CEDEFOP REFERNET NORWAY

Spotlight on VET NORWAY

Vocational education and training systems in Europe

2023

VET in Norway

The Ministry of Education and Research has overall responsibility for education and training at all levels. In upper secondary vocational education and training (VET), VET curricula and system structures are both laid down in national regulations, and providers are required to comply with them. There is close cooperation between education and training authorities and the social partners on upper secondary and tertiary VET.

The county authorities are responsible for general education and VET provision, distributing VET financing provided by the State budget and ensuring apprenticeship placement and supervision.

All young people completing compulsory schooling have a statutory right to 3-4 years of upper secondary education and training. Half of them choose one of the 10 VET programme areas leading to one of 197 different professional skills (trade certificates, journeyperson certificates or similar).

Upper secondary VET is offered in schools and enterprises, approved by the county authorities. The main model comprises 2 years at school, including practical training in workshops and enterprises, followed by 2 years of formal apprenticeship (training and productive work) in enterprises. The first year of training consists of an introduction to the vocational programme. In the second year, VET students choose specialisations and courses become more trade-specific, but core general education subjects are also included. Some trades and crafts follow other models, for example 3 years of school-based training or 1 year in school followed by 3 years of formal apprenticeship.

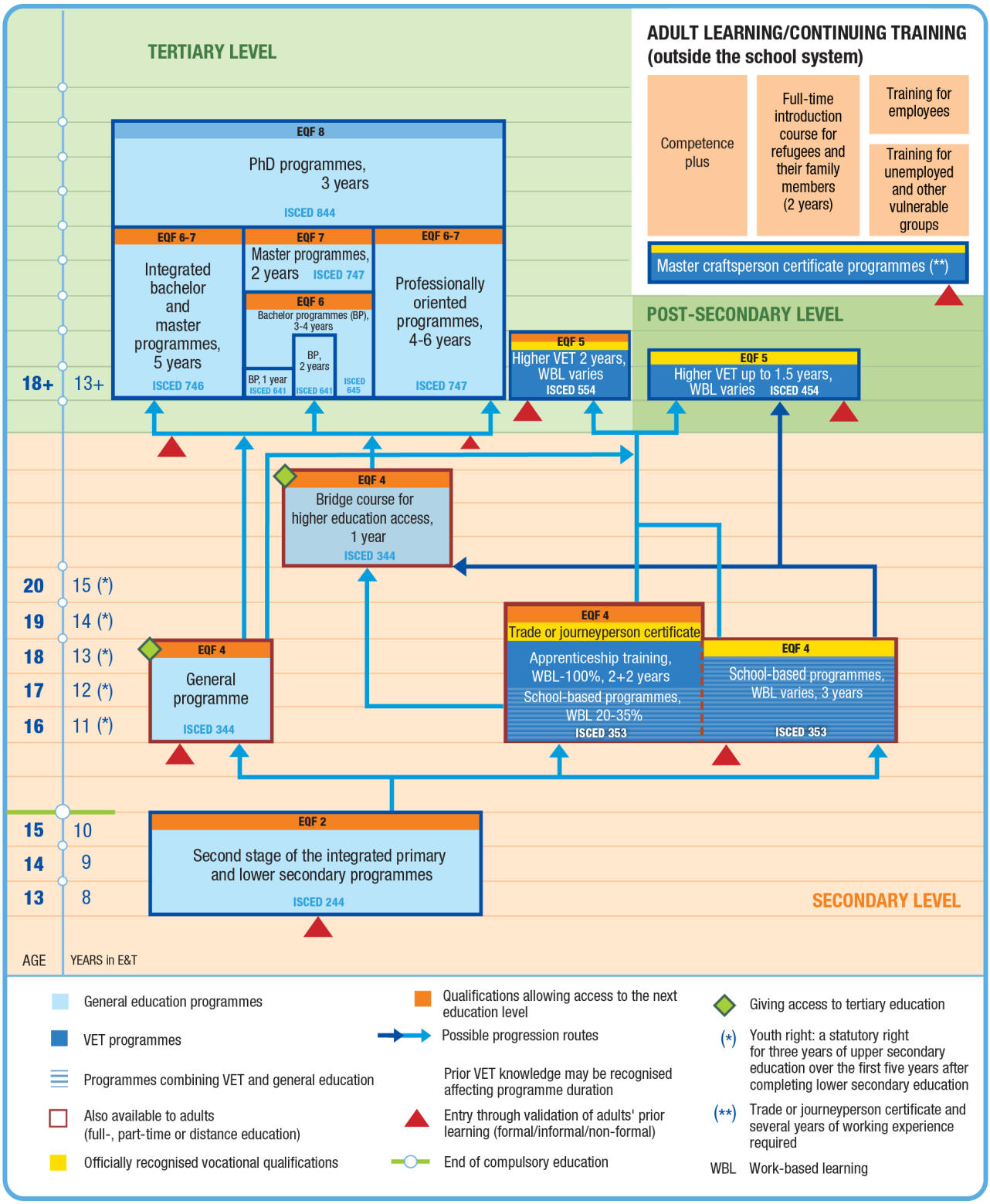
In the main model, upper secondary VET (2 years in school +2 years in company/enterprise) is completed with a practical-theoretical trade- or journeyperson examination (*Fagprøve* or *svenneprøve*) leading to an EQF level 4 qualification: a trade certificate *(Fagbrev)* for industrial and service trades or a journeyperson certificate *(Svennebrev)* for traditional crafts. The 10 programme areas offer 197 different certificates. Some crafts are provided as 3 years of school-based learning with integrated WBL, completed by a final exam and EQF level 4 qualification.

