company visits (status quo)
3. Traineeships (post-VET, no link to formal education system)
4. Apprenticeships in planning phase
5. Piloting of apprenticeships
6. Short-term internships
7. Long-term apprenticeships schemes
8. Company-based VET learning is anchored at system level
Company-based VET phases in Albania

The way how company-based phases are realised depends on the needs of the different sectors and the approach of the agencies implementing the VET projects. Out of the VET projects under analysis, one VET project currently operates on the micro level and in direct cooperation with the businesses. The other projects mainly act on the macro level, meaning that they assist state structures and institutions. Consequently, the company-based VET phases differ in their forms. However, the goal of all VET projects is to eventually integrate the lessons learned from their activities in the political decision-making process and to anchor and accredit them on the national system level. This stage generally marks the final phase of a development project.

In summary, it can be said that apprenticeships schemes and internships are implemented in the framework of VET projects. In one case, the introduction of apprenticeships schemes failed, and now the introduction of new apprenticeships is in the planning phase. The sectors in which company-based VET phases are implemented or which are viewed as having the biggest potential for this form of cooperation are the automotive, construction, hotel, restaurant, ICT, textile, welding, and nursing care industry. Here it should be mentioned that nearly all companies involved in providing apprenticeships phases are local, with the exception of the interviewed textile company, which is a German company with a production site in Albania. The companies that provide internships are partially local, for example, hospitals or nursing homes, and partially international. The hotel and restaurant sector have introduced functioning apprenticeships schemes in which students work in a local company and visit the VET school on a long-term basis. Students are one, two, or three days per week in the hotel or restaurant. The length of the daily training ranges between a couple of hours to a whole day. The length depends on the programme and the learning module. However, an interviewed company representative from the hotel industry said that some students chose on a voluntary basis to go to the hotel every day after school (personal communication, February 28, 2018). As the students do not learn a profession (like a cook, receptionist, waiter, etc.) but a direction (in this case hospitality), the apprentices undertake a parkour within the hotel or restaurant. This enables them to experience the different work units (for example, the kitchen, reception, housekeeping, service, bar, etc.) and the according products and tools within each unit. These forms of apprenticeship initially started with the length of 17 months, but it is intended that the students will stay for the whole three years of their vocational training. The rest of the week, the apprentices visit VET schools in which they learn general education and vocational theory.

In the case of the two interviewed companies that are located in the coastal town of Vlora, the students visit the local VET school. Alone this school has partnerships with eight hotels and seven restaurants located in this tourist destination (Swiss Contact, n.d.). They all offer long-term, company-based training VET phases and have between one to eight apprentices working in their company. There is a second VET school in Vlora that provides industrial VET programmes. However, this school has been concerned to send 10th grade students to companies because of security issues. Consequently, during the first year, they teach the practical part in their own laboratories. The students then enter the world of work in the company in the second year. The matching process of students and companies follows a competitive logic similarly found in countries with a dual system, meaning that the students apply for an apprenticeship position with their CV and motivation letter. They generally find the available positions on the company’s website or social media page. The company then short-lists the applicants and undertakes an interview with the students. If the student is for multiple positions or companies, the student can then decide in which company he or she wants to work for. The students undergo the alternance schemes for nine months so that at the beginning of the summer, the students are qualified to work during this high season of tourism and hospitality.

By taking an innovative approach, the same VET project facilitates the introduction of company-based phases in the ICT sector. This sector is highly relevant because it is a cross-cutting theme and has considerable growth potential. Eleven ICT firms are cooperating towards the introduction of an apprenticeship system that is remote, project-based, long-term, and adapted to the Albanian ICT context. The idea is that the companies
deliver a description of the task and the overall project, and 10th grade students are then required to perform the coding task under the guidance of a mentor within a certain period. This form of apprenticeship was planned to start in March 2018, so there is no concrete experience that can be noted yet. However, it is foreseen that the companies will follow up with the groups of students on a weekly basis or howsoever proves to be effective. It is not clear yet if the mentors will actually respond in a timely manner, and if they manage to do this as a part of their working hours. During the rest of the time, the VET students visit the VET school situated in the north of Albania that offers the ICT direction. This pioneering form of cooperation is still in its early phase, and further experimentation and adaptation is still required.

This development project started implementing company-based VET phases with ten companies in the beginning of 2017. By February 2018, cooperation was established with over 150 companies, 5 VET schools, and 6,500 students and teachers (Swiss contact, 2018).

The approach by the VET project financed by BMZ is to provide technical assistance to state institutions, such as the ministries involved in VET as well as VET providers, particularly the MFC Kamza (GIZ, n.d.). The MFC Kamza, with the support of the German implementation partners, enables company-based VET phases in the automotive, nursing care, and tourism industry. According to a VET project staff, VET takes place within the centre during the first two school years (personal communication, March 2, 2018). In the third year, VET students complete a 12-hours per week internship, either in the form of a one-month internship in a nursing home or hotel, or in the form of a short-term two-days a week apprenticeship in an automotive or IT company. This depends if there are any open apprenticeship positions. Students that do not undergo practical training in the company fulfil their training in the laboratories of the MFC. In the fourth year, the students prepare for their diploma.

The Austrian development cooperation follows a similar approach, meaning that state institutions are the main partner in development cooperation. Some initiatives were launched to increase practice-oriented education and company-based VET phases with a small number of companies. The interviewed German textile company that has production facilities in Albania was very motivated to collaborate with a technical school in order to implement apprenticeships schemes. The goal of their initiative was to have a whole class of students working one-day per week in four different textile companies. The Ministry in charge of VET at the time signed a letter of intent to support this collaboration. However, six months after the official start of the company-based VET phases – and after many vain attempts to get the students into the company – this form of engagement was terminated because the students did not go to work on a regular basis. Company-based VET phases are also envisaged in a project within the tourism industry, but are not (yet) put in place. In summary, it can be stated that at the time of data collection, de facto no functioning company-based VET phases at upper secondary level were implemented yet.

Lastly, it should be noted that the mechanisms that define the responsibilities of each actor (for example, working hours and social insurance coverage) are formalised in contracts, making companies a contractual partner. In the cooperation supported by ADA, contracts between the companies and the schools were signed (2-party contract). In the case of internships, the cooperation is formalised between the according business, the school, and the student (3-party contract). In the framework of apprenticeships schemes, the parents also enter their signatures (4-party agreements). In this case, the template for the individual contracts were drafted by a “renowned” law firm in Tirana (Interview with business relationship specialist, personal communication, March 2, 2018).

**Company-based VET phases in Kosovo**

In Kosovo, the donors follow similar approaches like their colleagues in Albania. There are differences in terms of the sectors in which company-based VET phased can be realised as well as in the forms of company-based learning.
The sectors with the highest growth and employment potential are – according to the statements of VET project staff – the automotive, mechatronics, metal, construction, electronics, wood-processing, furniture, ICT, textile, and retail industries. Tourism might become an important sector in the future. One VET project sees the potential in the agriculture, food-processing and mechatronics sectors because they are interlinked, which would facilitate the generation of economies of scale (personal communication, March 22, 2018). However, the agricultural sector remains a challenging sector – both in Albania and in Kosovo. The major obstacle in this sector is that agricultural production is carried out within the frame of small family businesses. Moreover, farming has an image of being a back-breaking job and is therefore considered a less attractive option for young adults. Nevertheless, in the future, short-term courses may be considered as the adequate form for the implementation of company-based VET phases in this sector.

Among the interviewees, four stated that the practical learning phases that are prescribed in the curricula are covered by either company visits in which VET students take the strict role of the observer or by learning workshops that take place in the schools. Thus, students are not involved in the actual production process or in the use of labour market relevant equipment. These company visits are not formalised through any regulations, contracts or memorandum of understanding. The standard case is that the school director knows a company owner that agrees to have a school class visiting the company.

Given this background, the implementation of company-based VET phases in Kosovo is in its early stages, meaning either in planning phase or in in the piloting phase. Two of the three donors are in the phase of planning the next intervention phase or of planning the next working steps to introduce company-based VET phases. One project that was in the planning phase in the beginning of March 2018 is choosing the companies with which two industrial-technical and three commercial VET schools will eventually cooperate to implement internship schemes. Their long-term goal is to collaborate with 100 companies so that classes of 20 students can do company-based internships. It is foreseen that the grade in which students should undergo this practical learning will depend on the sector. Sectors with higher security risks like construction will take the students at a later stage than those with small risks like commerce or retail. For example, a big Kosovan retail company and schools outside of Pristina in Kosovo are currently preparing the introduction of company-based VET phases for VET students at secondary level (representative of retail company, personal communication, March 7, 2018). The aim is to enable VET students to receive a job-specific training in addition to the school-based learning so that they can specialise in one of the different professional roles involved in retailing (like cashier or meat processor). The idea is that 10th grade VET students will work for one day a week in one of the retail shops, 11th graders for two days, and 12th graders for three days.

There is one VET project that is already piloting apprenticeships. Until recently, they supported company-based VET phases in the form of internships. By the end of 2017, the VET project took a new direction and initiated the introduction of apprenticeships. In March 2018, 54 students were placed in around five companies from the wood-processing, mechatronic, textile, and electronic retailing industries. These partnerships are formed in cooperation with VET schools in different municipalities. Like in Albania, the companies undertook interviews with candidates and selected the apprentices with the support from the schools. During the current piloting phase, students are exposed to the professional world two times a week during a period of six months. The goal is to gradually steer towards a system in which the number of days of company-based VET learning gradually increases to three and four days per week, and at the same time to expand these learning phases step by step for the 11th and 10th grade students. Until now, this cooperation and the according responsibilities are specified in three-party contracts between the VET project, the school, and the owner of the company. There are no contracts between students and the companies yet.

Apart from the case of gradually introducing company-based elements in the formal educational system, there is also the case that the private sector takes their own initiative by providing traineeships. In Kosovo, companies that implement own training centres play a leading role in the establishment of company-based VET phases at post-secondary level. One of the biggest Kosovan retailer and an expanding mechatronic
Empirical Findings

5.1.2 Cooperation in examinations and certification

The level of significance of examinations and certificates can be increased if the private sector is engaged during these processes (Euler, 2017, p. 21). Companies or umbrella organisations like chambers of commerce or associations can be involved in the design of state-approved examinations. Therefore, they test the existence and quality of competences of the learner that are relevant to the according profession.

Figure 9: Deduction of possible degrees of cooperation in examinations and certifications (own representation)
Cooperation in examinations and certification in Albania

Project staff and company representatives agreed that in general, companies have the opportunity to give their feedback to the VET teachers in the school – either occasionally or on a regular basis. In addition, there are also student evaluation sheets, which the company mentors can fill out at the end of the company-based VET phase or each semester. The mentor from the company informs the teachers about certain aspects of the practical learning. However, in all the cases (short-term internships and apprenticeships schemes), the ownership of the examination and qualification remains in the public sector because the feedback from companies are non-binding and VET teachers remain the final decision-makers when it comes to the grading of the student. Companies reported that they are open and willing to contribute more to the examination and certification process.

Apart from the official examination and qualification process, there are alternative instruments and plans to increase the engagement of the private sector in this process. One instrument to increase the significance of examination processes is by holding regular contests (for example, a cooking contest under the supervision of a cuisine master). The results of the contests are not binding and do not have an influence on the transcript of the students. However, successful results can be listed in the CV of a student, which in turn send a signal to future employers. Another instrument is to hand out letters of reference or certificates by the company, which summarises the competencies that the students acquired, which in turn potentially increase the employability of the student in a future company.

Overall, this area of engagement is still deeply in transition. One plan is, for example, to include a mentor from another company as an independent examiner in the final practical examination process in order to increase the objectivity of the evaluation. However, there are no initiatives yet to involve umbrella organisations in the design of the examination process.

The Austrian Institute of Excellence (AIEx) reflects one special case in the field of examination and certification. AIEx is an Austrian for-profit organisation that cooperates with ADA in Albania and Kosovo. They are specialised in the training, examinations, and certifications in the welding and electro-technology sector (Austrian Institute of Excellence, n.d.). Their business model is to provide fee-based examinations that are organised and evaluated by Austrian trainers. Around 40% of all participants manage to receive a certificate, of which half of them are internationally recognised. Given that the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) is currently being built in Albania and weak regulations exist in the welding sector, these certificates can be considered as highly valuable (Trans Adriatic Pipeline AG, 2018). However, it also demonstrates how the Albanian VET system missed the opportunity of building an own qualified workforce of welders with nationally recognised standards and qualifications.

Cooperation in examinations and certification in Kosovo

According to the new Law on Vocational Education and Training, the final examination for a specific occupation is ought to be established by an examination commission consisted of two VET teachers and one representative of an employer (Law on Vocational Education and Training of 2013, art. 21). According to the Kosovan umbrella organisation and the VET researcher, this is rarely implemented. The representative of the interviewed Kosovan umbrella organisation is aware of this legal framework; however, they do not see themselves in the position of having the means to control or enforce this requirement. The VET teacher reported that in one centre of competence, companies for the first time voluntarily contributed to jointly conduct the final assessment (personal communication, March 7, 2018). However, this information could not be further investigated on its accuracy in the framework of this study.

The development projects financed by ADA, BMZ, and SDC are all in the process of working towards the realisation of this standard during the coming or following year. For example, one VET project engaged local experts to support the companies in aligning their activities with the curricula of the school, which in turn should facilitate the assessment and evaluation of competencies by the in-company trainers. The actual
evaluation of the students is intended to take place during the summer 2018. Consequently, at present, there are no actual experiences in this area available yet.

The mechatronic company, that is establishing its own training centres, developed its own ideas on how this area of engagement should be realised. Their idea is to have two inter-connected examination steps, of which one will take place in the training centre and one in the company. The candidates need to pass the exams in both places. If the candidate does not meet to the assessment criteria, the company will not offer him/her a full-time job in the company. The training centre envisages a collaboration with German institutions like the German development cooperation and German chambers of industry and commerce to adapt the qualification standards. The mid-term goal is to enable candidates that have successfully passed their final examination and have two to three years of relevant work experience as a “Meister” to receive a certification that is recognised by German institutions as well. Due to this, they should be able to also work in German partner companies.

In terms of certification, the assessed mechatronic company as well as the retail company are both in the process of applying for the national accreditation so that their issued certificates will be nationally recognised.

### 5.1.3 Qualification of teaching and training staff

The quality of teaching and training staff is highly interdependent with the overall quality of the VET system, which in turn determines the quality of the human capital and, therefore, the overall economic and social development of a country (Euler, 2017, p. 22). Consequently, the teachers in VET schools and trainers in companies are key actors to consider within any project that seeks to improve the quality and relevance of a VET system. The main function of a VET teacher is to teach general subjects, vocational theoretical subjects, and practical sub-projects in school workshops and laboratories (Cedefop, 2016, p. 2). Trainers are generally employees who, in addition to their occupation duties, mentor VET students during the company-based VET phase. Ensuring that teaching and training staff have access to quality professional development are crucial to increase their technical competencies and pedagogical skills (p. 3). However, there are many challenges in this area. Often, teachers do not undergo any practical training. This results in teachers lacking the concrete practical experience in the occupational field they teach or/and teachers who do not manage to keep up with the fast-changing requirements of modern workplaces (OECD, 2009, p. 49). Moreover, vice versa: In-company trainers can lack pedagogical and didactical knowledge. This is a major issue raised by business relationship specialists in Albania (personal communication, March 2, 2018) and the representative of an umbrella organisation in Kosovo (personal communication, March 5, 2018). The engagement with the private sector can offer superior solutions. Companies can provide company-based training for VET teachers, or in-company trainers can attend pedagogical training taught by experienced company employees or trainings organised by umbrella organisations like chambers of commerce (Euler, 2017, p. 22; OECD, 2009, p. 53).

