



► Final report

ILO/Cinterfor Series of videoconferences: The role of vocational training in response to the Covid-19 crisis.

#NoContagiamosAlEmpleo

► Vocational training in the face of the Covid-19 crisis: building responses based on cooperation. Final report on the video conference series

Critical context and ILO/Cinterfor's response, a quick overview

- The ongoing crisis – health, economic and social – caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has quickly revealed labour market vulnerabilities and the fragility of our economies.
- The latest ILO-ECLAC projections estimate a negative variation of 5.3 per cent in GDP, leading to an increase in the unemployment rate, with some 11.5 million new unemployed, coupled with a deterioration in the quality of employment in a region where the average informality rate is 54 per cent. Additionally, the poverty rate could rise to almost 35 per cent of the population, while also leading to setbacks in informality and inequality, reflected in variations in the Gini index of between 0.5 and 6.0 per cent, with more severe impacts among the most vulnerable groups, especially young people and women.
- This also apparent in many other dimensions (health, institutional, political, economic, etc.), and challenges vocational training in its ability to respond to the crisis as regards both its first impacts and with a view to the subsequent recovery phase.
- Measures taken in most countries, including the closure of face-to-face classes, compelled vocational training institutions (VTIs) to confront a first challenge in terms of ensuring the continuity of training by other means, with the widest possible coverage.
- Almost simultaneously, ILO/Cinterfor deployed an action plan that included:
 - Conducting a survey among VTI members of its network, to learn how these measures affected their normal operations, the strategies they began to adopt to mitigate their effects, and the emerging demands for cooperation to be met by ILO/Cinterfor (<https://www.oitcinterfor.org/en/node/7764>).
 - Preparing a technical note addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to vocational training and labour market policies (https://www.oitcinterfor.org/publicaciones/oitcinterfor notas/Fp_covid).
 - Developing and making available an observatory on the measures and actions deployed by VTIs (<https://www.oitcinterfor.org/en/node/7757>).
 - Implementing a website on its platform that, in addition to including all of the above, provides documentation and various useful tools for developing responses to the crisis (https://www.oitcinterfor.org/en/fp_covid19).

- Organizing a series of weekly video conferences, twelve of which have been held to date, in order to address responses to the crisis, with different themes and from different perspectives and with a view to subsequent recovery, through sharing among VTIs and other agencies. (https://www.oitcinterfor.org/fp_covid19/ciclo_videoconferencias_FPCovid) Outcomes of the conferences are detailed below.
- It should be noted that developing and making available each and every one of these tools in such a short period was only possible thanks to the collaboration and openness of all of the VTIs that are part of the ILO/Cinterfor network.

The series of video conferences (VC) to share experiences and good practices among ILO/Cinterfor member institutions

- The VCs were the main driving force guiding cooperation between VTIs at this time. Two channels were used: Zoom and Facebook live.
- Twelve VCs were held between 26 March and 25 June; the final one closed the series. They had audiences of between 150 and 200 people per session for a total of more than 2200 people throughout the series, from 37 institutions and agencies in 17 countries in Latin America, the Caribbean and Spain. Presentations on experiences were made by 21 VTIs and other organizations¹.
- Based on the needs and demands identified, the topics addressed were:
 1. COVID-19: the response of VTIs (26 March)
 2. Instructors and teachers confronting COVID-19 (3 April)
 3. Vocational training: a coordinated response to COVID-19 through employment, protection and recovery policies (16 April)
 4. The role of quality apprenticeship/dual training in Latin America during and after COVID-19 (23 April)
 5. ILO in Latin America and the Caribbean responding to skills development challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic (30 April)
 6. Digitization and vocational training in times of COVID-19 (7 May)

7. Certification of work skills in times of COVID-19. Challenges and progress (14 May)
8. Overview, impact and response to COVID-19 in the vision of ETF in Europe (21 May)
9. In the face of the COVID-19 scenario: is online training here to stay? (28 May)
10. Vocational training prepares for a return to face-to-face classes (4 June)
11. Training in-company tutors for quality apprenticeships (18 June)
12. Closing the series: lessons learned and recommendations (25 June)

Six topics on results, findings and emerging actions

1. Swift VTI responses for equity and equal opportunities

- VTIs did not close their workshops; nor did they sit back and do nothing. They initially focused on actions in support of health policies; from the production of protective material for health workers and the general population, to the manufacture and/or retrofitting of mechanical breathing equipment for intensive care.
- In several cases (INA, SENA, INFOP, SENAI, among others) they devoted the efforts and time of teachers and apprentices to using their centres' equipment to produce medical material (hospital gowns, transparent acetate shields and even mechanical ventilator prototypes).
- The sudden shift to digital and remote training generated initiatives to facilitate broadband access for participants who could not afford it (SENA, SENCE), disseminated experiences for the provision of tablets and laptops (CEIBAL Uruguay, SENA Broadband), entered into agreements with technology and content providers to facilitate online courses (FUNDAE, INSAFORP, INADEH, SENA) and in some cases, promoted the free use of distance learning platforms (UTEC).
- The analysis and provision of training on digital TV channels for rural and remote areas (SENCE, SENA) was revisited.

