Spotlight on VET 🇵🇹 PORTUGAL

Vocational education and training systems in Europe

2023

VET in Portugal

The National Qualifications System (SNQ), created in 2007, introduced a new legal and strategic framework for vocational education and training (VET) and lifelong learning (LLL) in Portugal. The main objectives are to raise the citizens qualifications level, to ensure that VET qualifications better match the needs of the labour market and to promote the competitiveness of economy. The 2021 VET agreement, signed between the government and the social partners, created conditions to increase training participation and qualification levels, reinforcing the principle of double certification (educational and professional) and the integration of general, technical and work-based training components.
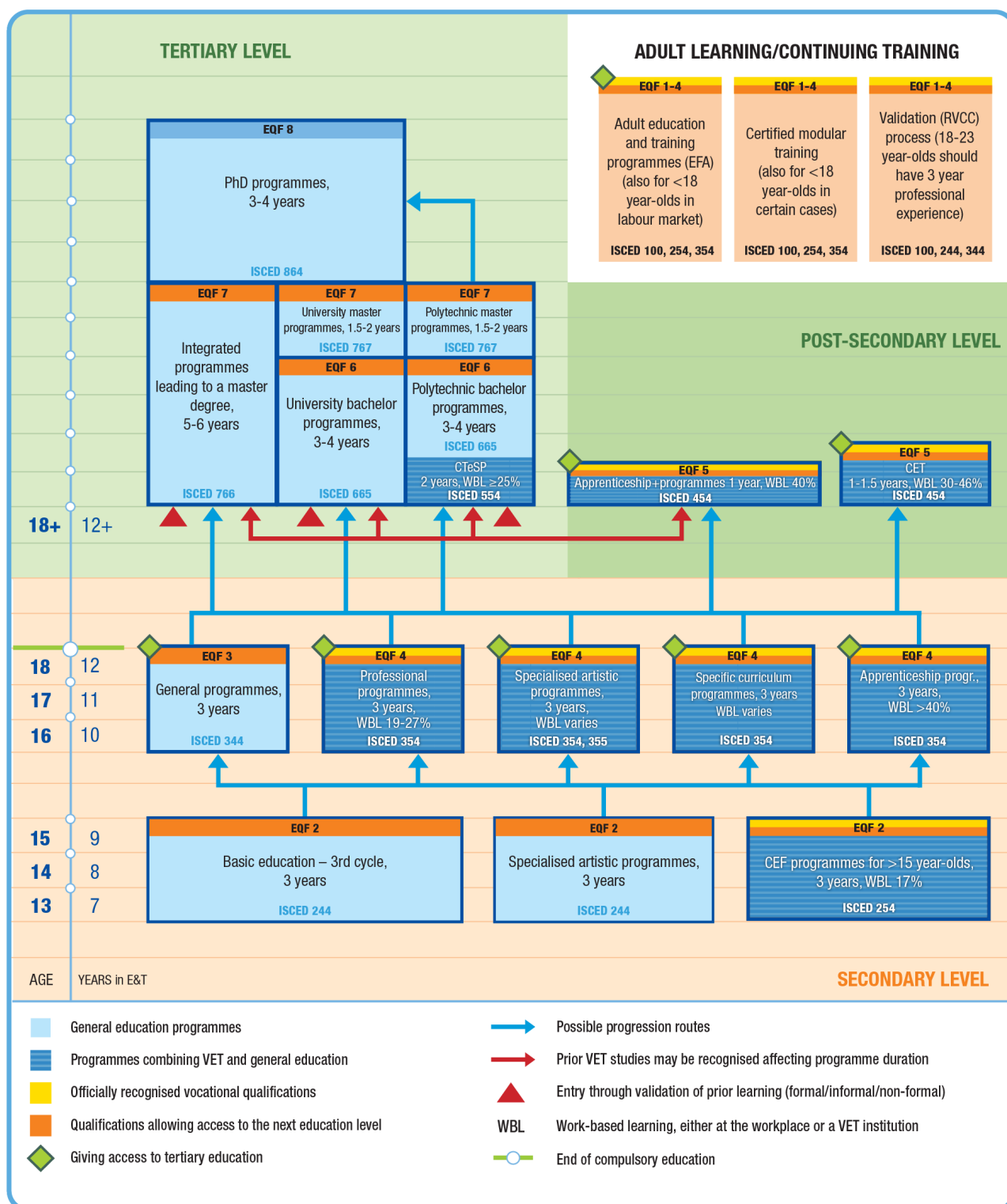
VET and adult training are the joint responsibility of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security. Their duties are undertaken by departments that are part of direct state administration, indirect state administration bodies, advisory bodies, and other organisations and entities. The political coordination of the VET system, within the context of the SNQ, is the responsibility of an inter-ministerial commission comprising members from several government departments. Governance of VET also involves the participation of the social partners, i.e., employers and workers' organisations, reinforced by the 2021 VET agreement. They participate in VET advisory or coordinating bodies and as promoters of sectoral VET operators. Main VET programmes include:

