# Evaluation Report

**External evaluation of “Support to VET reforms in Uzbekistan” project Phase 1 (2021-2025)**

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orange &teal

# Imprint

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External evaluation of “Support to VET reforms in Uzbekistan” project Phase 1 (2021-2025)

Final Report

**Submitted to:**

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# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AFD | Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency) |
| APA | Academy of Public Administration |
| AoH | Association of Hoteliers |
| CEMETS | Center on the Economics and Management of Education and Training Systems |
| CHF | Swiss Franc |
| DCC | Donor Coordination Committee |
| EHL | École Hôtelière de Lausanne |
| EQs | Evaluation Questions |
| ETH Zurich | Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich |
| GIZ | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for International Cooperation) |
| GSTC | Global Sustainable Tourism Council |
| IGE | Inclusive Green Economy |
| IVETD | Institute for VET Development |
| KOICA | Korea International Cooperation Agency |
| LMS | Learning Management System |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MEAL | Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning |
| MEPR | Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction |
| MHESI | Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation |
| MTR | Mid-Term Review |
| MoPSE | Ministry of Preschool and School Education |

| | |
|---|---|
| MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| NQF | National Qualifications Framework |
| OECD DAC | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Development Assistance Committee |
| PD | Presidential Decree |
| PECA | Professional Education for Economic Growth Sectors in Central Asia |
| PIU | Project Implementation Unit |
| QA | Quality Assurance |
| SFUVET | Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training |
| SSC | Sector Skills Council |
| SiVET | Situation-based VET |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| ToC | Theory of Change |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| VET | Vocational Education and Training |
| VET4UZ | Support to VET reforms in Uzbekistan |

# Executive Summary

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) commissioned a final review of the "Support to VET reforms in Uzbekistan" project Phase 1 (2021-2025). The evaluation was conducted between March and June 2025.

## Evaluation approach

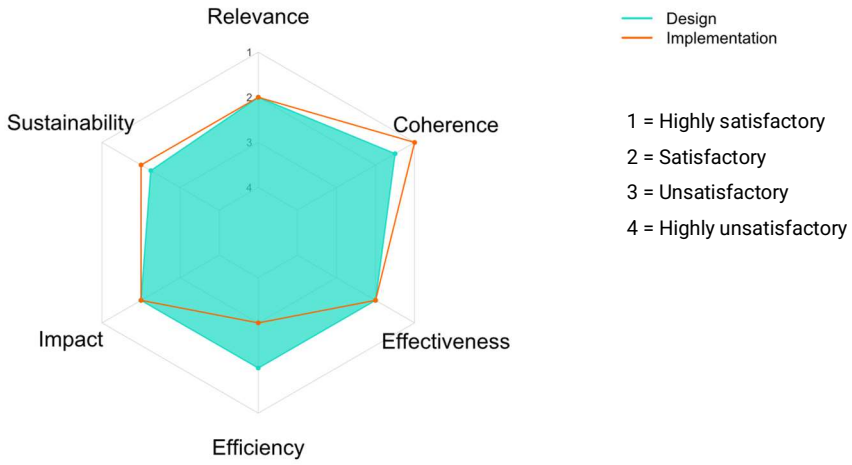
The objectives of the evaluation were to assess the project against OECD DAC criteria, capture key achievements and lessons, and provide recommendations to improve the design of the next phase, taking into account the budget cuts of 40-50% resulting from the general reduction in Switzerland's international cooperation funds.

These sources were used for the evaluation:

- **Document review:** analysis of project-related documents and studies.
- **Data review:** analysis of the M&E framework and project data.
- **Interviews:** 45 stakeholders were interviewed individually, or took part in group discussions.
- **Online survey:** a survey was distributed to 76 stakeholders, with 32 persons responding (42%)

Milestones of the evaluation were the kick-off meeting (06 March 2025), the approval of the evaluation concept (18 March 2025), the validation workshop with SDC and the VET4UZ team (01 May 2025), the submission of the draft report (15 May 2025), the submission of the final report (15 June 2025), and a presentation to the VET4UZ Steering Committee (12 June 2025).

## Evaluation results



**Relevance: Satisfactory**

The VET4UZ project is recognised as highly relevant, effectively addressing national priorities and institutional needs through its two-pronged focus on systemic reform and practical application, particularly in the hospitality sector. Strategic sector and location choices were well received, though remote areas like Zaamin faced implementation challenges. Nevertheless, the project's potential has been undermined by the lack of a coherent national strategic framework for VET, which has led to fragmented vision, implementation, unclear roles, and weak ownership - especially in advancing dual VET. The Theory of Change, while ambitious, requires further substantiation as it overly focuses on supply-side inputs, offers little explanation of how interventions will translate into improved employability. Combined with overstretched resources and insufficient adaptation of Swiss models to the Uzbek context, these gaps risk limiting sustainable impact unless addressed through more focused, context-driven strategies and clearer operational guidance. That said, the project's flexibility, responsiveness to emerging needs, and collaborative approach - particularly in engaging with national, regional, and sectoral stakeholders and development partners - have enhanced its ability to navigate a dynamic reform environment.

**Coherence: Highly satisfactory**

The VET4UZ project has contributed significantly to donor coordination in the VET sector, establishing mechanisms such as the Donor Coordination Committee and technical working groups that fostered alignment on themes like dual education and quality assurance. Its collaborative efforts with GIZ, UNESCO, and others - along with pragmatic adjustments to avoid duplication - have been widely recognised. However, broader coherence is hindered by the limited participation of several major donors - such as KOICA and World Bank - in formal coordination efforts, resulting in parallel interventions rather than integrated action. This is further compounded by persistent government fragmentation: overlapping mandates across ministries (e.g. MHESI, MEPR, MoPSE) and weak cross-ministerial coordination have led to conflicting priorities, unclear responsibilities, and inconsistent implementation. Despite these systemic constraints, the project's inclusive and adaptive approach positions it well to support greater alignment with a unified national reform agenda and to contribute to more sustainable, sector-wide impact over time.

**Effectiveness: Satisfactory**

The project is largely on track to meet its logframe targets, with several output indicators already exceeded - particularly in governance and private sector involvement. However, progress on some indicators - especially those linked to systemic change, inclusiveness, and end-beneficiary outcomes - remains harder to verify due to vague or activity-based indicators. Overall, VET4UZ has significantly strengthened Uzbekistan's VET system by enabling collaboration across ministries, technicums, and employers through multi-level stakeholder platforms, and delivering high-quality capacity-building - most notably the SiVET master trainer programme and the CEMETS Summer Institute. These efforts have helped shift VET reform from fragmented to more coordinated practice. However, the project's influence at the strategic level remains limited; its engagement has largely focused on technical support and mid-level actors, with fewer opportunities to shape policy at ministerial or presidential levels. While VET4UZ has contributed

substantively to reforms - such as inputs to QA legislation and labour code amendments - these contributions are not always formally recognised or embedded in policy processes. Employer engagement, though strong within the AoH network, remains narrowly concentrated, with limited awareness of dual VET beyond direct partners. Additionally, the project's substantial research outputs are underleveraged, often due to limited accessibility and dissemination. To increase its effectiveness, VET4UZ needs to strengthen its strategic influence, broaden employer outreach, and ensure its evidence base informs system-wide reform more directly. The integration of transversal themes - good governance, inclusion, and green skills - has been visible across project activities, but uptake remains uneven, with efforts on gender and disability inclusion in particular lacking depth, institutional commitment, and measurable impact.

**Efficiency: Unsatisfactory**

VET4UZ is perceived as delivering quality outputs in a timely and cost-effective manner, with stakeholders highlighting the responsiveness and professionalism of the PIU. Strategic use of Swiss expertise added technical value and credibility but raised concerns around cost and sustainability due to limited local contextualization and ownership. Internally, the project's fragmented setup limited cross-component integration, particularly around the dual VET pilot, which was not fully embedded in the original design. Collaboration with government partners - especially MHESI and regional authorities - was constructive and enabled joint planning, but engagement with key institutional actors remained uneven: while the project built strong ties with the AoH, it struggled to engage the Chamber of Commerce, which remained largely absent from coordination platforms, and Sector Skills Councils, which lacked the mandate, resources, and capacity to play a meaningful role. This limited the project's ability to institutionalise employer engagement. M&E systems were introduced late and remained underdeveloped, constraining learning and accountability. While the project adapted effectively to policy shifts - such as contributing to regulatory changes for dual VET - its efficiency was weakened by siloed implementation and missed opportunities for institutional strengthening. As a result, implementation performance was rated lower than the ambition of the original design.

**Impact: Satisfactory**

While VET4UZ has made meaningful contributions to elevating the VET reform agenda - particularly through high-level policy dialogue and inputs to major reforms like PD No.158- its direct impact on youth employability and income generation remains limited and difficult to measure at this stage. The project's interventions, such as improved teacher training and quality assurance systems, and roll-out of dual VET training pilot, are still in early phases of implementation, with no completed graduate cohorts yet. Attribution challenges are compounded by systemic constraints, limited outcome-level monitoring, and the persistent perception of VET as a less desirable education pathway. Moreover, the dual VET pilot's current focus on upskilling employed adults rather than targeting unemployed youth further weakens its alignment with the project's core employment objective. While early signals - such as signed training contracts and employer engagement - are promising, clearer progression pathways and stronger outcome tracking will be essential to determine whether VET4UZ can ultimately deliver on its goal of improved employment outcomes for young people.

**Sustainability: Satisfactory**

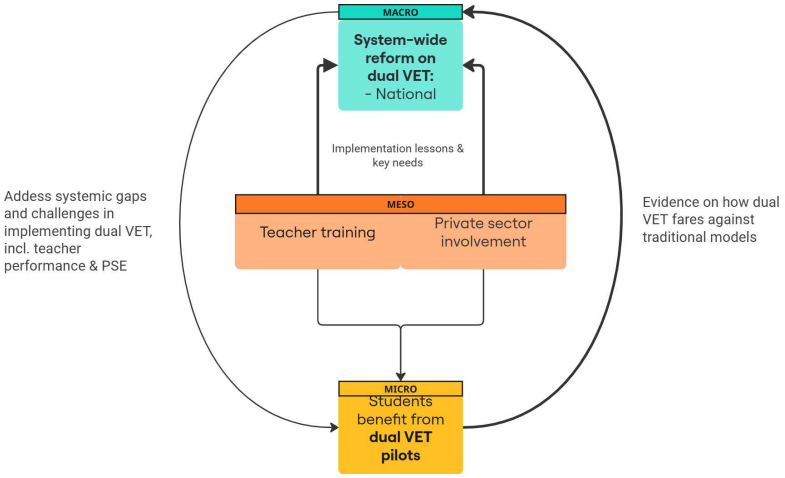
VET4UZ has laid a strong foundation for sustainability through capacity building in governance, teacher training, and QA, as well as through piloting dual VET models with engaged employers. Stakeholders expressed high motivation and confidence to sustain activities, but limited financial readiness remains a key barrier. Institutional anchoring is still partial: reforms have yet to be embedded into job roles, budgets, or national systems, making gains vulnerable to staff turnover and administrative change. Despite a growing legal basis for dual VET, operational clarity and funding mechanisms are lacking, with parallel models coexisting without a unified framework. Private sector involvement - particularly through AoH - has deepened but remains dependent on donor coordination and incentives such as free training. Expansion beyond hospitality is possible but should not be a priority for the next phase as it requires tailored approaches and longer preparation. While national actors recognise the need for a structured transition, no roadmap or formal agreement exists to ensure ownership, financing, and long-term governance of dual VET. Without a clear handover plan, current achievements risk remaining project-driven rather than institutionalised.

# Recommendations

**Recommendation 1: Enable a structured transition and use implementation to inform system-wide reform.** Phase 1 of VET4UZ has laid critical foundations in legal frameworks, pilot models, and institutional capacity, but sustained impact now requires embedding these elements into national systems. The project should support MHESI in developing a phased transition roadmap that clearly defines institutional roles, financing options, and coordination mechanisms, while gradually shifting implementation responsibilities to national actors. To ensure reforms are scalable and policy-responsive, implementation experiences must be systematically translated into policy input through tools like monitoring frameworks and policy briefs. This approach will allow VET4UZ to transition into a focused advisory role, while empowering Uzbek institutions to lead and sustain reform efforts.

**Recommendation 2: Focus phase 2 on teacher training and private sector involvement to consolidate reform delivery.** As Uzbekistan's VET system moves from foundational development to practical implementation, and with anticipated budget reductions of 40-50% in Phase 2 due to general cuts of Switzerland's international cooperation funds, the project should strategically narrow its focus to teacher training and private sector involvement - two key levers for improving quality and labour market relevance. Consolidating the teacher training cascade within IVETD and MHESI, embedding dual-compatible pedagogies into national curricula, and securing public financing will be essential for sustainable capacity development. In parallel, the project should deepen engagement in the hospitality sector by developing dual VET guidelines, strengthening intermediary coordination structures, and formalising public-private cost-sharing arrangements. This targeted focus will help consolidate Phase 1 gains and create a scalable foundation for future sectoral expansion.

*Visualisation of recommendation 1 and 2*




**Recommendation 3: Strengthen and evidence the Theory of Change (ToC) to guide Phase 2 design and prioritisation.** As the project shifts to delivery amid tighter resources, Phase 2 offers a critical moment to revise the ToC to better reflect how institutional and systemic change is expected to occur. The current ToC lacks clarity on demand-side drivers - such as employer engagement and learner pathways - and does not sufficiently define the mechanisms linking interventions to impact. A more robust, stakeholder-informed ToC will strengthen the project's strategic focus, improve prioritisation, and better guide pilot design, M&E, and government dialogue. In particular, aligning the dual VET pilot with the revised ToC will ensure that implementation actively tests key assumptions and contributes meaningfully to long-term goals around employability and system transformation.

**Recommendation 4: Strengthen the M&E system to support learning, accountability, and policy influence.** While VET4UZ's current M&E system provides a basic foundation, it requires significant enhancement to capture outcomes at the learner, institutional, and policy levels and to support evidence-based decision-making. Existing tools focus largely on activity tracking, with limited outcome-level data and an overreliance on under-resourced local actors for reporting. In Phase 2, the project should design a structured M&E framework aligned with the revised ToC, including robust evaluation of the dual VET pilot with appropriate baseline, outcome indicators linked to employment and institutional change, and support for provider-level capacity building. Embedding regular learning reviews and translating results into advocacy tools will ensure the M&E system drives both strategic adaptation and policy influence.

**Recommendation 5: Use Swiss expertise strategically to strengthen local capacity and shape policy reform.** Swiss partners, notably CEMETS and SFUVET, have played a key role in enhancing the project's technical credibility and policy influence; however, concerns around cost-effectiveness, contextual fit, and sustainability call for a more targeted approach in Phase 2. Their engagement should shift towards high-level policy support at ministerial and presidential levels,

mentoring of national actors, and co-developing capacity with local institutions. A tandem model - pairing Swiss and national experts - can help balance visibility and local ownership, while maintaining quality in key interventions. To maximise impact, the project should also monitor the uptake of Swiss inputs and adapt engagement formats based on strategic value and feedback.

**Recommendation 6: Leverage Inclusive Green Economy opportunities and strengthen coordination to amplify impact.** Uzbekistan's emphasis on green tourism presents a timely opportunity for VET4UZ to align its sectoral focus in hospitality with national Inclusive Green Economy (IGE) goals and SDC's strategic priorities. By embedding green skills into training, teacher development, and employer partnerships, the project can enhance its relevance and long-term impact without expanding its scope. At the same time, tighter budgets in Phase 2 call for stronger coordination with national and international partners, as well as Swiss-funded programmes, to maximise synergies and resource efficiency. Positioning VET4UZ as a learning hub for green skills in tourism and deepening collaboration around shared reform objectives can amplify the project's influence and sustainability.

# 1. Introduction

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) commissioned our team to conduct the final review of the "Support to VET reforms in Uzbekistan" project Phase 1 (2021-2025). The objectives of the final evaluation are threefold:

1. To assess the project in accordance with the OECD DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability;
2. To provide insights into the project's achievements, challenges, and lessons learned, with a view to informing future programming and decision-making;
3. To formulate recommendations regarding aspects that should be designed differently in the next phase.

The report presents the evaluation team's approach (Chapter 2), key findings (Chapter 3), conclusions (Chapter 4), and recommendations (Chapter 5).

We would like to thank all interviewees and survey participants for their valuable contributions to this evaluation. Our gratitude also goes to SDC and the VET4UZ team for their support and for their openness and constructive engagement in discussing the evaluation results.

# 2. Evaluation approach

The evaluation was guided by the OECD DAC Standards (including the Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, "Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully", and "Protection of people involved in evaluation" guidelines) as well as SDC guidelines for evaluations.

A mixed methods approach was applied, with the following key components:

- **Document review:** Design documents, progress reports, and other project documents were reviewed to find answers to the evaluation questions and to contextualise the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
- **Data review:** The M&E framework was an important source of information and was used to assess target achievement.
- **Interviews**: We interacted with more than 45 stakeholders (24% women and 76% men) almost exclusively face-to-face during the country visit between 3 and 9 April 2025. The interviewees (see Annex 3) were suggested by SDC and the VET4UZ team.
- **Online survey:** An online survey was distributed to 76 stakeholders during the country visit, with 11 women and 21 men responding (42% response rate). To encourage participation, reminders were sent via email and Telegram messages. The contact list was provided by the VET4UZ team.

- **Validation**: Opportunities for participation and feedback were provided through a debriefing with SDC at the end of the country visit, an online co-creation workshop with SDC and the VET4UZ team on 1 May 2025, the review of the draft evaluation report, and a presentation to the VET4UZ Steering Committee on 12 June 2025.

The evaluation was implemented in accordance with the inception report; all meetings took place as planned. As such, no significant challenges or limitations arose beyond those commonly encountered in evaluation processes:

- **Limited familiarity**: Several interviewees were involved only in specific components and lacked a full understanding of the project. *Mitigation*: For the interviews and the survey, we were breaking down the questions to intervention or activity level.
- **Response bias**: Responses may be influenced by power dynamics or vested interests. *Mitigation*: We ensured anonymity in data collection methods and triangulated findings from multiple independent sources. We emphasized the learning focus of the evaluation at the beginning of all interactions.
- **Meeting culture:** In our interactions - particularly with government stakeholders in Uzbekistan - we observed a tendency toward formal dialogue and limited expression of critical feedback. *Mitigation:* To foster more open and constructive exchanges, we adapted our approach by carefully phrasing our questions and encouraging candid input. While these efforts facilitated more open dialogue in several instances, certain limitations related to communication norms remained.

Despite these limitations, we believe that our data, gathered from diverse sources and perspectives, provides a solid foundation for this review. We adhered to **ethical guidelines** by implementing measures for informed consent, ensuring anonymity, and maintaining data security in the following ways:

- Interview, survey, and focus group participants received information on the purpose of the mid-term review, their involvement, and their rights.
- Participants received a generic link to the survey to prevent any possibility of identifying individual respondents; the survey included options to opt-out and delete responses.
- Recordings, transcripts, and other memos and contact information were deleted upon completion of the review.

# 3. Findings

This chapter presents the findings related to the twelve evaluation questions (EQs, see Annex 2), structured around the six DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The findings in each section are derived from the mix-method approach described in the section above.

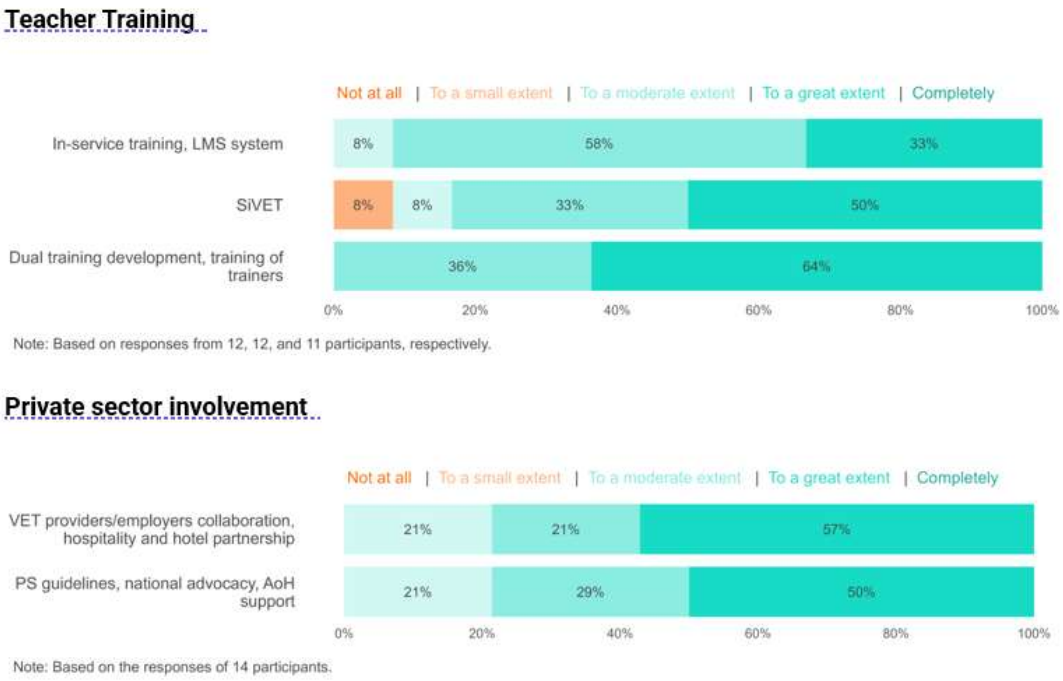
## 3.1. Relevance

In terms of relevance, we primarily assess how well the intervention meets the needs of its target populations (EQ 1), whether it focuses on the right locations and sectors (EQ 2), and if it has stayed relevant amid political, economic, and social changes (EQ 3).

*Figure 1: How relevant are these project activities to your organisation?*



*Figure 1 (cont.): How relevant are these project activities to your organisation?*




**The VET4UZ project has been widely regarded by stakeholders as highly relevant**, both in its design and implementation, across all four components: VET governance, quality assurance (QA), teacher training, and private sector involvement (see more in Annex 1). A large majority of survey respondents (92%–100%) believed that the project's activities align well with their institutional priorities (Figure 1). Many noted that the project's activities directly support their day-to-day responsibilities, especially in managing technicums, enhancing pedagogical quality, and linking education to labour market demands. Others emphasised the project's systemic contributions, including its role in donor coordination, policy reform processes, and national initiatives such as WorldSkills. Overall, there is a strong appreciation for the project's **systemic and sectoral focus** - supporting national-level VET governance while implementing dual training in the hospitality sector. This two-pronged strategy has enabled the project to address both structural reform and practical implementation and was considered a robust model for addressing fragmentation in Uzbekistan's VET system. Interviewees across ministries and VET providers also emphasised the coherence and responsiveness of the project amidst ongoing reforms. As one interviewee put it, *"Uzbekistan is a fast-moving ground… reforms are coming all the time, and the project is able to adapt fast"*.

Stakeholders unanimously acknowledged that **VET4UZ aligns with national strategic directions**, particularly the *Education Sector Plan 2019–2023*, the *Uzbekistan 2030 Development Strategy*, and the *2025 Year of Green Tourism*. The focus on Inclusive Green Economy (IGE), as part of the project's transversal themes, was seen as timely and relevant, with the 2024 training in GSTC

standards for hospitality employers serving as a direct response to Uzbekistan's ambitions for green tourism.

**The choice of hospitality as the pilot sector proved to be a strategically sound decision**. Stakeholders highlighted that the sector is labour-intensive, offers high potential for job creation, and has relatively few development partners active in it. They also noted its alignment with national development goals, including the government's prioritisation of tourism and green growth. The establishment of formal partnerships between VET colleges and over a dozen hotels in four regions, with employers participating in curriculum co-design, training implementation, and the hosting of apprentices, demonstrate a tangible shift towards shift towards employer-driven skills development. The MoU signed with the Association of Hoteliers (AoH) in December 2023 further formalised these strategic alignments.

