



Vocational education and training in Czechia

Short description



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The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training, skills and qualifications. We provide information, research, analyses and evidence on vocational education and training, skills and qualifications for policy-making in the EU Member States.

Cedefop was originally established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75. This decision was repealed in 2019 by Regulation (EU) 2019/128 establishing Cedefop as a Union Agency with a renewed mandate.

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Foreword

Czechia holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second semester of 2022, as the war in Ukraine creates unprecedented challenges that add to those of the COVID-19 pandemic. The role of vocational education and training (VET) at the current historical juncture, with the energy crisis looming and the greening of the European economy now an urgent priority, is becoming even more important. The two main priorities of the Czech Presidency for education will be supporting wellbeing in digital education and the initiative *Pathways to school success*. They are both linked to the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European education area and beyond (2021-30). *Pathways to school success* focuses primarily on helping learners reach a baseline level of proficiency in basic skills, combating early leaving from education and training, and assisting learners to complete upper secondary education. The initiative will lead to a proposal for a Council Recommendation, awaited within 2022. Digital education has come to the forefront due to the mass penetration of new technologies into the lives of children and young people and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education. The country plans to focus on wellbeing in digital education, drawing attention to challenges, risks, and opportunities in online educational learning.

As part of the trio Presidency with France and Sweden, the Czech Presidency will also implement the ninth cycle of the youth dialogue on Engaging together for a sustainable and inclusive Europe. The country aims to promote intergenerational solidarity and justice, providing more space and opportunities to young people to contribute to the development of cohesive societies. The Presidency will support the activities planned during the European Year of Youth 2022.

VET is an important pillar of the country's education system. The share of VET learners in upper secondary education programmes (70.5%) is the second highest among the EU-27. In 2021/22, the 4-year VET and lyceum programmes were the most popular initial VET (IVET) programmes, leading to the *maturita* certificate. Most graduates opt for higher education programmes.

The national register of qualifications (NSK), which includes vocational qualifications and complete vocational qualifications, is a key component of education and training. Its main target group is adults, primarily focusing on

learning outcomes achieved outside formal education. Validation of prior learning mainly focuses on continuing VET (CVET), promoting the recognition and validation of vocational skills and competences. It can lead to a NSK vocational or complete vocational qualification. The system offers a considerable number of qualifications, while results in certificates awarded are very positive.

The country's main priorities include innovating VET fields of study, supporting teaching staff, promoting digital learning and reforming lifelong learning (LLL). For digital learning there is a strong focus on digital competences development in IVET, by combating the digital divide and providing mobile digital devices for in-class and distance learning. In the upcoming period, the country also aims at incorporating into VET elements of the dual system, adapted to the national context using various forms of voluntary cooperation between schools and companies.

This short description, drawn up in close cooperation with Cedefop's national ReferNet partner, aims to offer to a wider European public an insight into Czechia's VET, its distinctive features and challenges. We hope that this publication will promote cooperation among Member States in VET, inform discussions on the future of VET, foster learner and teacher mobility, and be useful for policy-makers, researchers, VET providers and other readers across and beyond Europe.

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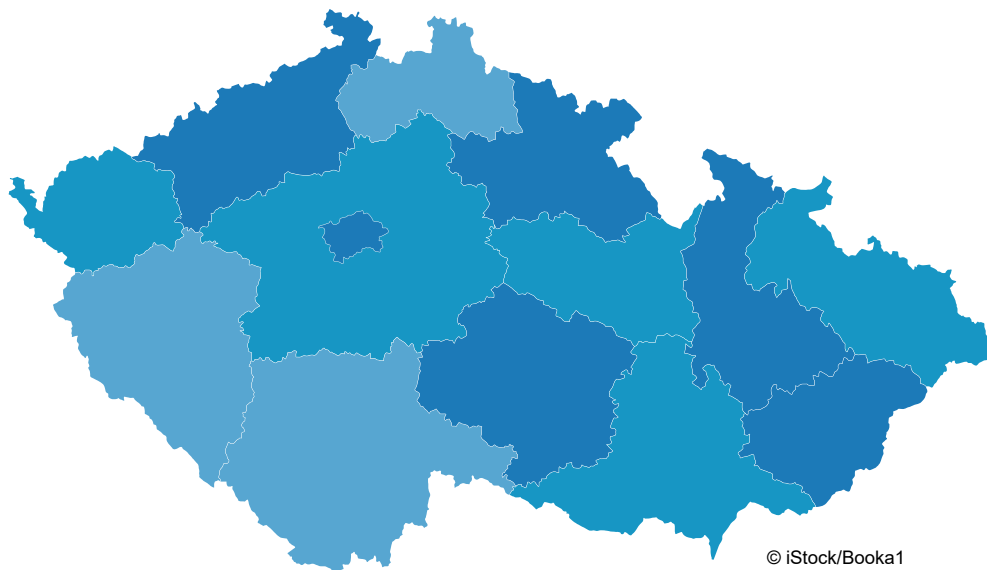
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Czechia



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Area ⁽¹⁾	78 868 km²
Capital	Prague
System of government	Parliamentary republic
Population (2021)	10 515 669 ⁽²⁾
Per capita gross domestic product (GDP) (current prices, 2021) ⁽³⁾	EUR 22 340
Legislative power	Parliament of Czechia

⁽¹⁾ [More information](#) [accessed 3.1.2022].

⁽²⁾ [Czech statistical office](#) (ČSÚ) [extracted on 29.3.2022].

⁽³⁾ Eurostat, [tec00001](#) [extracted on 30.3.2022].

CHAPTER 1.

External factors influencing VET

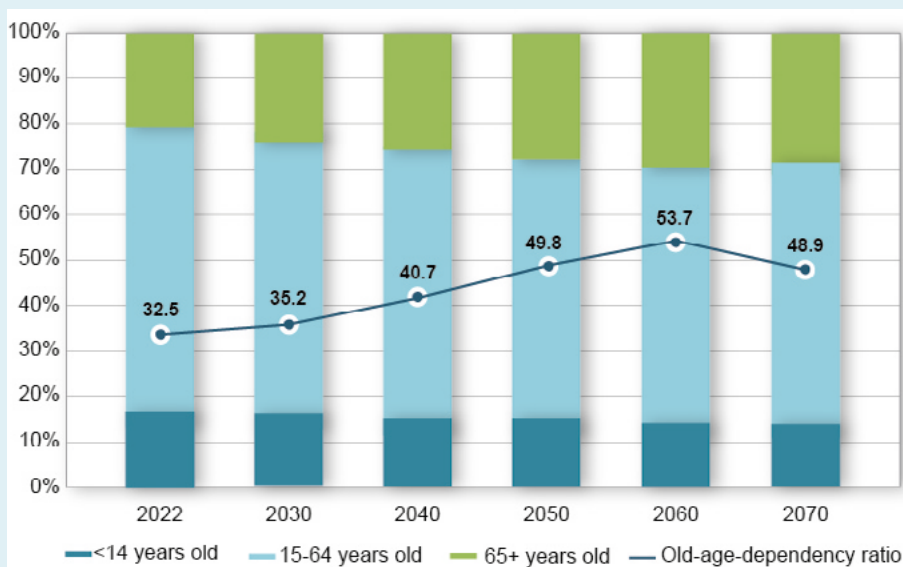


1.1. Demographics

In 2021, the population of Czechia was 10 515 669. Since 2013, it has increased by 0.03% due to the positive net migration rate (mainly from Ukraine and Slovakia) which covered the negative natural change (live births minus deaths) ⁽⁴⁾. Czechia is in central Europe, covering approximately an area of 78 868 km². The country has 14 administrative regions (*kraje*) ⁽⁵⁾.

As the population is ageing, the old-age-dependency ratio is expected to increase from 33 in 2022 to 49 in 2070 ⁽⁶⁾. In 2022, the proportion of population aged 0 to 14 years was 16.1%, while the share of population in the age group 65+ was 20.5% (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Population forecast by age group and old-age-dependency ratio



Source: Eurostat, proj_19ndbi [extracted on 12.5.2022].

⁽⁴⁾ [More information in Czech](#) [accessed 13.5.2022].

⁽⁵⁾ They are NUTS 3 regions (nomenclature of territorial units for statistics).

⁽⁶⁾ Old-age-dependency ratio is defined as the ratio between the number of persons aged 65 and more over the number of working-age persons (15 to 64 year-olds). The value is expressed per 100 persons of working age (15-64).

Ethnically, citizens are mainly Czechs speaking the Czech language. In 2020, approximately 5.8% of the population was from other countries ⁽⁷⁾. In 2019, Roma was the largest ethnic minority, corresponding, approximately, to 2.2% of the total population ⁽⁸⁾ (Government of the Czech Republic, 2020). Usually, the Roma population mother tongue is Czech, though often they are bilingual, also speaking Roma. The other main ethnic minorities are Slovaks (1.3%), Ukrainians (1.1%), Vietnamese (0.3%), Poles (0.3%) and Russians (0.2%) ⁽⁹⁾. Provided that there is a predefined number of learners from a specific ethnic minority in a local area, they have the right to attend an education programme in their native language ⁽¹⁰⁾. Currently, there is one secondary general education school using the Polish language in all courses.

1.2. Economy and labour-market indicators

After a period of economic instability at the beginning of the previous decade, due to the economic crisis, the Czech economy experienced steady growth until 2020. The real gross domestic product growth rate had remained higher than 2% and higher than the EU-27 average for 6 consecutive years (Figure 2), peaking in 2015 (5.4%). In 2020, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's GDP growth was at -5.8% (EU-27: -5.9%) ⁽¹¹⁾. In 2021, the Czech economy returned to a positive growth rate (3.3%) ⁽¹²⁾.

⁽⁷⁾ [More information in Czech](#) [accessed 13.5.2022].

⁽⁸⁾ Many Roma declare Czech nationality in census and there are methodological as well as ethical problems related to determining exact number of ethnic minority members.

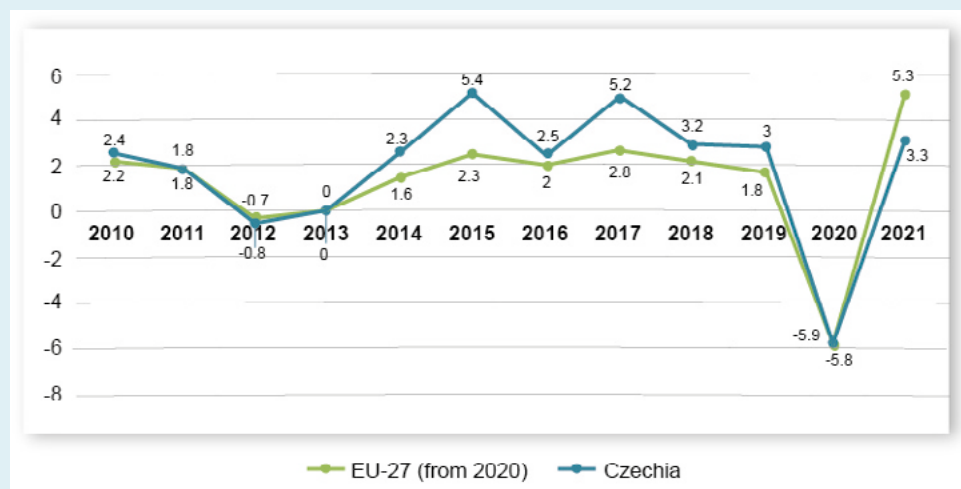
⁽⁹⁾ More information in Czech: [Analýza](#) and [Národnost](#) [accessed 13.5.2022].

⁽¹⁰⁾ According to the Education Act, at secondary level a class can be created if there are at least 12 learners, belonging to a national minority (in basic schools, 10 learners are needed). A secondary school using a national minority language can be founded provided that all classes have on average at least 15 learners belonging to the national minority.

⁽¹¹⁾ [Eurostat, tec00115](#) [extracted on 13.5.2022].

⁽¹²⁾ [Eurostat, tec00115](#) [extracted on 31.3.2022].

Figure 2. Real GDP growth rate (percentage change on previous year)



Source: Eurostat, tec00115 [extracted on 15.5.2022].

In the upcoming period, Czechia, as with the other EU Member States, will have to continue addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis. The strong decline in economic activity reflecting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was most intensely felt (in terms of employment fall) in the accommodation and food service, arts, entertainment and recreation sector, and transporting and storage ⁽¹³⁾.

In this context, vocational education and training (VET) will play an important role. The national recovery and resilience plan (Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2021) envisages reform in lifelong learning (LLL) to respond better to new and changing requirements of the labour market as well as strong focus on digital competences development in initial vocational education and training (IVET). For instance, in upper secondary schools, digital teaching aids designed for the development of learners' digital competences and computational thinking will be available in 2023.

⁽¹³⁾ More information at ČSÚ [accessed 13.5.2022].

1.2.1. Economic structure

Following the transition to the market economy (in the early 1990s), the country's economic structure has changed considerably. The GDP share of services has increased, while those of agriculture and heavy industry have decreased. VET has a long-lasting relationship with the national industry (Kaňáková; Czesaná and Šímová, 2019).

In 2020, the main economic sectors of the Czech economy, based on their employment share, were ⁽¹⁴⁾:

- (a) manufacturing, for example metal products, machinery (27.1%);
- (b) business and other services (21.3%);
- (c) non-marketed services (21.0%) ⁽¹⁵⁾;
- (d) distribution and transport (17.5%);
- (e) construction (7.6%);
- (f) primary sector and utilities (5.5%).

Large enterprises account for the 0.2% of the total number of enterprises in Czechia. The rest are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); 96% of them are micro (0 to 9 employees), 3.1% are small (10 to 49 employees) and only 0.5% are medium-sized enterprises (50 to 249 employees) ⁽¹⁶⁾.

Czechia's exports are mainly part of the intra-EU trade (84%) (Germany 32%, Slovakia 8% and Poland 6%), while outside the EU the country's main partners are the United States and Russia (2% goes to both) ⁽¹⁷⁾. Exports comprise mainly cars and car components, machines and machine components, computers and other ICT components, electronic and optical equipment, chemical substances, leather and rubber products, etc. (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

⁽¹⁴⁾ Eurostat, [lfsa_egan2](#) [extracted on 16.2.2022].

⁽¹⁵⁾ This sector includes public administration and defence; education; and health and social work.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Eurostat, [sbs_sc_sca_r2](#) [extracted on 16.2.2022].

