

Strategic boost to VET



Timeline



ID number 28187

Background

In June 2018, the government in office committed itself to consolidating a more prestigious and up-to-date model of vocational training which would play a decisive role in the modernisation of the Spanish productive system, supporting equity of training opportunities, and would be valued across Europe.

In October of 2018 the Government presented the Strategic plan for vocational training of the education system to the social partners.

The political situation since then, with two general elections taking place, delayed the formal launching of the Strategic plan for vocational training, though the roadmap was set and specific measures are being implemented gradually, when possible.

Objectives

The Strategic plan for vocational training aims to make VET more responsive to the needs of the productive system, meeting skills demands in a quick and prospective way.

Description

The new government, in power since June 2018, reorganised the administration. The change of name in the education administration state, now the Education and Vocational Training ministry (previously Education, Culture and Sports), reflects the new strategy to promote VET. In October 2018, the Government presented the Strategic plan for vocational training under education authorities. In February 2019, the Council of Ministers published the Agenda for change (Agenda del Cambio).

The agenda includes measures to improve training and human capital, with two initiatives of particular relevance for VET. The first is a Strategic Plan for Dual Vocational Training, according to which, in each sector, companies would take a major role in the design of occupational standards and related training as well as in the training of students and the updating of the teaching staff.

A second key measure is the reform of the Catalogue of occupational standards to better meet the labour market needs of the 21st-century economy. The idea is to update, in coordination with social partners and with private sector involvement, the contents of this catalogue as a basis for the subsequent design and/or update of professional certificates and current VET diplomas (further developing cybersecurity, collaborative robotics, big data, 2D and 3D manufacturing, extended reality and virtual reality, among others).

2018 Legislative process

2019 Approved/Agreed

At the end of November 2019, the Council of Ministers approved the first Strategic plan for vocational training of the education system 2019-22 which aims to consolidate the modernisation of this training stage.

The plan aims at having an updated qualification catalogue and a widespread training offer; improving access and making VET more flexible; increasing recognition of adults' basic and professional skills; and improving teacher training. This is a first step that will be completed with a future regulation on the general organisation of VET and the regulation of dual VET within education.

This first strategic plan is structured around nine strategic axes or areas and 16 objectives. In turn, the objectives are broken down into a series of lines of action with concrete measures:

AXIS 1: involvement of public authorities, productive sectors, trade union representatives and other social partners;

AXIS 2: proactive detection of the training needs of the productive and service sectors;

AXIS 3: streamlining of the mechanisms for designing qualifications and vocational training offers;

AXIS 4: flexibility in the organisation of vocational training qualifications;

AXIS 5: expansion of the education system VET offer, actions, initiatives and training modalities that aid obtaining a VET qualification;

AXIS 6: accessibility to the recognition of the skills acquired by means other than formal training;

AXIS 7: improvement in updating and continuing training for VET teachers;

AXIS 8: development of an integrated system of vocational guidance;

AXIS 9: development and implementation of a system of evaluation and quality of VET teachings in the education system.

This plan follows on from the work carried out over the last 13 months by the government together with the social partners and the business sector. It incorporates the Sustainable development goals of Agenda 2030 and the European Commission's New skills agenda for Europe, which includes actions to ensure that EU citizens benefit from the right training, skills and support.

The plan, which will continue until 2022, includes a control panel for its permanent monitoring. It establishes achievement indicators and the responsible authority for each axis, objective, and measure.

In January 2020, the new government created a new general secretariat under the Ministry for Education and Vocational Training, for VET matters in education and labour.

2020 Implementation

With the formation of a new government at the beginning of 2020, there was a change

of powers between the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, which affects vocational training.

All training actions within the national system of vocational qualifications (*Catálogo Nacional de Cualificaciones Profesionales*, CNCP) are placed under the coordination of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training: IVET programmes in the education system to acquire a vocational qualification (VET diploma); training programmes (including those offered through national and regional calls for subsidies) aimed at unemployed and employed workers to obtain a professional certificate (*Certificados de profesionalidad*); and dual VET delivery (apprenticeship contracts offered within and outside the education system, other alternance training schemes in the education remit).

The Ministry of Labour and Social Economy has overall responsibility for training programmes leading to vocational certificates included in the Catalogue of training actions of the State Public Employment Service (training organised by companies for their employees as well as other subsidised training schemes); training aiming at public administration staff; other alternance training schemes; training actions with a commitment to hiring.

