



spotlight on VET

POLAND

VET in Poland

Vocational education and training (VET) has three governance levels: national (ministries), regional (school superintendents, mainly in pedagogical supervision) and county (governing schools). The Ministry of National Education is in charge of VET policy at secondary level, supported by other ministries responsible for particular occupations. The Ministry of Science and Higher Education is responsible for higher VET. Social partners advise policy-makers on necessary changes in VET.

Since September 2017 the Polish education system has been undergoing substantial restructuring, which will be finalised in the 2022/23 school year. The key elements of the reform include: restructuring the current six-year primary education into eight years, divided into two four-year programmes (basic and lower secondary level); phasing out of the lower secondary school (*gimnazjum*), and extending the general upper secondary school (four instead of three years) and the technical upper secondary school (five instead of four); and introducing a two-level 'sectoral vocational school'.

VET is provided at upper secondary and post-secondary levels that are mainly school-based. Upper secondary programmes combine general and vocational education. Learners can acquire vocational qualifications in the following:

- three-year sectoral programmes (*szkoły branżowe I stopnia*, ISCED 353). Graduates can enrol in general education programmes bridging VET and higher education. For graduates of these programmes, the reform foresees introduction of new two-year programmes that will give access to tertiary education from 2020/21;
- five-year upper secondary technical programmes (*technika*, ISCED 354). Graduates can also acquire an upper secondary school leaving certificate (*matura*) giving access to tertiary education;
- three-year special job-training programmes (*szkoły specjalne przysposabiające do pracy*, ISCED 243) for learners with special education needs (SEN), leading to a certificate of a job-training;

- work preparation classes, available for SEN learners already at lower secondary level in primary schools at age 15 and over (*oddziały przysposabiające do pracy*, ISCED 243).

At post-secondary non-tertiary level, vocational qualifications can be acquired in one- to two-and-a-half-year school-based programmes (*szkoły policealne*, ISCED 453). These programmes are strictly vocational and do not include general education. Basic or upper secondary education level is required to enrol.

The work-based learning (WBL) share is minimum 50%. WBL takes place in school workshops, at continuing education centres, practical training centres and as in-company training from four to 12 weeks, depending on the occupation. The latter is compulsory for upper secondary and post-secondary VET learners.

Adult learning and CVET

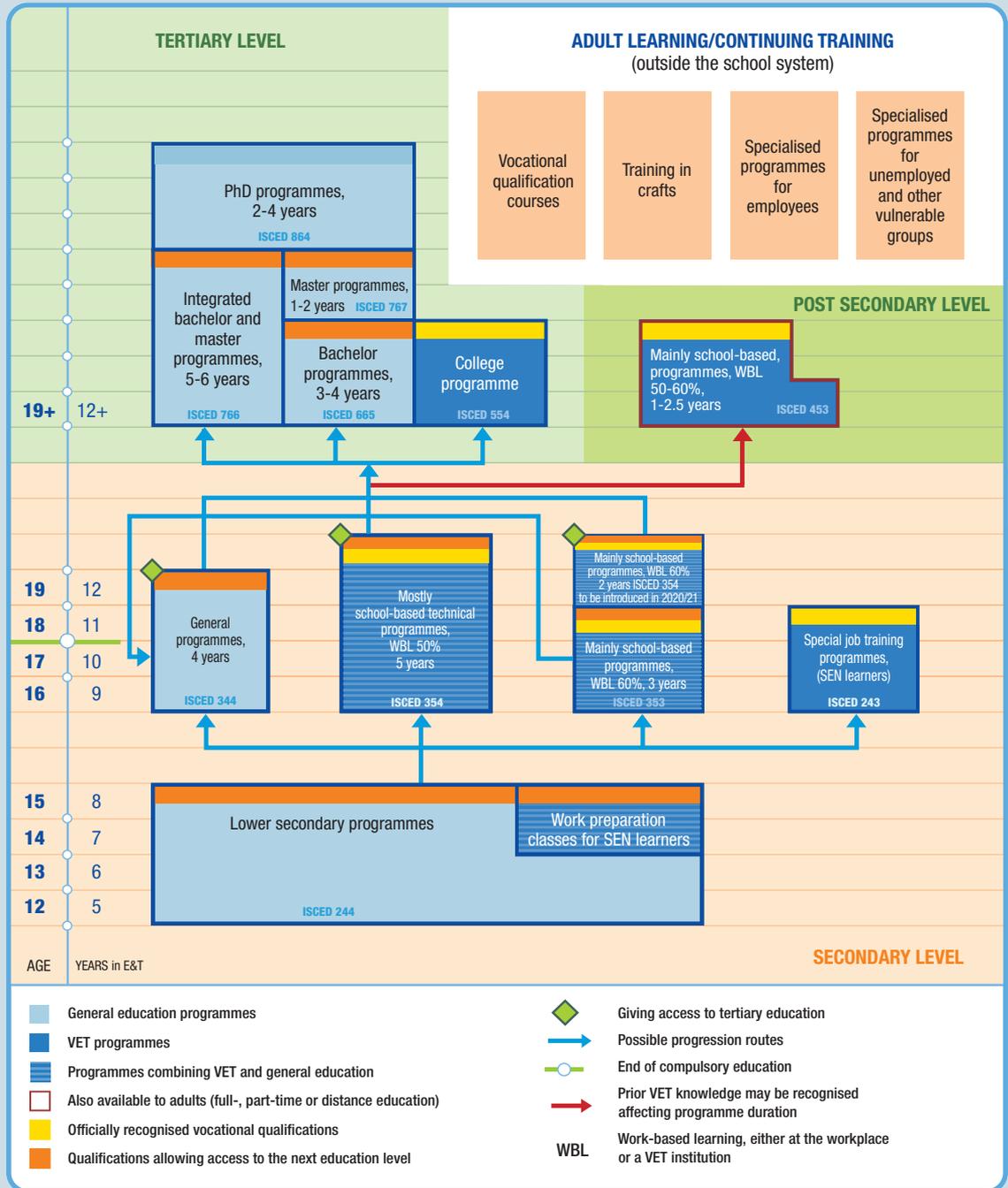
Adult learning and continuing VET is available in continuing education centres, practical training centres, further training and professional development centres, and initial VET schools.