**The selection of Bukhara, Bostanlik, Zaamin, and Tashkent as pilot locations reflected a balance** of tourism potential, institutional motivation, and implementation feasibility. Tashkent was chosen for its policy relevance and strong institutional base, Bukhara for its high tourism traffic and strong leadership at the technicum, Bostanlik and Zaamin for its growing appeal in eco-tourism, motivated local VET provider, and availability of committed local employers. However, challenges in Bostanlik included infrastructure and administrative instability, with renovation funds frozen due to tourism authority reorganisations, delaying capacity development. Zaamin technicum's geographical remoteness limits students' access to dual parallel VET, with currently only two nearby resorts participating. Stakeholders identified this as a key barrier to expanding dual training in the area.

**The project's initial emphasis on foundational systems development over immediate piloting was a deliberate and widely supported choice**, especially considering the evolving policy environment. In 2022 and 2023, key groundwork was laid for quality assurance, VET governance, and private sector involvement. For example, the project facilitated the development of the QA Handbook, now adopted as the national reference by Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation (MHESI), and trained 14 master trainers in the *Situation-based VET* methodology for further cascading of this training. VET4UZ also contributed to legal and policy developments, including amendments to the Law on Education[1] and inputs into Presidential Decree (PD) No.158 and Resolution No.345, both of which are shaping the evolving VET system in Uzbekistan[2]. This systemic focus - rather than short-term technical fixes - was seen as essential for maintaining relevance amid rapid reforms and institutional restructuring. However, as VET systemic

[1] Amendments to Article 58 of the Law on Education, informed by VET4UZ recommendations, granted educational institutions increased autonomy to develop internal quality assurance systems based on self-assessment and stakeholder participation. This legal change marks a shift towards a more decentralised and trust-based approach to quality in vocational education.

[2] Presidential Decree No. 158 (October 2024) and Resolution No. 345 (September 2024) together define the strategic direction for Uzbekistan's VET reform. Decree 158 establishes a unified system of multidisciplinary technical schools and consolidates all VET institutions under MHESI (600 institutions at International Standard Classification of Education - ISCED levels 3, 4, and 5), while also introducing credit-based pathways for transition to higher education and facilitating direct employer-based admissions into dual training. Resolution 345 reinforces these reforms by tasking the newly established Project Office with leading quality assurance system development, standardising curriculum processes, and aligning training with labour market demands. Both instruments strengthen governance coherence, promote dual training, and institutionalise quality and employer engagement within the VET system.

structures mature, **expectations have shifted towards implementation and applied learning.** Most stakeholders indicated that the transition from conceptual groundwork to practical delivery is now essential to maintain the project's relevance. In this context, the demand for tangible evidence of results has also grown more pressing.

Despite these achievements, several challenges remain. **The absence of a strategic framework - with clear roles, implementation guidance, and KPIs - has led to fragmented vision, scattered efforts, and limited commitment to implementation, particularly in dual VET.** While public and private stakeholders largely agree on the direction of dual training reform, there is weak ownership, accountability, and clarity regarding roles and responsibilities. This situation reflects broader issues of policy fragmentation. Although the 2019–2023 Education Sector Plan provided an initial foundation, the follow-up 2023–2026 Partnership Compact contains little VET-specific content, leaving a strategic vacuum. The absence of a unified framework has complicated efforts to align project interventions coherently. Some stakeholders highlighted that, in the absence of a unified national VET framework, ministries operate more as implementers than strategic drivers, with limited autonomy in shaping the reform agenda.

**The breadth of activities taken up by the project across four components**, despite a 2020 scoping study that may have intended to guide prioritisation, **raises questions about focus of the project, particularly as it moves into the next phase with a significantly reduced budget**[3]. While the comprehensive approach has enabled responsiveness and engagement, there are concerns that the project team was at times overstretched, particularly during the first half of the implementation period, when key technical positions such as QA expert, M&E officer, and communications lead remained unfilled. In addition, multiple activities had to be implemented in three languages and across dispersed pilot sites, adding to operational complexity and strain. This overextension contributed to delays in rollout and diluted the potential for intensive, high-impact interventions. A more targeted intervention strategy may have yielded deeper impact, particularly given capacity limitations within national institutions and the fluctuating reform environment.

A review of the project's **Theory of Change (ToC) suggests that its overall robustness is limited**, particularly in terms of its evidence base and the plausibility of its assumptions. Several key causal links - especially those relating to employability, income gains, and broader economic development - remain insufficiently substantiated. The ToC relies heavily on supply-side interventions such as curriculum reform, quality assurance, and teacher training, while giving comparatively little attention to demand-side factors like job matching, employer investment, and private sector co-ownership. This imbalance weakens the ToC's explanatory power and limits its usefulness as a strategic and learning tool.

[3] In their response to the validation workshop presentation, the VET4UZ team acknowledges the evaluators' perspective but maintains that the broad project scope was a strategic and politically viable response to the complex, systemic challenges in the VET sector. They noted that limiting the intervention to a few components may have delivered short-term gains but risked unsustainable outcomes without systemic integration. In their view, working across four components catalysed institutional learning, fostered inter-agency collaboration, and created opportunities for scaling and embedding reforms.

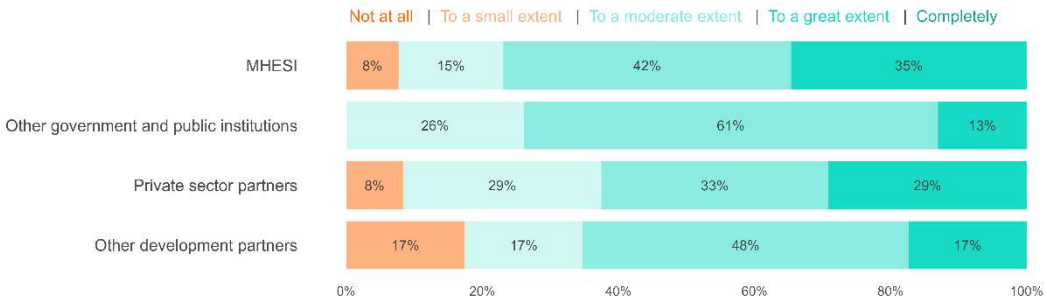
Finally, **the adaptation of Swiss models to the Uzbek context has not been without difficulty, leaving gaps in both implementation and local ownership.** Some feedback suggests that training approaches in governance, quality assurance, and pedagogy were insufficiently contextualised, at least for some participants, limiting their ability to apply them effectively. The four pilot technicums - Bukhara, Bostanlik, Zaamin, and Tashkent - are still developing the capacity to internalise and lead such reforms. Similarly, at the governance level, some civil servants have struggled to translate Swiss-based concepts into actionable policy. As one interviewee put it, *"We need more Uzbek examples, not just Swiss ones"*. Despite participation in initiatives like the CEMETS Summer Institute, strategic leadership capacity remains limited, reinforcing reliance on external actors and slowing progress toward nationally led VET reform.

## 3.2. Coherence

This section covers external coherence, i.e. the extent to which opportunities for cooperation with other donor-funded projects are sufficiently leveraged (EQ 4), including complementarity and coordination with government and other development partners' interventions.[4]

The majority of survey participants believed that **the project had coordinated effectively -** with responses ranging from a great extent to completely - **with other development partners** (62%), **MHESI** (77%), **and other government partners and public institutions** (74%), reflecting a strong overall perception of stakeholder engagement across institutional levels (Figure 2). These positive assessments are supported by VET4UZ's concrete efforts to establish and operationalise coordination mechanisms.

*Figure 2: Do you think that the project has done enough to coordinate with:*




Note: Based on responses from 26, 23, 24, and 23 participants, respectively.

**VET4UZ has played a constructive role in reinforcing development partner coordination and aligning interventions** within Uzbekistan's VET reform landscape. From 2022 to 2023, VET4UZ served as the secretariat of the Donor Coordination Committee (DCC), co-chaired by MHESI and the SDC, supporting its operational setup and facilitation of this platform. Development partners, including GIZ and UNESCO, acknowledged VET4UZ's contributions to a more coherent donor

[4] VET4UZ is currently SDC's only project in the VET/VSD sector but a tender process has just been launched at the time of the evaluation for a second project focussing on non-formal VET/VSD.

ecosystem, particularly on building structured mechanisms for collaboration and avoiding duplication. The project supported the formation of technical working groups[5], which facilitated coordination on key themes such as quality assurance, dual education, and teacher training. This included the joint adaptation of EQAVET indicators with the EU/UNESCO project, alignment with GIZ's PECA ("Professional Education for Economic Growth Sectors in Central Asia") and TexVET ("Support of the Reform and Modernization Process in the Vocational Education System of Uzbekistan") programmes on employer engagement, and collaboration to harmonise the regulatory framework for dual education in 2022. To support broader coordination, VET4UZ led the development of a donor platform (www.tvet.edu.uz), now hosted by MHESI, which consolidates information on ongoing interventions. While the initiative represents a valuable step towards transparency and alignment, the platform appears to be underutilised, limiting its potential as a central coordination tool.

VET4UZ has also demonstrated flexibility by **adjusting its plans to avoid duplication**. For instance, it cancelled the development of a standalone Learning Management System after identifying a similar GIZ-supported initiative and instead contributed technical recommendations based on previous Swiss-funded systems. The project also coordinated closely with UNESCO in delineating responsibilities in the area of QA. VET4UZ focused on internal QA systems, while UNESCO led on external QA processes, such as accreditation and attestation. The project's development of the QA Handbook and training materials was acknowledged as aligning with UNESCO's broader QA strategy and was used to promote consistency across national providers.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist. **Engagement remains concentrated among a few key development partners** - primarily GIZ, SDC, and the EU - while others such as KOICA, the World Bank, UNDP, USAID, and AFD have not actively participated in formal working groups. Although their thematic focus - such as KOICA on automation and digital skills, GIZ on textiles, and VET4UZ on hospitality - broadly complement one another, these initiatives have largely operated in parallel, at least for much of the implementation period. While the project's active alignment has played a role in reducing overlap, opportunities for broader and more strategic collaboration across all partners remain underutilised.

Government leadership has also struggled to provide consistent strategic direction in the VET sector, which continues to suffer from **institutional fragmentation** - an issue that directly affects the coherence of the VET4UZ project. Although PD No.158 formally consolidated VET oversight under the MHESI, implementation has remained uneven. The Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction (MEPR) continues to manage non-formal, short-term training through Monocentres, while the Ministry of Preschool and School Education (MoPSE) retains responsibility for skills-based education in general schools (grades 10–11). Coordination between the ministries is weak, with conflicts of interest, as each pursues its own priorities and programmes independently. The overlap in mandates creates ambiguity in roles and responsibilities, undermining effective

[5] In 2024, the co-chair role of DCC rotated to GIZ, with VET4UZ continuing to contribute technically through the DCdVET thematic working groups. These working groups - on quality assurance, dual education, and teacher training - were established as sub-groups of the DCC to enable more focused, theme-specific coordination among development partners.

horizontal collaboration and contributing to fragmented reform narratives rather than a unified vision for the sector.

The institutional fragmentation **limits the project's ability to align with a unified government strategy and undermines cross-ministerial collaboration** on key areas such as dual education, career guidance, and quality assurance. For example, both MEPR and MHESI issue similar vocational certificates despite differing training durations and purposes, complicating efforts to build a coherent certification system. VET4UZ's systemic approach - designed to promote harmonisation, integration and complementarity - is therefore challenged by siloed decision-making and inconsistent policy implementation. Without stronger leadership and clearer division of responsibilities, the project's efforts risk being diluted or duplicated, reducing the overall coherence and sustainability of the reform process it seeks to support.

Compounding this challenge is **the absence of a clear advocacy strategy to guide structured engagement with government stakeholders**. Ambiguity persists around the respective roles of SDC and the VET4UZ Project Implementation Unit (PIU), which has, at times, led to parallel efforts and a lack of clarity in communication lines. The lack of a shared engagement strategy - specifying who communicates with which counterpart, when, and on what issue - undermines the project's ability to influence policy in a coordinated and sustained manner. This is further exacerbated by shifting government priorities and frequent turnover among key stakeholders.

## 3.3. Effectiveness

Under effectiveness, we discuss the extent to which targets are on track and whether they were realistic (EQ 5), variations in results by location or sector and their underlying reasons (EQ 6), and improvements in the VET system attributable to the project (EQ 7). We also examine key factors influencing success (EQ 8), and the transversal themes, including the inclusion of women and people with disabilities (EQ 9), the promotion of good governance principles (EQ 10), and contributions to an Inclusive Green Economy (EQ 11).

### *Project's targets and outcome*

Figure 3 summarizes the progress achieved to date by comparing current achievements against the overall phase targets. A detailed overview of the 13 outcome indicators and 24 output indicators, along with notes on any discrepancies, can be found in Annex 6.

The project appears **largely on track to meet its logframe targets** (Figure 3), with most outcome and output indicators showing substantial progress or full achievement by the end of 2024. Several output indicators have already surpassed their targets - particularly in Components 1 and 4 - highlighting strong delivery in areas such as policy coordination, legal harmonisation, and private sector involvement. For instance, Output 1.2 on the number of civil servants strengthened in VET management reached over 240% of its target (29 vs. 12 civil servants), while Output 4.1 on formalised collaboration between VET providers and the private sector is marked as fully achieved. Outcome indicators also show steady advancement across components. For example,

Outcome 1.2 on improved VET coordination, and Outcome 4.1 on enhanced private sector representation are reported as fully achieved. Although a few indicators remain at early stages or are scheduled for implementation in 2025, especially within Component 2 (QA), such as Outcome 2.2 on internal QA application, and aspects of Component 3 (Teacher Training), such as Output 3.1.5 on LMS capacity-building - these appear manageable within the project's overall timeline.

However, it is important to recognise that **progress against impact and outcome indicators does not always reflect meaningful systemic change**. Despite the logframe's revision after the mid-term review (MTR) in March–April 2024[6], several indicators - especially those related to end-beneficiary outcomes, inclusiveness, and institutional change - remained vague or overly output-focused.[7] Many indicators continued to track activities (e.g. workshops, participants) without defining what constituted improved capacity, behavioural change, or systemic adoption. Furthermore, the absence of disaggregated targets, particularly for disadvantaged groups such as women, rural youth, or learners with disabilities, further weakened the ability to assess equity and inclusion. The goal-level indicator on graduate employment, which remains unchanged from the original version, lacks a clear baseline, target, or project-specific data source, relying instead on national statistics - thereby limiting its usefulness in assessing the project's direct contribution. Without stronger definitions and more outcome-oriented measures, **there is a risk that the logframe overemphasises delivery and underrepresents transformation.**

[6] The logframe was revised to reflect Uzbekistan's dynamic reform context and the emergence of new institutions and policies that altered the project's original assumptions. For example, the indicator on the integration of EMIS was removed, as this area had become the focus of ADB and GIZ; the pre-service teacher training (PRESETT) indicator was also dropped, as it was not implemented in Phase 1.

[7] For example, outcome indicator 1.1, which aims to capture the shift from a "fragmented" to a "harmonised" regulatory framework, is conceptually relevant but lacks measurable criteria, and risks equating progress with the number of documents produced rather than systemic reform. Outcome indicator 3.3, originally measuring student and employer satisfaction with dual VET, was replaced with the number of VET providers piloting dual training - shifting from assessing a higher-level result to tracking easily measurable activities.

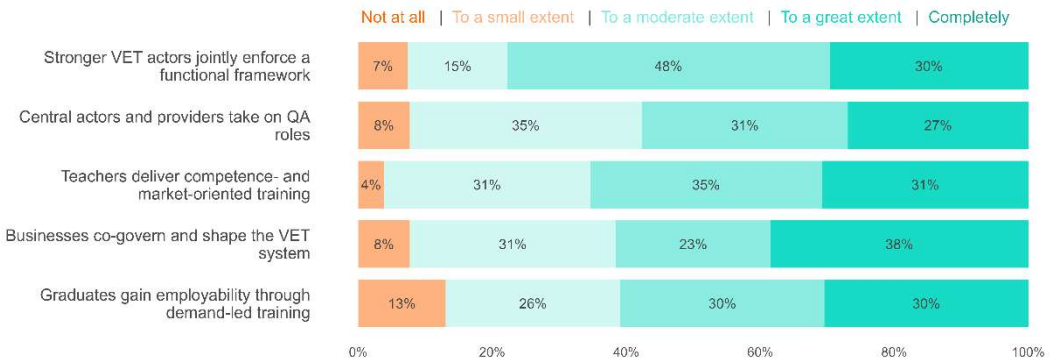
*Figure 3: Achievements measured against the LogFrame targets (status end of Q4 2024)*[8]




[8] Note: Outcome indicators are shown in orange and output indicators are in teal. Most indicators are qualitative; for visualisation purposes, we estimated percentage progress based on descriptive statuses by the project team (e.g. "Complete (100%)", "In progress (70%)", "Planned" = 0%). The chart helps identify which areas are fully achieved, in progress, or pending implementation.

The survey results show positive feedback for the five results (goal, outcomes), with some variation: Stakeholders perceive particularly strong contributions to joint enforcement of a functional framework (78%) and to teachers delivering more competence- and market-oriented training (68%). These values are still positive but slightly lower for business co-governance (61%), the uptake of quality assurance roles by central actors and providers (58%), and graduate employability (60%).

*Figure 4: To what extent has the project contributed to these project goals?*




Note: Based on responses from 27, 26, 26, 26, and 23 participants, respectively.

Interview evidence on the dual VET pilot reveals important regional differences that help explain the mixed survey results. **Progress varied across the four pilot sites - Zaamin, Bustonlik, Bukhara and Tashkent - depending on institutional capacity, employer engagement, and how effectively each technicum responded to national guidance**. Bukhara stood out for its strong partnerships with key hotels and proactive leadership, successfully launching the only active pilot group with 23 dual education students, many of whom were existing hotel staff. Tashkent moved quickly, backed by experienced staff and strong visibility, and had signed contracts to begin dual education with 200 students in September 2025, though implementation had not started at the time of the evaluation. Zaamin had previously begun training 65 students but had to disband the group due to unclear policies on admissions and tuition. It later secured ministry-level agreement to admit 30 students for the 2025/26 academic year, but final approval was still pending. Bustonlik faced the greatest difficulties, with poor infrastructure and limited engagement from local tourism bodies, resulting in stalled progress. These experiences show that successful reform relies not only on national frameworks and policies, but also on local leadership and coordination.

### *Project's key contributions to the VET system*

Findings from the M&E data and survey are strongly reinforced by interviewees' qualitative feedback, particularly their appreciation of the project's comprehensive approach to VET reform. Stakeholders consistently highlighted the project's facilitative role and its targeted capacity-building efforts as key strengths contributing to meaningful and sustained engagement across the VET system.

One of the project's achievements is **its success in fostering dialogue across government, VET providers, and the private sector, creating strong collaboration between national and regional levels and connecting policy discussions with practical realities**. National and regional authorities in VET and tourism along with pilot VET providers and hospitality employers have, for the very first time, had the opportunity to get together and discuss their needs, concerns, and roles in VET. Stakeholders particularly appreciated the project's role in enabling such joint discussions, marking a departure from previous siloed approaches. Additionally, three national stakeholder conferences, co-hosted with ETH Zurich/CEMETS and facilitated by Professor Ursula Renold, brought together an increasing number of participants from government, regional authorities, and private sector stakeholders - from 40 in the first edition to 120 in the third. These have emerged as key platforms for policy dialogue.

**The project's capacity building efforts, particularly in teacher training and governance, are not only seen as high quality but also as transformative**. Interviewees specifically praised the 120-hour training for master trainers, with certification jointly issued by SFUVET and MHESI. They emphasised the training's impact on shifting their mindset from hierarchical teaching to more participatory, learner-centred approaches. The 14 certified master trainers are now positioned to deliver training on Situation-based VET (SiVET) methodologies to 500 teachers in May-June, who will in turn cascade the approach to their colleagues in August 2025. If consistently applied, this pedagogical shift has strong potential to improve student engagement, enhance practical skills, and increase the workplace relevance of VET training. These efforts were complemented by participation in the CEMETS Summer Institute and public administration trainings, which helped build motivated practitioners and early advocates. One of the reform leaders shared: *"It's a platform to learn from other countries how they approach reforms - not just copying but thinking systemically."* The MHESI and the Institute for VET Development (IVETD) have already integrated these elements into broader institutional planning, signalling a potentially systemic impact. Nevertheless, the **absence of a formal mechanism for institutionalising these trainings and lacking sense of government ownership** suggests a continued reliance on the project to lead implementation.

**Employers involved in the dual VET pilot have responded positively to the project's efforts.** They appreciated the project's support in clarifying roles, setting expectations, and facilitating coordination. Interviews with hoteliers confirmed that exposure to Swiss expertise - through workshops by EHL (École Hôtelière de Lausanne) and SFUVET - was instrumental in building their confidence to host apprentices. One hotel director noted, *"Before, we didn't know our role in training; now we're building systems to mentor and evaluate students."* Still, many employers emphasised that **a key barrier to wider participation is low awareness of dual training**. Outside the project' immediate network, businesses often lack a clear understanding of the model or its benefits. As one interviewee observed, *"Most hotel managers still don't know what dual training really is. They think it's something for schools to organise, not them."* This not only limits participation but also reinforces the perception that VET remains the sole responsibility of the education system. The project's strategy of working through AoH has enabled targeted engagement and trust-building with committed employers, but it also **risks constraining outreach and anchoring private sector involvement to a single intermediary**, rather than embedding it in broader, system-wide mechanisms.

Despite these achievements, the project's engagement at the policy level has faced constraints. While VET4UZ has been commended for its technical backstopping – particularly in drafting and contributing to legislation on quality assurance, dual training, and student internships - it is an open question **whether the project could have taken a more proactive role in shaping policy direction**. The project's influence at high levels has often been channelled through internationally recognised experts, such as Professors Ursula Renold and Bastian Baumann. While these expert-led engagements created credible entry points, they were frequently perceived as externally driven, rather than the product of sustained local presence or institutionalised strategic leadership within Uzbekistan's VET reform process. Additionally, most interactions have taken place with mid-level counterparts**, limiting the project's ability to influence strategic decisions made at the ministerial level and within the Presidential Administration**. Interviewees noted that VET4UZ's technical contributions to national reforms are not always acknowledged or internalised. The recent appointment of a Policy Advisor within MHESI is a step toward greater strategic engagement, but the position so far seems to be perceived and utilised as a coordination and technical support function, and not as a channel for high-level policy advice by MHESI. The limited visibility and utilisation of this role point to a broader trend: the project is valued for its deep institutional support and responsiveness yet tends to stop short of leveraging its expertise to guide the overarching reform trajectory more decisively[9].

**The project's research outputs, though substantial in volume and scope, also seem to remain underutilised for reform dialogue and action.** Products such as the 2022 Governance Survey, the 2024 "Willingness to Train" study, and the inclusivity assessment in the hospitality sector offer rich insights, but few have been translated into accessible formats such as policy briefs or summaries. Several stakeholders reported they were unaware of these studies, and others noted they lacked the time or expertise to engage with lengthy reports. This gap diminishes the project's ability to support evidence-based decision-making at both policy and institutional levels[10].

[9] In response to the validation workshop presentation, the VET4UZ team emphasised that the project has consistently pursued a system-level approach to policy engagement. Rather than operating solely at a technical level, it combined high-level dialogue through internationally recognised experts, a sequenced strategy grounded in technical credibility, and targeted collaboration with mid- and high-level stakeholders. Structured engagement with key institutions under the Presidential Administration has further reinforced its policy influence. The team also noted that the Policy Advisor within MHESI plays a substantive role in reviewing legislation and shaping evidence-based strategies on key reform priorities. This multifaceted approach reflects a deliberate effort to influence policy sustainably across all levels of the VET system.

