

Promoting innovation and excellence through specific VET centres

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 SPAIN

Timeline

2017 Implementation	2018 Implementation	2019 Implementation
2020 Implementation	2021 Implementation	2022 Implementation
2023 Implementation	2024 Implementation	2025 Implementation

ID number 28688

Description

Since September 2017, several collaboration agreements between the State Public Employment Service (Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal, SEPE), the education ministry, and 11 Autonomous Regions have been approved. The agreements allow for implementing work plans of 25 national reference centres (*Centros de Referencia Nacional*, CRNs), of the 52 planned. CRNs are public institutions specialised in the different professional branches, in charge of carrying out innovation and experimentation initiatives in the area of vocational training, as well as teacher and tutor training. They are in charge of piloting innovative training actions, analysing labour market and training needs, assessing professional certificates, promoting good practices in VET, and establishing collaboration agreements involving businesses, universities, and R&D agents. National reference centres provide training to different learner profiles, including employed and unemployed workers.

2017 Implementation

2018 Implementation

2019 Implementation

During 2019, new national reference centres (CRN in Spanish) have been added. Some are totally new and others already exist but are modifying their nature, making a total of 37 national reference centres in operation. Almost all sector branches have a reference centre.

Several of the social councils of the national reference centres have been set up and/or held meetings to take stock the actions of their work plans carried out and plan for 2020. These social councils (*consejo social* in Spanish) are planning and participation bodies of the productive sector in each centre, made up of representatives of the State and regional authorities, and the most representative business and union organisations.

Within their work plans, the following actions carried out in 2019 can be highlighted:

- (a) drawing up of two professional certificates in e-learning modality to be yet piloted: Organisation and projects of photovoltaic solar installations and

- Installation and furnishing projects;
- (b) 22 guides have been prepared for the delivery and assessment of professional certificates, which, together with the previous 100 available, can be found on SEPE's website. They provide a useful tool for trainers, with methodological strategies, procedures, methods and didactic resources to develop teaching/learning and assessment processes in the objective of supporting the monitoring and control of the delivery of professional certificate programmes;
- (c) 36 courses were carried out, with a total of 396 teachers/trainers passing, to meet methodological, technological and technical skills of teachers and trainers providing vocational training, as part of the CRN role in teacher and trainer CPD (continuing professional development) at State level;
- (d) 10 innovative nationwide courses were given to the unemployed, in the sector branch or area assigned to the centre, increasing the innovative or experimental character of the skills addressed;
- (e) several studies were carried out in different sector branches/areas for the updating of the Catalogue of training specialities (image and sound, oils, seeds and fats, fishing, electrical energy, renewable energies, livestock, canned vegetables);
- (f) other actions are related to the implementation of visibility and dissemination actions, like developing web pages, holding workshops, open days or forums to spread information and knowledge of the CRN scope, as well as master classes, competitions and discussion fora;
- (g) two CRN network meetings took place, one in April and the second in September, with the participation of sectoral joint structures. These are composed of the most representative employers' organisations and trade unions at the sector level to support skills anticipation and development of sectoral training in line with labour market needs).
- (h) the CRNs have begun a path of collaboration with the sectoral joint structures (EPS in Spanish), and there has already been a pilot experience for the diagnosis of training needs within the digital economy EPS and the national reference centres (CRNs) for IT development and communications and IT systems and telematics.

2020 Implementation

The transfer of powers between the ministries of education and labour has affected the national reference centres, the year 2020 being a transitional period. The new single system of vocational education and training (IVET and vocational training for employment in the education remit) includes the coordination of the whole network of VET centres; the reformulation of the role of the existing integrated VET centres and national reference centres will support this aim.