There are several routes to higher academic education via upper secondary VET, both with and without a trade- or journeyperson’s certificate.

Legal rights shape VET and contribute to making vocational skills visible. Those over 25 are entitled to upper secondary education or training, adapted to their needs and life situation. Adults also have a right to have prior learning assessed towards national curricula, which may result in exemption from parts of training. The experience-based trade certification scheme enables adults to sit a trade or journeyperson examination based on sufficient relevant practice, usually over a minimum of 5 years in the trade or craft.

VET colleges offer a wide range of vocational programmes at EQF level 5 for students with a trade or journeyperson certificate. Some programmes at this level are also accessible for students with upper secondary general education.

VET in Norway's education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop, & Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills. (2023). Vocational education and training in Europe – Norway: 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/norway-u3

Distinctive features of VET

Norway has a long-standing tradition of close national and regional cooperation between education authorities and the social partners. National cooperation is organised in the National Council for VET (*Samarbeidsrådet for yrkesopplæring,* SRY), 10 vocational training councils *(Faglige råd)*, one for each programme area, and national appeal boards *(Klagenemnder).* Regional cooperation involves county vocational training boards *(Yrkesopplæringsnemnder)* and examination boards *(Prøvenemnder).*

Tripartite cooperation aims to ensure that training provided to VET learners meets labour market and skill needs. It informs changes in the VET structure, curriculum development, regional structure and volume of VET provision, the framework of examinations leading to trade or journeyperson certificates, and quality control at all levels. At EQF level 5, the social partners participate in the National Council for higher VET *(Nasjonalt fagskoleråd)* and six national higher vocational education councils *(Nasjonale fagråd).* In higher education, institutions are requested to set up a consultative council for cooperation with social partners.

Norway has a unified education and training system including both VET and general education as equal. Most education at upper-secondary level is provided by public schools. Young people have a right to attend upper secondary education, and most choose to do so. They also have the right to enrol in one of their top three choices.

More than half of trade and journeyperson certificates are awarded to people over 25.

Challenges and policy responses

Skilled workers with VET qualifications will play an important role in the reorganisation of the Norwegian economy. Figures from the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) show that many enterprises lack such employees and consequently lose business. Statistics Norway (SSB) estimates a shortage of almost 100 000 skilled workers by 2035.

The VET system is becoming more flexible, digital, labour market relevant and attractive. Initiatives aimed at increasing the number of students who complete their education, as well as teacher competences including digital, are continuous works in progress.

