

Cedefop opinion survey on vocational education and training in Europe

Data collection process

Opinion survey on VET in Europe

#VETopinionsurvey

About the survey

Cedefop's first survey on vocational education and training (VET) produced in partnership with Kantar Public explores European citizens' perceptions of VET in the EU-28 Member States.



AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE

What do Europeans know about VET, how do they get information and what do they associate it with?



EXPERIENCE AND SATISFACTION

What did people study at upper secondary level? How does VET compare to general education?



ATTRACTIVENESS AND ACCESS

What image does VET have, what are its benefits and who is it good for?



OUTCOMES AND EFFECTIVENESS

How does VET improve employment, education and training prospects? What is its effect on the economy and society?

3 DESIGN PHASES CONDUCTED OVER 10 MONTHS:

120

cognitive interviews in 6 EU countries to test and improve the questionnaire



840

interviews conducted throughout Europe to pilot the survey, 30 in each country



35 646

face-to-face interviews conducted in total with up to 2 200 interviews in a single country



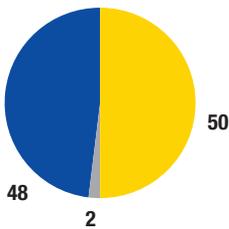


Awareness and knowledge

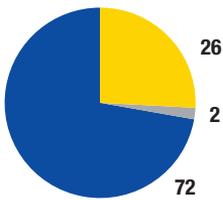
PROVISION OF INFORMATION (VET VS GE PARTICIPANTS)

At the time that you were making a decision about your education at upper secondary education, were you given information about vocational education? (% – EU)

Respondents who chose general education



Respondents who chose vocational education



- No
- Don't know
- Yes

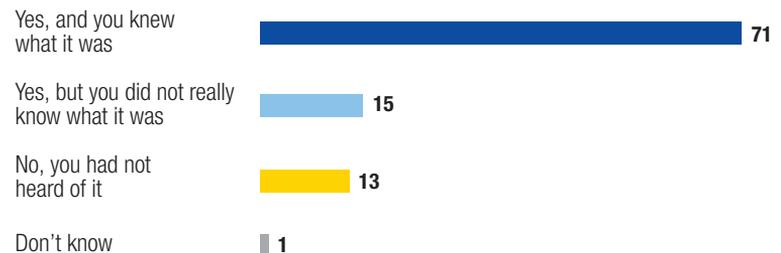
Survey respondents are generally familiar with vocational education. Most Europeans have heard about VET (86%). While they recognise its heterogeneity, linking it to different statements on when (initial versus continuous) and where it takes place (school versus work-based), VET is generally associated with an education that prepares you for a specific occupation and rarely connected to higher education, such as university.

Not perceiving VET as offering progression opportunities to higher education tends to reduce its attractiveness, and is a major argument for those who opted for general education; this conceptualisation is in line with the reason for choosing VET. Vocational education students tend to report that the likelihood of finding a job guided their choice of education at upper secondary level (46%), while general education students tend to report their choice as based on the possibility of continuing to higher education (45%). Breaking this general education/higher education duality might be a necessary condition to make VET more attractive.

The survey shows that many countries still encounter a negative public discourse on VET, reinforcing stereotypes and misconceptions; the potential of information and lifelong guidance is not fully exploited in these contexts. Looking at the survey results across countries, there is a strong correlation between the level of information people receive and their participation in VET programmes. Although we cannot assume direct causality, countries where more people are given information on VET have more vocational education participants. Less than half of those who opted for general education at upper secondary level say they were given information about vocational education, and one in four say that someone advised them against taking that option when they were deciding on their upper secondary education.

