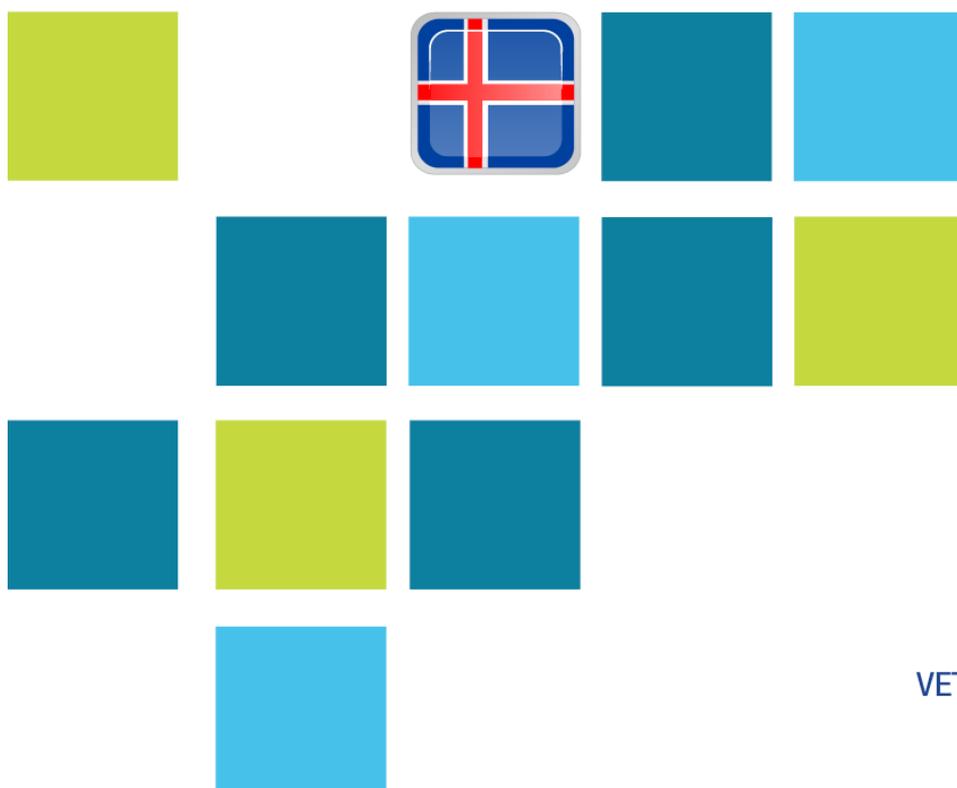

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE
ICELAND

SYSTEM DESCRIPTION



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CHAPTER 1.

Summary of main elements and distinctive features of VET

VET in Iceland comprises the following main features:

- almost all VET is offered at upper secondary level;
- almost all initial VET in Iceland comprises certified trades and is built on an apprentice system, where most of the education takes place at school, but workplace training is also necessary;
- social partners play an important role in shaping VET policies;
- participation in lifelong learning (and its VET component) is at 23.6% for 25 to 64 year olds, which is above the EU-28 average and the equivalent European education and training 2020 benchmark of 15%.

Distinctive features ([1])

Study programmes vary in length from one school year to four years of combined school and workplace training.

The participation rate of young people in VET aged 15 to 24 is among the lowest in Europe at 23.8%. Looking at all upper secondary learners, however, the proportion is around 30% *vis-à-vis* general studies, reflecting the higher average age of VET learners, many of whom had enrolled in general studies before switching to VET programmes.

Most learners in workplace training receive salaries, at an increasing percentage of fully qualified workers' salaries. Enterprises training learners can apply to the education ministry for a subsidy to fund the training.

Learners can finish upper secondary school with a vocational and a general degree (matriculation exam), which is the prerequisite for higher education.

[1] As there's no *Spotlight on VET* for Iceland prior to 2018 and the distinctive features section is not a feature of the 2018 spotlights, distinctive features were identified as such by ReferNet Iceland.

CHAPTER 2.

Main challenges and policy responses

In 2014, the education ministry published the White Paper on Education Reform ([2]). Concerning VET, the following measures were emphasised by the ministry:

- restructuring VET with simpler basic studies, with study programmes built on different steps and learning outcomes as well as cutting study time;
- all VET should include workplace learning, but the quality assessments, responsibilities and financing should be revised;
- the legal and institutional framework for VET after upper secondary school should be revised and it should be investigated whether a special VET university ([3]) should be established;
- the governance and administration of VET should be improved by evaluating the functions of committees and councils and defining the roles of each of them;
- guidance and counselling should be enhanced, both in the last classes of compulsory schools and the first in upper secondary schools, and more students should be encouraged to choose VET.

Work is underway within the education ministry to simplify the governance and administration of VET and school counselling has been strengthened, not least with a view to draw more learners' attention to VET. However, the proportion of learners choosing VET has not risen ([4]).

[3] *Fagháskóli*.

[4] As there's no *Spotlight on VET* for Iceland prior to 2018 and the distinctive features section is not a feature of the 2018 spotlights, distinctive features were identified as such by ReferNet Iceland.

CHAPTER 3.

External factors influencing VET

3.1. Demographics

Population in 2018: 348 450 ([5])

It increased since 2013 by 8.3% due to immigration. According to national data the proportion of foreign citizens was 12.2% of the entire population in late 2018 ([6]).

The average age of the nation is increasing, from 36.4 years in 2010 to 38.1 years on 1 January 2019 ([7]).

Icelandic VET participation rates have for many years been low compared to European rates and the proportion has been slowly decreasing in recent years, as well as the total number of learners at upper secondary level. The average age of the nation is increasing (from 36.4 years in 2010 to 38.1 years on 1 January 2019) ([8]) but the number of inhabitants has also been increasing for over a hundred years, with the exception of 2009 (due to emigration in an economic crisis). This may suggest a demographic impact on numbers of learners at upper secondary level, but does not explain the low ratio of learners choosing VET.

3.2. Economics

Most companies are small- and medium-sized (less than 250 employees). They constitute 99% of all companies in the country ([9]).

Main economic sectors.

In terms of export revenues the main economic sectors are:

- tourism (39%);
- manufacturing industry (24%);
- fisheries (18%).

These sectors are all heavily dependent upon labour with VET qualifications, such as chefs, electricians and marine captains.

3.3. Labour market

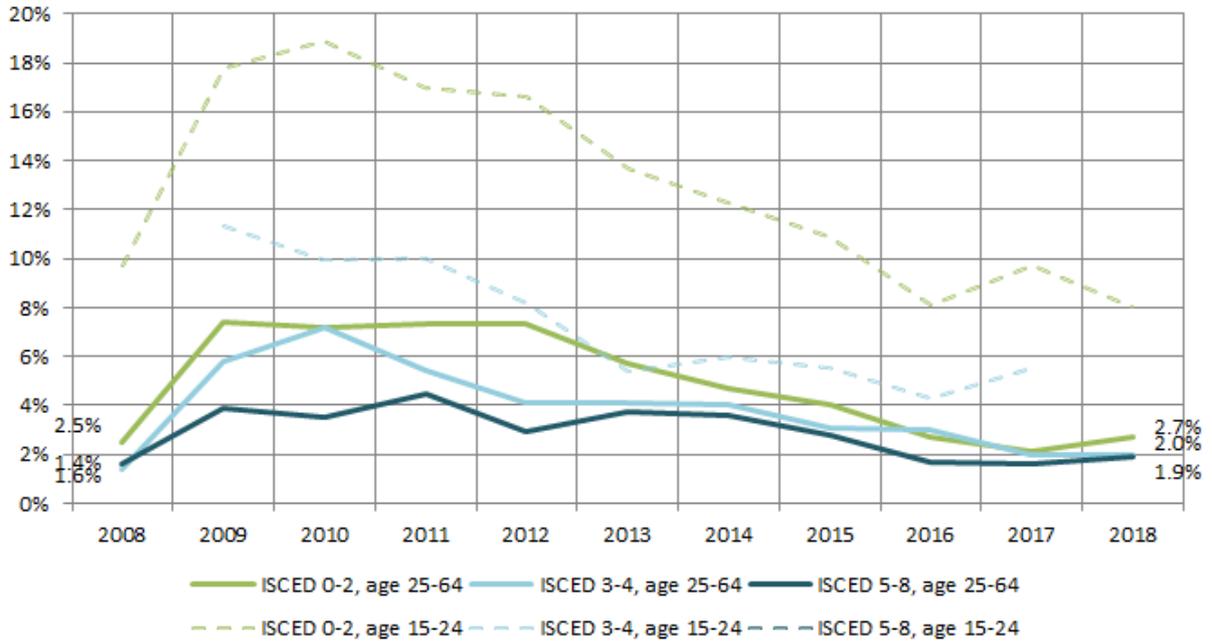
The labour market is considered flexible in terms of labour mobility.

The Icelandic economy can be defined as small but open with a well-established and regulated system of cooperation between social partners and the government, with the social partners negotiating through collective bargaining to control wage levels and influence prices.

Holding a VET qualification is highly valued by the labour market. However, a certificate is legally necessary only for certified trades such as electricians, masons, builders, plumbers etc.

