

Structural changes in VET pathways

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 POLAND

Timeline

2016 Legislative process

2017 Approved/Agreed

2018 Implementation

2019 Implementation

2020 Completed

ID number 28488

Description

In December 2016, the education ministry introduced a structural reform of the education system, influencing progression routes within the education and training system. The changes aim to enhance responsiveness of VET to the needs of the modern economy and include:

- (a) prolonging upper secondary VET programmes (from 2019/20, of five-year instead of four-year duration);
- (b) the introduction of a 'two-stage' sectoral school (*dwustopniowa branżowa szkoła*), consisting of:
 - (i) a first stage sectoral school, replacing the basic vocational school, which will offer a three-year VET programme, enabling students to attain an occupational vocational qualification diploma consisting of one qualification. Following this, learners can continue their education in the second year of study at a general upper secondary school for adults or in the two-year second stage sectoral school.
 - (ii) the two-year second stage sectoral school, enabling further development of the VET qualification attained in the first stage. This leads to an occupational vocational qualifications diploma consisting of two qualifications. Completing a second stage will allow learners to enter higher education after passing the secondary school examination (*matura*).

The regulations modifying the VET core curriculum and establishing the new classification of occupations after the structural reform were adopted in March 2017.

The Law of 22 November 2018 set the framework for the functioning of the newly-established second stage sectoral programmes, limited general education in particular, and organised vocational training in the form of vocational qualification courses.

2016 Legislative process

2017 Approved/Agreed

2018 Implementation

The first stage sectoral schools were introduced in the 2017/18 school year.

2019 Implementation

From the 2019/20 school year, upper secondary VET programmes had a five-year instead of four-year duration.

2020 Completed

The two-year second stage sectoral schools were introduced in the 2020/21 school year (they started operating in September 2020).

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of National Education (until 2021)
- Ministry of National Education

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Permeability between IVET and CVET and general and vocational pathways, academic and professional higher education

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Act of 14 December 2016, the Education Law \(Journal of Laws 2017, item 59 with further amendment\)](#)

[Ministry of Education rationale for the Education Law Act 2016](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Classification of occupations and VET core curricula

The Regulation modifying the VET core curricula and the Regulation establishing the new

classification of occupations were adopted in March 2017. They provide the occupations and curricula for the new structure of vocational education.

 POLAND

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2018 **Approved/Agreed**

2018 law reforming VET

The new act:

 POLAND

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2018 **Approved/Agreed**

Supporting ancillary occupations for specific target groups

The Law of 22 November 2018 supports the setting up of the so-called 'ancillary occupations'. Ancillary occupations are targeted at people with minor intellectual disabilities.

 POLAND

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Structural changes in VET pathways: Poland. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28488>