KNOWING ABOUT VET

Had you heard of vocational education and training before this interview? (% – EU)

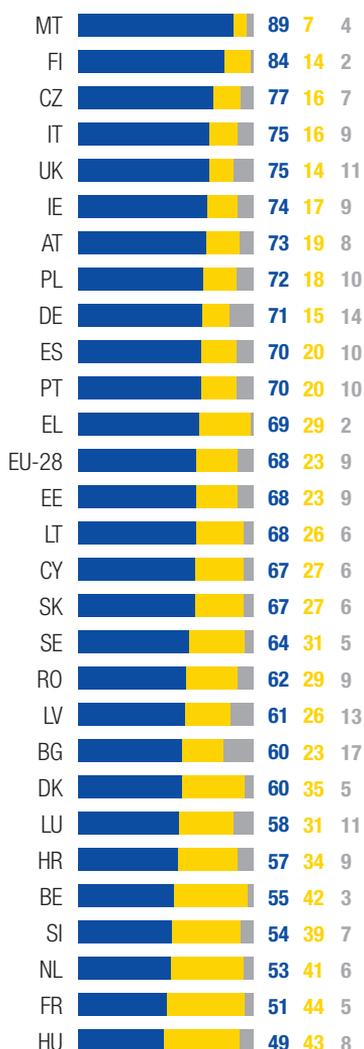




Attractiveness and access

IMAGE OF VET

Would you say that these days vocational education at upper secondary education for those aged 16-18 has a positive or negative image in [COUNTRY]? (% – EU)

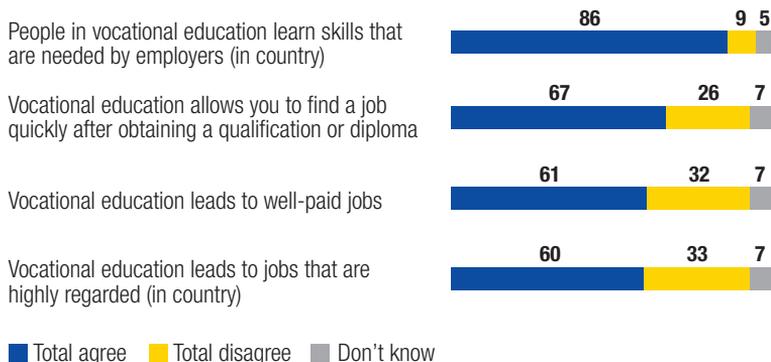


■ Total positive
■ Total negative
■ Don't know

The survey shows a generally positive citizen perception of VET in EU Member States. Around 68% of Europeans think that VET at upper secondary level has a positive image, especially in its capacity for providing job opportunities, preparing people for the world of work, and matching employer needs. EU citizens also generally agree that VET plays an important role in society: strengthening their country's economy, reducing unemployment, and tackling social exclusion. This is translated into significant support for national governments prioritising investment in vocational education at upper secondary stage. However, when asked to compare VET with general education, respondents tend to agree that general education has a more positive image than VET, that VET is mainly for students of lower academic performance, and that obtaining a VET qualification is usually easier than obtaining a qualification in general education. To address and reverse these perceptions it might be necessary to explore in depth their possible causes.

CORE BENEFITS OF VET IN RELATION TO LABOUR MARKET ISSUES (EU)

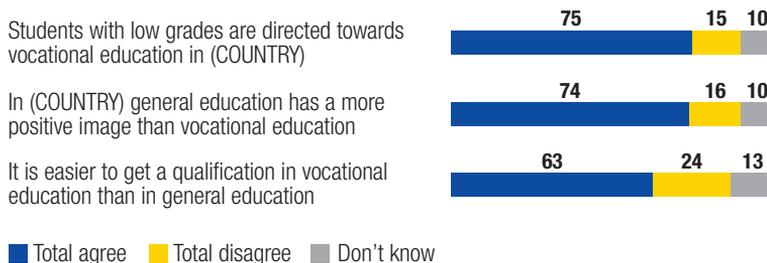
The following statements are about the jobs that people can get after vocational education at upper secondary education. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of them? (% – EU)



■ Total agree ■ Total disagree ■ Don't know

GENERAL PERCEPTIONS OF VET VS GENERAL EDUCATION (EU)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?