Total unemployment ([10]) (2018): 2.1% (6% in EU-28). It has increased by 0.2 percentage points since 2008 ([11]).

Unemployment rate (aged 15-24 and 25-64) by education attainment level in 2008-18



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series; low reliability for ISCED 3-4, age 15-24 and ISCED 5-8, both age groups.

ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education.

ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.

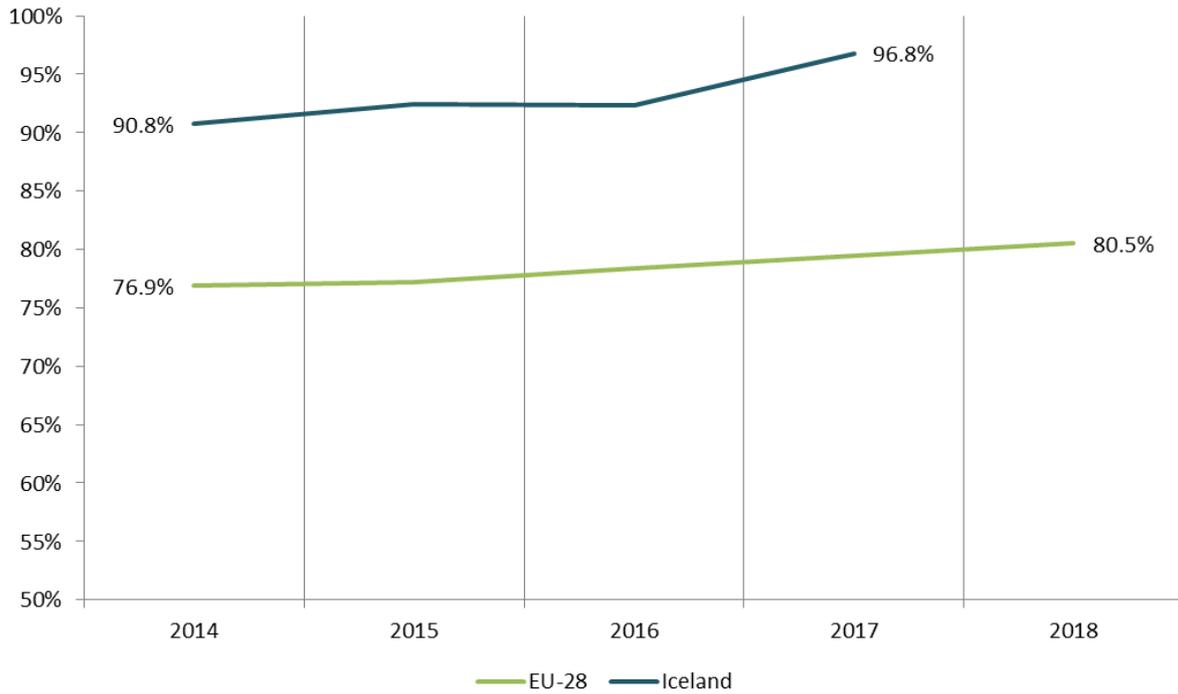
Source: Eurostat, lfsa_urgaed [extracted 16.5.2019].

The gap in employment between those with low and medium qualifications is small. Unemployment rates are only slightly higher than in the pre-crisis period. For people with medium-level qualifications, including most VET graduates (ISCED levels 3 and 4), it is 0.6 percentage points higher in 2018 compared to 2008.

Despite this, the ever growing demand for more qualified personnel will have an impact not only on people with low qualifications but also on VET graduates as they will need to upgrade their skills.

Employment rate of 20 to 34 year-old VET graduates increased from 90.8% in 2014 to 96.8% in 2017.

Employment rate of VET graduates (20 to 34 years old, ISCED levels 3 and 4)



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series.

ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat, edat_ifse_24 [extracted 16.5.2019].

The increase (+6.0 pp) in employment of 20 to 34 year-old VET graduates in 2014-2017 was lower compared to the increase in employment of all 20 to 34 year-old graduates (+6.6 pp) in the same period in Iceland ([12]).

[5] NB: Data for population as of 1 January. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 16.5.2019].

[6] NB: data for population as of 1 January. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 16.5.2019].

[7] Source: Statistics Iceland. No data available on the population forecast by Eurostat for Iceland.

[8] Adapted by ReferNet Iceland from Statistics Iceland.

[9] Data from Statistics Iceland.

[10] Percentage of active population, 25 to 74 years old.

[11] Source: Eurostat, une_rt_a [extracted 20.5.2019].

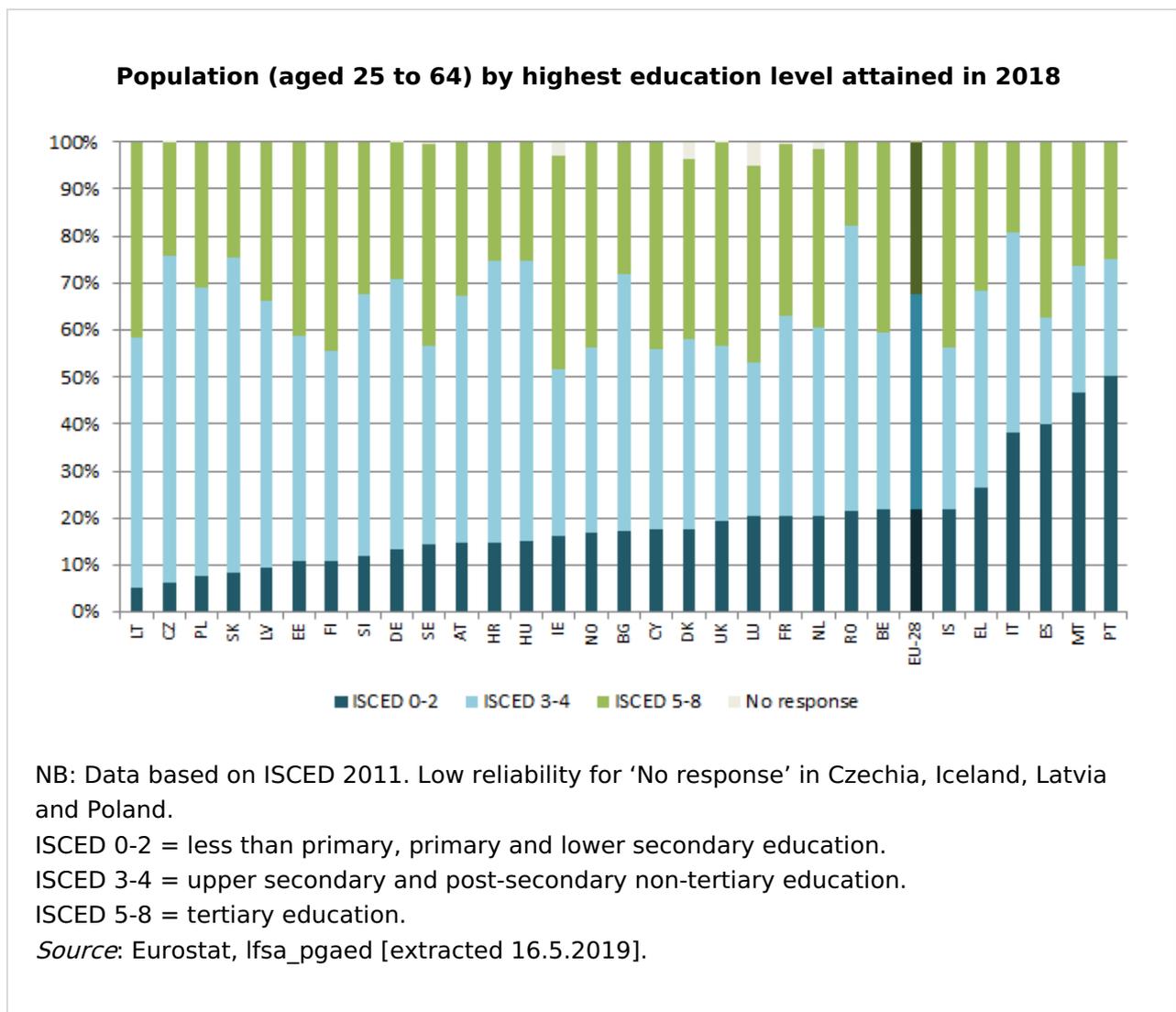
[12] NB: Break in series. Eurostat table edat_ifse_24 [extracted 23.1.2019]. No data for VET graduates for the period 2014-18. The employment rate of all 20-34 year old graduates for the period 2014-18 increased by 4.9 percentage points.

CHAPTER 4.

Education attainment

4.1. Share of high, medium and low level qualifications

The share of the population aged up to 64 with higher education (43.8%) is higher than the EU-28 average, and the share of people with a low qualification or without a qualification is among the highest in the EU. The share of people with a medium qualification (ISCED levels 3 and 4), including those in VET, is one of the lowest in the EU.