![Figure 10: Deduction of possible degrees of engagement in the qualification of teaching and training staff (own representation)](image-url)
Qualification of teaching and training staff in Albania

The area of teaching and training staff has proven to be a very active and particularly suitable field for capacity-building activities – a core activity in development cooperation (ECOSOC, 2015, p. 2). The Austrian, German, and Swiss donors are in different ways involved in improving the qualification of teachers and trainers. School-to-school cooperation (for example between Albanian and Austrian, German, or Swiss VET institutions) are not included in this section.

The Austrian donor facilitated and financed short-term seminars for VET teachers with German consultants and the textile company. The goal of this seminar was to equip the teacher with better management and practical skills.

The VET project that supports the MFC Kamza also collaborates with a foreign umbrella organisation located in Albania. They are in the planning process for carrying out training sessions for VET teachers to increase their practical skills. Automotive companies also bought a foreign examination standard that enables them to teach, examine, and provide teaching materials to teachers. The same collaboration logic applies to two VET projects who enable teachers to become Cisco certified and to use the corresponding teaching materials. In the mid-term, the foreign umbrella organisation is planning to issue “training of trainers” certificates in order to standardise the development of trainers in companies.

The VET project financed by SDC is strongly involved in the competence development of both teachers and trainers. On the one hand, VET teachers are undergoing a six-month training that takes place every Friday evening, Saturday, and Sunday. This training is taught by local private sector consultants. The aim of these workshops is to increase the teacher’s pedagogical and practical skills but also their ability to work in the career centres, where they are in charge of the apprenticeship programmes and of the relationship with companies. Short-term courses have also been provided by companies in the past. For example, VET teachers responsible for the hospitality direction attended a one-month practical training performed by staff of a five-star hotel located in Tirana. On the other hand, the project is in the process of preparing modules in which trainers in the company are capacitated with pedagogical and mentoring skills. These workshops will be provided by SFIVET (Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training). This is important because the level of pedagogical skills varies significantly. In some cases, the owners of the companies take up the role of the mentor, in other cases, the owner assigns the mentoring role to an employee in each section of the company. Moreover, before introducing the remote apprenticeship schemes, the practitioners in the ICT company attended workshops focusing on pedagogical aspects like project-based and digital learning.

Qualification of teaching and training staff in Kosovo

Like in Albania, the collaborations seeking to improve the qualifications of teaching and training staff serves as a strategic entry point for improving the overall VET system and for introducing dual elements in Kosovo. There are no regulations in place that define who should take up the role of the in-company mentor and how many students are assigned to one mentor. Typically, the VET teachers would supervise the VET students in the company. However, it became clear from VET project staff that the quality of this supervision varies strongly.

The analysed VET projects took various initiatives to improve this domain. Overall, their initiatives are still in the planning and piloting phase. This area of engagement is also the most common area where VET projects collaborate with companies that are establishing their own training centres.

One VET project that is piloting apprenticeships schemes demanded the companies to assign in-company instructors. The project then provided short-term courses to these instructors that were carried out by SFIVET prior to receiving the VET students. In addition, the companies received coaching by local experts in aligning their operational activities to the curricula.

The other VET projects are both in the planning phase of developing the competencies of trainers and teaching staff. The exact “how” is often not decided or carried out yet, but peer-exchanges between Kosovian
schools and companies, on the one hand, and Swiss or German VET staff and VET institutions, on the other hand, are currently considered as the most likely options. For instance, there are plans to carry out short-term courses of two to three days, two-week trainings, or three-month long trainings for future trainers by German experts, retired trainers from Germany, or experts from German institutions. Another potential form of cooperation is to collaborate with experienced companies. The mechatronic company signed a collaboration agreement with a large multinational firm from the mechatronic sector that is based in Hannover, Germany. This German company established an in-house training centre many decades ago. They are now willing to collaborate with the mechatronic company in the area of competence development of trainers, partly through exchange programmes.

It was considered an important aspect by all interviewed actors that the qualification of teaching and of training staff is carried out in cooperation with third-party VET institutions and partner organisations to ensure sustainability. This should prevent that this area of engagement is only carried out during the lifetime of the VET project and not going forward. For example, the Kosovan chamber of commerce is in the process of developing accreditations such as “training of trainers” certificates for in-company trainers in order to standardise their didactical trainings. The German, Swiss, and Austrian VET systems, and, in particular the chamber of handicrafts in Dortmund, serve here as an inspiration for this process. The mid-term goal of VET projects and by the umbrella organisation itself is to make the Kosovan umbrella organisations the bodies in charge of the qualification of trainers, and at the same time enable them to add fee-based activities to their services.

5.1.4 Provision of equipment and teaching materials

In school-based VET systems, the question arises if and how companies can support VET schools and non-company competence centres by providing them with modern equipment and practice-oriented teaching materials (Euler, 2017, p. 23). These are important questions because it allows VET students to get familiar with modern production and information technologies, and to learn with learning materials of high practical relevance. Moreover, it also saves the taxpayers money because the private sector has the financial means to provide the necessary equipment. This is particularly relevant in development countries where the educational sectors are generally chronically under-financed (Steer & Smith, 2015, pp. 20-25). Moreover, the more practical lessons schools need to offer, the more expensive it becomes for schools to provide high-quality training.

Figure 11: Deduction of possible degrees of engagement in the provision of equipment and teaching materials (own representation)

**Provision of equipment and teaching materials in Albania**

In general, all VET projects are providing the schools with school materials and modern equipment. Consequently, the donors are the actual financing institutions of the supply side of VET. However, there are cases where companies directly or indirectly cooperate in this area of engagement. Two VET projects currently
finance a modern IT infrastructure, laptops, and laboratories in VET institutions in order to increase the innovation and technology advancement in learning and teaching. Although these companies do not offer their products free of charge, the companies do have to apply for the call of proposals and generally make good deals. There is also the case that companies like Microsoft, a 3D printing company (that cooperated with SICPA, a Swiss company specialised in security inks), or an electronic installation company sponsored equipment. The exact terms of the sponsorships are unclear. Nevertheless, some VET schools then place the name plates of the companies prominently in their entrance halls – as a sort of “wall of fame”. In addition to these two projects, the interviewed textile company has also provided fabrics, sewing materials, and older sewing machines to the VET school if they demanded any equipment or materials. A further form of collaboration observed is when community work needs to be done, a local company provides the materials and equipment, and then the VET students from an industrial school carry out the work.

Given their technological means, the ICT company proved to be a highly valuable in the development of teaching materials. The company developed a user-friendly and pedagogically-oriented task and management application that allows VET students in ICT to complete the remote apprenticeship. The other ICT companies, which will also offer this kind of company-based VET phase, will use this teaching software as well.

The interviewed companies that did not provide any equipment or teaching materials stated that they were willing to do so if requested by the schools as this would be a form of collaboration for them.

Provision of equipment and teaching materials in Kosovo

According to the Kosovan umbrella organisation, the law states that companies have the right to look and revise 30% of the teaching materials (personal communication, March 5, 2018). This statement could not be verified as no such regulation was found in the new Law on Vocational Education and Training of 2013. This statement might be anchored in an unpublished sub-legal act. Apart from this regulation, the situation in Kosovo is similar to the Albanian case in the sense that mainly VET projects provide assistance in improving the outdated infrastructure of VET schools. The VET projects are also considering providing equipment to the post-secondary VET centres that are run by companies.

Overall, the cooperation with companies in this area is limited to their expression of interest to provide equipment to schools (for example by a Kosovan-Dutch factory that produces plastic bags) or developing teaching materials. In summary, the collaborations between the private and public sector is weak in this area.

5.1.5 Cooperation in governance – Ambassadors of VET

One of the basic characteristics of dual VET systems is the joint responsibility and effort between the state and the private sector to design and implement VET (Jäger, 2016, p. 9). Thus, the private sector should take ownership of the VET programmes. This is crucial in order to align the VET system better to the needs of the private sector, but also to increase the relevance and reputation of VET in society (Euler, 2017, p. 24). The private sector can participate in different forms: for instance, by participating in the law-making process, through the membership in VET relevant umbrella organisations, agencies, and bodies, or through the engagement in awareness-raising and advocacy activities as public VET ambassadors.

At the regional level, the increased call for greater cooperation between public and private actors is institutionalised via the Western Balkan Alliance for Work Based Learning and the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA). They are forms of ambassadors of VET. The joint statement of the Western Balkan Alliance for WBL in 2016 was adopted by public and private sector entities from Albania, Kosovo and other Balkan countries, representatives from Germany, Austria, Italia, and other European countries as well as multilateral institutes (WBC-RTI, 2016, para. “Excerpt from the Joint Statement”). The alliance has the objective of developing a better understanding on how every actor can contribute to a practice-oriented high-quality VET in the Balkan region. It aims at implementing initiatives that enable, among others, the sharing of lessons
learned, the creation of a greater awareness of the benefits of innovative partnerships between public and private actors in VET, the development of tools, the facilitation of stronger regional partnerships mechanisms, and the exploration of innovative financing solutions (p. 1-2). The EAfA, on the other hand, is a platform that brings together governments with stakeholders like businesses, chambers, VET providers and think tanks with the goal of improving the quality, supply and image of apprenticeships in Europe (European Commission, n.d.-b). In the framework of this alliance, Albania as an EU candidate country presented its VET reform measures that aim at “including work-based learning mechanisms, as per the dual approach in education and training” (MoSWY, 2015, p. 1).

Cooperation in governance in Albania – Ambassadors of VET

The governance of the Albanian VET system is somewhat opaque. After the new government took power in 2013, the ministry portfolios were re-arranged five times. Until recently, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MoSWY) was the main institution responsible for regulating and supervising the Albanian VET system in a dominantly top-down fashion (ETF, 2016, p. 2). However, since October 2017, the new Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Finance and Economy is responsible for the employment and VET portfolio (Government of Albania, 2018). The strategic and legislative documents by the Albanian state stress the importance of incorporating the private sector in VET agencies and bodies in order to change the VET system towards a multi-stakeholder governance model (MoSWY, 2014, p. 57; ETF, 2017c, p. 2).

The National Agency of Vocational Education Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ) is a subordinate institution and works with “interested employers in the development of occupational standards, qualification descriptions, and framework curricula” (ETF, 2017b, p. 11). This agency is the only relevant agency that seeks to establish a joint cooperation in governance.

All three VET projects attempted to collaborate with the NAVETQ: The textile company that collaborated with ADA revised the textile curricula and submitted it to the NAVETQ. The NAVETQ forwarded it to the MoSWY without comments, who then approved it. However, according to the textile company, it is until now not clear if the revised curricula is actually implemented (personal communication, March 26, 2018). In the framework of a VET project financed by BMZ, two curricula were revised. The VET staff member reported that the agency invited companies to consult their needs and proposals (personal communication, March 2, 2018). The exact procedure how curricula are in the end made is however non-transparent for outsiders. Again, it is difficult to assess the degree of enforcement of the new curricula. The VET project financed by SDC also attempted to collaborate with NAVETQ, but then stopped the collaboration. They reported that the collaboration was very difficult: “It is very hard to speak the same language. It’s very hard to push them in embracing our spirit. A challenge of all of these actors is to go with the same speed. It’s not happening. If we move very fast, the government is not moving so fast. Not just the speed, but also the mentality, the expectation” (business representative, personal communication, March 2, 2018, see Appendix C, p. 40).
The agency seems to be gridlocked and to have transparency problems. However, according to one donor representative, this agency is likely to dissolve under the National Employment Service (personal communication, February 27, 2018). To date, this couldn’t be verified yet. Apart from the NAVETQ, no other VET agency or body was mentioned by the interviewees. Given the opaque and ever-changing governance framework, it is doubtful that there are any other bodies that play a meaningful role. The public administration appears to be mainly occupied with the drafting of by-laws.

In contrast to VET systems in German-speaking countries, Albanian umbrella organisations like chambers of commerce play a minor role in VET. The new Law on Crafts envisages the setting up of a Chamber of Crafts as well as a dual training system in the crafts sector (ETF, 2017b, p. 12). However, the legal qualification frameworks as well as implementing revisions are months in delay. They should regulate open questions such as which party needs to pay for social insurance or which criteria firms need to fulfil in order to become a training company. However, according to all interviewed VET project staff members, businesses generally do not acknowledge organisations like chambers of commerce as their representing body for human resources related matters and do not join the chambers based on a network ethos. Then the chambers of commerce do not take any strong intermediary, representative, independent, nor organisational role. They are rather perceived as organisations, in which individual members have good contacts to high level politicians that can be potentially beneficial for the individual member. However, to fully assess the relevance of Albanian chambers of commerce, interviews with them would be necessary. In addition to the Albanian chambers of commerce, foreign umbrella organisations are active in the Albanian economic system. They are well-organised organisations that manage to weigh the interests and feasibility of foreign companies to provide company-based VET phases and of collaborating in other areas. However, their legal role and impact on the governance system is weak.

Apart from VET agencies and umbrella organisations, the VET projects play an important role in the governance because they provide assistance and consultation to the ministry and commissions in charge of VET. This is particularly the case in projects that take a macro approach, which aim at assisting state structures. Given that the VET projects are in direct contact with companies, it can be said that there is an indirect cooperation between companies and the formal governance system via the VET projects as intermediaries. Aside from this indirect cooperation, the most common chosen form of private sector engagement in the governance of the Albanian VET system is through the establishment of business-to-business networks, in which companies act as public VET ambassadors. One business relationship specialist reported that the three first pioneers in providing company-based VET phases started serving as “ambassadors” among their local peers (personal communication, March 2, 2018). By word of mouth, these companies spread the positive experience they made with the apprenticeship schemes and recommended it to other companies. This chain reaction led to a large network of companies that now implement and advocate for apprenticeships. This network of 150 companies, mainly from the tourism and hospitality sector, are now collaborating directly with the career centres in schools, and with declining intervention from the VET project. In November 2017, the first five companies that introduced this apprenticeship scheme formalised this network and founded the Albanian Alliance for Apprenticeships. It is open to all companies that provide apprenticeships. The aim of this business-oriented alliance is to collaborate with VET providers, and to serve as a platform for “improving vocational skills provision, sharing experiences and learning from the best practices” (“Apprenticeship Week by Swiss-Funded Project Links Companies with Vocational Schools”, 2017, para. 3). Eventually, the hope is that this alliance becomes larger and that it can increase its leverage to influence the overall VET system through the promotion of policy-making initiatives. Euler captured the strength and logic of these ambassadors by stating that “these leaders can strengthen the VET representations power in politics and the public through their presence and partisanship” (2017, p. 24).