■ Total agree ■ Total disagree ■ Don't know

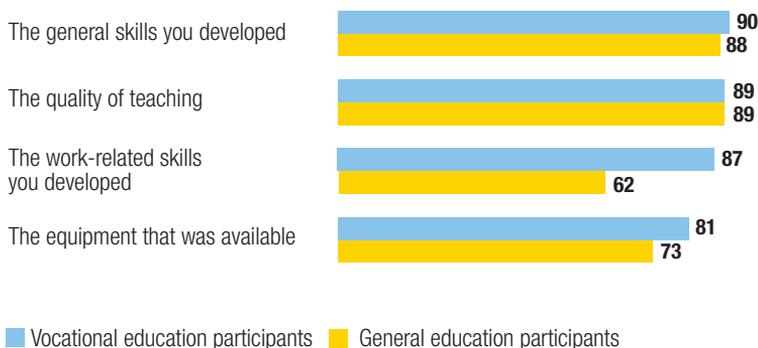


Experience and satisfaction

VET graduates are generally more satisfied with their learning outcomes than general education graduates; this is especially true of work-related skills developed. General education students are more satisfied when it comes to some of the key competences acquired during their upper secondary education, such as the ability to speak a foreign language and develop cultural awareness. However, the sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, as well as the ability to be creative, have the opposite pattern, with VET students showing more satisfaction than general education students.

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH ASPECTS OF EDUCATION (VET VS GE PARTICIPANTS)

How satisfied were you with the following aspects of the education you received at upper secondary education? (% – EU, total 'satisfied')

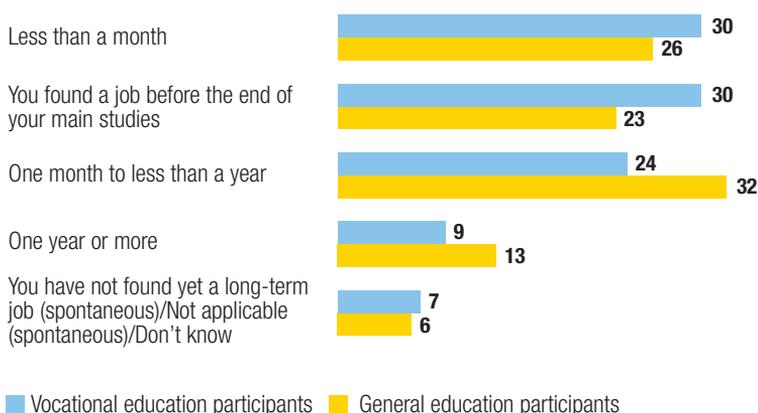


Outcomes and effectiveness

VET seems to be associated with positive labour market outcomes, particularly the perception that VET graduates at upper secondary level find a job more quickly than graduates of general education at upper secondary level and of higher education. VET graduates tend to need less time to find their first long-term job, while reporting similar career satisfaction as general education graduates.

TIME LAPSE BEFORE FINDING A JOB (VET VS GENERAL EDUCATION PARTICIPANTS)

How long did it take you to find your first long-term job after your main studies?



Opinions matter!

Opinions may be based on emotional factors and are not always the result of informed and rational estimations, but they play a major role in people's decision-making. Making vocational education and training (VET) more attractive and effective requires clear understanding of opinions. Identifying possible stereotypes and misconceptions shaping the concept of VET in people's minds, and understanding the challenges and limitations of VET experience from the end-users' point of view are essential to inform VET policy-making and allow it to become a first choice. Even the best VET policies can only be successful if they are implemented in a trusted environment and are well-received by individuals and societies.

The survey offers a wealth of information to help understand better citizens' views on VET. An accompanying Cedefop report provides a first view of the survey results. Further analysis will be carried out to develop our understanding of VET perceptions and how they are reached across Europe.



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