



# Decline or Expansion? Where is European VET heading

Future of VET in Europe  
Expert online technical workshop, 26 November 2020  
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**CEDEFOP**

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training

# COMPETING STORIES

## The negative story

VET is declining and losing out to general and academic education

The skills provided by VET are less in need due to digitalization and job polarization

## The positive story

VET is expanding to higher levels and form the backbone of lifelong learning

The skills provided by VET are essential for continued economic growth and for upholding welfare

# Enrolment in IVET: National differences

National statistics 1995-2015: diverse developments

Remarkable growth  
in some  
from a low base  
(e.g. Spain,  
Portugal)

Moderate growth  
in some  
from a moderate base  
(e.g. the Netherlands,  
Austria)

Significant decline in  
a limited number  
from a high base  
(e.g. Germany,  
Poland)

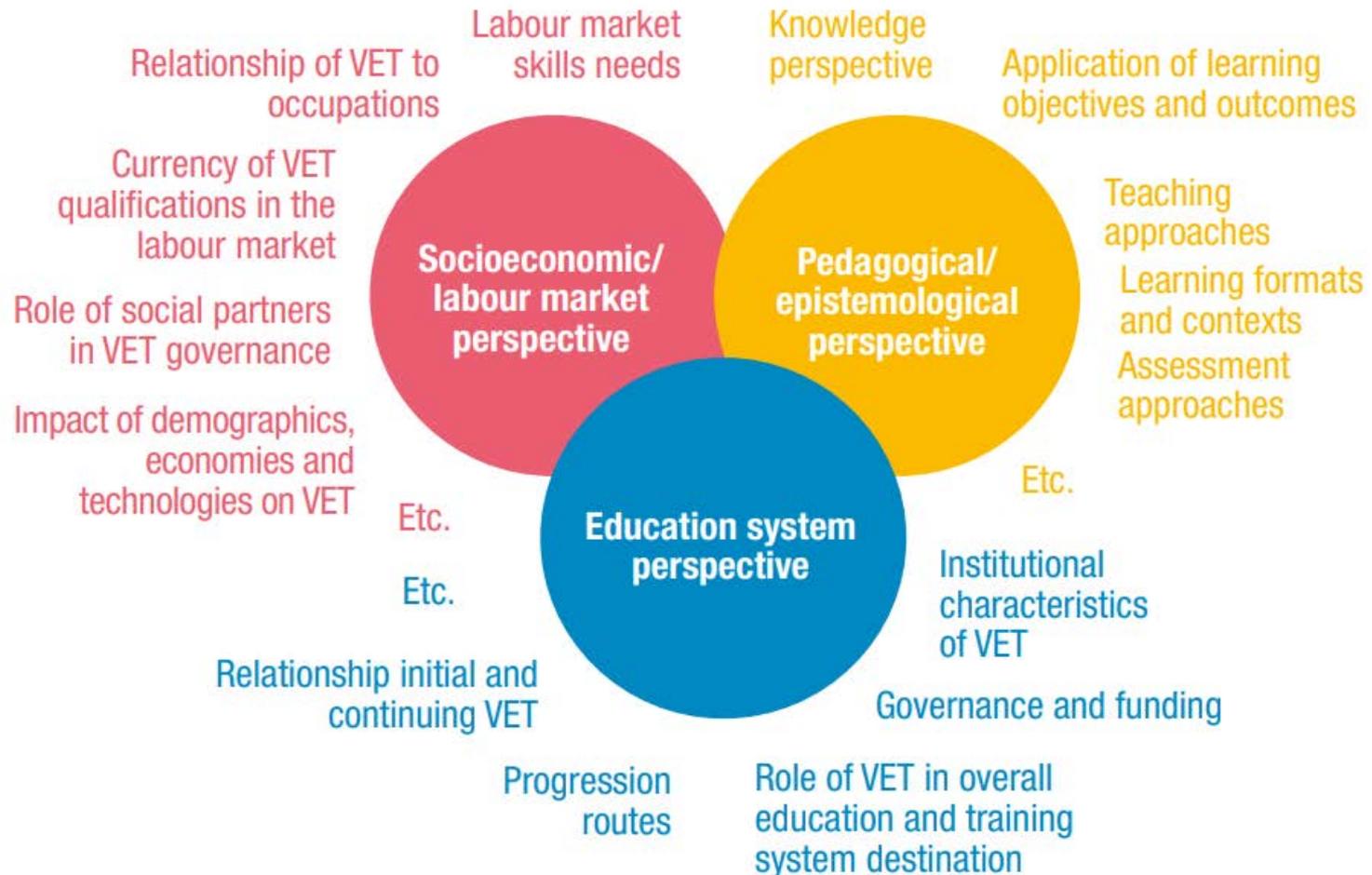
Growth and/or stability  
in the majority of European countries