In addition to the Albanian Alliance for Apprenticeships, it is also intended that the ICT companies, who are well-connected and who are strongly collaborating to introduce remote apprenticeships, will launch their own
ICT alliance. Lastly, a form of business-to-business networking activity also took place in the textile sector because the German textile company collaborated with other local textile companies to organise placements for the VET students. However, as in this case the introduction of apprenticeships schemes was not successful, it cannot be estimated if these companies also would have launched an own alliance in the future.

Cooperation in governance in Kosovo – Ambassadors of VET

Currently, the cooperation in the Kosovan governance system is rather static than dynamic, and like in Albania, state-driven and somewhat opaque. This is mostly due to the fact that the VET system is still in the early transition towards a work-based VET system. The main institution involved in the governance of VET is the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST) (ETF, 2017e, p. 1). The vocational education division is responsible for all the administrative work, like the preparation of regulations that ensure the functionality of vocational schools, the collection of data, the investigation of the needs of the Kosovan labour economy, and the development of the education curricula (Government of Kosovo, 2018b). Further national actors involved in VET are the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) and the Ministry of Youth Culture and Sports (MYCS) (ETF, 2017e, p. 1). Three further relevant bodies involved in VET policy-making are the Council of VET and for Adult Education (CVETAE), the Agency for VET and for Adult Education (AVETAE) and the National Qualifications Authority (NQA). The CVETAE and the AVETAE should, among others, improve the links between education, training, and work, and promote the institutionalised participation of the private sector in VET by incorporating business representatives in their structure (MEST, 2016b, p. 81; Law on Vocational Education and Training of 2013, art. 20-21). One member of the CVETAE is the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce (art. 15).

It became clear from an interview with a representative of a VET that these agencies are de facto not functional or highly inefficient (personal communication, March 22, 2018). In CVETAE, the payment of the members was based on participation. After the members were not reimbursed, the operational activities of the council faded away. In the case of AVETAE, the agency is working, but very inefficiently, presumably due to appointing leaders out of political motivation instead of assessing their competencies.

The most noteworthy involvement of the private sector in the VET governance is via the National Qualifications Authority (NQA), which is functioning well and consults the private sector in its development of curricula, namely the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce. The NQA is involved in approving occupational standards and qualifications (Law on Vocational Education and Training of 2013, art. 12). As the development of occupational standards is strongly linked to curricula development, this topic will be further elaborated in the next chapter. It can however be noted that there is some involvement of the Kosovan chamber of commerce in the development of occupational standards. But according to the interviewed actors, it is far from a satisfactory level that would leverage the VET system to one with joint responsibility.

In summary, all interviewed actors (companies, umbrella organisations and VET project staff) agree that chambers of commerce and associations should take a stronger role in steering and facilitating the cooperation between schools and businesses, and within the overall governance of the VET system. They are all aware of the role that umbrella organisations play in the Austrian, German, and Swiss VET systems. Furthermore, companies that are members in sectorial associations are often leaders in their respective sectors, which makes them particularly attractive partners for VET collaborations.

Overall, the interviewees reported about direct collaboration approaches by individual companies and chambers of commerce, but it is difficult to assess their efficiency and accuracy. For example, a VET teacher reported about a memorandum of understanding that was signed between a company, a municipality, and the MEST to cooperate more closely. But in the end, the commitments made were not implemented. The role of chambers of commerce as representatives of the private sector is also weak. Although they chair different VET bodies, they are—according to VET project staff and the interviewed companies—not perceived as the
main representation body of individual companies. It is difficult to assess their efficiency and political importance, partly because their involvement does not take place in the framework of a VET project.

Given the limited cooperation of chambers and companies in the governance of the Kosovan VET system, it can be stated that, like in Albania, the cooperation of the private sector mainly takes place indirectly via the VET projects. The projects are in close contact with the MEST and its executive units to strengthen their regulatory and infrastructural capacities to transform VET towards a more labour market oriented system. The companies and associations are in turn collaborating with the VET projects in different areas. Consequently, it can be expected that the VET projects function as intermediaries between the public and private sector and that they introduce the interests of each party. A direct contact between the formal governance system and the companies engaged in VET projects is limited to events in which the companies and associations are also invited to, and in which each party can contribute and participate in conversations. For instance, one VET project launched an event where staff from the MEST and the MLSW as well companies and the chambers were invited to elaborate a plan about how the companies can be involved in the improvement of the Kosovan VET system by making it more practice-related. However, the input from companies remains consultative during these events, then the final decisions rest with the MEST.

The introduction of apprenticeships schemes is still in its early phase. Thus, there are no relevant business-oriented alliances put in place yet that can serve as VET ambassadors. Nevertheless, the leading companies who are piloting company-based VET phases or/and who are establishing their own training centres might change this in the future. In particular, they are fast-growing and successful companies, who, in comparison to the small and micro companies in Kosovo, have the financial and temporal capacity to engage in VET events. The two companies who are launching their own training centres have staff with strong knowledge of the German VET system, so they are highly aware of the strengths of the dual VET system and of the need to collaborate. In addition, given the difficult business environment in Kosovo, there is a strong culture of copying successful competitors. Consequently, it cannot be ruled out that in the near future these pioneering companies will become public VET ambassadors.

5.1.6 Cooperation in curriculum development

The development of curricula is a core element to increase the relevance of VET (Euler, 2017, p. 25). In this elaboration process, the learning objectives, the contents, and the structure of VET programmes are designed. The goal is to standardise programmes to ensure a minimum of transparency and quality for stakeholders. Given that the private sector is the main recipient of VET graduates, their contribution in this process is fundamental. This can also take place via organisations like chambers of commerce, who should represent the interests of businesses of any size in a given sector.

Figure 13: Deduction of possible degrees of cooperation in curriculum development (own representation)

Cooperation in curriculum development in Albania

There is no systematic, but only occasional cooperation in curriculum development. One reason for this is the lack of chamber structures. Another reason is that the curricula are already defined. There is only room
to review and adapt the curricula during the implementation phase by introducing their own learning modules and to upgrade them to the demands of the individual companies. This is, for example, the case for the ICT companies, who adapted the curricula to project-based learning or added other companies who add competencies that are not previewed in the company. As previously indicated, one of the occasional cooperation attempts in this area was initiated by the textile company, which together with a German consultancy revised the curriculum of the textile direction. The head of this consultancy firm was a school director of a German VET school focused on the textile industry. According to the interviewed textile company, the revision of the textile curriculum was highly necessary because it was outdated and included production processes and technologies that were long obsolete. The revised curriculum was approved by the MoSWY. The revised curriculum was then submitted to the school in charge of the textile direction. But to date, it is unclear if the new curriculum is being implemented. Because of these weak results, the VET project that facilitated this process is not supporting the cooperation in curriculum development within the new partnerships.

There was also a consultative procedure in the revision of the IT and nursing curricula. On behalf of the VET project, the NAVETQ invited around seven companies to contribute their input in the revision of the IT and nursing curricula. These companies had the possibility to communicate their wants and needs. According to the feedback of the companies, the majority of presented points where then incorporated in the new curricula. One of the most pressing demands by the private sector was to triple the numbers of practical learning. Again, the degree of implementation cannot be assessed. And, as previously mentioned, this agency is likely to dissolve under the National Employment Service and, therefore, becomes irrelevant. The hope of the interviewed actors is that the curricula development process will become more transparent, efficient, lead to the opening of more labour-market relevant profiles, and will be driven by the private sector.

Cooperation in curriculum development in Kosovo

According to one VET project staff, although Kosovo has over 70 VET schools, most of them operate programmes that have no occupational standards. It is crucial to develop these as a preliminary step prior to the development of curricula. The idea is that the private sector states the competences that are needed for a certain profile and that then the curricula are developed based on this information. There are some approaches to involve the private sector in this process.

As mentioned in the previous sections, the National Qualification Authority (NQA) is in charge of verifying occupational standards with the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce, VET providers like schools, and donors. According to the representative of the Kosovan umbrella organisation, more than 30 occupation standards were developed in cooperation with the Kosovan Chamber of Commerce (personal communication, March 5, 2018). Then the Kosovan Chamber of Commerce is mandated to involve the respective sectoral chambers or associations in the development of the standards prior to the submission of their proposal to the NQA. However, for outsiders, it is difficult to assess the efficiency of this collaboration and the degree of involvement of the concerned companies as it is not transparent how these processes took place. It cannot be assessed to what degree the inputs from the private sector are then de facto incorporated into the curricula. Apart from the mandate of the Kosovan Chamber of Commerce, the VET projects also take initiative in involving sector-specific associations. In the framework of the VET project that is piloting company-based VET phases, companies and the association from the wood-processing sector were invited to attend expert groups in which they stated their skill needs and identified skill gaps. According to the representative of the retail company, they themselves also got the opportunity to validate the occupational standards of the retail salesman and to adapt it to their needs (personal communication, March 7, 2018). However, the overall process of developing occupational standards was carried out by the VET project staff. Overall, the main challenge of the NQA is still to develop more occupational standards and qualifications that are labour market relevant and to increase the number of hours of practical training per week.
5.1.7 Participation in financing

A joint responsibility between the private and public sector in VET is strongly associated with financial aspects, given that many areas of engagement are linked to costs – on the macro as well as also on the micro-economic level. Höckel (2008, pp. 3-4) shortly summarised the general costs and short- and long-term benefits to consider.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School-based VET system</th>
<th>Learning-on the-job system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual</strong></td>
<td>Accept lower wages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student fees</td>
<td>Opportunity costs (forgone earnings as unskilled worker)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charges for material/equipment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employer</strong></td>
<td>Pay wages (and labour costs) higher than productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid time off for staff/trainees</td>
<td>Mistakes by inexperienced trainees, wasted resources and time of experienced workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support for staff/trainees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State</strong></td>
<td>In-house training courses (material, special clothing, teacher salary, administration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding of education institutions</td>
<td>Scholarship, vouchers, grants and loans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Various direct and indirect costs that different stakeholders have to take into account in different VET systems (Source: Höckel, 2008, p. 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short-term benefits</td>
<td>Higher productivity from well-trained workforce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment chances</td>
<td>Save costs from recruiting external skilled workers (incl. time for integration and risk of hiring a person not known to the company)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earning levels</td>
<td>Saved expenses for social benefits (unemployment as consequence of failed transition from education to work)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term benefits</td>
<td>Supply benefits (e.g. image improvement)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility and mobility</td>
<td>Less turnover (no need for re-training of new workers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong learning (more likely to receive training and upgrade skills later in life)</td>
<td>Externalities from productivity gain due to better education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Various short- and long-term benefits of VET for different stakeholders (Source: Höckel, 2008, p. 4)

In the case of Switzerland, for instance, the cost for companies of having apprentices amounted to CHF 5.3 billion in 2009, whereas their productive performance accounts for CHF 5.8 billion benefits (SBFI, 2017, p. 24). This results in an overall CHF 0.5 billion net benefit for the Swiss private sector for having an apprenticeship system. On the micro-level, VET poses two main questions for companies (Euler, 2017, p. 26): What benefits are there in relation to the costs? And how can it be prevented that those, who do not invest in VET, do not profit from those who did invest in the VET (poaching problem)? These cost-benefit questions are strongly linked to the question why the private sector participates in VET and are thus evaluated in a more detailed manner in the next chapter. The aim of the next paragraphs is to illustrate the direct costs of VET for companies, and not those that are linked to the general costs for engaging in VET – the opportunity costs. Then apart from monetary contributions, the time of the owners and employers for providing training and for engaging in other areas of VET or forgone earnings as unskilled workers need to be incorporated in the calculation of the overall investment costs of VET (Höckel, 2008, p. 3).

Figure 14: Deduction of possible degrees of participation in financing (own representation)
Participation in financing in Albania

In Albania, the direct costs for companies participating in VET is mostly limited to the payment of the social insurance for each VET student (ALL 66 per student per year; ETF, 2017b, p. 13). Companies cannot be forced to pay it, but according to VET project staff this is the minimum cost factor that companies do cover. It is a small sum that can easily be paid by the companies. According to business relationship specialists, the advantage of this is that students get registered as apprentices in the tax office. Thus, their practical training converts to an officially recognised working experience. Apart from this financial cost, the further financial assistance by companies varies strongly and is dependent on voluntary contributions because legal regulations are still lacking. According to the Labour Code, VET students are allowed to receive a remuneration that is lower than the minimum salary (around ALL 24’000 = EUR 190; ETF, 2017b, p. 13). In some cases, the firms pay a small pocket money to the students. The business relationship specialist estimates that from the 150 companies that provide company-based VET phases in the framework of their VET project, 80% cover the transportation expenses and 50% pay some pocket money (personal communication, March 2, 2018). Hotels and restaurants are willing to pay student year-around based on the assumption that the apprentice will work during the highly intensive summer months. Some companies also bear the food costs.

Participation in financing in Kosovo

There are weak provisions that regulate the financial aspects of VET. According to the new law on VET, enterprises should be stimulated to host VET students by lowering their taxes (Law on Vocational Education and Training of 2013, art. 33). However, according to the interviewed actors, no such incentives are put in place yet. The Labour Law of 2010 states that employers can engage interns without paying a salary (art. 16). Moreover, there is no regulation that obliges the companies to pay social insurance either. Consequently, there is a great variation in the financial compensation provided by companies. The contribution strongly depends on the willingness of the individual company. The most important aspect for VET projects financed by ADA, BMZ, and SDC is that they do not provide any direct financial incentive to companies as this would undermine the sustainability of the private-public cooperation. All interviewees from the VET projects are still in the process of negotiating the financial aspects of company-based VET phases. The highest priority for them is that the costs are clearly shared between the schools, companies, students, and parents, and that the costs for social security are covered. In the framework of the VET project that is in the process of piloting company-based VET phases, it was negotiated and accepted that companies will pay EUR 50 per month to the apprentices for two days of practical learning per week. There are different modalities regarding the additional costs. Only one company pays the social insurance. In the other cases, the parents or the students assume this cost. This is an essential point for discussion as many companies are reluctant to accept students if they are not insured. Like in Albania, some companies already have their own busses that collect the employees and are used to pick up the apprentices. In other cases, the companies take over the food costs, for example, via the company’s canteen.

