CEDEFOP

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Spotlight on VET CYPRUS

Vocational education and training systems in Europe

2023

VET in Cyprus

The vocational education and training (VET) system of Cyprus is constantly being developed to respond better to the needs of the labour market.

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth has overall responsibility for developing and implementing education policy. The Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance has overall responsibility for labour and social policy and the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA) plays an important role in vocational training.

VET is available at secondary and tertiary education levels.

At upper secondary level, general education programmes (78% of enrolments in 2022/23) are with lyceums, including evening lyceums; VET programmes (22% of enrolments in 2022/23) are with technical schools, including evening technical schools. Horizontal and vertical movement across upper secondary education is possible upon successful completion of specific examinations. Technical schools offer two types of 3-year programmes, theoretical and practical, leading to EQF level 4 school-leaving certificates, equivalent to those of secondary general education schools. Specialisations are selected in the first year. Graduates are eligible for admission to universities and other tertiary education institutions in Cyprus and abroad. Both streams are school-based: they combine general education subjects with VET subjects and integrate practical training in enterprises at the end of the first and second years. However, the theoretical stream is mostly for those who wish to continue to higher education and the practical one is mostly for those oriented more towards entering the labour market.

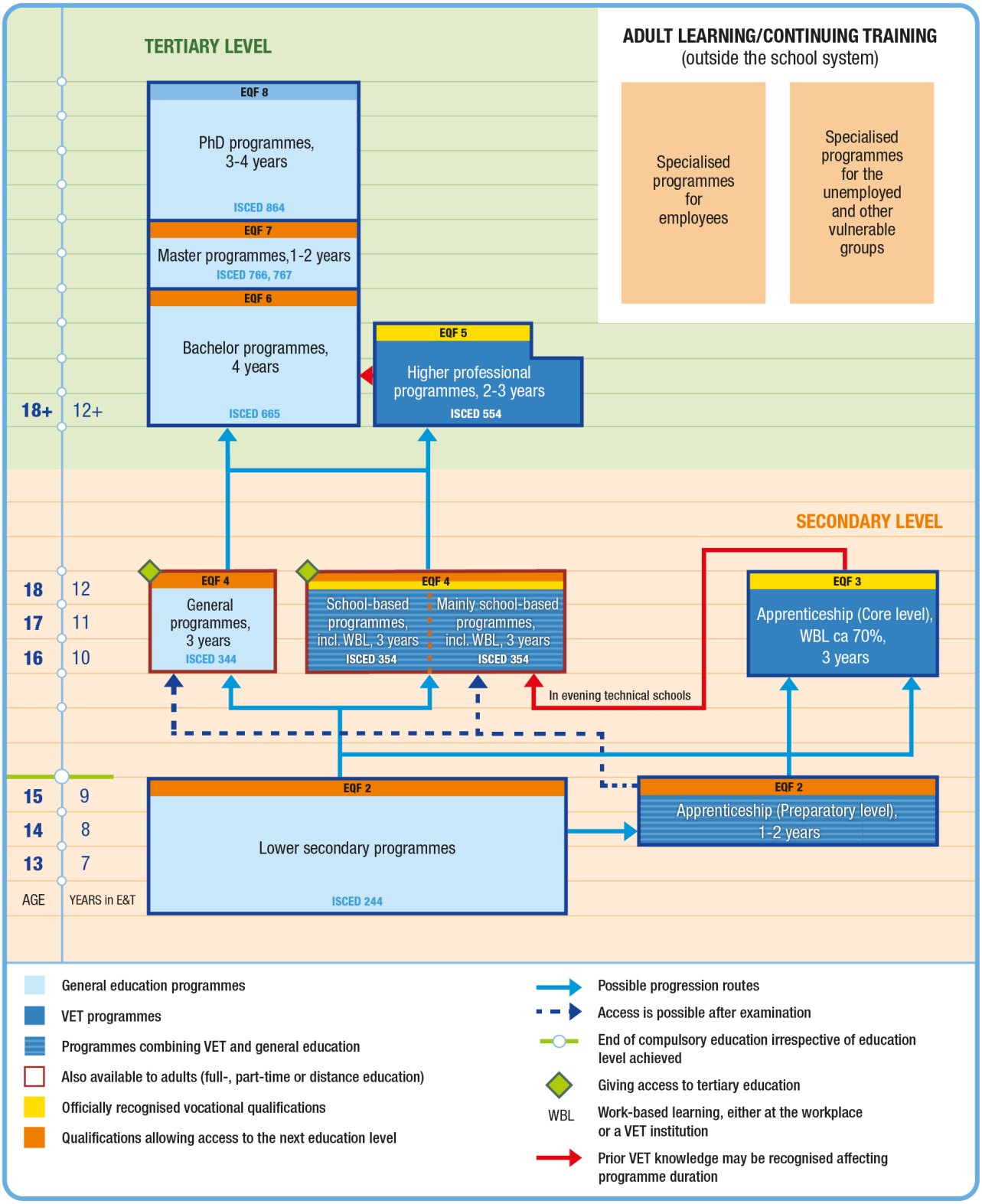
VET is also available through the apprenticeship system, which addresses young people between the ages of 14 and 18. Preparatory apprenticeship (EQF level 2) can last up to 2 school years, depending on the level and age of the apprentice. Young people aged between 14 and 16, who have not completed lower secondary programmes, may participate. After completing ‘preparatory apprenticeship’, graduates can either continue to ‘core apprenticeship’ or upper secondary programmes, provided they pass entrance examinations.