[10] The project team agreed that research findings from surveys and studies had not been sufficiently utilised and outlined steps to address this. In collaboration with CEMETS, the team plans to develop a series of policy briefs in 2025 to translate key research results into actionable recommendations. To further enhance visibility and uptake, the project has also produced short videos featuring Dr Ursula Renold, aimed at conveying core research messages to both policymakers and practitioners.

***Spotlight 1: Challenges with the VET4UZ's dual VET pilot***

The VET4UZ's dual VET pilot represents a promising step toward practical skills development but faces several structural and operational limitations that restrict its potential for scaling or policy influence. Although PD No.158 (October 2024) establishing a legal basis for dual education, **the pilot lacks a clear learning objective.** While the pilot's concept memo, which was jointly developed with MHESI and other partners, outlines broad project-level objectives - such as curriculum alignment, employer engagement, and quality assurance - these do not clearly articulate what the pilot is intended to test, compare, or demonstrate. As a result, its ability to generate actionable insights and inform evidence-based decisions on the future of dual VET remains limited.

Implementation has been disrupted by external factors, including COVID-19 and the introduction of the "test-first" policy (PD No.81, May 2024), which undermined the pilot's original approach of linking student selection to company partnerships and delayed enrolment. Some technicums had to switch to fee-based models, excluding many target beneficiaries. At the same time, **weak monitoring systems and a lack of baseline or counterfactual data** (*see more in Efficiency section*) **hinder the project's ability to track progress or build an evidence base for scaling**.

**Inconsistent implementation across technicums and employers adds further complexity.** Interviewees noted that some institutions follow a *"3 days in school, 3 days in the company"* schedule while others use a 70:30 theory-to-practice ratio. This flexibility allows adaptation to individual employer needs, which has been useful for initial engagement. However, such variability makes it difficult to ensure consistency in training quality, complicates monitoring and evaluation, and may not be feasible or sustainable for scaling the model nationally.

Moreover**, concentrating on ISCED Level 4 students presents a structural mismatch with both labour market needs and learner aspirations**. Level 4 training prepares students for entry- and mid- levels roles - raising concerns about long apprenticeship durations and limited permeability. Stakeholders suggested that Level 5 students might be better suited for dual programmes, while short, non-formal training could more effectively serve Level 4 learners[11]. However, so far, **the pilot's focus on upskilling existing employees - mostly over 30 - diverted attention from the project's core target group**: unemployed youth aged 15–29. While this shift has responded to employer demand - most urgently seeking entry- and mid-level staff from the existing workforce - it has reduced the project's relevance for its youth employment goals. This is further reflected in survey results, where only 68% of respondents felt the project had addressed the needs of under- and unemployed youth to a great extent or completely, and just 50% said the same for secondary school students (Figure 6).

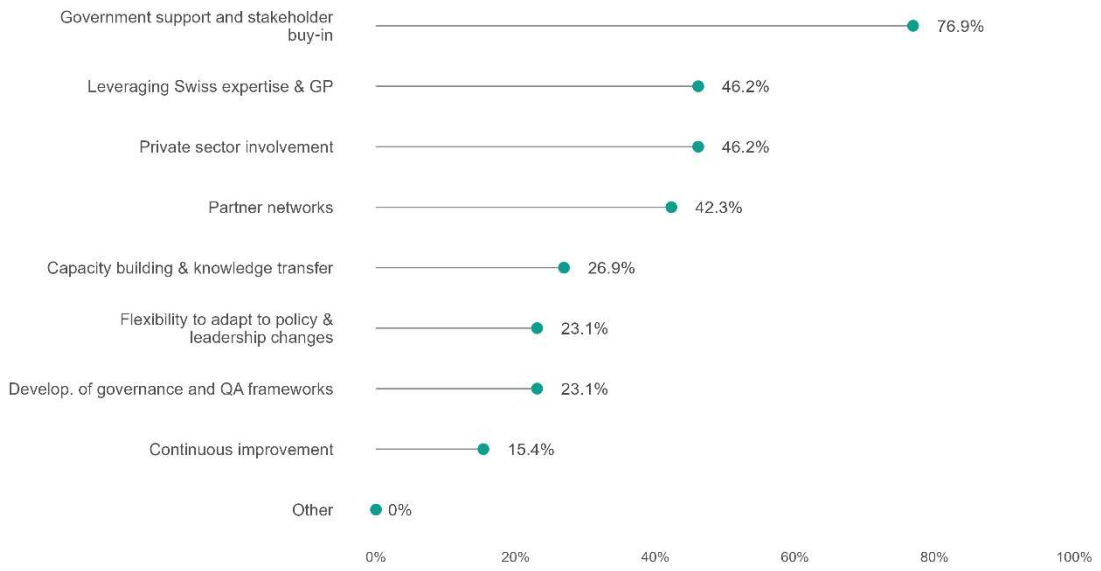
### *Key factors influencing the project's success*

When asked to share three key factors influencing the project's success, survey participants most frequently cited government support and political will (77%), employer engagement (46%), and the leveraging of Swiss expertise and good practices (46%) (Figure 5). Interview insights reinforce these findings. Several respondents emphasised that high-level government endorsement provided the project with legitimacy and momentum, enabling smoother engagement with public institutions. At the same time, employer involvement - particularly the commitment of hotels -

[11] In response to the validation workshop presentation, the project team acknowledged concerns about alignment with employer needs but explained that the decision to pilot a dual VET programme at NQF level 4 was made jointly with key stakeholders, including MHESI, the State Committee for Tourism, vocational colleges, and private sector partners. The focus on the Hotel Administrator role reflects national priorities, with level 4 chosen for its practical orientation and suitability for workplace-based training. At the same time, stakeholders interviewed by the evaluation team – particularly employers and teachers – shared perspectives that reflected some uncertainty, as outlined in the main text above. This indicates that there may be differences between the project's design intentions and how the pilot is currently perceived at the implementation level.

was described as a pivotal shift, with one college representative remarking, "*the moment hotels came on board, we saw real movement.*" The use of Swiss partners like CEMETS, SFUVET, and EHL was viewed as more than just technical assistance; it added credibility and introduced innovative approaches, especially when adapted thoughtfully to the Uzbek context. Together, these factors highlight **the critical role of strong institutional backing, active private sector participation, and the strategic use of international expertise in advancing dual VET and systemic reform.**

*Figure 5: In your view, what are the key factors influence the project's success? (Please choose the three most important factors)*




Note: Based on the responses of 26 participants.

# Transversal themes

The integration of cross-cutting themes such as good governance, the Inclusive Green Economy (IGE), and social inclusion has been a visible feature of the VET4UZ project, though the level of depth and uptake varies across themes and stakeholder groups.

**Good governance is a central focus, both as a reform area and a working principle.** The project contributed to shaping national policies, supported the development of the QA Handbook - a national reference tool, and established coordination platforms at national, regional, and sectoral levels in the hospitality sector. These efforts have helped strengthen accountability mechanisms – at least to a certain extent – by clarifying institutional roles, promoting transparency, and establishing more structured channels of communication between public institutions and private actors.

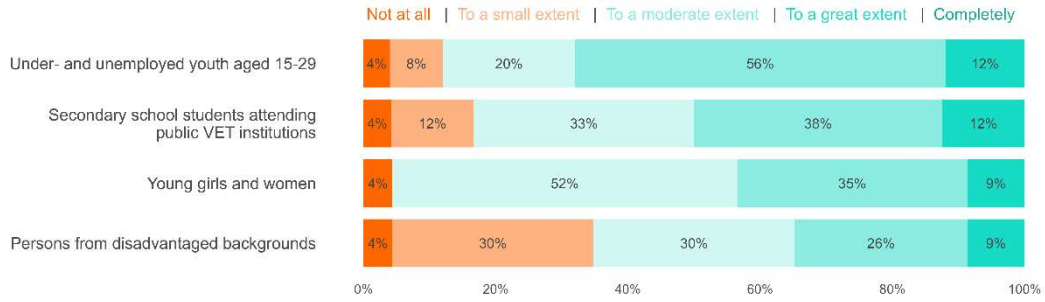
**In the area of the IGE, the project has contributed to raising awareness among policy makers, VET providers and hospitality employers.** A key example is the training workshop delivered in line with Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) standards, helping familiarise hospitality stakeholders with sustainable practices and led to some tangible changes, such as reduced plastic use and increased reliance on local food products in pilot hotels. Interviews show a growing awareness of green business practices within the sector, which align well with Uzbekistan's broader transition towards sustainable tourism. The IVETD has also taken steps to integrate modules on green skills into its revised in-service programmes. However, while these efforts are promising, the integration of green skills into VET curricula is still in its early stages and would benefit from more structured alignment with national skills strategies and employer demand.

**Social inclusion, particularly gender and disability inclusion, has also been addressed, although with more modest outcomes.** The project supported the development of training modules on inclusive pedagogy and gender equity within the IVETD's teacher training programmes. It also conducted a national survey on inclusion in the hospitality sector, revealing that while hotel managers express support for inclusive practices, implementation remains limited. Oftentimes, interviewees interpreted inclusion as adherence to formal requirements rather than active engagement. For example, many VET providers report being inclusive because they accept learners with disabilities, yet few have adapted facilities, learning materials, or support systems to ensure meaningful participation. One interviewee noted, *"people comply with the rules, but very few take initiatives."*

Efforts to promote gender equity have gained some traction through policy channels. A February 2023 dialogue workshop with EHL highlighted barriers to female participation in work-based training, prompting policy discussions on inclusion. This led to the adoption of PD No.516, introducing full scholarships for young women studying in priority sectors such as tourism, aiming to reduce gender gaps in male-dominated fields. Nonetheless, **gender stereotypes persist** in student recruitment and career guidance. Similarly, while the project has encouraged the participation of women in training activities and study visits, leadership positions among institutional partners remain male-dominated, and the inclusion of women in decision-making processes is still limited.

Survey results reflect this, with only 44% of respondents believing the project has adequately addressed the needs of young girls and women, and just 35% for persons from disadvantaged backgrounds (Figure 6). This points to a need for greater emphasis on equity and inclusion.

*Figure 6: In your view, to what extent has the project addressed important needs and priorities of:*




Note: Based on responses from 25, 24, 23, and 23 participants, respectively.

# 3.4. Efficiency

In this section we discuss whether the project's organisational setup, including steering and MEAL, is cost-effective and fit for purpose (EQ 11). We also assess how well the project collaborates with key government partners and supports interministerial coordination (EQ 12), as well as the factors that enhance or hinder cost-effectiveness for Phase 2 (EQ 13).

### Quality services, timeliness, cost-effectiveness, and the organisational setup

We begin this section with discussing the survey results on key efficiency factors: the quality, timeliness and the cost–effectiveness of product delivery. **The data shows strong alignment across these three aspects, with around 84% of the respondents affirming that the project met their expectations to a significant or complete extent** (Figure 7).

Out of a total budget of CHF 4,814,838, nearly half (49.1%) was allocated to expert services and operational support - comprising 8.1% for long-term experts, 26.3% for short-term experts, and 14.8% for local operations[12]. This heavy investment in short-term expertise reflects the project's strategy of leveraging specialised Swiss expertise to drive systemic reforms, though it may have contributed to perceptions of limited contextualisation and sustainability raised in interviews.

[12] The remaining budget was distributed across the four outcome areas, with the largest shares going to Quality Assurance (23.9%) and Governance (22.8%), followed by Private Sector Engagement (19.1%) and Teaching Performance (17.1%).

*Figure 7: Reflecting on the VET4UZ project, do you think that:*




Note: Based on responses from 25, 24, and 24 participants, respectively.

**The integration of Swiss VET partners - CEMETS and SFUVET - into the project setup was widely seen as a cornerstone of the project's technical credibility and innovation.** Participants in CEMETS Summer Institutes and SFUVET-led workshops gained significant exposure to modern approaches like competence-based learning and public-private partnerships. However, several practical issues emerged: the partnerships were costly[13], language barriers persisted, and there was concern about the limited contextualisation of content, with calls to expand use of local trainers to ensure sustainability and relevance. Some stakeholders also questioned the participant selection process, with suggestions that more key decision-makers should be targeted to enhance strategic impact and national ownership.

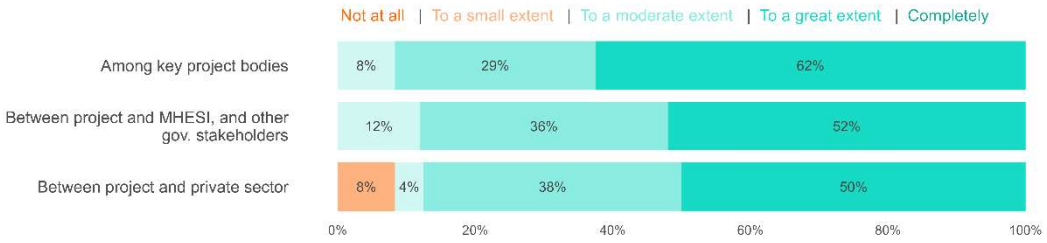
**The project's design and implementation were perceived as fragmented, resembling "*four projects under one umbrella*",** with calls for a stronger coordinating function across components. Implementation remains siloed across the governance, QA, teacher training, and private sector components, with insufficient linkage. For example, the dual VET pilot, though a key strategic element, was not fully integrated into the original logframe, and its interconnections with other components - such as quality assurance and teacher training - were not consistently articulated. This lack of alignment sometimes led to missed opportunities for synergies. Several interviewees echoed this concern, suggesting that while efforts have been made to streamline coordination and align workstreams, the project still functions as a collection of parallel workstreams rather than a fully integrated reform package. Going forward, it will be essential to strengthen internal alignment, systematically map interdependencies, and sequence interventions in a way that maximises systemic impact in future phases.

The Steering Committee, co-chaired by the Swiss Embassy and MHESI and meeting biannually, was intended to provide strategic guidance but has primarily focused on reviewing plans and budgets. Its limited role in facilitating cross-component integration has constrained the project's coherence, highlighting the need for a more active function to address persistent silos in future phases.

[13] These partnerships underpinned the project's strategic investment in long- and short-term experts, which together accounted for over 34% of the total budget.

## Collaboration and stakeholder engagement

*Figure 8: How well does the coordination, communication, and support within and around the project work?*




Note: Based on responses from 24, 25, and 24 participants, respectively.

Stakeholders across levels expressed **appreciation for their engagement with the VET4UZ PIU**, **highlighting its responsiveness and professionalism**. Multiple interviewees described the PIU as a "flexible coordinator" that adapted quickly to feedback and supported local actors to understand their reform roles. One interviewee noted, "*I didn't see [anything] like this flexibility before*" when referring to the openness of the team to co-develop solutions. This facilitative approach was complemented by regular training and peer exchange events, which helped sustain interest in reforms across central and local levels. However, in early stages, challenges such as limited PIU staff and turnover - particularly in leadership - affected continuity and slowed rollout.

By bringing together stakeholders from different ministries and levels through pilot activities, trainings, and workshops, **the project creates a platform for collaboration on reforms with the shared aims.** The interministerial and cross-level coordination facilitated by the project - especially in the hospitality sector - enabled stakeholders to engage in joint planning and problem-solving, often for the first time. A notable achievement was the creation of national, regional, and sectoral stakeholder networks. At the national level, the project supported regular coordination between key ministries and agencies involved in VET reform. At the regional level, education and tourism departments, partner universities, and VET providers were brought together to strengthen implementation alignment. In the hospitality sector, the project worked closely with the Association of Hoteliers to establish a platform for employer engagement and peer learning. These networks enabled more structured communication and helped build a shared understanding of reform priorities. Despite these gains, the limits of the project's mandate - focusing primarily on formal TVET - meant that deeper institutional reform and integration across ministries (e.g. between MHESI and MEPR) remained outside its scope and subject to broader political will.

Despite progress in engaging individual employers, **collaboration with key institutional actors - particularly the Chamber of Commerce and the Sector Skills Council (SSC) - remained limited**, potentially representing a missed opportunity for systemic anchorage and long-term sustainability. While the AoH emerged as a strong intermediary in the hospitality sector, the Chamber of Commerce played little to no active role in the implementation of dual VET or broader skills development efforts. Interviews suggested that the Chamber was largely absent from coordination platforms and that attempts to involve them in policy consultations or curriculum development had limited traction. One stakeholder noted that *"the Chamber is not seen as a*

*natural partner on VET - it's either too passive or too focused on advocacy for business interests rather than workforce development*." Similarly, SSCs – including the one in the hospitality sector - were described as "*existing on paper*" but lacking the operational mandate, resources, and credibility needed to convene employers or influence training standards in practice.

This institutional gap meant that the project's emphasis fell primarily on building bilateral partnerships with individual hotels and firms - an approach that, while **effective in generating short-term buy-in, lacked the formal mechanisms required to scale or sustain employer involvement**. Greater efforts to engage and clarify the role of the Chamber of Commerce or revitalise SSCs could help anchor employer engagement in recognised governance structures and embed private sector voices in curriculum, certification, and policy development. Without this, the risk remains that dual VET remains a project-driven initiative rather than a nationally owned reform.

### Factors that enhance or hinder cost-effectiveness for Phase 2

Cost-effectiveness refers to the balance between the benefits achieved and the resources invested. As outlined above, the project has generally been perceived as both effective and efficient, suggesting a positive level of cost-effectiveness. However, several challenges encountered during Phase 1 have also constrained cost-effectiveness. If left unaddressed, these issues may similarly affect the outcomes of Phase 2.

**Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) remained a persistent weakness throughout Phase 1**, due to constrained by the late development of a structured framework, underinvestment in data systems, and misaligned data collection efforts. Efforts to strengthen M&E were made from 2023 onward, including the recruitment of part-time consultant with a 75% workload (50% dedicated to M&E and 25% to gender-related issues), and the development of internal monitoring tools, but these came late. This led to delays, inconsistent data practices, and limited use of monitoring for learning or decision-making. More recently, the development of a Power BI dashboard represents a shift toward enhanced transparency and real-time data access for stakeholders, complemented by plans for a pre-/post-test study on teacher training and tracer studies to assess graduate employment outcomes. However, structural challenges remain, including the absence of baseline employment data and the continued reliance on part-time M&E staffing.

As discussed earlier (see spotlight), **the dual VET pilot lacked a structured evaluation methodology**. No plan was developed to compare outcomes between learners who participated in the dual training model and those in traditional VET pathways, making it impossible to generate credible evidence of impact[14]. This omission has severely constrained the project's ability to track change over time or attribute improvements to project interventions. Compounding this, the dual

[14] In response to the validation workshop presentation, the project team acknowledged the absence of a baseline and proper monitoring system at the outset but noted that corrective measures were introduced following the 2024 midterm review. In response, a comprehensive monitoring visit was conducted in February 2024 to assess pilot implementation at educational institutions and partner hotels, followed by two additional visits in December 2024 to review the dual training pilot and gather broader implementation feedback. Nonetheless, we would like to reiterate the importance of establishing a proper baseline and counterfactual design to enable systematic tracking of the pilot's effectiveness—particularly for comparing student outcomes with those from traditional VET pathways

VET pilot was not initially integrated into the original logframe, and did not include dedicated indicators to monitor its contribution to systemic change, learner trajectories, or employer satisfaction. As a result, the pilot's implementation and results were tracked largely through anecdotal feedback and periodic reporting, rather than through a coherent results framework. Finally, at the institutional level, VET providers' capacity to generate and use data remains weak, especially post-graduation, despite training on self-assessment and quality monitoring[15].

**Constant policy changes, delayed scholarship rollout, and confusion around admission procedures also significantly undermined the credibility of the dual VET pilot.** PD No.81 (May 2024) introduced a centralised admission policy requiring all applicants to pass a national entrance exam before selecting their training programme. This change directly conflicted with the dual VET model, which is based on early company involvement and contract-based selection. As a result, students who had secured apprenticeship agreements with partner hotels were unable to enrol in fee-free training, causing frustration and eroding trust among learners, providers, and employers. Although some pilot institutions, like the Bukhara Technicum, introduced fee-based alternatives, this option remained financially inaccessible for many, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The project has since advocated for policy adjustments to safeguard dual VET's integrity.

VET4UZ responded by engaging MHESI in policy dialogue, submitting formal recommendations and technical inputs to raise awareness of the issue and propose adjustments. While the extent of its influence is unclear, PD No.158 (October 2024) addressed several of the pilot's challenges. It restructured the VET system, authorised technicums to enrol students across NQF levels 3 to 5, and reinstated contract-based admissions, bypassing the centralized national entrance examination - removing key barriers to the continuation of the dual VET pilot.

## 3.5. Impact

This section covers the extent to which the intervention contributes to strengthening employability, income generation, and economic development (EQ 14).

The overall goal of the VET4UZ project is "*VET students and graduates in Uzbekistan profit from a functional labour market-oriented education and training system, allowing them to find and retain an attractive and decent job in sectors with growth potential.*" Despite evident progress at the institutional and policy levels, tangible impacts on final beneficiaries - particularly in terms of sustained and gainful employment - remain limited and difficult to assess at this stage.

[15] In response to the validation workshop presentation, the project team agreed that data culture at the provider level remains weak but highlighted their systematic approach to capacity building. This includes developing "Quality Ambassadors" to drive institutional change, integrating data practices into a broader quality assurance system that links internal and external evaluation, and delivering workshops and on-the-job training to promote self-assessment and evidence-based decision-making. Additionally, support for providers in establishing transparent monitoring systems is planned for 2025.

A key systemic contribution of the project has been its ability to **elevate the VET reform agenda through high-level policy dialogues with prominent Swiss thought leaders**. Visits by experts such as Prof. Ursula Renold (ETH Zurich) lent credibility and legitimacy to reform efforts, which several stakeholders described as "*very persuasive*" in framing governance gaps and proposing constructive solutions. These engagements played an important role in drawing attention to systemic issues and contributed to shaping major policy initiatives, for instance, Presidential Decree 158. This decree restructured the VET governance model by consolidating oversight under the MHESI and introduced more robust provisions for dual VET - a direction consistent with the project's recommendation.

However, while these developments reflect the influence of the project, they also emerge from broader government-led reform agendas. This layered dynamic makes direct attribution of major reforms – such as Presidential Decrees 158 and Resolution 345 – challenging. Furthermore, several stakeholders questioned the extent to which their participation through the project genuinely influenced policy decisions. As one interviewee noted, "*We're invited to meetings, but policies are written behind closed doors*." Another added, "*Sometimes it feels like we are there just to listen, not to shape decisions.*" These reflections point to a recurring tension in the policy space: although the project is valued for its technical inputs and capacity-building efforts, **its engagement often stops short of enabling genuinely participatory or evidence-informed policy dialogue.**

**At the level of final beneficiaries, impact remains difficult to determine.** The project target of "*2000 young persons of whom at least 50% being project beneficiaries, have obtained gainful and/or additional (self-) employment due to VET4UZ interventions*" by 2026 - is not yet matched by concrete evidence[16]. While VET4UZ has introduced improved systems for quality assurance and teacher training, and supported pilot actions in dual education, the causal link between these upstream interventions and improved employment outcomes for youth remains unclear. This is due in part to persistent systemic constraints, including limited data availability, high staff turnover within VET institutions, and frequent shifts in the policy environment. Compounding these challenges is the project's own limited M&E system, which has so far focused more on activity-level outputs than on tracking long-term outcomes or tracing pathways from intervention to employment (*see more in Effectiveness and Efficiency sections*).