⁽¹⁷⁾ [EU website](#) [extracted on 3.1.2022].

Table 1. **Employment structure by sector (15-64 years) in 2008 and 2020**

	Employment (000s)				Employment structure (%)			
	EU-27		CZ		EU-27		CZ	
	2008	2020	2008	2020	2008	2020	2008	2020
Primary sector and utilities	13 573.8	11 399.5	322.5	282.1	7.2	6.0	6.5	5.5
Manufacturing	34 519.5	31 756.3	1 368.5	1 378.4	18.3	16.7	27.7	27.1
Construction	15 840.2	12 654.3	476.1	387.3	8.4	6.7	9.7	7.6
Distribution and transport	36 833.0	36 091.2	938.7	888.1	19.5	19.0	19.0	17.5
Business and other services	44 755.0	49 408.9	923.2	1 083.8	23.7	26.0	18.7	21.3
Non-marketed services	43 551.6	48 786.6	904.0	1 065.8	23.0	25.7	18.3	21.0
Total	189 073.1	190 096.8	4 933.0	5 085.5	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

NB: Sector U (activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies) and cases with missing information ('no response') not included.

Source: Eurostat, *lfsa_egan2* [extracted on 18.2.2022].

1.2.2. Professional regulations

There are no legal professional regulations regarding access to most occupations; exceptions are some highly qualified professions such as law, healthcare and education. For lower qualifications there are mandatory certificates, for example for electricians and welders or security workers. Employers often expect job applicants to hold a relevant formal VET qualification. Informal non-mandatory requirements for individual occupations are defined in the national system of occupations ⁽¹⁸⁾. For the self-employed, entering some occupations is more specifically regulated. In certain cases, defined in the Trade Licensing Act, a formal qualification is required to become an entrepreneur, for example an optician. In craftsmen occupations, the self-employed usually need a formal qualification, although this can be partly substituted by proof of work experience ⁽¹⁹⁾.

⁽¹⁸⁾ This is an open and accessible [database of professions](#) (national system of occupations, *národní soustava povolání*, NSP), managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Czechia.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Through obtaining a vocational qualification listed in the national register of qualifications (NSK) and issued according to the Act on verification and recognition of further education results (Section 2.7).

1.2.3. Employment and unemployment

In 2021, the unemployment rate ⁽²⁰⁾ was 2.5%, remaining among the lowest in EU and considerably lower than the EU-27 average (6.1%) ⁽²¹⁾. At the beginning of the previous decade, the unemployment rate was higher, mostly due to the economic crisis; since then, it has been steadily decreasing. The higher the level of education attainment, the lower the possibility of being unemployed; tertiary education graduates (international standard classification of education, ISCED 5-8) enjoy lower unemployment rates than graduates of post-secondary education or below (ISCED 4 or below). The gap increased during the economic crisis (at the beginning of the previous decade) as unskilled workers, particularly younger people, are more vulnerable to unemployment. The crisis had no effect on the employment rates of those belonging to the age cohort 25 to 64 and holding tertiary education degrees (ISCED 5-8).

The unemployment rate of those in the age cohort 25 to 64 was not severely influenced by the COVID-19 crisis, as the labour market downturn so far has been less than expected. Those in the age cohort 15 to 24 were more significantly affected. The unemployment rate for those aged between 15 and 24 has generally been higher over the last decade (Vojtěch; Novotná and Zahradníčková, 2021). The unemployment rate of people with low- and medium-level qualifications (ISCED 0-4), including most VET graduates (ISCED levels 3 and 4) remained well below the pre-crisis years (Figure 3).

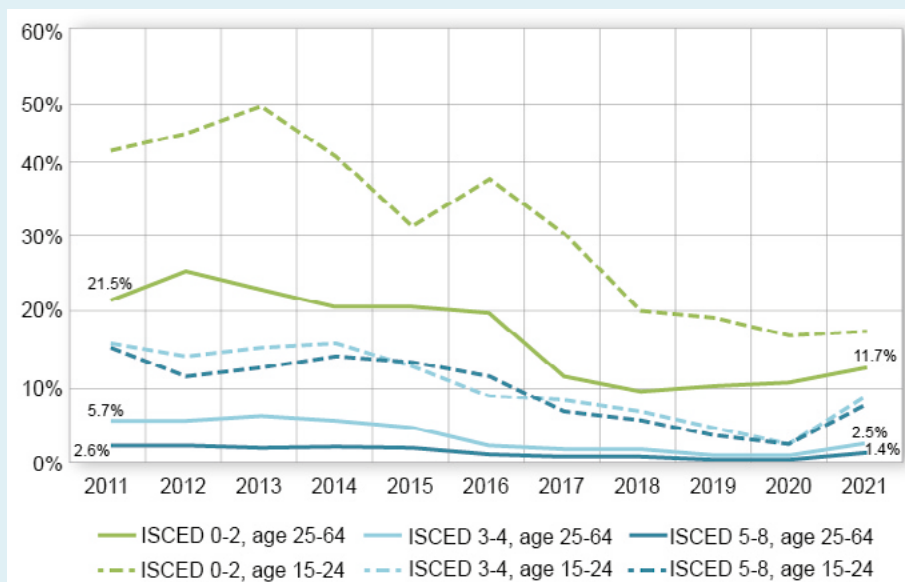
In 2020, the employment rate of all ISCED level graduates (age cohort 20 to 34) was 78.4%, remaining stable when compared to 2016 (78.5%) ⁽²²⁾. However, employment is significantly different for men and women; in 2020, men's employment rate was more than 30 percentage points higher than women's (for both VET graduates and graduates of all ISCED levels, Table 2). Women's position in the labour market was worse compared to 2016.

⁽²⁰⁾ Unemployment rate (aged 15-74).

⁽²¹⁾ Eurostat, [une_rt_a](#) [extracted on 12.5.2022].

⁽²²⁾ Eurostat, [edat_ifse_24](#) [extracted on 21.1.2022].

Figure 3. Unemployment rate (aged 15-24 and 25-64) by education attainment level in 2011-21



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series.
 ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education.
 ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.
 ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat, *lfsa_urgaed* [extracted on 6.5.2021].

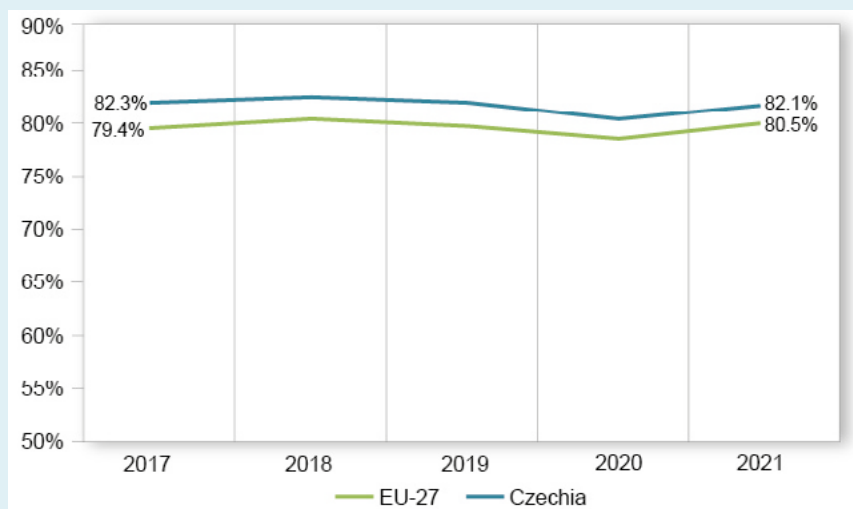
Table 2. Employment rate by ISCED level and sex (age cohort 20 to 34)

	All ISCED levels			ISCED 3-4 (VET)		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
2016	78.5	91.6	64.1	82.1	93.8	66.1
2020	78.4	93.5	62.0	81.7	94.5	63.1

Source: Eurostat, *edat_ifse_24* [extracted on 25.1.2022].

In 2021, the employment rate of recent VET graduates (age cohort 20 to 34) was 82.1%, slightly down on 2017 (82.3%) but higher than the EU-27 average (80.5%) (Figure 4).

Figure 4. **Employment rate of VET graduates (20 to 34 year-olds, ISCED levels 3 and 4)**



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series.

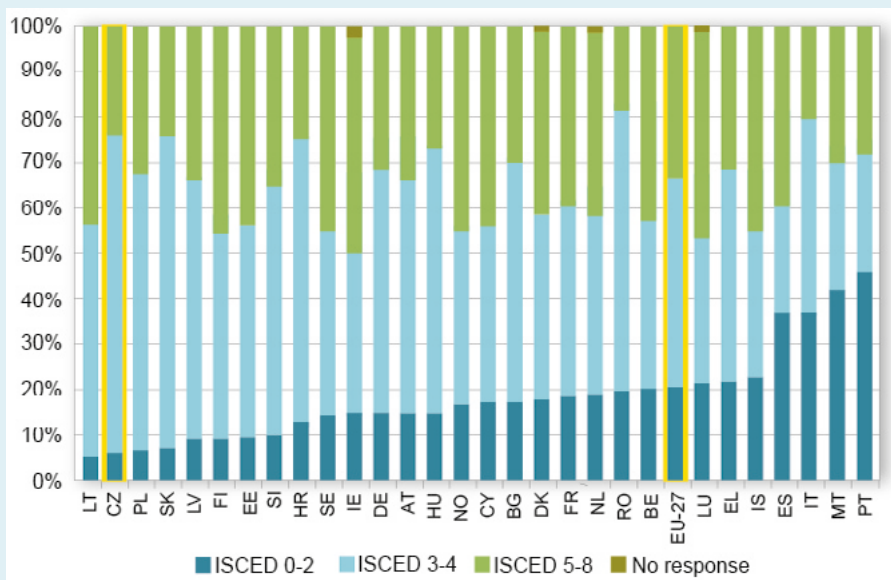
ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat, edat_lfse_24 [extracted on 21.1.2022].

1.3. Education attainment

In 2020, Czechia had the second lowest share of people with low-level or no qualification (ISCED 0-2, 5.9%) in the EU and the highest share of people with medium-level qualifications (ISCED 3-4, 69.2%). However, the share of those who have completed tertiary education (ISCED 5-8) was relatively low when compared to other EU Member States (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Population (aged 25 to 64) by highest education level attained in 2020



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Low reliability for 'no response' in Czechia, Iceland, Latvia, and Poland.

ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education.

ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

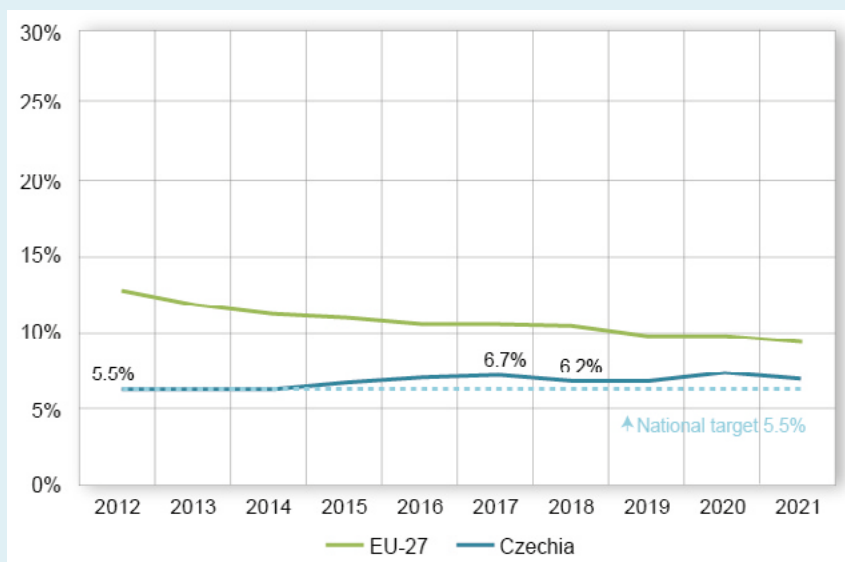
ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat, *lfsa_pgaed* [extracted on 12.5.2022].

The share of early leavers from education and training has increased from 5.5% in 2012 to 6.4% in 2021, partly due to the introduction of the State *maturita* exam⁽²³⁾. This exam has proved more demanding than the previous school-based one. The share of early leavers is above the national target for 2021 (5.5%) and below the EU-27 average of 9.7% in 2021 (Figure 6). The dropout rate is not monitored centrally (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

⁽²³⁾ The *maturita* exam has two parts. The common part was introduced in the school year 2010/11. It is defined by the state, including two obligatory subjects: Czech and foreign language or maths and, in certain cases, two extra subjects. Schools are responsible for the profile part of the exam (two to four subjects), which is also a compulsory part of the *maturita* exam. The common part of *maturita* exam is the same for both general and VET schools. In the profile part of the exam, VET learners should be examined in at least two VET subjects.

Figure 6. Early leavers from education and training in 2012-21



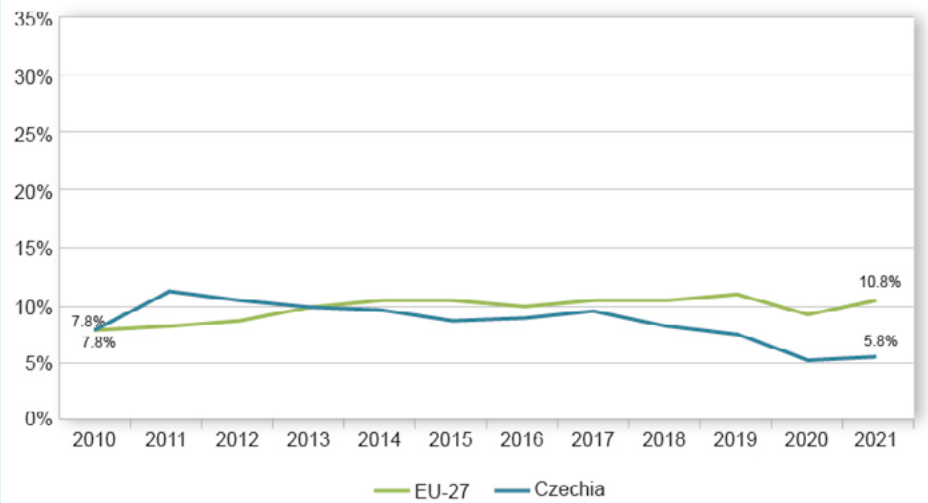
NB: Share of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training.