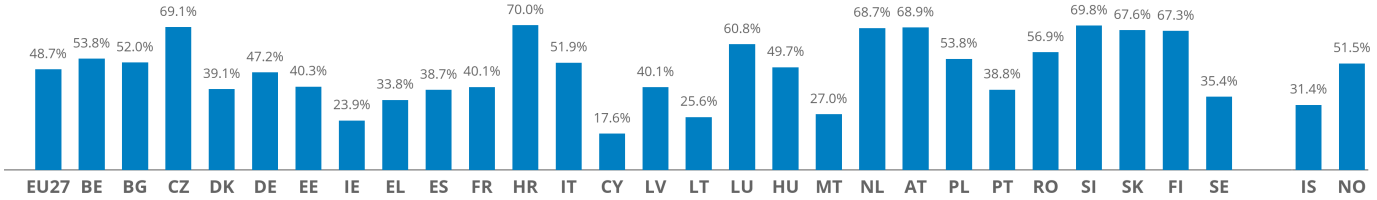
Important developments took place in 2022/23:

- the completion reform, White Paper 21 (2020-2021) (*Fullføringsreformen*) was agreed upon by the Government and is a priority for the next 10 years. The reform looks at all aspects of upper secondary education and how the content of upper secondary education will change;
- modular structured adult training has been initiated and will be implemented from 2024.
- an evaluation of the national qualification framework has been conducted and one recommendation is to allow VET to expand to level EQF 6 and above;
- a White Paper for higher VET is planned to be published in spring of 2025. Work has started and different stakeholders and social partners are involved;
- a report on a possible national centre for VET has been published.