A new plan for the modernisation of VET was presented in July 2020. It is based on the concept of a single vocational training system and encompasses 11 strategic areas with the aim of creating an ecosystem for economic revival based on a commitment to human capital and talent. It has a budget of EUR 1 500 million, the largest VET plan Spain has ever had, which may be increased with funds from the European Union's recovery plan. Overall, it foresees 200 000 new training places in IVET schools over the next 4 years (60 000 have already been created by 2020). The plan aims to:

- (a) facilitate individualised training itineraries, through modularisation of qualifications and personalised training paths to allow learners to enrol in one or more modules, depending on their education and employment needs, without having to take all the modules that make up a degree or a specialisation course;
- (b) offer *à la carte* training for companies, through programmes for their workforces in collaboration with the industrial sector;
- (c) strengthen dual VET in the education system, support company engagement in each sector, including (micro-) SMEs, and extending the duration of the on-the-job training module. The drafting of a new VET act, which will include a specific dual VET regulation, has already started in 2020;
- (d) promote vocational training in depopulated areas by multiplying the non-regulated online training programmes aimed at people over 18 years of age in rural areas, to reach up to 3 000 municipalities (from a total of around 8000) through an online training platform (Aulas Mentor). In 2020, new 750 Aulas Mentor opened in towns with fewer than 5 000 inhabitants and a new call to open further Aulas Mentor was released in November 2020;
- (e) multiply the training offer for qualifications related to new technologies and digitisation, adding a training module on digital skills to all existing VET qualifications and ensure adequate teacher training;
- (f) create entrepreneurship classrooms (resources and support to start up an entrepreneurship project) in a total of 1 850 VET centres throughout the country;
- (g) transform VET classrooms into applied technology spaces and encourage collaboration and synergies; a new platform, FPConecta, will support the relationship and exchange among VET centres, companies, social partners and education administrations;
- (h) foster links between education institutions and centres and companies through calls for innovation projects, generating networks, creating technology hubs and clusters around vocational training centres and companies.

The updating of qualifications and the creation of new ones has continued, in accordance with axes 2 and 4 of the first Strategic plan for VET, for the incorporation of new contents associated with key competences (languages, digital competence, internationalisation, entrepreneurship, applied creative thinking, innovation in SMEs, ecological transition).

The general State budget (approved in December 2020) included a fund associated with the Recovery and resilience mechanism in education. It comprises EUR 556 million allocated to a '*secondary education, vocational training and official language schools*' programme, of which 370 million are allocated to the plan for the modernisation of VET.

In October, the Sectoral Conference of the national system of qualifications and vocational training for employment was set up. This is the new body for cooperation between the General State Administration and the Autonomous Communities, to coordinate policies on vocational training for employment.

2021 Implementation

The implementation of the plan for the modernisation of VET continued. One of its main actions was developing a new VET regulation (draft Organic Act on the organisation of the system of qualifications and vocational training), which has already passed Congress and is pending processing by the Senate as the final step to its approval and implementation. This draft law on VET would replace Law 5/2002 on qualifications and vocational education and training.

The law establishes a single, modular and flexible offer of formal vocational training aimed at students and workers (both employed and unemployed) and a new State register of vocational training, accessible to all citizens to obtain their individual training and professional experience records. It organises VET into training itineraries and progression through five ascending grades (A, B, C, D and E). The new structure foresees a whole range of training courses of different lengths and learning volumes, ranging from smaller units or microtraining (grade A) to degrees and specialisation courses (grades D and E). In this way, each person will be able to design and draw their own itineraries adapted to their professional expectations and labour needs.

The entire formal VET provision will be cumulative, certifiable and accreditable, enabling students, the employed and unemployed to progress in their training pathway leading to accreditations, professional certificates, diplomas and professional masters. Grade A would be the lowest offer of the new national vocational training system leading to a partial competence accreditation on the achieved learning outcomes. Passing all the partial accreditations of competence of a module will lead to obtaining the corresponding certificate of professional competence or grade B of training, referring to a professional module included in the national catalogue of occupational standards. Grade C brings together several modules and leads to the award of a professional certificate. Grade D corresponds to the vocational training diploma programmes (basic, intermediate and higher levels) and will include an intermodular project and innovation, applied research and entrepreneurship. Grade E will consist of specialisation courses lasting between 300 and 800 hours.

The law regulates knowledge of foreign languages and the internationalisation of the vocational training system. It provides for the creation of double degrees as a result of international agreements, which makes possible the simultaneous acquisition of a VET qualification from both countries. It especially incorporates bilingualism in vocational training and foreign language training for the active population, linked to the productive sectors. Aspects such as participation in international projects and organisations are regulated and training and innovation projects between Spanish and foreign centres and alliances to carry out stays in another country during training are included.

