

Spotlight on VET SPAIN

Vocational education
and training systems
in Europe

2023

VET in Spain

Vocational education and training (VET) is the responsibility of the education authorities. Labour authorities are responsible for VET within active labour market policies (training programmes addressing companies' and employed and unemployed skills needs, employment-training schemes and the regulation of apprenticeship contracts). They share the same consultation bodies but keep their respective governance and objectives. VET system is governed by [Organic Law 3/2022](#), which organises VET offer in training itineraries, from 'micro-trainings' to full qualifications. Gradual implementation is planned from 2023/24.

The General Council for Vocational Training advises the government on VET policy. It comprises representatives of national and regional authorities, employers' organisations and trade unions. Stakeholders collaborate in the design of occupational standards and are involved in VET qualification design.

Initial VET offers upper secondary (basic and intermediate) and higher VET qualifications as part of the education system. All programmes include work-based learning in a company and at a VET school:

- [basic programmes](#) (ISCED 353) are available in the last year of compulsory education. They allow students at risk of dropping out to develop basic skills, prepare for an occupation (such as agro-gardening) and obtain a basic VET qualification. Students may move on to upper secondary VET and attain the compulsory secondary qualification, opening up the general education path;
- [intermediate programmes](#) lead to technician qualifications at ISCED 354 (such as cookery and gastronomy). Access to higher VET in the same field of study is possible, via an admission procedure;
- [higher programmes](#) (ISCED 554) lead to an advanced technician qualification (such as logistics coordinator) at the tertiary level. Graduates can progress to bachelor programmes through an admission procedure.

Graduates from intermediate and higher VET programmes can enrol in short [specialisation courses](#) in the same field of study to acquire occupation-specific and digital skills in line with the emerging needs of the economy.

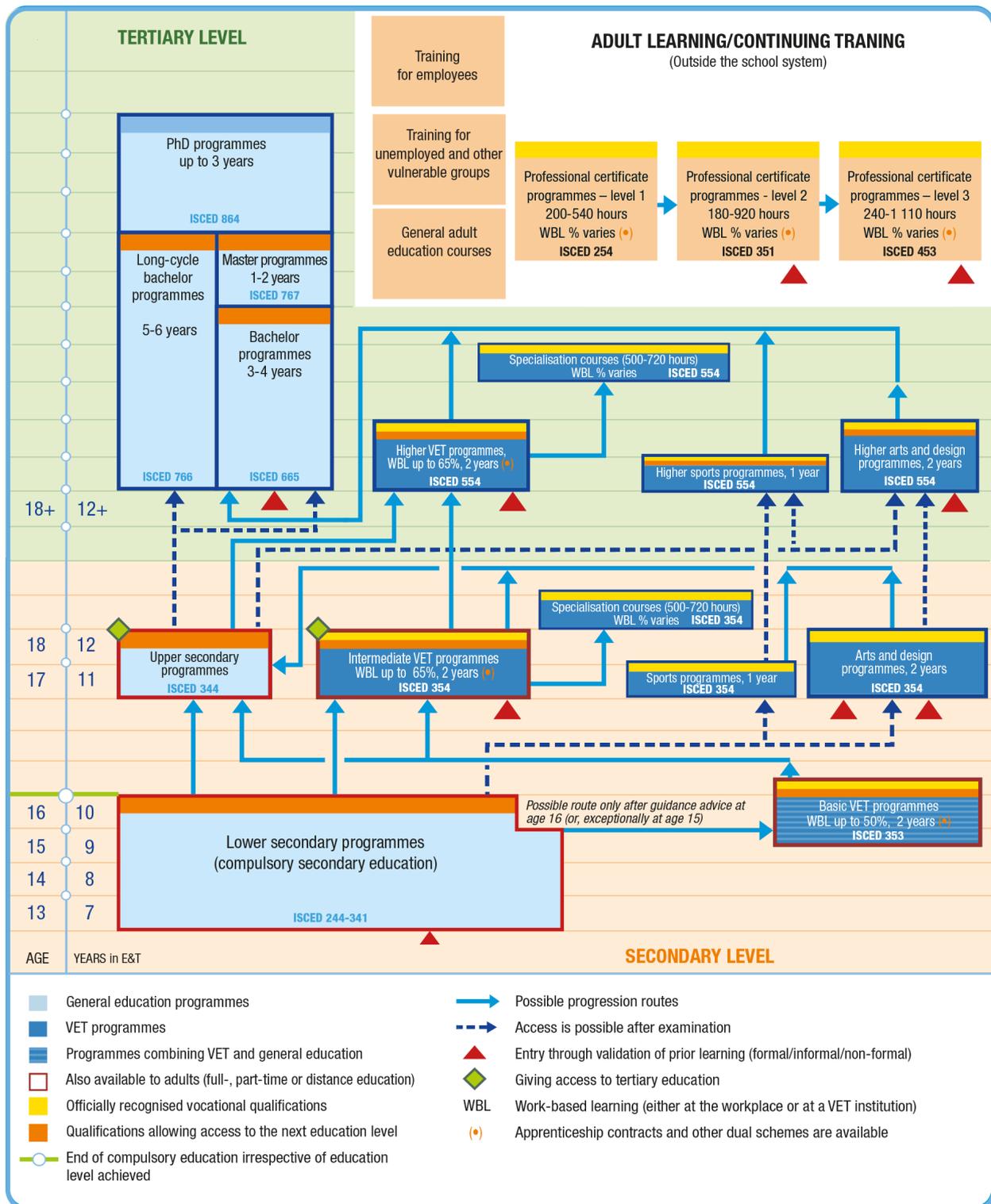
All IVET programmes allow learners to spend time in a real working environment. The Organic Law 3/2022 law introduced two schemes (*régimen general y régimen intensivo*) including social security contributions for apprentices and a paid contractual relationship if training in the workplace exceeds 35% of the programme duration (*régimen intensivo*). There are specific training programmes in arts and design and in sports (4% of the VET population in 2021/22).