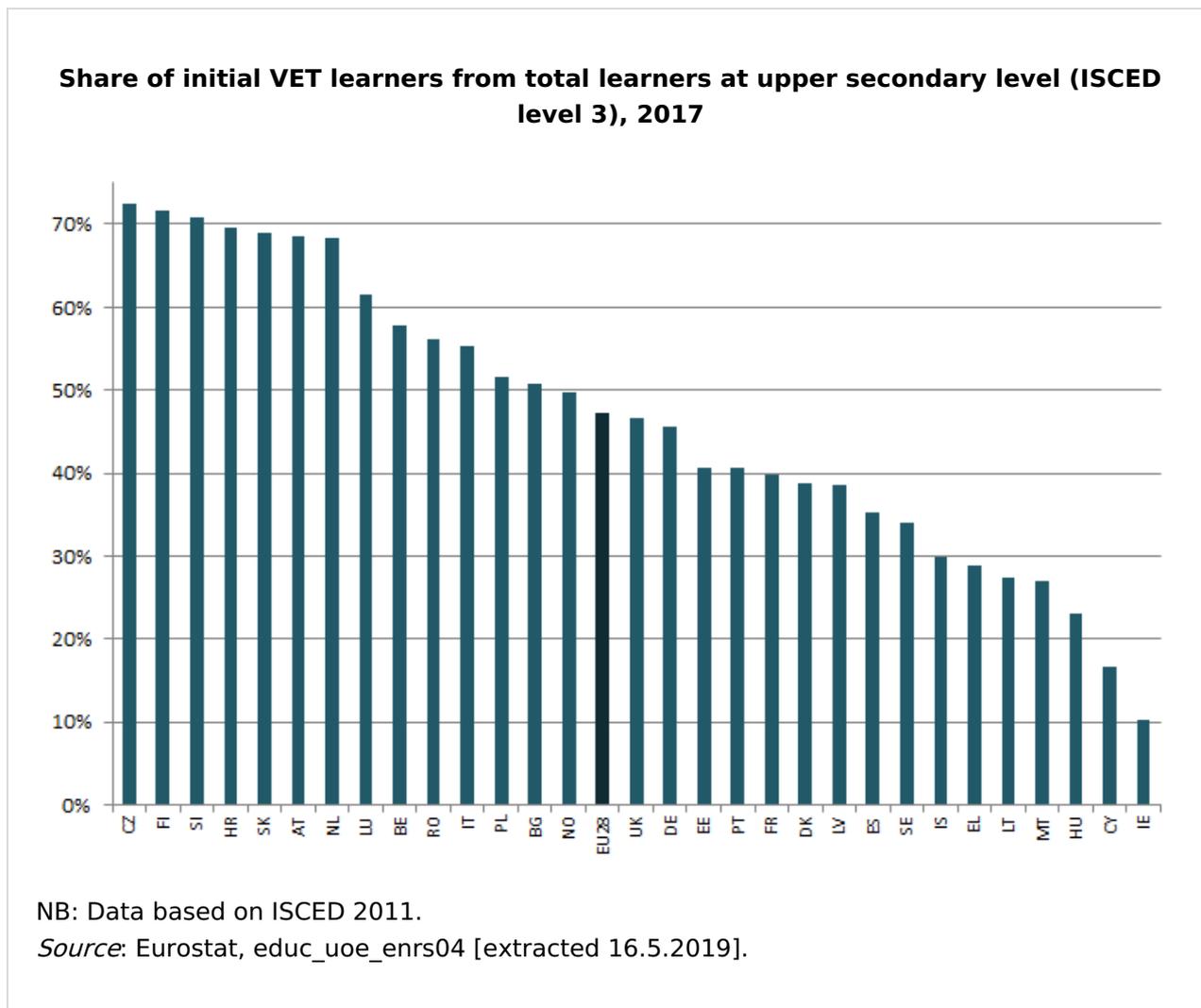
4.3. VET learners by level

Share of learners in VET by level in 2017

lower secondary	upper secondary	post-secondary
not applicable	29.9%	98.6%

NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Source: Eurostat, educ_uae_enrs01, educ_uae_enrs04 and educ_uae_enrs07 [extracted 16.5.2019].



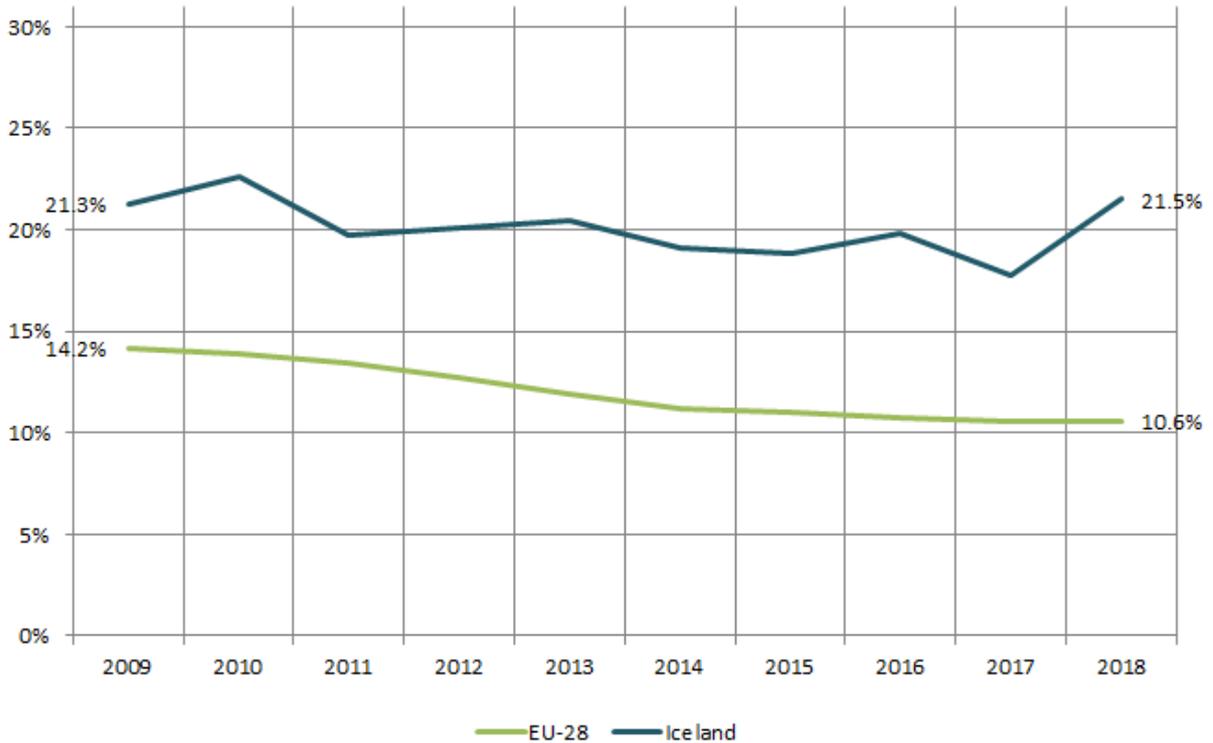
4.4. Female share

Almost two-thirds (63.9%) of those who choose VET are males, dominating many of the most popular study programmes, such as for various electrical, building and mechanical studies. Females, on the other hand, dominate popular study programmes such as for social service and health care assistants, as well as hair styling and cosmetology.

4.5. Early leavers from education and training

The share of early leavers from education and training has increased from 21.3% in 2009 to 21.5% in 2018. It is worse than the EU-28 average of 10.6%.

Early leavers from education and training in 2009-18



NB: Share of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training; break in series. *Source:* Eurostat, edat_ifse_14 [extracted 16.5.2019] and European Commission: https://ec.europa.eu/info/2018-european-semester-national-reform-programmes-and-stability-convergence-programmes_en [accessed 14.11.2018].

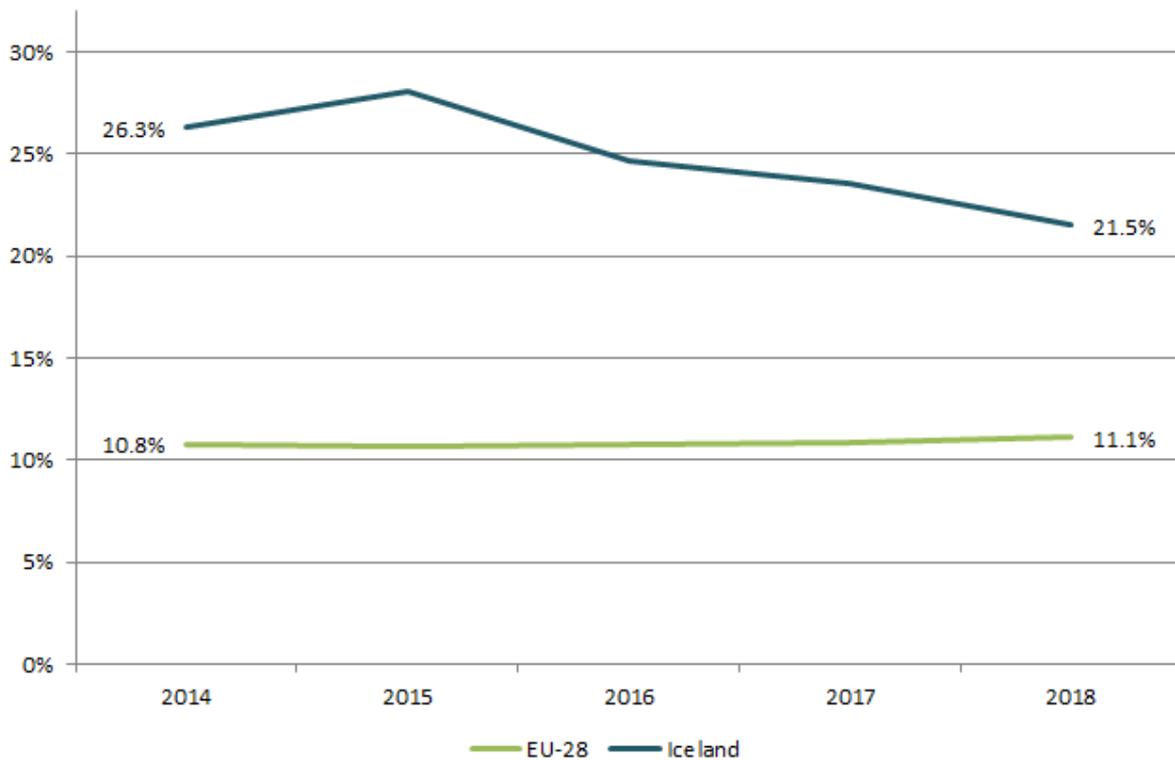
Dropout rate from VET (%)