For the companies who are in the process of opening their own training centres, it is clear that they will provide training allowance, transport, and “whatever is necessary – in view of a longer engagement” (translated quotation from a representative of a company from the retail sector, personal communication, March 7, 2018). The company from the mechatronic sector sees the financial compensation as a key element to increase the attractiveness and satisfaction of their programmes. As already mentioned, their idea is that the accepted candidates will have two contracts. One contract will regulate the training in the learning centre and one sets the working conditions. Based on the first contract, the students will have to hypothetically pay a fee of EUR 800 for a six-months training. However, according to the second contract, the trainee will receive a minimum salary, for example, of EUR 2,000 – 2,500. Consequently, the trainee should end up with a financial surplus.
## 5.1.8 Summary of results I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Engagement</th>
<th>Albania</th>
<th>Kosovo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of company-based VET phases</td>
<td>Potential sectors: automotive, construction, hotel, restaurant, tourism, ICT, textile, welding and nursing care industry</td>
<td>Potential sectors: automotive, mechatronics, metal, construction, electronics, wood-processing, furniture, ICT, textile and retail industry, eventually also the tourism, agriculture and food-processing sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initially failed, now new attempt of apprenticeships in the textile sector</td>
<td>Occasionally company visits where students are observers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Functioning short-term internships in the automobile, tourism, IT and nursing sector</td>
<td>Planning of company-based VET phases (mainly internships)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Functioning long-term apprenticeship schemes in the tourism (hotel and restaurant) sector</td>
<td>Piloting of long-term apprenticeship schemes in wood-processing, mechatronic, textile and electronic retail sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Launch of long-term, remote apprenticeships in the IT sector</td>
<td>Traineeships in in-company training centres (retail and mechatronic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation in examinations and certification</td>
<td>Non-binding student evaluation by company mentors</td>
<td>Examination commissions (public-private) in charge of final examination foreseen, but not implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alternative forms: contests, recommendation letters, examination and acquisition of certifications from private training providers</td>
<td>Planning of involving companies in the student assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Companies consulted or inform national VET agency (curriculum development)</td>
<td>Companies take overall responsibility for the examination at the end of traineeships (theoretical and practical examination parts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification of teaching and training staff</td>
<td>Short-term training of teachers by companies (textile and hotel company)</td>
<td>Implementation, but mostly, planning of competence-building workshops for in-company instructors (in collaboration with SFIVET, other companies, senior programs, and other Swiss or German institutions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Long-term training of VET teachers by private sector consultants</td>
<td>Umbrella organisation developing “training of trainers” certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning of training phases for mentors in didactical matters</td>
<td>No provision of equipment and teaching materials by companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Umbrella organisation developing “training of trainers” certificate</td>
<td>VET projects are the main actors improving the school infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of equipment and teaching materials</td>
<td>Individual companies (IT, textile, electronic and construction) sponsor equipment</td>
<td>Chambers of commerce consults and is member in national VET agency (mainly in curriculum development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development of teaching materials by IT company</td>
<td>Direct collaboration approaches (MoUs, inclusion of private sector in VET agencies) existent, but either non-functional or weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VET projects are the main actors improving the school infrastructure</td>
<td>Indirect cooperation between companies and the formal governance system via VET projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation in Governance</td>
<td>Companies consulted or inform national VET agency (curriculum development)</td>
<td>Chambers of commerce and associations are mandated with the elaboration of occupational standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishment of Albanian Alliance for Apprenticeships (and eventually IT alliance) that functions as a VET ambassador</td>
<td>Individual cases where companies were consulted in the development of occupational standards (wood-processing and retail sector)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indirect cooperation between companies and the formal governance system via VET projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation in curriculum development</td>
<td>Individual cases where the private sector contributed to the development of curricula (textile profile, IT and nursing profile)</td>
<td>Chambers of commerce and associations are mandated with the elaboration of occupational standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Companies adapt curricula and design additional learning modules</td>
<td>Individual cases where companies were consulted in the development of occupational standards (wood-processing and retail sector)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in financing</td>
<td>Companies cover the social insurance costs</td>
<td>Individual companies in pilot project and with own training centre pay training allowance, social insurance, transport and/or food costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occasional further payments in the form of training allowance, transport and/or food costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Tabular listing of activities undertaken by the private sector directed towards increased engagement in VET (Source: personal communication with donors, project staff private sector actors, and other experts, See Appendix B & C)
The previous table presents the first interim results by summarising the findings of how the private sector engages in VET projects. To sum up, it can be stated that the private sector is neither in the Albanian nor in the Kosovan VET system involved in VET in a systematic manner (yet). The approaches to engage the business sector is limited to certain areas of engagement that are backed by VET projects.

By taking the average degrees of engagement in the respective areas of engagement elaborated by Euler, it can be concluded that according to the classification of the DCED, the Albanian private sector on average coordinates its activities within the framework of VET projects (value of 4.6) (2017b, 7). The Kosovan private sector, on the other hand, is with an average value of 2.6 consulted by and to a certain degree involved in VET. They are on average across all VET projects not yet consolidated, integrated, or even empowered to engage in VET.

Based on the findings, the engagement of the private sector is a bit more advanced in Albania. This is mainly the result from one VET project that is intensively collaborating with over 150 companies, who successfully introduced apprenticeships schemes in quite a short period. In Kosovo, the introduction of company-based VET phases is in the piloting and planning phase.

Apart from apprenticeships schemes, other forms of company-based VET phases are being implemented. These are mainly short-term internships, company visits, and traineeships (pure private sector initiatives). In both countries, the collaboration in the qualification of teaching and training staff has been identified as a key area of engagement, in which VET projects in cooperation with companies can take a key role in developing the capacities and competences of the VET teachers and trainers. The Albanian and Kosovan private
sectors are involved in the development of curricula and occupational standards. However, the degree and efficiency of this process varies strongly. The same conclusion holds true for the cooperation of the private sector in VET governance. Both VET systems remain strongly state-driven and static, and for outsiders somewhat opaque. Nevertheless, they are some initiatives to include the private sector, for example, via public VET ambassadors (Albania) or by including umbrella organisations in VET bodies (Kosovo). In Albania, the private sector is stronger involved in the provision of equipment of teaching materials, either through sponsorships or the occasional provision of equipment. Nevertheless, the VET projects are in both countries the main actors improving the school infrastructures. In Kosovo and Albania, the engagement of the private sector in examinations and certifications, as well as in financing is relatively weak. There are weak legal regulations in these VET domains. The financial support is largely based on voluntary contributions and dependent on the individual company.
5.2 Why the Albanian and Kosovan private sector participate in VET

The aim of this chapter is to elaborate why the private sector does (or does not) participate in VET in the forms outlined in the previous chapter. The private sector can never be viewed in isolation, but needs to be understood in its entire context. The St. Gallen Management Model provides a comprehensive overview over the different environments, stakeholders as well as normative, strategic, and operational perspectives that shape and influence companies (Rüegg-Stürm & Grand, 2015, p. 42). Although this thesis is not a business administration study, the model helps to structure the discussion and the different dimensions in terms of the motivation of the private sector to engage in VET. According to the findings from the interviews, the most relevant external factors influencing VET decisions are the technological and social spheres. Moreover, the employees and various institutions like VET schools, VET project staff, donors, and public administrations, who either partner with companies or act as stakeholders that shape the VET governance, are influential. Within the enterprise, VET particularly impacts the design dimensions of a business. These are economic, technological, and social considerations that determine the strategy and operational activities of the company.

As indicated in the preceding chapter, there are numerous cases in which the private sector does not (yet) participate in VET or where participation could be improved. The reasons for non-cooperation are equally important as this generates information on who and what needs have to be targeted in order to leverage the cooperation in this field. Consequently, the possible reasons for non-engagement will also be elaborated. The following chapter will in a first step present the strategic design dimensions and then the role of VET projects, as they are in most cases the closest partners of companies the field of VET. In a second step, the role of how the schools, the students and parents, as well as the governance system contribute or hamper the engagement of the private sector in VET will later be elaborated because their perspective was not particularly targeted and interviewed. During the study trip to Albania, a VET school was visited and staff from schools provided insight into their daily life. However, their role was not systematically investigated during the data collection phase as the main contact persons to answer the research question where companies and VET project staff. Lastly, it should be noted that the findings from Albania and Kosovo will only be systematically separated from each other if necessary. Then the goal of this chapter is to make possibilistic generalisations about the motivations of companies to engage in VET.
5 Empirical Findings

5.2.1 Economic, technological, and social design dimensions
According to Euler (2017, p. 11), the willingness of companies to engage in VET is first and foremost influenced by their evaluation of existing recruitment alternatives. Companies assess the benefits of dual VET over staff recruitment and weigh the opportunity costs of having a dual VET pathway (for example, high staff turnover, low work morale, lower productivity). Companies can also follow revenue- or investment related motives in their human resources strategy.

Lack of qualified staff and high staff turnover
Since the fall of the communist regime in the early 1990s in Albania, and since the end of the Kosovan war, both economies have started to recover and the private sectors developed themselves. The societies’ hope was that the private sector would out the existing challenges. Numerous new companies were founded, with an abundance of cheap and low-skilled employees. In many sectors, this is still the case and the pressure to change the recruiting practices is low. However, in recent times, companies in growing sectors are realising that the quality of the products and services, and associated with that, the quality of the employees and their skills are key to differentiate themselves from their competitors. All interviewed actors in Albania and Kosovo agreed that the most pressing and internal forces to engage in VET are the lack of qualified staff, and connected to that, the high staff turnover.

Based on the feedback from companies, both issues pose challenges to any mid- to long-term human resources strategy. The underlying problems are that due to the low quality of the educational system in Albania and Kosovo, the most competitive and growing companies compete for the limited qualified staff. At the same time, the companies are under pressure to fill vacancies, so they also hire candidates that do not meet their qualification requirements, in particular candidates with lack of the required professional experience. On the one hand, this leads to a situation where the salaries of qualified staff increase due to constant enticement. On the other hand, the less qualified staff do not meet the objectives and are low performers, which impacts their motivation but also the overall productivity of the company. In both cases, the result is a high staff turnover, either because the employees cannot be retained or because they are being fired for low performance. This goes hand in hand with a loss of knowledge, increased recruitment costs, and lowered productivity.

Positively formulated, these reasons to engage in VET can be summarised as the productivity, employee retention, and screening arguments (Euler, 2017, p. 33). According to Euler, the productivity argument states that: “Qualified skilled workers contribute to increased productivity, quality, and growth. This argument is at the core in sectors with a strong or increasing orientation towards a quality competition” (p. 33). This productivity argument is particularly true for the ICT, wood-processing, tourism, hospitality, and mechatronic industries. This argument is also strongly linked to technological considerations. The employee retention argument, on the other hand, suggests that the increased training can contribute, with respect to the human resources, to stability in the company. This was particularly emphasised by representatives of the ICT, retail, and textile companies. Lastly, according to the screening argument, training VET students enables companies to monitor and assess the performance and motivation of potential future employees during their training period. This is true for all interviewed sector representatives.

As this finding is the most crucial point to answer the research question, the statements concerning the question why companies provide company-based VET phases are presented below.
“There is no direct benefit at the moment. Before it was that the apprentice would come for only three weeks but then I never saw them again. But where is the mutual interest here? […] Today I need 90 employees. I don’t have them. I hope with this way I will have qualified staff and professionals within three years. […] I will also keep doing this after I have enough employees, because I am already thinking of the future and of what I need in four years”
Representative of a hotel in Albania, personal communication, February 28, See Appendix C, p. 14

“We had some problems with employees who did not have tourism and hospitality education, the quality was not good. These [VET] students are more qualified. They are motivated, they really want it.”
Representative of a restaurant in Albania, personal communication, February 28, 2018, See Appendix C, p. 13

“For us, the idea was to train middle management. Because finding simple seamstresses is no problem. But I would have liked the support of a school and that would have been a good system. […] You don’t have such problems with senior management. When the senior manager is there, he is there. He’s not leaving for the next ten years. There are more changes in the middle positions. […] I had interns before and if they are good, I can bring them into the company. Then they get to know the company, that’s not so bad. They tell me if they can imagine it and I get to know the students. That is interesting for both sides.”
Translated quotation from a representative of a textile company in Albania, personal communication, March 26, 2018

“We are in front of upcoming prestigious projects in Kosovo and Albania, and we cannot try to get these projects without qualified company. […] We have a lot of issues how to train these people, because we do not have one institution in Kosovo and Albania where we can ask for these qualified personnel. This project came to us as a necessity to develop the company, […] What I am trying to promote through this TCM [Training Centre Meister]: It is a project that has to do with employability. It is as simple as that.”
Representative from mechatronic company in Kosovo, personal communication, March 6, 2018, See Appendix C, p. 56

“The interest is that you might hire employees you already know later on, so you can rely on that. This is one of the most important points for the recruitment in companies. You will often hear from companies in Albania: ‘He promised me so much, but unfortunately, he can’t do anything.’ Then these internship phases come in, and you have the interns in the company for four weeks. Then you can see if he can do something. You can supervise him, and the student also shows his true self-motivation and initiative. This is a real win-win situation between the good trainees and companies.
Translated quotation from a representative of a foreign umbrella organisation in Albania, personal communication, March 2, 2018

“Nobody is interested in the workers because they are very cheap here. However, afterwards, you see this in their low productivity. I immediately saw that it is due to the low level of education. […] We just can’t get the people we need. All we get are untrained people. […] Companies tell each other: ‘What if I train someone, and then he leaves?’ What I then always say is: ‘Imagine you don’t train and he stays? There you have the problem until the end of your days and can’t get any further.’ […] We also have the problem that we have a very high fluctuation of 100%, which means that we exchange almost 2’500 people per year at the store level. This is associated with enormous costs. This is only due to the fact that there is no good education. Then the employees are dismissed again or leave by themselves because they earn a little more somewhere in the market. They say to themselves: ‘I haven’t learned anything. I can’t do anything. Then I’d rather go somewhere where I get an extra Euro.’ […] In the end, our motivation is always profit: Better training leads to more productivity and more profit.”
Translated quotation from a representative from a retail company in Kosovo, personal communication, March 7, 2018

“There is no match between supply and demand. Companies are looking for something else and the employees they find do not fit. Everybody is suffering. Companies are suffering for not being able to find people that fit their needs and young people for not being able to find a job, because they are prepared for something else. They need to be retrained”
Representative of a Kosovan umbrella organisation, personal communication, See Appendix C, p. 45
Cost-benefit considerations

“Companies ask two things: ‘What do you offer?’ and ‘Is my investment going to be efficient or not?’” This statement from a business relationship specialist (personal communication, March 2, 2018, See Appendix C, p. 36) summarises the second crucial point why companies engage in VET: Companies only employ VET students if they see an economic benefit for themselves. Based on the interviews, on the one hand, the most relevant costs from a company’s perspective are the personnel costs which incur for them for employing VET students, including training allowance, health insurance, transport, and food costs. On the other hand, the costs for in-company trainers are relevant, which are mostly in the form of additional salary or opportunity costs as the trainer cannot be productive as a normal employee or as the manager of the company. According to one company in Albania and one VET project staff in Albania, these costs become higher the longer the training phase (personal communication, February 28, 2018). However, the shorter the company-based VET phases are, the higher is the cost of having a VET student because he/she is not as productive at the beginning, and could potentially even disturb production processes. Further costs can be the provision of equipment and materials. The benefits for the company are, linked to the previous point, the takeover of apprentices, interns and trainees upon the completion of their training, which in turn reduces the risk of misplacement and saves recruitment costs, as well as the profits from productive performances of the VET students, and later on as a professional. This is in line with the cost-benefit evaluation by Höckel (2008, pp. 3-4). For a company, there needs to be a break-even and a positive return on investment. This point is the most relevant that makes or breaks a cooperation in VET.

