

# spotlight on VET POLAND

2025

## VET in Poland

Vocational education and training (VET) in Poland has three governance levels: national (ministries), regional (school inspectorates, mainly for pedagogical supervision) and county (school administration). The [Ministry of National Education](#) regulates secondary-level VET, supported by other ministries responsible for specific occupations and by the Council of Directors of Sectoral Vocational Education Schools and Training Institutions, a consultative body. Social partners advise policymakers on necessary changes to VET.

## Initial VET

The latest reform of education and training was completed in the 2022/23 school year. VET is provided mainly in school-based upper secondary settings, combining general and vocational education, and at post-secondary level. Programmes are based on the classification of occupations, with occupations requiring one or more qualifications. After passing state examinations, learners can acquire vocational qualifications equivalent to upper secondary level through the following programmes.

- Three-year first-stage sectoral programmes (*branżowa szkoła I stopnia*, ISCED 353) leading to a vocational qualification diploma for a single-qualification occupation (after passing state vocational examinations). Graduates can enrol in the second year of general upper secondary programmes for adults or in a second-stage sectoral programme.
- Two-year second-stage sectoral programmes (*branżowa szkoła II stopnia*, ISCED 354), develop the vocational qualifications attained in first-stage sectoral programmes and lead to VET diplomas for occupations requiring two qualifications. General education is provided on a full-time, evening or extracurricular basis. Graduates can acquire an upper secondary school leaving certificate (*matura*) providing access to tertiary education.
- Five-year vocational programmes (*technikum*, ISCED 354) leading to a VET diploma for occupations consisting of two qualifications.

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There are also 3-year special job training programmes (*szkoła specjalna przysposabiająca do pracy*, ISCED 243) for special educational needs learners leading to a job training certificate.

Work preparation classes for special educational needs learners aged 15 and above already exist in ISCED 244 programmes (*oddział przysposabiający do pracy*).

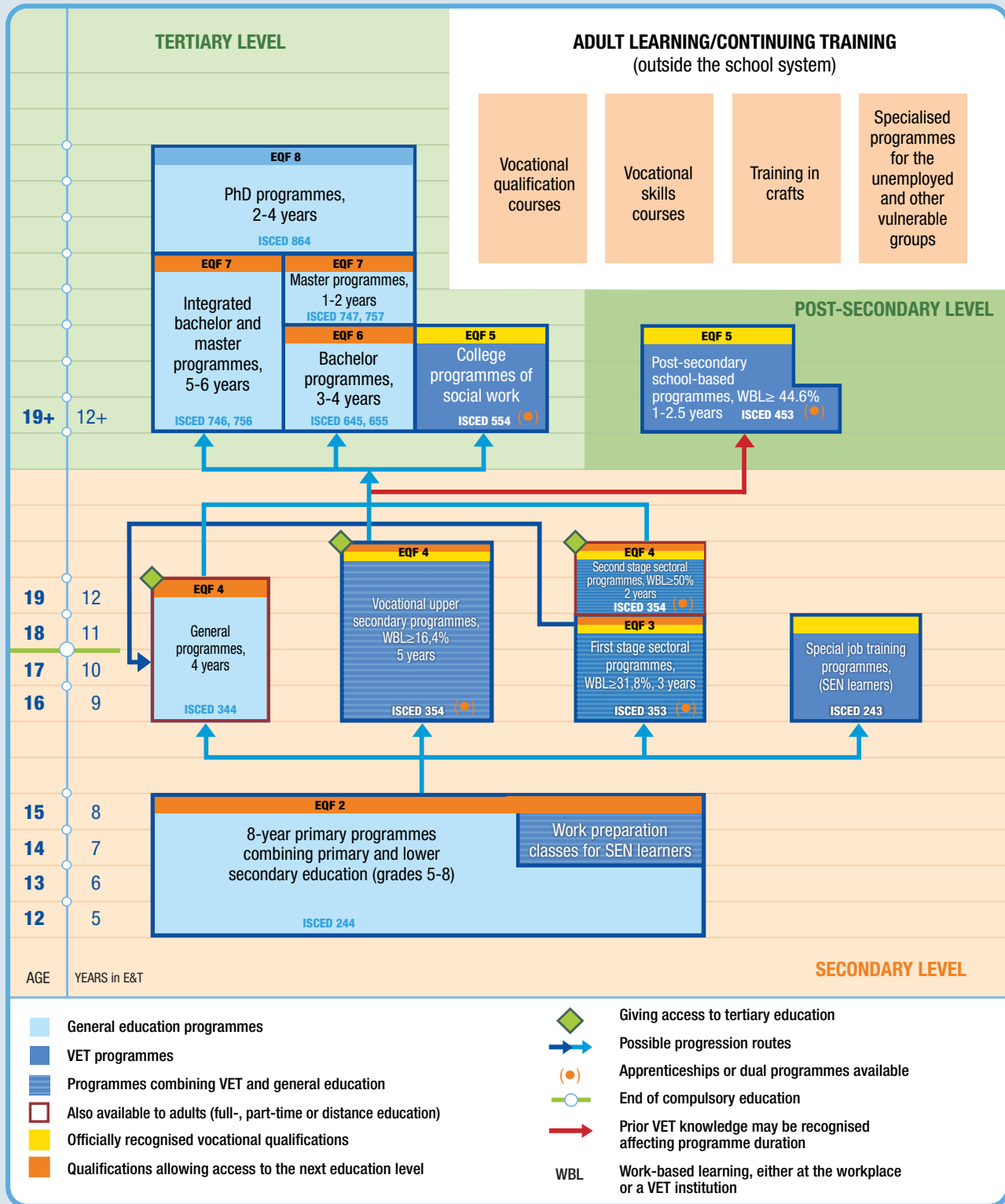
At the post-secondary non-tertiary level, vocational qualifications are acquired in school-based programmes lasting 1 to 2.5 years (*szkoła policealna*, ISCED 453). Social work college programmes (*kolegium pracowników służb społecznych*, ISCED 554) offer tertiary education combining classroom learning and on-the-job training, leading to a European qualifications framework (EQF) level 5 diploma.