Source: Eurostat, edat_ifse_14 [extracted on 12.5.2022].

There is no coherent continuing VET (CVET) system in the country, but rather several subsystems operating in parallel, serving different purposes and targeting different audiences (Sections 2.2.3 and 2.3). Adults can participate in education courses offered by different providers usually on a free-market basis or provided by companies to their employees. Adults can also attend any programme at upper secondary or tertiary level; some are designed, in terms of time schedule, for working adults. Schools also provide nonformal lifelong learning courses. In the framework of active labour market policies (ALMPs), there are retraining courses attended mainly by the unemployed ⁽²⁴⁾. In 2021, participation in lifelong learning was 5.8%, well below the EU average (10.8%). There was a period of increased participation in 2011-12 (up to 11.6%) which was a result of anti-crisis subsidised CVET programmes for companies. Since then, participation in lifelong learning has been decreasing.

⁽²⁴⁾ Retraining courses leading to vocational qualifications within the national register of qualifications (NSK) have to be accredited.

Figure 7. Participation in lifelong learning in 2010-21



NB: Share of adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training.

Source: Eurostat, trng_lfse_01 [extracted on 6.5.2021].

1.4. Employment policies influencing VET

Public employment policies influence VET provision especially through retraining courses administered and funded by the Labour Office (Section 2.2.3.3).

Labour market challenges, including automatisisation, digitalisation and lack of qualified workforce, are triggering new initiatives and policy measures, fostering flexibility and better matching skills supply. This is reflected mainly in the National recovery and resilience plan (Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2021), which includes measures like:

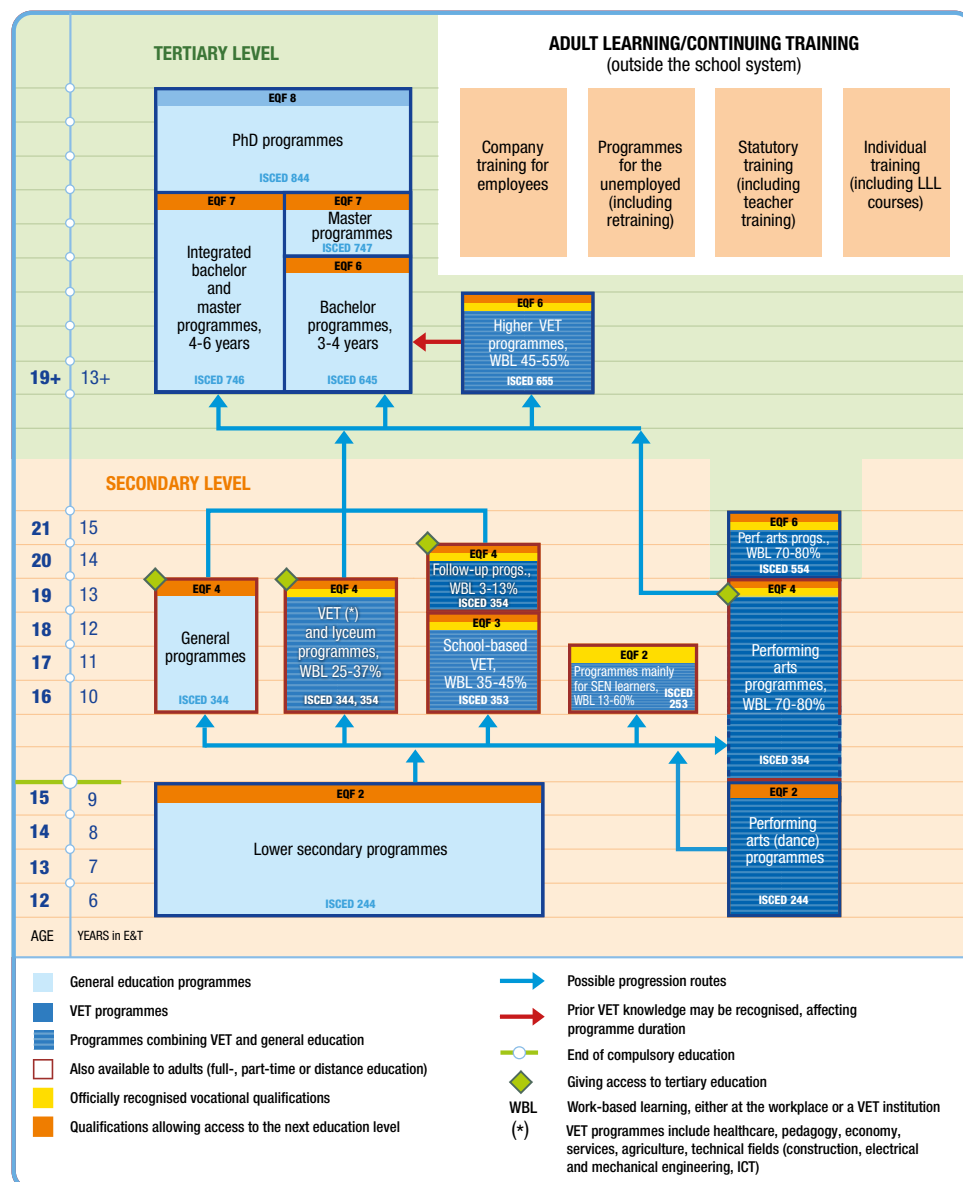
- establishing cooperation between the [Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs](#) (*Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí*, MPSV) and employer and trade union representatives to develop lifelong learning programmes in line with labour market needs;
- introducing a database of reskilling and upskilling courses;
- including people at risk of unemployment, and employed people seeking upskilling, in Labour Office retraining programmes;
- creating regional training centres, providing lifelong learning in the area of digital technologies and industry 4.0;
- funding reskilling and upskilling programmes for those vulnerable to changing labour market conditions.

CHAPTER 2.

VET provision



Figure 8. VET in the Czech education and training system in 2021/22



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Czechia, 2022.

2.1. Education and training system overview

The education and training system comprises (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019):

- (a) preschool education, covering children aged 2 to 6;
- (b) compulsory education (9 years), integrating primary and lower secondary education (European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 2);
- (c) upper secondary education (EQF levels 2, 3 and 4);
- (d) tertiary education (EQF levels 6, 7 and 8).

Formal education from preschool to tertiary professional VET is governed by the Education Act (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2004a). The Higher Education Act (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 1998) regulates higher education institutions ⁽²⁵⁾. The educational legislative framework also includes the Act on pedagogical staff (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2004b), the Act on verification and recognition of further education results (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2006a), while the Employment Act regulates the training provided by the public employment services (PES) (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2006b). The national curricula (framework educational programmes) are centrally processed documents issued and approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) for each study programme in basic (compulsory) ⁽²⁶⁾ and upper secondary education, and for preschool, basic art and language education, as stipulated by the Education Act (Section 3.2.1). They define the conditions under which programmes in each field are carried out, binding educational requirements for specific levels and fields of education, forms of education (face-to-face, distance or blended learning), content and a minimum range of lessons for each programme.

Preschool education is provided mainly by public (founded by municipalities) or private kindergartens (*mateřská škola*). These programmes are attended by children aged 2 to 6. The last year of preschool education is mandatory, but not considered as part of compulsory education.

Compulsory education lasts 9 school years and starts usually at the age of 6. It comprises 5 years of primary and 4 years of lower secondary education. 9-year compulsory education programmes are offered at basic schools. Alternatively, learners at the age of 10 or 12 can enrol in secondary schools (*gymnázia*), which

⁽²⁵⁾ This Act established the National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education, an independent body, deciding on accreditation of degree programmes.

⁽²⁶⁾ Basic education programmes are general programmes covering primary and lower secondary level and are provided by basic schools.

offer programmes that last 8 or 6 years, integrating lower secondary (compulsory) and upper secondary general education.

At the age of 15, compulsory education graduates can choose between general education (4-year *gymnázium* programme) and IVET programmes. At upper secondary level, IVET includes 3-year school-based study programmes leading to a VET certificate (*výuční list*) (Section 2.2.1.2), 4-year study programmes (VET and lyceum programmes) leading to a *maturita* certificate (*vysvědčení o maturitní zkoušce*) (Section 2.2.1.1), follow-up programmes (Section 2.2.1.3) and shortened programmes (Section 2.2.1.4). IVET programmes are offered by public and State schools ⁽²⁷⁾, providing programmes for free, while private and church schools may collect tuition fees. Secondary schools may deliver programmes for learners with special educational needs (SEN), depending on the type of disability. Such IVET programmes (ISCED 253) target learners over 15 years old with learning difficulties (Section 2.2.1.5). Horizontal permeability is an important characteristic of IVET programmes, targeting those at risk of early leaving from education and training or wishing to change their field of study. Graduates with *maturita* certificate can continue their studies at a higher education level by choosing the most suitable path.

A less common study path is offered by conservatoires, a specific type of VET school, which provide performing arts programmes (music, dance or drama) at lower secondary, upper secondary and higher VET level (Section 2.2.1.6).

Higher education includes tertiary professional schools (*vyšší odborné školy*, VOŠ), offering higher VET programmes, which lead to a specialist's diploma (*diplomovaný specialista*, DiS) (Section 2.2.2.1) and higher education institutions (*vysoké školy*, VŠ). Both VOŠ and VŠ are usually public but they can also be private; a minimum precondition to enter the latter is passing the *maturita* exams. Higher education institutions can lead to a bachelor degree (ISCED 645) (*bakalářský program*, EQF level 6). At EQF level 7, they offer master programmes (*nestruturovaný magisterský program*), lasting 4 to 6 years (ISCED 746) and follow-on master programmes (*navazující magisterský program*) (ISCED 747), while at EQF level 8 they provide PhD programmes (*doktorský program*) (ISCED 844). Programmes at public higher education institutions are free of charge. Public higher education institutions may also require special fees, related, for example, to admission proceedings or extending the standard length of studies. Private institutions charge tuition fees. Higher education institutions constitute a self-governed system, regulated by the Higher Education Act.

CVET can be provided:

⁽²⁷⁾ Public schools are founded by regions, while State schools are founded by ministries

- (a) within the formal education system (there are no age or other formal restrictions for adults);
- (b) as part of the active labour market policies (so-called retraining);
- (c) by companies; it can be either obligatory training set by the law or not-regulated according to each company's policy;
- (d) by training providers in the free market, covering individuals' needs.

Apart from full-time IVET programmes, schools offer programmes targeting mainly employed adults (for example through distance learning) where shorter (mostly weekend) presence at school is combined with consultations and various methods of distance learning, such as self-study and e-learning. These courses usually last 1 extra year in comparison to full-time programmes. Only 7.0% ⁽²⁸⁾ of all VET learners attend programmes that are not full-time. The national register of qualifications (NSK) also enables learners, through validation and recognition of prior learning, to obtain an IVET qualification without attending an IVET (formal) study programme at school (Section 2.7). Secondary VET schools are supported by national and regional authorities to perform lifelong learning.

2.2. Government-regulated VET provision

The purpose of VET is to prepare graduates for:

- (a) their personal, civic and professional life;
- (b) qualified practice of occupations and work activities;
- (c) their further education.

It also creates the preconditions for quality living, lifelong learning, independent decision-making, and critical thinking (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2004a). IVET is provided within the formal education system and it is usually part of secondary and tertiary professional education, leading to qualifications at EQF level 2 to 6.

At secondary level, there are the following main VET offers:

- (a) VET and lyceum programmes;
- (b) 3-year VET programmes;
- (c) follow-up programmes;
- (d) shortened programmes;
- (e) performing arts programmes.

⁽²⁸⁾ Data taken from the [Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports](#) (*Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy*, MŠMT) [extracted on 21.1.2022]. NPI's ČR calculation includes all upper and lower secondary and tertiary professional, follow-up and shortened programmes (i.e. all VET types).

All IVET programmes are open to SEN learners, while there are specific programmes mainly for SEN learners. At higher education level, there are higher VET programmes.

IVET is school-based, including mandatory practical work-based learning (WBL) ⁽²⁹⁾. The policy statement (Government of the Czech Republic, 2022) and the strategy for the education policy of the Czech Republic (Strategy 2030+) support the implementation of dual system elements adapted to the national context using various forms of voluntary cooperation between schools and companies (Ministry of Education Youth and Sports, 2020). Since 2020, pilots implementing selected elements ⁽³⁰⁾ of the dual system have been carried out in four out of the 14 regions of the country.

The total number of learners in upper secondary education fell by 25% between 2007 and 2017 because of the demographic decline. However, the total number of learners in upper secondary education has increased by 4% between 2017 and 2020.

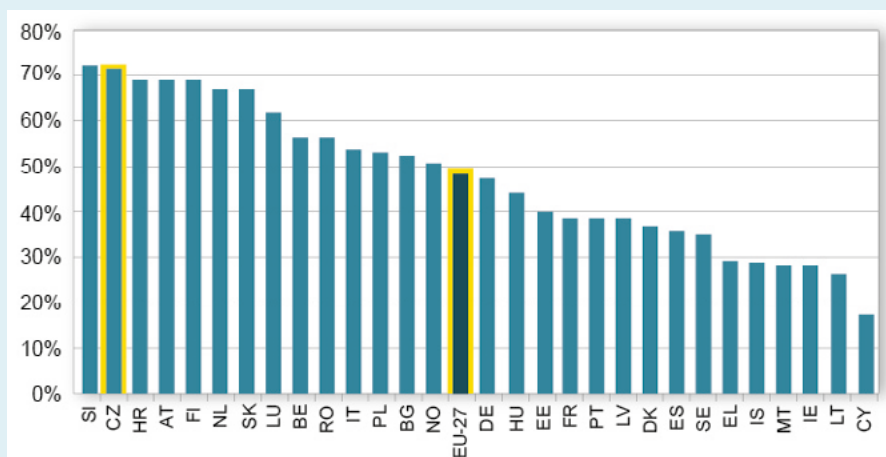
The share of VET learners in upper secondary education programmes dropped by 2.4 percentage points between 2016 and 2020 ⁽³¹⁾. Although slightly down, it remains the second higher (70.5%) among EU-27 (Figure 9).

