

# Spotlight on VET **FRANCE**

Vocational education  
and training systems  
in Europe

2023

## VET in France

France has a long tradition in vocational education and training (VET); the foundations of continuing VET were laid in the early 1970s. Initial VET is mainly regulated by the Ministries of Education, Youth and Sports and of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. Different ministries develop vocational qualifications valid nationally. Vocational training for adults and the apprenticeship system are under the remit of the Ministry of Labour. France compétences is a four-party national public institution in charge of the funding and regulation of vocational training and apprenticeship.

### Initial VET (IVET)

**VET at upper secondary level.** On leaving lower secondary education, generally at age 15, young learners may opt among the following upper secondary paths (*lycée*):

- general or technological (ISCED 344) 3-year programmes leading to an EQF level 4 general or technological baccalaureate, providing access to tertiary education. The first year is common to both paths, the last two years of technological programmes are vocationally oriented;
- vocational programmes (ISCED 354): leading to a vocational baccalaureate (EQF level 4) in 3 years or a professional skills certificate (CAP, EQF level 3) in 2 years. Both qualifications provide direct access to employment, and the training always includes in-company internship. Graduates may continue in specialisation programmes. Access to tertiary-level VET programmes in related fields is also possible.

Upper secondary education is governed by the Ministry of Education and financed largely by the Ministry of Education and partly by other ministries like agriculture and industry, as well as regional authorities.

**VET at tertiary level.** The *lycée*-based higher technician curricula provide a 2-year programme leading to the higher technician certificate (BTS, EQF level 5). General and technological baccalaureate graduates can also decide, on completion, to go on to a 3-year professional bachelor programme (EQF level 6) and progress to master level (EQF level 7). Since 2022 they may also enter 3-year University Bachelor of Technology programmes (*Bachelor Universitaire de technologie, BUT*). Technical and vocational studies are offered by *lycées*, universities, technology institutes attached to universities (IUT) and other public or private higher colleges of excellence (*grandes écoles*).

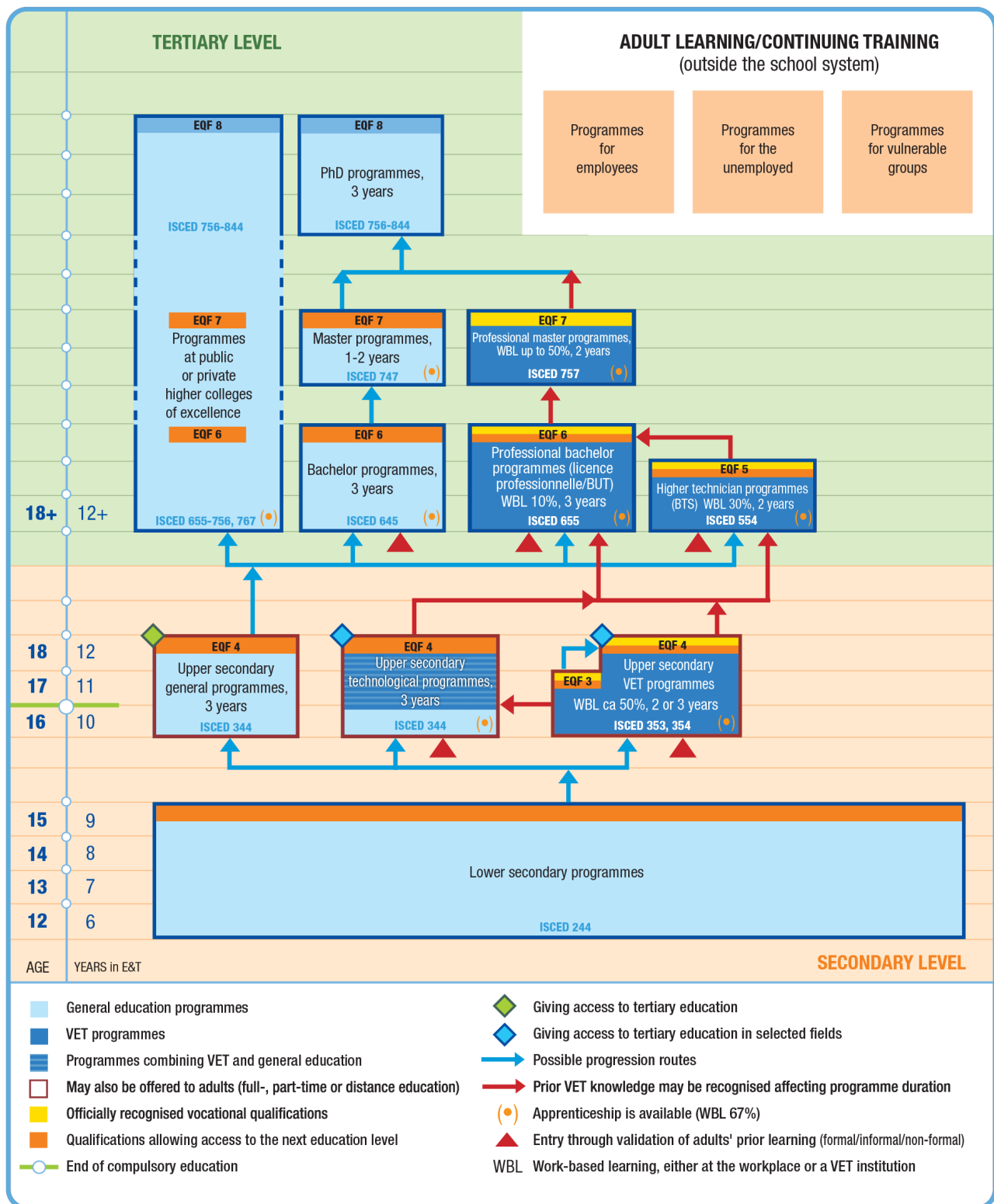
**Apprenticeship.** Apprenticeship in France is open to young people aged between 16 and 29 and provide comprehensive theoretical (classroom) training in apprentices training centres (*centre de formation des apprentis, CFA*) and practical (on-the-job) training with an apprenticeship contract lasting between 6 months and 3 years. Apprentices can obtain any qualification listed in the National Register of Vocational Qualifications (RNCP), from EQF level 3 (e.g. CAP) to EQF level 7 (e.g. engineer). Apprentices receive a salary and are considered employees. The system is jointly managed by the State, France Compétences and the social partners, with funding coming from compulsory training and apprenticeship contributions from companies, supplemented by regional.