Core apprenticeship lasts for 3 years. Eligible candidates must be less than 18 years old to apply and must have either completed a lower secondary programme or ‘preparatory apprenticeship’ or dropped out of upper secondary programmes. On successful completion, participants may continue with evening technical school programmes, which lead to an EQF 4 certificate, and receive an upper secondary education qualification (school leaving certificate) in 2 years instead of 3. The apprenticeship certificate (EQF 3) allows access to several regulated occupations, provided all other requirements of relevant legislation are met.

VET at tertiary, non-university level is provided at public and private institutes/colleges, offering an opportunity to acquire, improve, or upgrade qualifications and skills. Successful completion of these accredited programmes, which may last from 1, 2 or 3 years, leads to a certificate/diploma or higher certificate/diploma awarded by the institution (EQF level 5). The earlier-known as public post-secondary institutes of VET were accredited in 2017 by the Cyprus Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education as public schools of higher (tertiary/non-university) VET; they offer accredited 2-year programmes leading to a diploma.

Vocational training for adults is extensively available in Cyprus for the employed, the unemployed, vulnerable groups and adults in general, through a mixture of public and private provision: colleges, training institutions, consultancy firms and enterprises. The employed usually participate in training programmes for job-specific skills to meet company needs. The unemployed and vulnerable groups acquire both horizontal and job-specific skills to improve their employability. Training schemes targeted at these groups combine training with either employment in an enterprise or job placement to acquire work experience. The HRDA provides subsidies through several relevant schemes for training the employed and unemployed.

VET in Cyprus's education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop, & Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA). (2023). Vocational education and training in Europe – Cyprus: system description. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2024). *Vocational education and training in Europe: VET in Europe database – detailed VET system descriptions* [Database]. www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/cyprus-u3

Distinctive features of VET

Cyprus has a long-standing tradition of tripartite consultation (government, trade unions and employers' organisations) and social dialogue. The social partners are involved in:

- planning in an advisory and consultative capacity;
- supporting education reform;
- governance (in boards of directors of institutions dealing with human resource issues);
- identifying education and training needs and setting priorities.

VET is mainly public. Secondary VET - including evening technical schools and the apprenticeship system - and public higher (tertiary/non-university) VET are free of charge, while various adult vocational programmes are offered for a limited fee.

Financial incentives for participation in adult vocational training are provided by HRDA, a semi-government organisation under the remit of the labour minister.

HRDA funding has encouraged enterprises, employees and the unemployed to participate in training activities.

Cyprus' tertiary educational attainment is one of the highest in the EU. There is a cultural trend in favour of general secondary education followed by higher education. Efforts to increase VET attractiveness have resulted in an increase in upper secondary VET enrolments by 7 percentage points from 2011 to 2023.

Challenges and policy responses

A major challenge is to address youth and long-term unemployment. Actions are being taken to promote the employability of young people and the long-term unemployed, through individualised guidance, training and work placements.

Another challenge is to encourage adult participation in lifelong learning (10,5% in 2022,Eurostat) and to increase VET participation among the young (17.6% at upper secondary level in 2021). Although declining, the percentage of young people aged 15-24 not in education or training (NEETs) is the third highest in the EU (12.9% in 2022, Eurostat) and below the EU average (9.5% in 2022). According to the 2022 edition of the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), Cyprus ranks 20th among 27 EU Member States, with only 50% of people between 16 and 74 years having at least basic digital skills, below the EU average of 54%.

