

VET in Denmark

Vocational education and training (VET) plays a key role in the Danish strategy for lifelong learning and meeting the challenges of globalisation and technological change. An inclusive and flexible initial VET system helps ensure that all young people have an opportunity to obtain competences to aid smooth transition to the labour market. Adult education and continuing training respond to structural and technological changes in the labour market and provide the workforce with new and updated skills.

Danish education and training comprises a mainstream system providing qualifications at all levels, from compulsory schooling to doctoral degrees, and a parallel adult education and continuing training (CVT) system. Adult education and CVT are designed to meet the needs of adult learners, for example through part-time courses. The two systems offer equivalent qualifications at various levels, enabling horizontal permeability.

VET jurisdiction is with the Ministry of Education, which maintains close dialogue with social partners to respond to labour market needs. Initial VET is organised into four broad entry routes; care, health and pedagogy; office, trade and business services; food, agriculture and 'experiences' (an umbrella term for tourism and recreation); and technology, construction and transportation. Programmes are organised according to the dual principle, alternating between periods of college-based and work-based learning (apprenticeship training) in enterprises. A typical IVET programme (EUD) lasts three-and-a-half years with a 2:1 split between workplace and college-based training, although there is considerable variation among programmes. Individual study plans are compiled for all students. VET colleges and social partners share the responsibility for developing curricula to ensure responsiveness to local labour market needs. Qualifications at this level provide access to relevant fields in academy profession (KVU) programmes and professional bachelor programmes at tertiary level.

Alternative routes to VET qualifications include:

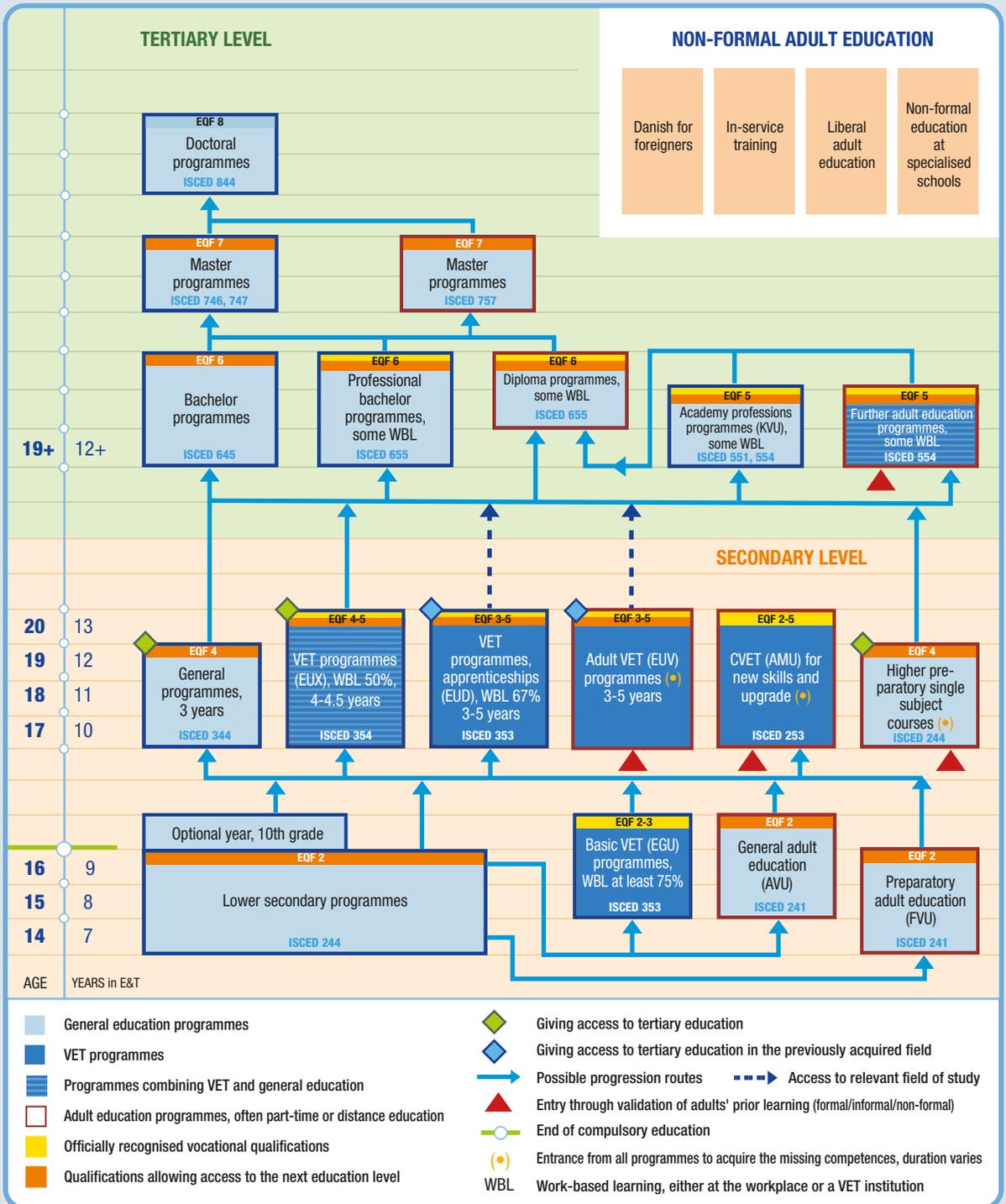
- combined vocational and general upper secondary education (EUX, an academic preparation programme), a relatively new pathway, which lasts around four years. It enables highly motivated students to obtain access to higher education along with a vocational qualification;
- 'new apprenticeship' (*Ny Mesterlære*) programmes, where the entire training takes place at a company instead of partly at a VET college. Students with a practical approach to learning benefit from these programmes;
- combined post-compulsory education for people aged 15 to 24 who do not possess the necessary vocational, personal or social skills to complete a VET programme;
- basic VET (EGU) for lower secondary graduates, with a practical approach to learning. The programme caters to the young unemployed, lasts three to four years, and includes at least 75% of work-based learning (WBL).

