



Level Up and National VET Systems

Needs Analysis

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Understanding the Current State of VET across Partner Countries

In order to ensure that the plans for Level Up's outputs are suited to the needs and activities of the VET sector, the project undertook a survey of the current approaches found in the countries involved in the project. This included the design of VET systems, their strengths and weaknesses, as well as key decision points and the role of guidance in the VET process. This information has been used to highlight common challenges and needs which the other Level Up outputs will look to address.

Structure

In terms of the design of national systems, the approaches to VET found across the five participating countries differ considerably. Whilst some begin to streamline learners into VET routes early in the secondary school system (e.g. Bulgaria, Germany and Hungary), others focus on introducing dedicated VET routes later on, as students enter upper secondary or further education (e.g. Finland, Ireland and the UK). Yet, interestingly, despite these differences on when students enter VET, the completion of initial VET training still provides flexible routes for further training (including progression into higher education) in all countries.

Another commonality lies in the main cohort of learners found within VET. The age group 15-19 makes up the biggest proportion of most countries' learner groups, with smaller numbers being involved between 12-15 and 19-30. The numbers involved massively reduce for learners over 30. Perhaps unsurprisingly given its reputation as a leading VET provider, Germany has the largest group of active VET learners, with over 1 million involved across all age groups.

Progression

In terms of the progression through VET systems, all countries use a combination of practical and theoretical learning. Where the facilities are available, this is delivered via VET institutions. However, a dual learning approach (with learners placed in companies) is also

growing in use across all countries (with the dual system best established in Germany where just over 50% of VET students follow this path). The completion of initial VET leads to a school leaving certificate in all countries, with learners given the option of entering the labour market or progressing into further training (providing they have achieved well during the initial course).

However, an area where there is considerable difference between how learners progress through the VET systems is the point at which they must make decisions about their learning pathways. In countries such as Bulgaria, Germany and Hungary, this is done early on in the secondary education cycle (between the ages of 12-14), whilst in Finland, Ireland and the UK, such decisions are taken later (15-16).

Strengths and Weaknesses

Several different strengths were highlighted across the national systems. For example, the flexibility of approaches to training was seen as a positive in Finland, Ireland and the UK. In Ireland, it was felt that this helped students avoid dead-ends, whilst in Finland, this flexibility was driven by a highly personalised approach which sees each student's learning pathway tailored to their needs and aspirations. It was felt that the German system is well resourced, with another positive being that the dual system is very well established. This has also helped to develop a strong engagement with employers and the labour market across the VET system. Good involvement of employers was also mentioned as a positive in Hungary (via Chambers of Commerce) and the UK (via Skills Councils). In Hungary, recent reforms to the structure of VET were also seen as a positive development, whilst in Bulgaria the principles of VET are well established within education.

When it came to the current challenges seen in the different systems across partner countries, there were two themes which came up in nearly every country – namely, falling student numbers and a poor perception of VET compared to other education routes. Findings from Bulgaria, Hungary and the UK all highlighted that this was in part due to vocational careers being seen as an option for mainly low achieving students. This was also given as a contributing factor to high drop-out rates found in several countries. Similarly, in

Bulgaria and Ireland, it was felt that the VET system could have a closer alignment to labour market need, whilst the Finnish system was seen as being slow to react to labour market changes. In Germany, the major challenge was also linked to the labour market, with problems identified around finding enough quality placements to match with the demand from VET learners.

Guidance and the Labour Market

All national qualification frameworks were found to be in line with the European Qualification Framework. However, the wider guidance and support systems found across partner countries varied massively. In Finland, students are able to access a personalised, comprehensive service throughout their VET learning. This focuses on helping them understand their options and is tailored specifically to each student's long-term goals. The UK also has provision for guidance throughout the learning journey, although this is more focused on helping students better understand the labour market than their own individual needs.

Such a focus on the world of work is also found in Hungary, where an extensive guidance programme is offered to young people, particularly those about to make decisions around education routes. This aims to introduce different work environments to these young people so that they are able to make more informed choices. Similarly, in Germany, guidance is provided to those making choices around education transitions, with a focus on helping young people understand both their own competencies and the needs of the labour market.

In Ireland and Bulgaria, the system is more fragmented. For example, in Bulgaria there is no uniform service across VET (although there are regional centres in large towns for more general guidance). Instead, the level of careers support offered directly to VET students is dependent on the commitment of individual schools. In comparison, self-referral and individual motivation plays a large role in Ireland.

However, despite these differences, a number of common needs emerged in the research in relation to guidance. Traditional approaches (e.g. face-to-face sessions and events) still

remain the most common method used in all countries, with digital services and support tools an emerging feature with the VET landscape. Likewise, whilst labour market information resources are available in many countries, these are delivered via either in-person experiences or resources produced for a more general (adult) audience (decision makers/school leaders). Thus, there is a need for resources which translate this information into easy-to-understand, relevant tools for learners to use in guidance sessions and independently.

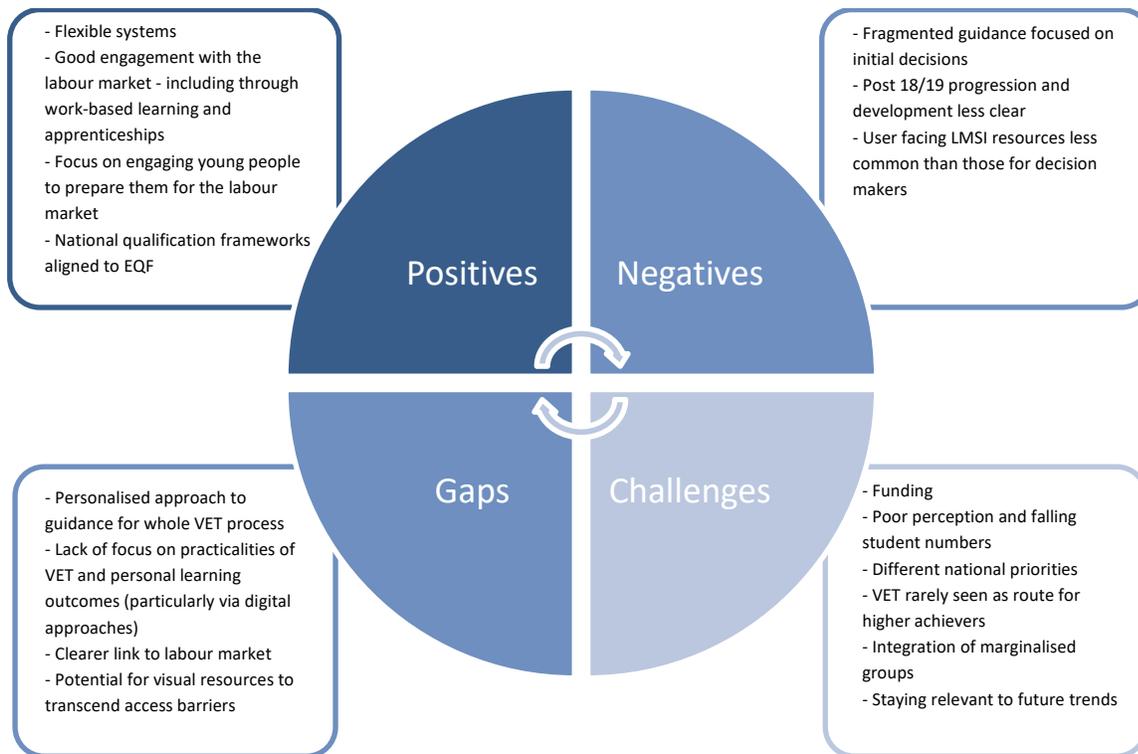
Such resources would also complement the growing role which labour market actors are playing within VET in partner countries. Work-based learning and apprenticeships are now an established feature in most systems (although Ireland and the UK have work to do to further develop this). Similarly, the evolution of all national VET systems is influenced by labour market needs where possible. In countries such as Finland and Ireland, this is done through monitoring LMI etc. and then feeding this information back to decision makers, whilst in Hungary and the UK, this is done by involving employers in the bodies which monitor and develop VET provisions.

Indeed, making sure that VET systems continue to evolve to meet the future needs of the labour market (including through digitalisation) was mentioned as one of the biggest issues facing VET in the future. Other future trends highlighted include improving the attractiveness of VET for learners, better integrating those from marginalised groups (particularly migrants) and further developing the role that work-based learning and apprenticeships play in VET systems.

For further details on the situation in individual countries, see the national research in the annex.

Level Up's Potential Impact across Partner Countries

Based on partners' research into their own national contexts, a number of commonalities relating to the strengths, weaknesses and role which Level Up can play within the national systems can be drawn. These include:



The project will, therefore, look to learn from these strengths in order to develop resources which address the gaps identified. This will be done digitally and will look to produce results which also take into account the challenges found across VET in partner countries. This can be summarised as:

| Need | Approach |
|---|---|
| <i>VET decisions within education are mostly made by young people aged 12-16</i> | Project's interactive resources should target this group |
| <i>There is a need for support tools targeted at marginalised groups (such as migrants)</i> | Visual elements of project outputs means that they have potential to add value to |

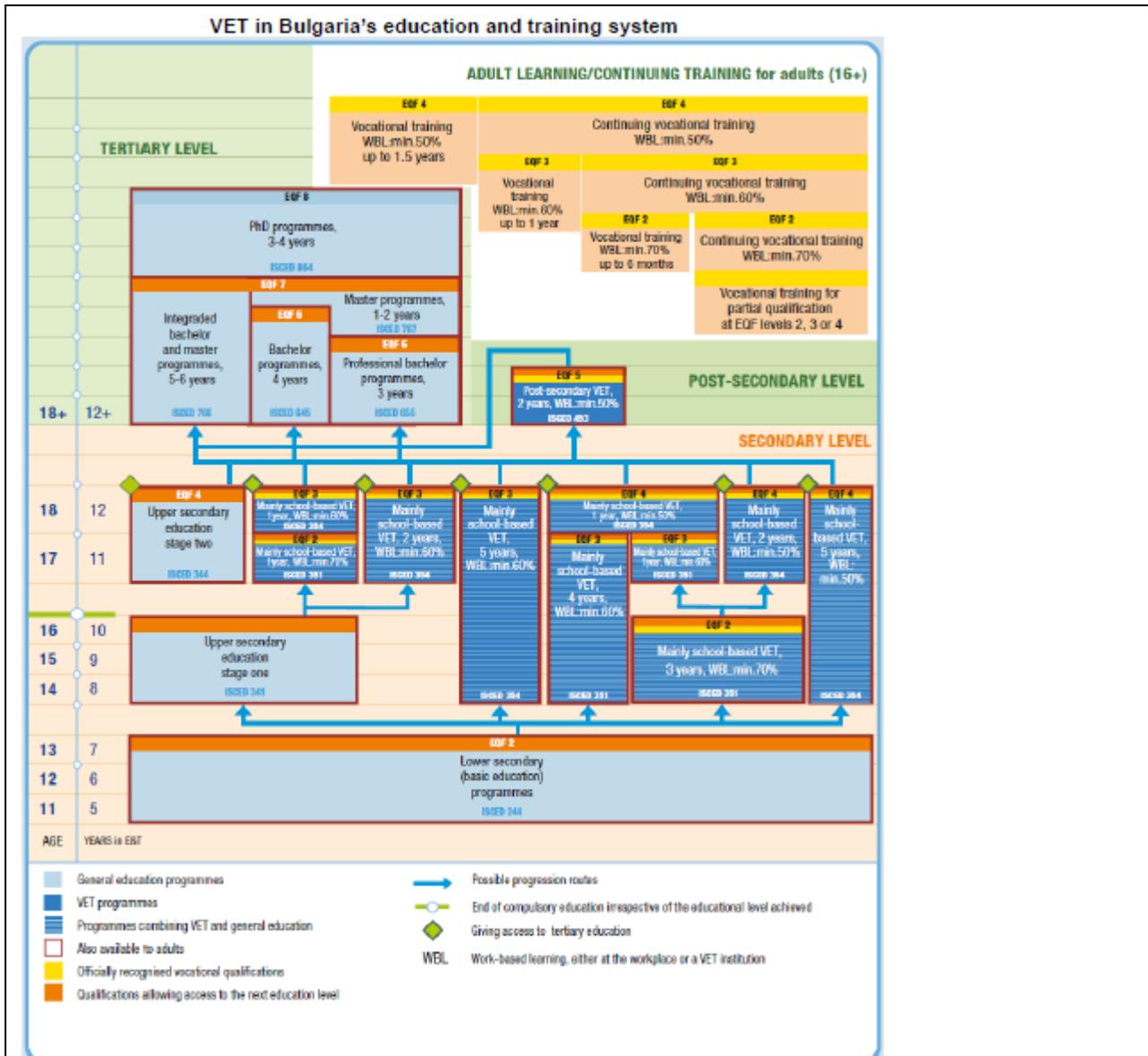
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| | engagement with this group (even if this is not the primary focus) |
| <i>The perception of VET is not always positive and VET student numbers are falling, with vocational routes too often seen as an option only for lower achievers</i> | Resources will show full range of VET options, with a focus on higher levels |
| <i>Guidance is often limited to young people at key decision points</i> | Level Up game will show full lifecycle of VET, whilst LMSI resources will be applicable for learners at all stages |
| <i>Whilst VET engages well with the labour market (via work-based learning, apprenticeships etc.), there is a focus on occupational overviews rather than personal impact and growth. This means that young people do not fully understand the impact which vocational training can have on their development (both initial and long-term)</i> | Resources will engage with personal growth rather than occupational aspects, highlighting impact, career benefits etc. of vocational skills |
| <i>LMSI is available but this is rarely presented in ways which can be easily consumed by young people</i> | Focus will be on creating age appropriate, adaptable LMSI content. Young people should be able to use resources independently if required |
| <i>Future proofing guidance so that young people are preparing for the jobs of tomorrow rather than focusing on current skills gaps remains a big challenge</i> | LMSI will take a long-range view based on future projects. Focus on personal growth rather than specific sectors will also make resources applicable across different contexts |