1- Among these were: CETP-UTU (Uruguay), UTEC (Uruguay), CONOCER (Mexico), SENA (Colombia), SENCE (Chile), SENAC (Brazil), SENAI (Brazil), SENAR (Brazil), TKNKA (Basque Country, Spain), INA (Costa Rica), SENATI (Peru), INSAFORP (El Salvador), INTECAP (Guatemala), INADEH (Panama), INFOTEP (Dominican Republic), FUNDAE and SEPE (Spain). Presentations were also provided by UNESCO, as well as by technical cooperation institutions such as BIBB, Germany, ETF, Europe and MTEySS, Paraguay.

- This was a global trend. The experiences presented by the European Training Foundation (ETF) referred to similar initiatives in support of broadband access and new media for training.
- Young people are the most affected by this pandemic and, in fact, they constitute the largest proportion of participants in training programmes. A Cinterfor survey in 2018 estimated that one in three participants (33%) in VT is between 15 and 24 years old and one in two (49%) is under 29 years old. The effort to keep them active in training is a major challenge.
- The number of participants who have failed to remain active and left their training remains to be discovered and analysed. More than 60% of participants in training programmes belong to the three lowest income quintiles (Cinterfor, 2018). The unequal distribution of the digital divide according to socio-economic strata is at issue here. For example, SENATI in Peru has identified through a survey that only 40 per cent of its students had a dedicated Internet line in their homes.
- Free training is an enormous opportunity to prevent students from dropping out of programmes. Several institutions even deferred and suspended tuition fees or training costs, while expanding their free range of distance courses.

2. The acceleration of virtual training: is it here to stay?

- The initial challenge for VTIs was to stay operational, in contact with their teachers and students and implementing training programmes. This challenge was met, on the one hand, through the expansion of distance learning and, on the other, by providing support for teachers to adapt their courses to non-face-to-face strategies.
- After an initial laborious period, which entailed adapting and relaunching programmes virtually, new measures and partnerships were quickly adopted to expand the coverage of online programmes.
- An acceleration in the digitization of several core training processes was evident: the availability of learning management platforms and synchronous online classes, the offer of new courses with external providers and the

need for digital resources for teacher training in this new field of action.

- The expansion of distance learning provision in this period has relied on three non-exclusive strategies: leveraging existing capabilities and processes; contracting services already available in the cloud; and agreements with external content providers.
- It is clear that the prior availability of provision and processes for the development of distance learning meant not only having the ability to maintain it, but also the ability to transfer that capacity to adapt courses or modules previously delivered face-to-face, or to generate a new range of courses.
- Other processes associated with training are being digitized, gap analysis and demand anticipation are using big data and web scraping tools.
- The need for distancing affected the processes of recognizing prior learning and certifying skills. Several VTIs are looking into possibilities involving evaluation and evidence gathering carried out with virtual tools and remotely (SENA, INFOTEP, CONOCER, among others, shared their outlook and experiences).
- Teams and processes have been formed aimed at designing new training modalities based on blended learning.

3. The central role of teachers, methodologies, learning environments

- A high percentage of the more than one hundred and twenty-four thousand VTI teachers (2017 data) faced the challenge of changing their training practice to a non-face-to-face model.
- The use of digital tools and learning platforms grew dramatically and represented a new demand for teacher training.
- This training will need to be expanded to include the pedagogical aspects of facilitating and designing courses using technologies.
- Fixed-term contracts link 57% of teachers (2018) to their institutions, which can affect the ability of institutions to retrain teachers and transform their role.
- This has not been an easy process and it presents a number of challenges: how should this transformation be carried out? with what resources and support? what training

methodologies should be used? how can learning outcomes be evaluated?

- Curriculum design and development also play a role in the flexibility of programmes to be adapted to new modalities. For example, the SENAC flexible training working group reported fewer problems in adapting integrative projects than in traditional modules and subjects.
- ILO/Cinterfor developed a digital resource portal for teachers and is working with the Turin Centre on some specific solutions such as a guide to teaching practices (SENAC, SENAI, SENA, INADEH, INA).
- It is also preparing and will launch this year a training programme to help teachers take on board the project-based training perspective, with a focus on blended cross-cutting skills development.