Overall, IVET have (so far) upheld its position relative to general upper secondary education in most countries

# Changing understandings of VET

	Narrow – (Initial) Vocational Training	Broad– 'Vocationally oriented learning'
Forms of learning	formal learning only	formal and non-formal learning
IVET and CVET	focused on IVET	covering IVET and CVET
Scope of CVET	exclusively covering job-related CVET	covering job-related and non-job related CVET
Education sectors	as a particular sector or set of subsectors of the education system (e.g. distinct from HE).	a cross-sectoral term or particular feature of any education and training (including forms of HE)

# Three perspective model of VET



Source: Cedefop, 2017c



# European VET since 1995 What changed?

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# Changing content and pedagogics

1995

- VET and general education conceptually distinct
- Work-based learning underdeveloped outside apprenticeship systems
- Much school based IVET 'input driven' and weakly linked to labour market
- Programmes and qualifications narrowly defined and specific

2015

- Crossing boundaries (school-workplace; general-vocational)
- Increased work-based learning in all IVET forms
- Reorientation to learning outcomes and competences
- More flexibility in time and place of learning; increased acceptance of prior learning

# Changing IVET systems and institutions

1995



2015

- Provision often fragmented, strong links to industries and sectors, weaker links to overall education and training systems
- Dead-end programmes, restricted to medium levels with little progression to higher levels
- VET narrowly defined as IVET
- VET addressing a narrowly defined target group (16-20 year olds)

- More coherent VET systems integrated within the overall education and training systems
- Increased permeability and fewer dead-ends
- More centralised standards setting
- Fewer qualifications and broadened profiles
- Diversification of target groups, including adults