Adults can enrol in the same IVET programmes as young people or enter a vocational programme leading to a professional certificate corresponding to an occupational profile, organised on three levels. Learners can move from one level to the next in the same field. Levels 2 and 3 programmes require having completed, respectively, compulsory or upper secondary, or equivalent, education. Duration varies according to the learning outcomes. All three level programmes include work-based learning and can be taken as apprenticeships. Only authorised public and private VET providers can deliver programmes leading to formal vocational qualifications.

Adults may also have their skills recognised through [validation](#).

Non-formal VET includes a wide range of schemes designed for different needs and skill profiles, allowing upskilling or reskilling. VET within active labour market policies is financed through public funds (mainly from company and worker contributions to social security). Publicly funded programmes, not linked to the national catalogue of occupational standards, are included in a [catalogue of training specialities](#) of the State public employment service (SEPE); providers need to be registered accordingly.

VET in Spain's education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011. The Spanish education system is not referenced to EQF levels.

Source: Cedefop, & State Foundation for Training in Employment (Fundae). (2023). Vocational education and training in Europe – Spain: 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/spain-u3

Distinctive features of VET

The national system for qualifications and vocational training is the umbrella for VET programmes leading to qualifications awarded by the education authorities: VET diplomas and professional certificates. They are based on the learning outcomes of the national catalogue of occupational standards, allowing mutual recognition of some parts of the training (modules) and the transfer of (units of) competences between different VET programmes, shortening their duration. Organic Law 3/2022 sets out a single, modular and flexible offer for formal VET in five ascending grades (A, B, C, D and E), ranging from smaller units or micro-training (grade A), professional certificates (level C), to VET diploma programmes and specialisation courses (grades D and E), and three levels of competence.

Modularisation allows the accumulation of learning outcomes towards (partial) certification and re-engagement from a lifelong learning perspective. Besides occupational skills, programmes include training in transversal competences, entrepreneurship, and socio-professional maturity, easing school-work transitions and career development, as well as compulsory workplace learning. Programmes can be taken in-person or through virtual learning platforms, making VET more accessible.

Occupational standards and programmes are regularly updated, and new specialisation courses are developed to address emerging needs.

Skills validation procedures empower citizens to engage in further learning and acquire full qualifications. The process is coordinated at different levels, with regional authorities playing an essential role in policy implementation and social partners participating in qualification designing and system's governance.

Upskilling and reskilling measures are essential to active labour market policies responding to current and future needs, with extensive social partner involvement in management. Vocational Training for Employment aims to train workers for the qualified and updated performance of different occupations, allowing access to employment and promoting active participation in social, cultural and economic life.