4. On-the-job training, a current and necessary response

- Companies, especially SMEs, have been affected by the crisis. In countries such as Costa Rica, the INA developed programmes with a view to offering support in conjunction with stimulus policies designed by the government. In Brazil, SENAI offered training programmes to make use of time freed up by partial closures.
- Dual apprenticeship models, alternating between training centres and practice in enterprises, have had to be adjusted owing to the suspension of business activities. Programmes in Mexico are supported by employers and, in Colombia, SENA's participation is extensive and means are sought to ensure that practices also incorporate digital technologies.
- During the critical period, ILO/Cinterfor offered support by disseminating and strengthening training practices for teachers and in-company tutors, and in returning to their role during the post-COVID-19 phase.
- Companies and workers were keen to continue to recognize and improve the different types of quality apprenticeship. There is a wide range of experiences and lessons learned that continue to confirm the fact that the company is an unbeatable learning place.

- In response to these demands, ILO/Cinterfor is preparing a training course on "quality apprenticeship".

5. Vocational training for recovery towards a new – and improved – normality

- The ability of VTIs to respond to emergencies, as well as to generate innovative mechanisms has once again become apparent.
- Social dialogue within the boards of directors, as well as in sectoral technical committees and panels, is a key instrument for the early detection of demands, policy design and response implementation.
- VT will play a central role in post-COVID-19 recovery strategies. In order to maximise their capacity to contribute, it is essential that VTIs coordinate effectively with policy design and implementation areas, in relation to both productive and labour market issues, as well as those that support inclusion and equity.
- Closing the digital divide, which has become so evident in the current crisis, finds in VT one of its main tools, especially with regard to young people.
- Among other things, it is key for VTIs to improve their information management and training demand anticipation mechanisms, taking into account the ongoing reconfiguration of labour markets, in order to counteract as far as possible, the risk of exclusion that this crisis entails, in particular for young people and women.
- It is also key to intensify long-term innovation processes aimed at developing skills for the future of work, which are already known and require new strategies.
- Devices such as observatories and labour market information systems need to be updated in order to keep a finely tuned handle on the changes that are taking place.
- With a view to returning to the workplace, and also to face-to-face training itself, the mainstreaming of occupational safety and health (OSH) into vocational training is an imperative, as it is the most effective way of developing a culture of prevention.

6. A strengthened ILO/Cinterfor network, emphasizing South-South cooperation and responding to the crisis

- The strong tradition of international cooperation among VTIs in the region has been much in evidence. The capital accumulated in this field for more than half a century, expressed in the VTI network coordinated by ILO/Cinterfor, had the opportunity to fully demonstrate its capacity to contribute to the collaborative search for appropriate and timely responses.
- In some cases, fiscal constraints and the demands of the emergency have led to the reallocation of VT resources to other forms of aid.
- It is to be hoped that these are temporary measures and that the stability and operability of VTIs will again be recognized and strengthened, especially as we emerge from the crisis, a time which will require training and skills updating programmes for growth sectors.
- Social dialogue is more necessary than ever in the search for comprehensive and inclusive responses to the crisis. In this respect, VT in the region has a long tradition of being put to good use, both for the purposes of VT policies and for productive and labour-related issues.
- VT plays a key role in the response to the crisis caused by COVID-19 in the region. Its implementation is crucial to increase the productive potential of workers and companies in the post-COVID period, when skill gaps will have been accentuated by sectoral effects and when retraining and reconversion programmes will be much in demand.
- In addition to the fruitful exchange of experience and knowledge within the series of video conferences, a significant pool of shared resources has been generated as a result of the VTIs' solidarity, a pool which has been made available to them all.
- Free online courses, digital teaching resources, guidelines for distance teaching, virtual training platforms, online course finders, ICT teacher competence frameworks, and protocols for returning to face-to-face classes are some of the resources that are available in the originating VTIs, and which can be accessed directly on the ILO/Cinterfor knowledge management platform.

Some proposals for the immediate future:

- ILO/Cinterfor will organize actions tailored to identified demands in order to continue strengthening knowledge management and learning on the basis of lessons learned and good practices.
- To this end, topics such as COVID and training in the rural sector, training expectations in growth sectors (digital skills, e-business), training for the reopening of sectors such as tourism or certain activities in industry and commerce, among others, are being identified.
- It will be essential to continue to promote the coordination of training policies and the measures taken by governments for the reopening and reactivation of the economy.
- Anticipating demand and the qualification and retraining of workers will be key actions over this period.
- Support will be provided for social dialogue in relation to vocational training solutions to emerge from the crisis and on shaping the new normal.
- Similarly, there will also be support for strategic analyses on institutionality, governance, policies and plans, public-private partnerships, financing and vocational training resources for recovery.