Although early signs of progress are visible - most notably in the hospitality sector, where over 290 training contracts have been signed between students and partner hotels across multiple regions - interviews reveal that implementation of dual education is still at a very nascent stage. All pilot technicums only began their first year of dual training in 2024, meaning no cohort has yet completed the full cycle. As such, **it is too early to assess whether these interventions are translating into meaningful employment outcomes for young people**. Sustained tracking,

[16] The project team clarified that this target was initially based on engagement with six pilot providers, but due to ongoing reforms, the number was reduced to four, with three undergoing major renovations that limited enrolment. Despite these constraints, the team remains confident in achieving the target, citing that 968 of 1,207 graduates from pilot providers were employed between 2022 and 2024. At the system level, 116,527 VET graduates secured employment in 2024 alone. However, we note that attributing these employment outcomes specifically "due to VET4UZ interventions" is difficult, given the absence of clear attribution mechanisms.

stronger outcome-level indicators, and more systematic beneficiary follow-up will be essential to assess whether the pilot models can deliver the project's intended results.

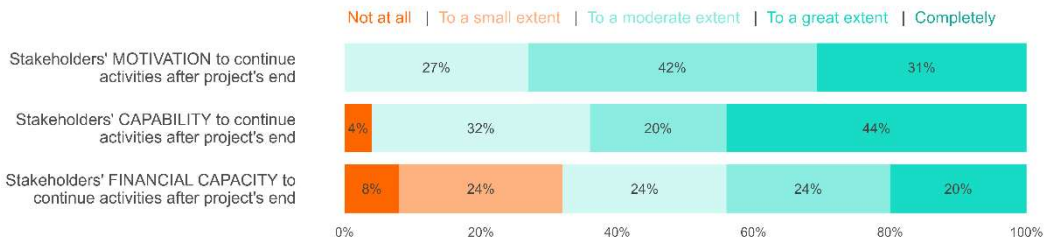
Finally, feedback from students highlights a strong preference for higher education as the main route to social mobility. This perception reflects a persistent view of VET as a second-choice option, undermining the immediate employment potential of interventions like dual training. Recent reforms - particularly PD No.158 - have established a legal framework for dual VET across NQF levels 3, 4, and 5, and introduced direct employer-based admissions. Crucially, only graduates of level 5 programmes are eligible to enter the second year of relevant bachelor's degrees, based on completed modules and credit accumulation. This formal permeability offers an academic progression pathway but remains inaccessible to learners completing level 3 and 4 qualifications. Stakeholders have raised concerns that level 3 and 4 learners face relatively long training durations without clear academic or professional advancement, which diminishes the attractiveness of dual VET and weakens its potential to deliver timely employment outcomes. Moreover, the pilot's current focus on upskilling employed adults has shifted attention away from youth, reducing the project's alignment with its employment objective. As a result, **the immediate employment potential of dual training for the target group remains constrained,** calling for a more tailored approach that reflects both learner aspirations and systemic pathways.

## 3.6. Sustainability

This chapter examines the extent to which the project results are likely to be sustained beyond donor support (EQ 15). It also explores the level of government and private sector involvement and ownership (EQ 16), as well as opportunities to scale project achievements and inform national reforms (EQ 17).

In the survey, stakeholders were asked about their motivation, capability, and financial readiness to sustain the project's activities and innovations - limited to the areas in which they were personally involved. The majority of respondents (64-73%) expressed strong to complete confidence in their motivation and capability to continue these efforts, indicating a high level of personal commitment and perceived competence; however, only 44% believed to a great extent or completely that they have sufficient financial resources to sustain the project results. This low percentage indicates a **significant challenge to the long-term sustainability of the project.**

*Figure 9: Reflecting on the stakeholders involved in the VET4UZ project, do you think that after the project's completion (i.e., without further donor funding):*




Note: Based on responses from 26, 25, and 25 participants, respectively.

**VET4UZ's capacity building in governance, QA, and teacher training has laid an essential foundation for sustainability, but institutional anchoring remains limited.** Throughout Phase 1, the project has invested significantly in capacity development across stakeholder levels - from pilot technicums and regional departments to central ministries. Master trainers have been developed, teacher training programmes designed[17], and institutional partners such as the IVETD supported in their reform mandates. These efforts were widely recognised by interviewees as meaningful groundwork. However, there is a shared concern that these gains remain vulnerable to staff turnover and administrative reshuffling. Interviewees from pilot colleges echoed this: "*We've had training, but when trained staff leave, the system forgets what was learned.*" Despite successful capacity-building outputs, the systemic integration of these capacities and tasks - into public budgets, job descriptions, and national training systems - has not yet materialised. While the IVETD has shared a vision to embed the revised upskilling programmes within a future continuous professional development (CPD) system, and to expand digital access through regional centres and online platforms, these ambitions remain at a preparatory stage. Concrete mechanisms for implementation, institutionalisation, and budgetary commitment are still pending. A step forward came in 2025, when a cooperation agreement between MHESI, the Tourism Committee, and the Presidential Academy marked the beginning of a gradual transfer of responsibilities, particularly for capacity building, aimed at strengthening local ownership and ensuring long-term sustainability.

**Dual VET training in Uzbekistan has gained momentum, particularly through pilots in the hospitality sector, yet embedding it into the national VET system remains difficult due to conceptual ambiguity and fragmented coordination.** Although the legal framework for dual VET has progressively strengthened since 2019 - starting with PD No.5812 (2019) and followed by key milestones such as the 2020 Law on Education and PD No.158, which formally authorised dual training across NQF levels 3 to 5 - operational clarity has lagged behind. As one technicum director put it: *"There's a law that says we can do dual education, but no one tells us how."* Alongside traditional VET programmes - typically offering minimal workplace exposure through a short internship at the end - several dual modalities now coexist. These include sequenced models (e.g. one semester of school followed by a three-month internship) and the Swiss-inspired parallel model piloted by VET4UZ (e.g. students alternate between three days in school and three days in the workplace each week). While the parallel approach has demonstrated strong potential and commended by all stakeholders, it remains just one of several competing formats. Moreover, while the PD No.158 opened doors for scaling dual education, it did not establish mechanisms for sustained cross-ministerial collaboration or institutional funding. Without a unified framework

[17] In 2024, four revised upskilling programmes were developed for VET institution directors, deputy directors, and teachers, aligned with newly developed professional standards that define core competencies for each role, including leadership, instructional design, and pedagogical skills. These standards also integrate cross-cutting themes such as green skills, inclusion, and gender sensitivity, ensuring relevance to both national reform priorities and modern teaching practices. Co-developed with IVETD and pilot institutions, the upskilling programmes were supported by the training of master trainers to enable broader rollout.

and sustained institutional support, dual training risks remaining a patchwork of experiments rather than a cohesive, scalable system.

**Private sector involvement has deepened, setting the stage for public-private collaboration, but continued involvement depends on formal structures and incentives.** Early in implementation, the project dedicated significant effort to establishing cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. However, by 2023, the Chamber's strategic focus had shifted away from vocational education, particularly in tourism, prompting the project to redirect efforts toward forming a structured partnership with the AoH. Through this partnership, the project has successfully mobilised the hospitality industry and operationalised employer involvement. Still, stakeholders highlighted the absence of structural mechanisms - such as chamber of commerce, SSCs or public co-financing - that would institutionalise employer participation. As noted in the interviews, "*Employers are keen, but they still rely on the project to coordinate. What happens when that support ends? We need structures - not just relationships.*"

The CEMETS mission in April 2025 also found out that the Tourism Committee still acts as the main representative of the sector, as other tourism and hospitality associations are not yet ready to speak with one voice for the private sector. The PD No.345 (October 2024) mandating that 25% of Sector Skills Council (SSC) seats be assigned to employers further demonstrates efforts to institutionalise private sector participation in VET governance. However, interview insights suggest that the current SSC model may be too dependent on personalities and donor support, lacks consistent institutional backing, and varies widely in effectiveness across sectors. While the Tourism SSC currently includes 52% employer representation - surpassing the mandated minimum - the real influence of this body remains limited.

Additionally, while many employers expressed enthusiasm for these practices and have actively contributed their time, facilities, and input into training design, interviews suggest that this is closely tied to the fact that dual training is currently offered free of charge. In the hospitality sector - where dual training is offered free of charge - employers welcomed the opportunity but clearly indicated that financial participation would not be feasible at this stage. As one hotel director put it, *"We joined because it's free and well-organised. If we had to fund it ourselves, we'd have to reconsider."* This highlights the need for long-term financing and policy solutions if employer participation is to move beyond the pilot phase and becomes a stable feature of the VET system.

**The project's scaling potential is evident in hospitality, but cross-sectoral expansion should proceed cautiously**. Hospitality was strategically selected due to strong growth, government support, and high employer demand. In interviews, regional stakeholders described the pilot as a "safe space" for experimentation and a model for replication. However, they also cautioned against assuming similar conditions elsewhere. As an interviewee advised: *"We're ready in tourism. But agriculture or manufacturing might need totally different approaches and longer prep time."* Without sector-specific diagnostics, premature scaling could lead to setbacks.

**National ownership and a structured exit strategy are still in development.** The project has successfully initiated "parallel" dual training models in four technicums, engaging over a dozen employers and building institutional capacity in programme design, delivery, and QA. These achievements demonstrate the viability of dual VET in Uzbekistan. However, they remain largely project-facilitated, raising concerns about long-term sustainability. Stakeholders across

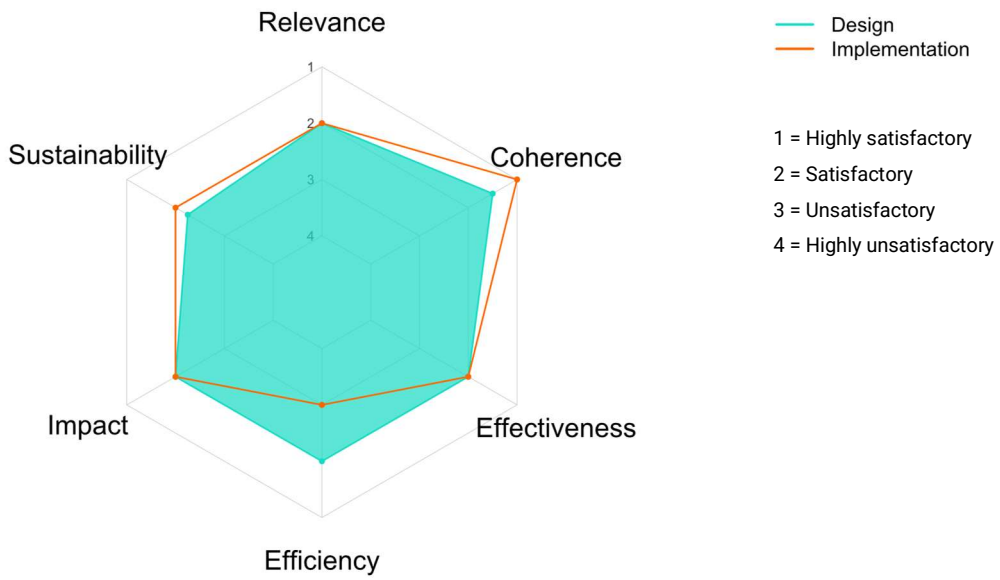
government and training institutions recognise the need for transition, but steps toward a structured handover have been incremental. Currently, there is no formal MoU or government-endorsed roadmap to guide the systemic scale-up or institutionalisation of dual VET, based on the success of the VET4UZ pilots. While MHESI has taken important steps - such as coordinating technical working groups and deepening collaboration with the Academy of Public Administration (APA) to build public sector capacity for reform leadership - there are still no agreements in place that clearly define who will lead, fund, and govern dual VET beyond the project's duration.

While a legally binding agreement may be ambitious in the current context - given institutional restructuring, financing uncertainties, and coordination gaps - **a government-endorsed transition roadmap or inter-agency Memorandum of Understanding seems both feasible and of strategic value**. Anchored by MHESI and involving key actors such as the MEPR and sectoral ministries, such a document could outline institutional roles, budget commitments, and phased scale-up targets. Without this type of coordinated plan, dual VET risks remaining a successful yet isolated pilot rather than becoming a fully embedded feature of Uzbekistan's national VET system.

# 4. Conclusions

The following visualization summarizes the ratings of the evaluation team, distinguishing between the initial design, and the implementation. We are applying the same rating system that SDC uses for the Assessment Grid (see Annex 7), on a scale from 1 to 4.

*Figure 10 Overall rating of the evaluation team*



**Relevance: Satisfactory**

The VET4UZ project is recognised as highly relevant, effectively addressing national priorities and institutional needs through its two-pronged focus on systemic reform and practical application, particularly in the hospitality sector. Strategic sector and location choices were well received, though remote areas like Zaamin faced implementation challenges. Nevertheless, the project's potential has been undermined by the lack of a coherent national strategic framework for VET, which has led to fragmented vision, implementation, unclear roles, and weak ownership - especially in advancing dual VET. The Theory of Change, while ambitious, requires further substantiation as it overly focuses on supply-side inputs, offers little explanation of how interventions will translate into improved employability. Combined with overstretched resources and insufficient adaptation of Swiss models to the Uzbek context, these gaps risk limiting sustainable impact unless addressed through more focused, context-driven strategies and clearer operational guidance. That said, the project's flexibility, responsiveness to emerging needs, and collaborative approach - particularly in engaging with national, regional, and sectoral stakeholders and development partners - have enhanced its ability to navigate a dynamic reform environment.

**Coherence: Highly satisfactory**

The VET4UZ project has contributed significantly to donor coordination in the VET sector, establishing mechanisms such as the Donor Coordination Committee and technical working groups that fostered alignment on themes like dual education and quality assurance. Its collaborative efforts with GIZ, UNESCO, and others - along with pragmatic adjustments to avoid duplication - have been widely recognised. However, broader coherence is hindered by the limited participation of several major donors - such as KOICA and World Bank - in formal coordination efforts, resulting in parallel interventions rather than integrated action. This is further compounded by persistent government fragmentation: overlapping mandates across ministries (e.g. MHESI, MEPR, MoPSE) and weak cross-ministerial coordination have led to conflicting priorities, unclear responsibilities, and inconsistent implementation. Despite these systemic constraints, the project's inclusive and adaptive approach positions it well to support greater alignment with a unified national reform agenda and to contribute to more sustainable, sector-wide impact over time.

**Effectiveness: Satisfactory**

The project is largely on track to meet its logframe targets, with several output indicators already exceeded - particularly in governance and private sector involvement. However, progress on some indicators - especially those linked to systemic change, inclusiveness, and end-beneficiary outcomes - remains harder to verify due to vague or activity-based indicators. Overall, VET4UZ has significantly strengthened Uzbekistan's VET system by enabling collaboration across ministries, technicums, and employers through multi-level stakeholder platforms, and delivering high-quality capacity-building - most notably the SiVET master trainer programme and the CEMETS Summer Institute. These efforts have helped shift VET reform from fragmented to more coordinated practice. However, the project's influence at the strategic level remains limited; its

engagement has largely focused on technical support and mid-level actors, with fewer opportunities to shape policy at ministerial or presidential levels. While VET4UZ has contributed substantively to reforms - such as inputs to QA legislation and labour code amendments - these contributions are not always formally recognised or embedded in policy processes. Employer engagement, though strong within the AoH network, remains narrowly concentrated, with limited awareness of dual VET beyond direct partners. Additionally, the project's substantial research outputs are underleveraged, often due to limited accessibility and dissemination. To increase its effectiveness, VET4UZ needs to strengthen its strategic influence, broaden employer outreach, and ensure its evidence base informs system-wide reform more directly. The integration of transversal themes - good governance, inclusion, and green skills - has been visible across project activities, but uptake remains uneven, with efforts on gender and disability inclusion in particular lacking depth, institutional commitment, and measurable impact.

**Efficiency: Unsatisfactory**

VET4UZ is perceived as delivering quality outputs in a timely and cost-effective manner, with stakeholders highlighting the responsiveness and professionalism of the PIU. Strategic use of Swiss expertise added technical value and credibility but raised concerns around cost and sustainability due to limited local contextualization and ownership. Internally, the project's fragmented setup limited cross-component integration, particularly around the dual VET pilot, which was not fully embedded in the original design. Collaboration with government partners - especially MHESI and regional authorities - was constructive and enabled joint planning, but engagement with key institutional actors remained uneven: while the project built strong ties with the AoH, it struggled to engage the Chamber of Commerce, which remained largely absent from coordination platforms, and Sector Skills Councils, which lacked the mandate, resources, and capacity to play a meaningful role. This limited the project's ability to institutionalise employer engagement. M&E systems were introduced late and remained underdeveloped, constraining learning and accountability. While the project adapted effectively to policy shifts - such as contributing to regulatory changes for dual VET - its efficiency was weakened by siloed implementation and missed opportunities for institutional strengthening. As a result, implementation performance was rated lower than the ambition of the original design.

**Impact: Satisfactory**

While VET4UZ has made meaningful contributions to elevating the VET reform agenda - particularly through high-level policy dialogue and inputs to major reforms like PD No.158- its direct impact on youth employability and income generation remains limited and difficult to measure at this stage. The project's interventions, such as improved teacher training and quality assurance systems, and roll-out of dual VET training pilot, are still in early phases of implementation, with no completed graduate cohorts yet. Attribution challenges are compounded by systemic constraints, limited outcome-level monitoring, and the persistent perception of VET as a less desirable education pathway. Moreover, the dual VET pilot's current focus on upskilling employed adults rather than targeting unemployed youth further weakens its alignment with the project's core employment objective. While early signals - such as signed training contracts and employer engagement - are promising, clearer progression pathways and stronger outcome

tracking will be essential to determine whether VET4UZ can ultimately deliver on its goal of improved employment outcomes for young people.

**Sustainability: Satisfactory**

VET4UZ has laid a strong foundation for sustainability through capacity building in governance, teacher training, and QA, as well as through piloting dual VET models with engaged employers. Stakeholders expressed high motivation and confidence to sustain activities, but limited financial readiness remains a key barrier. Institutional anchoring is still partial: reforms have yet to be embedded into job roles, budgets, or national systems, making gains vulnerable to staff turnover and administrative change. Despite a growing legal basis for dual VET, operational clarity and funding mechanisms are lacking, with parallel models coexisting without a unified framework. Private sector involvement - particularly through AoH - has deepened but remains dependent on donor coordination and incentives such as free training. Expansion beyond hospitality is possible but should not be a priority for the next phase as it requires tailored approaches and longer preparation. While national actors recognise the need for a structured transition, no roadmap or formal agreement exists to ensure ownership, financing, and long-term governance of dual VET. Without a clear handover plan, current achievements risk remaining project-driven rather than institutionalised.

# 5. Recommendations

The recommendations presented in this chapter have been formulated based on the findings and the conclusions of the evaluation team, also taking into account the planned budget cuts of 40-50% for phase 2, due to the general reduction of Switzerland's international cooperation funds.

### Recommendation 1: Enable a structured transition to national ownership and use implementation to inform system-wide reform

*Justification:* Phase 1 of VET4UZ has established essential groundwork - contributing to legal frameworks, strengthened capacity, pilot partnerships - across the VET system. As the system progresses, the remainder of Phase 1 and the next phase must focus on embedding proven approaches - such as dual VET, quality assurance, and teacher training - into national institutions and financing mechanisms to secure long-term sustainability. At the same time, implementation experiences must actively shape ongoing policy development. Creating structured feedback loops from practice to policy, alongside a phased transfer of responsibilities to national actors, offers the most promising pathway for consolidating and scaling reform across the VET system.

*Possible actions:*

**A. Anchor the transition through national leadership and institutional handover**

- **Define and implement a phased government-led roll-out as a core element of the project's exit strategy:** Support MHESI to lead the development and gradual

implementation of a dual VET transition roadmap that will eventually serve as the project's structured exit strategy. This roadmap - whether formalised through a government-endorsed plan or a non-binding inter-agency agreement - should guide the progressive transfer of coordination, delivery, and oversight responsibilities to national actors. Key elements should include:

  - Institutional responsibilities (who coordinates, who implements);
  - Indicative public financing pathways (e.g. MHESI budget lines, employer contributions);
  - Phased expansion targets (e.g. additional sectors, number of dual providers, students reached by 2027);
  - Formalised national coordination mechanisms - such as inter-ministerial working groups or task forces - to ensure alignment across MHESI, MEPR, MoF, the Tourism Committee, and other sectoral partners.

- **Develop and implement structured exit pathways to support this transition:**
  - Gradually shift coordination and implementation roles to national actors such as IVETD, regional departments, the Chamber of Commerce, and Sector Skills Councils.
  - Deliver targeted capacity-building to key institutions - including AoH and other public/private partners - to prepare them for post-project leadership in dual VET delivery.

  This phased roll-out should be accompanied by the project's transition to a focused policy and technical advisory function.

- **Prioritise readiness and absorption capacity:** Ensure that the transition roadmap includes a realistic assessment of institutional readiness and sequence the handover of functions accordingly to avoid overburdening emerging national structures.

**B. Put in place enabling mechanisms to ensure sustainability and policy responsiveness**

- **Explore embedding dual VET indicators into MHESI planning tools:** Engage with MHESI to identify relevant planning and monitoring tools (e.g. annual work plans, strategic frameworks) and explore opportunities to integrate key dual VET indicators. This would support long-term tracking, institutional ownership, and alignment with reform priorities.
- **Consolidate internal QA and support the transition of QA leadership:** Strengthen internal QA practices in pilot institutions, integrating them into IVETD and MHESI tools. In parallel, support UNESCO and other national partners to gradually take over QA system development, ensuring sustainability without overextending project resources[18].

[18] In response to the validation workshop presentation, the project team recommends a balanced approach to the proposed shift of external QA leadership to UNESCO. Internal and external QA are interdependent and separating them could weaken the overall system. Given that UNESCO's current focus is limited and its project is ending, the team suggests maintaining national ownership of external QA, reinforcing institutional internal QA, and engaging UNESCO in an advisory role to preserve coherence and build on existing progress.

- **Translate implementation lessons into policy advocacy:** Invest in implementation research on pilot programs to better understand what works and what does not. Such research projects are relatively low-cost but can generate evidence that can inform the subsequent upscaling phase and have a strong impact on sustaining reforms. Produce concise policy briefs capturing operational lessons and bottlenecks. Share these with MHESI, MEPR, and the Project Office to support evidence-informed decision-making and continuous policy refinement.

### Recommendation 2: Focus Phase 2 on teacher training and private sector involvement to consolidate reform delivery

*Justification:* With the system maturing and stakeholders expecting tangible results, the project must shift from conceptual groundwork to practical delivery. At the same time, the anticipated resource constraints (40–50% budget reduction) calls for a strategic narrowing of scope. We recommend prioritising teacher training and private sector involvement, which are the most direct drivers of quality, relevance, and labour market outcomes. Anchoring these efforts in national structures will also help consolidate Phase 1 gains and position the system for sustainable, scalable impact.

*Possible actions:*

**Teacher training**

- **Institutionalise the teacher training cascade in national systems and long-term plans:** Support the integration of the cascade delivery model - building a national and regional trainer system - within IVETD and MHESI's teacher training strategy. Formalise this model in IVETD's 2026–2030 roadmap, with clearly defined roles, delivery responsibilities, and governance structures. Align continued project support with demonstrated progress on institutional commitment and capacity development.
- **Integrate dual-compatible pedagogies into national curricula:** Ensure that modern methods, including SiVET and other dual-compatible didactics, are formally embedded in IVETD's CPD curriculum, aligned with teacher certification requirements and QA frameworks.
- **Secure public financing:** Advocate for dedicated MHESI budget lines to support cascade delivery and CPD scale-up beyond the project.