There are some further points to consider regarding this economic point:
Firstly, no company has conducted yet, for example, a full (e.g. three-year) apprenticeship with a VET student and employed him/her afterwards over as a regular employee. Consequently, there is no example that would illustrate the exact costs and benefits from a company’s perspective.
Secondly, the payment of apprenticeship allowance and health insurance are some of the biggest discussion points during the negotiation phase. Both in Kosovo and Albania, companies currently regard their investment in the form of time as critical. This is a major reason why many companies are reluctant to pay an apprenticeship allowance, as it would constitute an additional cost. An interesting observation was made from one VET project staff in Kosovo: “[…] if you ask the companies to compensate, you only get the companies who are really interested to get the students. In this way, we are actually convinced [the company] will engage the students in the real work and will not just have the students sitting there and not doing anything. […] In the other projects, we did not ask the companies to compensate since we were afraid that the companies will not show interest and they will leave” (personal communication, April 4, 2018, See Appendix C, p. 93).
The payment of the social insurance seems to be a much bigger issue in Kosovo than in Albania, where some VET projects managed to make this payment obligatory. Although this is a small cost, it is crucial because companies are reluctant to accept students if they are not insured because of health and accident risks.
There are three reasons, which were identified that explain the lacking willingness of companies to have a (greater) financial share in VET:

- Companies do not want to invest financial and human resources in cooperating in the development of curricula, examinations, certifications, or in providing equipment and financial compensation to the VET students because these activities are perceived to be a state responsibility. As one representative from an ICT company stressed: “At the moment, we provide no financial help and it is for now not in the plan. It’s a cost for me. I give my work, time and everything. There is a problem with the system. It is on the part of the government to do their job, but they are doing nothing. In negotiations and cooperation, you need a win-win. In the end of the day, I am a business. The government takes my taxes, which is a lot,
and I know that this money does not go to the places it should go. I don’t think I should then pay more, I already paid my does” (personal communication, February 28, 2018, See Appendix C, p. 17). The representative of a foreign umbrella organisation in Albania put it this way: „The private sector learned in the last 20 years: „The state is responsible, the state provides education, and we take the people so that there are no unemployed [people]“ (translated quotation, personal communication, March 2, 2018).

- Companies can be reluctant to invest in VET because they fear that the students will emigrate soon after they finished their training. This is a comprehensible fear given the high willingness of Albanian and Kosovan youth to go abroad.

- Closely related to the above point is the fear of poaching, meaning that the firms might lose their employees after they finished the training to a competitor (Mohrenweiset et al., 2010, p. 2). This was particularly observed in the case for very intellectually demanding and knowledge-intensive apprenticeships in Kosovan ICT companies, who pushed for binding contracts that would oblige the VET students to remain in the company after the completion of their education. The VET project staff explained: “[The ICT companies] considered it a huge investment for them if they constantly contribute in building the capacities of the students and then the students leave and they are left without employees, again” (personal communication, April 4, 2018, p. 91). Because of this fear, this particular cooperation was in the end not successful. The Kosovan retail company is also aware of this problem that smaller retail companies are more likely to poach from their employees because small companies to not have the financial means and structures to support company-based VET phases. The poaching problem is also observed by the representative of the foreign umbrella organisation based in Albania. He sees the main reason for the poaching problem in the loose structure of VET. Because in countries like Germany and Switzerland, the organisations in charge of VET and the fine-tuning of trade and craft professions have century old histories (Gonon & Maurer, 2012, pp. 133-143). This gave the responsible professional organisations time to implement counter-measures to this problem (for example financing funds; Euler, 2017, p. 26). In Albania and Kosovo, the situation is entirely different, so that some companies have to take the initiative and make advance investments, even though they do not know if the training costs will pay out and how this domain will be regulated in the future.

To conclude, it should be noted that the VET projects financed by ADA, BMZ, and SDC do not provide any financial incentives to companies to accept VET students. From past experiences in other countries and other VET projects financed by other donors, there is evidence that if donors finance the private sector (for example, in the form of subsidies), the projects only last as long as the financial assistance is carried out. The Kosovan umbrella organisation observed that the lacking regulations and unclear practice regarding financial assistance to companies among different donors has led to “confusion and rumours” across companies, which complicate cooperation efforts (personal communication, March 5, 2018, See appendix C, p. 47). Companies do not know if they get paid by donors for accepting students or if they are the ones who have to pay the costs. This results in a distortion of the overall concept of joint responsibility between the public and private sector.

**Social corporate responsibility**

Some companies, mostly local) engage in VET due to social responsibility reasons. The companies are aware of the high youth unemployment rates in Albania and Kosovo and the struggles connected with it. This sense for social responsibility seems to be genuine and, at the moment, less connected to any branding or reputational considerations. However, in the long term, branding considerations might create an additional incentive.
Familiarity with the dual VET system
A familiarity with the properties and advantages of dual VET systems facilitates the willingness of companies to engage in VET. This point is particularly pronounced if the familiarity is based on “hands-on” experience, which increases the companies’ belief in the VET system. There are different possible ways on how this familiarity can be formed:

- The owner or a high-level manager within a business was once himself an apprentice in a country with a dual system. This is the case in two Albanian companies and one Kosovan company.
- Companies employ foreign staff, for example, from Germany, or someone with a solid knowledge of the dual VET system implements in-house training centres (this is the case in Kosovo).
- Nearly all VET projects organise study trips to German-speaking countries to showcase the Austrian, German, or Swiss VET system – as best practices. Mostly, this is done for state institutions like school directors or Ministry staff. But in some cases, also companies were invited to join this trip, which enables the business representatives to get inspiration and a deeper understanding of the dual VET system.

However, familiarity with the dual VET system is not a necessary pre-condition for a successful collaboration. The majority of the 150 companies that are implementing apprenticeships schemes in Albania are local, have local staff, and were not able to attend study trips. Some VET projects take the approach of collaborating with international companies (mainly from Germany and Austria) because they are perceived as reliable partners who have a background from countries with dual VET systems, and who have a certain size and enough capacities to supervise VET students. Nevertheless, up to date, these collaborations have not been more successful or sustainable in comparison to collaborations that targeted local companies.

The general economic situation and structural conditions
General macroeconomic and structural conditions also influence the degree of engagement of businesses in VET. Firstly, a general positive economic development that contributes to a growth in employment and an increase in complex and demanding jobs are key to increase the demand for better skilled employers. As soon as the economic performance in growing sectors decreases, the willingness to invest in VET will also decrease. Four interviewees stressed this point: two VET project members in Albania and Kosovo and by both umbrella organisations. Secondly, one important structural condition reported in Kosovo is that the potential for company-based VET phases is mainly seen in middle- to large-sized companies because small companies do not have the experience, capacity and structure to offer any training. Given the difficult economic situation in some sectors, companies in those sectors are not able to take any middle or long-term perspective. In addition, informality among small-sized enterprises is particularly high, which impedes any form of enforcement or agreement. However, getting small companies on board in providing company-based VET phases is in the long-term key because they are the principle providers of employment. Thirdly, in Albania as well as in Kosovo, two members of staff from two VET projects reported that they received feedback by numerous companies that they prefer providing short-term internships than long-term apprenticeships.
schemes. The companies do not support the idea that VET students see many different working processes, as this provides more effort on their side. They have problems having students regularly entering and taken out in the middle of production processes. They prefer having a student that is involved in the production process and gets familiar with the involved technologies on a daily basis over a limited period of time. This wish from companies has also been reported back to the foreign and Kosovan umbrella organisation. According to their view, companies in the metal and automotive sector as well as small companies prefer internships between one to three months to avoid any duplication of training sessions and interruptions of working procedures. However, the big disadvantage of this training is that the student does not get any insight into the adjacent production processes (for example seasonal working steps) in order to understand the bigger picture.

**Further individual reasons for cooperation**

There are some individual reasons raised by companies and other interviewees regarding the question why the private sector collaborates in VET that should be considered. These reasons cannot be generalised yet. But they provide entry points for further research:

- Industry leaders and alliances of VET ambassadors are key to creating momentum and unleash copying effects because they lead by example, have a high credibility, and spread the benefits of dual elements by word-of-mouth.
- For ICT companies, remote apprenticeships are an ideal solution because the rental costs of additional space in Tirana is high. For example, taking up 10 apprentices in a company with 60 employees would entail major additional costs for the ICT companies.
- According to a business relationship specialist of a VET project, sponsorships “have proven to be a great marketing tool for attracting companies to the schools” (personal communication, March 2, 2018, See Appendix C, p. 38). The companies use this marketing opportunity to target young people, the future consumers, and to make them get familiar with the companies' products at an early age (for example IT soft- and hardware, electronic equipment, kitchen utensils, etc.). Having innovative companies sponsoring equipment increases the visibility of the sponsoring companies and attracts the attention from other companies, who may feel the urge to also get involved in VET to increase their branding. A similar logic applies to any company who applies for the call of proposals of the VET projects to supply materials.
- Training is key: In the case of a hotel company who offered training to VET teachers in Albania, it has proved to be beneficial for the company to offer this training. The VET teachers were updated with the latest developments and technologies offered by the market. This facilitated the cooperation between the schools and companies in the second phase because both sides started speaking the same language. On the other side, as the majority of interviewed companies stressed, one of the biggest challenges for companies remains the supervision and training of the students as they lack the required didactical skills.

**5.2.2 The role of VET projects**

VET projects facilitate and financially support the cooperation with companies in the domain of VET. Moreover, they act as central one-stop shops for all kind of VET inquiries. Thus, they are key actors to consider. VET project staff operate in challenging environments and are often impacted by circumstances that are beyond their control. Nevertheless, their approaches and project designs are important factors that do influence and shape the cooperation with companies. It should be noted that there is a difference in the approaches of the analysed VET projects. The projects financed by ADA and BMZ see their main function in assisting state structures and by taking a macro perspective, whereas the projects financed by SDC follow a
micro-perspective, meaning they directly collaborate with businesses. In Kosovo, VET projects financed by ADA and BMZ are currently in the planning phase. They are both committed to taking a more demand-oriented approach and to directly collaborate with businesses. This is a crucial aspect because it impacts the method regarding the question how the private sector is approached. In the framework of this paper, it cannot be determined to what degree the VET projects complement each other, provide the same assistance, or create duplications. In addition, it cannot be said which project has the approach to collaborate with the private sector. However, some note-worthy practices should be highlighted that can be considered as best practices:

Firstly, piloting projects and then improving future project phases with the lessons learned is an approach taken by most VET projects. Creating successful examples at the beginning of the VET project that are replicable, and working with “open-minded” and leading companies in their respective sector have proven to be successful approaches to create rapid results and a certain momentum. One representative of a VET project visualised their approach as follows: “We have created some success examples, like low-hanging fruits. The low-hanging fruits: we took them, we washed them, we peeled them, we squashed them, and we got the best juice ever and gave it to policymakers” (personal communication, March 2, 2018, See Appendix C, p. 32). These leading companies then set the sector standards for further companies willing to engage in VET. Two ICT and retail company both reported that the copying effect among competitors is very pronounced. Thus, this approach is key to increase the number of businesses collaborating in VET and to increase the leverage in the dialogue with public authorities.

Secondly, one VET project in Albania that follows a micro, bottom-up approach that is “constantly demand-oriented” and based on “one-to-one” relationships has so far been particularly successful in implementing apprenticeship schemes with over 150 companies. This approach means that every company is individually analysed and approached. This enables project staff to establish personal relationships, which gives each company a feeling of appreciation and importance and therefore facilitates the VET process. This approach is generally considered a “positive approach” (Heinrich, 2017, p. 4), meaning that project staff conduct a market analysis and identify like-minded businesses. This is a beneficial approach to work sustainably with "trusted" partners. A "negative approach" would be a call of proposals to then select the companies that fulfil a certain criteria list. Due to this one-to-one approach, the communication and apprenticeship schemes are sustainable and tailored to their specific needs – without the involvement of any third institutional parties like governmental agencies or chambers of commerce. Some may argue that this is not a sustainable approach because it creates parallel structures that are not approved by governmental agencies or umbrella organisations. Others argue that this bottom-up approach is more sustainable because the private sector first needs to figure out the appropriate VET modalities and then in a second step the according regulations should be drafted. Because to date, the opposite is mostly true: regulations are put in place in a top-down fashion, but the concerned actors do not implement it.

Overall, the strategy of the VET project staff is to use this approach to work their way through each sector, to implement the lessons learned and establish tailor-made apprenticeships schemes in each sector. A similar approach is taken by a VET project based in Kosovo that has piloted company-based VET phases. They stated that their success factor is to be as flexible as possible, to be demand-oriented and to have close “one-to-one” relationships (personal communication, April 4, 2018). In addition, both VET projects have specific business relationship specialists that are responsible for the direct communication with the private sector. They have private sector experience, and accordingly valuable sales and marketing skills. This enables them to understand the mind and rationale of businesses, to speak the same language as businesses and consequently to conduct successful negotiations. With this knowledge, they are able to build bridges between the private sector and the VET institutions like schools and the public administration. Moreover, according to business relationship specialists and other VET project staff, the most important precondition to effectively
communicate key messages is to build trust by building personal relationships with companies and by understanding their reality: “Relationships with third parties are first of all personal: you first build trust, then the work. Otherwise it does not work. You build trust by having a chat about his family, his problems, successes, etc. It’s a social skill […]. If we were a company selling a product, you cannot just say: ‘Buy my product!’ You first have to show the benefits of this product - it’s an art.” (personal communication, March 2, See Appendix C, p. 40). An additional measure to increase the trust among actors and increase the likelihood of successful cooperation is to clearly state and formalise the responsibilities of each party (the business, VET project, school, apprentice, and parent).

Thirdly, all VET projects agree that the dual systems found in Austria, Germany, or Switzerland cannot be copied one-to-one. The dual elements need to be adapted to the local contexts and, if necessary, re-named and adapted to concepts like “work-based learning system” as a “dual system” can be considered as too ambitious. In a first step, all VET projects aim at raising awareness of the benefits of having a VET student and in explaining to the businesses possible structures and benefits of work-based learning – in the form of study trips to countries with dual VET systems, fairs, presentations, round tables, workshops, or open days where businesses can meet students at the school. In the framework of this thesis, it cannot be assessed which form or sequence of activities are the most effective. This would need to be analysed separately.

Nevertheless, one experience proves to be a particularly valuable lesson learned. Many representatives of companies or umbrella organisations tend to focus on the deficiencies of the VET system and the problems associated with it – in terms of governance, students, schools, etc. This often ends in a vicious circle where beliefs reinforce each other and block any brainstorming session. One VET project was aware of this difficulty and that these discussions hamper constructive cooperation. Although it is not necessarily the common culture in Albania and Kosovo to group competitors together (like in chambers of commerce), they invited the ICT companies for a first round of discussions on the subject of company-based VET phases in ICT. The project staff at first presented slides with all the problems. The representative of a VET project explained: “It took two to three months to convince ICT companies to sit around a table together. What we decided is to package a very nice event in which we presented all the problems, because I didn’t want to hear anymore: ‘But …’. So we will bring all the ,but’s: ,There, we know that, we will do 1.2.3., we expect you to do 1.2. and maybe it will work. After 30 minutes of the presentation, they started saying: ,I don’t think I can take 10, but maybe 6 apprentices.’ But everybody was not discussing whether yes or no, but how to. It started there.” (personal communication, March 2, 2018, See Appendix C, p. 31). Thanks to this visualisation and direct attempt to pinpoint the problems, no platform was created to discuss the problems over again, but a platform where the participants went a step further in their thinking.