These offer:

- vocational qualification courses based on curricula for a qualification in a given occupation; these allow learners to take the State vocational examination and attain a vocational qualification certificate;
- vocational skills courses based on the core VET curriculum, including learning outcomes for a qualification or common learning outcomes for all occupations;
- minimum 30-hour general skills courses based on the general education curriculum;
- courses for juvenile employees in the crafts sector.

Adults, including the unemployed, may also undertake vocational training through courses provided by training companies and other non-formal education institutions. Since 2016, qualifications based on the curricula of such courses can be included in the national qualifications framework.

VET in Poland's education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011.
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Poland.

Distinctive features of VET

Over the past three decades, Poland's education system has undergone several profound changes in its structure, forms of organisation and management, as well as of the core curriculum. As a result of these changes, distinctive VET features were developed:

- a flexible VET system allows changing pathways at any point;
- a register classifying occupations (COVE), each comprising one to three qualifications that can be acquired in IVET and CVET. The register is consistent with the classification of occupations in the labour market. A VET qualification diploma can be issued only when all qualifications required for an occupation have been acquired (on passing State vocational examinations);
- VET schools are autonomous in choosing optional curricula for VET: either subject-centred or modular curricula, which can be easily modified, depending on labour market needs;
- one VET core curriculum for all occupations. Separate VET qualifications within specific occupations are described in the core curriculum as a set of expected learning outcomes: knowledge, occupational skills, and personal and social competences allowing learners to handle their occupational tasks independently;
- vocational qualification courses allow adults to acquire qualifications faster than IVET learners;
- possibility to validate qualifications acquired in different learning contexts, including professional experience, by taking external examinations.

Challenges and policy responses

The main challenges for VET are:

- increasing employer engagement in organising practical training; identifying and forecasting skills and qualification needs in the labour market, and in reviewing VET curricula;
- encouraging cooperation between VET schools and higher education institutions;
- developing guidance and counselling for all age groups, especially in the early stages of schooling;
- VET teacher and trainer access to professional development opportunities by encouraging traineeships for teachers and trainers in enterprises.