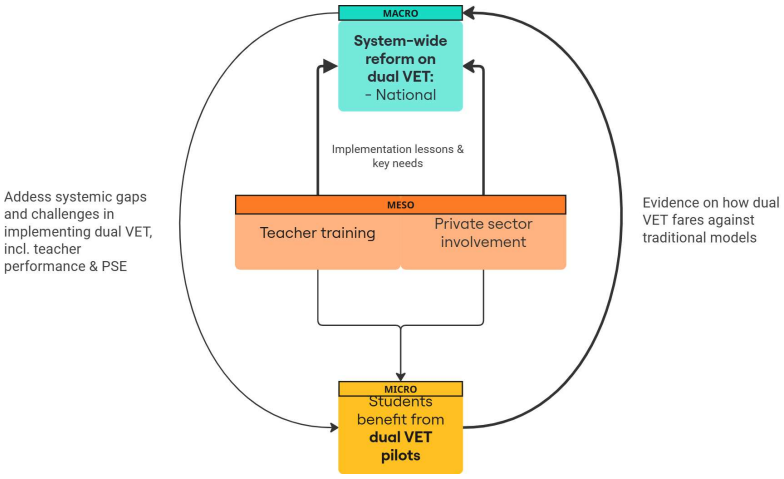
**Private sector involvement**

- **Maintain a focused consolidation in the hospitality and tourism sector,** where institutional traction and private sector buy-in are strongest, to ensure depth before broad expansion.
- **Plan for future replication:** Use hospitality as a springboard to engage adjacent sectors (e.g. culinary, green tourism, logistics) through clustering and targeted partnerships.
- **Develop sector-specific dual VET guidelines for hospitality, with future scalability in mind:** Develop and disseminate practical guidelines and implementation toolkits for the "parallel" dual VET model tailored to the hospitality sector. Ground these in lessons from

pilot implementation and ensure alignment with employer practices. While the focus remains on hospitality during Phase 2, the model should be designed for potential adaptation in other sectors beyond the project's lifetime.

- **Strengthen intermediary roles through the Chamber of Commerce or SSC:** While AoH can continue to coordinate within hospitality, broader sector coordination should be anchored in more formal structures. Explore partnerships with the Chamber or SSC or explore a public-private co-leadership (AoH, Tourism Committee) to support employer coordination, curriculum co-development, and long-term governance of dual VET.
- **Formalise and expand existing public-private cost-sharing arrangements in dual VET:** Build on the working model in the hospitality sector - where government and employers already share costs through tuition, training, and in-kind support - to develop a more structured and scalable co-financing approach. Document lessons learned, clarify roles, and explore opportunities for formal agreements or supportive policy instruments (e.g. tax incentives or matching funds) that could be applied to other sectors in the future.

*Figure 11: Visualisation of Recommendation 1 and 2*




## Recommendation 3: Strengthen and evidence the Theory of Change to guide Phase 2 design and prioritisation

*Justification:* Phase 2 presents a timely opportunity to revise the project's Theory of Change (ToC) as the system matures, resources tighten, and implementation moves from design to delivery. This is the right moment to capitalise on lessons learned so far to sharpen the project's strategic focus. The current ToC does not yet fully reflect how change is expected to occur at institutional and system levels, nor does it adequately account for demand-side drivers such as employer behaviour or labour market incentives. A revised ToC will help sharpen the project's scope (taking into account the financial cuts), target groups, and pathways to impact - improving prioritisation, informing pilot design, and guiding donor and government engagement.

The dual VET pilot in hospitality offers a key opportunity to test the project's core reform logic in practice. As such, it should be explicitly guided by the revised ToC to ensure that what is being piloted contributes meaningfully to the project's overall goals - particularly around employability, employer engagement, and system change.

*Possible actions:*

- **Revise the ToC through a focused, consultative process**: Engage key stakeholders - such as MHESI, IVETD, employers, and development partners - to validate core assumptions, clarify target groups, and define realistic change pathways. Use this process to ensure the revised ToC reflects practical reform dynamics and supports alignment across piloting, policy, and system-level goals.
- **Integrate demand-side dimensions**, such as employer co-investment, and learner transitions, to balance the supply-driven focus of Phase 1.
- **Align the dual VET pilot with the revised ToC**, clarifying its strategic purpose, learning objectives, and how it tests key assumptions about quality training, private sector engagement, and improved employment outcomes.
- **Use the revised ToC to guide updates to the logframe and M&E system**, ensuring they reflect the new strategic focus, realistic outcomes, and learning needs of Phase 2.
- **Use the ToC as a tool for strategic focus**, guiding resource allocation, government expectations, donor alignment, and communication with stakeholders.

### Recommendation 4: Strengthen the M&E system to support learning, accountability, and policy influence

*Justification:* The current M&E system offers a starting point but requires further development to match the project's complexity and ambition to influence outcomes at the micro (learner), meso (institutional), and macro (policy) levels. While it is appropriate that local partners such as technicums bear responsibility for data collection and reporting, the challenge lies in the fact that many have not been adequately prepared or equipped to fulfil this role, due to limited capacity and insufficient guidance. Moreover, existing tools focus heavily on activity tracking rather than outcomes, limiting the use of evidence for learning and strategic steering. Investing in a more fit-for-purpose M&E system is essential to ensure readiness for the pilot roll-out, and to generate credible, actionable evidence throughout Phase 2. While the level of M&E investment should match the project's narrowed strategic scope, any pilot or scaled intervention must yield evidence robust enough to inform implementation, support policy advocacy, and demonstrate impact.

*Possible actions:*

- **Design a structured M&E framework for Phase 2** that reflects the revised ToC, includes system, institutional, and learner-level outcomes, and prioritises a manageable number of well-defined indicators.
- **Integrate a robust evaluation methodology for the dual VET pilot**, including a baseline group (e.g. traditional VET learners), to assess impact on learner trajectories, employer satisfaction, and institutional performance.

- **Add specific dual VET indicators to the logframe**, such as graduate employment rates, job relevance, and income levels. Align these with national reform goals to track how dual VET contributes to better learner outcomes and system-wide change over time.
- **Strengthen institutional M&E capacity at provider level**, with a focus on post-training follow-up and basic data use. Build on existing QA/self-assessment work to embed monitoring into institutional routines.
- **Embed learning reviews into project governance** to ensure data is used for course correction and decision-making - not just reporting. Include MHESI, pilot institutions, and employer representatives.
- **Translate monitoring results into advocacy tools** by packaging key insights into concise briefs, visual summaries, or dashboards for MHESI, donors, and sectoral ministries to inform policy dialogue and scale-up decisions.
- **Address attribution challenges** by partnering with local research institutions or statistical agencies to implement comparative methodologies - such as longitudinal studies or tracer surveys - that track outcomes of dual VET versus traditional learners to credibly assess impact.

### Recommendation 5: Use Swiss expertise strategically to strengthen local capacity and shape policy reform

*Justification:* Collaboration with Swiss partners - particularly CEMETS and SFUVET - has been a cornerstone of the project's technical credibility and influence on framing governance issues and informing policy directions. However, challenges related to cost, contextual fit, systemic impact and sustainability remain. As the project enters Phase 2, Swiss engagement should be repositioned to a more strategic, catalytic role focused on high-level policy support, capacity co-development, and facilitating more inclusive dialogue.

*Possible actions:*

- **Reposition CEMETS and SFUVET as strategic enablers**: Focus on high-level policy influence at the ministerial and presidential levels, system diagnostics, and mentoring of national actors.
- **Localise capacity development using a tandem model**: Build on the success of the SFUVET Master Trainer cascade by pairing Swiss and national experts.
- **Balance local ownership with perceived quality in training delivery**: Maintain Swiss involvement in flagship training events and strategic topics to preserve visibility and credibility, while supporting national institutions (e.g. IVETD) to lead routine training and facilitation.
- **Track influence and adapt engagement**: Systematically monitor uptake of Swiss inputs and adjust roles and formats based on feedback and results.

### Recommendation 6: Leverage Inclusive Green Economy opportunities and strengthen coordination to amplify impact

*Justification:* Uzbekistan's growing focus on green tourism creates a strong opportunity to align VET4UZ's work in hospitality with national Inclusive Green Economy (IGE) goals and SDC's evolving strategy. Strengthening the project's green dimension - without expanding beyond its sectoral focus - can increase its visibility, relevance, and long-term value.

At the same time, with tighter budgets in Phase 2, deeper collaboration with national and international partners, as well as across Swiss-funded programmes will be essential to maximise resources. While the project remains sector-specific, coordination with other initiatives - particularly in areas like teacher training, employer engagement, or quality assurance - can help extend reach and influence. This dual focus on green relevance and smart coordination can position VET4UZ as a model for sustainable, system-oriented reform.

*Possible actions:*

- **Integrate green skills into hospitality and tourism training**, such as energy efficiency, sustainable operations, waste reduction, and eco-certification practices, ensuring alignment with IGE priorities.
- **Embed IGE-related competencies into Components 3 and 4**, including teacher training modules and employer partnerships, with a focus on environmental sustainability and inclusive practices.
- **Collaborate with other development partners on cross-cutting themes**, such as employer engagement models, teacher training systems, or QA frameworks - regardless of sector - to share tools, align efforts, and build institutional capacity.
- **Engage with Swiss-funded regional programmes** - such as SECO, SIFEM, or other SDC initiatives in Central Asia - to align policy messaging, share lessons on skills development, enhance visibility of Swiss cooperation, and explore opportunities for complementary funding or joint programming in areas like green skills, private sector engagement, or system reform.
- **Position the project as a green skills learning hub in tourism**, documenting lessons and sharing them through national and regional platforms.
- **Strengthen coordination with development partners into structured collaboration**, by co-investing in tools, research, or advocacy activities that support shared reform objectives under resource constraints.

# Annex 1: Project Overview

*Table 1: Project overview*

| VET4UZ | Details |
|---|---|
| **Budget** | 4,814,837 CHF |
| **Duration** | December 2021-December 2025 |
| **Implementation** | • Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation (lead)<br>• Center on the Economics and Management of Education and Training Systems (CEMETS) from CES/ETHZ<br>• Swiss Federal University of Vocational Education and Training (SFUVET) |
| **Goal** | VET students and graduates in Uzbekistan profit from a functional labour market-oriented education and training system allowing them to find and retain an attractive and decent job in sectors with growth potential |
| **Outcomes** | • **Outcome 1:** Strengthened institutional actors implement a functional regulatory framework in a coordinated manner.<br>• **Outcome 2:** VET actors on central level and VET providers assume their quality-assurance roles, having developed the necessary structures, processes and instruments.<br>• **Outcome 3:** Teachers perform in a competence-oriented and labour-market oriented way.<br>• **Outcome 4:** Economic actors play an enhanced role in the VET system and contribute actively to the governance, definition and implementation of VET |
| **Outputs** | • 1.1. VET system monitored and harmonised.<br>• 1.2. Key institutions / persons are capacitated to take a leading role.<br>• 1.3. VET coordination mechanisms and processes established.<br>• 2.1 Improved institutional capacity on QA.<br>• 2.2 Accreditation system of formal VET providers complied with (nationally) agreed standards and piloted.<br>• 3.1 Strengthened institutional capacity for initial and in-service teacher training.<br>• 3.2 Improved institutional capacity on teachers' qualification and certification systems.<br>• 3.3 VET providers piloted dual training with involvement of labour market<br>• 4.1 More structured representation of employers in VET established<br>• 4.2 Private sector-led strategy established and capacities of employers in advocacy built. |
| **Key stakeholders** | • **Government and public institutions:** MHESI; MEPR; IVETD; ILMR; Tourism Committee; APA; Educational Projects Centre and other state agencies<br>• **VET providers and educational institutions**: Technicums (Bukhara, Tashkent, Zaamin, Bostanlik), and partner universities (Tashkent University of Economics; International Tourism University "Silk Road"; Bukhara State University; Tashkent Pedagogical State University; IVETD regional branches (e.g. Samarkand, Namangan)<br>• **Private companies, business organisations** (AoH) |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Beneficiaries** | • Project beneficiaries are the under- and unemployed, predominantly youth aged 15-29, and secondary school students who are attending public VET institutions, especially women and persons from disadvantaged backgrounds. |
| **Location** | • Tashkent city, Bostanlik, Bukhara, Zaamin |

*Source: Annual progress report (2024)*

# Annex 2: Evaluation questions

*Table 2: Evaluation questions*

| Evaluation questions | Docs | Data | Interv. | Survey |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Relevance** | | | | |
| **EQ 1:** How well does VET4UZ address the needs of target populations related to VSD, employability, and income generation? | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| **EQ 2:** Does VET4UZ focus on the right locations and sector? | ● | ● | ● | |
| **EQ 3:** To what extent did the project remain relevant given ongoing political, economic, and social changes? | ● | | ● | |
| **Coherence** | | | | |
| **EQ 4:** Are opportunities of cooperation with other donor-funded projects sufficiently leveraged? | ● | | ● | ● |
| **Effectiveness** | | | | |
| **EQ 5**: To what extent are outcome and output targets on track to being achieved? If they are not on track, were they realistic? | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| **EQ 6**: Do results vary by location or sector? If so, why? | ● | ● | ● | |
| **EQ 7**: What improvements in the VET system can be attributed to the project? | ● | | ● | |
| **EQ 8**: What key factors influence the project's success? | ● | | ● | ● |
| **EQ 9**: Is the inclusion of women and people with disabilities effectively considered in project design and implementation? | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| **EQ 10**: Has VET4UZ promoted good governance principles?[19] | ● | | ● | |
| **EQ 11**: How does VET4UZ contribute to an Inclusive Green Economy? | | | | |
| **Efficiency** | | | | |

[19] The Project Document explains: *"Governance principles such as responsiveness (to Employer needs), participation, accountability (delivering quality to VET students and employers), transparency and inclusion are emphasized. The Project focuses on good practices with regard to the inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups."* The assessment will be based on these elements; the terms will be further operationalized in interviews to the extend needed and beneficial.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EQ 11**: Is the project's organizational setup (including steering and MEAL) cost-effective and fit for purpose? | | | ● | ● |
| **EQ 12**: How well does the project work with different key government partners and support the interministerial coordination? | | | ● | ● |
| **EQ 13**: What factors enhance or hinder cost-effectiveness for Phase 2? | | | ● | |
| **Impact** | | | | |
| **EQ 14**: Does the project contribute to strengthening employability, income generation, and economic development? | | | ● | ● |
| **Sustainability** | | | | |
| **EQ 15**: To what extent will project results be maintained beyond donor support? | | | ● | ● |
| **EQ 16**: Has the government and private sector actively engaged with and taken ownership of the project? | | | ● | |
| **EQ 17**: How can project achievements be scaled and / or inform national reforms? | | | ● | |

# Annex 3: Interviewees (internal only)

All the meetings held in Uzbekistan took place from the 3rd to the 9th of April 2025. The following table is organized by the location and the date of each meeting. Besides the face-to-face meetings, there were also virtual sessions conducted with SDC, the VET4UZ team and Emanuel Wühtrich vom SFUVET. Prof. Ursula Renold, CEMETS, provided a written input.

# Annex 4: Data collection tool

## Survey questionnaire

| No | Respondents | Survey question | Response options |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Background information** | | | |
| **1** | All | What is your gender? | • Male<br>• Female<br>• I don't want to disclose |
| **2** | All | What kind of organisation do you work for? | • Government<br>• Public training institution (universities, technicums, etc.)<br>• Private sector (businesses and associations, etc.)<br>• VET4UZ team (PIU, Helvetas backstopping, experts, etc.)<br>• Other (please specify) |
| **3** | All | In your work, on which level do you focus? | • National level<br>• Regional level<br>• Local level |
| **4** | Those who choose "Regional level" and "Local level" from previous question | Which area(s) do you focus on? *(Multiple answers possible)* | • Tashkent city<br>• Bustonlik district of Tashkent region<br>• Zomin district of Jizzak region<br>• Bukhara city<br>• Other (please specify) |
| **5** | All | Which VET4UZ outcome(s) does your area of work cover? *(Multiple answers possible)* | • Outcome 1: VET system governance<br>• Outcome 2: Quality assurance in VET<br>• Outcome 3: Improving teaching performance<br>• Outcome 4: Private sector engagement |

| Relevance | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **6** | All but VET4UZ team<br><br>*Note: only items relevant to the stakeholder will be shown, linked to the response given in Q5.* | How relevant are these project activities to your organization?<br><br>**VET system governance**<br>• Produce analytical reports; Review and harmonise legislative documents<br>• Capacity training in VET management<br>• Set up national, regional, and sectoral coordination platforms; Facilitate donor coordination<br><br>**Quality assurance in VET**<br>• Develop and approve QA framework and tools; Capacity building in QA<br>• Review and approve external QA mechanisms; Pilot internal QA procedures in VET providers<br><br>**Improving teaching performance**<br>• Update and pilot in-service training; Strengthen IVETD's capacity in training delivery and internal evaluation; Capacity building on LMS system<br>• Train master trainers in SiVET; Organise regional SiVET workshops<br>• Develop and pilot dual training programmes; Deliver workshops for VET teachers and in-company instructors<br><br>**Private sector engagement**<br>• Formalise collaboration between VET providers and employers; Conduct skills gap and inclusiveness studies in hospitality; Promote dual VET through hotel partnerships<br>• Draft private sector guidelines; organise national advocacy events; Support AoH in research and training on skills, green and inclusive practices | • Not at all<br>• To a small extent<br>• To a moderate extent<br>• To a great extent<br>• Completely |
| | All but VET4UZ team | It would help our understanding if you briefly explain the reasons behind your selection. | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **7** | All | In your view, to what extent has the project addressed important needs and priorities of:<br>• Under- and unemployed, predominantly youth aged 15-29<br>• Secondary school students who are attending public VET institutions<br>• Young girls and women<br>• Persons from disadvantaged backgrounds | • Not at all<br>• To a small extent<br>• To a moderate extent<br>• To a great extent<br>• Completely |
| **Coherence** | | | |
| **8** | All | Do you think that the project has done enough to coordinate with:<br>• MHESI<br>• other government and public institutions<br>• private sector partners<br>• other development partners | • Not at all<br>• To a small extent<br>• To a moderate extent<br>• To a great extent<br>• Completely |
| **Capacity building** | | | |
| **9** | All but VET4UZ team | Did you attend a capacity building activity (training event, seminar etc.) of the VET4UZ project? | • Yes<br>• No |
| **10** | All but VET4UZ team | Have you been able to:<br>• gain new insights relevant for your work.<br>• apply the learnings form the capacity building activity in your work. | • Not at all<br>• To a small extent<br>• To a moderate extent<br>• To a great extent<br>• Completely |
| **Effectiveness / Impact** | | | |
| **11** | All | To what extent has the project contributed to these project goals?<br>• Strengthened VET government institutions implement a functional regulatory framework in a coordinated way.<br>• VET actors at central level and VET providers take on quality assurance roles with the necessary structures and processes in place.<br>• Teachers perform in a competence-oriented and labour-market oriented way. | • Not at all<br>• To a small extent<br>• To a moderate extent<br>• To a great extent<br>• Completely |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | • Economic actors (businesses and associations) take on a greater role in the VET system, helping to govern, define, and implement it.<br>• VET graduates increase their employability through demand and labour market-oriented VET offer. | |
| | | What are the most important changes that you associate with the project? Were there any negative effects? | |
| **Efficiency** | | | |
| **12** | All but VET4UZ team | Reflecting on the VET4UZ project, do you think that:<br>• the project delivers high-quality services and products?<br>• the project delivers its services in a timely manner; any delays were justified?<br>• the resources (time and/or funds) you invested while participating in the project (thus far) have been worthwhile? | • Not at all<br>• To a small extent<br>• To a moderate extent<br>• To a great extent<br>• Completely |
| **13** | All | How well does the coordination, communication, and support within and around the project work?<br>Please assess the following:<br>• Between key project bodies (e.g., steering committee, Helvetas, experts)<br>• Between the project and MHESI, as well as other government stakeholders<br>• Between the project and private sector stakeholders | • Not at all<br>• To a small extent<br>• To a moderate extent<br>• To a great extent<br>• Completely |
| **Sustainability** | | | |
| **14** | All | Reflecting on the stakeholders involved in the VET4UZ project, do you think that after the project's completion (i.e., without further donor funding):<br>• they are MOTIVATED to continue the project's activities?<br>• they are CAPABLE to continue the project's activities?<br>• they have the FINANCIAL CAPACITY to continue the project's activities? | • Not at all<br>• To a small extent<br>• To a moderate extent<br>• To a great extent<br>• Completely |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **15** | All | Which project activities would you like to see being scaled up? (select the most important five activities) | **VET system governance**<br>• Produce analytical reports; Review and harmonise legislative documents<br>• Capacity training in VET management<br>• Set up national, regional, and sectoral coordination platforms; Facilitate donor coordination<br><br>**Quality assurance in VET**<br>• Develop and approve QA framework and tools; Capacity building in QA<br>• Review and approve external QA mechanisms; Pilot internal QA procedures in VET providers<br><br>**Improving teaching performance**<br>• Update and pilot in-service training; Strengthen IVETD's capacity in training delivery and internal evaluation; Capacity building on LMS system<br>• Train master trainers in SiVET; Organise regional SiVET workshops<br>• Develop and pilot dual training programmes; Deliver workshops for VET teachers and in-company instructors<br><br>**Private sector engagement**<br>• Formalise collaboration between VET providers and employers; Conduct skills gap and inclusiveness studies in hospitality; Promote dual VET through hotel partnerships<br>• Draft private sector guidelines; organise national advocacy events; Support AoH in research and training on skills, green and inclusive practices<br>• Other (please specify) |
| | All | It would help our understanding if you briefly explain the reasons behind your selection. | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **16** | All | In your view, what are the key factors influence the project's success? (Please choose the three most important factors) | • Government support and stakeholder buy-in.<br>• Partner networks at national, regional, and local levels<br>• Leveraging Swiss expertise and good practices<br>• Capacity building and know-how transfer<br>• Development of robust governance and Quality Assurance frameworks.<br>• Private sector involvement<br>• Flexibility to adapt in a changing policy environment and leadership changes.<br>• Continuous learning and ongoing project improvements<br>• Other (please specify) |
| **17** | All | What additional measures or adjustments do you think could further strengthen the project in Phase 2? Please share your ideas, opinions, and recommendations. | |

# Interview questionnaire

**VET4UZ Project Team -Follow up**

(Helvetas, CEMETS/ETHZ, SFUVET)

- Background & Role

The project team leads day-to-day implementation, coordination with national and local stakeholders, capacity development, technical assistance, monitoring, and learning. They also support legal/policy processes and pilot innovations such as dual education, QA frameworks, and private sector engagement.

- Monitoring & Learning (EQ5, EQ7)

1. You mentioned reform monitoring remains weak. What mechanisms could be introduced to track reform outcomes more systematically?

2. How is evidence from MEAL (e.g., tracer studies, QA self-assessments, stakeholder feedback) currently being used for learning and course correction?

- Scaling & Institutionalization (EQ14, EQ16, EQ17)

3. Which components of the project are most ready for national scale-up? What institutional or political conditions are needed to support that transition?

4. Which project tools (e.g., QA handbook, dual education guidelines, green skills guide) have gained traction within government systems? What steps have been taken to formalize or embed them?

- Strategic Alignment & Influence (EQ3, EQ14)

5. How has VET4UZ positioned itself as a system reform partner rather than a pilot project?

6. To what extent has the project influenced national-level policy decisions or strategic frameworks (e.g., presidential decrees, ministerial strategies)?

- Institutional Capacity Development (EQ5, EQ15)

7. What institutional capacities or behaviours have changed as a result of the project - particularly in ministries, VET providers, or employer associations?

8. What's still missing to enable full national ownership of key reform areas (QA, teacher development, dual education)?

- Unintended Effects & Challenges (EQ9, EQ11)

9. Have any unintended or unforeseen consequences emerged - for example, project fatigue, capacity overload, or policy misalignment?

10. How has the team managed overlaps in reform mandates or competition between institutional stakeholders?

- Coordination & Partnerships (EQ4, EQ13)

11. How is the project navigating overlapping mandates across ministries and institutions like the Educational Projects Centre?

12. What are the most effective strategies used for donor coordination and alignment (e.g., technical working groups, handovers)?

13. How has the project bridged the national–regional–local levels of VET reform to ensure alignment and ownership?

- Inclusion & Equity (EQ9)

15. Which strategies for including women, rural youth, or PwD have been most effective - and where are the remaining barriers?