Other areas of progress are related to: validation of skills acquired through professional experience, with the approval in March of a Royal Decree that modifies the previous regulations to speed up this procedure; funding distribution to the regions for more training places in the 2020/21 and 2021/22 academic years; developing new qualifications, with the launch of new vocational training qualifications and specialisation courses.

To support measures included in the plan for the modernisation of VET, the education ministry, following the criteria of the territorial cooperation programmes, approved and

distributed funds to the Autonomous Communities for increasing the number of VET places, enabling validation processes and VET teacher training. In June, the government approved the distribution to the Autonomous Regions of more than EUR 300 million from the Recovery and Resilience Facility to boost vocational training:

- (a) resizing the vocational training offer during the 2021/22 academic year through the creation of 38 789 places, to reach 135 000 people within 3 years, to add to the more than 60 000 places created last academic year (EUR 72.72 million);
- (b) an additional EUR 61.1 million were approved in December for 3 285 more places in the eight Autonomous Communities that asked for further funding. In total, added to the funds already distributed, the government will have financed the creation of 42 074 vocational training places this year in response to the growing demand from students. In the academic year 2020/21, the number of students in vocational training grew by +9.3% (for the basic, intermediate and higher levels) and in the academic year 2021/22 the number of students exceeded 1 million for the first time, an increase of 4.1% over the previous year;
- (c) conversion of classrooms into applied technology spaces (*Ateca* classrooms) (EUR 12.14 million), with the expectation of reaching a total of 638 spaces in 3 years (220 such spaces were created in 2021);
- (d) funds for the creation of 457 new entrepreneurship classrooms (496 are already in place) to enable students to set up their business projects and receive professional guidance (EUR 4.76 million);
- (e) within the action line on digitalisation and sustainability in the productive sectors, 25 000 teachers received training (EUR 2.43 million);
- (f) implementation of bilingual VET programmes in the regions (EUR 93 million);
- (g) funds to the regions for implementing professional certificate training programmes for the employed and unemployed workforce; an initiative now developed within the education remit, following the transfer of some powers from the labour ministry (over EUR 680 million);
- (h) the Council of Ministers approved funds in November for upskilling and reskilling activities of the labour force, with a particular focus on those sectors with the highest number of workers in temporary lay-off plans (*expedientes de regulación temporal de empleo - ERTE*), the care sector and areas at risk of depopulation (EUR 87.7 million);
- (i) the funds earmarked for areas of depopulation and care (EUR 24.5 million), will enable the training of 44 662 workers or jobseekers, while the EUR 63.2 million earmarked for strategic sectors will enable the training of 160 000 more. The training actions will prioritise training in emerging and rapidly evolving skills to create employment. They will also focus on training in those sectors that will generate jobs in the future as a result of the expected evolution in economic and social conditions;
- (j) within the territorial cooperation programmes for vocational training initiatives, EUR 22 416 130 were allocated in September to the Autonomous Communities for the following actions: promoting dual vocational training (EUR 11 million); improving the quality of the vocational training system (EUR 5 million) by funding innovation projects for students, developing computer applications and databases applicable to quality actions and improving the skills of intermediate-level students; and the development and mobility of VET teachers (EUR 6 million) to ensure that they properly train students and help them in their transition to the world of work.

2022 Implementation

Royal Decree 62/2022 of January complements existing legislation (RD 1147/2011 on the provision of vocational training in the education system and RD 34/2008 regulating professional certificates previously offered in the employment remit only). It sets flexible requirements for the delivery in the education system of any type of vocational training linked to the national catalogue of occupational standards.

Education authorities may design or authorise modular courses of shorter duration than VET diplomas and specialisation courses. Such courses may give access to vocational training certificates, certificates of professional competence or partial competence accreditations, depending on whether they correspond to several

diploma's vocational modules in the first case; a single vocational module in the second case; or several learning outcomes in the third case (grades C, B and A respectively, according to Organic Act 3/2022). The vocational training certificate may be composed of modules from the same or different occupational standards/diplomas.

The aim of the new Organic Act 3/2022 on the organisation and integration of vocational training, passed in March, is to make vocational training a lever of economic and social transformation for the country. The calendar for the implementation of the new Organic Act, which will mark the times for its regulatory development, has not yet been published.

The actions of the plan for the modernisation of VET have been included in the national recovery and resilience plan, a key EU instrument to emerge stronger and more resilient from the current crisis.