# Changing socio-economic context

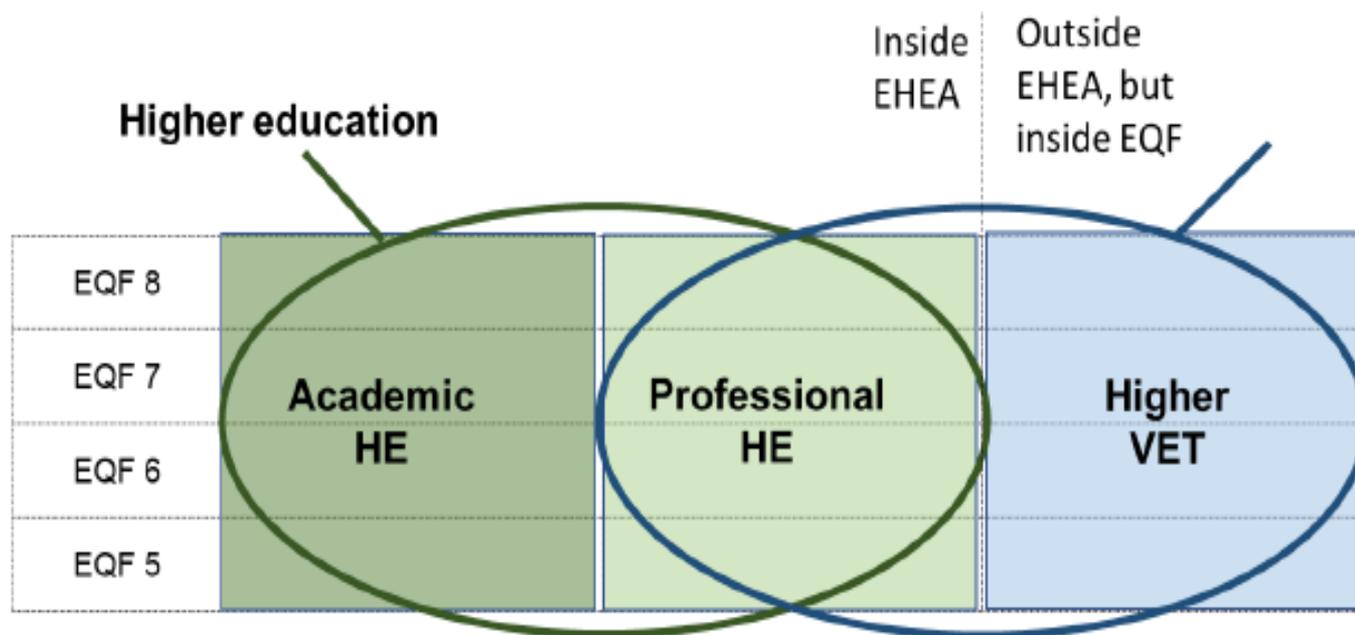
1995

- Limited goals; preparing for job entry and securing skilled labour
- Industry and sector based standard setting and anticipation of needs
- Jobs requiring medium-level skills dominate in the labour market
- Digitalisation one of several factors influencing VET

2015

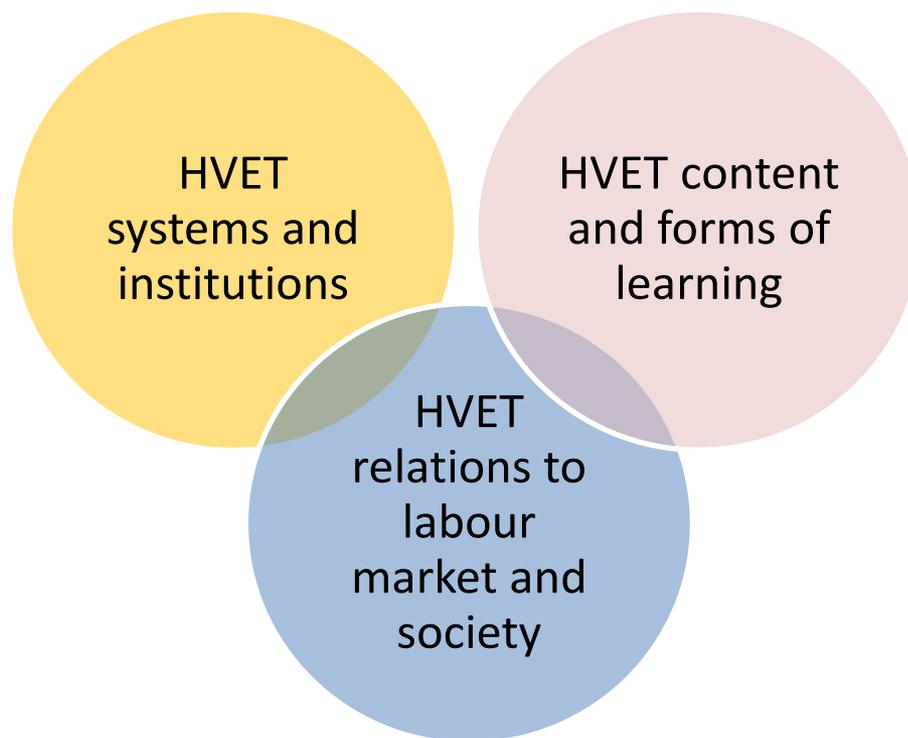
- Broader goals: social as well as economic; excellence as well as integration
- Increasing role of skills intelligence systems
- Jobs requiring medium-levels skills starting to decline; future developments contested
- Digitalisation a key-driving force

# Higher vocational education and training – exemplifying change



Source: Cedefop.