Challenges and policy responses

Spain has an ageing workforce that includes many low-skilled adults. Technological developments and global changes pressure businesses and people to upskill and reskill. The share of the labour force with intermediate skills is low compared to the EU average, a risk for the country's future development as skills demand forecasts point to the need to increase this share.

Recent policy initiatives have focused on boosting VET attractiveness, improving and expanding apprenticeship, and making the VET system more responsive to the labour market. This has resulted in a new VET framework reflected in Organic Law 3/2022. This law on VET seeks to unify the two previous sub-systems of VET qualifications, reduce regional disparities, and create more opportunities for young people and adults, employed and unemployed. It facilitates lifelong learning through different training pathways and enhances work-based learning by further involving employers.

The law on VET also reinforces validation procedures to enable individuals underqualified for their jobs to demonstrate and capitalise on the skills acquired through work experience. A new comprehensive guidance system is underway. New measures also focus on teachers, reinforcing their digital competence and setting the framework for digital competence in teaching. Other measures seek to modernise infrastructures, particularly in the digital domain, and to bring VET provision closer to citizens.

Training at work, that is, VET within active labour market policies aims to provide upskilling and reskilling programmes, outside the national catalogue of occupational standards, designed for the lifelong training of every working person, whether employed or unemployed, with the goal of improving their professional qualifications and employment opportunities. A future specific regulation on training at work is under discussion.