Work-based learning is required for all VET-oriented programmes and takes place in various educational settings, sectoral skills centres (*branżowe centrum umiejętności*) or with employers, including as part of apprenticeships. On-the-job training lasts 4 to 12 weeks, depending on the type of occupation, and is compulsory for vocational upper secondary, post-secondary and second-stage sectoral programmes.

## Continuing VET

Adult learning and continuing training are available in various educational institutions and initial VET schools. These provide courses for vocational qualifications, skills, general skills (minimum 30 hours), specialised training (minimum 15 hours), theoretical courses for employees aged 15 to under 18, and other knowledge and skills programmes. From 2016, the [integrated qualifications register](#) can include curriculum-based qualifications provided by training companies and non-formal educational institutions.

# VET in Poland's education and training system



Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Poland, 2024.

## Distinctive features of VET in Poland

VET in Poland allows students to change pathways at any point during their education. VET qualifications and their related programmes take into account the classification of vocational education occupations. The classification of occupations is designed to meet the needs of the labour market and is regularly updated by various stakeholders. Each occupation includes one or more qualifications that can be obtained through initial VET (IVET) and continuing VET (CVET) programmes linked to a core curriculum that VET schools can easily adapt to labour market needs.

The national qualifications framework covers all levels and types of qualifications (full or partial) from formal education and training, and state and non-regulated (market) qualifications awarded outside formal education and training. This integrated qualification system ensures that the qualifications are relevant and recognised across different sectors. A vocational diploma is awarded when all the necessary certificates for the occupation are achieved through state vocational examinations. Validation of non-formal and informal learning is also possible through external examinations. Standardised, centrally organised external vocational examinations ensure consistency and quality across the system.

Compulsory work-based learning is a key component, and since 2019, apprenticeships (*staż uczniowski*) have been available for learners in first-stage sectoral programmes and vocational upper secondary programmes as part of their work-based learning.

## Challenges and policy responses

Making VET more attractive to society and continuously adapting the VET system to the changing needs of the modern economy are key challenges for VET in Poland. Since 2018, several measures have been introduced to strengthen VET by aligning it with labour market needs. Many of these measures were designed as part of the [integrated skills strategy](#), in line with national VET commitments made at the EU level. These include [providing annual forecasts of labour demand in VET occupations](#), including non-statutory continuing vocational education and training qualifications in the [integrated qualifications register](#), developing new IVET core curricula, establishing a [monitoring system for graduates' careers](#), improving the accreditation of VET providers and ensuring quality, and [setting up sectoral skills centres](#).