List of member institutions and acronyms used

ADPUGH	Association of Uruguayan professionals in human resources management, Uruguay
ADRHA	Human Resources Association of Argentina
ASENOF	National Association of Education-for-work and human development institutions, Colombia.
BTVI	Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute, Bahamas
BVTB	Barbados Vocational Training Board
CADERH	Advisory Centre for Human Resources Development, Honduras
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CEPAL	Comisión Económica para América Latina
CETFOR	Development of capacities for the strengthening of the institutional framework of the public policies on employment, labour training and certification in the framework of a work culture
CETP/UTU	Vocational Technical Education Board – Uruguay's Polytechnic Schools
CFP 401	Project: Vocational Training Centre No. 401, Moron, Argentina
ChileValora	Commission of the National Skills Certification System, Chile
CIDEC	Centro de Investigación y Documentación sobre problemas de la Economía, el Empleo y las Cualificaciones Profesionales, España
CINTERFOR	Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training, ILO
CONALEP	National Technical Vocational Education School, Mexico
CONOCER	National Council for the Standardization and Certification of Labour Competencies, Mexico
CPS	Centro Paula Souza, Brazil
DINAE	National Employment Bureau of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Uruguay
DGCFT	General Office of Training for Work Centres, Mexico
DGSC	Dirección General de Servicio Civil, Costa Rica
DuocUC	Vocational Institute Technical Training Centre of the University, Chile
ETF	Decent Work Country Programme
FAECYS	Federación Argentina de Empleados de Comercio y Servicios
FATERYH	Argentine Federation of Rental Tenancy Building and Property Workers
FAUTAPO	Fautapo Foundation – Education for Development
FUNDAE	Fundación Estatal para la Formación en el Empleo, España
Fundación UOCRA	Fundación para la Educación de los Trabajadores Constructores, Argentina
HEART/NSTA Trust	Human Employment and Resource Training/National Service Training Agency, Jamaica
IEFP	Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional, Cabo Verde
IEFP	Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional, Portugal
IERIC	Instituto de Estadística y Registro de la Industria de la Construcción, Argentina

INA	National Training Institute, Costa Rica
INADEH	National Vocational Training Institute for Human Development, Panama
INATEC	National Technological Institute, Nicaragua
INCES	National Socialist Training and Education Institute, Venezuela
INEFOP	National Institute for Employment and Vocational Training, Uruguay
INET	National Institute for Technological Education, Argentina
INFOCAL	INFOCAL Foundation, Bolivia
INFOP	National Institute of Vocational Training, Honduras
INFOTEP	National Institute of Technical Vocational Training, Dominican Republic
INFP	Institut National de Formation Professionnelle, Haïti
INSAFORP	Salvadorian Vocational Training Institute, El Salvador
INTECAP	Technical Institute for Training and Productivity, Guatemala
INTERFASES	Interfases Capacitación, Chile
LA LIGA	Ibero-American League of Civil Society Organizations
MINTRABAJO	Ministry of Labor, Colombia
MTEySS	Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, Argentina
MTPE	Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion, Peru
MTPS	Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, El Salvador
MTSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Cuba
MTSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Uruguay
NTA	National Training Agency, Trinidad y Tobago
SECAP	Ecuadorian Occupational Training Service, Ecuador
SEP	Public Education Secretariat, México
SEPE	Public State Employment Service, Spain
SESI	Serviço Social da Indústria, Brazil
SNA EDUCA	Educational Corporation of the National Society of Agriculture
SENA	National Learning Service, Colombia
SENAC	National Commercial Learning Service, Brazil
SENAI	National Industrial Learning Service, Brazil
SENAR	Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Rural, Brazil
SENATI	National Service of Skills Development in Industrial Labour, Peru
SENCE	National Training and Employment Service, Chile
SENCICO	National Standardization, Training and Research Service for the Construction Sector, Peru
SEST/SENAT	Social Transportation Service National Transportation Training Service, Brazil
SETEC	Vocational and Technological Education Secretariat, Ecuador
SINAFOCAL	Sistema de Formación y Capacitación Laboral, Paraguay
SKILLS	Skills and Employability Branch Service, ILO
SMATA	Union of Mechanics and Allied Automotive Transport, Argentina
SNPP	National Service of Vocational Promotion, Paraguay

SPTS	Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare, Mexico
TKNICA	Centre promoted by the Deputy Ministry of Vocational Education and Training of the Education Department of the Basque Government.
UNCUYO	National University of Cuyo. Secretariat of Extension and Liaison, Argentina
UOCRA	Argentinean Building Workers Union
UOMRA	Unión Obrera Metalúrgica de la República Argentina
UPACP	National Union of Domestic Employees, Argentina
UTEC	Technological University of Uruguay, Uruguay
UTHGRA	Workers' Union of the Tourism, Hotel and Gastronomy Sector of the Republic Argentina
VT	Vocational training
VTI	Vocational Training Institution