Annex: National Research Frameworks

| | |
|--|----------|
| Country | Bulgaria |
| Brief Description of National VET Systems | |
| <p>The regulation is ensured by the National Education Act and VET Act. The main institutions at national level which determine the policy of VET quality are the Ministry of Education Youth and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The Centre for control and assessment of quality in education develops models and mechanisms for internal and external assessment, as well as systems of analysis and assessment of education quality. The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training coordinates activities with the social partners for developing state educational requirements for acquiring qualification in professions, the list of professions of VET and also issues licences to centres for adults' training.</p> <p>The institutions in the system of VET are: vocational schools, vocational secondary schools, arts schools, sports schools, vocational colleges, centres for vocational training and centres for information and vocational guidance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational schools provide initial training for acquiring first and second degree of professional qualification or qualification part of profession with total duration of up to four years. They admit students who have completed at least 6th grade. • Vocational secondary schools provide education for acquiring second and third degree of professional qualification with total duration of four years. They admit students with completed basic education or completed 7th grade. Vocational secondary schools can also conduct vocational training for acquiring first, second and third degree of professional qualification as well as qualification in a part of profession. Vocational schools and vocational secondary schools can also organise training of people aged 16 years old. • Arts schools provide vocational education for acquiring third degree of professional | |

qualification with total duration of up to four years after completing basic education.

- Sports schools provide vocational education for acquiring third degree of professional qualification with total duration of up to four years after completing basic education.
- Vocational colleges provide vocational education for acquiring fourth degree of professional qualification with duration from two to four years according to the already acquired degree of professional qualification. They admit students who have completed secondary education.
- Centres for vocational training provide vocational training of persons aged 16 years old.
- Centres for information and vocational guidance provide vocational guidance to students and other persons.



Age Groups Involved in VET and Current National Student Numbers

Participation in VET by education level and provider type in 2014/15¹

| | |
|---|-------|
| vocational schools after VI and VII grade (VET qualification level 1) | 2 432 |
|---|-------|

¹ CEDEFOP Refernet VET country report Bulgaria 2016 - https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_CR_BG.pdf

| | |
|---|---------|
| vocational schools after VIII grade (VET qualification level 1) | 988 |
| vocational gymnasiums and schools (VET qualification level 2) | 32 095 |
| vocational gymnasiums (VET qualification level 3) | 96 100 |
| arts and sports schools (VET qualification level 3) | 7 802 |
| vocational training centres, adults 16+ (VET qualification level 1)* | 4 994 |
| vocational training centres, adults 16+ (VET qualification level 2)* | 3 535 |
| vocational training centres, adults 16+ (VET qualification level 3)* | 5 744 |
| vocational training centres, adults 16+ (part of a profession at any level)* | 65 573 |
| vocational colleges, adults 16+, post-secondary, non-tertiary vocational training (VET qualification level 4) | 1 618 |
| Total | 141 035 |

How Do Students Progress Through the VET System?

School VET is provided only at a secondary level. Until August 2016, the lowest level of qualification could also be acquired in lower secondary education programmes. Out-of-school adults (16+) can still acquire the lowest VET qualification level (VET qualification level 1, EQF level 2) before secondary education.

The Upper secondary VET aims at obtaining a vocational qualification but also comprises a general education part that is required to acquire secondary education. The vocational education and training complies with the requirements of the state educational standards and consists of theory and (study and production) practice. The study practice is conducted during the learning process and is performed mostly in schools. The production practice usually takes place at the end of 11 and 12 grade in a real work environment. VET may also be organised as work-based learning (dual training system).

Schools providing VET are vocational gymnasiums, art schools and sports schools. Other providers (profiled gymnasiums, secondary schools, prisons' schools) may also provide VET in separate classes.

Examples of qualifications at upper secondary level are builder, electro technician, electronic equipment technician, cook, waiter, assistant trainer in sports and system programmer.

Upper secondary VET is completed with State matriculation examinations in 'Bulgarian language and literature' and a State qualification examination. Graduates receive a secondary education diploma (EQF level 4) and a certificate of vocational qualification (EQF levels 3 or

4). The acquired vocational qualification gives access to the labour market. Students, who are willing to continue their education, can enroll in higher education institutions (universities, research universities, specialised higher schools or independent colleges).

Partnerships between VET and higher education providers ease transitions from VET to tertiary programmes. Learning outcomes acquired in VET may be recognised by higher education providers, sometimes allowing VET graduates to enroll in tertiary programmes without entry examinations. Some higher education programmes even reserve seats for VET graduates. For example, the National Sports Academy (NSA) reserves 10% of their seats for VET graduates from the State sports school.

Key Decision Points

The main entry point is at the age of 12-13 years, when students have to make a decision how they will continue their education after primary school.

Current Strengths of National System

There is a high demand on VET professions in the labour market, as well as long traditions of education in diverse fields.

Current Weaknesses of National System

- The quality and labour market relevance of vocational educational and training (VET) remain a challenge but efforts are being made to improve them. The proportion of VET students out of total upper secondary students (ISCED 3) is above the EU average (52.6 % compared to 47.3 % in 2015), but the employment rate of recent VET graduates is lower (64.2 % compared to 75 %). While some VET schools provide high quality training, a significant part is mainly an option for low achievers.
- The number of trainees in professions with II, III and IV level of professional qualification has decreased. For 2000/2001 – 2015/2016 period, the number of students has decreased by 56,073 and today the labour market, in particular employers, feel the consequences. According to a survey by the Agency for Small and

Medium Enterprises conducted in 2016, about 82% of employers are experiencing serious difficulties in finding qualified professionals.

- 18,364 students have dropped out of vocational education in only 3 years (2012-2014). The effectiveness of vocational education is low despite the invested funds - 36 in every 100 students do not acquire professional qualifications (according to an Audit Court report)
- Only two thirds of VET students graduate with a VET degree (NAO, 2016). Insufficient labour market information hampers adjusting the training content to employers' needs.
- In 2016, the number of students had decreased by 17% compared to 2002 and by 11% since 2006 due to low birth rates and emigration.
- Bulgaria's Ministry of Education and Science has not catered for a high-quality professional education which corresponds with the need of the labour market, the audit of the National Audit Office, covering the period 2012-2014, shows.
- The annual planned reception to Bulgarian high schools and universities has been carried out without specific data about the needs of the national labour market.
- There isn't any active system that monitors the career development of the pupils graduating from professional high schools.
- large proportion of disadvantaged students in VET
- The proportion of people who have acquired I, II, III, IV degree of professional qualifications in fields of Computer Science, Engineering, Manufacturing, Architecture and Construction has decreased by about 15% - from 63.1% (2001/2002) to 48.2% (2012/2013).
- The existing network of vocational schools and classes does not comply with the socio-economic specifics of the region. The annual plan for admission in state schools is carried out without researching the labour market needs. Also, no operating system tracks students' professional development (according to an Audit Court report).
- The list of professions for vocational education and training includes 47 professional fields with 239 professions and 570 specialties. There are 189 state educational

requirements for acquiring qualification on professions. However, there are no educational standards for acquiring professional qualifications in the rest of the professions and specialties (according to an Audit Court report).

- There is no system for evaluating the quality of vocational education, thus, financing cannot be associated with education's quality. There are a small number of training programmes for teachers, which cannot improve the quality of education.

Links to European Level Tools

All vocational qualifications are linked to the National Qualification Framework which is developed in line with the EQF.

The Role of Guidance in VET

There are 28 regional personal and career development centres in the bigger towns, in which there are trained career guidance practitioners, who offer services free of charge to every student who is interested.

There is no standardised career guidance service practice in VET schools. In many schools, there are trained career advisors or psychologists who can offer individual career guidance and group information workshops to students. In some VET schools, a career centre is already established with a more structured approach, with an annual calendar of events and activities which complement the career sessions and workshops.

In the most typical case, there are some specialized subjects and career hours, led by the class teacher, in which career decision-making and LM issues are addressed. Sometimes, parents, alumni or other guest visitors (employers, young employees) are invited to share experience and tips with students.

VET schools rely on their good cooperation with employers, who offer WBL and introduce students to the trends in the specific area. However, this approach is limited because it doesn't cater to those VET students who are interested in other career areas.

The national portal for career guidance offers online self-assessment instruments, exercises and videos which are available and freely accessible to everyone.

VET and the Labour Market

WBL is very popular and has a long tradition in Bulgaria and includes compulsory student workplace practice. The amended VET Act of August 2016 confirms apprenticeships as a form of practical training for acquiring professional qualifications, organised in partnership with businesses. As a result of the introduction of the dual system of vocational training and synchronisation with the VET Act (which entered into force in August 2017) and the amendment of the Labour Code, VET students aged 16 and above can now conclude contracts with employers.

From September 2017, all VET schools conduct training according to new school documentation. Training of trainers/mentors forms part of the scheme launched in 2016 under the VET development strategy. In addition, the implementation of the European Qualification Framework is ongoing.

Recent (2016) amendments harmonised the VET Act with the Pre-school and school education act and introduced additional opportunities for acquiring a vocational qualification in the new structure of secondary education (two stages). They also aim at improving the quality of VET by changing the ratio between theoretical and practical training in favour of the latter, including practice in a real working environment.

The share of practical training varies by level of qualification. EQF level 2 qualifications are related to the performance of routine activities and practical training comprises 70% of the learning time or more. For qualifications that require the performance of a complex set of activities (EQF level 3) it is no less than 60%; qualifications requiring managerial (EQF level 4) and financial (EQF level 5) skills comprise no less than 50% practical training.

There are three types of dual training:

- **Apprenticeships for VET learners (regulated by the VET act)** - The practical training in a company is altered with periods of theoretical training in a school or another VET

provider. In-company mentors are responsible for the practical training. They are required to have a VET or higher education qualification and at least three years of work experience. Apprenticeships for VET learners last for 1-3 years and are regulated by the VET Act.