a. at lower secondary level, CEF programmes (ISCED 254; EQF 2) combining school-based and practical training. They target those aged 15+ who completed the first cycle of basic education (four years) and are at risk of early leaving education and training. Progression to upper secondary education is possible;
b. at upper secondary level, the programmes (ISCEDs 344-354, EQF 4) are:
    - three-year professional programmes; WBL is provided as a traineeship in enterprises or organisations;
    - three-year specialised artistic programmes, including visual arts and audiovisual, and dance;
    - specific curriculum programmes combining elements of general and VET programmes, as schools' autonomy allows them to diversify their education and training provision. WBL takes place as traineeship in companies or other entities for varying durations;
    - apprenticeship programmes are for young people up to age 29. A training contract between the apprentice, the training provider and the enterprise must be signed;
c. at post-secondary level:
    - technological specialisation programmes (CET, ISCED 454; EQF 5) last from one to one-and-a-half years, leading to a technological specialisation diploma. CET graduates can be accredited up to 90 ECTS points; and apprenticeship+ programmes, since 2022, allow people aged 18 to 29 holding a secondary education to obtain a NQF5 qualification after 1 year of in-company practice.
d. at tertiary level, two-year short-cycle high professional technical programmes (CTeSP, ISCED 554) are offered by polytechnics. Graduates are credited 120 ECTS points and receive a higher professional technician diploma (not a tertiary education).

Adult learning programmes (EQF 1-4) include:

a. education and training programmes for adults (EFA, ISCED 100, 254 and 354), aimed at those who want to complete lower or upper secondary education and/or obtain a professional qualification;
b. certified modular training (ISCED 100, 254; and 354) is based on short- term training units (25-50h), offering them greater flexibility in obtaining a qualification;
c. RVCC (ISCED 100, 244, 344) enables the certification of competences developed through life, including at least 50 training hours. The two RVCC paths (education and professional) can lead to a basic, upper secondary education, professional or double certification. Adults lacking competences required for a qualification are guided to relevant training programmes to acquire them.

VET in Portugal's education and training system

TERTIARY LEVEL

ADULT LEARNING/CONTINUING TRAINING

EQF 1-4	EQF 1-4	EQF 1-4
Adult education and training programmes (EFA) (also for <18 year-olds in labour market)	Certified modular training (also for <18 year-olds in certain cases)	Validation (RVCC) process (18-23 year-olds should have 3 year professional experience)
ISCED 100, 254, 354	ISCED 100, 254, 354	ISCED 100, 244, 344

EQF 8

PhD programmes, 3-4 years

ISCED 864

POST-SECONDARY LEVEL

EQF 7	EQF 7	EQF 7
	University master programmes, 1.5-2 years	Polytechnic master programmes, 1.5-2 years
Integrated programmes leading to a master degree, 5-6 years	ISCED 767	ISCED 767
	EQF 6	**EQF 6**
	University bachelor programmes, 3-4 years	Polytechnic bachelor programmes, 3-4 years
	ISCED 665	ISCED 665
ISCED 766	ISCED 665	CTeSP 2 years, WBL ≥25% ISCED 554

EQF 5
Apprenticeship+programmes 1 year, WBL 40%
ISCED 454

EQF 5
CET 1-1.5 years, WBL 30-46%
ISCED 454

18+ **12+**

EQF 3	EQF 4	EQF 4	EQF 4	EQF 4
General programmes, 3 years	Professional programmes, 3 years, WBL 19-27%	Specialised artistic programmes, 3 years, WBL varies	Specific curriculum programmes, 3 years WBL varies	Apprenticeship progr., 3 years, WBL >40%
ISCED 344	ISCED 354	ISCED 354, 355	ISCED 354	ISCED 354