Adult learning

VET for adults aged 25 or older (EUV) has been established as a specific track to offer the low-skilled an attractive and goal-oriented path to become a skilled worker.

Adults with at least two years of work experience will receive VET education without the basic programme and without internship. Adult vocational training (*arbejdsmarkedsuddannelser*, AMU) provides participants with skills and competences relevant to the labour market and is primarily geared towards specific sectors and jobs. The programmes either help learners deepen their existing knowledge in a particular field or develop new knowledge in related fields. AMU programmes (around 3 000) last one week on average and are created, adapted or discontinued in response to labour market needs. At tertiary level, further VET and adult education programmes lead to EQF level 5 qualifications.

VET in Denmark's education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Denmark.

Distinctive features of VET

The Danish VET system is characterised by a high level of stakeholder involvement. Social partners, vocational colleges, teachers and students are all involved in developing VET based on consensus and shared responsibility. Stakeholders play a key role in advising the Ministry of Education on overall VET policy and determining the structure and general framework for training programmes within their field, cooperating in national trade committees. At local level, stakeholders cooperate in developing curricula to respond to local labour market needs.

Denmark has the highest participation in adult education and continuing training in the EU. High participation rates reflect the national strategy to focus on knowledge-intensive specialist sectors and lifelong learning, the large public sector, and a tradition of strong ties between education institutions and social partners.

An integrated lifelong learning strategy was introduced in 2007 and supported by the implementation of a national qualifications framework. This improved horizontal and vertical permeability within education and training. It also improved guidance services and provided better opportunities for recognition of non-formal learning and qualifications through standardised procedures for validation of prior learning.

Public financing is central to the VET system, with colleges receiving performance-based block grants. Apprenticeships and employee further training are subsidised according to a solidarity principle, coordinated in the AUB system (*Arbejdsgivernes Uddannelses Bidrag*). In this, all enterprises, regardless of their involvement in VET, contribute a fixed amount per employee to a central fund. Enterprises are then partially reimbursed for providing training placements and for employee participation in continuing training.

Challenges and policy responses

Education and training are considered a key area as demand for skilled labour continues to increase: IVET is expected to accommodate an increasingly heterogeneous student population. Two reforms have had significant influence on VET development. The VET reform (2014) established VET students' minimum entrance requirements. Earlier, requirements for VET teachers were strengthened: since 2010, all VET teachers must have a pedagogic diploma (60 ECTS) at EQF level 6. Both initiatives are expected to increase VET quality. Social assistance reform (2014) makes it mandatory for unemployed people under 30 receiving social benefits to participate in education and training. This will increase the number of weaker learners entering VET.

The 2014 VET reform has four main objectives for improving VET quality:

- more students must enter VET directly from compulsory school; from 18% in 2015 to 30% by 2025;
- completion rates in VET must be improved; from 52% in 2012 to 67% in 2025;
- VET must challenge all students so they may reach their full potential;
- employer and student satisfaction with VET must gradually be increased by 2020.

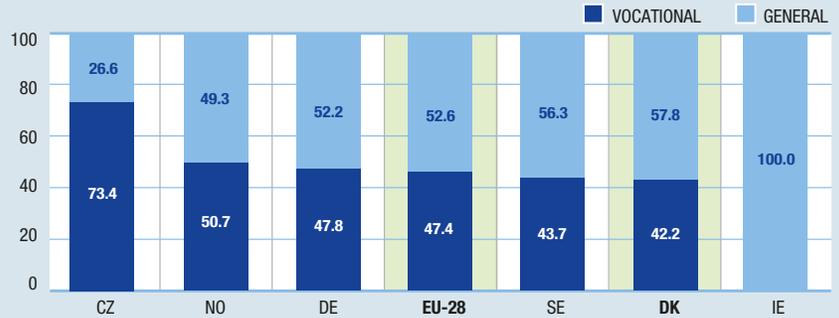
Lack of suitable training placements in enterprises is frequently cited as a primary reason for student dropout. Several policy initiatives seek to address the problem, but the global financial crisis has further widened the gap between training place supply and demand. Implementation of 50 practical training centres (2013) and the planned 1 000 new placements in *Vækstplan 2014* (growth plan, 2014) are expected to alleviate this problem.