- Green Economy (EQ11)

16. What are the strongest entry points for mainstreaming green skills across sectors beyond hospitality?

17. How has VET4UZ contributed to the national green economy agenda, especially in light of 2024's thematic focus?

- Internal Learning & Coherence (EQ12)

18. What are the biggest internal lessons learned across components or between Swiss and local partners?

19. How has the project ensured cross-component coherence in technical design and delivery?

- Phase 2 Vision & Strategic Focus (EQ17)

20. From your perspective, what should be the strategic focus of Phase 2?

21. Where do you see the greatest opportunity for catalytic reform or systems transformation next?

**Institute for Development of National Qualifications (IDNQ)**

- Background & Role

The Institute for Development of National Qualifications (IDNQ) is mandated to lead the development, harmonization, and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in Uzbekistan. It plays a key role in aligning occupational standards, integrating formal and non-formal training pathways, and supporting quality assurance processes. Within VET4UZ, the IDNQ contributes to system-level reform in areas such as qualifications design, accreditation, and permeability between education and employment.

- Background & Relevance

1. Could you briefly describe IDNQ's mandate and your institution's involement in the VET4UZ project?

2. How has the project contributed to IDNQ's goals in developing or aligning the NQF and supporting skills recognition?

- Coordination & Policy Coherence

3. How has IDNQ engaged with the VET4UZ team and its coordination mechanisms (e.g., Steering committee, working group)? What has worked well? What has not worked well?

4. How does IDNQ coordinate with MHESI, MEPR, and other relevant agencies on qualification reform?

5. Have there been challenges in aligning responsibilities or mandates across institutions involved in VET qualifications?

- Effectiveness & System Improvements

6. What are the most significant changes brought by the VET4UZ project? (i.e. qualifications design, occupational standards, or recognition of prior learning)

7. Have there been any notable challenges or unintended effects in project implementation

8. What progress has been made toward improving permeability across levels and types of education (e.g., between level 4 VET and higher education)?

- Sustainability & Scale-Up

8. What steps are being taken to institutionalize VET4UZ-supported tools or processes related to the NQF?

9. How should IDNQ be positioned in the next phase of the project to advance qualifications reform?

10. What support or capacity development would help IDNQ sustain and scale its qualifications work nationally?

- Reform Challenges & Lessons

10. What challenges remain in the legal, institutional, or technical setup for implementing a fully functional NQF?

11. What lessons from collaboration with VET4UZ could help guide further qualifications reform?

**Academy of Public Administration (APA)**

The Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan plays a key role in developing public service capacity in Uzbekistan. In the VET4UZ context, APA supports good governance reforms, contributes to leadership and policy capacity building, and engages in promoting evidence-based policy and interministerial coordination for education reform. APA has also supported the development of governance tools and monitoring mechanisms in collaboration with MHESI and the project team.

The APA and the Project signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on March 15, 2024. The collaboration with the Academy can lead to significant improvements in the governance structures of the TVET sector, ensuring that policies and practices are more effective and aligned with national development goals. However, since the Academy focuses primarily on general public governance, there may be a lack of specialized experience in TVET governance.

- Background & Relevance

1. Could you briefly describe APA's mandate and your involvement in the VET4UZ project?

2. How has the project contributed to APA's goals in strengthening public sector governance, institutional capacity, or interministerial coordination?

- Coordination & Project Set-Up

3. How has APA engaged with the VET4UZ team and its governance mechanisms (e.g., Steering Committee, technical working groups)? What has worked well? What has not worked well?

4. How does APA collaborate with other institutions (e.g., MHESI, IVETD, MEPR) to support good governance in the VET sector?

- Effectiveness & Results

5. What are the most significant improvements brought by the project (e.g. governance, public management, capacity building)?

6. Have there been any key challenges, setbacks, or unintended consequences? What are they?

7. What results have been achieved in terms of good governance, inclusion (e.g., women, PwD), and green economy agenda through VET4UZ activities?

- Sustainability & Scale-Up

8. What steps is APA taking to institutionalize successful governance innovations or capacity development models from the project?

9. What would APA need to expand these approaches at scale or embed them into national training programs for civil servants? And how is APA preparing to contribute to that process?

- Reform Challenges

10. What are the main challenges in improving VET sector governance across multiple ministries and levels of government?

11. What lessons has APA learned about building effective institutional capacity for cross-sectoral reform implementation?

**Tourism Committee**

By presidential decree, the Tourism Committee of Uzbekistan has been established under the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment Protection, and Climate Change, led by Aziz Abdukhakimov, a seasoned tourism expert and rector of the International "Silk Road" University. Umid Shadiev was appointed chairman of the committee. The entire ministry staff transitioned to the committee, positioning the tourism sector for focused reform and sustainable growth.

Recent reforms, including Presidential Decree #200, aim to improve public administration in education and innovation. From the 2023/2024 academic year, government scholarships will fully fund tourism education at vocational schools, supporting the sector's development.

The Tourism Committee oversees 10 VET providers, offering material support and work-based learning opportunities. However, bureaucratic barriers, weak inter-ministerial coordination, and frequent leadership changes challenge the system's responsiveness and innovation. These issues hinder collaboration, disrupt progress, and complicate governance.

Additionally, the disconnect between technical school curricula and university programs, particularly in language and instructional methods, limits the alignment of educational pathways. This fragmentation further exacerbates the difficulties in delivering cohesive vocational education, affecting the overall growth of tourism-related skills and talent development.

- Background & Relevance

1. Could you briefly describe the Tourism Committee's mandate and your involvement in VET4UZ?

2. How does the project support your goals, particularly in skills development for hospitality and tourism?

- Coordination & Project Set-Up

3. How has you engaged with the project team and its coordination mechanism (e.g. steering committee, working groups)? What has worked well? What has not worked well?

4. How does the Tourism Committee collaborate with MHESI, IVETD, and private sector actors to align training with labor market demand?

- Effectiveness & Results

5. What are the most significant improvements in hospitality training that can be linked to VET4UZ? (e.g., stronger linkages between technicums and employers, curriculum development, industry standards)

6. What challenges has the Committee faced in promoting private sector engagement or sustaining reforms in tourism skills training? How do structural or funding challenges affect the Committee's ability to support pilot colleges like Bostanlik or Zomin?

7. What outcomes have you seen in terms of inclusion (e.g., youth, women, PwD) and sustainability (e.g., eco-tourism, green skills)?

- Sustainability & Scale-Up

8. What steps are being taken to institutionalize or scale up successful elements from the project (e.g., dual VET for tourism)?

9. What support would help the Committee play a more proactive role in Phase 2? How is the Tourism Committee preparing to contribute to the institutionalisation or scale-up process?

- Reform Challenges

10. What are the key regulatory or institutional barriers that need to be addressed to better align vocational training with tourism sector growth?

11. What would help you further institutionalize public-private partnerships in hospitality VET?

**Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation (MHESI)**

- Background

MHESI is the lead agency for VET governance in Uzbekistan. It is responsible for developing national policy, guiding regulatory reforms, overseeing the accreditation system, and steering interministerial coordination. In VET4UZ, MHESI is a strategic partner supporting the alignment of dual vocational education with broader education reforms and institutionalizing quality assurance and teacher training systems.

- Role & Relevance

1. Could you briefly describe MHESI's mandate in the VET sector and your institution's involvement in the VET4UZ project?

2. How has the project supported MHESI's strategic goals and broader education reforms?

- Coordination & Project Set-Up

3. How would you assess MHESI's collaboration with the VET4UZ team and the effectiveness of the project's setup (e.g., Steering Committee, Swiss expertise such as CEMETS and SFUVET)? What has worked well? What has not worked well?

4. How is MHESI coordinating with other ministries (e.g., MEPR, Tourism Committee) to ensure coherent implementation of reforms? What has worked well? What has not worked well?

5. What steps has MHESI taken to address overlap or fragmentation among donor-funded initiatives in QA, teacher development, or institutional governance?

- Effectiveness & Results

6. What are the most significant improvements brought by the project? How has the project strengthened key reform areas: VET governance, QA systems, teacher training, and private sector engagement?

7. Have there been any key challenges, setbacks, or unintended consequences (e.g., overlapping reforms, coordination fatigue)? What are they?

8. What concrete contributions has the project made in promoting good governance, gender equality, disability inclusion, or green economy agenda?

- Sustainability & Scale-Up

9. What mechanisms has MHESI put in place to sustain reforms supported by the project (e.g., QA handbook, national accreditation framework)?

10. How is MHESI planning to scale up successful pilots or practices from the project across the national system?

11. What role does MHESI expect to play in the next phase of the project, and what additional support or partnerships would strengthen that role?

12. What changes or improvements would you like to see as the project moves forward?

- Reform Challenges

13. What are the key legal or institutional barriers to improving permeability between level 4 dual education and higher education pathways?

14. What lessons have emerged from MHESI's recent assumption of accreditation responsibilities following structural reforms?

**Educational Projects Centre**

The most significant legal change on the professional education sector for the reporting period was the establishment of the "Educational Projects Center" project office (Resolution OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN, #PR-54).

The project office, "Educational Projects Center," was established with the following main areas of activity:

a) Developing measures and promising initiatives for the reform of the education sector.

b) Analyzing and summarizing the recommendations of international organizations, financial institutions, consulting companies, and experts to ensure the effective implementation of feasible initiatives.

c) Preparing proposals for the improvement of educational standards, curricula, and programs based on advanced foreign experience, with the extensive involvement of leading experts, consultants, advisors, and the public.

d) Ensuring unity and continuity between types and levels of education and fostering cooperation between ministries and agencies in developing state education standards and curricula.

e) Promoting a culture of educational quality in educational organizations and providing comprehensive assistance to ministries and agencies in the international accreditation of educational programs.

f) Strengthening international relations in the area of education quality control and expanding cooperation with foreign and international evaluation organizations.

- Background & Relevance

1. Could you briefly describe EPC's mandate and your involvement in the VET4UZ project?

2. How do you think the project has and could support the EPC's capacity to manage education reform projects and coordinate across institutions?

- Coordination & Project Set-Up

3. How has you engaged with the project team and its coordination mechanisms? What has worked well? What has not worked well?

4. How does EPC collaborate with MHESI, IVETD and other partners / donors to ensure coordination of education reform initiatives?

- Effectiveness & Results

5. What are the most significant improvements brought by the project? (e.g. inter-agency cooperation, project management, or reform coherence and integration of international expertise)

6. Have there been any key challenges, setbacks, or unintended consequences? What are they?

7. What results have been achieved in terms of good governance, inclusion (e.g., women, PwD), and green economy agenda through VET4UZ activities?

- Sustainability & Scale-Up

8. What steps is EPC taking to institutionalize good practices introduced through the project (e.g., stakeholder coordination)?

9. How can EPC contribute more effectively to national scale-up efforts and future donor coordination in Phase 2? What supports are needed?

- Reform Challenges

10. What legal, institutional, or procedural barriers still limit EPC's ability to deliver its full mandate?

11. What lessons has EPC learned in managing multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder education reforms?

**Institute for Vocational Education and Training Development (IVETD)**

- Background & Role

The Institute for VET Development (IVETD) plays a key role in the VET system, as it is responsible for the continuous professional development of VET managers and teachers, as well as the development of curricula, training programs, and methodological and didactic materials for the VET system. In this context, the IVETD is one of the project's key partners in the VET reform. To date, the project's cooperation with the IVETD has focused on various research projects related to the effectiveness of upskilling programs, the development of new upskilling programs, and training trainers in innovative didactic approaches, among other activities. Moving forward, this partnership will encompass a range of initiatives, including piloting new in-service teacher training approaches, strengthening IVETD's strategic role and its engagement in the VET reform with support from international VET institutions, and disseminating modern teaching methodologies throughout Uzbekistan's VET system.

- Background & Relevance

1. Could you briefly describe IVETD's mandate and your involvement in the VET4UZ?

2. How are roles shared or aligned between IVETD and other institutions like the Educational Projects Centre?

3. How has VET4UZ contributed to IVETD's core work in improving institutional delivery, dual education implementation, and quality assurance?

- Coordination & Project Set-Up

4. How has IVETD engaged with the VET4UZ team and its coordination mechanisms such as the Steering Committee, working groups, or regional implementation support? What has worked well? What has not worked well?

5. How effective is IVETD's collaboration with MHESI, MEPR, and technicums?

- Effectiveness & Results

6. What are the most significant improvements brought by the project (e.g. in technicum performance or system coordination)? How has the project contributed to institutionalizing the dual education model in selected technicums (e.g., curriculum adaptation, student placement, employer partnerships)?

7. What are the main operational or institutional barriers IVETD faces in expanding dual education or QA systems? How is IVETD navigating coordination with newly created structures like the Educational Projects Centre?

8. What results have been achieved in terms of good governance, inclusion (e.g., women, PwD), and green economy agenda through VET4UZ activities?

- Sustainability & Scale-Up

9. What steps is IVETD taking to institutionalize VET4UZ-supported innovations (e.g., QA handbook, SiVET, work-based learning procedures)?

10. What support or capacity building would help IVETD sustain or deepen its implementation role in Phase 2? How is IVETD preparing to contribute to that process?

11. What changes or improvements would you like to see as the project moves forward?

**Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction (MEPR)**

- Role in VET4UZ

MEPR plays a central role in ensuring that skills development contributes to employment and poverty reduction in Uzbekistan. In VET4UZ, MEPR supports the alignment of vocational training with labor market needs, contributes to the development of occupational standards, and helps adapt the legal and institutional frameworks for dual education. It also leads on integrating non-formal training and expanding opportunities for youth and vulnerable groups.

The Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction has recently placed significant emphasis on non-formal education, an area of undeniable importance for broadening access to learning and skills development. This shift in focus, however, raises concerns that the VET4UZ project, which is crucial for advancing formal TVET in Uzbekistan, may not receive the necessary attention.

Background & Relevance

1. Could you briefly describe MEPR's mandate in skills development and employment, and your involvement in the VET4UZ project?

2. How has VET4UZ supported MEPR's strategic objectives in youth employability, labor market access, and inclusive training?

- Coordination & Project Set-Up

3. How has MEPR engaged with the VET4UZ team and its coordination mechanisms (e.g., Steering Committee)? What has worked well? What has not worked well?

4. How effective is MEPR's collaboration with MHESI, IVETD, and other stakeholders within the project?

5. How does MEPR ensure coherence between its non-formal training programs and VET4UZ's formal dual education approach?

- Effectiveness & Results

6. What are the most significant improvements brought by the project? What legal or policy changes linked to dual education (e.g., student registration, mentor compensation, labor code provisions) have resulted from MEPR's involvement? How has VET4UZ strengthened MEPR's capacity to reach under- and unemployed youth or improve job-oriented training pathways?

7. Have there been any notable challenges or unintended effects in project implementation (e.g., overlap with existing programs, unclear mandates)?

8. What are the most visible results in promoting gender equality, disability inclusion, or green economy agenda through your engagement in the project?

- Sustainability & Scale-Up

10. What mechanisms is MEPR putting in place to institutionalize legal frameworks or pilot experiences from VET4UZ?

11. What elements of the project should be scaled nationally, and how is MEPR preparing to contribute to that process? What additional support would strengthen MEPR's role in Phase 2?

12. What changes or improvements would you like to see as the project moves forward?

- Reform Challenges

13. What are the main challenges in integrating dual education students into the labor framework (e.g., employer liability, contractual clarity, student protection)?

14. What lessons has MEPR learned about legal or institutional alignment during this reform process?

**Hotels**

- Employers (Hotels, Tourism Businesses)

Background & Role

Private sector actors - especially those in the hospitality industry - are central to piloting the dual education model. They offer workplace training, co-develop curricula, assess students, and participate in VET governance.

- Engagement & Motivation

1. How did you become involved in the VET4UZ project or in the dual education pilot? What motivated your company to offer training placements for students?

- Institutional Collaboration

2. How would you describe the collaboration with the technicum or university involved in the pilot? What has worked well? What has not worked well?

3. Are you satisfied with the communication, coordination, and role-sharing between your company and the education institution?

4. How well have you been supported by the VET4UZ project team? Any improvement is needed?

- Business Value & Impact

5. What has been the most significant benefit or positive change in your business due to participating in the project?

6. What are the main challenges or costs of providing workplace training (e.g., supervision time, legal uncertainties, resource constraints)?

7. Have there been any unintended or negative effects (e.g., mismatched expectations, student preparedness issues)?

- Sustainability & Future Engagement

8. Which aspects of this collaboration should be sustained or scaled up in future phases?

9. What support, incentives, or changes would help more companies like yours participate in the dual education model?

10. Looking ahead, in what ways would your company like to be more involved in the dual education model? How are you preparing to contribute more actively to its expansion?

**AoH**

- Association of Hoteliers (AoH) or Sectoral Associations

The Association of Hoteliers of Uzbekistan (AoH) is a key organization representing the hospitality sector, focusing on enhancing service standards, supporting hotels and related businesses, and promoting collaboration across tourism and hospitality. Established after COVID-19, AoH has expanded its membership beyond the capital, now including 36 hoteliers and restaurants, 18 suppliers, and 1 managing service company. The VET4UZ project also encouraged partner hotels to join AoH and participate in its workshops.

One of AoH's major initiatives is the "Upgrade" Academy, a training center offering short-term courses to upskill hospitality professionals and VET teachers. In 2024, the academy trained 150 individuals, including VET teachers from all regions, with financial support from the Tourism Committee. The association has signed four MoUs, including one with Helvetas Uzbekistan, to further advance training initiatives.

Despite its growing influence, AoH faces challenges due to unstable financial resources, limiting its ability to fully support its operations. However, it remains a crucial driver in developing Uzbekistan's hospitality sector, focusing on improving industry standards and professional development.

- Strategic Role

1. What are your main responsibilities, and your involvement with the VET4UZ project? How is the Association supporting the dual education model or broader VET reform?

- Public-Private Dialogue

2. How effective is current collaboration between the private sector and public VET institutions? What has worked well? What has not worked well?

3. What could be improved in terms of coordination, representation, or shared governance?

- Advocacy & Representation

4. What are the most important contributions of VET4UZ from the perspective of the hospitality sector? Have you seen an increase in employer awareness or engagement with VET as a result of this project?

5. What are the main challenges in promoting PSE? Are there any risks or challenges in sustaining employer involvement beyond the project?

6. What role do you play in promoting inclusive or green practices within the hospitality training sector?

7. What are the biggest opportunities to scale or institutionalize dual education?

**Technicums**

(Bukhara, Tashkent, Zaamin, Bostanlik)

Technicums are public vocational colleges piloting dual education in the hospitality sector under VET4UZ. They work directly with local employers, implement quality assurance tools, receive teacher training, and are critical actors for testing inclusion, labor market alignment, and governance reforms.

- Background & Relevance

1. Please introduce your technicum and describe your involvement in the VET4UZ project.

- Coordination & Implementation

2. How do you collaborate with employers and other partners in implementing dual education?

3. How effective is your engagement with the VET4UZ project team and regional authorities? What has worked well? What has not worked well?

- Results & Improvements

4. What have been the most important improvements in your technicum due to VET4UZ (e.g., curriculum, infrastructure, employer partnerships, student outcomes)?

5. What main challenges have you faced in implementing project components (e.g., dual education, QA tools)? Are there any unintended effects or areas that require further attention?

6. How has your technicum addressed inclusion (e.g., gender, PwD) or sustainability through the project?

- Sustainability & Future Engagement

7. What aspects of the project should be sustained or expanded beyond the pilot phase?

8. What support would help you maintain or scale these efforts in Phase 2?

- Lessons

9. What practical lessons have you learned that could benefit other institutions?

**Partner Universities**

(Tashkent University of Economics, International Tourism University “Silk Road,” Bukhara State University, Tashkent Pedagogical State University)

Partner universities work with VET4UZ to deliver initial and in-service teacher training, develop SiVET didactics, support curriculum updates, and contribute to improving vertical mobility between VET and higher education.

- Relevance & Collaboration

1. How relevant are the VET4UZ objectives (e.g., dual education, quality improvement) to your university's strategy or mandate?

2. How are you collaborating with technicums or VET institutions under the project?

- Teacher Education & Training

3. What has been your role in delivering teacher training, especially in SiVET and the Master Trainer approach?

4. How has collaboration with IVETD or international partners influenced your teacher education programs?

- Quality & Alignment

5. Has the project supported changes to your curriculum or assessment approaches for future VET teachers?

6. How are you contributing to improved alignment between VET teaching standards and higher education pathways?

- Permeability & Pathways

7. What are the main challenges in ensuring that VET students can transition into university programs?

8. What changes would help improve permeability between level 4 VET programs and your university's offerings?

- Reflections & Results

9. What have been the most significant outcomes of your involvement in VET4UZ?

10. What are the most positive contributions of the project for your institution or faculty?

11. Have there been any challenges or unintended effects (e.g., unclear roles, capacity gaps)?

**Teachers (Technicums & Partner Universities)**

- Background & Role

Teachers are direct beneficiaries of VET4UZ through in-service training (e.g., SiVET methodology, Master Trainers), revised curricula, digital resources, and changes in instructional delivery. Their experience provides key insights into quality, relevance, and institutional change.

- Training & Professional Development

1. What training or support have you received through VET4UZ (e.g., SiVET, didactics, Master Trainer programs)?

2. How has your teaching changed since participating in the training?

- Curriculum & Practice

3. Have you used new teaching methods (e.g., workplace scenarios, student-centered approaches) in your classroom?

4. What is the most important change you have experienced as a teacher due to VET4UZ? What has been the most positive aspect?

5. Have there been any challenges or negative effects (e.g., time burden, unclear expectations)

- Tools & Resources

5. What resources (digital tools, lesson plans, assessments) have been most useful from the project?

6. What additional support would help you improve your teaching?

- Inclusion & Student Response

7. Have you seen any changes in student engagement or learning outcomes since the reforms began?

8. Are girls or students from disadvantaged backgrounds participating more actively?

**Students (Technicums)**

- Background & Role

Students are the primary beneficiaries of VET4UZ. Those in dual education programs (especially hospitality) gain both classroom and workplace experience. Their perspectives help evaluate relevance, effectiveness, and inclusion.

- Motivation & Experience

1. Why did you choose to study at this technicum and in this program? How did you first hear about the opportunity to do workplace training?

- Dual Education Experience

2. What has been the most positive part of your experience with this program?

3. What was the most challenging part of your training?

- Teaching & Support

4. How do you feel about the quality of teaching in your program?

5. Have teachers used new teaching styles or methods that made learning more practical or interesting?

- Access & Inclusion

6. Are students from different backgrounds (e.g., girls, rural, low-income) well supported here?

7. Have you personally faced any obstacles during your studies?

- Future Plans

8. Have you already found work or been offered a job after graduation?

9. What would you change or improve about the program for future students?

**Donors**

- Other Donor Agencies & Development Partners

- Background & Role

These stakeholders implement or support parallel initiatives in vocational skills, education governance, labor market development, or private sector engagement. Some co-develop policies or tools with the same government partners as VET4UZ, which creates both synergy potential and coordination challenges.

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- Strategic Positioning & Complementarity

1. Can you briefly describe your organization's current or planned work in Uzbekistan's VET or education sector?

2. What overlaps or touchpoints exist between your work and the VET4UZ project?

3. In your view, what is VET4UZ's distinct contribution or niche in the broader reform landscape?

- Government Engagement

4. How well is the government managing coordination across multiple donors in VET reform?

5. Have you observed fragmentation, duplication, or unclear mandates as a result of multiple overlapping initiatives?

- Coordination & Coherence

6. How effective is coordination between your organization and VET4UZ, both formally (e.g., joint meetings) and informally (e.g., technical exchanges)?

7. Are there specific areas where greater alignment or collaboration could be achieved (e.g., QA, teacher training, digital platforms)?