18 12
17 11
16 10

EQF 2	EQF 2	EQF 2
Basic education – 3rd cycle, 3 years	Specialised artistic programmes, 3 years	CEF programmes for >15 year-olds, 3 years, WBL 17%
ISCED 244	ISCED 244	ISCED 254

15 9
14 8
13 7

AGE   YEARS in E&T

SECONDARY LEVEL

Legend

- General education programmes
- Programmes combining VET and general education
- Officially recognised vocational qualifications
- Qualifications allowing access to the next education level
- Giving access to tertiary education
- → Possible progression routes
- → Prior VET studies may be recognised affecting programme duration
- ▲ Entry through validation of prior learning (formal/informal/non-formal)
- WBL Work-based learning, either at the workplace or a VET institution
- ─○ End of compulsory education

Distinctive features of VET

In Portugal, the VET system has permeability between different VET programmes and between them and general education; double certification for all VET programmes; increased non-tertiary post-secondary training and encouraging lifelong learning; inclusive schooling for all students; special higher education entry admission process for double certification holders; flexible curriculum management; decreasing early leaving from education and training.

Key principles of VET provision are the wide range of programmes accessible to young people and adults, the link between VET provision and labour market needs, and flexibility in the type and duration of courses for adults. Accreditation and certification of VET providers, teachers and trainers, and their external evaluation, ensures VET quality.

The SNQ promotes upper secondary education as the minimum level of attainment. It adopted a governance model based on the involvement of different VET providers, sector councils, and social partners, establishing common objectives and instruments. SNQ support tools are:

a. the eight-level national qualifications framework (QNQ), designed in line with EQF;
b. the national catalogue of qualifications (CNQ), which helps manage and regulate non-tertiary VET qualifications. This aims to develop competence-based qualifications, regulate double certification, aid in designing learning programmes, provide standards for the RVCC process, promote the transparency and efficiency of public funding, and modularise the training offer;
c. the *Qualifica* passport, an instrument for guidance and individual record of qualifications and competences;
d. the system for anticipating qualification needs (SANQ), evaluates the relevance of qualifications to the labour market and monitors trends in qualified human resources supply;
e. the National credit system for VET, which allocates credits to VET qualifications.

Challenges and policy responses

High on the policy agenda are the following challenges:

- increasing participation in lifelong learning;
- modernising VET provision by introducing new teaching methods and diversified VET programmes;
- strengthening the alignment of VET with labour market needs;
- underlining the principles of inclusion, sustainability and transparency;
- facing the profound transformations caused by digitalisation and the greening of the economy and society;
- upskilling and reskilling vulnerable groups.

The Government continues to focus on the valorisation of double certification modalities addressed to youths, through a modernised, inclusive and quality offer, able to attract more young people to secondary education. At the same time, the government aims to encourage more graduates to pursue further studies, particularly at a higher level.

In adult qualification, the focus continues to be on flexible training paths, more suitable for adults, and leading to effective qualification, i.e., expanding the network of adult education and training providers in cooperation with the *Qualifica* centres to attract more adult learners to VET programmes.
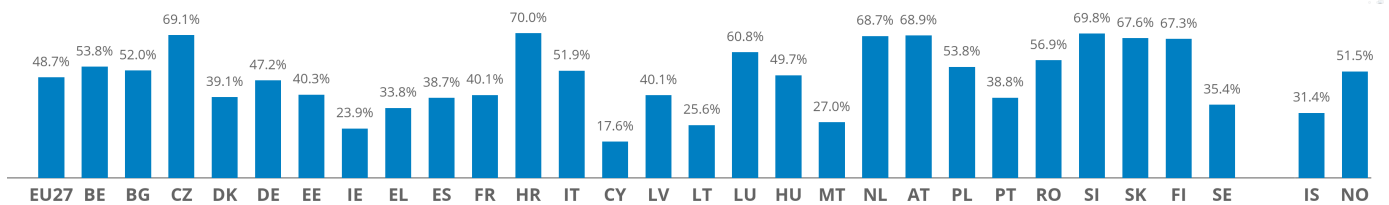
The Government, through the recovery and resilience plan (2021), has identified areas in which policy interventions will focus with a view to modernise VET, including quality assurance, digital and green transition, industrial renewal etc.
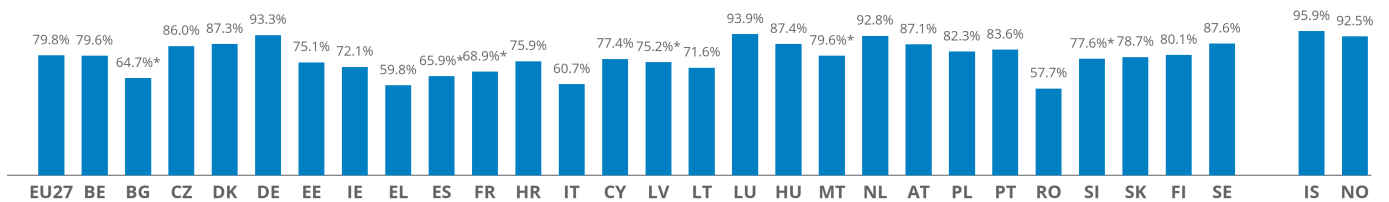
Portugal