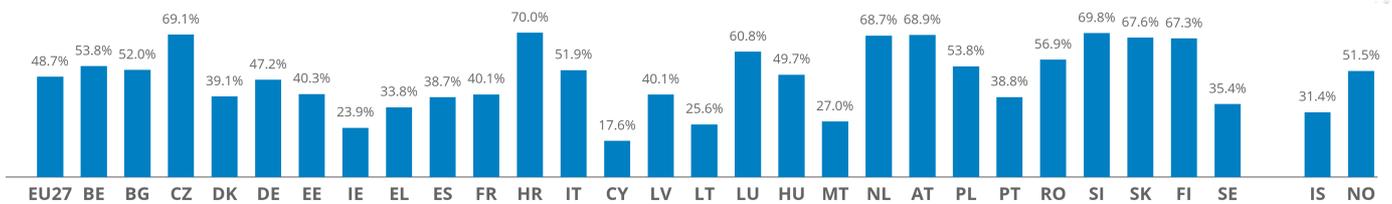


Spain

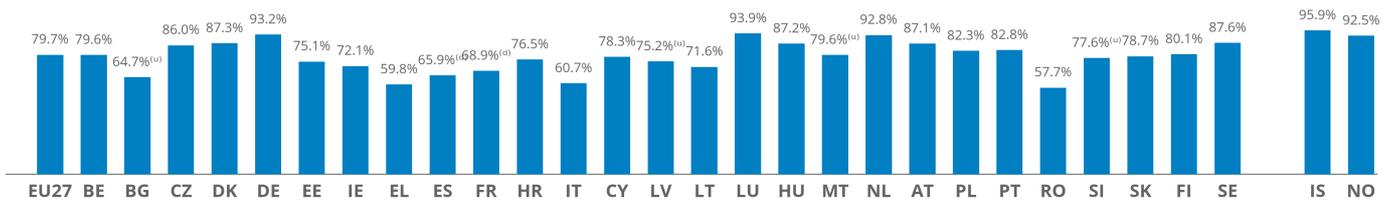


Education and training in figures

IVET students as % of all upper secondary students, 2021

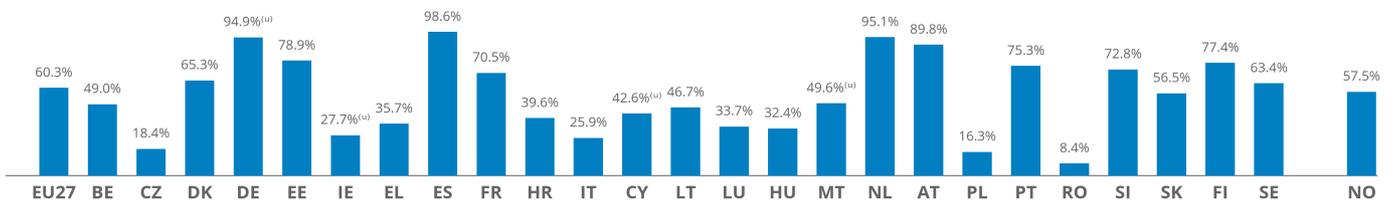


Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) (%), 2022



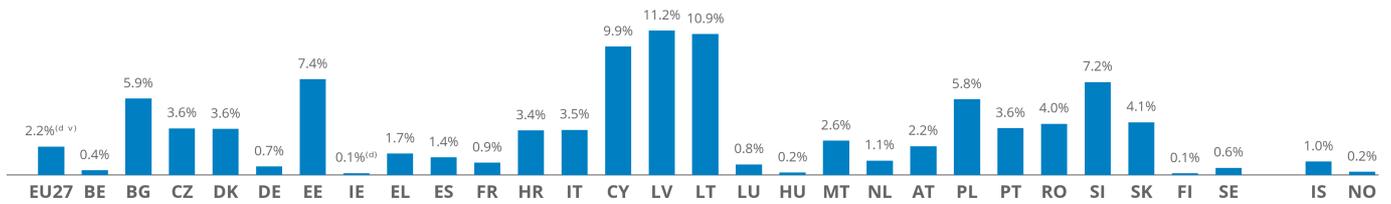
Notes: Bulgaria, Latvia, Malta and Slovenia: (u) low reliability, Czechia: (b) break in time series, Spain and France: (d) definition differs

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

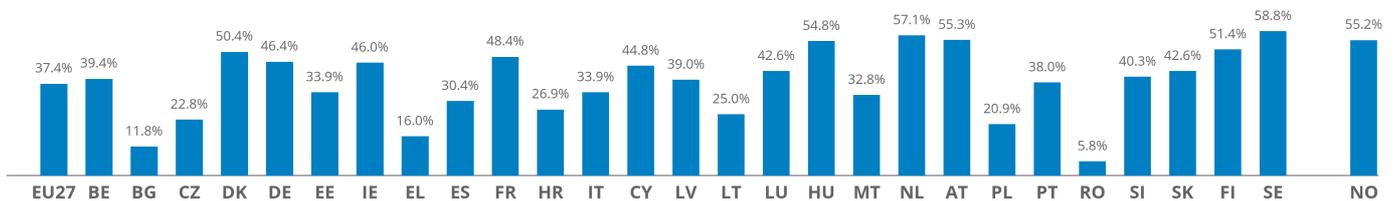
IVET learners who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad (%), 2021



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

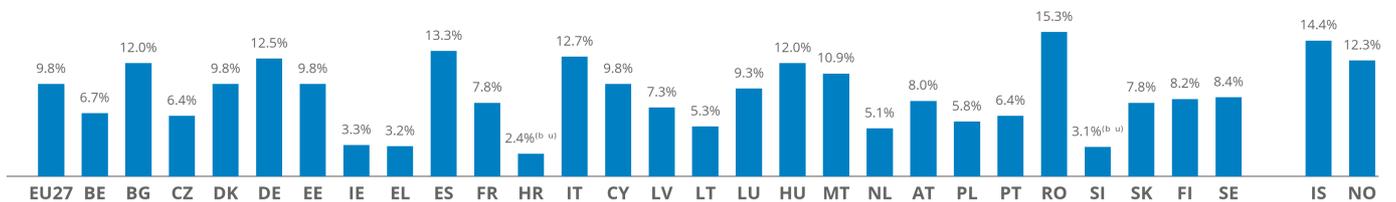
Adults (25-64 year-olds) with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%), 2016



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

Early leavers from education and training (%), 2021



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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. (2023). *Vocational education and training in Spain: short description*.
- Cedefop and Refernet. (2023). *Timeline of VET policies: Spain*.
- European Commission. (2022). *Education and training monitor 2022: Spain*.
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- Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. (2022). *Ley Orgánica 3/2022, de 31 de marzo, de ordenación e integración de la Formación Profesional. Dossier informativo* [Organic Law 3/2022, of 31 March, on the organisation and integration of Vocational Training. Information dossier].
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www.refernet.es	ReferNet Spain
www.educacionyfp.gob.es	Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training
www.todofp.es	web portal for VET
www.sepe.es	Spanish Public Employment Service
www.fundae.es	Fundae
www.incual.educacion.gob.es	National Institute for Qualifications
https://euroguidance-spain.educacionfpydeportes.gob.es	Euroguidance

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