The (approved) work plans 2020 of the 32 national reference centres include several visibility actions and support for VET teachers and training providers in planning and delivering vocational training:

- (a) website design (20 CRNs), improving website performance (10 CRNs), positioning on social networks (19 CRNs), implementation of communication/marketing plans (10 CRNs);
- (b) two congresses, 27 technical meetings, eight open days, nine master classes and three national programmes and initiatives held;
- (c) 54 training courses for VET teachers and trainers/instructors in companies;
- (d) 32 innovative courses for unemployed people to be delivered nationwide;
- (e) 20 learning and assessment guides for professional certificate programmes;
- (f) setting up a network of key stakeholders that would identify training companies and specialised professionals in the sectors and elaborate sectoral maps in 11 national reference centres;
- (g) exchanges with State-wide sectoral entities and collaboration between NRCs of the same sectoral branch;
- (h) collaboration meetings (October and November 2020) with SEPE's Observatory of Occupations, the National Institute for Qualifications (INCUAL), the State Foundation for Training in Employment (FUNDAE) and the joint sectoral structures (EPS) with meetings held during October and November on the Diagnosis of

- training needs;
- (i) actions in 17 CRNs to identify new training needs with the commitment to develop 57 new programmes related to the training needs of the productive sector.

2021 Implementation

Two new national reference centres have been created in the reporting period, one in the professional areas of accommodation, catering and games of chance in the hospitality and tourism sector (in Andalusia), and the other in the professional areas of metallic construction and foundry in the metalworking sector (in the Principality of Asturias).

National reference centres carried out different activities according to their approved plans. In December, the education ministry organised a congress of national reference centres for vocational training, which was also attended by the leading VET social partners. National reference centre managers shared their experiences of training delivery, information and vocational guidance, international programmes and validation of professional competences. In addition, different working groups were held to design joint activities for the 2022 annual work plan of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

2022 Implementation

The Organic Act 3/2022 of 31 March on the organisation and integration of Vocational Training, strengthens the connection of the National Reference Centres with the productive fabric of their environment to meet the needs of the specific and highly qualified professional profiles of the new economy. Spain continued to strengthen the network of reference centres in vocational training, in an economic scenario based on sustainability and digitisation, through innovation and applied research.

The network of National Reference Centres reached 40 throughout Spain with the addition of the Andalusian Integral Training Centre of the Mijas Leisure Industries (Málaga) and the transformation of the San Blas de Teruel Integrated Public Vocational Training Centre into a reference centre for the vocational training system of the Safety and Environment branch.

With the inclusion of the mentioned centres, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEFP) responded to the need for a reference centre in the vocational training system specialised in the hotel business and catering, and environmental management sectors. Reference centres, which carry out innovation actions, research and training, help to identify new professional qualifications, promote networks of collaboration with companies, or participate in procedures for the assessment and accreditation of professional competences, amongst others.

Recognising the rapid industrial evolution in digitalisation, automation, and the green economy, Spain's NIP and Organic Act 3/2022 established a network of vocational training centres of excellence based on smart specialisation, aimed at fostering innovation, applied research, and entrepreneurship in various productive sectors.

In July 2022, the education ministry launched a call worth EUR 50 million to create a state network of VET centres of excellence to equip VET students with essential skills and prepare them to lead in innovation and adapt to future workforce needs. This investment, coming from component 20 of the Recovery, Transformation, and Resilience Plan, was allocated to finance the qualification and integration plans of the selected centres. These plans are to be implemented over a maximum period of three years and focus on several areas: the methodological and digital transformation of the centre's spaces and equipment, the incorporation of applied disruptive technology, the training of teachers at the state level, the development of innovation projects and applied research or networking, amongst others.

In addition, these centres are expected to foster applied research and collaborative projects with companies, enabling students to work on real-world challenges and develop solutions that can be applied in professional environments. These VET centres

are also expected to act as regional innovation hubs and promote entrepreneurship by providing training on how to set up businesses, access funding and scale up innovative ideas. By involving local businesses and industry, these centres aim to create strong public-private partnerships that ensure students' training remains relevant and directly applicable to the labour market.

Public Administrations responsible for Vocational Training, which will be the recipients of all the funds and responsible for their justification, will be eligible for these aids. These funds will be transferred in their entirety to the selected centres to finance their plans and projects for their integration into the network of excellence

2023 Implementation

The education ministry launched the second call for proposals in September 2023, with the aim of consolidating the new VET model connected to the different productive sectors and based on applied research, sustainability and entrepreneurship.

In the first call, the education ministry selected 44 public centres from the 17 Autonomous Communities to promote innovative ecosystems, new methodologies and the latest technologies at the service of VET. The centres received funding of up to EUR 41.6 million from component 20 of the national recovery and resilience plan. This funding was aimed at helping centres to collaborate in identifying the needs of the professional profiles of the productive sectors and in the curricular revisions of the related training provision. The centres are intended to maintain close collaboration with the companies in their environment, business and trade union associations, training centres and third sector entities to become a driving force for innovation throughout the territory and to promote internationalisation.