Education and training in figures

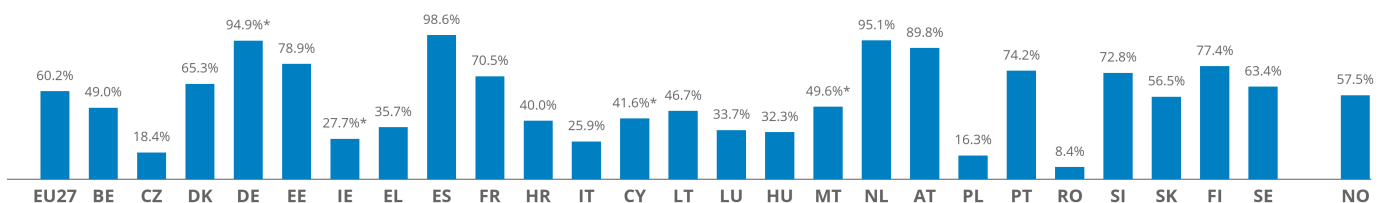## IVET students as % of all upper secondary students, 2021

Bar chart values by country:
- EU27: 48.7%
- BE: 53.8%
- BG: 52.0%
- CZ: 69.1%
- DK: 39.1%
- DE: 47.2%
- EE: 40.3%
- IE: 23.9%
- EL: 33.8%
- ES: 38.7%
- FR: 40.1%
- HR: 70.0%
- IT: 51.9%
- CY: 17.6%
- LV: 40.1%
- LT: 25.6%
- LU: 60.8%
- HU: 49.7%
- MT: 27.0%
- NL: 68.7%
- AT: 68.9%
- PL: 53.8%
- PT: 38.8%
- RO: 56.9%
- SI: 69.8%
- SK: 67.6%
- FI: 67.3%
- SE: 35.4%
- IS: 31.4%
- NO: 51.5%

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

Bar chart values by country:
- EU27: 79.8%
- BE: 79.6%
- BG: 64.7%*
- CZ: 86.0%
- DK: 87.3%
- DE: 93.3%
- EE: 75.1%
- IE: 72.1%
- EL: 59.8%
- ES: 65.9%*
- FR: 68.9%*
- HR: 75.9%
- IT: 60.7%
- CY: 77.4%
- LV: 75.2%*
- LT: 71.6%
- LU: 93.9%
- HU: 87.4%
- MT: 79.6%*
- NL: 92.8%
- AT: 87.1%
- PL: 82.3%
- PT: 83.6%
- RO: 57.7%
- SI: 77.6%*
- SK: 78.7%
- FI: 80.1%
- SE: 87.6%
- IS: 95.9%
- NO: 92.5%