- Tools, Frameworks & Policy Alignment

8. Have you had any engagement with VET4UZ-supported tools or processes (e.g., QA handbook, dual education pilots, stakeholder mapping)?

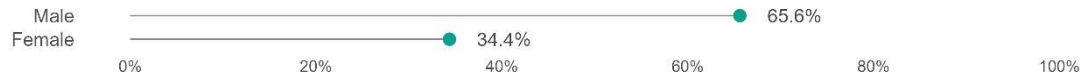
- Reflections & Suggestions

9. What would help strengthen donor coordination in Uzbekistan's VET and skills development sector?

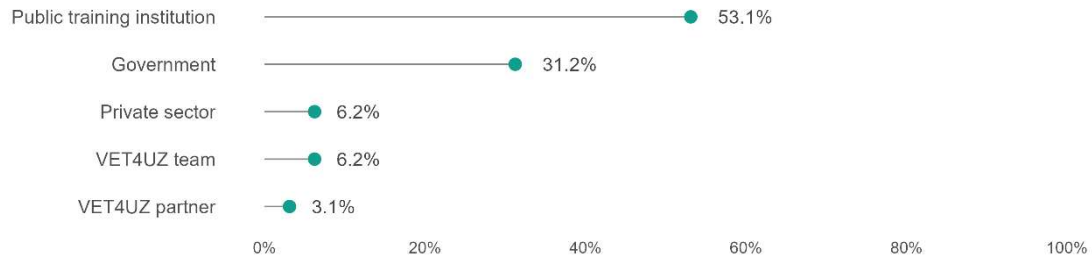
10. What do you see as the biggest risks or opportunities for scaling VET4UZ outcomes beyond the pilot phase?

# Annex 5: Additional survey information

*Figure 12: Survey participant background*




Note: Based on the responses of 32 participants.




Note: Based on the responses of 32 participants.

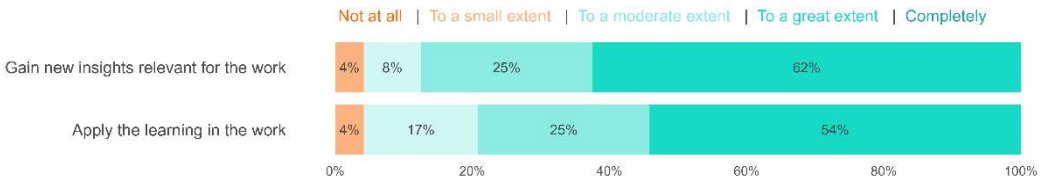
*Figure 13: Training participation and results*

*Did you attend a capacity building activity (training event, seminar etc.) of the VET4UZ project?*




Note: Based on the responses of 26 participants.

*Have you been able to:*




Note: Based on the responses of 24 participants.

# Annex 6: Target achievement

Achievements measured against the LogFrame targets (status end of Q4 2024)

| Outcome / Output | Indicator | Indicator | Baseline | Target | Progress_2024 | Comments | Progress (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Strengthened institutional actors implement a functional regulatory framework in a coordinated manner | 1.1. VET overall regulatory framework. (IED TRI 3) | 1.1. VET overall regulatory framework | 1.1. Regulatory framework fragmented (2021). | 1.1. Regulatory framework harmonized by enforcement of respective legislative documents (2025) | In progress (not yet due) | 9 documents developed and submitted to relevant government stakeholders aimed at harmonizing regulatory framework | 0% |
| 1.1. VET system monitored and harmonised. | 1.1.1. Institutional Level of knowledge on current VET reform progress | 1.1.1. Institutional knowledge on current VET reform progress | 1.1.1. Fragmented and not based on evidence. | 1.1.1. Analytical reports on monitoring of VET reform progress in 2022 and 2025 | 1 report completed in 2022 (50%) | Governance of TVET in Uzbekistan | 50% |
| 1.1. VET system monitored and harmonised. | 1.1.2. Number of legislative documents harmonised including gender sensitive policies and practices. (COI) | 1.1.2. Nr of legislative documents harmonised | 1.1.2. Inconsistency between legal documents. | 1.1.2. Identified legal gaps and inconsistencies adjusted in legislative documents; documents approved by mandated stakeholders. | Ongoing Complete (100%) | (i) in 2021: 'Analysis of the legal and institutional environment of the secondary Vocational Education and Training sector of Uzbekistan' Report;<br>(ii) in 2022: Analysis paper identifying legal collisions in the main normative documents on VET and RECOMMENDATIONS on the 3 key VET normative acts: Law on Chamber of Commerce and Industry (2018), Law on Education (2020) and Law on Employment (2020);<br>(iii) in 2023: recommendations for the draft Presidential Decree on how to enhance the quality of VET, engage the private sector in training, upskill the teachers and implement dual track education following the Swiss model;<br>(iv) in 2023: recommendations for draft Presidential Decree on enhancing quality of VET, engaging private sector in training, upskilling teachers and implement Swiss-model dual education. Expected in August 2023;<br>(v) in 2023: Roadmap for the Development of the Professional | 100% |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | Education System in the Republic of Uzbekistan (2023-2028);<br>(vi) in 2023: Recommendations on "VET Sector Development Strategy - 2030";<br>(vii) in 2024: Recommendations on the improvement of the regulatory framework of Uzbekistan in connection with the implementation of dual VET;<br>(viii) in 2024: proposals on amendments to the draft law on professional qualifications.<br>(ix) in 2024: draft of resolution of Cabinet Ministries of the Republic of Uzbekistan: Additional Measures for Improving the Regulatory and Legal Framework of the National Qualification System. | |
| 1. Strengthened institutional actors implement a functional regulatory framework in a coordinated manner | 1.2. VET coordination mechanisms for strategic steering of VET policies (IED TRI 3) | 1.2. VET coord. mech. for strategic steering of VET policies | 1.2. Not in place | 1.2. Informed decisions adopted by VET system stakeholders and implementation is followed. | Ongoing<br>Complete (100%) | (i) VET4UZ continuously provides support to VET system stakeholders in the form of analytical documents including analysis and proposals on amendments to regulatory documents;<br>(ii) VET4UZ continuously builds capacity of senior civil servants to improve informed decision-making;<br>(iii) VET4UZ attends regular meetings with donors and key local stakeholders to contribute to and facilitate informed decision-making | 100% |
| 1.2. Key institutions / persons are capacitated to take a leading role. | 1.2. Number of senior civil servants with evidence of their strengthened capacity in respective fields of VET management. | 1.2. Nr of civil servants strengthened capacity in VET mgmt | 1.2. 0 | 1.2. 12 | 29<br>(242%) | (i) 11 senior civil servants have attended CEMETS institutes and received confirmation (certificates) for their participation;<br>(ii) 18 civil servants attended training on strategic planning and management decision making (Academy of Public Administration (APA)); | 242% |
| 1.3. VET coordination mechanisms and processes established. | 1.3.1. Status of effective national and sectoral VET coordination networks<br>(Additional indicator, not listed as ARI/TRI/COI) | 1.3.1. Status of effective national and sectoral VET coord. networks | 1.3.1. Not in place | 1.3.1. 1 national, 1 regional and 1 sectoral network established (2022); cooperation agreements signed (2024). | Complete (100%) | 3 coordination and collaboration platforms established:<br>(i) national level (key VET actors: MHESI, Tourism Committee)<br>(ii) regional level (regional educational departments, regional tourism departments, partner universities, pilot VET providers, employers),<br>(iii) sectoral level (Association of Hoteliers of Uzbekistan, pilot VET providers, employers)<br>Agreement signed at sectoral level with VET actors: MHESI, APA, Tourism Committee; | 100% |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | National level agreement planned to be signed by the end of 2024. | |
| 1.3. VET coordination mechanisms and processes established. | 1.3.2. Degree to which donor coordination on VET issues executed (Additional indicator, not listed as ARI/TRI/COI) | 1.3.2. Degree to which donor coord. on VET issues executed | 1.3.2. No regular exchanges; communication limited to informal channels; absence of coordination of activities. | 1.3.2. General data sharing by donors and debates on VET reform progress through regular meetings; and 1 digital platform; coordination improved in planning of donor projects' activities (2025). | Ongoing Complete (100%) | Regular meetings with donors established and are being attended for data sharing, coordination and discussions on VET reform progress.<br>tvet.edu.uz online platform created.<br>Coordination improved thanks to the initiation and holding of the regular meetings and establishment of the online platform. | 100% |
| 2. VET actors on central level and VET providers assume their quality-assurance roles, having developed the necessary structures, processes, and instruments. | 2.1. Status of institutional framework on QA model<br>(COI) | 2.1. Status of institutional framework on QA model | 2.1. Fragmented and incomplete | 2.1. QA model revised (2023); approved by MHESI (2024) | Complete (100%); In progress (70%) | Draft legal act endorsed by MHESI and submitted for review to Cabinet of Ministers (MHESI can approve and start applying the provisions of the act only after approval by Cabinet of Ministers) | 85% |
| 2.1. Improved institutional capacity on QA. | 2.1.1. Development of standards and mechanisms operationalising the national quality assurance framework (Additional indicator, not listed as ARI/TRI/COI) | 2.1.1. Dev. of standards and mech. for the national QA framework | 2.1.1. Existing procedures, methodologies, and tools do not match new national quality assurance framework | 2.1.1. Revised standards and mechanisms operationalising the national quality assurance framework are developed and approved by MHESI. | In progress (90%) | 1. Foundations and guiding principles of QA fostering a balanced approach between a quality culture and accountability have been approved and included in 4 main legal acts (Decrees #200, #345, #158 and Law on Education)<br>2. Two draft legal acts on standards and mechanisms operationalizing the national quality assurance framework were developed in 2023, approved and submitted by the Ministry of higher education, science and innovation to the Cabinet of Ministers in 2024. It is expected to be approved by the Government in 2025. The project is actively working with Porject Office to finalize this process by May 2025. | 90% |
| 2.1. Improved institutional capacity on QA. | 2.1.2. Degree to which national quality assurance framework mechanisms executed by | 2.1.2. Degree to which national QA framework mech. executed | 2.1.2. Insufficient due to limited capacity and absence of regulating mechanisms. | 2.1.2. Improved implementation of national quality assurance framework through strengthened capacity. | In progress (75%) | Under capacity building plan in Quality Assurance, 9 of 12 modules were completed so far. | 75% |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | mandated authorities. | | | | | | |
| 2.1. Improved institutional capacity on QA. | 2.1.3. Quality assurance standards and mechanisms for formal VET providers (Additional indicator, not listed as ARI/TRI/COI) | 2.1.3. QA standards and mech. for VET providers | 2.1.3. Existing QA standards and mechanisms do not match NQF. | 2.1.3. Existing QA standards and mechanisms for formal VET providers revised and aligned with NQF levels 4 and 5 (2023); and approved by MHESI (2025) | Complete (100%); In progress (70%) | QA standards and mechanisms for formal VET providers were developed (QA Handbook, Self-assessment manual). QA Handbook Revised QA standards and mechanisms will be piloted in 2025 and improved QA standards and mechanisms will be submitted to MHESI for approval | 70% |
| 2. VET actors on central level and VET providers assume their quality-assurance roles, having developed the necessary structures, processes, and instruments. | 2.2. Nr of VET providers applying quality assurance processes defined by approved QA model. (COI) | 2.2. Nr of VET providers applying approved QA processes | 2.2. 0 | 2.2.1. 4 pilot VET providers systematically applying quality assurance procedures (2025) | In progress (not yet due) | planned for 2025 | 0% |
| 2.2. Internal quality assurance system of formal VET providers complies with (nationally) approved standards and are piloted. | 2.2. Extent to which external quality assurance procedures guide VET providers to implement internal quality assurance policies through appropriate structures and processes. | 2.2. External QA procedures guide VET providers apply internal QA policies | 2.2. External quality assurance procedures do not address the effectiveness of internal QA processes. | 2.2. External quality assurance mechanisms are reviewed and approved by MHESI (2024); Internal quality assurance procedures are piloted in academic year 2025-2026. | In progress (25%); In progress (not yet due) | The concept and ToR are developed. Consulting company for the review of the external quality assurance mechanisms to be hired in September 2024. | 13% |
| 3. Teachers perform in a competence-oriented and labour-market oriented way. | 3.1. Status of professional development system for VET managers and teachers (EDU ARI 2) | 3.1. Status of PD system for VET managers and teachers | 3.1. Outdated | 3.1. Existing PD system reviewed (2022-2023);curricula and internal assessment tools developed (2024); updated curricula and internal | Complete (100%); In progress (90%); In progress (not yet due); | | 48% |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | assessment tools piloted (2025); | In progress (not yet due) | | |
| 3.1. Strengthened institutional capacity for in-service teacher training. | 3.1.1. Nr of amended upskilling programs for VET teachers based on needs assessment Additional indicator, not listed as ARI/TRI/COI) | 3.1.1. Nr of amended upskilling prog. for VET teachers | 3.1.1. 0 | 3.1.1. Study on the current status of in-service teacher training system (2023). Four amended upskilling programs for VET teachers developed (2024); | Complete (100%) | | 100% |
| 3.1. Strengthened institutional capacity for in-service teacher training. | 3.1.2. Nr of VET managers and teachers trained based on the amended upskilling programs. (SDC EDU ARI2) | 3.1.2. Nr of VET managers and teachers trained | 3.1.2. 0 | 3.1.2. 2000 | In progress (%) | Planned for 2025. | 0% |
| 3.1. Strengthened institutional capacity for in-service teacher training. | 3.1.3. Nr of IVETD is competent in designing and implementing teacher training programmes. (SDC EDU ARI2) | 3.1.3. Nr of IVETD competent in design. & implem. teacher training prog. | 3.1.3. 0 | 3.1.3. 20 (2024-2025) | Complete (100%) | | 100% |
| 3.1. Strengthened institutional capacity for in-service teacher training. | 3.1.4. Status of IVETD practices on the internal evaluation of VET teachers, involved in in-service teacher training courses. | 3.1.4. Status of IVETD practices on internal evaluation of VET teachers | 3.1.4. Internal assessment system inadequate | 3.1.4. The Institute internal assessment system analysed (2023); the system is improved and applied (2025) | Complete (100%); In progress (not yet due) | | 50% |
| 3.1. Strengthened institutional capacity for in-service teacher training. | 3.1.5. Nr of VET managers and teachers capacitated in the Learning | 3.1.5. Nr of VET managers and teachers capacitated in the LMS | 3.1.5. 0 | 3.1.5. 500 VET managers and teachers trained on updated LMS (2025) | In progress (not yet due) | | 0% |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Management System (LMS) | | | | | | |
| 3. Teachers perform in a competence-oriented and labour-market oriented way. | 3.2. Nr of certified VET teachers competent in work-based and situation-based teaching. (EDU ARI 2) | 3.2. Nr of certified VET teachers competent in WB and SiVET | 3.2. 0 | 3.2. 500 (at least 50% are women) by the end of 2025 | In progress (not yet due) | | 0% |
| 3.2. VET teachers certified by MHESI and SFUVET on work-based teaching approaches | 3.2.1. Nr of master trainers on Situation-based didactics (SiVET) | 3.2.1. Nr of master trainers on SiVET | 3.2.1. 0 | 3.2.1. 20 VET and University teachers trained on SiVET (2024); 14 National trainers participated in Swiss VET Academy (2024) | Complete (100%) | | 100% |
| 3.2. VET teachers certified by MHESI and SFUVET on work-based teaching approaches | 3.2.2. Nr of VET teachers participated in workshops on SiVET at regional level | 3.2.2. Nr of VET teachers part. in regional SiVET workshops | 3.2.2. 0 | 3.2.2. 500 VET participants of workshops on SiVET (50% are women) (2025) | In progress (not yet due) | | 0% |
| 3. Teachers perform in a competence-oriented and labour-market oriented way. | 3.3. Nr of VET providers piloting dual VET in hospitality. | 3.3. Nr of VET providers piloting dual VET in hospitality | 3.3. 0 | 3.3. 2 VET providers pilot dual VET in hospitality based on revised curricula approved for piloting (2024-2025 academic year) | In progress (50%) | Curricula revised and approved for piloting in 2024-2025 academic year.<br>Piloting of dual curricula launched in Bukhara Technicum of Tourism and Cultural Heritage. | 50% |
| 3.3. VET providers piloted dual training with involvement of labour market | 3.3.1. Nr of dual training programs reviewed and agreed by employers | 3.3.1. Nr of dual training prog. reviewed and agreed by PS | 3.3.1. 0 | 3.3.1. 4 updated dual training programs (2024); training program piloted in 2 pilot VET providers (2024-2025 academic year) | Complete (100%); In progress (not yet due) | 1 core curriculum for the area of training 'Organization and Management Hotel Business' developed and approved by MHESI, 4 different dual training programs according to the needs and requirements of regional employers are developed. Piloting of dual curricula launched in Bukhara Technicum of Tourism and Cultural Heritage. | 50% |
| 3.3. VET providers piloted dual training with involvement of labour market | 3.3.2. Nr of workshops for VET teachers and in-company instructors on dual training implementation | 3.3.2. Nr of workshops for VET teachers and in-company instructors on dual training implementation | 3.3.2. 0 | 3.3.2. Workshops (three in 2024, and three in 2025): 1 on adult training for in-company instructors, 1 on revised dual training programs for VET teachers and in-company instructors, | Complete (100%) | | 100% |

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| | | | | 1 on modern hospitality practices for VET teachers | | | |
| 4. The economic actors assume an enhanced role in the VET system, by contributing actively to the governance, definition, and implementation of VET. | 4.1. Status of networks fostering structured representation of employers and private sector in VET. (Additional indicator, not listed as ARI/TRI/COI) | 4.1. Status of networks for structured representation of PS in VET | 4.1. Not in place (2021) | 4.1. National and sub-national networks established (2024). | Complete (100%) | National:<br>Association of Hoteliers of Uzbekistan members<br><br>Sub-national:<br>Regional departments of tourism and cultural heritage and regional departments of higher education | 100% |
| 4.1. More structured representation of employers in VET established | 4.1.1. Nr of VET providers formalised collaboration with the private sector. (COI) | 4.1.1. Nr of VET providers formalised collab. with the PS | 4.1.1. 0 | 4.1.1. 4<br>(2 providers at each of two levels of formal VET: college, technicum); | Complete (100%) | | 100% |
| 4. The economic actors assume an enhanced role in the VET system, by contributing actively to the governance, definition, and implementation of VET. | 4.2. Nr of companies or professional organisations contributing to relevant VET, disaggregated by a) companies and b) professional organisations) (IED TRI 2) | 4.2. Nr of companies or professional org. contributing to relevant VET | 4.2. 0 | 4.2. 7 (six companies and one professional organisation). | In progress (186%) | Companies:<br>1. Intercontinental, (Tashkent),<br>2. Navruz (Radisson Blu), (Tashkent)<br>3. Inspira-S, (Tashkent),<br>4. Mercure (Tashkent),<br>5. Heaven's Garden, (Tashkent region),<br>6. Anka Palace, (Tashkent region),<br>7. Amirsoy, (Tashkent region),<br>8. Sahid Zarafshan, (Bukhara),<br>9. Turon City Plaza, (Bukhara),<br>10. Turon Hotel, (Bukhara),<br>11. Plato, (Zomin),<br>12. Zomin Resort Sayqal, (Zomin),<br>13. Zomin Sufa, (Zomin).<br><br>Professional organization:<br>Association of Hoteliers of Uzbekistan | 186% |
| 4.2. Private sector-led strategy established and capacities of | 4.2.1. Status of Guidelines on the role of private sector | 4.2.1. Status of Guidelines on the | 4.2.1. Not in place | 4.2.1. Guidelines developed and approved by relevant stakeholders (2024) | Complete (100%) | Guidelines is developed and completed in July 2024, and translated into Uzbek;<br>Review and approval by relevant stakeholders is received. | 100% |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| employers in advocacy built. | in dual VET. (Additional indicator, not listed as ARI/TRI/COI) | role of PS in dual VET | | | | | |
| 4.2. Private sector-led strategy established and capacities of employers in advocacy built. | 4.2.2. Nr of advocacy actions fostering participation of employers in VET (Additional indicator, not listed as ARI/TRI/COI) | 4.2.2. Nr of advocacy actions for participation of PS in VET | 4.2.2. 0 | 4.2.2. 3<br>(one national advocacy action per year starting from 2023) | In progress (66%) | In 2023:<br>(i) Hospitality Business Forum (presentation "Green skills in hospitality: Swiss example", S.Ryan keynote speech "Dual VET in Swiss hospitality industry: importance of private sector");<br>(ii) The 25th session of the UNWTO General Assembly \| Samarkand, Uzbekistan;<br>In 2024:<br>(i) 29.02-01.03.2024 Keynote speeches and presentations at the Hospitality Business Forum Uzbekistan 2024 on "Inclusiveness in the hotel sector in Uzbekistan" and "The role of social partners in Swiss professional training in hospitality";<br>(ii) 5.06.2024 A high-level meeting on "Swisstainable" program;<br>In 2025: one advocacy action planned. | 66% |
| 4.2. Private sector-led strategy established and capacities of employers in advocacy built. | 4.2.3. AoH competent in labour market screening, lobbying and capacity building | 4.2.3. AoH competent in LM screening, lobbying and CB | 4.2.3. 0 | 4.2.3. 3 national level studies conducted jointly; | In progress (100%) | 2022: Survey of enterprises and employers (hotels) on the quality of VET in Uzbekistan (Satisfaction level of employers among VET providers graduates);<br>2023: Private sector needs assessment – Skills gap analysis of the hospitality sector.<br>2023-2024: "Skills Shortage and Training Trends:Results of a study on employers' willingness to train in the hospitality sector in Uzbekistan";<br>2023-2024: Inclusivity in the Hospitality Industry of Uzbekistan: Perspectives of Hotel Executives;<br>2025: Stakeholder mapping in hospitaliy (tourism) sector planned. | 100% |

*Note: Outcome indicators are highlighted in orange.*

# Annex 7: Assessment grid

The assessment grid below provides ratings for the elements identified as primary interests of the evaluation. Other elements, for which the evaluation gathered less evidence, are marked as 'not determined.' As the grid uses only four fixed scores, these ratings may differ slightly from those presented in the conclusion chapter, where decimal values have been applied.