Several recent initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of National Education address these challenges:

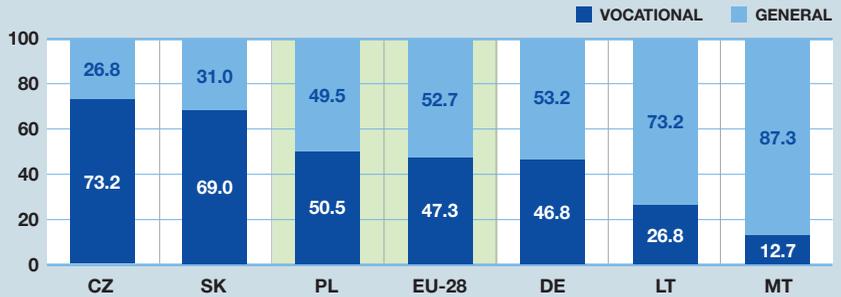
- the Act on the Integrated Qualifications System (2016) has brought together the qualifications framework, register of qualifications that can be attained, quality assurance and validation principles. General and higher education level qualifications are included in the register. Non-statutory qualifications linked to CVET have been registered based on the initiative of VET providers or other stakeholders;
- the government has revised the incentive system to increase VET participation, develop the vocational guidance system, and expand the implementation of work-based learning in VET by promoting cooperation between schools and employers;
- IVET funding will be reviewed to direct more funds to VET programmes in occupations in demand on the labour market;
- The Ministry of National Education, together with the Centre for Education Development (ORE), continue work on the development of new core curricula to be introduced in 2019;
- new sectoral skills councils are being established under the umbrella of the Polish Enterprise Development Agency, giving voice to sectoral stakeholders regarding the demand for competences at sectoral level to improve education and labour market matching.



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, 2015

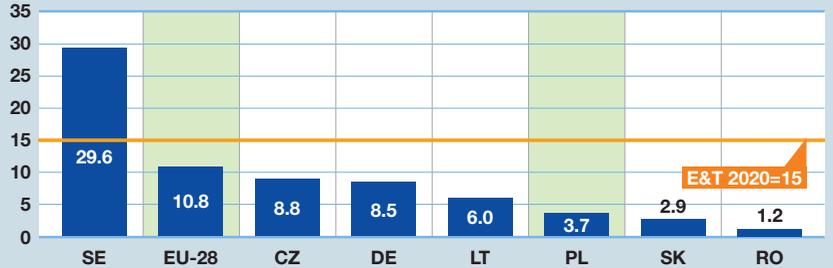


NB: EU-28 value is based on estimated Eurostat values.

Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 1.8.2017.

Lifelong learning

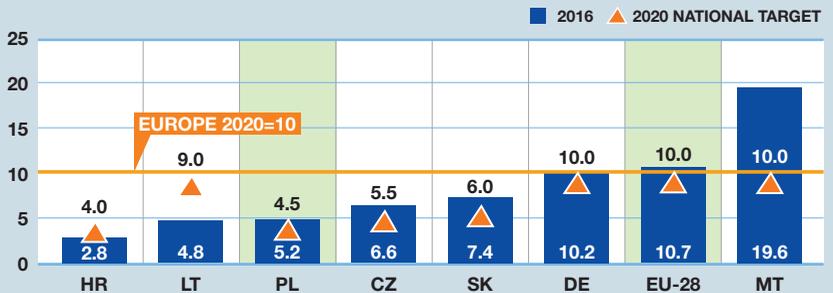
% of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2016



Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 1.8.2017.

Early leavers from education and training

% of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and who were not in further education or training during the last four weeks prior to the survey, 2016

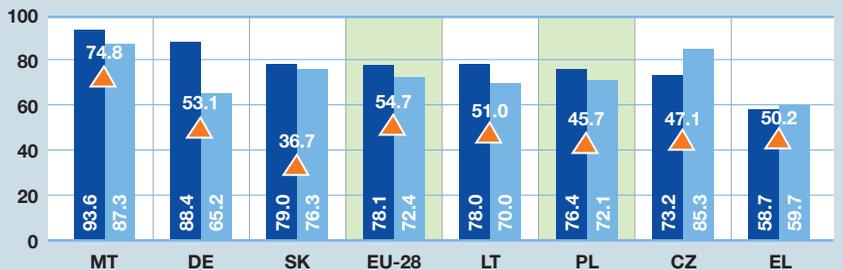


NB: Low reliability for HR 2016 value.

Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 1.8.2017.

Employment rates of young graduates

% of 20 to 34 year-olds no longer in education and training, 2016



■ Upper vocational secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)
 ■ Upper general secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)
 ▲ Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2)

Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 1.8.2017.



Further information

- Cedefop ReferNet Poland (2016). *VET in Europe: country report Poland*.
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/poland-vet-europe-country-report-2016>
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| www.men.gov.pl | Ministry of National Education |
| www.nauka.gov.pl | Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy |
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