In order to response to the challenges above, four new training schemes have been included by HRDA in the Cyprus' Recovery and Resilience Plan for the employed and the unemployed, in line with existing and future needs in the national economy and EU priorities: digital and green skills, skills related to the blue economy and entrepreneurial knowledge and skills.

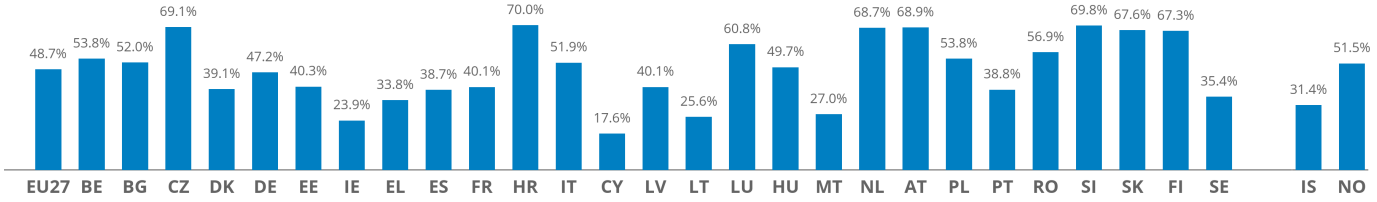
A new Lifelong Learning Strategy for the years 2021-27 has been approved by the Council of Ministers in September 2022. It is structured around six strategic horizontal pillars: digital transformation, green transition and sustainability, inclusion and equality, validation of non-formal and informal learning, health and wellbeing and lifelong learning culture. The strategy aims to improve efforts to upskill and reskill low-qualified and low-skilled adults and address the high percentage of unemployment among young people and to assist national agencies and other stakeholders in Cyprus reaching the EU targets for the participation of adults in lifelong learning.

The Cyprus qualifications framework (CyQF) supports the validation of non-formal and informal learning. It includes vocational qualifications offered in the formal education and training system as well as those offered in the competence-based system of professional qualifications by the HRDA, with the aim of improving the skillset of the workforce.