Improving the image of VET also involves teachers. Their initial training has been expanded and additional measures have been introduced aiming to attract specialists and motivate current teachers. Teacher training is now [mandatory](#) and tailored to school needs. [In-service training in companies](#) is also available for teachers' professional development.

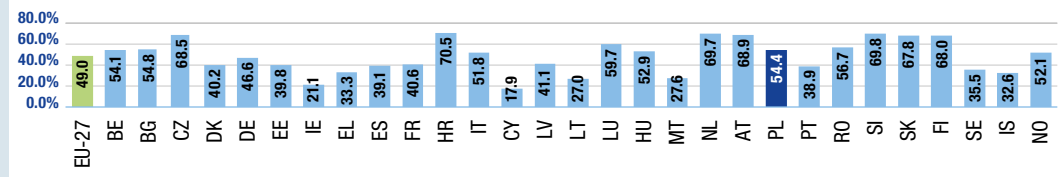
Another challenge is increasing employers' involvement in different areas of VET. Measures have been taken to increase their engagement, such as establishing [sector skills councils](#). Employers' commitment to expanding work-based learning and reviewing VET curricula and [examinations](#) is crucial.

Ensuring quality guidance and counselling for all age groups is a particular challenge. This includes providing psychological and pedagogical support, especially for students affected by the pandemic and for those migrating from Ukraine as a result of Russia's invasion. [Strengthening vocational/career guidance](#) is one policy response to these issues.



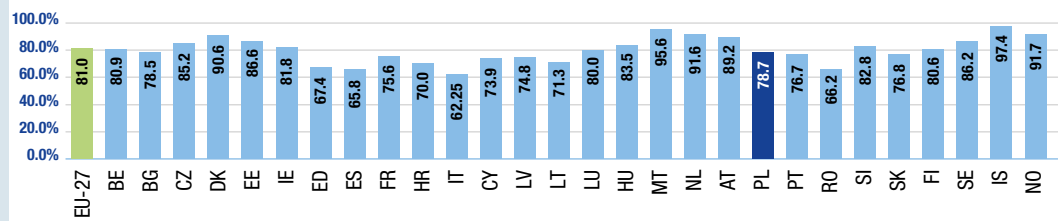
## Education and training in figures

**IVET students as a percentage of all upper secondary students, 2022**



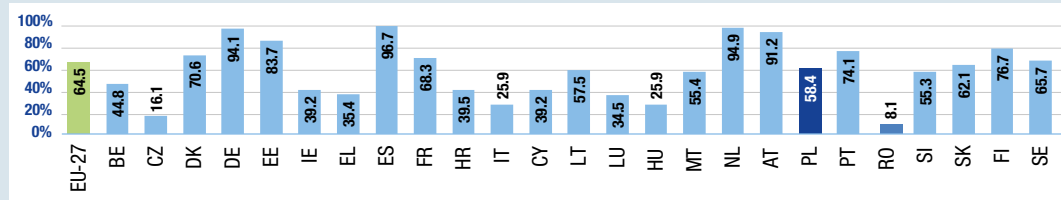
Source: [Key indicators on VET](#) (Cedefop) (accessed on 18 November 2024).

**Employment rates for recent IVET graduates aged 20–34 (%), 2023**



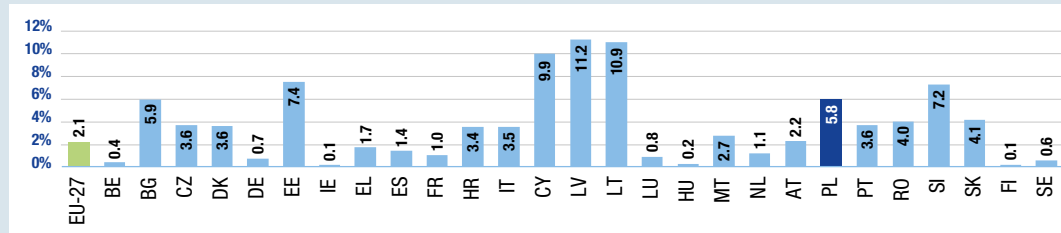
NB: There is a break in the time series for Croatia and Slovenia, and the data for Cyprus, Latvia and Malta are of low reliability.  
Source: [European VET policy dashboard](#) (Cedefop) (accessed on 18 November 2024).