### Continuing VET (CVET)

CVET targets those entering or already in the workforce, irrespective of age. Continuing training is mainly aimed at facilitating professional integration, sustaining employment, and fostering upskilling. Employers directly finance employee training, or intermediary expenditures are managed by joint professional bodies for smaller companies. State aid is also available for eligible employers. Regions fund training for jobseekers registered with the public employment service.

The training market is open and adaptive to changing needs of individuals and companies. CVET training linked to the individual training account (CPF) scheme accessible to the (un)employed is quality assured. Only certified providers awarded with the national quality label [Qualiopi](#) may deliver CPF-funded programmes.

# VET in France's education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop, & Centre for the Development of Information on Continuing Training (Centre Inffo). (2023). Vocational education and training in Europe – France: 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/france-u3](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/france-u3)

## Distinctive features of VET

The State ensures the principles of equal opportunities and the right to education; public education is free of charge and secular. The social partners have an essential role in regulatory, political and financial aspects of lifelong learning programmes. They manage different bodies that fund apprenticeship and vocational training schemes for small companies, as well as the unemployment insurance system for jobseekers.

Regions have full authority over vocational training (except apprenticeship), career advice and coordinating job support policies. They develop training policies adapted to their needs, define and manage territorial public policies, and can elaborate their strategies on VET and economic developments.

Lifelong learning aims to facilitate access and secure employment for young people and adults. Companies have an obligation to contribute financially to continuing training of employees. The rate of applicable compulsory contributions is set by law, with some professional branches applying rates above the legal minimum. Any person engaged in working life is entitled to individual rights to training through the personal training account (CPF). The policy intention is to promote social progress and reduce inequalities in access to training. The system is unmediated; by activating the account online, individuals may use their credits to buy training sessions.

State-issued qualifications can be acquired in and outside the education system, in adult learning and through validation processes. Public and private providers, including social partners, may design and offer their own qualifications. However, only vocational qualifications and certificates included in the national registers (RNCP and RS) in line with the quality requirements of the national qualifications system are accessible through CPF-eligible training schemes financed by public or mutualised funds.