In 2016, the dropout rate from VET was a staggering 37.5% ([13]). No doubt a part of this group will return and finish their study programmes at some point, as the average graduation age in VET is around 27 years old.

4.6. Participation in lifelong learning

Lifelong learning offers training opportunities for adults, either employed or unemployed.

Participation in lifelong learning in 2014-18



NB: Share of adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training.

Source: Eurostat, trng_lfse_01 [extracted 16.5.2019].

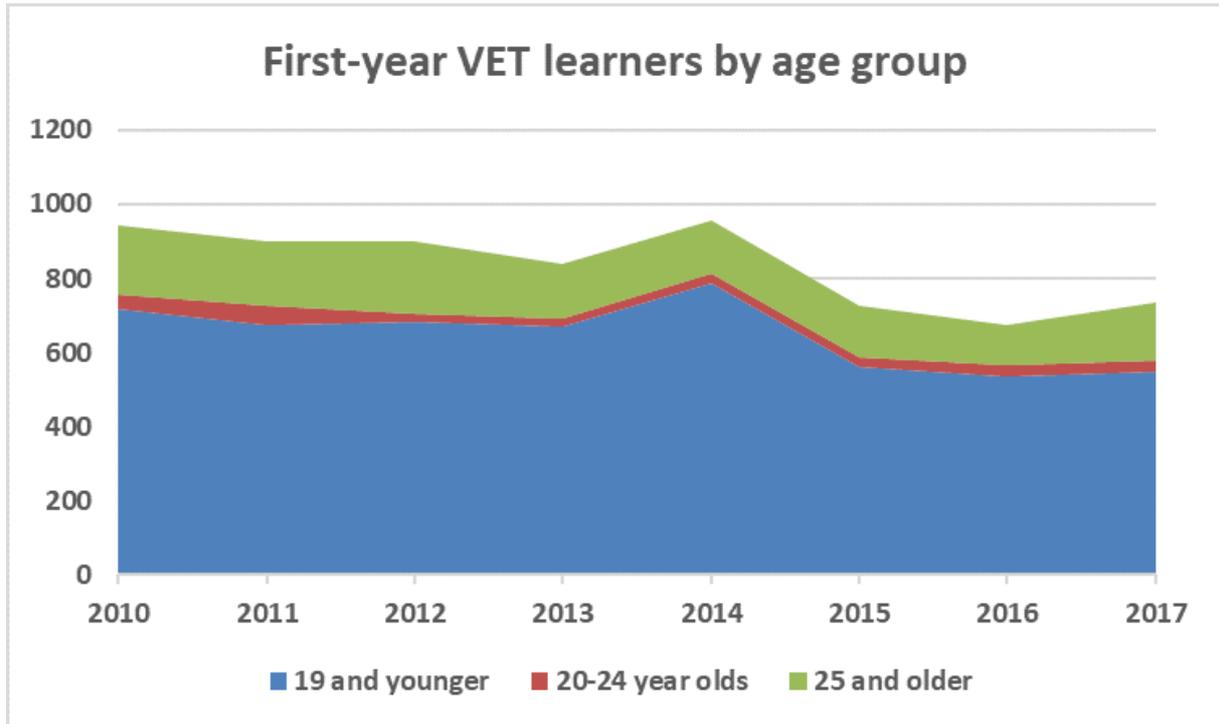
Participation in lifelong learning is high and above the EU-28 average but has slightly decreased since 2014.

An important feature in terms of upgrading the skills of employees (and, therefore, of participation in lifelong learning) is that in 2017 35% of employees received some kind of training ([14]).

4.7. VET learners by age

Information from Statistics Iceland on VET learners by age is mostly focused on the age of first-year learners, but the average graduation age is around 27 years old. As can be seen from the graph below, first-year learners are predominantly in the age group 19 years old and younger. In fact, 70-74% of first-year learners are normally aged 16 but the dropout rate is very high, a staggering 37.5%.

First-year VET learners by age group



NB: Data from Statistics Iceland.

[13] Source: Statistics Iceland.

[14] Source: Statistics Iceland.

CHAPTER 5.

VET within education and training system

The education and training system comprises:

- preschool education (ISCED level 0);
- integrated primary and lower secondary education (EQF levels 1-2, ISCED levels 244) (hereafter basic/compulsory education);
- upper secondary education (EQF 4, ISCED levels 344, 351, 353);
- post-secondary non-tertiary education (EQF 5, ISCED levels 453, 454);
- higher education (EQF levels 6, 7, 8, ISCED levels 554, 665, 766, 768, 864).

Compulsory education starts at the age of 6 and includes ten years of basic education (or until June of the year a learner reaches the age of 16).

Integrated primary and lower secondary education is the responsibility of the municipalities.

Upper secondary education (either general or vocational) is steered by the State. Only a few of the 37 upper secondary schools do not offer VET programmes.

Post-secondary non-tertiary education is offered for limited specialties (e.g. tour guides and masters of crafts).

Higher education is in line with the Bologna process offering three-year bachelor, two-year master and three-year PhD programmes.

Almost all initial VET in Iceland is in certified trades and built on an apprentice system, where most of the education takes place in school, but workplace training is also necessary. The duration of the time spent in school and the time spent at the workplace varies between programmes and branches. In addition, there are a small number of VET programmes where all the education and training takes place in school and are not certified trades, such as in computer technology and various arts.

The most common duration of VET studies in certified trades is four years. An example would be the electrician programmes, which are either six semesters in school and 48 weeks in apprenticeship, or seven semesters in school and 30 weeks in apprenticeship, after which time the pupil is ready to complete a journeyman's examination. An example of a shorter programme is a cook programme with two semesters in school and 34 weeks in work-based training, or a social care assistant programme comprising five semesters, of which the last 2 to 3 take place in work-based training.

VET at post-secondary non-tertiary level is mostly composed of master of crafts' programmes where a journeyman's certificate (in the relevant study programme such as electrical, building or mechanical studies) is a prerequisite for enrolment.

Certified tradesmen (with a journeyman's examination) can also enter (90 ECTS) diploma studies in construction, mechanical or electrical engineering at tertiary level, earning them the professional title of a certified technician.

Continuing VET (CVET) programmes are available for adults and are usually offered by:

- institutions ([15]) owned by social partners. Courses offered are aimed at upgrading skills. These courses are usually of short duration. People in the labour market with VET qualifications can get financial support from the social partners' training funds for these courses;

- other continuing VET centres ([16]), which are much smaller than the social partners' institutions and offer more specialised training.

Workplace training is also offered to employees mainly on security, environmental protection, new working techniques, etc.

[15] There are two main institutions: the IDAN VET training centre (the largest continuing VET institution in Iceland) which offers continuing VET programmes in a variety of sectors (e.g. food and catering, metal and machines, building and construction, printing technology, auto mechanics, computer supported design and hair styling) and the Retraining and Technical Training Centre (*Rafiðnaðarskólinn*) for electric and electronic technicians.

[16] These are: the private company Sýni Research Centre which offers various job-related courses for people working in the food industry and the Icelandic Innovation Centre which is a public institution under the Ministry of Industries and Innovation offering courses in project management or personal leadership.

CHAPTER 6.

Apprenticeship

According to the framework legislation on upper secondary schooling, a prerequisite for doing qualified VET workplace training is having a contract with a company that is willing and able to offer training in a VET subject. Many prerequisites for such a contract to be signed must be met, including that of the workplace having a certified master in the trade in question.

Two types of contracts are possible:

- a contract between the school and the company, in which the training content must be made as per regulation issued by the education minister, and which contains detailed provision concerning contracts for on-the-job training;
- a traditional apprenticeship contract between the company and the learner, stipulating the rights and obligations of the workplace and the learner respectively, as well as the objective of the training, quality control and the handling of possible disputes. The learner becomes an employee and receives a marginal salary during the training, in line with labour market agreements where the number of working hours is also set.