⁽²⁹⁾ In the national context, according to the education act, WBL is referred to as practical education, which can take the form of *practicum* or practical training. Practical training is part of 2 and 3-year programmes, while *practicum* is included in EQF level 4 VET programmes leading to a *maturita* examination. They may take place in companies or alternatively in school workshops/facilities. Practical training lasts longer than *practicum*.

⁽³⁰⁾ For example, learning agreements signed by companies and learners are introduced.

⁽³¹⁾ Eurostat, [educ_uoe_enrs01](#), [educ_uoe_enrs04](#) and [educ_uoe_enrs07](#) [extracted on 12.5.2022].

Figure 9. Share of initial VET learners from total learners at upper secondary level (ISCED level 3), 2020

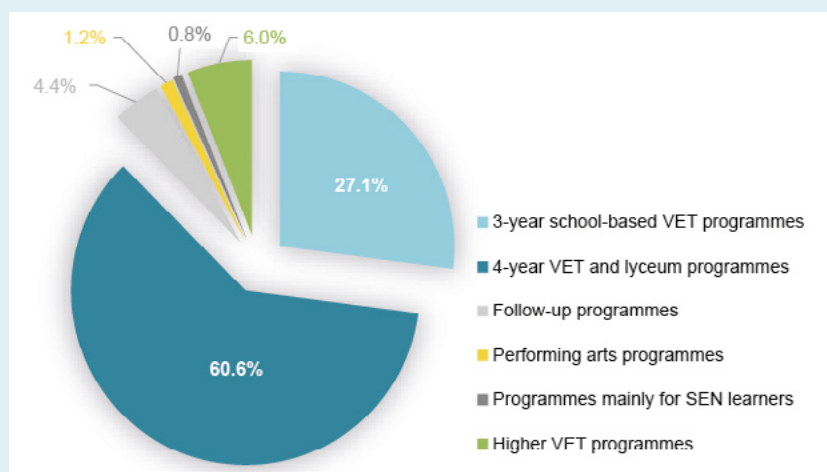


NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs04 [extracted on 12.5.2022].

In 2021/22, the 4-year VET and lyceum programmes were the most popular IVET programmes (60.6%) among IVET learners, followed by the 3-year school-based VET programmes (27.1%). Higher VET programmes attract 6.0% of IVET learners (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Learners by IVET programme 2021/22



NB: Data include learners attending shortened programmes.

Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2022a [accessed 13.5.2022].

Learners attending 3-year school-based VET programmes, 4-year VET and lyceum programmes are usually younger than 19 years old, while approximately 70% of those attending follow-up and shortened programmes are over 20 years old (Table 3).

Table 3. **Secondary education learners by age group in 2011/12-2021/22**

	19 and younger		20 to 24 year-olds		25 and older	
	2011/12	2021/22	2011/12	2021/22	2011/12	2021/22
Upper secondary VET with vocational certificate (ISCED 353)	90.0%	89.2%	8.3%	8.3%	1.8%	2.5%
Upper secondary general, VET and lyceum with <i>maturita</i> exam (ISCED 344, 354)	93.7%	96.3%	4.2%	2.6%	2.1%	1.1%
Follow-up programmes and shortened programmes (ISCED 354, 353)	27.1%	37.2%	28.6%	30.1%	44.3%	37.2%
Total	87.3%	91.5%	7.2%	5.3%	5.5%	3.2%
Total learners in all forms and types of schools, including lower secondary general education (<i>gymnazium</i> programmes) and practical schools (ISCED 244, 253)	88.3%	92.0%	6.7%	4.9%	5.1%	3.1%

Source: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2022a (performance indicators 2011/2012 and 2021/2022) [extracted on 9.3.2022]. Calculations done by the NPI ČR.

Traditionally, slightly more male learners attend VET programmes (52%). Male learners usually prefer fields such as mechanical engineering (tinsmith 100%, machine mechanic 99%, machine-setter 99%, metal worker 98%), electrotechnics (mechanic electrotechnician 99%, high voltage electrician 99%, automotive-electrician 98%), construction (bricklayer 100%, plumber 99%, carpenter 99% or roofer 98%) and ICT 94%. Female learners opt more often for health and social care (children's nurse 100%, dental hygienist 97%, care

service 95%), pedagogy (preschool and leisure pedagogy 98%, assistant teachers 96%, social pedagogy 92%), cosmetician (99%), rider and horse breeder (97%), wigmaker and make-up artist (95%), clothing industry (95%), tailor (95%) and confectioner (94%) ⁽³²⁾. Female learners are also usually the majority in performing arts programmes (especially in dancing and singing).

2.2.1. Upper secondary education programmes

2.2.1.1. VET and lyceum programmes

4-year VET (ISCED 354) and lyceum programmes ⁽³³⁾ (ISCED 344) (*programy středního odborného vzdělávání s maturitní zkouškou*) leading to EQF level 4 are IVET programmes. In 2021/22, approximately 60.6% of VET learners attended such programmes ⁽³⁴⁾.

These programmes target young people and, less often, adults. They are open to learners who have completed compulsory education ⁽³⁵⁾ and meet the admission criteria. Applicants have to sit standardised admission tests in Czech language, literature and mathematics. Their results in these tests constitute 60% of the overall candidate's assessment score; the rest is based on the learners' score against admission criteria set by the director of each school ⁽³⁶⁾.

They include school-based learning complemented with WBL. On average, general subjects constitute 45% of 4-year VET and 70% of lyceum programmes. The share of WBL (nationally referred to as *practicum*) is 25 to 37%. *Practicum* in both 4-year VET and lyceum programmes, takes place:

- (a) at schools, usually in laboratories, workshops and school facilities, such as kitchens, hotels;
- (b) in companies or institutions for a minimum of 4 weeks (in some programmes it can last 6 to 8 weeks, while in agriculture programmes even 12 weeks).

To complete these programmes, learners need to pass a *maturita* examination; this comprises common and profile parts. The common (State) exam includes two obligatory subjects – Czech language and a foreign language or mathematics, in a form of a didactic test ⁽³⁷⁾ – and a maximum two other optional subjects (from mathematics, advanced mathematics and a second

⁽³²⁾ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2022a [extracted on 1.2.2022], calculations done by NPI ČR.

⁽³³⁾ Lyceum programmes are considered VET programmes (Government of the Czech Republic, 2010).

⁽³⁴⁾ More information in Czech at MŠMT [accessed 9.3.2022].

⁽³⁵⁾ Compulsory education is defined as 9 years of school attendance, regardless of the grade that the learner has successfully completed.

⁽³⁶⁾ For example, their previous grades in profile subjects.

⁽³⁷⁾ The didactic test is a centrally prepared, assigned and evaluated written exam.

foreign language). The education ministry is responsible for the preparation of the common part of the *maturita* examination. The profile part is designed and evaluated by each school; in 4-year VET and lyceum programmes it includes Czech language (oral and writing) and foreign language ⁽³⁸⁾ (oral and writing only for those who have already passed a didactic test in the common part of the exam), and two or three compulsory exams (the number is defined in national curricula for each field of study); one of these exams is in the form of a practical exam or a graduation thesis. The exams take place at the end of the final year of studies. Learners who fail can attempt to pass these exams twice within a period of 5 years. Since 2021, learners attending ⁽³⁹⁾ 4-year VET programmes in specific fields of study can sit an exam leading to a VET certificate (ISCED 353) when finalising the third year of their studies ⁽⁴⁰⁾. This measure aims to prevent early leaving from education and avoid those who fail to pass the *maturita* exam leaving school without a certificate. The *maturita* certificate is a formally recognised prestigious certificate that depicts the EQF level and field of education. It is a precondition for entering higher education and is often required by employers for performing respective jobs.

Four-year VET programme graduates, for example civil engineering technicians, travel agents, nurses, chemical technicians, veterinary technicians, leisure time pedagogues or social workers, can directly enter the labour market, continue their studies at tertiary education level or attend a shortened programme (Section 2.2.1.4) to obtain a second qualification (either a VET or *maturita* certificate in a relevant field). In total, 62% (55% at higher education institutions and 10% at tertiary professional schools) ⁽⁴¹⁾ of graduates of 4-year VET programmes continue after passing the *maturita* exam in tertiary education. Around 38% of 4-year VET programme graduates directly enter the labour market.

There are different types of lyceum programmes, such as technical, pedagogical, economic, medical (healthcare) and natural science, usually leading to mid-level occupations, such as web designer or laboratory assistant. Lyceum programmes aim to prepare their graduates to enter a respective higher education programme. Approximately, 74% of lyceum programme graduates

⁽³⁸⁾ Headmasters may give permission for the result of the mandatory profile exam in foreign language to be replaced with an official language certificate.

⁽³⁹⁾ Learners attending the automotive diagnostic technician programme (EQF level 4) can acquire the vocational certificate of automotive electrician (EQF level 3), while those attending the gastronomy field (EQF level 4) can acquire the vocational certificate of cook/waiter (EQF level 3).

⁽⁴⁰⁾ The so-called complementary fields of education were introduced by the Government Regulation No 211/2010 Coll.

⁽⁴¹⁾ If learners are accepted both to a higher VET and a higher education programme, they are counted in both categories.

continue in higher education and 8% in tertiary professional education ⁽⁴²⁾; 20% of lyceum graduates enter the labour market (Vojtěch and Kleňha, 2018).

2.2.1.2. Three-year school-based VET programmes

Three-year school-based VET programmes (ISCED 353) leading to EQF level 3, (*programy středního odborného vzdělávání s výučním listem*) are IVET programmes, offered by public and private secondary VET schools (*střední odborné učiliště*, SOU and *střední odborná škola*, SOŠ). Programmes offered by public schools are free of charge, while private schools may charge tuition fees. In 2021/22, 27.1% of VET learners attended such programmes ⁽⁴³⁾. These programmes can also be offered as shortened programmes, leading to a second VET certificate (qualification) in a relevant field of study. They do not lead to a higher EQF level (Section 2.2.1.4).

Three-year school-based VET programmes include school-based learning combined with practical training. The share of WBL is 35-45%. It takes place in the form of practical training, which is a mandatory part of the study programme, usually lasting 2 weeks per month. Usually, practical training is held in a real work environment (in-company training). However, depending on the availability of appropriate companies at the local or regional level, it can also take place at specially designed school training facilities, such as workshops or laboratories.

Three-year school-based VET programmes target basic education graduates who are mainly young people and, less often, adults. There are usually no other entry requirements. However, the school director may take into account their previous study results or invite them for an interview ⁽⁴⁴⁾.

To complete these programmes, learners need to pass a standardised final examination, which includes a theoretical vocational and a practical part, which may take place in companies. For each qualification (for example bricklayer, hairdresser, gardener, baker) the standardised final examination has uniform content at national level, ensuring that all learners have achieved the same learning outcomes. Assignments of the final examination are developed and regularly updated jointly by vocational schools' teachers and professionals ⁽⁴⁵⁾ with practical experience. According to the Education Act, participation of an expert representing the business sector is obligatory at the final examination. After passing the final examination, learners obtain a VET certificate, which is a

⁽⁴²⁾ If learners are accepted both to a higher VET and a higher education programme, they are counted in both categories.

⁽⁴³⁾ [More information in Czech at MŠMT](#) [accessed 13.5.2022].

⁽⁴⁴⁾ School directors may want to select the most motivated learners, avoiding early leaving from education and training.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ A database exists for such professionals; they are often representatives of guilds, associations, etc.

recognised formal certificate depicting the EQF level and field of education; this is often required by employers for performing relevant jobs. Learners who fail can attempt to pass the final exam two more times within a period of 5 years.

Graduates of most programmes may enrol in a follow-up programme (Section 2.2.1.3) to pass the *maturita* examination and continue to higher education, or attend a shortened programme (Section 2.2.1.4). They may also enter the labour market. In 2020/21, about 23% of graduates of 3-year school-based VET programmes entered a follow-up course to obtain a *maturita* certificate (Vojtěch and Novotná, 2021).

2.2.1.3. Follow-up programmes

Follow-up VET programmes (*nástavbové studium*) leading to EQF level 4 (ISCED 354) are IVET programmes offered by secondary VET schools. In the last decade, the number of learners has decreased, also due to the demanding *maturita* examination (Table 4). In 2021/22, 4.4% of VET learners attended such programmes ⁽⁴⁶⁾.

These programmes target graduates of 3-year school-based VET programmes (EQF 3), who are mostly young people, but also adults who want to complement their education by obtaining a *maturita* certificate. Applicants have to sit standardised admission tests in Czech language, literature and mathematics. Their results in these tests constitute 60% of the overall candidate's assessment score; the rest is based on the learner's score against admission criteria set by the director of each school.

Follow-up programmes are school-based (including general education subjects), complemented with *practicum* (minimum 2 weeks per programme). Only 3% to 13% of the study programme is covered by WBL.

To complete a follow-up programme, learners need to pass a *maturita* examination. Graduates can enter the labour market or continue their studies in higher education. Although, 24% of graduates continue in tertiary education, their failure rate is comparatively high (60%) (Vojtěch and Novotná, 2021).

2.2.1.4. Shortened programmes

3-year school-based VET programmes (ISCED 353), as well as 4-year VET (ISCED 354) and lyceum programmes (ISCED 344) can be also offered as shortened programmes. Full-time programmes may last 1 to 2 years, while part-time ones may be 12 months longer.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ More information in Czech at MŠMT [accessed 13.5.2022].

Shortened programmes target learners who have already completed an upper secondary education programme. Holders of a *maturita* certificate (ISCED 354 and 344) may obtain either a VET certificate (ISCED 353) or an additional *maturita* certificate in another field. Holders of a VET certificate (ISCED 353) can only obtain another VET certificate, not a *maturita* certificate. Shortened programmes do not lead to a higher EQF level.

Shortened programmes are practically oriented and are suitable for adults. Although the number of learners in these programmes used to be low, it has considerably increased in the last decade (Table 4), mainly due to the possibility they offer learners the chance to broaden their skills and competences and employees to re- or upskill in new technologies (Vojtěch and Novotná, 2021).

Table 4. Participation in follow-up and shortened programmes

	2008/09	2011/12	2014/15	2017/18	2021/22
Follow-up courses	45 059	36 482	22 758	16 486	14 952
Shortened programmes	537	1 709	4 183	4 873	5 295

Source: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2022b [extracted on 24.2.2022]. Calculations done by NPI ČR.

