

Prepared for the future V: reforming upper secondary education by introducing a new VET pathway (EPX)

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 DENMARK

Timeline

2024 Design 2025 Implementation

ID number 46246

Background

Many young people do not feel ready to choose between a practical upper secondary vocational education programme (EUD) and more theoretical general upper secondary education programmes, such as Higher General Examination (STX), Higher Commercial Examination (HHX), or Higher Technical Examination (HTX) programmes.

Objectives

The Prepared for the future V proposed reform aims that most young people attend general upper secondary education in the future and have more time to choose which educational path to pursue.

In this respect, the purpose of introducing a new vocational and profession-oriented gymnasium (EPX) is to move away from the idea that youth education must be either academic or practical and that one is superior or more valuable than the other and instead create a general upper secondary education system that includes more students. With *Prepared for the future V*, the government has a vision of creating general upper secondary schools that will be attractive environments for the youth, more flexible and closer to young people.

Description

The government presented a reform of the youth education system, including significant investments in the area, along with their proposal for a new upper secondary education programme, the vocational and profession-oriented gymnasium (EPX), which they aim to implement by 2030.

The proposal aims to address young people's perception that choosing their education pathway immediately after primary school is a significant decision. Currently, the majority of young people opt for a three-year general upper secondary education (STX, HHX, HTX) after primary school, leading to an uneven enrolment rate between general upper secondary education programmes and other youth education options. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that conditions are particularly challenging for vibrant youth

environments in VET, which is based on a dual training model, where many young people enter adult work environments very early.

This proposal will have implications for a wide range of educational provision and the structure of the VET system. If adopted, it would mean that the first of the two current basic courses— basic course 1—will be integrated into the new 2-year Vocational and Professional Examination (EPX). Additionally, it will become more difficult to gain admission to the 3-year Higher General Examination Programme (STX) and Higher Commercial Examination (HHX), as the government proposes to raise the average grade required from primary school for entry into STX and HHX.

Also, the proposal aims to address the decline in youth(15/16 to under 25 years old young people) cohorts, which will make it more challenging to operate youth education programmes throughout the country, especially outside the bigger cities. The proposal seeks to consolidate educational provision and thereby create stronger environments.

The government's proposal involves additional budget for upper secondary education of approximately EUR 310 million (DKK 2.3 billion) annually from 2030 onwards. This corresponds to an increase of about 10 percent compared to current spending on youth education. Furthermore, the government proposes to allocate a total of EUR 645 million (DKK 4.8 billion) from 2027 to 2034, averaging about EUR 80 million (DKK 0.6 billion) annually during this period, for one-time investments in buildings, workshops, and equipment for the EPX. Additionally, approximately EUR 670 million (5 billion DKK) will be permanently allocated to operate EPX once the programme is fully implemented.

2024 Design

In October 2024, the government presented the proposal, *Prepared for the Future V*, describing a new youth education(upper secondary level in the Danish context) structure. Political negotiations followed regarding a framework agreement on its various elements, but the government aims that the first cohort of students begin the new education programmes in August 2030.

2025 Implementation

In February, the government, together with two other parties, reached an agreement to establish the EPX programme as a concrete operationalisation of the ambitions outlined in the reform text *Prepared for the Future V*. The new vocational- and professional-oriented upper secondary education programme (EPX) programme is designed to meet several key objectives:

- (a) to provide a new route after compulsory school that is attractive to students who have both practical and theoretical interests, giving them more room to explore before making a definitive choice of study path;
- (b) to deliver both academic/general education and practical, work-oriented content, combining theory with practical work;
- (c) to strengthen the relationship between schools and enterprises and public institutions (such as hospitals), so students get exposed to real-world work practices;
- (d) to ensure that future EPX students will be firmly rooted in the values of freedom of thought, equality, and democracy.
- (e) to build strong youth environments, that support professional immersion and strong social communities.

EPX will be launched in 2030.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Higher Education and Science
- Ministry of Children and Education
- Ministry of Economic Affairs

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Permeability between IVET and CVET and general and vocational pathways, academic and professional higher education

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[An upper secondary education accessible to all- Press release on the education ministry's webpage](#)

[Prepared for the Future V](#)

[Agreement on EPX](#)

[Epx - a new practical general upper secondary education](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

A substantial reinforcement of VET

The agreement contains 31 initiatives that have the purpose of improving Danish VET. Many of the initiatives included in the agreement are linked to other agreements within the VET area.

 DENMARK

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

2025 Implementation**A coherent plan for the education system**

The coherent plan for the education system consists of different reforms and initiatives across the entire education system thus targeting a wide array of groups.

 DENMARK

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation**More skilled workers for the green transition**

The *Prepared for the future IV - more skilled workers for the green transition* agreement is a component of a holistic education reform plan encompassing various education levels.

 DENMARK

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation**Tripartite agreement for increasing apprentices in the health sector**

In November 2020, a tripartite agreement was made between the government, Local Government Denmark (KL) (the national association of municipalities), the national association of the Danish Regions and the largest trade union confederation in Denmark (FH).

 DENMARK

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” **Cite as**

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/46246>