For several trades, the education ministry has allocated the overall management of the training contracts to a common education centre portal hosted by IDAN education centre ([17]), which offers continuous education for several VET sectors, where contracts have been streamlined and modularised and guidelines issued to workplaces. Still in production in summer 2019 is a digital VET logbook where the student in question, as well as the trainer, record all details of the teaching process and the knowledge, skills and competences acquired for the job at the workplace. The digital logbook system will be launched in autumn 2019 for several trades. In the end, the teacher or the institution must certify each step of the teaching process and that specific competences have been achieved.

The length of the workplace training varies from 3 to 126 weeks, depending on the VET study programme. The reasons for this difference are first and foremost: the overall length of the programme on the one hand, and the tradition in each sector on the other. Similar training takes place for professionals in electricity and electronics at Rafmennt VET centre, i.e. the VET centre which specialises in training for electricians.

Learn more about apprenticeships in the national context from the European database on apprenticeship schemes by Cedefop: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/apprenticeship-schemes/scheme-fiches>

[17] In Icelandic: IDAN *fræðslusetur*.

CHAPTER 7.

VET governance

Education is steered centrally by the education ministry. The ministry oversees and provides curriculum for all school levels, including VET.

All upper secondary schools have 'school curricula' where education aims, intended learning outcomes, assessment, content and the connections between these elements are listed.

New VET study programmes are proposed by the upper secondary schools, in cooperation with the occupational councils (which are composed of representatives of the relevant social partners, i.e. trade unions and employers' associations and professional associations). The initiative is often that of the occupational councils, which also define the quality, competences, skills and knowledge requirements and work descriptions. The directorate of education liaises between the two and the education ministry, which confirms new study programmes.

CHAPTER 8.

VET financing mechanisms

The main principle for funding the upper secondary school system and VET is that the education ministry makes a contract with each school concerning the number of enrolled students and then pays a certain amount, based on a formula that considers the actual cost per learner in the relevant subject per year. The amount differs between study programmes and is higher for VET learners in comparison to general education learners. This applies both to public and private schools.

According to the education ministry, the average cost per VET learner is IKR 1 300 000 (approximately EUR 9 600) per year. The number of VET students at upper secondary level was 7 070 in 2017 making the total amount around IKR 9.2 billion (approximately EUR 67.5 million), or 0.6% of GDP and 1.1% of government spending.

On-the-job training is funded by the companies which train learners, but they can apply for a subsidy from a state-financed workplace training fund ([18]). The fund was founded in 2012 and supports companies with a particular amount per learner per week. In 2018, the fund supported companies with IKR 14 000 (approximately EUR 104) per learner per week, supporting in total 15.328 learner-weeks with IKR 199.3 million (approximately EUR 1.48 million).

All apprentices are entitled to salaries during their training periods, albeit much lower than those of the fully qualified staff. In the certified trades, the minimum wage for apprentices ranges from IKR 253 000 to IKR 278 000 (around EUR 2 060) per month, or IKR 1 500 to 1 600 (around EUR 12) per hour (in regular daytime work, otherwise higher), the amount increasing gradually for more weeks at the workplace ([19]).

Continuing VET (CVET) programmes are usually short in duration and funded either by the relevant workplaces, by social partners, by the state or a combination of two or three of the above to varying degrees.

[18] See more information on the fund here at Rannis' website:

<https://www.rannis.is/sjodir/menntun/vinnustadanamssjodur/>

[19] See the relevant information here at (trade union) Samidn's website:

<http://www.samidn.is/forsida/kjarasamningar/launataxtar-idnnema-lagmarkslaun>

CHAPTER 9.

Teachers and trainers

9.1. VET teacher types

In VET, there are:

- general subject teachers;
- teachers of vocational subjects;
- trainers at the workplace.

General subject teachers must have a master degree in education from a university.

Teachers of vocational subjects must be masters of craft in the relevant profession and have taken a minimum of 60 ECTS ([20]) in pedagogy at a university.

Trainers at the workplace must be masters of craft in the relevant profession.

Although salaries for VET teachers have increased, the teacher population is ageing. Attracting young people to the profession remains a challenge.

9.2. Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers

Teachers can receive various scholarships to finance further university studies and for work, school visits at home or abroad, conference fees, study leave etc. The official funds are financed by the schools/employers but managed by the teachers' unions. Teachers can apply to the education ministry for up to a year's study leave on full salary, but most teachers are not granted this more than once and then usually only after more than 20 years at work.

Various other options are available, such as scholarships to finance part-time studies or shorter periods of study leave. Teachers are also expected to spend two weeks per year in continuous education, outside the school year; they have access to various other funds and options for continuous education on the basis of their wage agreements with the state. Choosing the relevant study programmes, conferences etc. is mostly up to the teachers and trainers themselves, and the programmes and training are provided by lifelong learning institutions (e.g. in the electricity sector) and universities, among others, and via study visits at home or abroad.

More information is available in the Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspective on teachers and trainers ([21]).

[20] European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS). is a credit system designed to make it easier for students to move between different countries. Since they are based on the learning achievements and workload of a course, a student can transfer their credits from one university to another so they are added up to contribute to an individual's degree programme or training. It helps to make learning more student-centred. It is a central tool in the Bologna process, which aims to make national systems more compatible and was adopted into Icelandic legislation with the law on universities No 63/2006 (Parliament, www.althingi.is). It also helps with the planning, delivery and evaluation of study programmes, and makes them more transparent. European credit transfer and accumulation system credits represent the workload and defined learning outcomes ('what the individual knows understands and is able to do') of a given course or programme. 60 credits are the equivalent of a full school year of study or work, or two full semesters. In a standard academic year, 60 credits would usually be broken down into several smaller components.

A typical 'first cycle' (or bachelor) degree, would consist of 180 or 240 credits, whereas a typical 'second cycle' (or master) degree, would consist of 90 or 120 credits, with at least 60 credits at second cycle level. The use of European credit transfer and accumulation system at the 'third cycle' (or Ph.D. level) varies. European credit transfer and accumulation system has been adopted by most of the countries in the European higher education area (EHEA), and is increasingly used elsewhere. More information on the European credit transfer and accumulation system available at:

https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects_en . More information on Bologna process and the European higher education area available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/higher-education/bologna-process-and-european-higher-education-area_en

[21] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/teachers-and-trainers>

CHAPTER 10.

Shaping VET qualifications

The role of the Occupational Council is (among other duties) to advise the Minister of Education, Science and Culture, and to provide opinion on the categorisation and division of occupations between the twelve Occupational Councils.

Due to the small size of the labour market, most trades are based on a broad level of competences, so that graduates have a wider possibility of employment. The exams at the end of each study validates whether this is indeed the case. Thus, the studies can rather be termed output based than input based, even though studies are defined in the hours it takes to complete them.

10.1. Anticipating skill needs

When assessing future skills needs, the twelve occupational councils are the strongest link between the education ministry and industry. The councils operate under the responsibility of the ministry and are composed of representatives of the relevant social partners and trade associations for different vocational trades. Each council has the role to define the needs of a particular trade in respect to the knowledge and ability required, the aims and structure of the education and the curriculum guidelines. The councils often initiate or suggest new VET study programmes or changes to existing ones, but it is up to the upper secondary schools to propose such programmes and the Directorate of Education to liaise between the two, while it is up to the education ministry to confirm new study programmes.

Unlike many countries, no authority in Iceland has made systematic estimates or forecasts regarding skills anticipation and needs in the labour market or for certain trades. At the time of writing the minister for labour affairs is considering ways to change this situation, following a report written for the ministry in 2018 by a group of experts from social partners, statistics Iceland and the directorate of labour. The occupational councils sometimes attempt to estimate future demand but not in a coordinated and systemic manner, as have certain social partners, education institutions and public institutions on a mostly ad hoc basis for particular trades and industries, but not in a systematic manner.

See also Cedefop's skills forecast ([22]) and European skills index ([23]).

10.2. Designing qualifications

Due to the small size of the labour market, most trades are based on a broad level of competences, so that graduates have a wider possibility of employment. The examinations at the end of each study validate whether this is, indeed, the case. Thus, the studies can rather be termed output- based than input-based, even though studies are defined by the hours it takes to complete them.

According to the education ministry's national curriculum guide for upper secondary schools ([24]), the education institutions may develop new study programmes, although subject to approval and validation by the ministry after consultation with the relevant occupational council, in the case of a VET programme. All upper secondary schools have a school curriculum where education aims, intended learning outcomes, assessment, content and the connections between these elements are listed. Individual schools are responsible for all study programmes they offer but can use study programmes from other schools as well.

Once approved by the education ministry, new study programmes become part of the curricula for

upper secondary schools when published in the legislator's legal journal.

The twelve occupational councils, composed of representatives of the relevant social partners and professional associations for different vocational trades, discuss the demand for new study programmes and the need for updating existing ones in terms of: qualifications demands, basic structure, competences, skills and knowledge requirements of work descriptions, which they define and gradually update. Typically, they report the need for new study programmes or updates to existing ones to individual schools or to the directorate for education. The upper secondary schools do, however, have the task of proposing new study programmes or updating them, including the curricula, often at the initiative of the occupational councils but sometimes also at their own initiative based on their estimate of existing demand. The schools' ideas are then put before the relevant occupational council to discuss the desirable qualification demands and structure, and the directorate of education liaises between the two before the education ministry finally approves the study programme.