## Challenges and policy responses

National policies aim to better align initial VET with labour market needs, including digital and green skills, and increase VET [attractiveness](#). Training opportunities for skills are [guaranteed](#) for all 16-18-year-olds through schooling, apprenticeship, continuing education, civic service and support for social and professional integration programmes. Financial support for enterprises and low-skilled young people is complemented by targeted support under the [national Youth Plan](#).

In 2023-24, the ongoing [reform](#) of upper secondary paths (*lycées*) is focusing on preventing early school leaving, easing transition from school to work and supporting VET graduates following further education through targeted actions: financial allowance to each learner for internships undertaken during their studies, creation of a business relations office in each *lycée*, acceleration of the adaptation of the training offer and [support measures](#) for programme completion. Professional integration through apprenticeship programmes continues with 14.3% increase on apprenticeship contracts recorded in 2022.

In the field of CVET, upgrading the skills of the least qualified remain high in the policy agenda. In 2023, new programmes are launched through the Investment in Skills Plan ([PIC](#)). The National Agency to Combat Illiteracy is coordinating local support schemes (ESF-funded) aiming to address the high number (1 in 15) of people without basic skills. Moreover, targeted measures under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, which runs until 2026, allocate €15 billion for recruitment subsidies, sustainable professional integration support and 200 000 additional training opportunities in ecological and digital transition jobs. An ambitious national plan to reduce recruitment pressures is being implemented in 2021-23 (EUR 1.4 billion) by the public employment service.

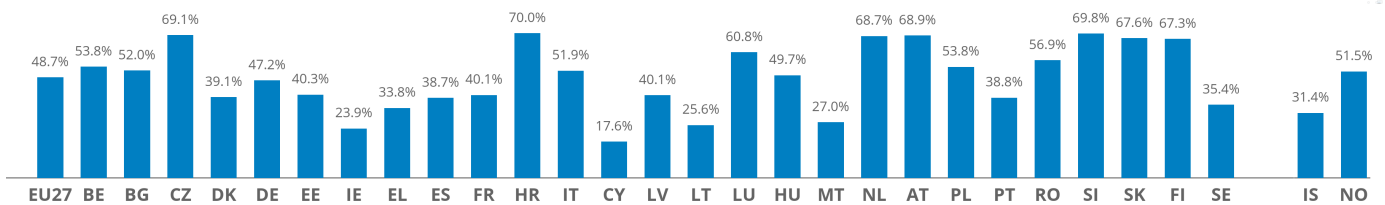
An ambitious national plan to reduce recruitment pressures is being implemented in 2021-23 (EUR 1.4 billion) by the public employment service. At the same time, high level policy discussions were initiated in mid-2023 between the Head of State and social partners to agree on an ambitious social agenda, define career paths and retraining programmes for the (un)employed.



France

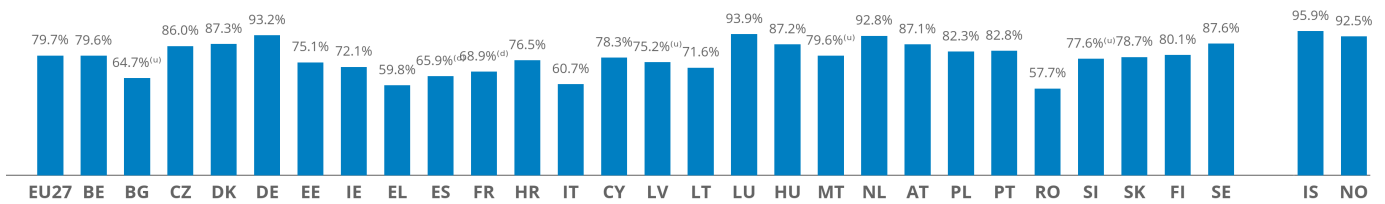
# Education and training in figures

## IVET students as % of all upper secondary students, 2021



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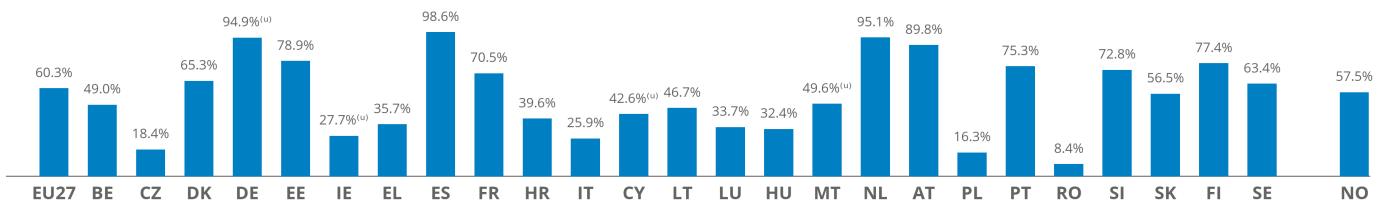
## Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) (%), 2022