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2022a (performance indicators 2021/22) [extracted on 9.3.2022].

2.2.1.5. Programmes mainly for SEN learners

Initial VET programmes, mainly for SEN learners (mainly ISCED 253 and ISCED 353 programmes) leading to EQF level 2 ⁽⁴⁷⁾, include 1-, 2- and 3-year programmes with lower requirements compared to other VET programmes offered by upper secondary schools. They are full-time programmes. In 2021/22, 0.8% ⁽⁴⁸⁾ of VET learners attended programmes for SEN learners.

These programmes target learners with mental disabilities of various severities, learning difficulties or other types of disadvantaged learners. To attend these programmes, learners should have completed 9 years of compulsory education and be at least 16 years old. Apart from an interview, there are no other entry requirements. They are also available for adults.

The main objective of VET programmes mainly for SEN learners is to enable them to complete and broaden their general education and acquire the basic work skills, competences and attitudes needed in everyday and working life.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ In rare cases they can lead to EQF level 3.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ More information in Czech at MŠMT [accessed 13.5.2022].

They provide basic vocational education and manual skills, allowing learners to perform easy practical tasks in the services and manufacturing sectors. They are school-based, including 13% to 60% work-based learning, usually practical training in school workshops or in sheltered workshops ⁽⁴⁹⁾. WBL mainly consists of simple practical activities simulating the performance of professional tasks. Depending on personal capabilities and individual abilities, graduates may perform easy auxiliary works in public catering, healthcare, social care and services, manufacturing businesses, or in sheltered workplaces.

Learners in some of the 2-year and all 3-year programmes (*dvouleté a tříleté obory s výučním listem s nižšími nároky na žáky*) obtain a VET certificate after passing a final examination. In the rest, they only receive a certificate verifying that they have passed a school-leaving examination, successfully completing the programme ⁽⁵⁰⁾. The same applies for practical school programmes at ISCED 253 level. Progression to the next education level is not possible. Graduates can enter the labour market.

2.2.1.6. *Performing arts programmes*

Performing arts programmes (*vyšší odborné vzdělání v konzervatoři*) are IVET programmes included in the formal education and training system. Dance, music and drama programmes are offered by conservatoires (specific type of secondary schools). In 2021/22, approximately 1.2% of VET learners attended such programmes ⁽⁵¹⁾.

Performing arts programmes (music and drama), leading optionally to EQF level 4 (ISCED 354) and subsequently 6 (ISCED 554), last 6 years; they consist of a 4-year upper secondary and a 2-year higher professional programme. Learners have the option to sit the *maturita* examinations at the end of their upper secondary studies and obtain a qualification at EQF level 4 (ISCED 354). In the 8-year dance programme, learners at conservatoires initially attend and complete the 4 final years of compulsory education, leading to EQF level 2 (ISCED 244). Subsequently, they attend the 4-year higher professional programme leading to a *maturita* certificate at EQF level 4 (ISCED 354) and to a diploma specialist certificate at EQF level 6.

These programmes target young people with an artistic talent, but also adults. The dance programme is designed for those who have completed the fifth year of basic school, while music and drama programmes target compulsory

⁽⁴⁹⁾ A sheltered workshop is an employer's work unit in which at least 60% of employees are persons with disabilities.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Graduates of programmes not leading to a VET certificate perform activities under supervision, while the rest perform simple tasks and activities independently.

⁽⁵¹⁾ [More information in Czech at MŠMT](#) [accessed 13.5.2022].

education graduates. Passing a talent exam is a prerequisite for entering a performing arts programme. Applicants who pass the talent exam also have to sit the standardised admission tests (Section 2.2.1.1).

Performing arts programmes are school-based (including general education subjects) complemented with practical training of art performance. The share of WBL is 70% to 80% of the study programme, including at least 2 weeks of art practice and 30 lessons of pedagogical practice per school year. *Practicum* takes place at conservatoires, basic art schools ⁽⁵²⁾ or other facilities.

To complete these programmes, learners need to pass a final examination called *absolutorium* (EQF level 6). It consists of theoretical vocational subjects, foreign language, graduate thesis and an art performance. It also includes exams in Czech language if learners have not opted for *maturita* examination during their studies. If the learner fails, s/he has a possibility of two other attempts within a period of 5 years. The *absolutorium* certificate is a formally recognised certificate of higher VET.

Graduates of these programmes obtain a qualification as an art performer (for example actor, musician, singer); also, due to the fact that they acquire a pedagogical qualification, they may work as art teachers, for example at basic art school. Graduates usually enter the labour market. Those who passed the *maturita* examination can progress to higher education studies.

2.2.2. Higher education programmes

2.2.2.1. Higher VET programmes

Higher VET programmes (*programy vyššího odborného vzdělávání*) leading to EQF level 6 (ISCED 655) are IVET programmes. They are offered by tertiary professional schools (*vyšší odborné školy, VOŠ*); which charge tuition fees. In 2021/22, 6% of VET learners attended such programmes ⁽⁵³⁾.

Higher VET programmes target learners who are at least 19 years old. Applicants must have completed their upper secondary education and hold a *maturita* certificate. The director of each school can decide whether an entrance examination should be part of admission proceedings.

⁽⁵²⁾ Basic art schools provide basics of education only in art disciplines; they do not lead to the attainment of an education level; they offer the option to conservatoire learners to gain a pedagogical practicum, which is obligatory for them.

⁽⁵³⁾ [More information at MŠMT](#) [accessed 9.3.2022].

These are school-based programmes complemented with practicum at school and/or companies and institutions. They comprise approximately 45% to 55% of vocational theoretical and general subjects (for example foreign language). Work-based learning is up to 45% to 55% of the study programme, including *practicum* at school or school facilities and at least 3 months of work placement in companies.

At the end of higher VET programmes, learners should pass a final examination, (*absolutorium*) ⁽⁵⁴⁾, consisting of theoretical vocational subjects, foreign language, and a graduate thesis. *Absolutorium* leads to a tertiary professional qualification and the title of a specialist with a diploma (*diplomovaný specialista*). Examples of qualifications obtained through these programmes include nutritionist, dental assistant, graphic designer. Graduates can enrol at tertiary academic education programmes under the same conditions with *maturita* certificate holders. Completed parts (subjects) of higher VET programmes can be recognised by higher education institutions.

2.2.3. VET for adults

Government-regulated VET for adults can take the following forms:

- (a) CVET within the formal education system;
- (b) statutory training to address legal requirements for certain professions;
- (c) retraining as part of active labour market policies;
- (d) post-*maturita* language courses;
- (e) lifelong learning courses in higher education institutions (VŠ).

2.2.3.1. CVET within the formal education system

Formal VET includes school-based IVET programmes (Sections 2.2.1.1 and 2.2.1.2), targeting primarily young people. Adults are also allowed to participate in these programmes, side by side with young learners. Schools can provide some of their programmes in the form of distance or blended learning, mainly targeting working adults. This rare type of training is considered CVET. The same training programmes, curricula, quality assurance methods and assessment tools as in IVET programmes are used.

A main challenge for adults attending such programmes is balancing between studies and work and family life; they are also reluctant to return to the school environment (when necessary). An extra barrier is that adult learning principles cannot be thoroughly applied. The entrance examination poses an extra difficulty to adults aiming to attend these programmes, particularly those at higher levels (Kaňáková; Czesaná and Šímová, 2019).

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Learners need to gather 180 ECTS points to sit *absolutorium* exams.

2.2.3.2. *Statutory training*

Statutory training addresses specific legal requirements that exist for certain professions, such as public administration, healthcare, railway transport. Sectoral or/and industry institutes and commercial training providers usually offer such training. This type of training is regulated by relevant ministries. Higher education institutions provide accredited teacher training courses (Section 2.6) (Kaňáková; Czesaná and Šimová, 2019).

2.2.3.3. *Retraining as part of active labour market policies*

Retraining as part of ALMPs is primarily targeted at the unemployed, but employees can also participate. The courses are accredited by the education ministry, offered by the Labour Office (*Úřad práce*, ÚP) through its regional and local branches, and carried out by private or public training providers, including schools. Most retraining courses are linked to the national register of qualifications; their content and the certificate issued follow the relevant vocational qualification and its standards (Kaňáková; Czesaná and Šimová, 2019).

The retraining of the unemployed also addresses the needs of those at risk of unemployment and other vulnerable groups, such as the disabled and women on maternity leave. The regional ÚP branches develop tailored projects for the main target groups included in their registry, for example people over 50, women and the long-term unemployed. Then they contract appropriate training providers and inform the beneficiaries. Further, individuals registered at a regional ÚP branch can identify an accredited course according to their needs and apply for funding. Provided that applicants meet the requirements set for a specific course, the necessary funds are granted (Kaňáková; Czesaná and Šimová, 2019).

Employers can also initiate the retraining of their employees, ensuring the continuation of their employment. If employers consider that the skills of some employees are becoming redundant, or retraining is needed, for instance, to technological changes, they can apply at the ÚP for funding to retrain them. Apart from the training costs, ÚP may also cover other related costs, such as travel. The retraining should be carried out during working hours and the employer must reimburse participants according to their average earnings. Courses tailored to the specific employer can be funded even if they do not lead to a government-regulated vocational qualification (Kaňáková; Czesaná and Šimová, 2019).

2.2.3.4. *Post-maturita language courses*

Authorised language schools offer post-*maturita* foreign language courses (ISCED 454), accredited by the education ministry, mostly targeting learners who intend to continue their studies at the tertiary level. They are considered post-secondary non-tertiary VET courses, allowing learners to prolong their initial education student status, for instance for social security benefits. Only learners who have passed a *maturita* exam can attend such courses. Learners can sit the State language exam, which is standardised and officially recognised. These courses do not lead to a higher qualification level. Learners should pay tuition fees (Kaňáková; Czesaná and Šímová, 2019).

2.2.3.5. *Lifelong-learning courses in higher education institutions (VŠ)*

In addition to their regular study programmes, higher education institutions (*vysoké školy*) can provide also lifelong learning courses, according to the Higher Education Act. The courses can be professionally oriented, such as in-service training of education staff or focusing on personal development. Higher education institutions offer very few LLL courses in technical fields. Internal rules of individual institutions specify the conditions of such courses. Lifelong learning courses are either paid or are free of charge.

2.3. Other forms of training

Private training providers or independent consultants, lecturers, as well as non-profit or public organisations including schools provide non-formal learning. They are usually demand-driven courses without entry requirements and have tuition fees. Quality assurance of these courses and their providers is not controlled centrally by public authorities; for most open market courses, providers are also responsible for quality assuring them. Although the relatively strong market competition stimulates providers, the quality of such courses may vary.

2.3.1. Individual training

The largest share of individual training courses is offered by private or non-profit education organisations. They usually charge tuition fees but, in some cases, courses can be free of charge if funding is available (for example from the State, European Social Fund (ESF)). The range of courses is relatively wide, especially for language courses, ICT (for example in programming, database development, cybersecurity), business (for example in e-commerce, marketing), personal

development (for example in communication and presentation skills) and hobby education. Some professional technical skills courses are also offered, but they are rather limited. Online courses are becoming increasingly popular. Various web portals provide an overview of the course offerings ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

As defined by the Education Act, institutions operating within the formal education system can provide non-formal courses. They are not subject to strict rules and do not lead to a higher EQF level. Graduates obtain a certificate of completion of the course. This type of non-formal training is not subject to strict rules and, in most cases, is open to all applicants, provided they meet the entry requirements set by each school. Schools offer these programmes on a voluntary basis, usually charging a fee. Most often they are delivered by school teachers (Kaňáková; Czesaná and Šímová, 2019).

Non-formal training includes specialist courses in various subjects, and post-*maturita* specialisation courses offered both by secondary schools and tertiary professional schools (for example, healthcare for lab assistants, interior design). They mostly focus on providing the necessary additional knowledge and skills to learners to practice a profession (Kaňáková; Czesaná and Šímová, 2019).

The Education Act also defines specific types of specialised institutions, which operate under the Act, offering non-formal training. These courses are attended mostly by young people (but also adults), they often do not have entry requirements. They are usually part-time courses, provided for a fee. These institutions are (Kaňáková; Czesaná and Šímová, 2019):

- (a) basic art schools (*základní umělecké školy*) which provide part-time courses in arts (music, dance, fine arts, literature/drama);
- (b) language schools carrying out State language examinations (*jazykové školy s právem státní jazykové zkoušky*);
- (c) leisure centres (*střediska volného času*), mainly focusing on leisure activities; these can also offer language, computer skills and art courses, including continuing education courses for teachers and the general public.

2.3.2. Company training

The basic regulatory framework for obligatory training provided by employers is set by the Labour code (*Zákoník práce*) (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2006b). There is no unified funding system for this type of programmes. Participation in these programmes is usually financed either by employers providing training to their employees or by individual learners. Mainly EU-funded grants (of temporary nature), targeting mostly employers, are regularly launched

⁽⁵⁵⁾ For example [educity](#), [dat.cz](#) and [edumenu](#).

(Sections 4.1 and 4.2) (Kaňáková; Czesaná and Šímová, 2019). According to the Labour code, employers are obliged to provide their employees with specific types of in-company training. Employers should:

- (a) ensure appropriate practical experience for employed graduates ⁽⁵⁶⁾;
- (b) provide introductory training for all employees not holding a qualification when hired;
- (c) provide initial training to employees transferred to a new workplace or expected to perform a different type of work;
- (d) offer to employees training on health and safety issues.

The form or duration of such training is not defined by law. Their content and other characteristics are set by employers, who cover the cost. However, the State Labour Inspection Office can check their quality and appropriateness. Recently, e-learning has become increasingly popular (Kaňáková; Czesaná and Šímová, 2019).

Employers usually shape training according to their human resource policy. Training is not regulated by the State and is mostly provided by external training organisations and consultancies. Companies owning their own training facilities are rare; occasionally, this type of training is offered by secondary or tertiary schools.

Unregulated staff training is mainly financed by employers. Nevertheless, the State regularly develops incentives through EU joint funded projects. Under certain conditions, employers can receive State subsidies to retrain their employees as part of ALMP. This training can address each employer's specific needs or lead to a government-regulated qualification (Kaňáková; Czesaná and Šímová, 2019).