- **Apprenticeships for employees** do not offer a formal VET qualification but often guarantee a job in the end of training, according to the contract with the employer. The duration of this type of apprenticeships is up to six months.
- **Internships are for young people** (up to 29 years old) who have already acquired a VET qualification (or higher education degree) but have no work experience in the profession. The duration of internships is 6-12 months.

To What Extent Are VET Students Exposed to Labour Market Information? What Tools Are Used For This?

Labour Market Information is accessible to most students in several ways – mainly as part of their direct contacts with employers during WBL. The school curriculum also includes some specialised and more practically oriented subjects (such as Entrepreneurship) which provide some information. Additionally, many VET schools have trained school advisors or can use the services of career centres on a regional level which provide some labour market information. However, there is no systematic approach. The National portal for career guidance was planned to include such a specialised module to help link the school system with the labour market, but it was not developed.

The Future Evolution of VET

Improving the quality, LM relevance and attractiveness of VET to students, including adding a more practical dimension of learning, is a key priority.

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| Country | Finland |
| Brief Description of National VET Systems | |
| <p>The main objective of Finnish education policy is to offer all citizens equal opportunities to receive education. The structure of the education system reflects these principles. The system is highly permeable, that is, there are no dead-ends preventing progression to higher levels of education.</p> <p>The focus of education is on learning rather than testing. There are no national tests for pupils in basic education in Finland. Instead, teachers are responsible for assessment in their respective subjects on the basis of the objectives included in the curriculum.</p> <p>After their nine-year basic education in a comprehensive school, students at the age of 16 may choose to continue their upper secondary education in either an academic track or a vocational track, both of which provide a qualification to continue to tertiary education.</p> <p>The selection of students for upper secondary school is based on their grade point average for the theoretical subjects in the basic education certificate. Entrance and aptitude tests may also be used, and students may be awarded points for hobbies and other relevant activities.</p> <p>The only national examination, the matriculation examination, is held at the end of general upper secondary education. Commonly, admission to higher education is based on the results in the matriculation examination and entrance tests.</p> <p>Vocational qualifications can be completed in upper secondary VET, apprenticeship training or as competence-based qualifications. Competence-based qualifications are usually completed by adults. The majority of young learners complete their upper secondary vocational qualifications at vocational institutions.</p> <p>The Finnish National Board of Education decides on the national qualification requirement for each vocational qualification, determining the composition of studies and objectives, core contents and assessment criteria for study modules. It also includes provisions on student assessment, student counselling, on-the-job learning, special education and training, educational arrangements for immigrants and apprenticeship training. The content of local</p> | |

curricula is defined in the national qualification requirement as well.

Tertiary education is divided into university and polytechnic (also known as "university of applied sciences") systems. Universities award licentiate and doctoral-level degrees. Both university graduates and all bachelor's degree holders can qualify for further academic studies.

Age Groups Involved in VET and Current National Student Numbers

According to Finland's education statistics, a total of **125,600 new students** attended education leading to a vocational qualification in 2016.

Of the new students, 47,100 studied in curriculum-based education aimed at young people leading to an initial vocational qualification. 38,600 in preparatory initial vocational education for a skills examination, and 39,900 in further vocational education (further and specialist vocational qualifications). There were three per cent more new students than in the previous year.

VET students and age groups (year 2016)

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| 15 – 19 years | 95 363 |
| 20 – 24 years | 40 821 |
| 25 – 29 years | 28 356 |
| 30 – 34 years | 23 840 |
| 35 – 39 years | 20 296 |
| 40 – 44 years | 16 001 |
| 45 – 49 years | 14 192 |
| 50 – 54 years | 11 086 |
| 55 – 59 years | 5 047 |
| 60 years or age unknown | 962 |
| | 255 964 |

How Do Students Progress Through the VET System?

The number of offered qualifications decreases. From the beginning of 2019 onward, there will be 43 basic vocational qualifications, 65 vocational qualifications and 56 specialist vocational qualifications. Competence needed by working life and businesses remains a part of vocational qualifications e.g. as areas of expertise, or as orientation enabled by elective

parts of the qualification within the qualification.

All qualifications are completed in the same manner.

A student who completes a basic vocational qualification acquires comprehensive vocational basic skills for various tasks of the sector, as well as more specialised competence and professional skills required by working life in at least one field. Basic vocational qualifications often include areas of expertise that enable specialisation in certain work tasks.

A student who completes a vocational qualification acquires professional skills targeted in accordance with the needs of working life; these skills are more profound than those provided by a basic qualification or are aimed at more closely defined work tasks.

A student who completes a specialist vocational qualification acquires professional skills targeted in accordance with the needs of working life; these skills are more profound than those provided by a vocational qualification; they constitute management of professional skills or horizontal competence.

The extent of a basic vocational qualification is 180 competence points: 145 competence points for vocational parts of the qualification and 35 competence points for common parts of the qualification. Common parts of the qualification are mostly completed in the spring term of the first year. (Mathematics, Finnish, English, Swedish, physical education, health education, information technology, art and culture, psychology, physics and chemistry).

A personal competence development plan (PCDP) is prepared for every student. It includes a plan specifying the combination of instruction, supervision and on-the-job learning that leads to the accumulation of competence so that the student will actually complete his or her studies. The teacher supports the student, as well as evaluates and recognises his or her previously acquired competences, when necessary in cooperation with the guidance counsellor and the representative of working life.

The student's competence is evaluated for each part of the qualification or, as regards the common parts of the qualification, on a field-by-field basis. As a rule, competence is demonstrated in practical work situations. As regards basic vocational qualifications, the

vocational parts of the qualification and the common parts of the qualification are evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5.

The student is also entitled to special support for his or her studies. The support measures agreed upon are entered in the student's PCDP. Evaluation of competence generates information on the student's competence and ensures the attainment of professional skill requirements and competence requirements in accordance with the foundations of the qualification.

Key Decision Points

The nationwide joint application procedure for vocational education and upper secondary education is organised every spring. The joint application procedure is primarily intended for young people completing their basic education or preparatory education in the application year. The joint application procedure supports the immediate transition of the age group completing their basic education to further studies. Also, others without a post-basic education qualification can apply for VET through the joint application procedure.

Applicants who do not obtain a study place in the joint application procedure will be guided to apply for education through the continuous application procedure. The continuous application procedure makes it possible to apply for education flexibly throughout the year. In the continuous application procedure, the providers of education decide on the application periods and other application-related procedures, admission criteria and possible entrance or aptitude tests. If the provider of education does not admit an applicant, it shall guide the applicant to other forms of education or, when necessary, to other services.

The educational options and instructions for applicants are available at www.studyinfo.fi

As a rule, the joint application procedure concerns basic vocational qualifications. Within the qualifications, there are several areas of expertise, with which the student can be oriented towards different work tasks. In some fields, it is possible to apply for studying an area of expertise, or a more limited area, instead of a basic vocational qualification.

In the application form, the applicant can already express his or her interest in completing upper secondary education or matriculation examination, in addition to the vocational qualification. In the joint application procedure, the applicants are not admitted to pursue a

double qualification; instead, after the VET admission procedure, their prerequisites for upper secondary education are clarified, and students are possibly admitted also to upper secondary education, in addition to VET.

Within the vocational studies, the student can choose further common parts of the qualifications and elective vocational studies to a given qualification. The qualification can also include parts of other vocational qualifications and studies from an upper secondary school or even a university of applied sciences.

It is also possible to deepen professional competence in an individual manner by extending the qualification.

Current Strengths of National System

The providers of education have wide-ranging possibilities of tailoring education to the needs of regional and local working life and offering students individual and flexible study paths.

Students can be oriented towards various careers, specialise, become top-level experts, be oriented for the international labour market or be prepared for further studies. The study path is individual, and a personal competence development plan (PCDP) is prepared for every student.

In basic vocational education, the extent of basic qualifications and parts of qualifications is determined in accordance with the extent of competence and expressed in competence points. Students only study what is necessary, without time-based criteria. Key skills of lifelong learning are included in the foundations of the qualification.

The student can acquire competence either fully on the basis of an apprenticeship or training agreement or by combining these flexibly during his or her studies. The personal competence development plan (PCDP) is attached to the on-the-job learning agreement. We use a single way of demonstrating and evaluating competence. As a rule, competence is demonstrated in practical work situations.

Basic vocational education is free of charge to the student. However, a fee can be charged

from students for study material and other material that will remain in their use after their studies. In full-time basic vocational education, the student is also entitled to a free meal on days when the student's personal competence development plan requires his or her presence in the educational unit indicated by the provider of education.

Along with the reform of VET, a national centralised service of integrating study entitlements and performances (*kansallinen opinto-oikeuksien ja suoritusten keskitetty integraatiopalvelu, KOSKI*) was introduced to serve the needs of citizens and different administrative branches.

In Finland, VET teachers are experts of their profession and pedagogically competent.

Current Weaknesses of National System

Measures aimed at the digitalisation of vocational education are intended to meet the future competence needs by improving and digitalising the operating processes and learning environments of providers of education. At the moment, VET teachers have a reasonably good competence in digital tools and applications, but teachers' and supervisors' in-depth competence is unevenly divided.

As a consequence of cost savings, funding for VET has decreased by approximately 30% in the past five years, which has partly slowed down the development of activities.

Education also faces challenges such as rapidly changing professional skill requirements and slow response to them.

Vocational education is too often seen as a secondary option to young people. Vocational education suffers from a lack of appreciation. Everyone does not yet have up to date (correct) picture of VET and vocations.

Links to European Level Tools

The framework facilitates overall scrutiny of the Finnish qualifications system. It describes the learning outcomes required by qualifications, syllabi and other extensive competence modules as knowledge, skills and competences, and by defining their interrelations. The competence-based description of qualifications is designed to support lifelong learning,

improve employment prospects, increase mobility, and bridge the gap between education and the world of work.

The Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules is based on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The abbreviation FiNQF is also used to refer to the National Qualifications Framework.

In the Government Decree, Finnish qualifications, syllabi and other extensive competence modules are placed at the following levels of competence of the National Qualifications Framework (FiNQF):

- Upper secondary vocational qualifications and further vocational qualifications, Basic Examination in Prison Services, Fire Fighter Qualification, and Emergency Response Centre Operator Qualification at level 4
- Specialist vocational qualifications, the Sub-Officer Qualification (Fire and Rescue Services) and the Vocational Qualification in Air Traffic Control at level 5.

The Role of Guidance in VET

A personal competence development plan (PCDP) is prepared for every student; it shall also comprise the necessary supervision and support, as well as the student's personal career plan.

Guidance counselling and career counselling: The aim of guidance counselling is to make students capable of operating in their institutional community, planning their studies and committing themselves to studying. The student is acquainted with the foundations of the qualification and with different learning and studying possibilities. The student is guided to follow the development of his or her competence. When necessary, the student is supported in the planning of competence development and demonstration. The student is also encouraged to seek support in difficulties related to studying. Guidance counselling is provided by teachers, group supervisors and guidance counsellors. Guidance counsellors use various social media tools, e.g. Snapchat and Facebook, in their work. Guidance counsellors also produce different YouTube videos related to education marketing and vocations.

Special support: The student is entitled to special support if he or she needs support in his or her studies owing to learning difficulties, disability, illness or another reason. Special support is based on the student's personal objectives and skills. Special support is pedagogic support and takes the form of versatile teaching and studying arrangements. The primary aim of the special support is that, with it, the student completes the qualification or attains the competence specified in the foundations for education.

If the student needs special support, the provider of education shall decide on the special support. Necessary support measures are discussed with the student, and the support measures agreed upon are entered in the student's personal competence development plan.

When deciding on the special support, it can also be decided that the evaluation of competence is adjusted and professional skill requirements are deviated from in accordance with the student's personal skills and objectives. Adjustment or deviation is possible only when it is necessary for the student in question.