Unemployment, and particularly long-term unemployment, among young people with little or no work experience poses challenges for adult education and continuing training. Substantial upskilling and reskilling is necessary to avoid a considerable part of the workforce becoming permanently excluded from the labour market. The 2014 growth plan includes funding for the unskilled to become skilled workers through targeted adult VET programmes.



Education and training in figures

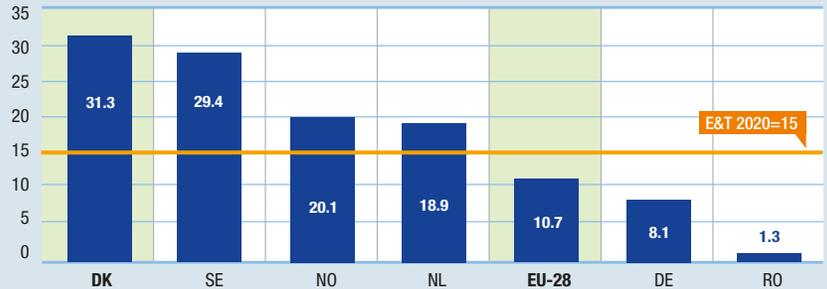
Upper secondary students (ISCED 2011 level 3) enrolled in vocational and general programmes
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2014



NB: 47.4% is the provisional weighted EU average for 2014 based on available country data (27 countries).

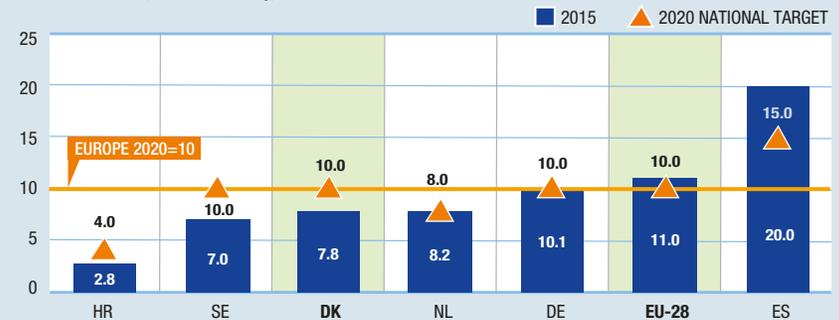
Source: Cedefop calculations, based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 9.6.2016.

Lifelong learning
% of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2015



Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 8.6.2016.

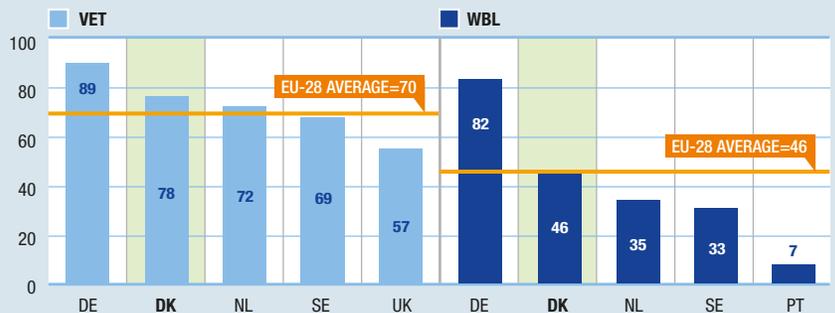
Early leavers from education and training
% of early leavers from education and training, 2015



NB: Low reliability in HR; definition for national target differs in SE, DE, DK and ES.

Source: Eurostat labour force survey, date of extraction 8.6.2016.

Share of employees (aged 24 to 65) with medium-level education (ISCED 3-4) who obtained a vocational qualification, and whose highest level of education involved some learning in a workplace (% , 2014)



NB: VET: survey respondents described their highest qualification as vocational;

WBL: studies involved some learning at a workplace (e.g. apprenticeships, internships, other forms of work-based learning).

Results may differ from those reported in national statistics and international surveys, as the online data collection method used does not always lead to fully representative findings.

Source: Cedefop European skills and jobs survey, 2014.



Further information

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www.eng.uvm.dk/service/Publications.aspx	Publications on IVET and adult education
www.praktikpladsen.dk	Information on training placements
www.phmetropol.dk/Refernet	ReferNet Denmark

This Spotlight is based on input from Metropol University College (ReferNet Denmark 2016).



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