# Higher vocational education - perceptions and dimensions



# HVET developments – choices and tensions

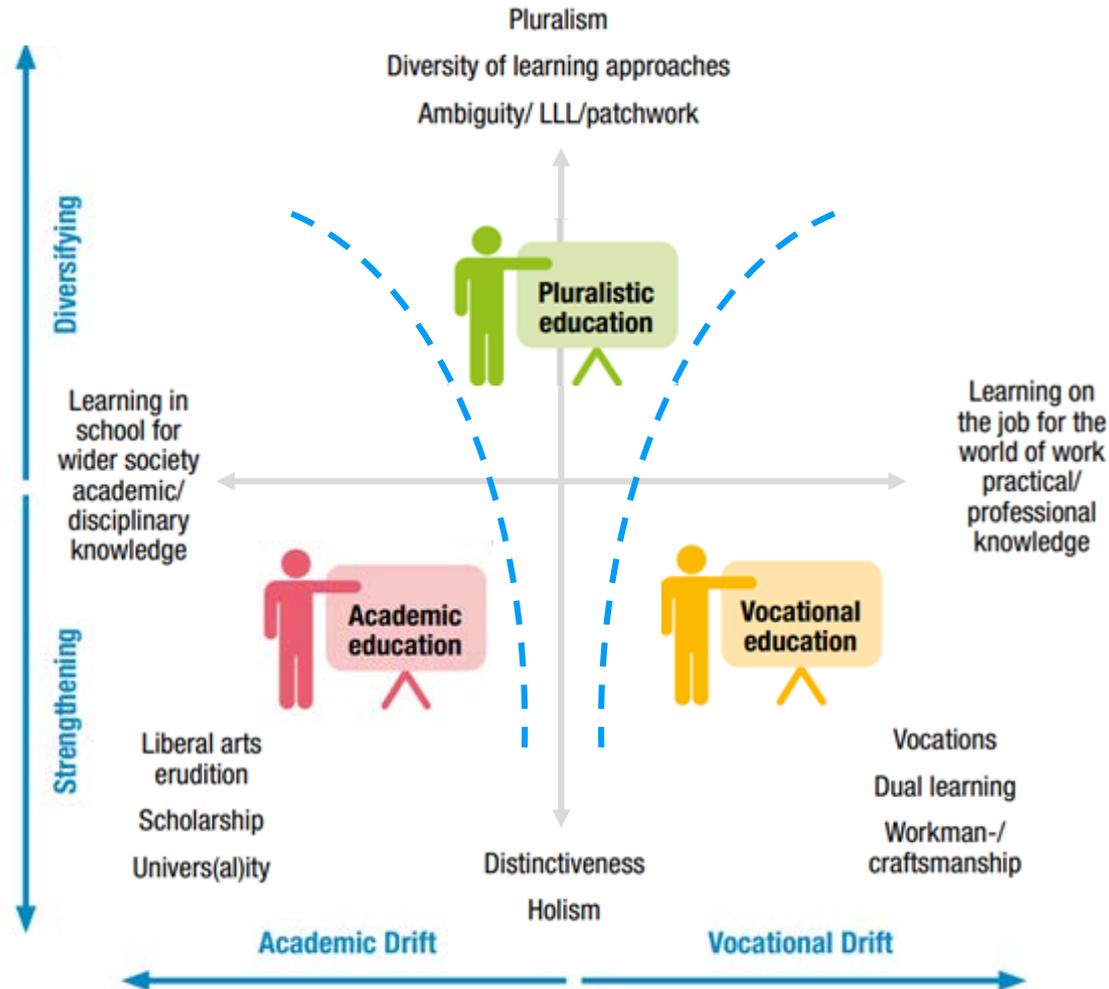
European higher education is characterised by a fundamental tension:

- An **academic drift** where traditionally vocational programmes and areas are influenced by and gravitates towards traditional universities and their quality and relevance criteria
- A **vocational drift** where the characteristics of vocational education and training influences higher education and where the focus is increasingly on practise-based learning developed in cooperation with working life.
- **The future of VET**, including HVET, will be influenced by the balancing of this tension