Special needs education can take the form of e.g. parallel teaching, school assistants and possibility of creating small groups to teach students in need of support.

Student welfare: Student welfare refers to the promotion and maintenance of the students' good learning, mental and physical health and social wellbeing. It includes student welfare approved by the provider of education, as well as student welfare services, i.e. psychologist and social welfare counsellor services and school and student health welfare services. Student welfare is implemented in horizontal, systematic cooperation between the education, social and health departments and the students and their parents and carers and, when necessary, other partners.

Educational institutions also utilise various national youth guidance services and chat services, e.g. [Netari](#) online youth house.

VET and the Labour Market

At the national level, the National Board of Education and, at the local (regional) level, the providers of education are in charge of meeting the educational competence needs. The

providers of education conduct anticipatory cooperation with regional authorities, generating information on the basis of which the providers of education make their own assessments and decisions on the field-specific targeting of education (quantitative decisions).

Information retrieval is based on various statistics (on societal changes and market changes) and on dialogue with representatives of various fields. Short-term (1 to 2 years) working life needs are met by the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centre) which carries out regional executive and development tasks of public administration. The ELY Centre cooperates with the providers of upper secondary education and, in practice, invites the providers of education to tender. In Finland, this type of education is subject to the competition legislation.

The data used by the ELY Centre is based on demand for workforce and employment/unemployment statistics, as well as on acute needs raised by working life. Cooperation between authorities is supplemented by competence needs of working life raised in the educational institutions' own working life cooperation. These needs are met directly, with appropriate funding arrangements and training events.

Education related to practical work tasks can be organised at a workplace outside the provider of education, as education based on an apprenticeship or a training agreement. The provider of education is in charge of the target-oriented and supervised education.

In education based on a training agreement, the student is not in an employment relationship, and no salary or other compensation shall be paid to him or her. The training agreement is prepared in writing for each student individually, for the part of the qualification or a smaller entity at a time. The training agreement is concluded between the provider of education and the representative of the workplace, and the agreement is notified to the student.

Apprenticeship training is based on the fixed-term employment contract and on the agreement between the employer and the provider of education. In apprenticeship training, the student is a full-time employee, and a salary is paid to him or her. In apprenticeship training, a training compensation is paid to the employer if the training causes costs to the

employer and if the provider of education and the employer agree on the compensation to be paid.

To What Extent Are VET Students Exposed to Labour Market Information? What Tools Are Used For This?

As regards vocational education, the sector/qualification-specific expert groups, organised by the National Board of Education, discuss qualifications and generate required information, publications, anticipatory material etc.

Further information: [Skills Panorama](#)

The Future Evolution of VET

VET is undergoing reform. Main topics of the reform are the flexibility of studies, single demonstration system, a combination of different forms of funding, and different learning environments.

The reform will also change the teachers' working hours. Teachers will become subject to annual working hours.

In the annual working hours, lessons are not separated from other work; the annual working hours comprise lessons, work done for lessons before and after, meetings, discussions, sessions, training events and all work tasks assigned to the teacher. The working hours are determined in annual terms. The working hours of a full-time teacher comprise 1,600 hours per year.

In the funding of education, more weight is given to the operational effectiveness and efficiency.

The new funding model mainly consists of three basic elements:

- core funding (student years),
- performance-based funding (qualifications and parts of qualifications),
- effectiveness-based funding (e.g. employment and further studies)

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| Country | Germany |
| Brief Description of National VET Systems | |
| <p>Secondary education breaks down into lower secondary level (<i>Sekundarstufe I</i>), which comprises the courses of education from grades 5/7 to 9/10 of school, and upper secondary level (<i>Sekundarstufe II</i>), which comprises all the courses of education that build on the foundations laid in the lower secondary level. Secondary level education includes courses offering general education, a combination of general and vocational education, or vocational education. The aim of all the courses of education at lower secondary level is to prepare pupils for courses of education at upper secondary level, completion of which is required for vocational or university entrance qualification.</p> <p>Vocational education predominates at upper secondary level (the pupils between 15/16 and 18/19 years old). Admission to courses of vocational education at upper secondary level is based on leaving certificates and qualifications acquired at the end of lower secondary level. Secondary level educational institutions do differ in terms of duration and school-leaving qualifications, but they are so interrelated that they largely constitute an open system allowing transfer from one type of course to the other. The same qualifications can also be obtained subsequently in vocational education and training institutions as well as adult education institutions.</p> <p>Vocational Education on upper secondary level is organised around following types of schools:</p> <p>Full-time vocational schools including the <i>Berufsfachschule</i>, the <i>Fachoberschule</i>, the <i>Berufliches Gymnasium</i>, the <i>Berufsoberschule</i> and other types of schools that exist only in certain <i>Länder</i>.</p> <p><i>Berufsfachschulen</i> offer part of vocational education and training in one or several recognised occupations (around 330 recognised occupations requiring formal training) or lead to a vocational qualification in a specific occupation. They offer a very wide range of courses for business occupations, occupations involving foreign languages, trade and technical occupations, crafts industry occupations, home-economics-related and social-work-related occupations, artistic occupations, the health sector occupations regulated by federal law etc. In order to prove the equivalence of a vocational qualification at a <i>Berufsfachschule</i> with dual vocational education and training, successful graduates can sit an examination</p> | |

before the competent authority. The duration of training at *Berufsfachschulen* varies from one to three years, depending on the intended career specialisation.

The *Fachoberschule* covers grades 11 and 12 and requires a *Mittlerer Schulabschluss*. It equips its pupils with general and specialised theoretical and practical knowledge and skills and leads up to higher education entrance qualification for the *Fachhochschule*. The *Fachoberschule* offers education in the fields of business and administration, technology, health and social work, design, nutrition and home economics, as well as agriculture, bio- and environmental engineering. Training includes instruction and professional training.

Berufliches Gymnasium offers education with career-oriented specialisations and comprises a three-year course of education, leading to higher education. *Berufsoberschule* offers entrance to higher education qualifications for those who have completed vocational education and training in the dual system.

Except this, vocational education is offered by adult and continuing education. Continuing education in Germany is regulated by the state but to a lower extent than other areas of education. The activities of the state in the field of continuing education are restricted to laying down principles and to issuing regulations relating to organisation and financing. Here is offered general continuing education, continuing education leading to school-leaving qualifications, further vocational training, and vocational retraining leading to a qualification in a recognised occupation requiring formal training: targeted mainly at unemployed people with no vocational qualifications.

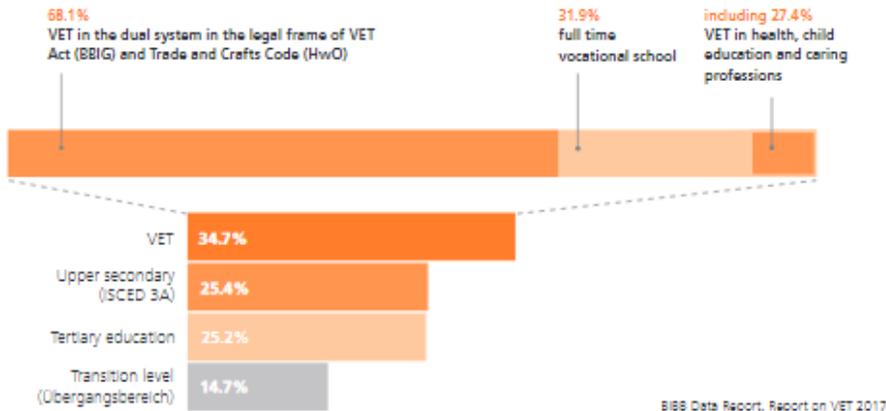
Age Groups Involved in VET and Current National Student Numbers

According to the statistical data of Federal Statistics Office 2016, Bev. Deutschlands bis 2060; BIBB Report 23/14, BIBB Data Report on VET 2017, there are:

- 1.34 million trainees in 326 occupations
- 19.4 years: average age of trainee
- 52.4% of population enter Dual VET
- 5.4% of all employees are trainees
- €854 average training allowance/month
- 71.7% of trainees are satisfied with their VET
- 90.0% of age cohort graduate from Dual VET

- 27.7% first-year trainees have a tertiary entrance qualification
- 600,933 trainees seeking traineeships in 2016
- 7.2% youth unemployment rate (2017: 6,4%)

Entrants to education and training 2016, age 15-24:



How Do Students Progress Through the VET System?

In initial vocational education, young people have the choice between apprenticeships and full-time vocational schools. For graduates, both systems offer pathways for professional advancement. When choosing initial VET, graduates with the secondary education leaving certificate can enter full-time vocational schools leading to a state certified occupation, general education programmes with vocational orientation or dual apprenticeship programmes (dual VET system). Apprenticeships are open to anyone having finished compulsory education and having a contract with a training company. Pre-vocational training measures are available for young people that did not succeed in finding a training company to start an apprenticeship or are in need of upgrading their knowledge and competences. The full-time vocational school system encompasses the VET programmes outside the dual VET system, which are regulated by other federal or federal state laws. Those are for example occupations in the health and the social sector or the so-called assistant occupations. Many occupations in the health sector also encompass two learning venues, e.g. a hospital and the vocational school. Also, there are programmes that combine general

upper secondary and vocationally oriented education, usually leading to a university entrance qualification. Continuing VET is characterised by a broad range of offers and functions. For VET graduates, nationally regulated further training qualifications are available, e.g. the "*Meister*" (EQF 6) and qualifications issued by the chambers. The qualifications are mostly mapped on EQF-levels 5-7. The trade and technical schools of the federal states also offer state recognized VET qualifications at a higher level, e.g. to become a technician (EQF 6). Most further training qualifications and certificates of trade and technical schools enable access to university. On the level of higher education, there are offered also dual study programmes that combine learning at the higher education institution and the company.

Key Decision Points

The first orientation process in choice of school is carried out at age 10 – 11 at the end of elementary education, here it is decided on the choice of schools of the first phase of secondary education (lower secondary education) The track that they enter determines which type of school they can next enter, and finally, whether they will go to a university or enter a technical field or trade. At the stage of lower secondary education (grade 7 – approx. 12 – 13 years old) there is provided an analysis of potential (*Potenzialanalyse*), and workshops in grade 8. The analysis of potential enables pupils to arrive at an initial assessment of their own predispositions and competences. The two-week workshops (*Werkstatttage*) provide them with an opportunity to familiarise themselves with at least three occupational fields. This guidance is offered within the programme "The Vocational Orientation Programme" <https://www.berufsorientierungsprogramm.de/de/the-vocational-orientation-programme-1791.html>. Additionally, there are also other initiatives and programmes supporting young people in choice of future career.

Current Strengths of National System

The German VET system is well resourced; it includes public and private funding. It is also well supported by VET research, including the Federal Institute for VET, (BIBB), and a national network of research centres that study different aspects of the system to support continuous innovation and improvement in the VET system. The dual system is especially well developed in Germany, integrating work-based and school-based learning to prepare apprentices for a

successful transition to full time employment. Another strength of the system is the high degree of engagement and ownership on the part of employers and other social partners.

(Data: <https://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/45938559.pdf>)

Current Weaknesses of National System

One of the current problems is a lack of correspondence or imbalance between demand for suitable vocational training and work opportunities and supply of training places and jobs. These matching problems may be related to qualifications, occupational, regional, sectoral or information aspects. The increase in the numbers of higher education students will change the occupational qualifications structure of the working age population.

Links to European Level Tools

The German Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (GQF) has eight levels to which formal qualifications from general education, higher education and vocational education are assigned. The concept of action competence is at the centre of the GQF. In the vocational sphere, it is equated with vocational capacity as defined in the Vocational Training Act. The two-year occupations of the dual system are assigned to level 3, the three-year and three-and-a-half-year occupations to level 4. Advanced training occupations in the CVET sector are assigned up to level 7.