Fourthly, three VET projects staff in Albania and Kosovo observed that there are differences in the culture of businesses towards VET. Generally speaking, these differences can be broken down to two group of businesses. One group that consists of rather traditional, risk-averse, family-oriented, and stable companies. The second group incorporates businesses that are rather progressive, fast-growing, dynamic, and internationally oriented. Their perspective towards the state also differs. The first group sees the private sector largely disconnected from the state and expects financial incentives for any kind of service. The second group is sceptical of the state, but is aware that private-public partnerships can lead to win-win situations. Overall, the latter group of businesses tends to be more open towards the idea and benefits of engaging in VET. However, in all cases, tailor-made awareness-raising measures are needed.

Lastly, VET projects funded by SDC in Albania and Kosovo have been especially private-sector oriented in their project monitoring by using the DCED standard (DCED, n.d.). This standard is designed for private sector development projects in complex environments such as market systems. For example, one VET project in Albania that uses the DCED standard conducts a weekly update of their performance monitoring indicators. This disciplined and tight monitoring ensures greater ability of the project management staff to react
and adapt quickly and flexibly to the dynamic demands of the private sector, and allows them to rapidly identify activities that to not lead to the desired results.

5.2.3 Changing the role of VET schools
The main observations and issues regarding the role of the schools as a main stakeholder in public-private cooperation in VET are shortly outlined in this chapter. School management issues or other matters that do not directly concern the private sector are not incorporated. There are two main issues: lack of trust and a sense of responsibility between schools and businesses, and teachers resisting change.

The lack of understanding in the joint responsibility and mutual trust for educational matters is seen both in Kosovo and Albania. Companies complain about the schools and are critical of their performance, specifically of the skills of VET teachers, and vice versa. As the representative of a Kosovan umbrella organisation put it: “Teachers say that businesses don’t know, that they are just businesses, they cannot think from the educational perspective, and businesses say that teachers do not know, that they are too far from the market, […] not ready, too slow, and not able” (personal communication, March 5, 2018, See Appendix C, p. 47).

In Albania’s and Kosovo’s school context, the main issue is that the VET teachers are the principal stakeholders that offer resistance against the implementation of company-based VET phases and other dual elements. There are three reasons reported that explain this resistance. Firstly, given their lack of practice-based knowledge, their practical lessons are being substituted by company-based learning phases. This fuels fear that their jobs are at risk. Secondly, it is also possible that the teachers do not understand the benefits and necessity of company-based learning for VET students. They may fear that companies exploit the students as cheap labour, in particular because they are weak regulations in this domain. Thirdly, they may be sceptical towards VET projects as donors have been active in VET for several years. For many years, their efforts did not result in any significant improvements.

Their resistance becomes noticeable if they do not want to hand over any competence to the businesses (for example, practical supervision or assessment of students) or if the teachers do not track if the students actually go to the companies. It has also been observed that VET school staff orientate students to take a certain profile (that might be not demanded by the employers anymore), just so that the VET teachers in this profile are not dismissed. This can even include school staff expecting bribes in exchange for action. Their resistance, which complicates collaborations, is also seen in other domains: Teachers may be reluctant to adjust their schedule to open up spaces for company-based learning under the pretext that they have to follow a pre-defined curriculum. Businesses then raise objections and say that they have process cycles to follow. In addition, VET teachers can have weak intrinsic motivations to participate in trainings. This raises questions if monetary and non-monetary incentives may be useful to increase participation. One company who participated in VET teacher seminars reported that the participation rate of teachers was significantly higher when the teachers were offered a financial compensation for attending the workshop (personal communication, March 26, 2018).

Given this background, the success of private-public cooperation in VET is strongly dependent on the willingness of the schools to cooperate and facilitate. One example demonstrates the high reward of overcoming the status quo. One director of a VET school in Albania, who initially was highly resistant towards the idea of introducing apprenticeships and who thought the VET project was just a development project like any other, wrote a message to the VET staff: “I would like to thank you for the great job you are doing with the schools, supported by the project, especially for our school. […] We see now that the problems we tackle are so overarching and you are actually addressing them one-by-one and in quite a record-time. I wish you all the best and I am so happy you actually chanced my mind-set and to become part of this change” (personal communication, March 2, 2018, See Appendix C, pp. 31-32).
An effective measure to keep their jobs and use the potential of teachers is to retrain them as career counsellors or/and coordinators of apprenticeships or internships. In this function, their main role is to supervise the company-based VET phases, assist the students in finding and completing their practical learning, and to collaborate, recruit, and maintain the relationships with the companies. Other activities can include the translation of the curricula in action plans for businesses. Some teachers may even have private sector experience or can acquire relevant knowledge through continuing trainings. According to the experience by project VET staff in this domain, these activities take much more time and effort than previously anticipated, so that the teachers need to work to full capacity. Consequently, the teachers can be fully utilised.

A further measure to decrease the school’s resistance to engaging the private sector in VET is to quickly deliver results and to fulfil obligations. The ICT company, who on behalf of the VET project supplied equipment told an anecdote: “We said to the teachers: ‘Don’t confuse us with the government. We promise that whatever we say today, we will deliver it the day we promise.’ They were very suspicious. But after six months, we delivered everything we promised. That was the piloting face: They got a new platform, career centres, new laptops. They started to change their behaviour towards us, they saw that we couldn’t get corrupted. Teachers couldn’t believe that somebody would do good like this. We had to change their beliefs and concepts. This takes time. It took us six months to make them believe in us. We had a new phase. The project was so intensive that in 1.5 years we did as much as in 25 years that all the projects and ministry together didn’t achieve” (personal communication, February 28, 2018, See Appendix C, p. 18).

Collaborating with companies and having up-to-date equipment can increase the attractiveness, financial situation, and prestige of the individual school.

5.2.4 VET in society, in particular perceived by students and parents

VET students as the main target group of VET, their parents, and overall society are crucial stakeholders to consider for successful engagements and for increasing the attractiveness of VET. VET students were not interviewed in the framework of this paper. However, some observations and possible implications that are based on the interviews with companies and VET project staff need to be pointed out:

Firstly, it should be noted that two companies and two members of VET projects reported that they are satisfied with the performance and motivation of the VET students. This in turns increases the satisfaction of the employers.

Secondly, one Albanian company and VET project staff in Albania and Kosovo stated that they have issues with some students dropping out, appearing irregularly in the companies for their practical learning phases, or refusing to do certain work activities. There are three possible explanations for this. Some companies and project members see the reason for this in the lacking didactical skills of company mentors. Others attribute it to their young age, and that they still need to become disciplined and get familiar with the code of work ethics. Moreover, some think the cause is that they are part of the “generation Z”: Those born after 1997 (Dimock 2018), who have in comparison to their parent generation many of their basic needs covered and therefore lack work attitude elements. They are less willing to work hard and to invest their time in a “lengthy” VET qualification. This interpretation must be regarded with caution. Then the attribution of characteristics to a group of people that were born within a certain period cannot be generalised. They are currently in their adolescence and their behaviour might change during their adulthood. In addition, studies about the attitudes of the current adolescents are mostly done in Western countries. They cannot be applied one-to-one to the Balkan youth. Notwithstanding, there appears to be an issue in the differing expectations of VET students and companies that needs to be clearly addressed. Companies do not see work culture as a part of the VET.

In the framework of this thesis, it couldn’t be assessed if monetary compensation influences the motivation of VET students. It can be expected that a certain threshold value positively influences the willingness of students to show up in a company, in particular given that VET students often come from poor backgrounds,
and therefore need some basic financial security. However, as numerous studies already proved, pure monetary incentives only have the desired motivating effect in simple, repetitive activities (Cameron et al., 1999; Herzberg, et al., 2011). One complementary element to consider is to introduce shorter VET programmes for those students who are interested in educational programmes that can quickly increase their employability. Thirdly, parents are crucial stakeholders and exogenous drivers to consider for making company-based VET work and to increase the attractiveness of VET. Project staff and companies in Albania and Kosovo reported that in some cases parents do not actively support their children in their VET. Possible reasons are that they do not understand the benefits of the company-based learning, they are afraid that their children will be exploited, or they simply do not have the capacity (emotional or financial) to support them. These statements cannot be generalised and adequately classified to the according country as larger studies are needed. However, from the feedback received during the interviews, the perspective of society towards the private sector can differ widely. In Kosovo, there has been feedback that the private sector is negatively perceived because it is associated with exploitative working conditions in terms of working hours and work security. Paying fair wages could be an effective counter-measure to this fear. In contrast, the private sector in Albania enjoys a good reputation because of the country’s difficult communist past. Consequently, the Albanian private sector is perceived as a credible partner when it comes to the delivery of VET.

Fourthly, an over-arching reason explaining the perception of parents and students towards VET is that, as already mentioned, VET is mostly a second choice. This was confirmed by VET project staff in Kosovo and Albania. The socially more respected choice is to take the academic path. There is still a need to change the perception of society towards professionals or “blue collar workers” with a VET background. Traditionally, there is little understanding that a professional can also be associated with a person who has a safe and honest job, is highly demanded on the market, and has a constant salary, promotion opportunities, and in the end also a good socio-economic status (representative of foreign umbrella organisation, personal communication, March 2, 2018; Cedefop, 2014, p. 170). The launch of awareness-raising campaigns has been considered by donors and ministries, but there is the risk that in the short-term, the promises made in these campaigns cannot live up to the expectations.

Lastly, one company in Albania and one in Kosovo mentioned their willingness and their practice in involving socially disadvantaged people like disabled students or Roma. The potential of companies in contributing to social integration through VET is still in its early stages, but is nevertheless noteworthy.

5.2.5 VET and the challenges of governance
The most cited problems concerning VET were the challenges in terms of governance. The most pressing ones that influence the private-public relationships are those around the question, how the governance model can transform from a static model, which is pre-dominantly found in pure school-based VET systems, to a more cooperative form, that is stakeholder-driven like in dual VET systems:

![Diagram of VET governance models](image)

Figure 18: The statist (left) vs. the cooperative (right) VET governance model (Source: Busemeyer & Trampush, 2012a, p.12)
The main idea of a cooperative governance model is that the private sector, associations, and the public sector are both strongly committed to invest in the VET system and to play an active role in the steering of the overall system (Busemeyer & Trampush, 2012a, p.12). Consequently, the question arises how stakeholders can drive the system and become directly involved in the decision-making process. This is a multidisciplinary field of research that was not a main focus point in this study. Many governance issues are addressed in international reports, which aim at giving appropriate recommendations (see e.g.: ETF, 2016; ETF, 2017e).

However, a non-exhaustive elaboration of the issues raised by the interviewees are presented in the next sections. The list cannot be reviewed for its entire accuracy as no interviews with state representatives took place. It can be noted that there are finger-pointing blame games taking place in both countries. The majority of the interviewed VET project staff view the governance problems as the main hindrance to strong and well-functioning VET systems. They argue that if the system changes, the partnerships with the private sector will change. A minority sees it the other way around: As soon as functioning partnerships are established, the governance system will adapt and change. Which one is true, cannot be conclusively clarified. However, it demonstrates the high relevance of governance issues. Moreover, the problems of governance and the importance of involving the private sector in decision-making processes like curriculum development or final assessments are even more important to reduce the complaints about VET graduates.

The findings in this domain are key for companies and VET project staff because the governance systems define their environment.

As previously indicated, the VET governance in Albania and Kosovo are state-driven, centralised, and policy-making is done in a rather top-down fashion. Moreover, the systems are somewhat opaque. In both countries, a possible reason for this are ambitious strategic and legislative documents, but poor implementation, which in turn confuse the actors involved in VET. This contributes to a situation where the VET actors speak different “languages” and operate at different speeds. There is the need to have a clear overview of the relevant bodies and of their functions. With this kind of mapping, interested actors know who to contact, understand the decision-making procedures and can consider where to put leverage to impact VET policy-making. Currently, one VET project in Kosovo is in the process of mapping all VET actors.

Adding to the above point, in Albania, a further aggravating factor is the fact that the Minister in charge of VET changed various times during the last four years. Consequently, the ideas and focus points changed several times. There was ambiguity regarding the legal situation, and there has been no systematic anchoring of best practices or new stakeholder-oriented approaches. There is the hope that with the new deputy minister, stability and clarity will return in VET. Political instability is also a challenging factor in Kosovo — a ten-year-old country that is still building up its institutions and confronted with numerous internal and external challenges (Brosig, 2011; Skendaj, 2014). Along with this point is that there is a lack of expertise in the administrations in charge of VET. Reasons for this are that staff is appointed based on political affiliations and not on competencies. Moreover, central competencies of the administration are outsourced to external organisations like European agencies, donor-led projects, and consultancies. Lastly, there is a weak knowledge transfer from relevant stakeholders as they are not systematically involved. This in turn reduces the sense of ownership for the VET system.

Further reasons reported by the interviewees that complicate the transition to a cooperative governance model are the lack of trust and, connected to that, communication between the stakeholders: within the private sector (for example vis-à-vis chambers of commerce and among competitors), but also between the private sector and state institutions like the government and schools. Potential factors like inefficient and lumbering bureaucracies, partly due to corrupt practices, poor management and small budgets, contribute to the unsatisfactory situation. They diminish the state’s capability to coordinate actions, to react and adapt to changing circumstances, to comply with agreements, to fulfil strategic objectives, and to enforce laws. These
points cannot be generalised and need to be analysed from institution to institution, or better from person to person. Because in both countries, the main factor embracing or resisting change are the people in their respective positions (for example at the head of schools or governmental agencies).

An additional issue reducing the efficiency and efficacy of governance systems in Albania and Kosovo is the weak coordination among donors. An effective donor coordination from the respective government would ensure a unified approach and a reduction in duplications. This is not a specific problem and aspiration in Albania and Kosovo, but a general one that can be found in many countries with donor assistance (see e.g.: Ashoff, 2004; Leiderer, 2015; DC dVET, n.d., subpage “Our offer”). Every donor has their own strategy and own understanding of VET and developmental objectives. In Kosovo, there is an exchange platform with an exchange taking place every two months that should ensure a better coordination. But for in- and outsiders, it is still difficult to assess the degree to which VET projects are setting new standards, actually influencing the system, and those that are possibly blocking improvements.