CEDEFOP

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

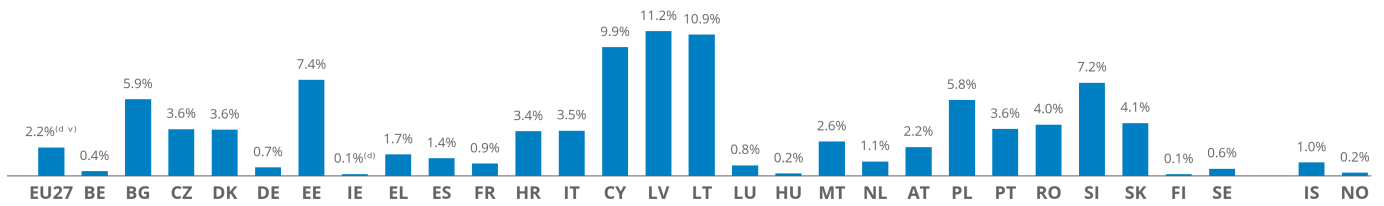
## Recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) with a work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%), 2022



CEDEFOP

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

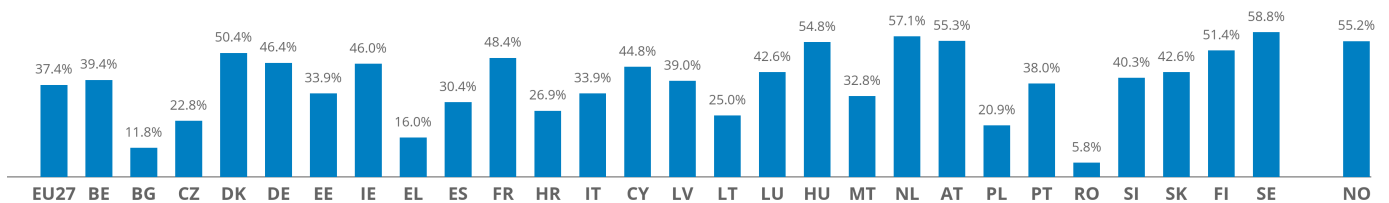
## IVET learners who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad (%), 2021



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

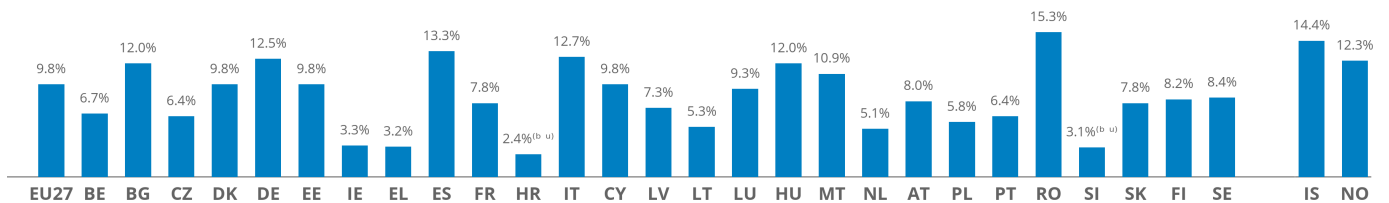
## Adults (25-64 year-olds) with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%), 2016



CEDEFOP

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

## Early leavers from education and training (%), 2021



CEDEFOP

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. (2022). *Vocational education and training in France: short description*.
- Cedefop and ReferNet. (2023). *Timeline of VET policies: France*.
- European Commission. (2023). *Education and training monitor: France*.
- Eurydice. (2024). *National education systems: France*.

<a href="https://www.education.gouv.fr">https://www.education.gouv.fr</a>	Ministry of National Education and Youth
<a href="https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr">https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr</a>	Ministry of Labour, Health and Solidarity
<a href="https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr">https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr</a>	Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation
<a href="https://www.francecompetences.fr">https://www.francecompetences.fr</a>	France compétences
<a href="https://www.centre-inffo.fr">https://www.centre-inffo.fr</a>	Centre for the Development of Information on Continuing Training (Centre Inffo)

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