2.4. VET governance

At the national level, the education ministry holds executive powers regarding IVET and, to some extent, CVET. The key responsibilities of the ministry include the development of the national education strategy and priorities, development of curriculum policy, coordination of public administration, and IVET funding and quality assurance. Although it is also responsible for higher education institutions, they enjoy broad academic autonomy (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019). The education ministry is also responsible for accreditation of retraining courses, offered to the unemployed by the labour

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Individuals are considered as graduates for a period of 2 years after completing their education.

ministry through the PES. Additionally, the Ministry of Health is responsible for the accreditation of training offers of health staff; the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for the accreditation of public administration staff training courses.

At the regional level, self-governing bodies, the regional assembly and regional council (*zastupitelstvo kraje, rada kraje*), are responsible for founding public upper secondary VET and tertiary professional schools. Regions administer approximately 69% of upper secondary VET schools and approximately 65% of tertiary professional schools ⁽⁵⁷⁾. The regional assembly has decision-making and consulting powers on the number, structure, provision, quality, and funding of schools. The regional council (composed of 9 to 11 members) is elected by the regional assembly and holds executive powers, forming expert advisory commissions in various fields, including education. It is responsible for drafting a regional long-term plan for the development of education and a report on education in the region. It also allocates resources from the State budget to schools, covering pedagogical staff wages and direct educational costs (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

Czechia is one of the countries with the highest level of school autonomy, as the education system is characterised by a high degree of decentralisation. Although beneficial, this also has disadvantages, such as the risk of overburdening schools and school leaders with administrative tasks, increasing inequalities between schools or regions and complicated communication among a large number of stakeholders.

School directors (including VET) hold significant responsibilities:

- (a) ensuring the development and implementation of school curricula (based on national curricula);
- (b) quality assuring pedagogical work;
- (c) carrying out the human resources policy;
- (d) performing education management;
- (e) ensuring efficient use of financial resources;
- (f) ensuring health and work safety, fire protection, building and facility management and maintenance; they are also responsible for public procurement and tenders.

School councils are established at schools as a consultative body. The councils include representatives of the school founding body, pedagogical staff, parents and sometimes learners.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ More information in Czech at the [Education development yearbook 2010/11-2020/21](#).

For a long time, the participation of social partners in curriculum development has been seen as insufficient. Continuing discussions aim to develop a more participatory approach. Participation of their representatives in the final exam committees of 3-year school-based VET programmes (ISCED 353) and in the *absolutorium* committees of higher VET programmes of tertiary professional schools (ISCED 655) is mandatory and embedded in the Education Act. They also participate in the design of the standardised assignments for final examinations (ISCED 353), and profile (vocational) parts of *maturita* exams (ISCED 354), while their participation in the *maturita* examination committee is not mandatory, but highly appreciated.

2.5. Financing VET

In 2019, public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP was 4.9%, slightly above the EU average (4.7%). When compared to 2018, public spending had been considerably increased by approximately 11%. A major part (46%) of these funds was directed to secondary education, which includes most IVET programmes (European Commission and Directorate-General for Education and Culture, 2021). In 2020, public expenditure further increased to 5.1% (EU-27 5.0%) ⁽⁵⁸⁾.

VET is mainly financed by two different systems of regular public funding:

- (a) the first, regulated by the Education Act, finances upper secondary and higher VET programmes;
- (b) the second finances the different types of training offered by the PES; it is regulated by the Employment Act.

Primary, secondary and tertiary professional schools are jointly funded by the education ministry and regional authorities, which are responsible for founding public schools ⁽⁵⁹⁾. The direct costs of education, i.e. teacher salaries, teaching aids and further education of pedagogical staff, are covered from the State budget (via the education ministry). Operational costs are covered by the founder of the relevant school. Apart from public funds, VET stakeholders, such as employers, often support VET schools on a voluntary basis, for instance by

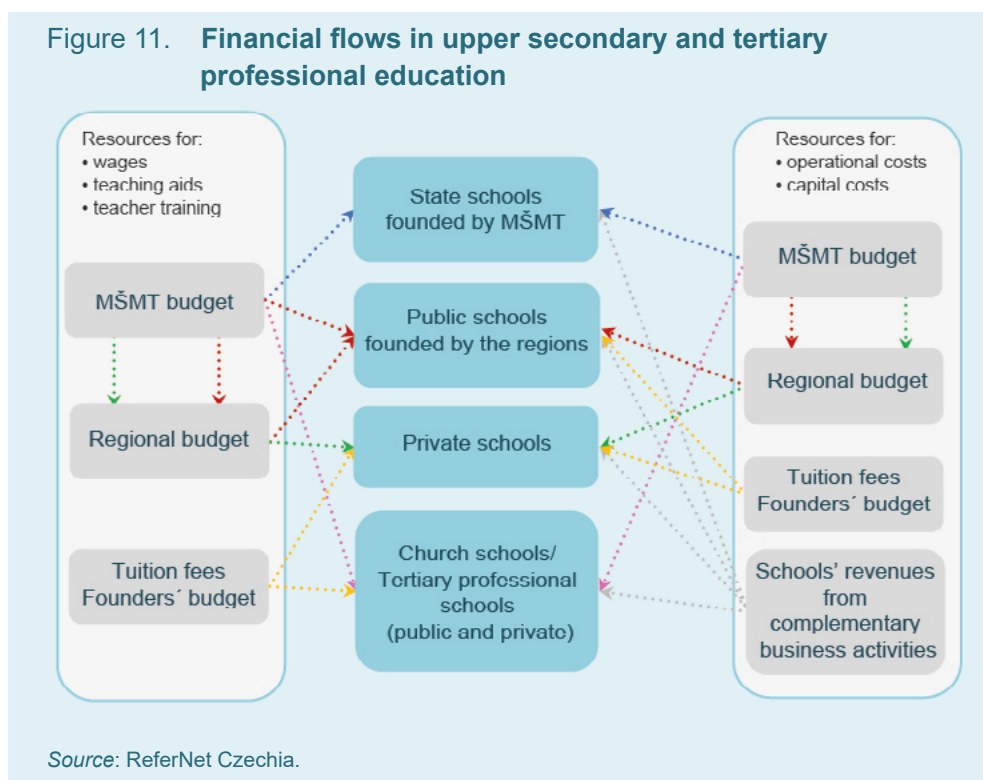
⁽⁵⁸⁾ Eurostat, [gov_10a_exp](#) [extracted on 31.3.2022].

⁽⁵⁹⁾ In specific cases, schools are founded and owned by private entities and churches. State schools are founded by the education or other ministries. Their operational costs are partly contributed by a subsidy from the State budget and partly by other sources (tuition fees, donations, etc.). The subsidy is set as a percentage of the per-capita funding of a comparable programme in public education.

offering sponsorships and investing in infrastructure and equipment. Schools can also acquire some funds through their economic activities and participation in international programmes (Figure 11).

An important source of funding for private secondary VET schools and VOŠ is tuition fees ⁽⁶⁰⁾. Private schools are also funded by the State and regional budgets (Figure 11). The maximum limit of tuition fees for public VOŠ is set by legislation and differs depending on the field of study. Generally, fees are low, ranging from the equivalent of EUR 97 to 195 per year. The level of tuition fees for private schools is not regulated.

Figure 11. **Financial flows in upper secondary and tertiary professional education**



Since 2020, a more centralised approach to regional funding of public schools up to upper secondary level has been introduced. School funding is no longer based on the number of learners (per capita approach): it is based on the financing of the real volume of teaching (the number of lessons taught). Financial resources are allocated according to the real amount of teacher salaries. This opens the option of dividing classes into smaller groups to improve the quality

⁽⁶⁰⁾ This also applies to public VOŠ.

of teaching. The per-capita principle remains in tertiary professional schools (VOŠ), but the amount is set centrally by the ministry.

Retraining in the framework of the ALMP is funded from the budget of the labour ministry. The financial resources are transferred to the Labour Office of Czechia ⁽⁶¹⁾, which then distributes them further to its regional branches. The ÚP branches cover the course fees for participants fulfilling all requirements but may also contribute to other retraining-related costs.

2.6. Teachers and trainers

2.6.1. Vocational teachers and trainers

The following types of teaching professionals work in VET:

- (a) general subject teachers;
- (b) vocational theoretical subject teachers;
- (c) practical training teachers (in EQF level 2 and 3 programmes leading to a VET certificate);
- (d) teachers of *practicum* ⁽⁶²⁾.

The Act on pedagogical staff regulates issues regarding teaching professionals' qualification and competence requirements, their working hours, continuing professional development (CPD) and career scheme.

Upper secondary VET teachers (i.e. teachers of general subjects, teachers of vocational theoretical subjects, teachers of vocational training and teachers of *practicum*) should hold a formal qualification ⁽⁶³⁾ in their teaching field and a pedagogical qualification. If the pedagogical qualification is not part of their master programme, they should obtain a bachelor degree in pedagogical sciences or a certificate of completion of an education programme, usually provided by higher education institutions. There are two types of programme leading to such certificates:

- (a) 250-hour programmes (3 semesters), including also training in reflective teaching practices (approximately one third of the programme);

⁽⁶¹⁾ Labour Office of Czechia is a public employment service.

⁽⁶²⁾ According to the Education Act, practical education includes *practicum* and practical training, which may take place in companies or alternatively in school workshops/facilities. *Practicum* is included in 4-year leading to a *maturita* examination.

⁽⁶³⁾ The Act No 563/2004 Coll. on pedagogical staff (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2004b) stipulates what type of study programmes and certificates are required for individual categories of teachers (master degree, *absolutorium*, *maturita* certificate or VET certificate).

- (b) 120-hour programmes (2 semesters), including a short *practicum*; these can also be offered by educational entities or entities offering teacher CPD.

The latter primarily target teachers of vocational theoretical subjects, practicum and vocational training, while they are also available for teachers of artistic vocational subjects at elementary artistic schools, secondary schools and conservatoires, as well as teachers at language schools authorised to organise State language examinations. Usually, company specialists wanting to become full-time teachers opt for these programmes. Teachers can complete the required pedagogical qualification during their CPD.

In-company trainers, nationally referred to as practical training instructors, are not recognised as pedagogues by the Act on pedagogical staff. They are exclusively company employees, who are not obliged to have pedagogical training.

The country is currently facing two major challenges regarding teachers:

- (a) ageing teaching population;
- (b) low attractiveness of the teaching profession.

The average age of upper secondary school teachers is relatively high (49.4 years). Although substantially increased in last 4 years, teacher salaries are still below the average salary of tertiary-educated employees in the country and the EU and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average. Apart from being undervalued, the attractiveness of the teaching profession, also at tertiary level, is low due to the limited opportunities for career development. In an attempt to attract field experts by easing access to the teaching profession, school directors can employ (20 hours/week) practitioners/field professionals from the world of business, non-profit organisations and public administration by recognising their professional qualification⁽⁶⁴⁾, even if they do not possess a pedagogical qualification for part-time teaching (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

2.6.2. Continuing professional development of teachers and trainers

All teachers are obliged to participate in CPD and can take educational leave for up to 12 days per academic year⁽⁶⁵⁾. As part of their CPD, they can have courses or an internship in a company, an option that is popular and desirable⁽⁶⁶⁾. Each school director is responsible for the development and implementation of a CPD

⁽⁶⁴⁾ The recognised qualification is valid only for a teaching position in that particular school.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ The school director cannot influence the content of this training.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ In 2021, 42% of secondary and tertiary professional schools organised internships in companies.

plan in coherence with the strategic needs of the school as well as the needs and interests of individual teachers.

Teachers have limited options in their career path. They can be trained to perform specialised school activities, for instance become a school prevention specialist ⁽⁶⁷⁾, an educational counsellor or try to acquire a leadership position.

Teacher CPD is among national key priorities. The Strategy 2030+ (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2020) aims to develop a teacher competence profile, reform pre- and in-service teacher training, increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession and strengthen the role of school directors. An innovative approach to new teacher training is being jointly piloted with the participation of representatives of universities providing pre-service teacher training and experienced in-service teachers and school management (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

2.7. Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The national system of recognition and validation of learning outcomes was launched in 2006 by the Act on verification and recognition of further education results (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2006a), which set its legislative framework. According to the Act, those who have gained certain skills and knowledge in a vocational field may, after meeting specific requirements, obtain a certificate of qualification generally recognised by employers. Applicants can acquire either a vocational or a complete vocational qualification ⁽⁶⁸⁾ (Section 3.2.3) included in the qualifications register (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019). The system, although to some extent connected to the formal education system, works mainly in parallel to it without covering general and higher education. It mainly focuses on CVET, promoting the recognition and validation of vocational skills and competences (Stalker, 2019).

The validation system includes four stages: identification, documentation, assessment and certification. However, the first two are not mandatory for individuals intending to apply for assessment and certification. The main element

⁽⁶⁷⁾ A teacher who has attended specialised training courses and is able to prevent and/ or address problematic behaviour or situations in the school environment, for example drug abuse, cyber bullying.

⁽⁶⁸⁾ A vocational qualification (*profesní kvalifikace*) is defined as the ability of a person to duly perform a task or a set of tasks within an occupation. A complete vocational qualification (*úplná profesní kvalifikace*) is defined as a professional competence to duly perform all the tasks within an occupation.

of the system is a competence-based assessment of the knowledge, skills and competences that applicants have acquired, including through work experience. The assessment usually includes an oral and/or written examination and a practical demonstration of skills and competences (Stalker, 2019).

NSK vocational qualifications contain a qualification standard, which includes a specific set of competences, and an assessment standard, including methods and procedures used in the assessment and certification of prior learning ⁽⁶⁹⁾. Sector councils, in cooperation with employers' representatives, contribute in developing these standards, ensuring that they are in line with the labour market needs. The National Pedagogical Institute (NPI ČR) participates in the work of sector councils, while standards are approved by the education ministry. The recognition and validation of prior learning is conducted mainly by adult education providers and/or VET schools, the so-called authorised entities ⁽⁷⁰⁾. For some vocational qualifications the assessment has to be done by a jury. Applicants have the right for an appeal in case they wish the authorising body to review the process (Stalker, 2019).