All interviewed actors agreed that in both countries, the numerous local (and foreign) umbrella organisations are not (yet) key system-relevant stakeholders that ensure a systematic working method, coordination, and efficiency. According to Schmitter & Streeck (1999, p. 21), weak business organisations can be understood as associations with weak organisational properties. This means that they do not have any effective representative functions, participatory possibilities, control or provision of services. This diminishes their ability to assure a stable link between national policies and the local enterprises, to enforce binding long-term commitments, and to bargain the implementation of steering mechanisms (p. 86). Consequently, they have a weak ownership in VET matters (Jäger, 2016, p. 9). The reasons for a lack of relevant umbrella organisations cannot be conclusively clarified. However, a possible reason is that there is a wide discrepancy between the expectations of the local companies of what the organisation should achieve (in terms of lobbying, management, coordinative activities, consulting services, and in the return-on-investment of a membership) and of what the chambers de facto can and is willing to accomplish. It should be noted that according to Jäger (2016, p. 9), chambers of commerce are not sufficient for joint ownership, but sector-specific perspectives are necessary. Consequently, the role of sectorial business associations should receive a greater role.

Schmitter and Streecker (1999) proposed strategies to increase the relevance and autonomy of underdeveloped umbrella organisations. In the long term, they can be considered during any attempt to increase the ownerships of private sector organisation. Among others, they suggest that they should provide selective goods such as information (e.g. VET legislation, VET supports), advice (e.g. in getting VET assistance), courses and certificates (e.g. for in-company mentors), the procurement of materials at a reduced price (e.g. teaching materials for trainers and apprentices), and legal advices (e.g. regarding VET) (p. 88). The provision of such goods is not only beneficial for the members themselves, but also for the overall organisation as income can be generated from these goods. Lastly, the organisations can consider ways of rewarding members that comply with the decisions of the organisation (for example if the organisation recommends the recruitment of a certain number of VET students) (p. 92).

Lastly, in the case of Kosovo, it should be noted that training centres for post-secondary VET students that are run by companies are complementary training institutions. They can provide inspiration, momentum and lead the discourse around the implementation of work-based learning phases. However, these fast-growing companies do not reflect the vast majority of Kosovan businesses. It is necessary that there remains as a link to the official VET system in order to prevent parallel structures and to guarantee a minimum degree of standardisation and qualification.
5.2.6 Summary of results II

As outlined before, the findings of this qualitative study cannot be statically generalised like studies with a larger set of observations, but only possibility generalisations can be made. Consequently, the findings regarding the question why the private sector participates in VET (including internal and external factors) can be understood as hypotheses. Further studies are needed to verify the accuracy and generalisability of each statement. However, they can also be used as recommendations or inspiration for further VET endeavours.

### Reasons why businesses engage (and do not engage) in VET from a company perspective

- **Productivity argument**: „Qualified skilled workers contribute to increased productivity, quality and growth.“
- **Employee retention argument**: Increased training can contribute to stability in the company by decreasing high staff turnover rates
- **Scanning argument**: Possibility to monitor and assess the performance and motivation of potential future employees during the training (in particular middle-level management)
- **Positive return-on-investment needed**
- **Financial contributions increase the likelihood of companies perceiving a VET student as an investment that should be productively integrated in processes**
- **Sense of social responsibility** (awareness of the difficult situation of youth in terms of their qualification levels and unemployment risks)
- **Familiarity with dual VET system**
- **Alliances of VET ambassadors are key to create momentum and unleash copying effects**
- **Sponsorships as an effective marketing instrument for branding**
- **Training is key**: To facilitate the communication between the private sector and VET institutions
- **General positive economic development**

- **Belief that VET is a pure state responsibility**
- **Fear that VET students emigrate after training**
- **Concerns about poaching**
- **Small companies lacking the resources and capacities to engage in VET**
- **Companies lacking the time and didactical skills to supervise VET students**

### Best practices of VET projects to engage companies in VET

- **Pilot projects**, quick analysis and adaptation to lessons learned, creation of quick-wins and replicable results
- **Collaborations** with leading businesses in the different sectors, who set the VET standards
- **Positive approach** to identify like-minded businesses and one-to-one business relationships: Thorough market and company analysis, individual approach of businesses, bottom-up, demand-driven
- **Business relationship specialists** with private sector experience as bridge-builders and people of trust
- **Clear formulation and formalisation** of the responsibilities of each actor
- **Adaptation of the dual elements** to each country’s context (no one-to-one transfer)
- **Organisation of awareness-raising and information activities** (study trips, round tables, open school days, presentations, etc.)
- **Pinpoint the problems** at the beginning of the cooperation, shift the discussion towards questions how each actor can contribute to VET improvement according to its capabilities
- **In the short-term**, collaboration with progressive, fast-growing, and dynamic companies is easier than with traditional, family-oriented, risk-averse, and stable companies
- **DCED standard key success factor** for results-based monitoring, and to quickly adapt the activities and the project’s direction to the needs of the private sector
Schools as main actors that can facilitate or impede private-public collaboration in VET

- Weak mutual trust and understanding of joint responsibility between VET schools and private sector
- VET school staff resistant to change, visible through the following actions:
  - No hand-over of competencies
  - Lacking monitoring of students
  - Poor advice regarding profiles demanded by the labour market
  - Expectation of bribes
  - Resistance to adapt schedules
  - Weak participation in training
- Reasons for resistance:
  - Jobs of VET teachers at risk (substitution by company-based VET phases)
  - Fear that students get exploited by companies due to weak regulations
  - Poor experience with previous VET projects

Need for change management measures:
- Grow your people: Retraining the VET teachers as career counselor or/and coordinators of company-based VET phases to strengthen their position (shared supervision of company-based VET phases, career advice, collaboration, recruitment and relationship-management with companies, translation of curricula according to business needs, etc.)
- Keep your promise: Private sector sticks and fulfils obligations to increase trust and change belief of the VET schools towards the private sector
- Follow the bright spots: Having companies involved in schools (e.g. via sponsorships, provision of equipment) can increase the attractiveness, financial situation and prestige of the school

Society, particularly VET students and parents, is part of the equation for successful cooperation

- Low work morale of VET students: irregular appearance in company, drop-outs, refusal to complete certain activities. Possible reasons are:
  - Lacking didactical skills of company mentors
  - Young students not yet disciplined and familiar with code of work ethics
  - Generation Z: “lazy because basic needs are covered”
- Parents reluctant to support company-based learning, possible reasons are:
  - Lacking understanding of benefits
  - No capacity to support the VET student
  - Fear of exploitation by private sector
- VET as a second choice, low status of professionals & blue-collar workers

Points to consider:
- The motivated and eager VET students, who enjoy the company-based learning phases, increase the satisfaction and belief of companies in VET
- The different perceptions of society towards the private sector (dependent on country’s history) needs to be considered
- Expectation management of VET students and companies
- Financial incentives are not a panacea to motivate VET students, but an assessment of the monetary threshold to calculate what minimum financial support is needed to cover opportunity costs and exploitation fears of company-based VET (transportation, food, pocket money)
- Consideration of shorter VET programmes (e.g. two years) as complementary measure
- Parents are key stakeholders to involve (information and awareness-raising activities)
- Change of perceptions: professionals are demanded by the labour market, and have a constant salary, promotion opportunities, and a safe and honest job
- VET as a measure to integrate socially disadvantaged people
VET and the challenges of governance

- Unclear cause-and-effect relationship between the quality of the governance system and the degree of involvement of the private sector in VET
- VET policy-making is state-driven, centralised and top-down
- Opaque governance system, possible reasons:
  - Poor implementation of VET strategies
  - VET actors speaking different languages and working at different speeds
  - Political instability: change of ministerial ownerships of VET portfolio, development of political and administrative institutions still in process
  - Lack of expertise: Staff appointed based on political affiliations, outsourcing of competencies, weak knowledge transfers
  - Lack of trust and communication between stakeholders, partly due to lumbering bureaucracies (poor management, small budgets, corrupt practices)
- Weak involvement of umbrella organisations in VET governance, possible reasons:
  - Umbrella organisations have weak organisational properties
  - Wide discrepancy between the members’ and the chambers’ expectations
- Insufficient coordination between donors vis-à-vis public administration leading to inefficiency and inefficacy.

Possible considerations:
- Increased transparency and accountability, clear overview or relevant VET actors
- Greater role of umbrella organisations like chambers of commerce and business associations. They can provide selective goods like:
  - Information regarding VET legislation and VET support
  - Advice in getting VET assistance
  - VET courses and certificates for trainers
  - Procurement of materials like teaching material
  - Legal advice regarding VET
- Regular round tables between donors and the public authorities
- Clear link between official VET system and private sector initiatives to avoid parallel structures
Implications of the Findings

The aim of this descriptive study was to provide a broad access and understanding about the involvement of the private sector in VET in the Albanian and Kosovan context. The perspectives of companies, VET project staff and their donors, umbrella organisations, and some individual experts functioned as a vehicle to approach the reality. Their views helped to assess to what degree the private sector is involved in VET. Moreover, they showed that there are many internal and external factors, as well stakeholders to consider when reflecting upon the question how and why the private sector engages in VET. The results of the empirical findings demonstrate that VET is a cross-cutting theme that affects various domains and cannot just be viewed from one angle. However, they also illustrated that there is no one-size-fits-all approach how to engage the private sector in VET.

Taking into account the limitations of this study, each finding still needs to be assessed for its generalisability. This can be done by putting each empirical result in a broader context, by linking them to theoretical frameworks and further evaluating the validity of each statement through more detailed studies. This opens the way for many new research projects:

The empirical findings surrounding the question why companies engage in VET need to be embedded in human resource development theories. There are numerous studies in this field. For example, the work by Acemoglu et al. (1998), Lepak & Snell (2001), and Swanson (2010) provide an easy and broad access to this theoretical field. Furthermore, from a financial perspective, research that focusses on why companies train apprentices from a cost-benefit and investment point of view could to be incorporated (See e.g.: Acemoglu et al., 1999; Höckel, 2008; Leuven et al., 2005; Mohrenweiser & Zwick, 2009; Moretti et al., 2017). To mitigate the risks of engaging in VET from a company-perspective, studies that focus on poaching, free-rider problems, and mobility of VET students provide an interesting follow-up on the empirical findings (See e.g.: Fitzenberger et al., 2015; ILO, 2012; Mohrenweiser et al., 2013). In addition, it would also be interesting to take a sector-specific view to further investigate the empirical findings (See e.g.: Crouch & Voelzkow, 2009; Martin & Knudsen, 2010; Schröder & Voelzkow, 2016).

The research question was examined from a development cooperation angle. Among donors, there seems to be variations to what degree VET development programmes are considered an educational or a private sector issue. However, as this study focused on companies and not on schools and other educational institutions, the private sector is viewed as the main strategic partner for VET matters. Consequently, studies focusing on the private sector’s role in development projects will provide further insight in this relatively new field of cooperation. This could entail research about public private partnerships (See e.g.: Maurrasse, 2013; Morley, 2015), or best practices in private sector engagement elaborated by the DCED, OECD, or WEF (See e.g.: Heinrich, 2017; OECD, 2016b; WEF, 2016). Moreover, quantitative studies that systematically cross-evaluate the results of the current VET projects in 2-3 years would provide valuable insight about successful approaches in engaging the private sector in VET. The projects could be assessed according to the DAC criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability (OECD, 1991). Lastly, the latest findings about measuring results in private sector engagement (for example, from the OECD, 2018) can provide guidance to VET project staff on how to reach efficient and functioning collaborations.

The theories in the domain of change management can provide an interesting background on how to sustainably change the roles of schools so that they start embracing the private sector in VET. Models and
concepts that focus on the denial, resistance, experimentation, and engagement phases of change give effective guidance on what methodologies and tools to use when facing challenges in projects initiating organisational changes (See e.g.: Kotter, 1996; Scire, 2007).

In terms of societal issues, academic work that put a focus on innovative forms of learning and training, and pedagogical aspects can be key to understand VET student’s motivation to opt for VET or to drop out (See e.g.: Booth & Marton, S. 1997; Callan, 2005; Singh, 2003).

Lastly, there is a rapidly growing research domain focusing on the governance of VET that can improve the framing of the empirical findings. This could entail sources that investigate the political economy of VET (See e.g.: Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2012b; Culpepper, 2003; Martin, 2000) or the role of umbrella organisations (See e.g.: Behrens, 2011; Traxler & Huemer, 2007). Lastly, cross-country comparison, either with “best practices” found in Europe or with other Balkan countries could also reflect new interesting aspects of the VET systems in Albania and Kosovo (See e.g.: Bartlett et al, 2014; Mayer & Solga, 2008).

The further investigation of the empirical findings and domains of VET will help to deduct further possible generalisations how the private sector can be encouraged to engage in VET. For instance, this could include the question how the cooperation should be conceptualised, or issues such as relationship management and networking, the deduction of criteria for collaboration and of appropriate incentives for VET actors, financial considerations in terms of cost-benefits and risks, the knowledge transfer between private and public actors, the governance models, and lastly issues of monitoring and evaluation.
Concluding Remarks

Given the macroeconomic contexts in Albania and Kosovo, the pressure to change the VET systems in Albania and Kosovo is high. The engagement of the private sector in VET is in both countries still in its early stage. They are at the beginning of reaching their objectives set in their ambitious strategic documents. It is beyond the scope of this paper to assess the progress of the national objectives. However, with the assistance of donors, both countries have initiated first attempts to engage with the private sector. To date, the first successful internships and “full-fledged” apprenticeships schemes are found in Albania. In Kosovo, the introduction of apprenticeships schemes is still being piloted in smaller experiments or are about to take place in the framework of in-company training centres. In all the cases, there is increased awareness of the benefits of work-based learning.

In theory, developing dual VET system elements lead to pure win-win situations. However, in practice, numerous challenges remain. They can be attributed to company-internal factors as well as to the stakeholders that shape the company’s external environment: the VET projects, the schools, society, and the governance system. Even if the involvement of the private sector in VET succeeds, many issues persist: How can short-term firm-based learning phases be sustainably upgraded to long-term periods? How can the quality of company-based VET learning be ensured? How can the development of parallel VET structures be prevented? Despite the numerous difficulties, it became clear from one lighthouse project in Albania that the potential of VET is enormous. There is a momentum taking place thanks to the over 150 companies (and still counting) that are introducing apprenticeship schemes. This project demonstrates how the private sector can become part of every aspect of VET, how shared value can be created and how all participants can become empowered: The companies having young and motivated apprentices and potential future employees, VET students developing relevant skills, the directors actually preparing the students for the labour market, teachers taking on new crucial roles, and the parents getting in contact with companies and eventually also getting employed. Even the deputy minister in charge of VET has actual results to demonstrate to the wider public and public authorities. This does not mean that in the end VET will or should become privatised. It just shows that this snow-ball system essentially promotes entrepreneurialism in various domains – and along with that participatory approaches, efficiency, and dynamism. Essentially, the VET project demonstrates that a weak governance system also has its advantage: Whatever is not strictly prohibited, is allowed. As soon as the companies are strongly involved in VET thanks to a bottom-up approach, and best practices are elaborated, the actors impacted by the VET project have enough bargaining-power to influence policy-making. These kind of VET projects can and should act as a source of inspiration and innovation.