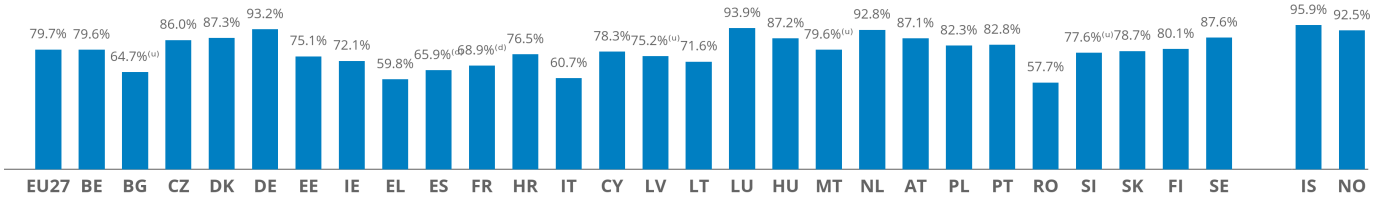
Norway

Education and training in figures

IVET students as % of all upper secondary students, 2021

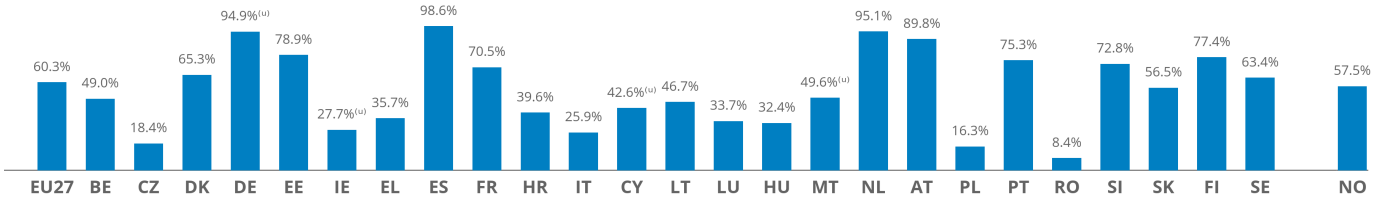


Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) (%), 2022



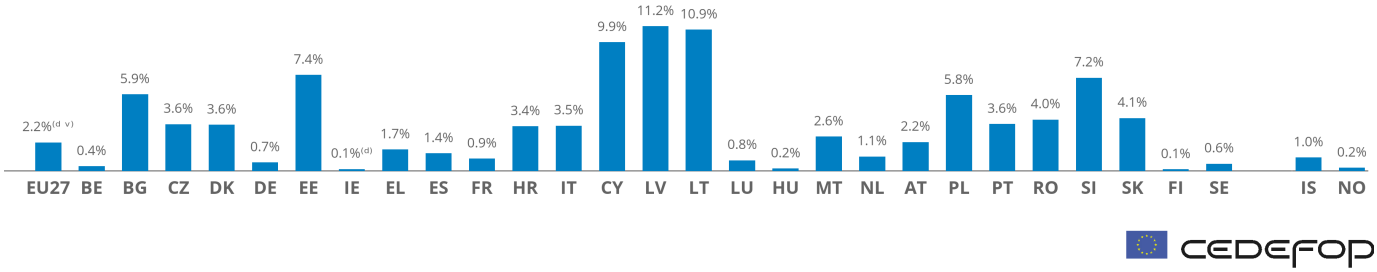
Notes: Bulgaria, Latvia, Malta and Slovenia: (u) low reliability, Czechia: (b) break in time series, Spain and France: (d) definition differs

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



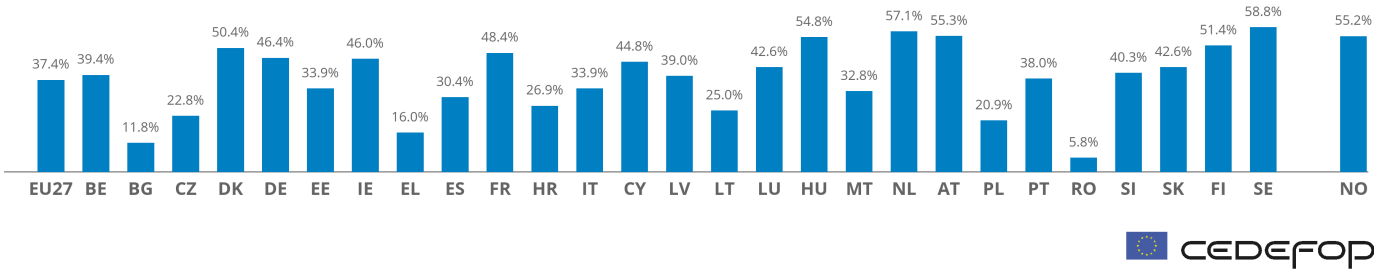
Notes: Germany, Ireland and Cyprus: (u) low reliability

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



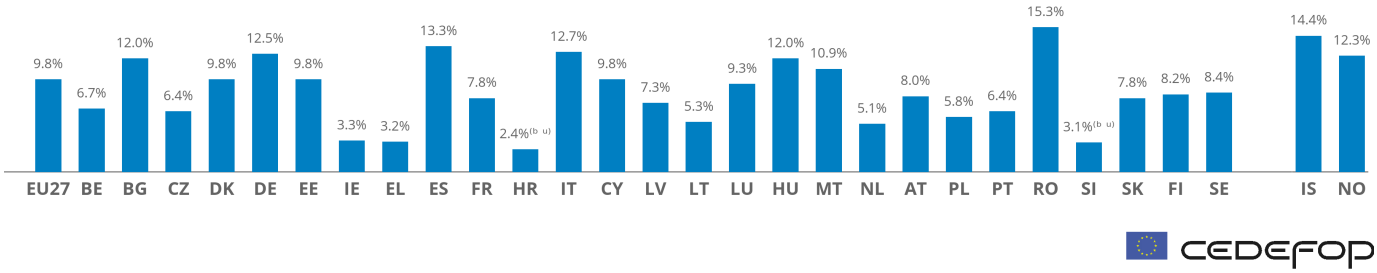
Notes: EU27: (d) definition differs (V) Cedefop estimate, Ireland: (d) definition differs, Croatia, Cyprus, Netherlands and Slovenia: (z) not applicable

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

- Cedefop and ReferNet. (2023). *Timeline of VET policies: Norway*.
- Eurydice. (2024). *National education systems: Norway*.

https://www.hkdir.no	Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills
https://www.udir.no	Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training
https://www.nokut.no	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education
https://www.regjeringen.no	Norwegian Government
https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dep/kd/id586/	Ministry of Education and Research
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