The Role of Guidance in VET

As mentioned above, one part of the guidance is a vocational orientation programme offered for students at age of 12 – 13. Within this programme, the analysis of potential is carried out and then the students have the possibility of trying practical activities at companies. With the choice of school on lower secondary level it is also decided if the person will follow more vocational education or further general education towards university education. Also, the predispositions of the person play an important role in choice of further education.

In many regions of Germany, common initiatives between schools, government, trade unions and companies are organised, e.g. so-called "*Berufswahltag*" in Bavaria. An important element of the initiative is the close networking among above mentioned partners. During

the action, the companies present various jobs, the students can get information on the professions, current trainees also provide information on the vocational apprenticeship.

Other initiatives are also offered within guidance activities:

Initiative: Klischeefrei: Nationale Kooperationen zur Berufs- und Studienwahl

<https://www.klischee-frei.de/de/index.php>

The Federal Initiative Cliché-free aims to show that all professions are opened for boys and girls, it focuses on reducing gender stereotypes in choice of profession.

Planet Beruf <http://planet-beruf.de/index.php?id=3>

The platform developed by the Federal Employment Agency, on the platform the descriptions of various professions are provided, as well as information guidance for the career development.

Berufswahlpass <http://www.berufswahlpass.de/>

The career choice pass leads like a compass through the career orientation towards desired job. It documents strengths and helps to plan further steps of one's own professional development

Praktisch unschlagbar <https://www.praktisch-unschlagbar.de/>

This website provides information and guidance related to various phases of the vocational education, e.g. during the vocational education and after. Some elements of the platform are offered as simple games or quizzes.

BERUFE TV <http://www.berufe.tv/>

This platform offers a large collection of videos detailing specific training occupations.

Beerobi <http://www.beroobi.de/>

Beerobi offers support in finding a suitable job. In addition, the platform provides an overview of all training occupations, tips for applying, as well as information on rights and obligations during an apprenticeship.

Das Handwerk <https://handwerk.de/berufchecker>

The platform is designed as a story of two people who try various professions in the field of craft.

In addition to the videos, there are job profiles and an apprenticeship radar with tips on internships and training. On the basis of a simple test, the students can select some professions in the field of craft.

Azubot <https://azubot.de/>

Azubot offers about 200 films from all areas of VET dual education and the dual study programmes.

Ich mach's! <http://www.ardmediathek.de/tv/Ich-mach-s/Sendung?documentId=14913126&>

It offers more than 300 short films about professional education offered in various professions.

Mein PlanB <http://www.mein-planb.de/>

Plan B is a free online consultation. Young people can ask questions by email and receive an answer within 48 hours - anonymously and individually. There is also a public bulletin board where it is possible to read questions from others or even post or comment on posts.

Girls' Day - Mädchen-Zukunftstag

On Girls' Day, companies, firms and universities all over Germany open their doors to pupils from the 5th grade onwards. The girls can get information and experience in apprenticeships and study programmes in IT, craft, science and technology, where women are rarely represented.

Boys' Day – Jungen-Zukunftstag

The counterpart of Girl's Day, where boys can gain insight into social, educational or nursing careers for a day, for example, where the male share has been below average, but men are welcome.

VET and the Labour Market

As mentioned in the other section, the dual system dominates in terms of number of learners and leads to recognized training occupations. More than 50% of young people aged

15 – 24 enter the dual VET system. The training is conducted in two places of learning: companies and vocational schools. The dual system is based on a close cooperation between employers, trade unions and the government.

To What Extent Are VET Students Exposed to Labour Market Information? What Tools Are Used For This?

Due to strong presence of work-based learning approach, the students are fully engaged in the labour market. Also, the orientation process on the level of lower secondary level allows them to get relevant information on the labour market. The vocational orientation programme allows also to check own talents and interests.

The strong cooperation between schools, trade unions and companies is also a basis for provision of labour market information to the students (organisation of the vocational fairs, vocational events etc.).

The Federal Employment Agency provides a wide range of information on available professions and educational paths, information is provided online via websites or apps.

The Future Evolution of VET

One of the important issues is to improve ability of the dual vocational training system to integrate certain groups, such as young people from migrant backgrounds, those in the transition system and young adults with no qualifications.

Other important issues are improvement of targeted training placement; attracting university dropouts to vocational training; improving opportunities for transfer between vocational and academic education and training, expanding funding and support for young people from migrant backgrounds in vocational training, Validation of non-formal and informally acquired skills in vocational training.

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| Country | Hungary |
| Brief Description of National VET Systems | |
| <p>Preparing a trained workforce can take place in VET in public education within the school system, VET in higher education and in VET for adults outside the school system.</p> <p>The government provides acquiring the first and second vocational qualification – recognised by the state and assigned for fulfilling a job and carrying out an occupation or activity – for the students free of charge within school-based formal VET. Students – apart from the highly disadvantaged ones – can start their second vocational training exclusively in adult education. Students who become 25 years old in the school year of their secondary studies can start a new semester exclusively in adult education.</p> <p>The National Qualifications Register contains the list of vocational qualifications recognised by the state. The professional competences related to a certain qualification consist of different module requirements, which have been issued in a Decree.</p> <p>The vocational and examination requirements are issued in a Ministerial Order in which the module requirements of the different vocational qualifications are set. The list of vocational and examination requirements is one of the most important basic documents of VET, which determine the requirements needed for the complex professional exam of a certain vocational qualification. VET Frame Curriculum of training within the school system have been prepared on the basis of the vocational and examination requirements that contain the number of lessons divided into practice and theory according to institutions and classes.</p> <p>Vocational qualifications recognised by the state can be obtained in VET within the school system, the maintainers of VET providers can be the state (through the representation of Ministries), foundations or churches. In 2015, there were significant changes in the institutional system of VET, most vocational schools received maintenance supervision by the Ministry for National Economy, 44 financially independent vocational centres have been established that include 381 member institutions engaged with vocational education. Vocational schools have been transformed since the school year of 2016/17.</p> <p>Training in vocational secondary schools consist of 9-12 classes and a vocational training class following the school-leaving exam, after which a vocational qualification linked to the vocational final exam can be obtained. The training lasts for 4+1 years. In the 9-12th grades of vocational secondary schools, besides general education subjects defined according to the</p> | |

unified framework curriculum, theoretical and practical education including common content related to the qualifications of a particular sector and optional content defined according to the VET framework curriculum, is simultaneously held.

Vocational school education last for 5 years. During the first 3 years general educational subjects and vocational subjects in theory and practice are taught, which are needed for obtaining the vocational qualification. During the next 2 years students are prepared for their school-leaving exam. In respect to vocational qualifications recognised by the state, in vocational schools VET is implemented according to the VET Frame Curriculum. Vocational schools for special education and skills development schools prepare students who are unable to cooperate due to their special educational needs with other students for the vocational examination. In vocational schools, general education is conducted according to the frame curriculum of general education of vocational schools.

Higher vocational education provided by higher education institutions lasts for 2 years similarly to bachelor level of education courses, which require a secondary school leaving certificate. After graduating from higher vocational education, one cannot obtain a degree, only a vocational certificate. After obtaining the certificate, one can enter the labour market and apply for – by recognizing and validating their credits – bachelor or undivided training.

VET can be implemented **outside the school system** by licensed adult training institutions. One fulfilling his/her compulsory education can obtain his/her vocational qualification recognised by the state or other vocational qualification in adult training. In the case of training including other professional training and language courses – with a similar content to the vocational and examination requirements of vocational qualifications listed in the National Qualifications Register – the register for vocational programme requirements in adult training has been established so that adult training can be more uniform, regulated and transparent. Adult trainings are multi-financed, the four significant funders are the state, the company, the individual and the European Union.

Age Groups Involved in VET and Current National Student Numbers

In the academic year of 2016/2017, 434.7 thousand people attended the full-time training programmes of secondary education (with a 23% decrease over 5 years). 1.6% of students (7.1 thousand people) studied in vocational school for special education and skills development schools, 18.0% (78.2 thousand people) in vocational schools, 41.8% (181.8 thousand) in general secondary schools, 38.5% (167.6 thousand people) studied at vocational

secondary schools. Over the past five years, the number of full time students has fallen back to the greatest extent in vocational secondary schools by 28.1%, 39.6% in vocational schools, 26.9% in vocational schools for special education and skills development schools, this rate is only 6.9% in general secondary schools.

In the academic year of 2016/2017, 120.8 thousand students attended the vocational training courses of secondary school institutions providing vocational training with a reduction of 7.7% within a year and 24.6% within 5 years. In vocational secondary schools, there were 42.8 thousand, in vocational schools there were 73.3 thousand, in VET schools there were 4.7 thousand students involved in vocational training classes.

Eurostat data for 2016 shows the proportion of adult learning participants in the age group 25-64 is 6.3%.

In tertiary education, 587 thousand students studied in the academic year of 2016/2017, and 4.6% attended higher vocational education (a non-degree education). 60.7% of students were in bachelor level of education, 13.9% in undivided training, 12.8% in master level of education, 5.4% in specialized training, 2.6% in doctoral studies.

How Do Students Progress Through the VET System?

The National Qualifications Register lists "basic" vocational qualifications (qualifying for all positions of one or more occupations), partial-qualifications (qualifications for at least one job) and sub-specialty vocational qualifications. The vocational qualifications are divided into six levels, the basic level does not require any elementary education, the lower secondary and secondary vocational qualifications are based on primary education, the upper secondary and advanced level (technical) qualifications can be obtained after secondary school leaving exam, and there are also higher vocational education qualifications.

After primary school, students can choose three types of school in the school system if they want to acquire a vocational qualification. Compulsory education lasts until the end of the academic year, in which the student reaches the age of 16.

School leavers in the elementary education/level and those with significant skills shortages can participate in *HÍD* (BRIDGE) programmes and can acquire partial vocational qualifications in 2 years.

In vocational schools, a 3-year long work placement is conducted in a student contract form in real-life workplace practice. After 3 years of professional training, students can obtain a

school leaving certificate (only for general education in full time) in 2 years, which enables students to obtain upper secondary or advanced vocational qualifications based on school leaving certificate. With five years of professional experience, a master's exam can also be acquired (in dual training this is the condition of practical instructor assignment), and then an individual can take part in advanced technical training even without having a school leaving certificate.

In vocational technical schools, there is also professional theoretical and practical training appropriate to the sector, in addition to the general subjects, and after the fourth grade there is a complex professional school leaving exam, which also provides vocational qualification. After the school leaving exam, an upper level (technical) qualification in the sector can be obtained within 1 year, and an extra-sectorial upper level qualification can be obtained within 2 years. In the case of 'traditional' secondary school leaving certificate, upper level qualification can be obtained within 2 years. In case of entry into tertiary education, credit transfer takes place in the case of further training in the sector, thereby training period becomes shorter.

After obtaining school leaving certificate (regardless of school type), the path to higher education opens, students can start their studies at college or university, or they can study in higher vocational education for 2 years.

After completing education within the school system at all levels (primary, secondary and tertiary), one completing his/her compulsory education can acquire an equivalent level of qualification outside the school system or other professional qualification – not included in the National Qualifications Register but controlled by the state – vocational qualifications.

After each school and training type, students/adults can immediately enter the labour market.

Key Decision Points

The first step of decision in class 8 is in primary school when students are 14-15 years old. The National Curriculum specifies a minimum level of knowledge in the topic of career orientation. 5 and 6 graders get acquainted with it and express their opinion about professions and work activities through examples linked to the study material. 7 and 8 graders' ability to choose a proper career and their realistic self-assessment are developed. Students also obtain labour market basic (career and professional) knowledge.

After 3 years of vocational school, students obtaining vocational qualification at the end of class 11 can decide whether to obtain another vocational qualification that requires a secondary school leaving certificate which they can obtain after a 2 year long preparatory education (12-13th class) or they can study in higher vocational education.

In vocational schools and general secondary schools, students can also decide after obtaining secondary school leaving certificate at the end of class 12 whether to enter VET (in case of having general secondary school leaving certificate) or to have further education (in case of having vocational secondary school leaving certificate).