In the end, changing the VET system has a lot to do with going beyond conventional boundaries, challenging the status quo, and introducing change in various organisational cultures. Then each company, VET school, family, and governmental body has its own culture – and that culture is difficult to change. There are probably still many experiments, successes, and failures needed until Albania and Kosovo find a VET system that suits their respective economic, social, and political conditions. However, given the first successes in VET, there is hope that they will succeed. As one VET project staff in Albania put it: “The fact that we have chanced religion a few times in different geographies shows me that we [people from Albania] are fine with changing the rules of the game” (personal communication, March 2, 2018, see Appendix C, pp. 32-33).
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Overview of VET project sources

Albania (listed in order as in table 1)


Kosovo (listed in order as in table 1)


Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview Guidelines

1. Leitfragen für Geber und VET-Projektmitarbeiter (in German)

I. Bitte erzählen Sie mir in wenigen Worten von Ihrem Projekt.

A. Durchführung von betrieblichen Ausbildungsphasen
1. Welche betrieblichen Ausbildungsphasen fördert Ihr Projekt für die Berufsschüler?
   a. Mit welchem Partner bieten Sie diese Form der Ausbildung an? Wie wurden diese Partner ausgewählt? Können Sie verallgemeinern, ob die Zusammenarbeit mit kleinen, lokalen oder grossen, regionalen Partnern besser abläuft?
   b. Was waren die Gründe, warum sich Ihr Projekt für diese Form der Zusammenarbeit entschieden hat? Wer hat die Zusammenarbeit initiiert? Wie werden private Akteure am besten für VET-Projekte acquiriert? Müssen private Akteure aktiv/explicit beworben werden? Oder empfiehlt es sich, auf die Bedürfnisse des Marktes zu reagieren und sich an sie anpassen?
   c. Wie hat sich die Zusammenarbeit mit der Privatwirtschaft entwickelt?
   d. Warum hat sich Ihrer Meinung nach die Privatwirtschaft für eine Zusammenarbeit entschieden?
   e. Wie wählen Sie die Schüler aus, die an Ihrem Ausbildungsangebot teilnehmen können?
   f. Mit welchen anderen Institutionen (z.B. Berufsschulen oder Regierungsstellen) sind Sie in Kontakt, um die Ausbildung durchzuführen?
   g. Welchen Mechanismus haben Sie, der die Rollen der beteiligten Parteien festlegt?
   h. Wenn Sie in Ihrem Projekt keine betrieblichen Berufsbildungsphasen anbieten, warum stellen Sie es dann nicht zur Verfügung?

B. Mitwirkung bei Prüfung und Zertifizierung
1. Kooperiert Ihr Projekt mit Firmen oder Handelskammern oder ähnlichen Institutionen bei der Entwicklung von Prüfungen und der Zertifizierung von Studenten? Wenn ja, in welcher Form?
   a. Welche Faktoren haben Sie veranlasst, an der Entwicklung von Prüfungen und Zertifizierungen teilzunehmen?
   b. Wie hat sich diese Zusammenarbeit im Laufe der Zeit entwickelt?
   c. Wie haben Sie Ihre Zusammenarbeit beschlossen und formalisiert?
   d. Wenn nicht, warum sind Sie nicht an der Entwicklung von Prüfungen und Zertifikaten beteiligt?

C. Qualifizierung von Lehr- und Ausbildungspersonal
1. Kooperieren Sie mit privaten Akteuren, um Lehrer und Ausbilder zu qualifizieren? Wenn nicht, warum nicht?

D. Bereitstellung von Ausstattung und Lehrmaterialien
1. Arbeiten Sie mit Firmen zusammen, um Lerausstattung und Lehrmaterialien zur Verfügung zu stellen?
   a. Wenn ja, welche Akteure führen zu der Entscheidung, sich an der Bereitstellung von Lerausstattung/Lehrmaterial zu beteiligen? Wenn nicht, warum nicht?
   b. Wie hat sich diese Zusammenarbeit im Laufe der Zeit verändert?
   c. Wie funktioniert diese Zusammenarbeit?

E. Mitwirkung bei der Governance
1. Kooperieren Sie mit Berufsbildungsagenturen, Berufsverbänden, Kammern, lokalen/regionalen/nationalen Fachbeiräten, Aufsichtsgremien bei der Gestaltung des Berufsbildungssystems?
   a. Waren Sie an der Ausarbeitung strategischer Dokumente wie z.B. der National Education Skills Strategy in Albanien/Kosovo Education Strategic Plan beteiligt?
   b. Wenn ja, warum verfolgen Sie diese Form der Zusammenarbeit?
Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview Guidelines

F. Mitwirkung bei der Curriculumentwicklung
1. Kooperieren Sie mit privaten Akteuren bei der Entwicklung eines Curriculums für Berufsschüler?
   a. Wenn ja, warum haben Sie sich für eine Zusammenarbeit auf diesem Gebiet entschieden?
   b. Hat sich Ihre Rolle im Laufe der Zeit verändert?
   c. Wie wurden die Rollen festgelegt und formalisiert?
   d. Wenn nicht, warum nicht?

G. Beteiligung an der Finanzierung
1. Gibt es private Akteure, die die Berufsschüler finanziell unterstützen oder sich im Berufsbildungssystem finanziell beteiligen?
   a. Wenn ja, welche Gründe haben zu dieser Entscheidung geführt?
   b. Haben sich die Gründe im Laufe der Zeit geändert?
   d. Wenn nicht, warum kooperieren private Akteure nicht im Finanzbereich?

III. Welchen Hintergrund haben Ihre Projektmitarbeiter, die direkt mit den Firmen kooperieren? Bauen Sie Mitarbeiterqualifikationen auf?

IV. Was ist der wichtigste Erfolgsfaktor, der zu funktionierenden Partnerschaften mit privaten Akteuren führt? Wie finden Sie gemeinsame Interessengebiete und überwinden kulturelle, organisatorische und kommunikative Barrieren?

V. Welche Faktoren tragen zum Vertrauensaufbau bei?

VI. Was ist der schwierigste Teil Ihres Engagements in der Berufsbildung? Haben Unternehmen die Zusammenarbeit schon mal abgebrochen? Wo gibt es den größten Widerstand?

VII. Welche Potenziale und Herausforderungen birgt das Engagement mit der Privatwirtschaft in der Berufsbildung in Albanien/Kosovo für die Zukunft?

VIII. In welche Richtung soll Ihrer Meinung nach die Berufsbildung gehen? Was ist notwendig um dies zu erreichen?
2. Questions for donors and project staff

I. Please tell me a bit about your project in a few words.

II. At first, I would like to understand exactly how you and your partner firms are engaged in VET and then in the last part I will propose some more reflective questions.

A. Company-Based VET Phases

1. What kind of company-based phases does your project promote for VET students?
   a. With what kind of partner do you provide this training? How were these partners selected? Can you generalise whether cooperation with small, local or large regional partners is better?
   b. What were the reasons that made your project choose this form of cooperation? Who initiated cooperation? What is the best way to acquire private actors for VET projects? Do private actors need to be actively/explicitly advertised? Or is it advisable to react to the needs of the market and adapt to them?
   c. How has the cooperation with the private sector evolved?
   d. Why do you think did the private sector decide to cooperate?
   e. How do you choose the students that can participate in your training?
   f. With which other institutions (like VET schools or governmental agencies) are you in contact with to provide the training?
   g. What kind of mechanism do you have that shape the roles of each party involved?
   h. If you don’t provide company-based VET phases in your project, why don’t you provide it?

B. Cooperation in Examinations and Certification

1. Does your project cooperate with firms or chambers of commerce or other similar institutions in developing exams and the certification of students? If yes, in what form?
   a. What factors initiated you to be part of examinations and certification?
   b. How has this cooperation developed over time?
   c. How did you decide and formalise your cooperation?
   d. If not, why are you not involved in the development of exams and certificates?

C. Qualification of (Teaching and) Training Staff

1. Do you cooperate with private actors to qualify teachers and training staff/instructors? If not, why not?

D. Provision of Equipment and Teaching Materials

1. Do you work with private actors to provide any equipment and teaching materials?
   a. If yes, what actors lead to the decision to be involved in providing equipment/teaching materials?
   b. How has this cooperation changed over time?
   c. How does this cooperation work?
   d. If not, why not?

E. Cooperation in Governance – Ambassadors of VET

1. Do you cooperate with VET agencies, trade associations, chambers, local/regional/national skills council, supervisory body in shaping the VET system?
   a. Were you involved in the drafting of strategic documents like the National Education Skills Strategy in Albania/Kosovo Education Strategic Plan?
   b. If yes, why do you have this form of cooperation?
   c. How has the cooperation changed over time?
   d. How did you decide on the form of cooperation and how did you formalise it?
   e. If not, why not?

F. Cooperation in developing a curriculum

1. Do you cooperate with private actors in developing a curriculum for students?
   a. If yes, why did you decide to cooperate in this field?
Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview Guidelines

b. Has your role changed over time?
c. How were the roles decided upon and formalised?
d. If not, why not?

G. Participation in Financing
2. Do any private actors provide any form of financial support to the students?
   a. If yes, what reasons lead to this decision?
   b. Have the reasons changed over time?
   c. How has this financial support been formalised?
   d. If not, why don’t private actors cooperate in finance?

III. What kind of background does your project staff have that cooperates directly with the private sector? Do you build staff skills?

IV. What is the most important success factor that leads to well-functioning partnerships with private actors? How do you find common areas of interest and overcome cultural, organisational and communicational barriers?

V. Which factors contribute to building trust?

VI. What is the hardest part of your engagement in VET? Have companies ever stopped the cooperation? Where do you face the greatest resistance?

VII. What potentials and challenges does the engagement with the private sector in VET in Albania/Kosovo hold for the future?

VIII. In which direction do you hope VET is going? What is necessary to make this happen?
3. Questions for companies

I. Please tell me a bit about your company in a few words.

II. At first, I would like to understand exactly how you are engaged in VET and then in the last part I will propose some more reflective questions.

A. Company-Based VET Phases
   1. What kind of VET do you provide to the students in your company?
      a. Before you provided this training, what were the reasons that made the company take this step?
      b. Why do you still provide this training?
      c. How do you choose the students that can participate in your training?
      d. With which other institutions (like VET school or donor) are you in contact with to provide the training?
      e. What kind of mechanism do you have that shape the roles of each party involved?
      f. If you don’t provide company-based VET phases, why don’t you provide it?

B. Cooperation in Examinations and Certification
   2. Are you involved in developing exams and the certification of students? If yes, in what form?
      a. What factors initiated you to be part of examinations and certification?
      b. How has it developed over time?
      c. With which institutions are you in contact with to develop exams and certificates?
      d. How did you decide and formalise your cooperation?
      e. If not, why are you not involved in the development of exams and certificates?

C. Qualification of (Teaching and) Training Staff
   2. Who explains the tasks to the students?
      a. Do you cooperate with another organisation in order to qualify the instructors?
      b. If not, why not?

D. Provision of Equipment and Teaching Materials
   2. Do you provide any equipment to other VET institutions?
      a. Do you cooperate in developing teaching materials? Do you develop them by yourself?
      b. If yes, what actors lead to the decision to be involved in providing equipment/teaching materials?
      c. How has this changed over time?
      d. With which organisations are you in contact with to provide equipment/teaching materials?
      e. How does this cooperation work?
      f. If not, why not?

E. Cooperation in Governance – Ambassadors of VET
   2. Do you cooperate in VET agencies, propose laws or similar to change the law, trade associations, chamber, local/regional/national skills council, supervisory body, other company? Or do you make your engagement in VET visible in any form? Public relations?
      a. If yes, why do you have this form of cooperation?
      b. How has the cooperation changed over time?
      c. How did you decide on the form of cooperation and how did you formalise it?
      d. If not, why not?

F. Cooperate in developing a curriculum
   2. Do you cooperate in developing a curriculum for students?
      a. With which institution do you develop curriculum?
      b. If yes, why did you decide to help in this field?
      c. Has your role changed over time?
      d. How were the roles decided upon and formalised?
      e. If not, why not?
G. Participation in Financing
4. Do you provide any form of financial support to the students? Other institutions?
   a. If yes, what reasons lead to this decision?
   b. Have the reasons changed over time?
   c. How has this financial support been formalised?
   d. What benefits are there in (not) participating in finance over the costs?
   e. How do you prevent that others do not benefit from your engagement/investment in the skills?

III. What are the biggest benefits for your company to engage in VET?

IV. What factors or measures are needed for you as a company to build trust with an institution that wants to cooperate with you?

V. What is the hardest part of your engagement in VET? Where do you face the biggest resistance?

VI. What potentials and challenges does the engagement with the private sector in VET in Albania and Kosovo hold for the future?

VII. In which direction do you hope VET is going? What is necessary to make this happen?
Appendix B: List of interview partners and notes

Albania
A.1 Interview with representative of ADA, 27th February 2018, 01h 05min, at ADA Head office in Tirana, Albania
A.2 Statements made during informal talks with representatives of a VET project funded by SDC, 27th February 2018, in Tirana, Albania
A.3 Statements and inputs from the school visit (Shkolla Tregtare Vlorë) that cooperates with a project financed by SDC, 28th February 2018, in Vlora, Albania
A.4 Interview with company representative from restaurant sector, 28th February 2018, 12 min, in Vlora, Albania, Direct translation during interview
A.5 Interview with company representative from hotel sector, 28th February 2018, 13 min, in Vlora, Tirana, Direct translation during interview
A.6 Interview with company representative from ICT sector, Interview from 28th February 2018, 33min, in Tirana, Albania
A.7 Interview with a representative of a VET project funded by BMZ and a representative of a foreign umbrella organisation, Interview on the 2nd March 2018, 01h 07min, in Tirana, Albania
A.8 Interview with representative of a VET project funded by SDC, 2nd March 2018, 47min, in Tirana, Albania
A.9 Interview with two business relationships specialists from a VET project funded by SDC, 2nd March 2018, 01h 02min, Tirana, Albania
A.10 Interview with a company representative from the textile sector, 26th March 2018, 26min, via Skype (Interviewee located in Germany)

Kosovo
B.1 Interview with representative of an umbrella organisation, 5th March 2018, 01h 05min, in Pristina, Kosovo
B.2 Interview with a representative of SDC, 6th March 2018, 46min, Pristina, Kosovo
B.3 Interview with company representative from the mechanical engineering sector, 6th March 2018, 57min, Pristina, Kosovo
B.4 Interview with a representative of a VET project funded by BMZ, 7th March 2018, 1h, Pristina, Kosovo
B.5 Interview with representative of a research institute focussing on VET and a teacher from a VET school, 7th March 2018, 56min, Pristina, Kosovo, Direct translation during interview
B.6 Interview with company representative from the retail sector, 7th March 2018, 43min, Pristina, Tirana
B.7 Interview with a representative of a VET project funded by ADA, 22nd March 2018, 58min, via Skype (Interviewee located in Pristina, Kosovo)
B.8 Interview with a representative of a VET project funded by SDC, 4th April 2018, 58min, via Skype (Interviewee located in Pristina, Kosovo)

The interview transcripts are written down in a separate document (Appendix C).
Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare

- that I have written this thesis without any help from others and without the use of documents and aids other than those stated above,
- that I have mentioned all sources used and that I have cited them correctly according to established academic citation rules.

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Linda Wanklin