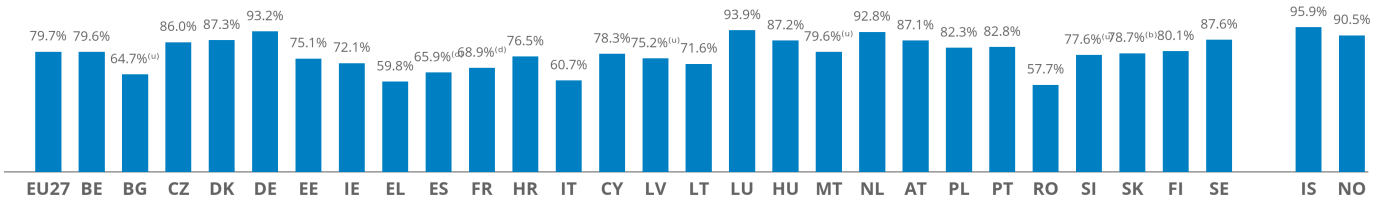
Cyprus

Education and training in figures

IVET students as % of all upper secondary students, 2021

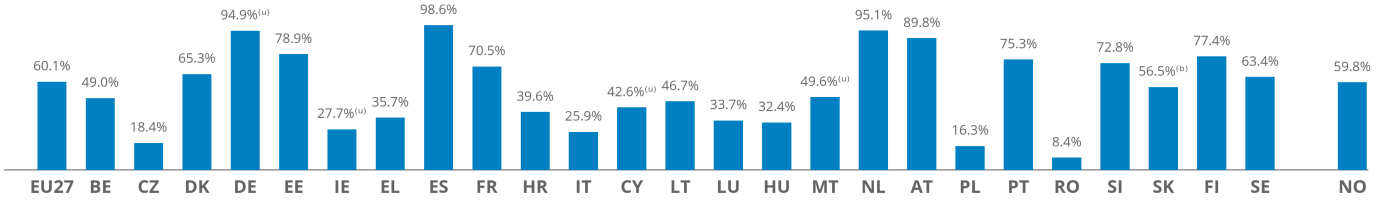


Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) (%), 2022



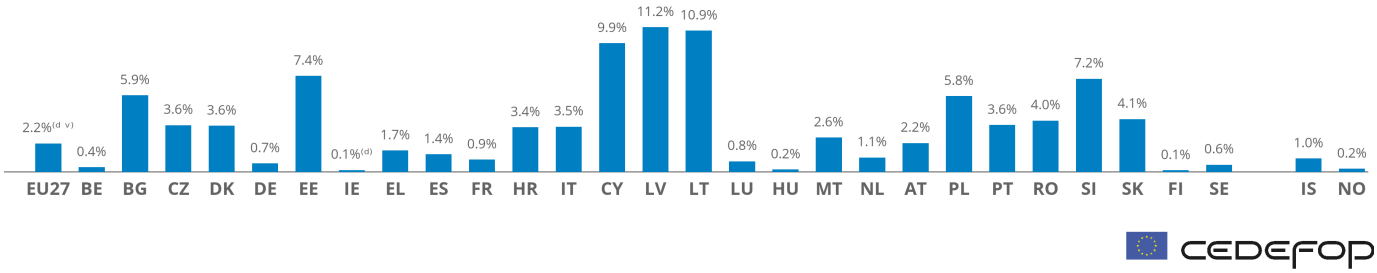
Notes: Bulgaria, Latvia, Malta and Slovenia: (u) low reliability, Czechia: (b) break in time series, Spain and France: (d) definition differs

Recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) with a work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%), 2022



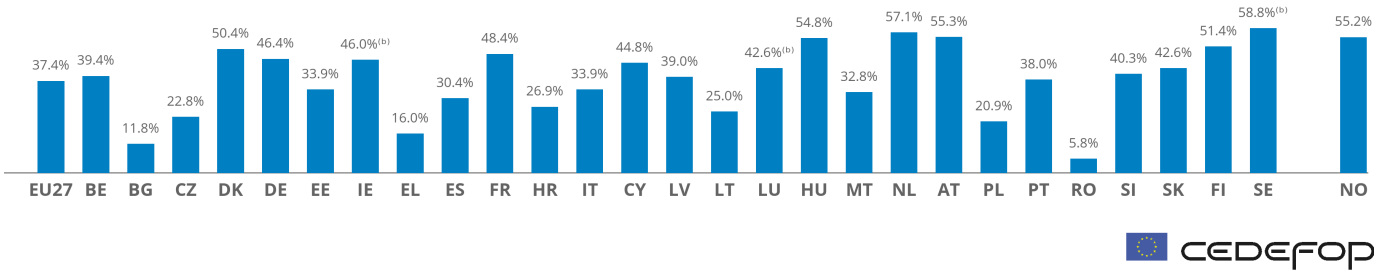
Notes: Germany, Ireland and Cyprus: (u) low reliability

IVET learners who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad (%), 2021



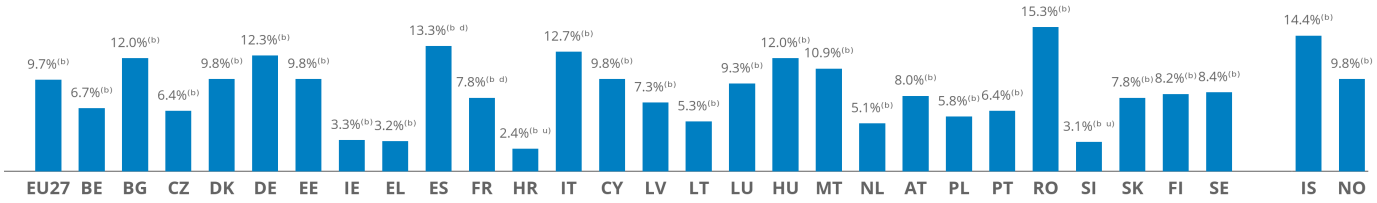
Notes: EU27: (d) definition differs (V) Cedefop estimate, Ireland: (d) definition differs, Croatia, Cyprus, Netherlands and Slovenia: (z) not applicable

Adults (25-64 year-olds) with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%), 2016



Notes: All values: (b) break in time series

Early leavers from education and training (%), 2021



Notes: EU27, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway: (b) break in time series, Croatia and Slovenia: (b) break in time series (u) low reliability

Source: Cedefop's Key indicators on VET

Further information

- Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. (2022). *Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy 2021-2027*.
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