In order to meet the objective of the plan for the modernisation of VET, the ministry of education and vocational training has defined the following strategic actions under component 20:

- (a) the conversion of classrooms into spaces of applied technology (action included in Spain's NIP). Investment: EUR 13 709 000. Milestone: A total of 206 classrooms are to be converted in the current financial year. The final objective is to convert 638 classrooms by 2024;
- (b) entrepreneurship classrooms in VET (action included in Spain's NIP). Investment: EUR 6 635 000. Milestone: For the current financial year, a total of 1 327 classrooms are to be financed, 374 newly created classrooms, added to the 496 classrooms created with funds from the 2020 financial year and the 457 ones created with funds from the 2021 financial year;
- (c) resizing the supply of VET (action included in Spain's NIP). Investment: EUR 103 890 000. Milestone: for the current financial year, 55 408 places are planned. The final objective is to create 135 000 places within 3 years;
- (d) transformation of intermediate and higher vocational training programmes into a bilingual offer (action included in Spain's NIP). Investment: EUR 89 100 000. Milestone: For the current financial year, 1 100 groups of students are expected to be provided with bilingual education, with particular attention being paid to the training of teachers.

Nearly EUR 393 million, from the 2022 education ministry budget, were earmarked for the territorial cooperation programme to implement these actions.

With respect to referencing the Spanish qualifications system (MECU) to the EQF which is also included in Spain's NIP, the work was very advanced as the Spanish qualification framework for lifelong learning was published in April 2022.

To complete the referencing, the MECU must pass the 'compatibility certification' process with the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning, which entails the evaluation of this regulation by international experts.

2023 Implementation

Following the approval of the Organic Act 3/2022, Royal Decree 659/2023, of 18 July, developed the organisation of the Spanish VET system, contributing to the effective development of the different actions supporting the strategic boost to VET in the country.

Royal Decree 659/2023 plays a pivotal role in improving VET in Spain. It implements several key measures such as the accreditation of competences acquired through work experience or the boost to the number of VET available places, collectively aiming to create a more responsive, inclusive, and high-quality vocational training system in Spain, better preparing individuals for the evolving demands of the labour market.

Actions, such as the implementation of Ateca classrooms or the implementation of a dual VET system for all grades C and D, were taken to improve the quality of vocational training centres aimed at teachers and students, and to reinforce the

relationship with the labour environment, with special attention to intermediate level VET, with a global budget of EUR 43 448 012.89. In 2023, the budget amounted to EUR 25.700 million.

Several initiatives have been introduced for the training, development and mobility of VET teachers.

Investment in vocational training has increased significantly, from EUR 187.508 million in 2018 to EUR 1 219 million in 2023, that is, by 550.12%. Over the same period, funding to the Autonomous Communities for territorial cooperation programmes increased by 774.97%, from EUR 78.7 million in 2018 to EUR 688.6 million in 2023.

With respect to referencing the Spanish qualifications system (MECU) to the EQF, which is also included in Spain's NIP, the work kept advancing after the publication of the Spanish qualification framework for lifelong learning in April 2022. The competition of the referencing was on the procedure to pass the 'compatibility certification' process with the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning, which entails the evaluation of this regulation by international experts.

2024 Implementation

Measures to make VET more responsive to the needs of the productive system continued:

- (a) implementation of the new VET model set in the Organic Act 3/2022 and developed in Royal Decree 659/2023 started in the 2024/25 academic year;
- (b) bilingual courses were incorporated, in addition to the inclusion of the professional English module in the curriculum of the Grade D courses, starting in the 2024/25 academic year.
- (c) from 1 January 2024, VET students have been registered for Social Security contributions as assimilated to employees, allowing them to begin their contribution career, generating future rights and increasing coverage in the event of an accident. By 2025, this measure is expected to reach more than one million young people, the totality of VET learners.
- (d) information and guidance units (UOP) continued providing advice on training and professional itineraries and accreditation of professional competences acquired through work experience and other non-formal training since 2023 and with a budget of EUR 2 850 million:
 - (i) 100 career guidance units have been created;
 - (ii) 19 290 people have been assisted;
 - (iii) 850 collective orientation and information activities;
 - (iv) 11 710 people referred to the procedure for the accreditation of professional competences.
- (e) introduction of two new master's diplomas in vocational education and training, focused on web application development and e-commerce.
- (f) four VET hubs were established for the audiovisual, aerospace, green energy, and railways sectors. These hubs are part of the strategy to boost VET by fostering strong partnerships between the government, businesses, and educational institutions to ensure that VET provision is aligned with labour market needs, increasing students' employability.

