Youth education attainment level
Population aged 20-24 having completed at least upper secondary education (2011, %)

Early-leavers from education and training
Population aged 18-24 with, or without, lower secondary education and not in further education or training (2011, %)

Participation in lifelong learning
Population aged 25-64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey (2011, %)

Educational attainment of the population
Population aged 20-64 for highest level of education attained in Poland and in selected Member States (2011, %)

Further information


Spotlight on VET

Poland

The education system in Poland

The main challenges in Polish VET include:

- Developing the national lifelong learning policy. The new national lifelong learning strategy has not yet been developed, although the national reform programme for years 2008–11, set out by the Ministry of Economy, foresees preparation and implementation of the lifelong learning strategy together with legal and institutional instruments resulting from it.

- Participation of adults in lifelong learning. According to Eurostat data, in 2010–13, the average percentage of adults aged 25–64 who participated in lifelong education (continuing education), much lower than the EU average of 9.5%. The group with the highest rate of participation in formal continuing education are women (67.1% in Poland). Women's participation in non-formal lifelong education almost halves that for men, and those working were under 30 years of age. The group with the highest rate of participation in formal continuing education are women (67.1% in Poland). Women's participation in non-formal lifelong education almost halves that for men, and those working were under 30 years of age. The group with the highest rate of participation in formal continuing education are women (67.1% in Poland). Women's participation in non-formal lifelong education almost halves that for men, and those working were under 30 years of age. The group with the highest rate of participation in formal continuing education are women (67.1% in Poland). Women's participation in non-formal lifelong education almost halves that for men, and those working were under 30 years of age. The group with the highest rate of participation in formal continuing education are women (67.1% in Poland). Women's participation in non-formal lifelong education almost halves that for men, and those working were under 30 years of age. The group with the highest rate of participation in formal continuing education are women (67.1% in Poland). Women's participation in non-formal lifelong education almost halves that for men, and those working were under 30 years of age.

- Apprenticeship training is regarded as an alternative pathway to full-time, school-based vocational education. It is organized in small and medium-sized enterprises, mainly in handicrafts. Employers are usually members of a guild or a chamber of handicrafts, a particular chamber of handicrafts or appointed guild supervisors handles the training. According to data provided by the Polish Association of Crafts (Związek Zawodów Rzemiosła Polskiego), in the 2009/10 school year, 90,969 juvenile workers were in apprenticeship training.

- The education system enables relatively flexible transition from a vocational education to general one and vice versa since the curricula for general subjects are the same in both technical (secondary school) and general schools. Basic vocational school leavers can continue their education in supplementary technical or general schools.

Characteristics

- Improving the quality of VET is a focus of Polish education policy. This will be achieved through cooperation with employers and the development of a system of continuous education, implying opportunities to gain vocational qualifications. In these, students will be able to acquaint themselves with modern methods of management, work organization, application and use of modern technologies; their teachers will have the potential to update theoretical and practical knowledge. Efforts are under way to ensure effective and continuing participation in vocational training by establishing financial mechanisms supporting cooperation with educational institutions. One such mechanism is financing the cost of vocational training for young workers from the labour fund.

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Challenges

- Developing the national lifelong learning policy. The new national lifelong learning strategy has not yet been developed, although the national reform programme for years 2008–11, set out by the Ministry of Economy, foresees preparation and implementation of the lifelong learning strategy together with legal and institutional instruments resulting from it.

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Development of an efficient system for anticipating skill need on the labour market. There is no national system for anticipating skill needs: employers and research institutes carry out random surveys related to vocational competences among school leavers and demand for specific skills as part of sectoral, regional or local research projects. Launching a common effective and efficient system to anticipate demand for specific sets of skills requires development of an efficient system for diagnosing the external effectiveness of education and agreeing cooperation arrangements between individual entities.

Transition and modernization

Successful vocational education is one of the priorities of Polish education policy. Recent changes in vocational education have been developing a flexible system relevant to the labour market needs; and on technological and scientific progress responsive to the challenge of globalisation. Reform is also induced by requirements of the Copenhagen process and the need to prepare the system to accommodate the national qualification framework.

Key priorities of education policy include:

- developing a flexible education system able to adapt in progress, science, new technologies and globalisation, as well change in the labour market;

- building up a transparent system of vocational qualifications;

- creating a unified system for recognising vocational qualifications acquired in different forms;

- developing key competences along with vocational skills.

Structure

In Poland students are obliged to continue education up to age 18. After compulsory lower secondary education at the age of 16 they decide whether to choose VET and, if so, what type. Upper secondary vocational education in schools lasts between two and six years and tertiary vocational education lasts between three and six years depending on the type of school.

There are several vocational schools:

- 3-year profiled general secondary school (szkoła ponadgimnazjalna) as well as general education, provides education in general vocational profiles. The 15 profiles of general vocational education correspond to the categories of activities listed in the Polish classification of activities. Those leaving profiled general schools may continue their education in post-secondary schools. Further, with an upper secondary school-leaving certificate (matura), they can access higher education institutions, including higher vocational schools.

- 3-year basic vocational school (szkoła zawodowa), which confers the qualification of skilled worker, is the only vocational school at the upper secondary level that awards a vocational qualification diploma but does not lead to a maturity. The duration of education for particular vocations is indicated in the diploma but does not lead to a qualification.

- 4-year technical secondary school (technikum) enables the acquisition of both a maturity and vocational qualifications to the level of technician. After completion of technical secondary school, graduates may take an external exam confirming their vocational qualifications. Obtaining a maturity in their fourth year opens the door to higher education in vocational and technical education.

- 5-year supplementary technical secondary school (technikum uzupełniające) is a school with a follow-up curriculum to that of the vocational school. Its goal is to bring students education to intermediate level and prepare them for the examination confirming their vocational qualifications and for the maturity exam. On completion, students are awarded the technikum-leaving certificate provided they have obtained no more than 3 courses.

- 3-year special school (szkoła specjalna), offering preparation for performing a given job, are mainly for mentally disabled students and for those with complex disabilities who completed lower secondary school: curricula and organization of education are adapted to their specific needs and capabilities. On completion, they receive certificates confirming their preparatory work to perform specific work, but do not have full vocational qualifications.

- 2.5-year post-secondary schools (szkoła ponadgimnazjalna) award a vocational qualification diploma for systems from general or technical secondary schools.

- 5-year teacher colleges (institute nauczycielskie) – graduates can obtain qualifications enabling them to teach a foreign language in primary, lower and upper secondary schools. A different type of teacher college prepares teachers for kindergartens: primary school (przedszkole, ośrodek edukacyjno-wychowawczy).

- Higher education institutions (uniwersytet lub akademia) may be academic or vocational depending on their competence. Both types are entitled to fund first and second level studies and vertically master studies, however, vocational ones are not eligible to offer doctoral studies.