In December 2023, the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports selected another 21 new public centres from among the candidates who applied in September 2023 to join the state network of centres of excellence in vocational training. With these additions, the network grew to 66 centres of excellence.

2024 Implementation

In July 2024, the education ministry launched a call for aid for those centres already integrated into the network in the 2022 and 2023 calls.

The network of centres of excellence comprised strategic sectors such as aeronautical, agri-food, audiovisual, automobile, cybersecurity, building and energy sustainability, social and care economy, renewable energies, automated manufacturing, catering, artificial intelligence and big data, maritime-fisheries, mechatronics, chemistry, sanitary, information technology, transport and logistics, and tourism.

The network, consisting of 66 centres of excellence, provided training to 19 250 students, 111 courses were carried out for 3 330 teachers, and 175 innovation projects were implemented. All this with a total budget of EUR 77.4 million, of which EUR 15 million corresponds to 2024.

2025 Implementation

From its launch until June 2025, the network of centres of excellence had received funding that has enabled the development of 129 courses for 3 975 teachers and 309 innovation projects.

In October 2025, the education ministry opened a new call for centres to join the state network of centres of excellence for VET and to subsidise ongoing development plans. Centres join through a plan lasting up to three years.

The 2025 call aimed to establish a network of educational centres focused on innovation and quality in VET by developing plans and projects that promote digital and methodological transformation, innovation, applied research and inter-centre collaboration. Projects must be aligned with strategic sectors such as aeronautics,

audiovisual, sustainable construction, transport and logistics, maritime-fishing, artificial intelligence and big data.

The purpose of the grants is to finance modality 1, in accordance with Article 5.3.a) of Order EFP/717/2022, of 22 July.

The number of centres, as well as the sectors and subsectors, were:

- (a) aeronautics (1 centre);
- (b) audiovisual (1 centre);
- (c) construction and energy sustainability (2 centres);
- (d) transport and logistics (2 centres);
- (e) maritime-fishing (1 centre);
- (f) artificial intelligence and big data (2 centres).

The call for applications falls under Investment 2, 'Digital Transformation of Vocational Training', of Component 20 of the Spanish Government's recovery and resilience plan.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (until 2023)
- Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports
- Autonomous Communities (CC.AA.)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices

Young people (15-29 years old)

Adult learners

Unemployed and jobseekers

Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment

Education professionals

Teachers

Trainers

Entities providing VET

Companies

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies

Optimising VET funding

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Further developing national quality assurance systems

Establishing and developing skills intelligence systems

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Diversifying modes of learning: face-to-face, digital and/or blended learning; adaptable/flexible training formats

Developing and updating learning resources and materials

Supporting Centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs)

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers

Supporting teachers and trainers for green transition and sustainability

Supporting teachers and trainers for and through digital

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET as a driver for innovation and growth preparing for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand

VET as an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training and skills

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Establishing a new lifelong learning culture - relevance of continuing VET and digitalisation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[National Reference Centres](#)

[The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training allocates 50 million euros to start up the network of Vocational Training centres of excellence \[El Ministerio de Educacion y FP destina 50 millones de euros a la puesta en marcha de la red de centros de e](#)

[Order EFP/717/2022, of July 22, by which the state network of centres of excellence in vocational training is created](#)

[Ministerio de Educacion, Formacion Profesional y Deportes](#)

[Calls for consolidation of existing centres](#)

[The 2025 Call for Proposals for the Creation of a State Network of Centres of Excellence in Vocational Training](#)

[Financial support for the state network of centres of excellence in vocational training \(2025\)](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

New approach to training needs anticipation

In order to set out Law 30/2015, with the change of government in 2018, a new approach started to develop, which seeks all major stakeholders to work together:

 SPAIN

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

2025 Implementation

Review of the national catalogue of occupational standards

During the fourth quarter of 2018, the National Institute of Qualifications (INCUAL) carried out a review of the entire national catalogue of occupational standards.

 SPAIN

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Promoting innovation and excellence through specific VET centres: Spain. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

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