This process can vary, in terms of processes, initiatives and procedures, between schools, occupational councils, individual teachers/trainers and study programmes. It is, however, always a result of a liaison between the schools and the occupational councils, always developed within the framework of the national curriculum guide and always subject to approval of the education ministry.

[22] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/skills-forecast>

[23] Information for Iceland is not available.

[24] https://www.government.is/library/01-Ministries/Ministry-of-Education/Curriculum/adskr_frsk_ens_2012.pdf

CHAPTER 11.

Quality assurance

The education ministry validates the study programmes for all upper secondary education and training, which become part of the curricula for upper secondary schools when published in the legislator's legal journal.

The VET study programmes for all trades are developed in cooperation with members of each occupation's association through twelve occupational councils. Job descriptions, knowledge, skills and competences are gradually revised by the occupational councils.

All upper secondary schools are subject to a quality evaluation performed by outside parties once every five years. The quality criteria are defined by the education ministry. The schools are requested to report on their performance according to the ministry's quality criteria (internal evaluation) and the directorate of education hires independent consultants to perform a quality evaluation based on the same criteria. The independent consultants' reports are published openly on the directorate of education's website, but prior to that the schools are given a chance to respond to a draft report and the consultants may adjust their report accordingly. Follow-up to the evaluation reports is the responsibility of the education ministry and of course the schools themselves.

Training providers must be formally accredited by the directorate of education, on behalf of the education ministry, to obtain a licence to teach courses for adults giving credits that can be used for further training at upper secondary schools.

The accreditation is based on the evaluation of the following:

- teaching and learning facilities;
- organisation and supervision of studies;
- curricula or course descriptions;
- the competences of adult education providers, with regard to their knowledge and experience;
- financial issues and insurance;
- the existence of a quality control system focused on adult education.

The accreditation does not entail commitment for public funding to the education provider in question or responsibility for the education and training provider's liabilities.

For several trades, the education ministry has allocated the overall management of the training contracts to a common education centre portal hosted by IDAN education centre ([25]), which offers continuous education for several VET sectors, where contracts have been streamlined and modularised and guidelines issued to the workplaces.

A VET logbook is gradually being made digital in 2019. The student in question, as well as the trainer, record in the logbook all details of the teaching process and the knowledge, skills and competences acquired for the job at the workplace. In the end, the teacher or the institution must certify each step of the teaching process and that the specific competences have been achieved.

[25] IDAN (in Icelandic: IÐAN) is a non-profit education and training provider supported by the federation of employees and unions; a provider of continuing education offering diverse in house- and company courses including accredited programs for qualified professionals in the crafts and trades. Companies have also access to career and vocational counselling through skills assessment, analysis of educational needs and planning and implementation of in-house educational pathways. IÐAN has been heavily involved with the implementation of validation of prior learning in Iceland. IÐAN provides assessment of non-Icelandic professional qualifications and work experience. In addition, a provider of various services for the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and are involved in creating both national and international partnerships, embracing innovation and meeting new challenges to support the labour market. More information available at: <http://viskaproject.eu/about-us/idan/>

CHAPTER 12.

Validation of prior learning

Real competence validation/accreditation of prior learning ([26]) is a system organised by the social partners and the education ministry to validate non-formal and informal learning. People who have acquired some skills at workplaces, for example, can get them validated through a formal process, which may shorten their study periods towards a journeyman's examination in a trade, for example. They also get valuable assistance (counselling and study aid) if they have dyslexia, for example, or other learning problems. Real competence validations are available in several trades. Social partners and the education ministry are working on expanding the offers.

For more information about arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning please visit Cedefop's European database ([27]).

[26] In Icelandic: *Raunfærnimat*.

[27] https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_IS.pdf

CHAPTER 13.

Incentives for learners

- The Icelandic study loan fund offers subsistence loans with subsidised interest rates to VET students after the first two years of studies, while students of general education at this level are not entitled to such loans. The basic amount (for 2018-19) is ISK 492 900 (approximately EUR 3 650) per semester, but additional amounts are granted based on, for example, their housing situation and their number of dependants.
- In recent years, increased emphasis has been put on vocational and education counselling to help students choose their study paths, and thus drawing their attention to often less visible VET study and training options where applicable.

CHAPTER 14.

Incentives for enterprises to boost their participation in VET provision

On-the-job training is funded by the companies which train learners, but they can apply for a subsidy from a state-financed workplace training fund. The fund was founded in 2012 and supports companies with a particular amount per learner per week. In 2018, the fund supported companies with IKR 14 000 (approximately EUR 104) per learner per week, altogether supporting 15 328 learner-weeks with IKR 199.3 million (approximately EUR 1.48 million). This makes a big difference, especially for small companies which would otherwise not be able to afford training costs.

The education ministry has an ongoing contract with skills Iceland ([28]), charging this organization with the responsibility of supervising the Icelandic Skills Competition every other year, as well as to enable participation of VET learners in Euro Skills.

[28] In Icelandic: *Verkiðn*: <http://verkidn.is/>

CHAPTER 15.

Guidance and counselling

In recent years, increased emphasis has been put on vocational and education counselling to help students choose their study paths. For example, at grammar school level VET subjects were introduced in an attempt to increase VET attractiveness. Work is in progress to enhance VET counselling and guidance.

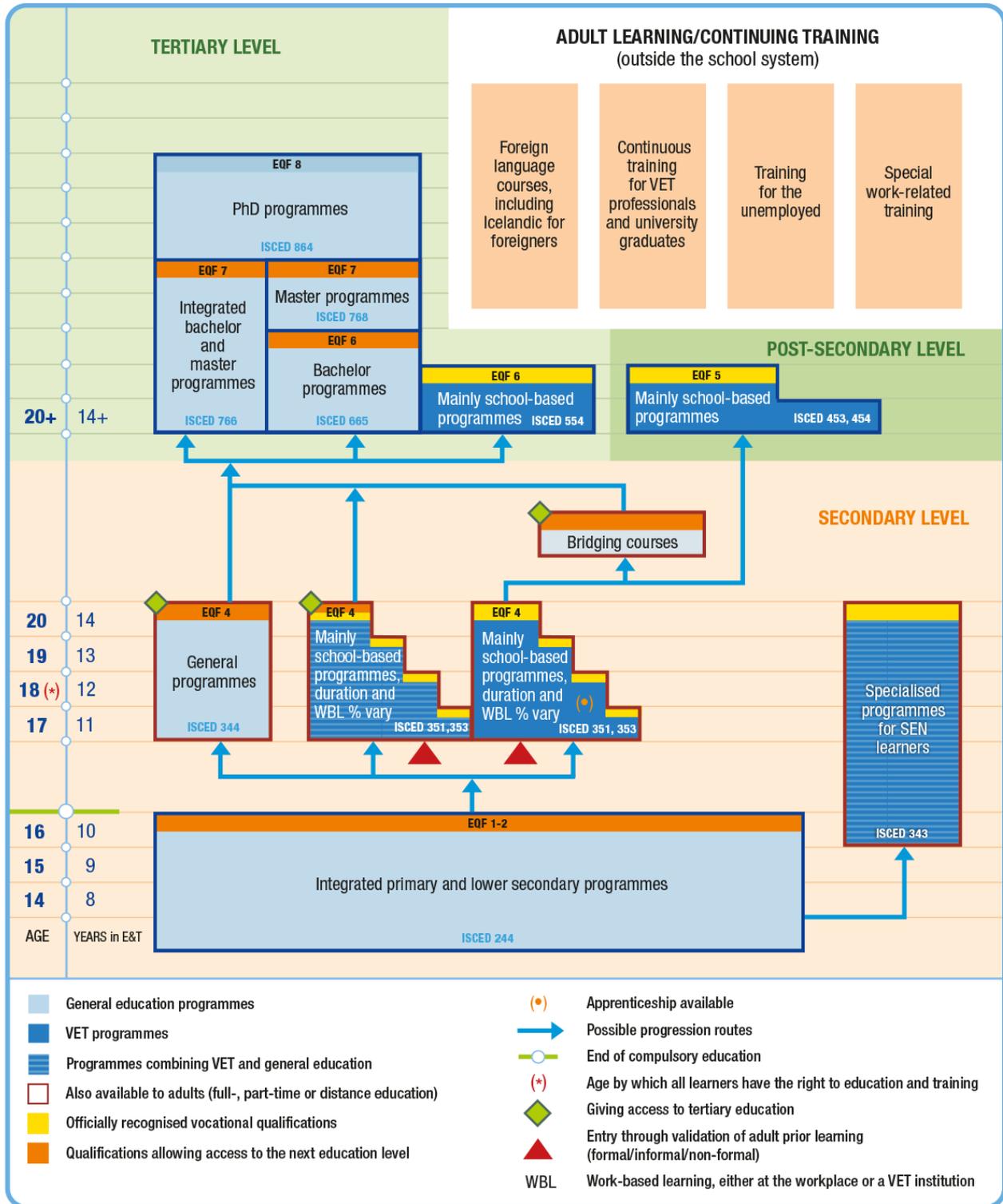
Please see:

- guidance and outreach Iceland national report ([29]);
- Cedefop's labour market intelligence toolkit ([30]);
- Cedefop's inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices ([A1]).