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification |
|---|---|---|
| **1 Relevance: Is the intervention doing the right things?**<br><br>Summary: The extent to which the intervention's objectives and design (at the time of design and at time of evaluation) respond to beneficiaries' and involved stakeholders' needs and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.<br><br>*Note: Understanding gendered power dynamics and reflecting on the SDG commitment to "leave no one behind" are crucial in understanding relevance.* | *Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.* | |
| *1.1* ***Responsiveness to needs, policies and priorities***: the extent to which the objectives (at output, outcome and impact levels) of the intervention respond to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries (target group), involved stakeholders (involved in funding, implementing and/or overseeing the intervention) and, when relevant, to indirectly affected stakeholders (e.g. civil society, etc.).<br><br>*Note: A particular emphasis should be placed on beneficiaries. If there are trade-offs, please describe them in the justification.* | 1 - highly satisfactory | The VET4UZ project has demonstrated strong responsiveness to the needs and priorities of its beneficiaries and stakeholders by aligning its objectives with institutional mandates, national policy directions, and sectoral development goals. Beneficiaries, particularly VET providers and technicum staff, reported that project activities directly supported their operational responsibilities, while systemic actors valued its contribution to governance and reform processes. However, the broad scope of activities and limited inclusion of demand-side actors led to some trade-offs in implementation depth and employer engagement. |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification |
|---|---|---|
| 1.2 ***Sensitiveness and responsiveness to the context and capacities of the beneficiaries and involved stakeholders***: the extent to which the context was considered in the design of the intervention (e.g. economic, environmental, equity, social, cultural, political economy and last but not least capacity considerations).<br><br>*Note: Evaluators are encouraged to describe which contextual factors are most pertinent to the intervention.* | 1 - highly satisfactory | The VET4UZ project was largely responsive to Uzbekistan's dynamic reform context, embedding its design within ongoing policy shifts and institutional restructuring. It strategically prioritised foundational system-building in governance, quality assurance, and stakeholder coordination, recognising limited institutional capacities and the need for groundwork before scaling implementation. However, challenges arose in adapting Swiss models to local realities, as some training approaches and governance concepts were perceived as insufficiently contextualised, highlighting the importance of stronger alignment with cultural and operational capacities of national actors. |
| 1.3 ***Quality of design***: the extent to which core design elements of the intervention (such as objectives and their related indicators, logframe, theory of change including related assumptions, choice of services and intervention partners, exit strategy) reflect the needs and priorities of the target group, are appropriate, realistic, clearly defined, measurable and feasible (technical, organisational and financial feasibility).<br><br>*Note: the exit strategy should be planed from the outset of the intervention to ensure the continuation of positive effects as intended, whilst allowing for changes in contextual conditions.* | 3 - unsatisfactory | The design of the VET4UZ project broadly reflected the needs and priorities of target groups through its focus on systemic VET reform and sectoral piloting. However, key design elements - particularly the Theory of Change and logframe - were found to be limited in robustness, with unclear assumptions, weak evidence links (especially on employability and income outcomes), and an overemphasis on supply-side interventions. While the project's comprehensive scope and choice of partners enabled responsiveness, this breadth sometimes compromised feasibility, as capacity gaps, unfilled technical roles, and operational complexity diluted implementation depth and delayed delivery. |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification |
|---|---|---|
| 1.4 ***Adaptation over time***: the extent to which the intervention has meaningfully adapted to changes over the course of its lifespan (e.g. evolving policy and economic contexts, change of funding, new opportunities, outbreaks of conflict or pandemic, etc.). | 0 - not determined | |
| **2 Coherence: How well does the intervention fit?**<br><br>Summary: The compatibility of the evaluated intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution, i.e., the extent to which other interventions (in particular policies) support or undermine the intervention and vice versa. | *Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.* | |
| 2.1 ***Internal policy alignment***: the extent to which the intervention aligns with the wider policy frameworks of the Swiss Development Cooperation, including the most recent Swiss international cooperation strategy overall and at country level, as well as to relevant international norms and standards to which Switzerland adheres (international law, international agreements, etc.). | 0 - not determined | |
| 2.2 ***Internal compatibility***: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with other interventions of Swiss development cooperation in the same country/region and thematic field (consistency, complementarity, synergies, avoiding duplication of efforts, subsidiarity).<br><br>*Note: if feasible, evaluators are encouraged to also take into account compatibility with the interventions of different levels / departments of the Swiss government in the same operating* | 0 - not determined | |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification |
|---|---|---|
| *context (e.g.: development, diplomacy, trade, security, etc.)* | | |
| 2.3 ***External compatibility***: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with interventions of other actors in the country and thematic field (complementarity, synergies, overlaps and gaps, value-added, use of existing systems and structures for implementing activities, harmonization, coordination, etc.). | 1 - highly satisfactory | VET4UZ has demonstrated strong external compatibility by actively aligning with key development partners, coordinating through formal mechanisms such as the Donor Coordination Committee, and adapting its activities to avoid duplication, for example by integrating with existing LMS and QA initiatives. The project's efforts to promote complementarity - such as joint work with UNESCO and GIZ - enhanced coherence in the VET sector. However, coordination remained limited to a few actors, with broader donor engagement underutilised. Institutional fragmentation and the absence of a structured advocacy strategy further constrained harmonisation and limited the project's ability to fully leverage synergies across government and development partners. |
| **3 Effectiveness: Is the intervention achieving its objectives?**<br><br>Summary: The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups. | *Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.* | |
| 3.1 ***Achievement of objectives***: The extent to which the intervention achieved or is expected to achieve its intended objectives (outputs and outcomes) as originally planned (or as modified to cater for changes in the environment), including its transversal objectives (e.g. gender, climate) | 2 - satisfactory | The VET4UZ project is largely on track to achieve its intended outputs and outcomes, with most logframe targets showing substantial progress or full achievement by the end of 2024. Notable successes include surpassing targets in Components 1 and 4 - particularly in policy coordination, legal |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification |
|---|---|---|
| *Note: If some – but not all – of the objectives were achieved the evaluators will need to examine their **relative importance** to draw conclusions on the effectiveness.* | | harmonisation, and private sector engagement - and advancing implementation in dual education and teacher training. However, several outcome indicators remain overly activity-based or insufficiently defined, limiting their ability to capture meaningful systemic change or improvements for end beneficiaries, especially in areas such as employability, inclusion, and institutional transformation. Progress on transversal objectives such as gender equality, inclusion, and green skills has been visible but uneven; while awareness has increased and some policy shifts have occurred, practical uptake and structural change remain limited, suggesting that these areas require stronger emphasis and clearer indicators to ensure sustained impact. |
| 3.2 ***Unintended effects***: The extent to which the intervention has responded adequately to the potential benefits/risks of the positive/negative unintended results. | 0 - not determined | |
| 3.3 ***Differential results***: the extent to which the intervention results (outcomes) were inclusive and equitable amongst beneficiary groups and the extent to which key principles such as non-discrimination, accountability and leave-no-one-behind were taken into account during the implementation. | 2 - satisfactory | The VET4UZ project made efforts to promote inclusive and equitable outcomes through activities such as gender and disability inclusion training, a national inclusion survey in the hospitality sector, and support for policy measures like full scholarships for young women in tourism. However, these efforts yielded modest results, with limited structural change in practice. Facilities, learning materials, and support systems remain insufficiently adapted to the needs of disadvantaged learners, and inclusion is often treated as compliance rather than active engagement. Survey data |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification |
|---|---|---|
| | | reinforce this, with only 44% of respondents believing the project adequately addressed the needs of young women and just 35% for disadvantaged groups, indicating that core principles such as non-discrimination and leave-no-one-behind were acknowledged but not fully operationalised during implementation. |
| **4 Efficiency: How well are resources being used?**<br><br>Summary: The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way. | *Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated.* | |
| 4.1 ***Economic efficiency*:** The extent to which the intervention delivered the results (inputs  outputs; inputs  outcomes) in the most cost-efficient way possible (including allocation of resources between target groups and time periods; available options for purchasing inputs according to market conditions, etc.). | 2 - satisfactory | The VET4UZ project demonstrated generally strong economic efficiency, with 84% of survey respondents affirming the quality, timeliness, and cost-effectiveness of delivery to a significant or complete extent. The project's resource allocation - particularly its heavy investment in short-term expert services (26.3% of the budget) - enabled high-quality technical support and reform-oriented delivery, though it also raised concerns about contextualisation and sustainability. Strategic use of Swiss expertise added credibility and innovation, but associated costs and limited localisation point to opportunities for more cost-efficient approaches in future phases, such as increased engagement of national trainers. However, the lack of integrated monitoring systems and weak data on end-beneficiary outcomes - particularly for the dual VET pilot - limited the project's ability to fully demonstrate the cost-efficiency of its outcomes relative to inputs. |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification |
|---|---|---|
| 4.2 ***Timeliness*:** The extent to which the intervention delivered the results (outputs, outcomes) in a timely manner (within the intended timeframe or reasonably adjusted timeframe) and the extent to which efforts were made to mitigate delays.<br><br>*Note: in case timeliness was unsatisfactory for reasons outside of the intervention's control, the rating should still be unsatisfactory and explanation provided in the justification field.* | 2 - satisfactory | The VET4UZ project delivered the majority of its outputs and outcomes within or close to the intended timeframe, with stakeholders widely affirming its timely implementation. Some delays occurred in the early stages due to under-resourcing - such as unfilled technical positions and limited PIU capacity - and external disruptions, including COVID-19 and policy changes like the introduction of the "test-first" admission policy. While these delays were partly beyond the project's control, they nonetheless hindered rollout, particularly of the dual VET pilot. The project took active steps to mitigate delays through flexible coordination, rapid adaptation, and sustained policy dialogue warrants an overall satisfactory rating for timeliness. |
| 4.3 ***Operational efficiency***: The extent to which management, monitoring and steering mechanisms supported efficient implementation (resource allocation, spending and redirection, risk management, logistics and procurement decisions, etc.) | 3 - unsatisfactory | VET4UZ demonstrated mixed operational efficiency. On the one hand, the PIU was widely praised for its flexibility, responsiveness, and support to stakeholders, and the project maintained strong delivery performance within budget. Strategic partnerships, timely resource allocation, and adaptive coordination mechanisms enabled efficient implementation despite a complex operating environment. However, fragmented implementation across components, a Steering Committee with limited strategic or integrative function, and weak early-stage M&E systems reduced the project's ability to optimise synergies and use monitoring data for course correction. Delayed investments in M&E, limited outcome tracking, and underutilisation of research outputs also constrained learning |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification |
|---|---|---|
| | | and strategic steering, highlighting the need for stronger management integration and institutionalised feedback loops in future phases. |
| **5 Impact: What difference does the intervention make?**<br><br>Summary: The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. Impact addresses the ultimate significance and potentially transformative effects of the intervention. It seeks to identify social, environmental and economic indirect, secondary and potential consequences of the intervention that are longer term or broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness criterion. It does so by examining the holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms, and potential effects on people's well-being, human rights, gender equality, and the environment.<br><br>*Note: depending on the timing of the evaluation and the timescale of intended benefits, evaluators can assess for both actual impacts (i.e. already evident) and foreseeable impacts.* | *Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.* | |
| 5.1 ***Intended impacts*:** The extent to which the intended (planed and, where applicable, revised) 'higher-level effects' (i.e. lasting changes in the lives of beneficiaries) of the intervention were (or are expected to be) achieved.<br><br>*Note: also consider the extent to which the intervention contributed to "holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms" and transformational change (addressing root causes or systemic drivers of poverty, inequalities, exclusion and environmental damage).* | 2 - satisfactory | VET4UZ has contributed to systemic change by strengthening VET governance, quality assurance, and employer engagement, with policy influence evident in reforms such as Presidential Decree 158. However, the project's intended higher-level impacts - particularly improved employment outcomes for youth - are not yet observable, as dual VET pilots remain at an early stage and no full training cycles have been completed. Structural barriers, including limited academic progression from lower VET levels and persistent negative perceptions |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification |
|---|---|---|
| | | of VET, further constrain the realisation of transformational change. As a result, while the project has laid important foundations, lasting benefits for final beneficiaries remain to be demonstrated. |
| 5.2 ***Contribution to intended impacts:*** The extent to which the intervention actually contributed (or is expected to contribute) to the intended higher-level effects.<br>*Note: results of contribution analysis, etc.* | 0 - not determined | |
| 5.3 ***Unintended impacts***: Has the intervention brought about (or is it expected to bring about) any unintended (positive and/or negative) higher-level development results? If yes, to what extent have these higher-level effects been positive (or are likely to be positive)?<br>*Note: consider here any kind of unintended effects such as escalating or deescalating effect on a conflict or context of fragility, effect on the legitimacy of the state or non-state actors, effect on the inclusion or exclusion of vulnerable groups, unintended pollution, etc.*<br>*If there wasn't any noteworthy unintended impact (higher-level effect), mark this question as non-applicable (n/a) and do not give a rating.* | 0 - not determined | |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification |
|---|---|---|
| 5.4 ***Differential impact***: the extent to which the intervention's intended and unintended higher-level results (impacts) were (or are expected to be) inclusive and equitable amongst beneficiary groups and the extent to which key principles such as non-discrimination, accountability and leave-no-one-behind were taken into account during the implementation.<br>*Note: Keep in mind that positive impacts overall can hide significant negative distributional effects.* | 0 - not determined | |
| If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here | select | |
| **6 Sustainability: Will the benefits last?**<br><br>Summary: The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue. Includes an examination of the enabling environment for sustainable development, i.e. financial, economic, social, environmental, and institutional capacities of the systems needed to sustain net benefits over time. Involves analysis of resilience, risks and potential trade-offs.<br><br>*Note: depending on the timing of the evaluation and the timescale of intended benefits, evaluators can assess for both actual sustainability (i.e. the continuation of net benefits created by the intervention that are already evident) and prospective sustainability (i.e. the net benefits for key stakeholders that are likely to continue into the future)* | *Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.* | |
| 6.1 ***Capacity and resilience development***: The extent to which the beneficiaries and development partners have strengthened their capacities (at the individual, community, or institutional level), have the resilience to overcome future risks and external shocks that could jeopardise the intervention's results and | 2 - satisfactory | VET4UZ has made substantial investments in capacity development at individual and institutional levels, particularly through the training of master trainers, the design of revised teacher training programmes, and technical support to entities like IVETD. These efforts have laid |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification |
|---|---|---|
| have improved their ownership or political will. | | essential groundwork for reform ownership and resilience, with stakeholders expressing strong motivation and perceived capability to sustain activities. However, systemic anchoring remains limited; high staff turnover, absence of mechanisms to institutionalise training delivery, and reliance on project facilitation pose risks to long-term retention of capacity. Without clearer role definitions, job-embedded practices, and formal integration into national systems, these capacities may not translate into resilient, self-sustaining reform processes. |
| *6.2* ***Financial sustainability***: The extent to which development partners have the financial resources to maintain the intervention's net benefits over time (e.g. increased national, and where applicable subnational, financial or budgetary commitments). | 3 - unsatisfactory | Financial sustainability presents a major challenge. Only 44% of survey respondents believe they have the resources to continue project-initiated activities post-funding. While motivation and technical readiness are relatively high, institutional budgets have not yet been adapted to absorb and scale reforms. Key components - such as teacher upskilling, dual training implementation, and public-private collaboration - currently rely on donor support. Employers, though engaged, are not interested in co-financing Idual training, and public allocations for reform implementation remain unclear. |
| *6.3* ***Contextual factors***: The extent to which the context is conducive to maintain the intervention's net benefits over time (e.g. policy or strategy change; legislative reform; institutional reforms; governance reforms; increased accountability for public expenditures; improved processes for public consultation in development planning). | 2 - satisfactory | The policy and institutional context is partially conducive to sustaining the project's outcomes. Legal frameworks, such as PD 158, now authorise dual training and introduce flexibility across NQF levels, reflecting alignment with project objectives. However, strategic clarity, cross-ministerial coordination, and implementation |

| DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria | Score | Justification |
|---|---|---|
| *Note: It includes assessing the trade-offs associated between instant outcomes and potential longer-term effects as well as the trade-offs between financial, economic, social and environmental aspects.* | | mechanisms are still lacking. Dual VET remains conceptually ambiguous and fragmented, with limited integration into national plans, no inter-agency roadmap, and weak institutional accountability. Although government support exists in principle, the absence of a transition strategy and budgetary commitments limits the likelihood that current gains will translate into scalable and durable systems. There is a tension between the short-term success of project-supported pilots and the need to embed these achievements within the national VET system for lasting impact. While the dual VET pilots have shown first promising results, they remain largely dependent on project support and are not yet fully integrated into government structures, budgets, or long-term plans. Without clear leadership, coordination between ministries, and formal commitments to take over and scale these models, the risk is that the pilots will remain isolated examples rather than becoming part of a sustainable, nationwide system. To overcome this, greater national ownership and stronger inter-ministerial coordination are needed to ensure that pilot experiences translate into durable, system-wide reforms. |
| **7 General comments**<br><br>Summary: this section is only for free text (no score). The evaluator may provide an overall assessment of the evaluated intervention, explore and reflect on relationships and synergies between different criteria (this includes considering if and how they are causally related). | | |

# Management response to external evaluation of the "Support to VET reforms in Uzbekistan" project, phase 1 (2021-2025)

## Management Response

The Management Response (MR) states the position of the SDC on the recommendations of the External evaluation of the "Support to VET reforms in Uzbekistan" (VET4UZ) project, Phase 1 (2021-2025), implemented by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation office in Uzbekistan. The MR provides a solid basis for strategic decision-making on upcoming development of a project design for phase 2.

## Assessment of the evaluation

The evaluation was conducted by a team of 'orange & teal' experts - Michael Morlok, Ha-My Nguyen, and local expert Shukhrat Amanov in May-June 2025 in accordance with international standards. The evaluation process was supported with contributions by Manuela Sells-Rohrbach as an SDC Peer reviewer, who represents the Education and Economics thematic network of SDC HQ.

The main objectives – to assess the project against OECD DAC criteria, capture key achievements and lessons, and provide recommendations to improve the design of the next phase, considering the budget cuts of 40-50% resulting from the general reduction in Switzerland's international cooperation funds – have been met by the evaluators. The SDC appreciates the comprehensiveness of the evaluation report and the sound analysis of key elements of the SDC's performance in the VET4UZ project, phase 1.

The report's analysis and resulting recommendations are considered to be highly useful for strengthening the strategic orientation of the VET4UZ project.

The evaluation is thorough, methodologically sound, and grounded in OECD-DAC criteria. It triangulates data from diverse sources—documents, M&E data, stakeholder interviews (45 people), and a survey (42% response rate)—resulting in credible and actionable insights.

The evaluation's usefulness is considered high, especially in:

- Identifying structural barriers to systemic reform,
- Clarifying the strengths and weaknesses of Phase 1 implementation,
- Providing strategic recommendations for a more focused and sustainable phase 2, considering significant budget cuts (40–50%).

The assessment is honest about current limitations, such as the M&E setup, attribution of impact, and policy engagement. Its pragmatic orientation and forward-looking tone make it particularly valuable for management and future planning.

## Main findings

The evaluation of the "Support to VET reforms in Uzbekistan" project (phase 1, 2021–2025) finds the initiative largely relevant and coherent, with strong contributions to policy reform, donor coordination, and pilot implementation in the hospitality sector. While most logframe targets were met or exceeded, effectiveness was found to be constrained by vague indicators, limited outcome data, and narrow employer engagement. Efficiency was rated unsatisfactory due to fragmented implementation, underdeveloped M&E systems, and over-reliance on costly Swiss expertise. Impact and sustainability were rated satisfactory but require deeper institutional anchoring and financial commitment.

Overall, the evaluation is well-structured, evidence-based, and highly useful in informing the next phase. The SDC Management endorses key recommendations, particularly the need for a focused phase 2 (teacher training and private sector engagement), a strengthened Theory of Change, robust M&E, and a structured transition to national ownership. These steps are seen as essential for ensuring sustainability and maximizing reform impact under tighter budgets.

Out of the six recommendations, five are 'fully agreed' (green), one is 'partially agreed' (orange) – see table below. The SDC agrees to seize this opportunity to improve its results by taking specific measures in line with the recommendation.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Recommendation 1**: Enable a structured transition to national ownership and use implementation to inform system-wide reform | |
| **Recommendation 2**: Focus Phase 2 on teacher training and private sector involvement to consolidate reform delivery | |
| **Recommendation 3**: Strengthen and evidence the Theory of Change to guide Phase 2 design and prioritisation | |
| **Recommendation 4**: Strengthen the M&E system to support learning, accountability, and policy influence | |
| **Recommendation 5**: Use Swiss expertise strategically to strengthen local capacity and shape policy reform | |
| **Recommendation 6**: Leverage Inclusive Green Economy opportunities and strengthen coordination to amplify impact | |

Fully agree | Partially agree | Disagree

**Overview of recommendations, management response and measures**

| **Recommendation 1** | | |
|---|---|---|
| Enable a structured transition to national ownership and use implementation to inform system-wide reform. | | |
| **Management response** | | |
| **Fully agree** | Partially agree | Disagree |
| We fully agree with recommendation and find it highly relevant and actionable. We expect the implementing partner to work closely with MHESI in phase 2 to develop a realistic transition roadmap that strengthens institutional ownership and long-term sustainability. | | |

| **Measures** | Responsibility | Timing |
|---|---|---|
| a) The project should support MHESI in developing a phased transition roadmap that clearly defines institutional roles, financing options, and coordination mechanisms, while gradually shifting implementation responsibilities to national actors. | HELVETAS Intercooperation Uzbekistan | During design of phase 2 |
| b) The HELVETAS Intercooperation Uzbekistan is to consider relocation of its office at a venue provided by one of the key National partners (ensure contribution from and stronger ownership of a national partner). | HELVETAS Intercooperation Uzbekistan | phase 2 |

| Recommendation 2 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Focus phase 2 on teacher training and private sector involvement to consolidate reform delivery. | | | |
| **Management response** | | | |
| Fully agree | **Partially agree** | Disagree | |
| SDC partially agrees and considers it a matter for joint deliberation between MHESI, HELVETAS, and SDC to ensure that phase 2 maintains a balanced and coherent scope while staying responsive to national reform priorities.<br>While we agree with the assessment of the evaluation team that phase 2 needs to be more focused, we also appreciate the value of quality assurance as a cross-cutting topic. | | | |
| **Measures** | | Responsibility | Timing |
| a) Organize a workshop/discussion with the key stakeholder (MHESI) and SDC | | HELVETAS Intercooperation Uzbekistan | August 2025 |

| Recommendation 3 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Strengthen and evidence the Theory of Change to guide phase 2 design and prioritisation. | | | |
| **Management response** | | | |
| **Fully agree** | Partially agree | Disagree | |
| We fully support revising the Theory of Change to better articulate how interventions will lead to improved employability and system transformation. We expect the updated ToC to guide strategic prioritization and align closely with Phase 2 objectives. | | | |
| **Measures** | | Responsibility | Timing |
| a) The implementing partner, together with MHESI and SDC, is to revise the Theory of Change. The revised ToC should clearly define how institutional and systemic change will occur, integrate demand-side factors like employer engagement and learner pathways, and serve as a strategic tool to prioritisation, M&E, and policy dialogue. | | HELVETAS Intercooperation Uzbekistan | During design of phase 2 |

| Recommendation 4 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Strengthen the M&E system to support learning, accountability, and policy influence | | | |
| **Management response** | | | |
| **Fully agree** | Partially agree | Disagree | |
| We fully agree and consider this recommendation a top priority. A more robust M&E framework, including outcome-level indicators and baseline data, will be essential for learning, accountability, and policy influence in the next phase. | | | |
| **Measures** | | Responsibility | Timing |
| b) Elaborate Logical and Results Framework(s) in accordance with the SDC requirements (RDM, ARI, TRI etc.) | | HELVETAS Intercooperation Uzbekistan, M&E specialist, SDC NPO | During design of phase 2 |

| Recommendation 5 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Use Swiss expertise strategically to strengthen local capacity and shape policy reform | | | |
| **Management response** | | | |
| **Fully agree** | Partially agree | Disagree | |
| We fully support this recommendation and encourage a more targeted, mentoring-based approach that balances international credibility with national ownership and capacity development. | | | |
| **Measures** | | Responsibility | Timing |
| a) Explore a tandem model - pairing Swiss and national experts - to balance visibility and local ownership, while maintaining quality in key interventions | | HELVETAS Intercooperation Uzbekistan | During design of phase 2 |
| b) Explore private sector engagement in the form of co-financing of /contributing to joint activities (study tours, workshops, dual education programme, etc.) | | HELVETAS Intercooperation Uzbekistan | During design of phase 2 |

| Recommendation 6 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Leverage Inclusive Green Economy opportunities and strengthen coordination to amplify impact | | | |
| **Management response** | | | |
| **Fully agree** | Partially agree | Disagree | |
| We encourage HELVETAS/ VET4UZ team to further align with Uzbekistan's green economy agenda and improve synergies with other actors. This will enhance the project's relevance and efficiency without expanding its scope. | | | |
| **Measures** | | Responsibility | Timing |
| a) Integrate green skills into training curricula; align VET4UZ's work with national Inclusive Green Economy (IGE) goals and SDC's evolving strategy. | | HELVETAS Intercooperation Uzbekistan | During design of phase 2 |

A Fink 07/07/2025

Andrin Fink

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