Individuals possessing vocational qualifications and specified work experience can decide to take part in training directed at acquiring the knowledge needed for master's exam and for the higher level practice of professional activity.

When one becomes an adult, he/she can decide whether to take part in supported further adult education/training in the area of his/her profession or to obtain a new vocational qualification.

Current Strengths of National System

In Hungary, most institutions of the VET system operate within VET centres maintained by the Ministry for National Economy, hence they operate in a new training structure that is flexible, effective and able to harmonically cooperate with the actors of the economy. VET centres can operate more cost effectively, individually and in a more responsible way compared to the previous institutional structure.

The actors of the economy and education have good relationship with county level chambers that have a significant role in dual training. Costs related to professional training are partly eligible and partly recoverable, thus there are enough and constantly growing number of workplaces for dual trainings. Chambers guarantee the placement of vocational school students at workplaces providing student contract.

The conditions of VET school enrolment have significantly extended. The age limit of participating in VET within the school system has been increased from 21 to 25, hence there is more time for joining VET after finishing the general education section. Obtaining the second vocational qualification free of charge in adulthood serves the strengthening of

lifelong learning process and provides the chance for adults to participate in a quality, practice-oriented VET. Choosing shortage occupations is also supported by a scholarship system.

Current Weaknesses of National System

Labour market needs more skilled workers and technicians than what is provided by the training system. There is a lack of well-skilled employees possessing a wide range of basic knowledge who can be involved in modern production.

Due to constant demographical and emigrational reduction, there are fewer students in VET. The decreasing tendency is also created by the low prestige of physical professions, inefficient career orientation and by the fact that parents tend to orient their children to schools providing higher qualification (vocational secondary schools, general secondary schools). Instead of choosing a career or a profession, parents and their children rather choose a school. Vocational school enrolment, where students can obtain lower secondary or secondary vocational qualifications is based on the fact that many students cannot enter general or vocational secondary school (which provides secondary school leaving certificate). Most students in VET are unmotivated, struggle with learning problems, behavioral disorders and lack basic skills, thus the rate of drop-outs is quite high, 30% in some cases. Social responsibility is barely built in the strategy of the companies that can be potentially involved in work based learning, also some companies joining dual training are not motivated to train workers for themselves.

Links to European Level Tools

In 2008 the Hungarian government committed itself to joining EQF and decided to introduce Hungarian Qualifications Framework. Levelling Hungarian qualifications in public, adult and vocational education was realized in 2013-2014, hence the Hungarian Qualifications Framework levels also provide information on the relative status and level of each vocational qualification in an international context.

The national report on matching the Hungarian Qualifications Framework with EQF was accepted by the EQF Advisory Council of the European Committee in 2015. The Hungarian Qualifications Framework classifies 8 levels of qualifications obtainable in the Hungarian educational system and the vocational qualifications recognized by the state. Based on qualification: 1: 6th grade in primary school, 2: 8th grade in primary school, 3: 10th grade in secondary school, 4: secondary school leaving exam, 5: higher vocational education, 6:

bachelor degree in higher education, 7: masters degree in higher education, 8: doctorate. Vocational qualifications included in the National Qualifications Register list are classified in 6 levels (levels 2-6). Unlike in the EQF, learning outcomes are formulated with the help of not 3 (knowledge, skill, competence) but 4 descriptors (knowledge, skills, attitudes, autonomy and responsibility) within each level.

The Role of Guidance in VET

The system of career guidance is multi levelled, the different services are built on each other. The 1st level consists of online applications and websites that reach the most people (<https://palyaorientacio.munka.hu/>). Career counselling can be a one-time meeting or it can take longer time or even in the form of courses or group training. The target group of services are primary school students, secondary school students, career modifiers, career leavers, candidates, students of higher education and recent graduates but indirectly it also includes the narrower environment of those concerned.

During the career counselling process, the counsellor helps show real training or employment directions after synthesising positive characteristics, skills and values. On the basis of existing possibilities, the individual's goals, interests, ability to develop or define an appropriate occupation or business activity is carried out. There are different online questionnaires on self-assessment and interests linked to career orientation counselling.

Those interested in career orientation can get help from government offices, chambers of commerce and industry, employers, VET institutions, non-profit organisations (youth offices, foundations, family support offices), schools, teachers of VET institutions, professionals engaging with career orientation, but there are different events and online platforms related to career orientation. These events enable people to get acquainted with career orientation, labour market, employment trends, new professions and current enterprises and they await students and their parents with exciting experiences, they can test the world of work through experimental and playful methods, they can obtain practical knowledge of different professions, getting acquainted with professions and factories is varied with several interesting tasks

- Job fairs, career days: It helps visitors in job-seeking and career building.
- Open days: Students and their parents can meet teachers and other students at a

school, they can have a look at the everyday life of the school and can get information about the education there. Secondary school open days are usually held in autumn while university open days are held during the months before applying, typically in December.

- Site visits: During site visits the visitors can get acquainted with a specific profession, its features and can see the process of the skills needed for its acquirement in real circumstances.
- Profession Star Festival: It is organised by the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. 6th and 7th graders can take part in it free of charge. The event is a place for the National Final of National Professional Studies Competition.
- The career orientation event called 'Test it, do it, get to know it! – Night of Professions' was organised for the 3rd time in April, in 2018, there are 441 locations waiting for students and their parents.
- In Hungary, there is an event called 'Day of Girls'. This is the largest career orientation initiative organised for girls, its aim is to inform girls about the advantages of technical and IT fields, thus broadening girls' vision on the world of work.
- Career guidance exhibitions and fairs in October and November organised by government offices, where students (primary and secondary) before choosing a career and adults before career correction encounter secondary and higher education schools, adult training institutions and they can also benefit from career guidance. VET institutions and employers provide testing of certain work processes of professions (focusing on shortage occupations).
- During the 'Night of Modern Factories' in November, the most modern factories are open for the whole night so that students and their parents can visit.
- Thematic events in several cities of the country: Organising the professional meeting of construction industry called 'Build your future' where the relevant occupations are demonstrated. During the technical career orientation festival called 'What's up?', youngsters can get acquainted with sectors such as mechanical engineering, information technology, telecommunications, electronics, electrical engineering and chemical industry.

VET and the Labour Market

In order that the needs of labour market prevail, the state determines which training is supported with unlimited or limited budget contribution and which are not supported at all.

Decisions concerning the structure of professions, the quota and the vocational qualifications are prepared by developing and training commissions in each county, members of which also include employers organisations, hence the actors of the economy directly apply their demand for the vocational qualifications that can be taught.

Within the Hungarian dual training, practical training can be completed in vocational institutions and/or at companies. Dual system supports students to get acquainted with real production processes as soon as possible, the system is coordinated and controlled by chambers of commerce and industry. Based on data from January 2018, nearly 53 thousand students take part in dual training, there are 7250 companies engaging with practical training.

In the 1st year of VET in vocational schools, students can only take part in practical training at a school workshop or at an employer's workshop exclusively established for practical training. At the end of the 1st year, the chamber considers whether the student can enter a workplace that provides real practical training circumstances. In case of successful level exam and if proper workplace is provided, students' practical training can only be organised **with a student contract** – at a site training place – starting from the related professional practice of the 1st VET class of vocational school. Under guarantee, the chamber provides a workplace to vocational school students, the school is only entitled and obliged at the same time to provide students with practical training if the chamber justifies that there is no proper workplace.

Students at vocational secondary schools have to complete vocational practice each summer at the end of class 9-11. (each year) in a school workshop or at an external workplace **under cooperational agreement**. Student contract can be concluded with vocational secondary school students after class 11.

Cooperation agreements and student contracts have to be countersigned by the economic chamber. VET schools are responsible for the theoretical training of students with a student contract and employers organising practical training are responsible for preparing them for the practical part of the complex professional exam and for their practical training. The workplace is obliged to provide the personal conditions and the tangible assets specified by the requirements of practical training.

Students studying skills shortages in their county are given a grant by the state. Some students studying with a student contract are given allowance by the employer depending

on the practical training period.

The costs of practical training can be accounted to some extent with reducing the amount of VET contribution paid on a compulsory basis as part of wages by economic entities. Such another item of reducing costs is the product of the annual fixed base rate/one student and the weighted mean defined, but the supplementary items of investment and workshop maintenance costs can also be validated for cost reduction.

To What Extent Are VET Students Exposed to Labour Market Information? What Tools Are Used For This?

The main objectives of the activities of government offices, chambers, VET and adult training schools are that students have a view on employment, know the career opportunities in different fields through which they can get acquainted with the main professional fields determining the Hungarian economy. Career and success that can be achieved in different fields strongly depend on the path leading to it, namely on VET opportunities. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the structure of the VET system, the number and characteristics of the available professions, the shortage of skills, the characteristics of occupations requiring higher education qualification, and the characteristics of the higher education system (14 training fields). The role of work in a person's life can be presented through employment. The related knowledge is the characteristics of the labour market, the role and possibilities of the employee, characteristics of the independent enterprise. It is important to emphasise the significance of positive presentation. Analysing unemployment as a phenomenon is discussed primarily on preventive aspects.

The Future Evolution of VET

Demand driven regulation has to be further developed in the future. The main aim of the changes is to adapt the content and structure of the training to the expectations of our changing environment. In order to satisfy the labour force demand of the companies, it is necessary to develop career orientation and VET and adult training system.

Measures planned in order to create a more effective and successful career orientation and dual practical training:

- In order to directly appear enterprise needs in VET, Sectoral Skills Councils are established, which directly enable the actors of the economical sectors through selected representatives to control and update the professional content of training within VET and adult training.
- In order to further develop dual training in accordance with the German model, sectoral training centres are being set up therefore the enterprise can provide practical training with the available tools, but students can also use workplaces in vocational training centres if the required technology in a given sector is not applied in that particular company.
- Closer cooperation between schools and businesses, involvement of school trainers into the work of the companies' workplaces, involvement of company trainers in school education: Further training of VET institutions' trainers is carried out within compulsory company-based further training. With the introduction of the training and examination system of practical trainers, a wider range of professionals working in business organisations will be able to acquire the knowledge needed to train students.
- Expanding career guidance by combining the actors of VET and the economy, involving parents and primary school teachers and by exchanging good practices (e.g. organising events: day of girls, night of factories etc.).
- Promoting dual training in higher education by creating real cooperation between higher education institutions and enterprises.
- Creating a more flexible adult training system which suits the needs of companies, re-skilling and up-skilling employers as early as possible, obtaining proper, up-to-date knowledge besides the reduction of administrative duties directly targeted to the given occupation.
- The introduction of the system of vocational training arrangements advances the involvement of non-state funded VET schools in the provision of state services, thus it is able to ensure the distribution of vocational training capacities at national level in a comprehensive and long-term manner.
- Transferring the necessary linguistic and digital knowledge besides professional

knowledge.

- Creating a workforce-forecast system: online, up-to-date information bank which informs about the training opportunities and income conditions.

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| Country | Ireland |
| Brief Description of National VET Systems | |
| <p>Education is compulsory for children from the ages of six to sixteen or until students have completed three years of second-level education (or up until the Junior cycle examinations in second level education). All Irish children are entitled to free primary and post-primary education. The curriculum taught in primary schools is child-centered and has a focus on literacy, numeracy and language – reading, writing, maths, Irish and English are considered the most important subjects. Pupils normally transfer to post-primary education at the age of twelve. Children from about 12 to 18 years attend a post-primary school (also referred to as second level education). Post-primary education consists of a three-year Junior Cycle (lower secondary), followed by a two or three year Senior Cycle (upper secondary), depending on whether the optional Transition Year (TY) is taken. Students usually begin the Junior Cycle at age 12 and the Junior Certificate examination is taken after three years. The Senior Cycle caters for students in the 15 to 18 year age group.</p> <p>There are three types of Leaving Certificate programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Leaving Certificate where students must complete at least five subjects and where the results in the Leaving Certificate (generally) tend to determine access to tertiary education. - The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) where students have to take five Leaving Certificate subjects, including two subjects from a specified set of vocational subjects, a course in a modern European language and three Link Modules – Enterprise Education, Preparation for Work and Work Experience. The LCVP is recognised for direct entry to tertiary education. - Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) where students are provided with a cross-curricular approach rather than a subject-based structure. It uses modules in three areas: general education, vocational education and vocational preparation. Certification in the LCA is not recognised for direct entry to tertiary education, but Post-Leaving | |

Certificate courses can be accessed through it.