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

Bar chart values by country:
- EU27: 60.2%
- BE: 49.0%
- CZ: 18.4%
- DK: 65.3%
- DE: 94.9%*
- EE: 78.9%
- IE: 27.7%*
- EL: 35.7%
- ES: 98.6%
- FR: 70.5%
- HR: 40.0%
- IT: 25.9%
- CY: 41.6%*
- LT: 46.7%
- LU: 33.7%
- HU: 32.3%
- MT: 49.6%*
- NL: 95.1%
- AT: 89.8%
- PL: 16.3%
- PT: 74.2%
- RO: 8.4%
- SI: 72.8%
- SK: 56.5%
- FI: 77.4%
- SE: 63.4%
- NO: 57.5%
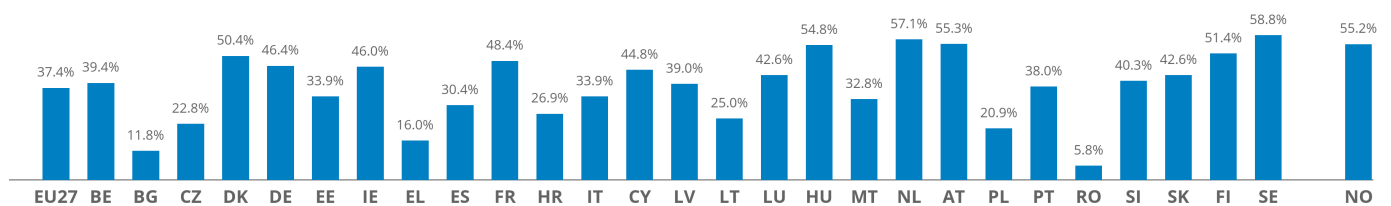
Notes: Germany, Ireland and Cyprus: (u) low reliability

IVET learners who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad (%), 2021
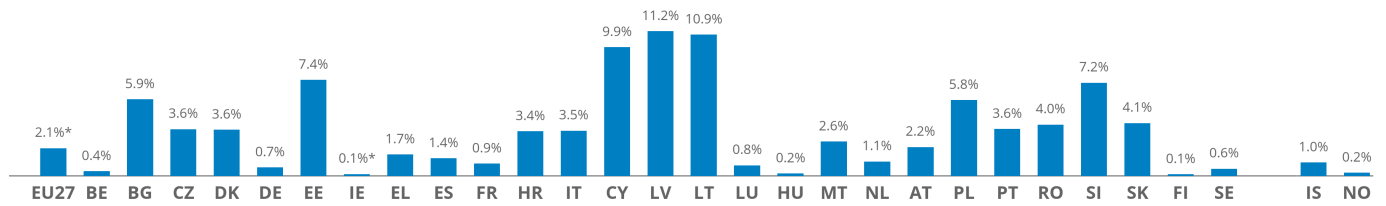
Notes: EU27: (d) definition differs (V) Cedefop estimate, Ireland: (d) definition differs, Croatia, Cyprus, Netherlands and Slovenia: (z) not applicable
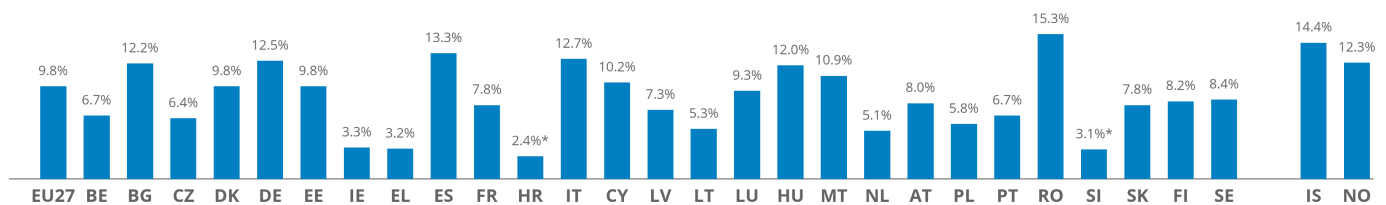
Adults (25-64 year-olds) with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%), 2016

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: Portugal*
- European Commission (2023). *Education and training monitor: Portugal*
- Eurydice (2024). *National education systems: Portugal*
- República Portuguesa (2021). *Plano de Recuperação e Resiliência - Plano preliminar* [Recovery and resilience plan - initial version]

www.refernet.pt	ReferNet Portugal
www.dgert.gov.pt	Directorate-General for Employment and Industrial Relations
www.dge.mec.pt	Directorate-General for Education
https://www.dges.gov.pt/en	Directorate-General for Higher Education
https://www.portugal.gov.pt/en/gc23	Government
https://www.anqep.gov.pt/np4EN/home	National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training
www.iefp.pt	Institute for Employment and Vocational Training
https://catalogo.anqep.gov.pt/	National catalogue of qualifications
www.qualifica.gov.pt/	*Qualifica* programme
www.ine.pt	National Institute for Statistics

Please cite as:

Cedefop, & Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations (DGERT). (2023). Spotlight on VET - Portugal: Vocational education and training systems in Europe. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2024). *Vocational education and training in Europe: VET in Europe database - detailed VET system descriptions* [Database]. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/portugal-u3