# Country trajectories & The big picture

# A model to describe the changing role of VET



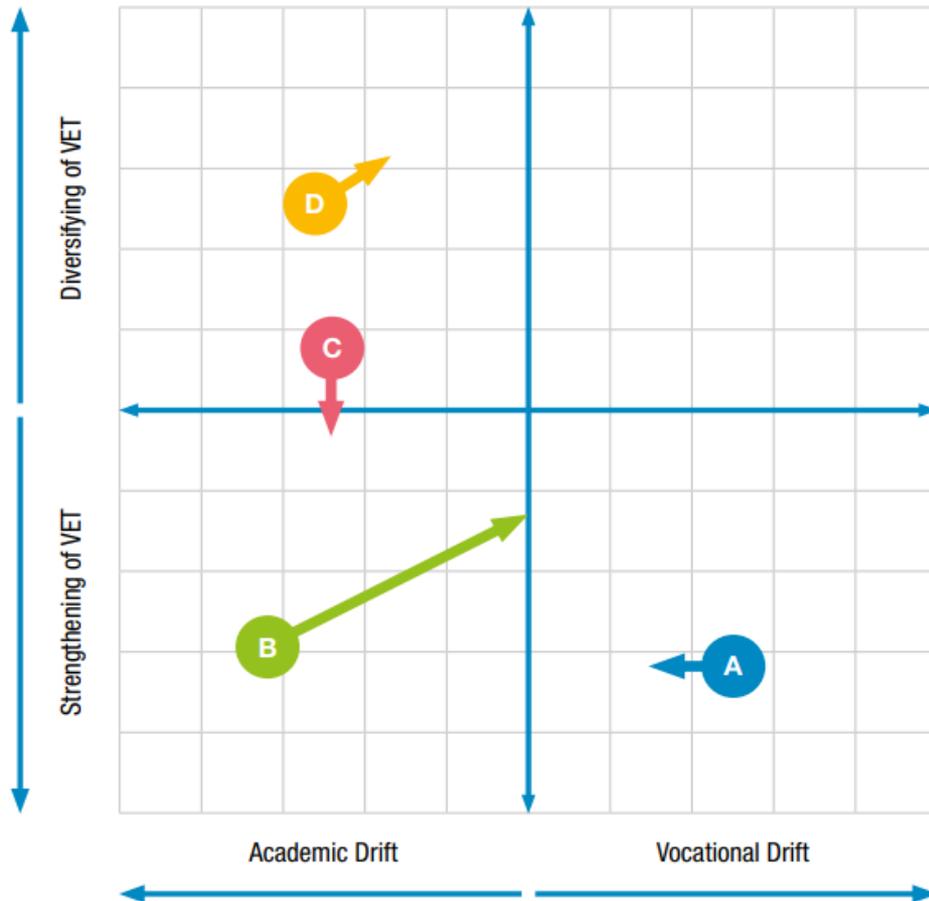
# Vocational vs. Academic drift

	<b>Vocational drift</b> <b>Increasing significance of VET</b>	<b>Academic drift</b> <b>Decreasing significance of VET</b>
<b>Epistemological/ pedagogical perspective</b>	<p>Increasing work-based elements in school-based VET or HE</p> <p>Increasing esteem of professional knowledge</p> <p>Increasing emphasis on employing teachers with comprehensive work experience</p>	<p>Increasing esteem of academic / disciplinary knowledge</p> <p>Accentuation of theoretical and abstract knowledge</p> <p>Increasing emphasis on the academic qualifications of teachers</p>
<b>Education system perspective</b>	<p>Increasing relative enrolment in vocational education at upper-secondary level</p> <p>Increasing relative enrolment in professional HE and higher VET</p>	<p>Increasing relative enrolment in general education at upper-secondary level</p> <p>Increasing relative enrolment in universities</p>
<b>Labour market perspective</b>	<p>Fostering employer engagement</p> <p>Strengthening role of social partners</p> <p>Increasing attractiveness of vocational education</p>	<p>Increasing attractiveness of general and academic</p>