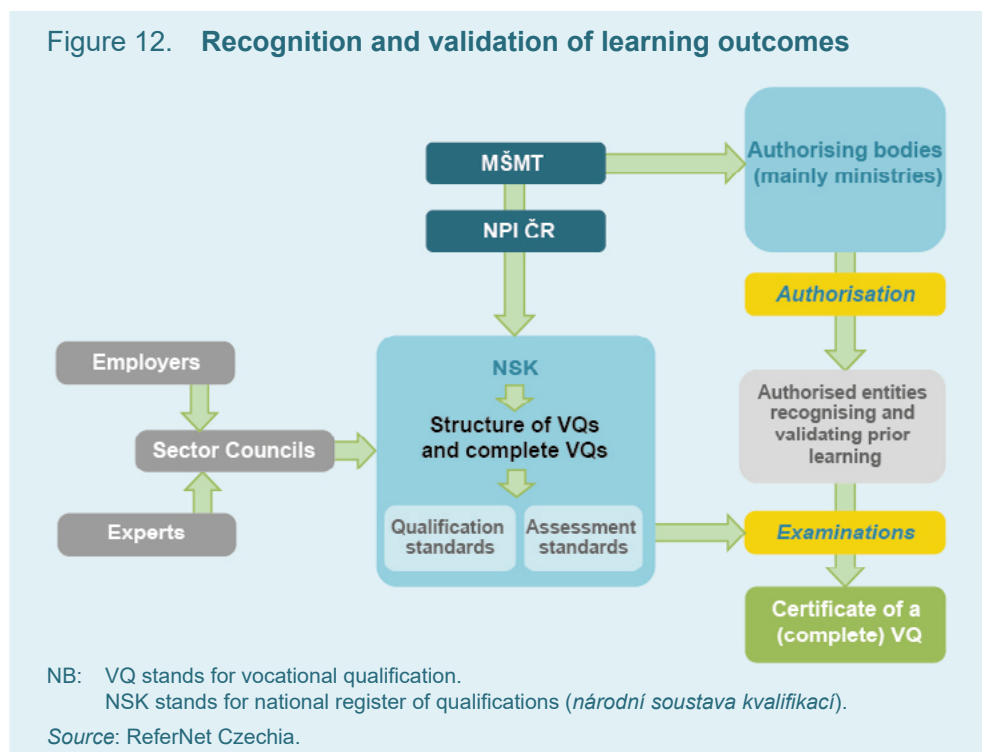
To obtain a vocational qualification, the applicant needs to demonstrate all competences listed in the qualification standard included in the NSK. This is done through an examination carried out by the authorised entities. As an incentive, exam fees can be offset against participants' taxable income. Only individuals who are over 18 and have completed at least compulsory education are eligible to sit the exam. Upon passing, individuals receive a certificate of a vocational qualification issued by the authorised entity. Since 2009, when this process was launched, more than 250 000 exams have been held (August 2021) (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

A certificate of a complete vocational qualification can be equivalent to certificates offered by the formal education system (VET and *maturita* certificates). Obtaining such a qualification is a demanding process; applicants should pass, as an additional exam, the same final examination with learners attending formal VET programmes (certified by a *maturita* or VET certificate). If the entity offering the validation procedure is not a school with formal study programmes, the applicant has to pass the additional exam at a school, though this is a rare way of acquiring a complete vocational qualification (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

⁽⁶⁹⁾ These standards are also used in developing non-formal training programmes.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ Authorised entities are licenced by authorising bodies, which are public administration entities, related to a given field (ministries or the Czech National Bank). In 2022 there were 1 031 authorised entities.

Figure 12. Recognition and validation of learning outcomes



According to Stalker (2019), the country's validation system has showcased some impressive results regarding the number of newly developed NSK (complete) vocational qualifications (enabling recognition of prior learning in more fields) and awarded certificates. This correlates to the fact that the system is labour market oriented and to the close cooperation with employers' representatives.

2.8. Recent policy changes

In October 2020, the Strategy 2030+ was approved by the Government of Czechia. For the first implementation period (2020-23), it includes the following priorities for VET (Ministry of Education Youth and Sports, 2020):

- transforming the content, methods and assessment of education;
- innovating the system of VET fields of study;
- supporting teaching staff;
- promoting digital learning;
- reducing the non-teaching burden on the teaching staff.

The national recovery and resilience plan comprises a set of reforms and investments which will be implemented in 2021-26 with the support of the Recovery and Resilience Facility. The priorities of the education ministry are (Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2021):

- (a) reducing inequalities in accessing quality education, caused by the digital divide;
- (b) providing mobile digital devices for in-class and distance learning; at least 80% of schools will be able to lend basic digital equipment to disadvantaged learners.

The automation and digitisation of production technologies has caused significant changes in the skills and competences that upper secondary VET graduates should possess. Responding to the new labour market needs, the number of VET fields of studies has been increased (currently covering 281 programmes), while preserving the ones that are no longer in demand.

In March 2021, the *Strategy of small and medium-sized enterprises* was approved. It includes measures aiming to develop learners' skills in line with labour market needs by supporting the creation and strengthening of appropriate forms of cooperation between schools and businesses, and increasing the quality, efficiency and relevance of professional training. It also aims at promoting further training for employees and businesses, particularly in the area of key competences, and increasing their digital skills.

In September 2021, the education ministry signed with deans of pedagogical faculties a memorandum which initiated the transformation of undergraduate teacher study programmes. It aims to prepare future teachers not only to carry out the teaching job but also to be able to face the challenges of the 21st century, such as digitalisation.

CHAPTER 3.

Shaping VET qualifications



3.1. Anticipating skills needs

Cedefop's European skills index (ESI) measures countries' performance in skills development, activation and matching. A score of 100 corresponds to the ideal performance, which is the highest achieved by any country over a period of 7 years. In 2022, Czechia is ranked first, remaining at the same position since 2018. The country ranks 16th in skills activation ⁽⁷¹⁾, obtaining a rather low score for the activity rate of the younger cohort (20-24), while is ranked 11th in skills development ⁽⁷²⁾, being first in VET students. In skills matching ⁽⁷³⁾ the country is the top scorer ⁽⁷⁴⁾.

A coherent system for forecasting skill needs is currently being developed. In 2017, the KOMPAS project was launched by the labour ministry, aiming to establish, by 2022, a forecasting system of labour market skill needs, interlinking national and regional approaches. The national training fund (*národní vzdělávací fond*, NVF), the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs (*Výzkumný ústav práce a sociálních věcí*, VÚPSV) and newly established regional platforms (groups of various regional partners) have been key partners of the labour ministry within this project.

The system collects the available statistical data as well as qualitative information on the future regional and national labour market developments, important changes and technology trends. A system of statistical models (national and regional) was created to develop skill-needs forecasts. The outcomes are expected to inform VET providers and counsellors, PES (responsible for retraining), regional authorities (responsible for IVET), employers, ministries, and the general public. They are published on the project [website](#), specifically developed for this purpose.

In addition, the National Pedagogical Institute has developed an [information system](#) on the situation of graduates in the labour market (ISA+), including short information about future labour market prospects within economic sectors until 2025 ⁽⁷⁵⁾ (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

⁽⁷¹⁾ Skills activation includes indicators of the transition from education to work, together with labour market activity rates for different groups of the population, to identify those which have greater or lesser representation in the labour market.

⁽⁷²⁾ Skills development represents the training and education activities of the country and the immediate outputs of that system in terms of the skills developed and attained.

⁽⁷³⁾ Skills matching represents the degree of successful utilisation of skills, the extent to which skills are effectively matched in the labour market.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ More information at Cedefop's [European skills index](#) [accessed 30.5.2022].

⁽⁷⁵⁾ [More information](#) [accessed 11.1.2021].

3.2. Designing VET qualifications

The country has not developed a comprehensive national qualifications framework (NQF), as ‘work on qualifications has been carried out at subsystem level ⁽⁷⁶⁾ to varying degrees’ (Cedefop, 2021, p. 3). In the past decade, a lot of effort has been made in developing and updating VET qualifications and the 281 national VET curricula. The main objective is to address the labour market needs better.

3.2.1. Curriculum development

National IVET curricula have been developed and updated ⁽⁷⁷⁾ based on modern trends and labour market requirements. Secondary education curricula are developed at two levels. At national level, national curricula (framework educational programmes, *rámcové vzdělávací programy*) are developed under the responsibility of the education ministry, containing the minimum requirements for State-regulated education programmes. There are 281 national VET curricula, one for each individual field of education (VET programme). They mainly describe the learning outcomes and key competences that learners should achieve. Representatives of social partners are involved in drafting them. At local level, secondary schools design their own school education programmes or school curricula (*školní vzdělávací programy*), based on the national curricula, in cooperation with regional social partners. The objective of this approach is to introduce flexibility in designing school curricula, better aligning them to regional labour market needs, latest developments in the relevant field and the interests and capacities of learners (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

The updated national IVET curricula were launched by the education ministry in September 2020. These updates refer to their vocational component, linking them to the vocational qualifications of the NSK. National curricula now include economic concepts in line with the updated financial literacy standards, approved by the Ministry of Finance (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

Tertiary professional schools develop the content of their study programmes. Higher VET programmes offered by VOŠ, provided that they comply with the recommendation issued by the accreditation commission for tertiary professional

⁽⁷⁶⁾ Lower and upper secondary education, higher education and the NSK.

⁽⁷⁷⁾ In the national context, there is a distinction between updating and revising curricula. Updating refers to partially renewing curricula (see below in this section), while revising refers to developing new ones (Section 4.4).

education (AK VOV), are approved by the education ministry. The commission is set up by the government (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

Government-regulated CVET programmes within the formal education system (Section 2.2.3.1) use the same curricula as IVET ones. Since 2009, the providers of retraining programmes, which are part of ALMP, must also link the content of these courses to the qualification standards described in NSK (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019). Accreditation of CVET programmes is applied in programmes like statutory training and post-*maturita* language courses (Section 2.2.3). The curriculum of non-government-regulated open-market adult courses (Section 2.3) is not regulated. CVET programmes, provided outside formal education and training, usually respond directly to the labour market needs. When developing the programmes, providers can consider the [national system of occupations](#) or the NSK.

3.2.2. Qualifications design inputs

The National Pedagogical Institute ensures that qualification and assessment standards are developed according to a specific methodology; it also ensures their linkage with the curricula developed for upper secondary education. The NPI ČR submits proposals for qualification standards to authorising bodies for feedback (there are 10 authorising bodies, usually ministries). The final approval of standards is the responsibility of the education ministry (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

In 2016, the education ministry supported an agreement with key employer representatives (Czech Chamber of Commerce, Confederation of Industry of Czechia, Czech Agrarian Chamber and Union of Employers' Associations of Czechia), allocating to them the responsibility to contribute in the preparation of the IVET national curricula ⁽⁷⁸⁾. These stakeholders have divided responsibilities among themselves for particular fields of education. For example, the Union of Employers' Associations of Czechia is responsible for IVET qualifications in the textile and clothing sector (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

⁽⁷⁸⁾ A group of experts has been brought together for each field, under the supervision of the NPI ČR.

3.2.3. National register of qualifications

The [National register of qualifications](#) (*národní soustava kvalifikací*, NSK) was introduced in 2007 by the Act on the verification and recognition of further education results (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2006a). Its main target group is adults, while it is primarily focused on learning outcomes achieved outside the formal education system (Cedefop, 2021). The NSK includes:

- (a) vocational qualifications;
- (b) complete vocational qualifications.

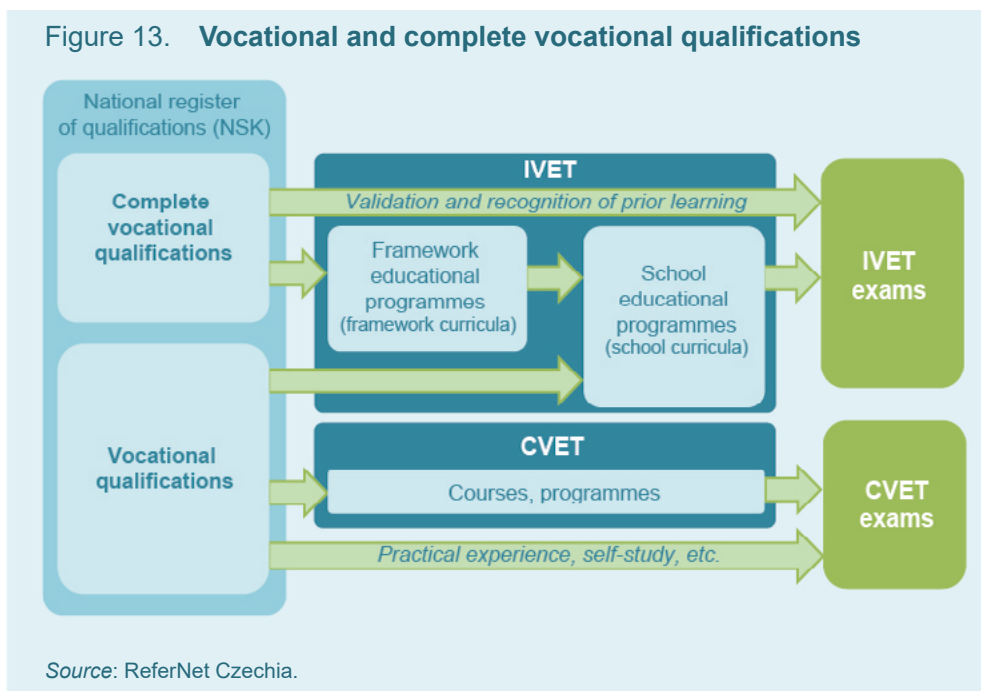
Holding a vocational qualification (*profesní kvalifikace*) testifies the ability of a person to perform a task or a set of tasks within an occupation. It corresponds to specific activities (for example furniture assembly, installation of lifts, manufacture of upholstered seats, sports massage, flower arrangement, cold dishes catering, production of ice cream) but does not cover the whole occupation (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019). Each vocational qualification includes a specific list of competences, in the form of a qualification standard, and the relevant assessment standard. The latter contains information on assessment methods and examination procedures. Vocational qualifications are developed by sector councils (Section 3.2.3.1) (Stalker, 2019). They are based on occupation standards included in the national system of occupations. NSP is interconnected with the NSK through a common [database](#) of competences, which is used for developing both occupational standards and vocational qualifications ⁽⁷⁹⁾.