**Recent IVET graduates aged 20–34 with a work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%), 2023**



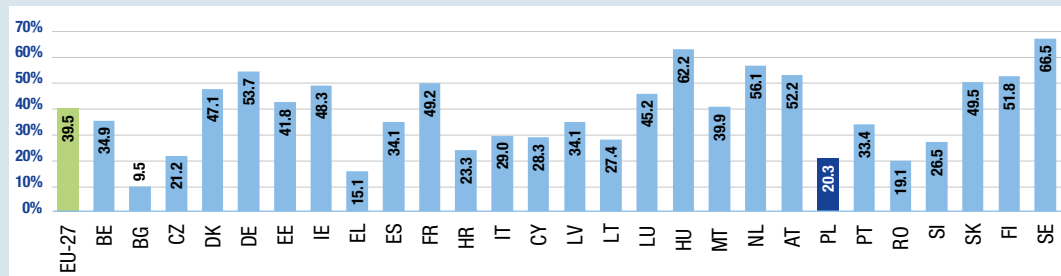
NB: The data for Germany, Cyprus, Hungary, Malta, Poland and Finland are of low reliability, and there is a break in the time series for Croatia and Slovenia.  
Source: [European VET policy dashboard](#) (Cedefop) (accessed on 18 November 2024).

**IVET learners who benefitted from learning mobility abroad (%), 2021**



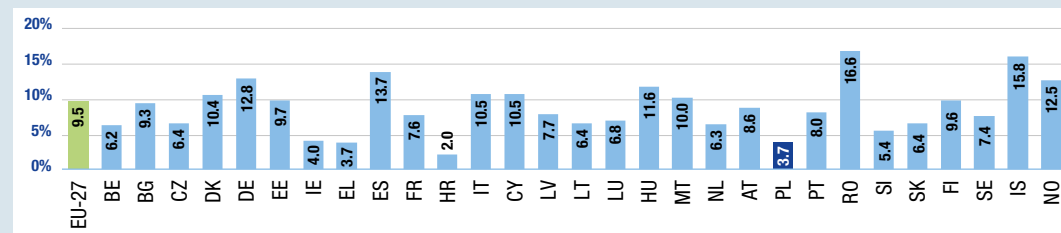
Disclaimer: Cedefop calculations based on European Commission methodology, European Commission Erasmus+ data supplied at Cedefop's request along with Eurostat data and [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation](#) Institute for Statistics, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and [Eurostat](#) joint data collection on formal education. Data are provisional estimates and are affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.  
NB: Definition differs for the EU-27 and Ireland.  
Source: [European VET policy dashboard](#) (Cedefop) (accessed on 18 November 2024).

**Adults aged 25–64 with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%), 2022**



NB: Percentage of the population aged 25–64 who participated in formal or non-formal education and training over the 12 months prior to the survey (Eurostat and AES data supplied at Cedefop's request and excluding participation in guided on-the-job training. Cedefop uses this source as a proxy up until 2024 LFS data are not available). There is a break in the time series for France, Italy and Romania.  
Source: [European VET policy dashboard](#) (Cedefop) (accessed on 18 November 2024).

**Early leavers from education and training (%), 2023**



NB: The data for Croatia and Luxembourg are of low reliability, and there is a break in the time series for Croatia and Slovenia.  
Source: [European VET policy dashboard](#) (Cedefop) (accessed on 18 November 2024).



## Further information

- Cedefop (2025 forthcoming). *Vocational education and training in Poland: short description*.
- Cedefop & Educational Research Institute (IBE) (2023). [Vocational education and training in Europe – Poland: system description](#). In Cedefop & ReferNet. (2024). *Vocational education and training in Europe: VET in Europe database: detailed VET system descriptions* [database].
- Cedefop & ReferNet (2023). [Timeline of VET policies: Poland](#).
- Cedefop & Educational Research Institute (IBE) (2023). [Spotlight on VET: Poland](#). *Vocational education and training in Europe* [database]
- European Commission (2023). [Education and training monitor: Poland](#).
- Eurydice (2024). [National education systems: Poland](#).
- Poland (2022). [National Implementation plan on VET: Poland](#).

<a href="#">Ministry of National Education</a>
<a href="#">Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy</a>
<a href="#">Ministry of Science and Higher Education</a>
<a href="#">European Social Fund programmes in Poland</a>
<a href="#">Statistics Poland</a>
<a href="#">Public employment services</a>
<a href="#">ReferNet Poland</a>

This spotlight is based on input from the Educational Research Institute (IBE) (ReferNet partner in 2024).



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