After obtaining the Leaving Certificate students may continue in tertiary (“third level”) education or in Further Education and Training (FET), which includes VET. Tertiary education includes programmes of general education provided at universities and colleges, and vocational education, provided in institutes of technology.

The national Irish training and employment authority prior to 2013 was “*Foras Áiseanna Saothair*”, commonly known as FÁS. This was replaced with a new agency, SOLAS, in 2013, who manage much of the VET within Ireland. With SOLAS, there has been an attempt to provide more coordinated and integrated training, arising from the streamlining of 33 existing Vocational Education Councils into 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). SOLAS’ functions are therefore to manage, co-ordinate and support the delivery of integrated FET by the ETBs, to monitor delivery and provide funding based on reliable, good quality data and positive outcomes and to promote Further Education and Training provision that is relevant to individual learner needs and national skills needs. SOLAS is also responsible for the strategic coordination and funding of the further education and training sector, as set out in the Irish Further Education and Training Strategy 2014–2018.

Age Groups Involved in VET and Current National Student Numbers

Age groups involved in VET education vary and there are no official national figures. Also, as identified in a later section, VET in Ireland facilitates multiple demographics so multiple facilities are available to potential Irish VET students. Some information may be gathered, however to summarise some key elements. The HEA report “Key Facts and Figures 2016/2017” identified that the age distribution of Full-time Undergraduate New Entrants, 2016/17 was:

- 17 and under - 4% (1,777)
- 18 - 34% (14,649)
- 19 - 39% (17,023)
- 20 - 9% (3,716)

- 21 - 3% (1,263)
- 22 - 1% (621)
- 23 - 1% (382)
- 24 - 2% (659)
- 25-29 - 3% (1,354)
- 30 and over - 5% (2,125)

The SOLAS report "Further Education and Training Strategy 2014 – 2019", while referring to Projected employment growth by education 2012-2020, identifies that in relative terms employment growth for FET will have growth rates similar to higher education i.e. 19%.

How Do Students Progress Through the VET System?

The report "Further Education and Training Strategy 2014 – 2019" developed by SOLAS identifies some of the main VET provisions available in Ireland through ETBs, including:

Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) Courses - The aim of PLC courses is to provide participants with a combination of general studies, vocational studies and opportunities for work experience so that they are able to enter (or re-enter) intermediate skilled jobs in the labour market such as business studies, childcare, community care, computing and technology, e-commerce, horticulture, multimedia production, sport and leisure, and tourism. They are usually delivered in one academic year on a full-time basis and are not modularised. The courses generally lead to major awards at NFQ Level 5 and 6.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) provides a range of courses to meet the education and training needs of unemployed people. Some examples include ICT, Art and Design, Business Administration, Childcare and Digital Media. They are usually delivered over two academic years on a full-time basis of 30 hours per week. The courses lead to a range of awards across NFQ levels.

Youthreach is a full-time programme, usually over two years, directed at unemployed early school leavers aged 15-20 and lead to major awards typically at Levels 3 and 4 on the NFQ. Learners are facilitated in setting individual learning plans aimed at increasing their self-

esteem, skills and knowledge base and employability with a strong emphasis on personal development.

Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) provides part-time Further Education programmes for young people and adults designed to give participants an opportunity to combine a return to learning with family, work and other responsibilities. Programmes are offered in partnership with a number of agencies throughout the country on a flexible part-time basis. Courses lead to a range of accreditation at Levels 1-6 on the NFQ.

Key Decision Points

Key decisions related to VET education arises towards the end of the Senior Cycle - for students in the 15 to 18 year age group. Alternatively students can leave school at 16 & engage in VET education. A 2014 SOLAS report however, a number of different options are available to cater to different demographics. The largest of the VET programmes is the Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) programme offering over 1000 courses primarily in NQF level 5 and 6 courses. Vocational Training Opportunities Schemes (VTOS) are aimed at providing second chance education for the unemployed who are over 21 years old. Youthreach caters for early school leavers aged 15-20. The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) provides part-time programmes for young people/adults aimed at giving participants an opportunity to combine a return to learning with family, work and other responsibilities. (Courses lead to a range of accreditation at Levels 1-6 on the NFQ).

Current Strengths of National System

According to the OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training Ireland, there is a range of provision of different types of VET at post-secondary level, targeted at a wide range of different client groups, including those in and out of work and with second chance opportunities.

The national qualifications framework is also identified as being comprehensive as it integrates both vocational and general qualifications and "includes a strong commitment to

the avoidance of dead-ends and pathways of progression". Collaboration with social partners is also well-established and takes place at most relevant levels. The apprenticeship system is identified as well-structured with "a systematic blend of on and off-the-job elements". It also mentions that there is cooperation between the two lead departments and that the National Skills Strategy provides for common objectives. It is also identified that there are some innovative ways of engaging employers in a bottom-up approach to provision.

Current Weaknesses of National System

According to the OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training Ireland, it is noted that the economy can potentially make intense demands on the Irish system to provide education and training for an ever-increasing number of people. It is noted that this can pose serious challenges to the Irish apprenticeship system in particular and that apprenticeships are limited to a small number of occupations. It is also noted that workplace training is not used in many VET programmes and that many individuals involved in looking after VET students in these programmes are lacking appropriate pedagogical training. A lack of research is also identified as a weakness - including fragmented data on labour market outcomes, scarce research on VET and also that the wide range of VET programmes has not been systematically evaluated. It is also noted that career guidance services are fragmented and that there's little information on labour market opportunities.

Links to European Level Tools

The majority of accredited VET Qualifications in Ireland tend to be situated within the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), which was developed as part of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999. The different types and sizes of qualifications included in the NFQ are organised based on their level of knowledge, skill and competence. The NFQ is comprised of a system of 10 "Levels" which are based on standards of the learning outcome types identified above). All quality assured qualifications offered by professional bodies and international awarding bodies operating in Ireland can also be recognised through these NFQ levels. The NFQ was referenced to the EQF in 2009, as per

the report "Referencing of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)". A breakdown of the references from the NFQ to the EQF can be seen at <http://www.qqi.ie>

The Role of Guidance in VET

The SOLAS report "Further Education And Training Professional Development Strategy 2017-2019" refers to guidance counsellors a number of times throughout the document, but never specifically gives information related to their role and background. The report does however, identify a number of SOLAS-funded organisations providing professional development services to the FET sector. Within this context, the report refers to the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE). The NCGE website, in turn, identifies that "Guidance is provided in the FET sector through various services, including FET / Adult Education Guidance Services, Colleges of Further Education / PLC Programmes, Youthreach / CTCs, Training Centres, Adult and Community Education, Youth Information, BTEI and Prison Services." and notes that guidance provided by the NCGE is informed by the "Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019" report (section 10).

The 2014 report identifies that FET/ VET learners generally access courses and services through self-referral or having been referred to courses and services through Intreo/DSP. For younger individuals in schools or those who have recently left, they are generally required to choose the course and apply directly by letter or online to the school or college offering that course. In some instances, they will be called for an interview before final selection. With regard to apprenticeship, the person must first obtain employment as an apprentice in their chosen trade. The employer must be approved to train apprentices and must register the person with SOLAS as an apprentice within two weeks of recruitment. The registered apprentice is then called for training by SOLAS. The report notes that "the nature and quality of guidance provision appear to vary across the different access points into the FET sector. The need for an integrated FET Guidance approach was frequently mentioned during the consultation process", suggesting that there is no applicable standard in the area of Guidance in VET in Ireland currently. The report does, however suggest elements for an

integrated guidance strategy for the FET sector should include:

1. Development of national referral protocols between Adult Guidance Services and DSP and other national agencies – HSE, disability services etc.
2. Widening of the remit of the Adult Educational Guidance Services to become the Adult Guidance and Information Services for the FET sector and general public.
3. The Adult Guidance Service would develop and ensure collaboration with PLC-based guidance provision, and will include those guidance counsellors who are currently working within and across other ETB programmes.
4. All guidance staff employed by ETBs, outside of the current AEGI and PLC structure, would be linked to the adult guidance service to ensure quality assurance of service, reporting mechanisms and access to national supports and continuous professional development programmes.
5. Implementation of a national quality assurance system for the guidance services based on national and EU good practice and guidelines.
6. A national advisory committee of representatives from DES/SOLAS/NCGE/ETBI and other relevant stakeholders to ensure a national approach to the guidance provision within the FET sector.

VET and the Labour Market

There would appear to be genuine correlation between courses developed in Ireland and the labour market demand. The primary driver of this is as a result of SOLAS' involvement in a unit called the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU). This unit is responsible for publishing research and reports which facilitate development and review of policy and practice in the further and higher education sectors as well as other related sectors. The SLMRU also manages the National Skills Database and provides labour market data and analysis to the Education and Training Board sector (e.g., in support of the joint SOLAS/ETB

annual business planning exercise). The SLMRU group is also involved in additional units, including:

- The Expert Group on Future Skill Needs (EGFSN). This group advises the Irish Government on current and future skills needs of the economy and on other labour market issues that impact on Ireland's enterprise and employment growth. It has a central role in ensuring that labour market needs for skilled workers are anticipated and met. (<http://www.skillsireland.ie/>)
- The National Skills Database (NSD), developed by the SLMRU, collates all available information on the supply and demand of skills in Ireland. It represents an effective tool for timely analyses and forecasting of the labour market at occupational level. It facilitates the use of a range of indicators and models to assess potential imbalances between the demand and supply of skills for more than 100 occupations. The data held in the NSD is gathered, usually at occupational level, from numerous sources, including the Central Statistics Office, the Department of Social Protection, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, the Higher Education Authority, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the Department of Education and Skills, the Central Applications Office, among others. The Unit also conducts a Recruitment Agency Survey twice a year. (<http://lmi.fas.ie/search.aspx>)

To What Extent Are VET Students Exposed to Labour Market Information? What Tools Are Used For This?

Information on the exposure of VET students to Labour Market Information is limited. While reports and findings of the SLMRU are freely available, it would appear that there is little in the way of direct marketing of the relevant information to VET students. Rather, it would appear that the SLMRU directly inform SOLAS, who then make appropriate decisions in relation to available training and who distribute relevant information to the NCGE.

The Future Evolution of VET

The Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 report has identified a number of

key areas which could impact on the future evolution of VET in Ireland. Key outcomes emerging include:

- An identified need for “Enhanced research and support for programme reviews and identification and roll-out of FET best practice across the sector”.
- The provision of further education and training programmes for a diverse range of individuals - particularly long-term unemployed and young unemployed people.
- Ensure effective CPD is in place to support quality of provision across the sector.
- Provide career management skills to learners on FET courses to manage flexible career pathways, increasing employability thereby empowering learners to manage their skills development and career goals.
- Plan and conduct a comprehensive communications campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of FET with enterprise, learners and more generally.

In addition, notable for the project purposes, the report “Further Education And Training Professional Development Strategy 2017-2019” identifies that Technology enhanced learning (TEL) is a critical “missing piece” for a lot of career guidance professionals. It is noted that digital capacity is becoming more central to effective outcomes for FET learners and that the “use of technology to enhance learning is, in turn, becoming ‘intrinsic’ to FET in Ireland; TEL was by far the most commonly articulated development need cited by FET practitioners across the sector as a whole.”. The same report also notes that “As with TEL, the application of ICT is becoming central to the effective management, support and administration of FET.”