Four Royal Decrees (for basic, intermediate and higher VET diploma programmes and specialisation courses) on the regulatory development of the Organic Act 3/2022 were published in 2024, completing the implementation of the dual system, both in intermediate and higher VET.

In the 2024/25 school year, all intermediate and higher VET programmes included new core modules tailored to each training offer and linked to essential aspects of the current economy. That is the case of the following modules: Digitalisation applied to the production system, Sustainability adapted to the production system, Technical English, and Personal itinerary for employability I and II.

The formal referencing process of the Spanish qualifications system (MECU) to the EQF was completed, and the 'compatibility certification' process was passed.

2025 Implementation

The number of ATECA classrooms reached 1 434. This is one of the strategic actions aimed at incorporating digitalisation into the vocational training system.

Funding was allocated for the creation of 1 785 entrepreneurship classrooms, distributed throughout all the autonomous communities.

On March 12, 2025, the General Secretariat for Vocational Training published a resolution detailing an agreement from 10 December 2024. This agreement enables EUR 7 million in funds, managed by autonomous communities, to be distributed for reskilling and upskilling initiatives targeting the workforce. The initiatives focus on professional qualifications in key sectors, support for people, and assistance in areas at risk of depopulation. This effort is part of Component 20 of the National recovery and resilience plan (RRP), which aims to improve vocational training.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (until 2023)
- Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices

Young people (15-29 years old)

Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)

Learners with migrant background, including refugees

Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers

Learners with disabilities

Adult learners

Older workers and employees (55 - 64 years old)

Unemployed and jobseekers

Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment

Low-skilled/qualified persons

Learners from other groups at risk of exclusion (minorities, people with fewer opportunities due to geographical location or social-economic disadvantaged position)

Education professionals

Teachers

Trainers

School leaders

Adult educators

Guidance practitioners

Entities providing VET

Companies

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

VET providers (all kinds)

Other stakeholders

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

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 infrastructure

Modernising infrastructure for vocational training

Improving digital infrastructure of VET provision

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Using learning-outcome-based approaches and modularisation

Acquiring key competences

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Developing and applying qualifications smaller/shorter than full

Learners' possibilities of accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

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

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European and international dimensions of VET

VET internationalisation strategies

Mobility of learners and staff

Transnational VET initiatives, including joint VET programmes

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

Flexibility and progression opportunities at the core of VET

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

Sustainability - a green link in VET

European Education and Training Area and international VET

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Plan for the modernisation of VET](#)

[Royal Decree 62/2022, of 25 January, on making the requirements for the provision of vocational training leading to professional certificates more flexible](#)

[Royal Decree 1147/2011, of 29 July, which establishes the general organisation of vocational training in the education system](#)

[Organic Act 3/2022, of 31 March, on the organisation and integration of Vocational Training](#)

[Signature to launch several VET hubs](#)

[Initial report on the status of the vocational training system](#)

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

[Authorisation for the territorial distribution and allocation criteria for the funds managed by the Autonomous Communities for upskilling and reskilling](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

VET system evaluation and quality assurance

Systematic evaluation plans are essential elements in ensuring quality in the design of public policies.

 SPAIN

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET 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

2025 Implementation

Teacher training through digital environment

The National Institute of Education Technologies and Teacher Training (INTEF) is also responsible for the integration of ICT in non-university education.

 SPAIN

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

2025 Implementation

Curricula update supporting key competences

A 2015 Ministerial Decree ECD/65/2015 provides for the revision and update of key competences in curricula. The Decree describes the relationship between competences, content and evaluation criteria for primary, compulsory and secondary education.

 SPAIN

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

2025 Implementation

Raising employability for ICT and the digital economy

There are multiple initiatives to raise the skills of young people and workers (employed or unemployed) in ICT and the digital economy. Different public bodies are involved, in some cases in partnership with industry.

 SPAIN

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Validation arrangements

Within the General Council for Vocational Training, a working group has been set up to review the results obtained during the almost 10 years of implementation of this procedure. Data are collected through a platform established by INCUAL.

 SPAIN

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

2025 Implementation

Integrated career guidance system

In the education system, the process towards an integrated vocational guidance system was initiated in 2018. A working group was set within the General Council for Vocational Training, with the aim of laying down basic principles and legal provisions.

 SPAIN

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2023 Completed

The Spanish Employment activation strategies

Employment authorities have reflected the policy priority given to dual VET and apprenticeships, including them as structural objectives in the 2017-20 Spanish

employment activation strategy approved in December 2017.

 SPAIN

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Completed

The Dual VET reform

Dual VET is being developed in cooperation with the Autonomous Communities.

 SPAIN

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

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