A complete vocational qualification (*úplná profesní kvalifikace*) testifies that an individual holds the necessary professional competences to perform all relevant tasks within an occupation (for example pastry chef, hairdresser, plumber, economist, engineering technician). It can be obtained upon completion of an IVET programme or through the recognition and validation of prior learning. Those obtaining a complete NSK vocational qualification can sit the final, *maturita* or *absolutorium* ⁽⁸⁰⁾ exam and achieve the relevant level of education without attending the respective study programme (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

⁽⁷⁹⁾ Currently, there are approximately 23 000 competences included in the database.

⁽⁸⁰⁾ In conservatories.

Figure 13. Vocational and complete vocational qualifications



The number of qualifications included in the NSK has gradually increased. In March 2022, there were 1 448 vocational qualifications and 212 complete vocational qualifications publicly accessible in the register. All approved standards and related information are published in the [NSK information system](#) in Czech and English (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019). The NSK database records the following information for each vocational qualification: qualification and assessment standard (including description of learning outcomes), reference to corresponding occupations, information on authorising body and validation procedure and NSK/EQF level (Cedefop, 2021).

3.2.3.1. Sector Councils

Sector councils (*sektorové rady*, SR), have been operating since 2006 primarily in the process of defining occupation and qualification standards. During the last decade they have operated at national level. They bring together representatives of key stakeholders, especially employers. There are 28 sector councils consisting of approximately 350 representatives of mostly employers and also employees, educators and policy-makers from ministries. They participate in the development of qualification and assessment standards of NSK vocational

qualifications and in labour market skill needs analysis (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

3.3. Quality assurance

3.3.1. Quality assurance in IVET

At national level, the education ministry is responsible for evaluation of the education system. School evaluation is the responsibility of the Czech school inspectorate (*Česká školní inspekce*, ČŠI).

The ČŠI is an independent national evaluation authority. Its main responsibility is to evaluate education provision and outcomes, assessing their links to national curricula and compliance with school-based curricula. Quality assurance and school evaluation are carried out through external and self-evaluation. In 2015, the ČŠI defined and introduced a guide on how to perform quality assurance at schools ⁽⁸¹⁾ (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019). The criteria introduced are grouped in six main areas, including pedagogical leadership, quality of the pedagogical staff, educational process and learners' learning outcomes (EQAVET, 2021). The guide also contains a methodology for inspections in all school types and levels. This model ensures that the criteria are not only used by the ČŠI but also for the self-evaluation of schools or evaluation of schools by their founders. Every school year, an updated set of criteria, based on the six criteria of the guide, is published for school reference (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019). Several European Quality Assurance in VET (EQAVET) indicators are also used in IVET (EQAVET, 2021).

The National Pedagogical Institute has the role of the national reference point (NRP) for quality assurance in VET. Activities of the EQAVET reference framework are performed in cooperation with the ČŠI (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

In line with the Education Act, the outcome of schools' self-evaluation procedures (self-evaluation report) is an important input for drafting each school's annual activity report, which is a publicly accessible document. VET schools at secondary and tertiary level are obliged to develop this annual activity report. Since 2011, schools were granted more autonomy in terms of self-evaluation.

⁽⁸¹⁾ The school quality model and the related criteria for evaluation were designed and developed within the ESF project The national system for the inspection and evaluation of the education system in Czechia (NIQES), implemented in 2011-15.

The obligation of schools to respect the structure (criteria) of the self-evaluation report as well as the frequency and dates of its submission has been cancelled. The self-evaluation report is no longer required as a mandatory school document for observations by the ČŠI. However, most schools prepare the self-evaluation report as an internal school document (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

According to the Strategy 2030+, the education ministry has prioritised quality-assuring WBL. The ministry will develop a quality standard for practical training taking place in companies and school workplaces (Ministry of Education Youth and Sports, 2020).

3.3.2. Quality assurance in CVET

CVET is fragmented and only programmes publicly funded and/or relating to regulated professions are regulated.

The national approach applied to IVET school education, defined in the ČŠI guide (Section 3.3.1), also applies to CVET programmes provided by schools.

The quality of State accredited courses is guaranteed by the relevant responsible State bodies (in most cases the respective ministry). The quality is assessed as a part of the accreditation procedure. If shortcomings are discovered, accreditation is not granted but repeated applications are possible. The responsible bodies (ministries) apply different approaches. The quality of provision is not evaluated on a continuous basis. The accreditation is awarded for a limited period of time (usually for several years) and then the programme must be reaccredited.

CVET providers can optionally develop a quality assurance framework, linked to an ISO certification. Quality assurance requirements for validation of non-formal and informal learning are defined at system level by the Validation Act (EQAVET, 2021).

Quality assurance of non-accredited courses is the responsibility of providers and users; there are no quality standards and the quality is not assessed by any particular body or institution.

CHAPTER 4.

Promoting VET participation



4.1. Incentives for learners

Policy measures and tools regarding incentives for participation in VET are fragmented, with no comprehensive system in place. Nevertheless, several mechanisms offer limited financial support under certain conditions to VET learners.

Most regions provide scholarships or other benefits to learners participating in secondary education programmes, provided that they lead to a qualification in high demand in the regional labour market. The main objective is to attract new learners and motivate existing ones to complete the programme. Scholarship programmes may slightly differ among regions. The scholarship grant is around EUR 1 000 for a 3-year study programme. In some study fields, scholarships have contributed in increasing enrolments, while in others learner interest continues to decline. The usual prerequisites to receiving a scholarship are:

- (a) regular school attendance;
- (b) excellent learning results;
- (c) good behaviour.

According to the Act on verification and recognition of further education, CVET learners can deduct the cost of exam fees from their tax base (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

Companies also provide both financial and non-financial benefits to VET learners doing their practical training or *practicum* in their premises.

4.2. Incentives for enterprises

4.2.1. IVET programmes

Employers participating in IVET programmes have specific tax incentives. The main aim is to motivate companies to cooperate with VET schools. Direct and indirect funding of secondary and tertiary VET is considered as a tax-deductible expense:

- (a) approximately EUR 7 (CZK 200) ⁽⁸²⁾ per hour of practical training or internship provided to a learner in the company's premises is deducted from its taxable income;

⁽⁸²⁾ Czech crowns (*českých korun*, CZK).

- (b) 50% to 110% of the costs of assets acquired and at least partially used for the purposes of vocational training are also tax deductible;
- (c) corporate scholarships for learners of upper secondary VET and tertiary professional programmes are tax deductible up to EUR 192 (CZK 5 000) per learner per month.

According to the Education Act, upper secondary VET schools can use some of their funds for labour costs to pay in-company practical training instructors. This measure enables schools to carry out practical training in company premises, function as contractual partners more easily, and quality assure practical training more effectively (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

4.2.2. CVET and adult learning

When employers and education organisations providing adult learning and CVET meet specific requirements (Section 2.2.3.3), they can apply for public grants to finance the training of their employees. There are several public programmes financed by the State budget and/or EU funds, including:

- (a) ALMP schemes, financing companies to (re)train their employees (Section 2.2.3.3);
- (b) employers in manufacturing industry and other specific innovative fields can receive, as a part of an investment incentive offered by the government, support for training their employees;
- (c) companies can receive funding for carrying out projects that include training, provided they meet the criteria set by the EU joint funded operational programmes; for example, in the period 2015-22, the POVEZ II programme (Support to vocational education of employees), administered by the regional branches of the Labour Office, offers subsidies to companies and entrepreneurs for the training of employees.

The cost of employee training is considered as part of the overall business tax deductible costs (Šímová et al., 2018; Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

4.3. Guidance and counselling

There are two main guidance and counselling systems. The education ministry supervises guidance and counselling for initial education learners, while the labour ministry is responsible for the services provided to adults as part of labour market policies (Šímová et al., 2018). The National Guidance Forum (NGF), created in 2010, is the advisory body of the education and labour ministries in this policy area (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

Career counselling services provided at schools are available to all learners in lower secondary programmes (ISCED 244) to help them choose their upper secondary school. At this level, the subject Career path selection places a significant focus on the development of career management skills of learners. The curricula for upper secondary programmes include the subject Introduction to the world of work. Learners may also attend various education fairs, open-door days at schools, job brokering events, etc. (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

All basic and secondary schools have an education counsellor, often recruited among the teachers of the school. Such counsellors usually have a rather limited time capacity due to their teaching duties, focusing on learner education and professional orientation. Each school also employs a school methodologist, specialised in the prevention of socio-pathological disorders, and there may also be a school psychologist and a special pedagogue.

At the regional/local level, there are approximately 80 pedagogical-psychological guidance centres and around 120 centres for special pedagogy for children with communication disorders and health, mental or combined disabilities. Guidance and counselling are based on a pedagogical-psychological diagnosis of the learner's capacities, personal qualities, interests and other personal characteristics (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019). Schools can contact the guidance centres in the event of any kind of psychological or educational problems. A consultation or targeted treatment is provided upon the agreement of parents.

The career guidance services to adults of the labour ministry are provided by the regional and local branches of the Labour Office. They support jobseekers and the unemployed in finding a job and assist the transition from school to labour market.

At each Labour Office branch there is an information and guidance centre (*informační a poradenské středisko*, IPS), offering a wide range of information

materials and media. The main target groups are learners in the last year of basic school, unemployed people, people who seek alternative employment, and those at risk of unemployment. IPS are in contact with regional schools and organise workshops on educational and professional guidance.

A [website](#), developed by the National Pedagogical Institute, gathers information on formal education programmes, transition to the labour market and further education, targeting career counsellors, learners, parents and employers. The OECD considers this system as a beneficial practice (Cedefop; National Institute for Education and National Training Fund, 2019).

There are also private career guidance service providers, employers' associations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and career guidance organisations. There are several additional online sources and tools, like a [private database](#) on continuing education, the [registry of schools](#) and an [information system](#) on learner transition to the labour market and further education. Some elements of career counselling, such as preparation for a job interview, support for CV writing, and information on employment relations are also provided [online](#).

The country is also involved in the [Euroguidance network](#) for career counsellors and [Eures](#), which provides services to citizens who are interested in seeking employment in EU Member States.

4.4. Challenges and development opportunities

A crucial challenge is the ageing teaching population, as the average age of teachers at upper secondary education is 49.4 years. Although average salaries were increased, the teaching profession, even at tertiary level, suffers from low attractiveness.

As the industry sector plays an important role in the economy of the country, the industry 4.0 revolution is posing challenges like digitalisation and automation. Additionally, SMEs, a significant factor in the country's economy, are sensitive to economic fluctuations and often need to address skills mismatch.

Another challenge is further promoting quality in-company WBL, increasing learning options in a real-work environment and easing graduate transitions from school to the labour market. Better matching of skills supply and demand is also needed. Linking IVET programmes with relevant qualifications in the national register of qualifications should further support responsiveness and flexibility to labour market needs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the digital skills gap, deepening the digital divide, and pointed out the need for digital transformation and increasing and improving digital capacity. At the same time, it has speeded up the development of digital skills and competences of VET teachers and learners.

In autumn 2020, to address the challenges identified above, the new strategy 2030+ was adopted, promoting the introduction of dual system elements in VET, and fostering cooperation between the world of schools and business. The strategy also prioritised quality assuring WBL and developing a quality standard for practical training (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2020).

In the upcoming period, the education ministry intends to modernise and equip schools, to enable them introducing digital technologies, supporting innovation, revising curricula and carrying out new methods of instruction and assessment. The ministry will also focus on teacher initial and continuing training, and the professional development of headmasters. VET education fields are expected to benefit from curriculum renewal by 2023. An emphasis will be on developing a common basis among relevant fields of study, allowing learners to make a career choice at a later stage of their studies, reducing the possibilities of a wrong choice and postponing early specialisation. The number of fields of study will be reduced.

Acronyms

AK VOV	accreditation commission for tertiary professional education <i>[akreditační komise pro vyšší odborné vzdělávání]</i>
ALMPs	active labour market policies
Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CPD	continuing professional development
ČŠI	Czech school inspectorate <i>[Česká školní inspekce]</i>
ČSÚ	Czech statistical office <i>[Český statistický úřad]</i>
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
CZESHA	Union of Schools' Associations of the Czech Republic
DiS	specialist's diploma <i>[diplomovaný specialista]</i>
ECTS	European credit transfer and accumulation system
EQAVET	European quality assurance in vocational education and training
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESF	European Social Fund
ESI	European skills index
GDP	gross domestic product
ICT	information and communications technology
IPS	information and guidance centre <i>[informační a poradenské středisko]</i>
ISCED	international standard classification of education
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
IVET	initial vocational education and training
LFS	labour force survey
LLL	lifelong learning
MŠMT	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports <i>[Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy]</i>
NGF	National Guidance Forum
NGO	non-governmental organisation

NPI ČR	National Pedagogical Institute of the Czech Republic <i>[Národní pedagogický institut ČR]</i>
NQF	national qualifications framework
NRP	national reference point
NSK	national register of qualifications <i>[národní soustava kvalifikací]</i>
NSP	national system of occupations <i>[národní soustava povolání]</i>
NUTS	nomenclature of territorial units for statistics
NVF	national training fund <i>[národní vzdělávací fond]</i>
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PES	public employment service
SEN	special educational needs
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
SOŠ	type of secondary VET school <i>[střední odborná škola]</i>
SOU	type of secondary VET school <i>[střední odborné učiliště]</i>
SR	sector councils <i>[sektorové rady]</i>
ÚP	Labour Office <i>[Úřad práce České republiky]</i>
VET	vocational education and training
VOŠ	tertiary professional schools <i>[vyšší odborné školy]</i>
VQ	vocational qualification
VŠ	higher education institutions <i>[vysoké školy]</i>
VÚPSV	Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs <i>[Výzkumný ústav práce a sociálních věcí]</i>
WBL	work-based learning

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Vocational education and training in

Czechia

Short description

This short description contributes to better understanding of vocational education and training in Czechia by providing insights into its distinctive features and highlighting system developments and current challenges.

The share of VET learners in upper secondary education programmes is the second highest in the EU-27. Initial VET is school-based, including mandatory practical work-based learning. Permeability is a main element of IVET programmes, while most graduates opt for higher education.

The national register of qualifications is a key component of education and training. Validation of prior learning mainly focuses on continuing VET, promoting the recognition and validation of vocational skills and competences. The system offers a considerable number of qualifications, while results regarding the certificates awarded are very positive.

The country's set priorities include innovating VET fields of study, supporting teaching staff, reforming lifelong learning, and promoting digital learning, for instance by tackling the digital divide.


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