[29] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/events-and-projects/networks/refernet/thematic-perspectives/guidance-outreach>

[30] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/toolkits/resources-guidance/toolkit/where-can-you-find-more-information-in-your-country-and-elsewhere>

Vocational education and training system chart



NB: ISCED-P 2011.
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Iceland, 2019.

VET programme types

Specialised programmes for SEN learners ISCED 343			
Initial VET (and general education) programmes for people with disabilities leading to EQF level 2, ISCED 343 (Sérdeildir fatlaðra)			
EQF level	2	ISCED-P 2011 level	343
Usual entry grade	10 ([31])	Usual completion grade	12-14 ([32])
Usual entry age	16	Usual completion age	18-20
Length of a programme (years)	from 2 to 4		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	<p>✗</p> <p>The programmes start at compulsory school level for most learners, as they still need some preparation for the upper secondary school level.</p>	Is it part of formal education and training system?	<p>✓</p>
Is it initial VET?	<p>✓</p> <p>The programmes are adapted to each individual's skills and needs and are generally a combination of general and vocational studies.</p>	Is it continuing VET?	<p>✗</p>
Is it offered free of charge?	<p>✗</p> <p>Learners pay a minor registration charge of IKR 20 000 (approximately EUR 150) per term.</p>	Is it available for adults?	<p>✓</p> <p>For general studies the regular (daytime) upper secondary school programmes are available for learners up to 25 years of age but that limit does not apply to VET nor to this particular course.</p>
ECVET or other credits	Up to 240 credits ([33])		

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, The programmes are adapted to each individual's skills and needs and are generally a combination of general and vocational studies.

distance)	
Main providers	Upper secondary schools.
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	Information not available ([34]).
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	The programmes are adapted to each individual's skills and needs and are generally a combination of general and vocational studies, school-based and in-company practice.
Main target groups	Programmes are available for people with special education needs as well as young people and adults, but are especially meant to provide opportunities for young people with special education needs.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Compulsory education and an official confirmation (provided by a health authority) of a special needs' status.
Assessment of learning outcomes	The learners' status is subject to assessment – by formal (such as by examination) or informal means, i.e. via continuous evaluation by teachers of progress made by the learner – throughout his or her study time.
Diplomas/certificates provided	Learners finishing this programme receive an upper secondary school diploma of competence (<i>hæfnipróf á framhaldsskólastigi</i>). The composition between general studies and VET varies between individual learners. The diploma is recognised by all relevant authorities but does not entail a professional qualification.
Examples of qualifications	Not applicable ([35]).
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	These diplomas can entail the potential for the learners to continue their education, at EQF level 4. However, continuation of studies is subject to various forms of assessment.
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	✗
General education subjects	✓ The programmes are adapted to each individual's skills and needs and are generally a combination of general and vocational studies, school-based and in-company practice.
Key competences	✓ The national curriculum guide for upper secondary schools ([36]) defines the fundamental pillars of education as literacy, sustainability, democracy and human rights, health and welfare and creativity. These pillars are represented in all curricula, to a varying degree.
Application of learning outcomes approach	✓ The curricula are defined with respect to competences, maturity

and knowledge.

**Share of learners in
this programme type
compared with the
total number of VET
learners** <1%
([37])

- [31] For this type of programme 10th grade means that the learner has entered a special programme within an upper secondary school but in a programmes which initially involves carrying on with subjects and at levels comparable to 10th grade in the compulsory school system.
- [32] In Iceland the grade concept is used only for compulsory school, with 10th grade being the final and highest one. But as a number for years in E&T the numbering is from 10 onwards.
- [33] One secondary school credit equals 18 to 24 hours of work and full-time study equals 60 secondary school credits per school year, or 30 credits per term.
- [34] The programmes are adapted to each individual's skills and needs and are generally a combination of general and vocational studies, school based and in-company practice.
- [35] These diplomas do not entail professional qualifications.
- [36] https://www.government.is/library/01-Ministries/Ministry-of-Education/Curriculum/adskr_frsk_ens_2012.pdf
- [37] 2014/15

EQF 4

Mainly school- based programmes,
ISCED levels 351, 353

Initial VET programmes leading to EQF level 4, ISCED levels 351, 353 (Rafvirkjun, hársnyrting, vélstjórn etc.)

EQF level	4	ISCED-P 2011 level	351, 353
Usual entry grade	11	Usual completion grade	13-14
Usual entry age	16	Usual completion age	20
Length of a programme (years)	From 2.5 to 4		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	<p>✗</p> <p>Primary and lower secondary education are compulsory. The duration of primary and lower secondary studies is 10- years.</p>	Is it part of formal education and training system?	<p>✓</p>
Is it initial VET?	<p>✓</p> <p>All programmes at upper secondary level. Master of trades e.g. is at post-secondary non-tertiary level and lifelong learning courses are available outside this system.</p>	Is it continuing VET?	<p>✗</p> <p>These programmes are all at upper secondary level. However, master of trades e.g. is at post-secondary non-tertiary level and lifelong learning courses are available outside this system.</p>
Is it offered free of charge?	<p>✗</p> <p>Learners normally pay a minor registration charge of IKR 20 000 (approximately EUR 150) per term. In some programmes learners also pay a minor material fee, a maximum amount of IKR 50 000 (approximately EUR 370), varying between types of programme (e.g. goldsmiths pay more than bakers).</p>	Is it available for adults?	<p>✓</p>

ECVET or other credits 154 to 290 credits ([38]), depending on the programme. A journeyman's exam in a certified trade such as an electrician is typically 260 credits (in 4 years), automobile painting is 154 credits (2.5 years) but some food processing trades (e.g. meat processing

and baking) are 290 credits (4 years, with 200 credits out of 290 in WBL).

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school-based learning; • apprenticeships; • work practice (practical training at school and in-company practice); <p>The most common form is a mixture of school-based learning and apprenticeships. Usually a majority of the studies is school based (e.g. 180 credits versus 80 credits in WBL for electricians) but in food processing trades the majority is usually WBL (200 out of 290 credits).</p>
Main providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools • enterprises
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	>=70%
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical training at school • in-company practice
Main target groups	<p>Programmes are available for young people and adults. The total dropout rate at upper secondary school level is very high but many learners return to VET programmes having started and left general studies earlier.</p>
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	<p>Completion of compulsory education (primary and lower secondary) is required for admission (entry is also allowed through validation of adult prior learning).</p>
Assessment of learning outcomes	<p>Each course or workplace training module finishes with some sort of an assessment, either theoretical or hands-on. Students complete their overall studies with a VET exam. They can also opt for a path toward Matriculation exam, in which case the studies may take longer, because they must add general subjects to their list of VET courses.</p>
Diplomas/certificates provided	<p>The most common diplomas are certified trades' school diplomas (<i>burtfararprófi</i>) and journeyman's diplomas (<i>sveinsprófi</i>), granting certain professional rights and rights to further VET studies. Other examples from a vast array of terms used include those of a health care assistant (<i>sjúkraliði</i>) and marine engineer (<i>vélstjóri</i>), also granting professional rights and rights for further studies post-secondary non-tertiary level.</p>
Examples of qualifications	<p>Mason, hair stylist, health care assistant ([39]).</p>
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<p>Access to VET taught at post-secondary non-tertiary level depends on the completion of an upper secondary level certificate in the relevant subject and requires work experience, the length of which differs much.</p> <p>Prerequisite for admission to higher education is to pass matriculation exams or possibly have one's experience and prior learning validated towards possible missing parts of the formal matriculation exam.</p>
Destination of	<p>Information not available</p>

graduates

Awards through validation of prior learning ✓

People who have acquired some skills at e.g. workplaces can get them validated through a formal process, partly operated by education centres run by social partners, which may shorten their study periods towards e.g. a journeyman's exam in a trade. Real competence validations are available in several trades and social partners and the education ministry are gradually expanding the offers.

General education subjects ✓

At least the Icelandic language, English and mathematics form a part of all study programmes, to a varying degree between programmes.

Key competences ✓

The national curriculum guide for upper secondary schools ([40]) defines the fundamental pillars of education as literacy, sustainability, democracy and human rights, health and welfare and creativity. These pillars are represented in all curricula, to a varying degree.

Application of learning outcomes approach ✓

The programmes are based on the occupational councils' definition of competences, skills and knowledge.

Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners >75% ([41])

[38] One secondary school credit equals 18 to 24 hours of work and full-time study equals 60 secondary school credits per school year, or 30 credits per term.

[39] As described in national context.

[40] https://www.government.is/library/01-Ministries/Ministry-of-Education/Curriculum/adskr_frsk_ens_2012.pdf

[41] 2014/15

EQF 4

Mainly school-based programmes, duration and WBL % vary
ISCED 351, 353

Initial VET programmes leading to EQF level 4, ISCED levels 254, 351, 353.