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| Country | UK |
| Brief Description of National VET Systems | |
| <p>VET is a devolved issue across the UK which means that policy, funding etc. is controlled by each of the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. However, whilst this means that there are differences across each of the home nations, the general approach, principles and structure found within VET across the UK remains similar. In terms of subjects covered, most professional vocational occupations (such as architecture, dentistry and nursing) have been traditionally taught via academic, higher education routes. Therefore, the focus of VET in the UK is on skills linked to sectors such as construction, health and beauty, administration, tourism etc.</p> <p>VET is delivered across the UK by various different types of providers. The main players within VET are further education colleges, but VET can also be provided via schools, private training providers, universities and employers. Funding for these courses can come from public funds (administered by the devolved governments), through course fees, or through other commercial activities carried out at the institution. The process for attaining public funding sees providers apply for money based on a strategic plan (including courses to be offered and student numbers). These are assessed in line with government objectives and needs. Payment is often made in stages, with money withheld or claimed back if the student numbers/levels of achievement promised in the strategic plan are not met. In recent years, the pressure on government funding has increased, meaning that providers are increasingly looking for alternative sources of funding.</p> <p>The structure of education across the UK sees young people follow a compulsory education path within secondary schools until aged 16. The focus of this learning is on academic subjects, with very little attention on formal vocational training (although some courses may be offered to young people as part of their choices at 14 – see below). From 16, young people can choose to continue with academic education, switch to a vocational pathway or take up an apprenticeship. The system has been designed to allow some flexibility, although it remains far easier to switch from academic routes to vocational courses/apprenticeships</p> | |

than to move from a vocational route back to an academic one.

Young people are able to apply to higher education at 18. Whilst in theory vocational qualifications can be used to progress onto higher education courses, academic qualifications (e.g. A Levels) remain the de-facto accepted option. Some universities are starting to offer degree-level apprenticeships, whilst similar level 6 qualifications are also becoming more common at further education institutions; a development which is beginning to blur the distinction between VET and higher education in some subject areas.

Age Groups Involved in VET and Current National Student Numbers

The main age range of students involved in UK VET is 16-24, with a focus on 16-19 year olds. However, most VET courses are open to anyone over the age of 16. There is limited VET specific training for under 16s due to the structure of the UK system. Where this is provided, it is normally carried out in schools alongside the academic curriculum.

According to the latest available data (2014/15), there are around 290,000 students enrolled at further education colleges in the UK.

How Do Students Progress Through the VET System?

Students can enter the VET system at different levels, depending on their results in the school leaving exams. For those who leave school with no/few qualifications, an entry level route is available which includes level 1 and level 2 courses. For certain subject areas, those who leave school with some qualifications can enter at a slightly higher level (normally as part of a level 3 course).

Course structure varies massively between institutions. Some courses involve only classroom-based exercises, whilst others take the form of apprenticeships, combining real work with classroom learning. On average, most courses last between 1-2 years. For courses which are primarily taught in a classroom (i.e. with little 'real-world' experience), students will be most often awarded a BTEC (or equivalent) qualification. For those courses that are based around work experience and learning on-the-job, an NVQ (or SVQ in Scotland) qualification is awarded. Both BTECs and NVQs are available at a range of levels, depending on the course

content. Students who choose to continue to progress through the VET system normally move on to the next level in their chosen subject. In some fields, this may require them to choose to specialise in a certain skill or work aspect.

For students who reach level 4 and level 5, Higher National Certificates (Level 4), Higher National Diplomas (Level 5), Foundation Degrees (Level 5) or Higher Apprenticeships (Level 5) are available, all of which allow students to develop more specialist and complex vocational skills. For some subject areas, the completion of these courses can also be a route into further university studies, with top-up courses available for students to gain a bachelor's degree. Again, the structure for these varies, with differing levels of work experience included depending on the course.

Recently degree apprenticeships have also been introduced to offer students a more direct route to a vocational degree-level qualification. Like other apprenticeships, students are classified as full-time workers, as they follow a formal training programme (including periods of classroom learning) alongside real work. Students apply for places via the employer rather than the training provider, with level 3 qualifications normally required as a minimum entry requirement.

Key Decision Points

The first decision point for most students comes around the age of 14 when they are required to choose the subjects that they wish to continue with for the last two years of formal secondary education. Whilst some schools may offer a vocational option to pupils at this point, it is more common that the selection is based on academic subjects – with choices being driven by what plans students have for their post-16 options.

The next decision point comes when students finish compulsory education at 16. As of 2015, all young people must stay in some form of education or training until the age of 18 and so the choice facing most students is between continuing with academic studies to gain A Levels (the most common university entry route) or switching to a VET course/apprenticeship.

A further decision point comes around the age of 18 when young people finish either their A Levels or initial VET course. They can decide to progress to university, take further VET training (to gain higher level qualifications) or enter full-time employment.

Current Strengths of National System

- Flexible approach which allows employers and learners to tailor their training journey relatively easily
- Good level of engagement with labour market actors
- Focus on workplace skills and learning
- Self-awareness of need for improvement within the system

Current Weaknesses of National System

- Lack of funding
- Poor public perception. Perceived as second choice to formal academic learning
- Variety of routes and qualifications makes understanding options difficult
- Students engage with formal VET learning relatively late (often 16+)

Links to European Level Tools

All vocational qualifications are linked to the National Qualification Framework in each home nation. These frameworks have been developed in line with the EQF and so each qualification level nationally can be easily mapped across onto the EQF.

The Role of Guidance in VET

Any institution providing courses for young people aged 18 or under must comply with the statutory guidance set out by the Government as part of their grant agreement for funding. Any VET provider who does not fall under this definition is still encouraged to follow the statutory guidance as a way of ensuring a quality provision.

In terms of careers guidance, the statutory guidance sets out that all young people must have access to impartial, independent careers advice and information. To help providers achieve this, the government has recently published an updated careers strategy which focuses on 8 benchmarks (the 'Gatsby Benchmarks') that set out the features which make up a good careers provision. Whilst these are not yet compulsory, all schools are expected to be

working towards achieving these benchmarks by 2020. Their compliance to both the statutory guidance and the benchmarks forms part of quality inspections of training provisions.

The guidance does not specify who must deliver career guidance – it can either be an internal member of staff or an external contractor. However, they must have relevant qualifications and experience. From September 2018, all providers are also expected to appoint a Careers Leader to oversee the guidance provision for their VET learners.

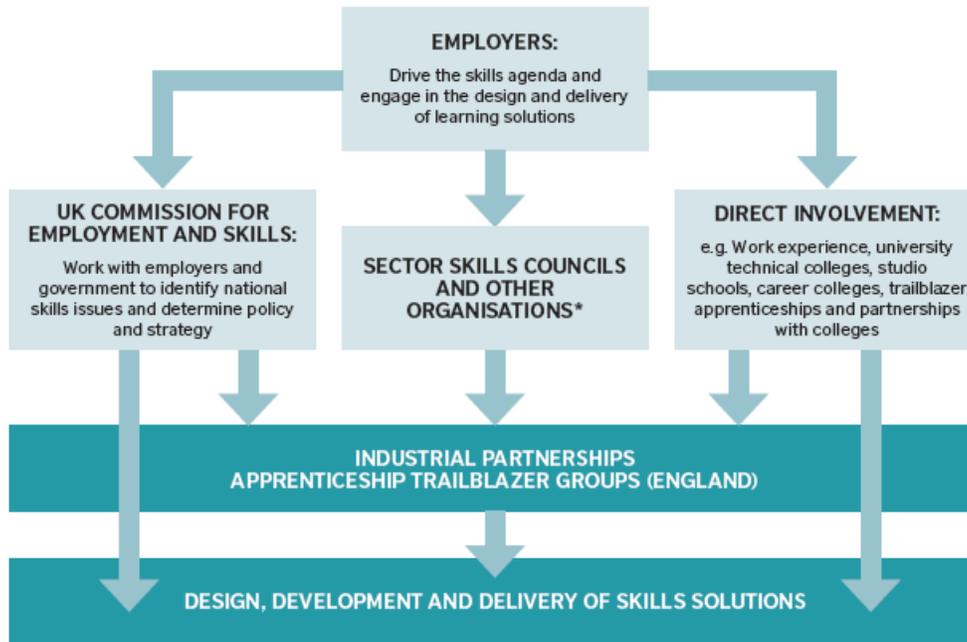
The 8 Gatsby benchmarks are:

- A stable careers programme
- Learning from career and labour market information
- Addressing the needs of each student
- Linking curriculum learning to careers
- Encounters with employers and employees
- Experiences of workplaces
- Encounters with further and higher education
- Personal guidance

In reality, these benchmarks mean that students must have at least 1 careers interview, 1 quality work placement and 2 quality interactions with employers (with at least one related to their field of study) during their course. They must also have spoken to other further education, higher education and apprenticeship providers about learning options for after they finish their current course.

All providers must publish their career strategies online but there are no formal requirements to provide careers guidance digitally. However, more and more digital career tools are becoming available and so the careers process is naturally digitising. This includes support via national careers websites such as the National Careers Service, Careers Wales, Careers Service Northern Ireland and Skills Development Scotland sites.

VET and the Labour Market



The government considers labour market forecasts, skills demand and feedback from employers when setting the skills policies which inform the development of VET courses. At the same time, bodies such as sector skills councils work with qualification bodies to help shape the sort of skills which will be assessed as part of any qualification award. This helps to make sure that the skills being developed by students are in line with real employers' needs and expectations.

With the growth in work-based learning and apprenticeships, employers are now taking a far more direct role in VET. The majority of apprenticeships are offered via employers, which means that they drive learning and content. They are also responsible for recruitment and so can choose young people with the personal attributes and skills demanded by the labour market.

Any NVQ course must be based on real-job experience which means that these courses include a focus on on-the-job training through apprenticeships and work-based learning. There are no requirements for such work-based training as part of BTECs. Nevertheless, training providers are increasingly choosing to include work placements as part of these

courses to make sure that young people are gaining practical, as well as theoretical, experience.

To What Extent Are VET Students Exposed to Labour Market Information? What Tools Are Used For This?

As part of the Government's statutory guidance, all VET providers dealing with young people aged 18 and under must provide students with guidance material related to careers opportunities. The Gatsby Benchmarks (see above) add detail to this requirement, with the second benchmark being to make sure that students are able to learn from career and labour market information. This includes information around skills demand, skills gaps, progression routes, earning potential etc. At the same time, the labour market information provided should also include details around training options and next steps.

However, whilst training providers are expected to be working towards fulfilling these benchmarks, it is up to them to decide exactly how they do this. Therefore, the type of LMI they provide and the methods they use are for them to define. Some guidance is given (mainly in the form of links through to services such as the National Careers Service and LMI for All) but there is no formal requirement for these services to be engaged.

The Future Evolution of VET

In an attempt to improve the reputation of VET in comparison to academic routes, the government has announced the introduction of T Levels from 2020. These will sit alongside A Levels as options for young people in regards to their post-16 learning pathways. Each option will be based around industries which require common skills, knowledge and behaviours (the first three announced are digital, construction and Education and Childcare). Within each route, students will be able to further specialise and a work placement will be included as standard. It is hoped these reforms will add value to VET by helping to demonstrate the real-world applications of vocational learning, as well as providing a simpler learning pathway than is currently available. There will be an additional £500 million in funding every year to help develop T Levels.

Another key national trend is a strengthening of the apprenticeship system across the UK, which has traditionally lagged behind similar systems in other EU countries (the government has promised 3 million new apprenticeships by 2020). This includes the introduction of degree apprenticeships and a centralised website to advertise all available opportunities. There have also been changes to the way apprenticeships are funded in an effort to encourage more companies to invest in apprentices. This includes the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy, which is an additional charge on companies with a wage bill larger than £3 million a year. Companies who pay the levy can set up an online account to manage how these funds are used – in particular by using this money to offset apprenticeship costs.