EQF level	4	ISCED-P 2011 level	351, 353
Usual entry grade	11	Usual completion grade	13-14
Usual entry age	16	Usual completion age	18-19
Length of a programme (years)	4 (up to)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	Completion of compulsory education (primary and lower secondary) is required for admission (entry is also allowed through validation of adult prior learning).		Is it part of formal education and training system? ✓
Is it initial VET? ✓	All programmes begin and end at upper secondary level.		Is it continuing VET? ✗ Initial VET programmes often leading to rights to further VET studies.
Is it offered free of charge? ✗	Learners normally pay a minor registration charge of IKR 20 000 (approximately EUR 150) per term. In some programmes learners also pay a minor material fee, a maximum amount of IKR 50 000 (approximately EUR 370), varying between types of programme.		Is it available for adults? ✓

ECVET or other credits 120-260 credits, depending on the nature of the programme ([42]).

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)

- school -based learning
- work practice (practical training at school)

Main providers

- Schools

Share of work-based learning provided by >=50%

schools and companies

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• practical training at school
Main target groups	Programmes are available for young people and adults.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Learners must hold a compulsory education certificate.
Assessment of learning outcomes	Each course or training module finishes with some sort of an assessment, either theoretical or hands-on. Students complete their overall studies with a VET exam. They can also opt for a path toward Matriculation exam, in which case the studies may take longer, because they must add general subjects to their list of VET courses.
Diplomas/certificates provided	Upper secondary level certificate in the relevant subject (<i>framhaldsskólapróf</i>), not granting professional rights but often granting rights for further VET studies.
Examples of qualifications	Film maker, painter, sculpturist ([43])
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Access to VET taught at post-secondary non-tertiary level depends on the completion of an upper secondary level certificate in the relevant subject. Prerequisite for admission to higher education is to pass matriculation exams.
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	 The system of validation of prior learning is mostly connected with workplace / labour market experience and thus not as relevant in these programmes as e.g. in the certified trades.
General education subjects	 At least the Icelandic language, English and mathematics form a part of all study programmes, to a varying degree between programmes.
Key competences	 The national curriculum guide for upper secondary schools ([44]) defines the fundamental pillars of education as literacy, sustainability, democracy and human rights, health and welfare and creativity. These pillars are represented in all curricula, to a varying degree.
Application of learning outcomes approach	
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET	<5%

learners

- [42] One secondary school credit equals 18 to 24 hours of work and full-time study equals 60 secondary school credits per school year, or 30 credits per term.
- [43] As described in national context.
- [44] https://www.government.is/library/01-Ministries/Ministry-of-Education/Curriculum/adskr_frsk_ens_2012.pdf

EQF 5

Mainly school-based programmes
ISCED 453, 454

Initial VET programmes leading to EQF level 5, ISCED levels 453, 454 (iðnmeistari, píanóleikari etc.)

EQF level	5	ISCED-P 2011 level	453, 454
Usual entry grade	14+ ([45])	Usual completion grade	14+ ([46])
Usual entry age	20+	Usual completion age	30+
Length of a programme (years)	From 1 to 2		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	<p>✗</p> <p>Compulsory education is up to lower secondary level. This level is post-secondary.</p>	Is it part of formal education and training system?	<p>✓</p>
Is it initial VET?	<p>✗</p> <p>These programmes are designed for people who have already completed VET studies at upper secondary level.</p>	Is it continuing VET?	<p>✓</p> <p>These programmes are designed for people who have already completed VET studies at upper secondary level.</p>
Is it offered free of charge?	<p>✗</p> <p>The costs vary between schools, but at post-secondary level learners can be expected to pay up to 1/3 of the direct programme costs, which can be around ISK 40 000 (approximately EUR 300) per term, plus study materials (books, etc.). Other schools only charge an ISK 20 000 (approximately EUR 150) registration fee, per term.</p>	Is it available for adults?	<p>✓</p>

ECVET or other credits Around 40 upper secondary school credits ([47]).

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance) Mostly part-time distance learning with several in-school sessions per term.

Main providers	Schools
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	>=10% ([48])
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical assignments at schools • Practical assignments in distance-learning
Main target groups	Programmes are available for people who have already completed VET studies at upper secondary level, typically a journeyman's exam or certain levels in art programmes.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Completion of VET studies at upper secondary level, most often a journeyman's exam, plus a certain basic knowledge of relevant computer software (such as Excel, Word and sometimes AutoCAD). Also relevant upper secondary level in the case of various art programmes.
Assessment of learning outcomes	Each course or practical assignment finishes with some sort of an assessment, either theoretical or hands-on.
Diplomas/certificates provided	Mostly Master of Craft certificates (<i>iðnmeistarar</i>) in the relevant trade (plumbers, electricians, hair stylists etc.). Also e.g. upper secondary examination at various fine and applied art levels (e.g. music at levels 6 and 7) (<i>6. og 7. stig í tónlist</i>), marine engineers (<i>vélstjórar</i>), marine captains (<i>skipstjórar</i>).
Examples of qualifications	Master of plumbing, master of building, pianist, textile artist ([49])
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<p>Access to VET taught at post-secondary non-tertiary level depends on the completion of an upper secondary level certificate in the relevant subject and requires work experience, the length of which differs much.</p> <p>Prerequisite for admission to higher education is to pass matriculation exams.</p>
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	<p>✗</p> <p>Validation of prior learning is not available at this post-secondary VET level.</p>
General education subjects	<p>✓</p> <p>The Master of Craft programmes e.g. are largely based on subjects like management, accounting etc.</p>
Key competences	<p>✓</p> <p>Key competences like sustainability and participation in a democratic society are parts of the curriculum guide.</p>
Application of learning outcomes approach	<p>✓</p>
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the	>=10% ([50])

**total number of VET
learners**

- [45] In Iceland grades are usually associated with the compulsory school levels which are 10 grades. The upper secondary level can be said to constitute grades 11-14 but at post-secondary level there is no talk of grades.
- [46] In Iceland grades are usually associated with the compulsory school levels which are 10 grades. The upper secondary level can be said to constitute grades 11-14 but at post-secondary level there is no talk of grades.
- [47] One secondary school credit equals 18 to 24 hours of work and full-time study equals 60 secondary school credits per school year, or 30 credits per term.
- [48] These are mostly Master of Craft programmes, based partly on practical assignments but mostly on general studies of management, accounting, security affairs, etc.
- [49] As described in national context.
- [50] 2017

EQF 6

Mainly school-based
programme
ISCED 554

Initial VET programmes leading to EQF level 6, ISCED level 554 (iðnfræði)

EQF level	6	ISCED-P 2011 level	554
Usual entry grade	14+ ([51])	Usual completion grade	14+ ([52])
Usual entry age	20+	Usual completion age	23+
Length of a programme (years)	1.5 or 3 in part-time study along with labour market participation.		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗ Primary and lower secondary education are compulsory	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✓ Practical tertiary level studies available i.e. for learners with a VET background
Is it offered free of charge?	✗ Fees apply, Ikr 204 000 (approximately EUR 1 500) per term.	Is it available for adults?	✓
ECVET or other credits	90 ECTS ([53])		
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	Distance learning with two weekends' school-based sessions per term.		
Main providers	Reykjavik University		
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	>=15% (several practical assignments, including one 12 ECTS assignment, usually in-company).		
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	In-company practical assignments.		
Main target groups	Programmes are available for young people and adults but mainly targeted at people with a journeyman's certificate.		
Entry requirements for learners	A journeyman's certificate, or at least having completed its general studies' part, or a matriculation exam. In the former case, some		

(qualification/education level, age)	bridging courses may apply, in mathematics, physics, Icelandic and English.
Assessment of learning outcomes	Examinations, essays, practical assignments etc., at the end of or during each course.
Diplomas/certificates provided	A diploma as a certified technician, plus the right to practice as a Master of Crafts in the relevant trade.
Examples of qualifications	Mechanical technician, electrical technician, construction technician ([54]).
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Learners can progress to the next level of tertiary education, i.e. to EQF level 6 B.Sc. studies in science and engineering.
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	✗
General education subjects	✓ Courses include management, law and accounting.
Key competences	✓
Application of learning outcomes approach	✓
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	<1% ([55])

[51] In Iceland grades are usually associated with the compulsory school levels which are 10 grades. The upper secondary level can be said to constitute grades 11-14 but at post-secondary level there is no talk of grades.

[52] In Iceland grades are usually associated with the compulsory school levels which are 10 grades. The upper secondary level can be said to constitute grades 11-14 but at post-secondary level there is no talk of grades.

[53] European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS). is a credit system designed to make it easier for students to move between different countries. Since they are based on the learning achievements and workload of a course, a student can transfer their credits from one university to another so they are added up to contribute to an individual's degree programme or training. It helps to make learning more student-centred. It is a central tool in the Bologna process, which aims to make national systems more compatible and was adopted into Icelandic legislation with the law on universities No 63/2006 (Parliament, www.althingi.is). It also helps with the planning, delivery and evaluation of study programmes, and makes them more transparent. European credit transfer and accumulation system credits represent the workload and defined learning outcomes ('what the individual knows understands and is able to do') of a given course or programme. 60 credits are the equivalent of a full school year of study or work, or two full semesters. In a standard academic year, 60 credits would usually be broken down into several smaller components.

[54] As described in national context.

[55] 2018

References

- [2] Ministry of Education and Culture, Iceland (2014). *White paper on education reform*.
https://www.stjornarradid.is/media/menntamalaraduneyti-media/media/frettir2015/Hvitbok_ENSKA_04.pdf