# Pluralisation vs. Distinctiveness

	More distinctive / strengthening	More pluralistic / diversification
Epistemological/ pedagogical perspective	<p>Duality dominates/ increases</p> <p>Vocation as key organising principle and constitutive for self-identity</p> <p>Learning in real-life work environment</p>	<p>Increasing diversity of forms of VET (dual, trial, school-based) and learning approaches</p> <p>Diverse identities</p> <p>Increased blurring of boundaries in terms of knowledge/ content</p>
Education system perspective	<p>Re-emphasis on apprenticeship</p> <p>A distinct higher VET sector</p> <p>VET at all levels clearly separated</p>	<p>An ambiguous sector of higher VET and professional HE</p> <p>Increased crossing of boundaries in terms of education sectors</p> <p>Diversification of providers, programmes and target groups</p>
Labour market perspective	<p>VET as preparation for particular occupations/jobs</p> <p>Focus on job entry and business/economic growth</p>	<p>Various new and additional purposes of VET (e.g. equity)</p> <p>VET as preparation for occupations/jobs AND/OR further education</p>

# Schematic representation for trajectory of change for three fictitious countries (1995-2015)



**Country A: strong, distinctive VET system in 1995 with modest academic drift**

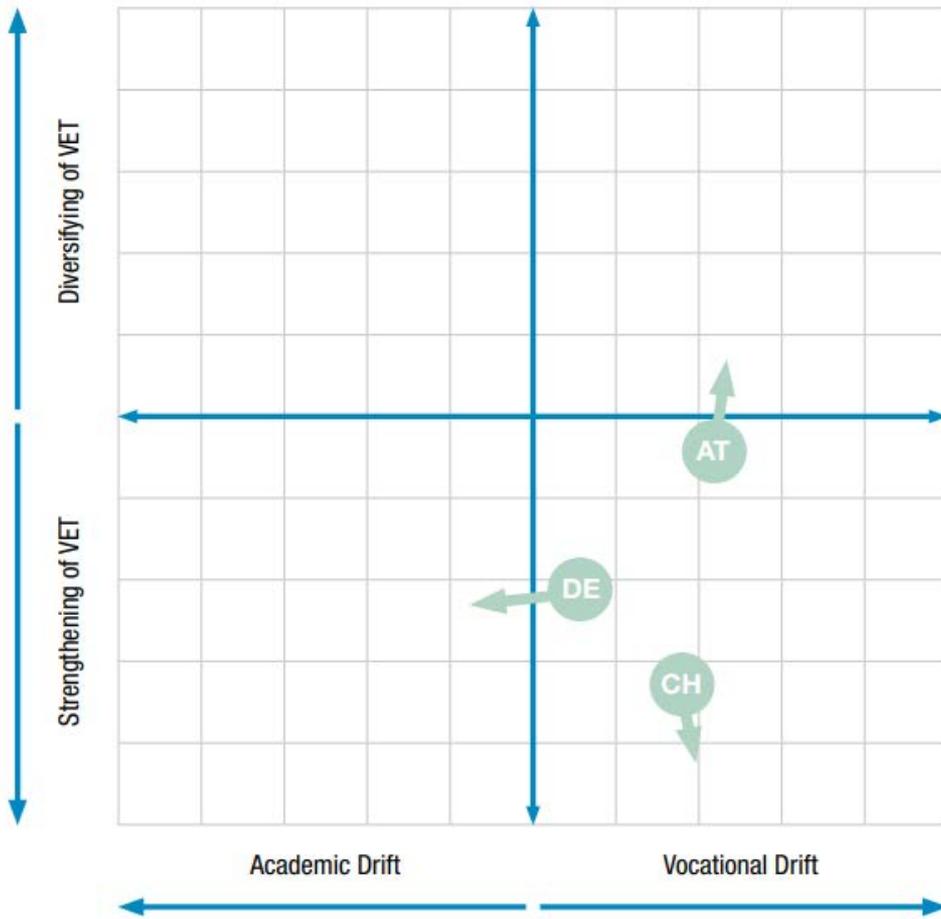
**Country B: weak WBL based VET which has seen strong vocational drift**

**Country D: weak school-based VET which has seen some vocational drift**

NB: Beginning of vector shows the position in 1995, end of vector the position in 2015, length of vector extent of change, direction of vector shows direction of change.

Source: Cedefop.

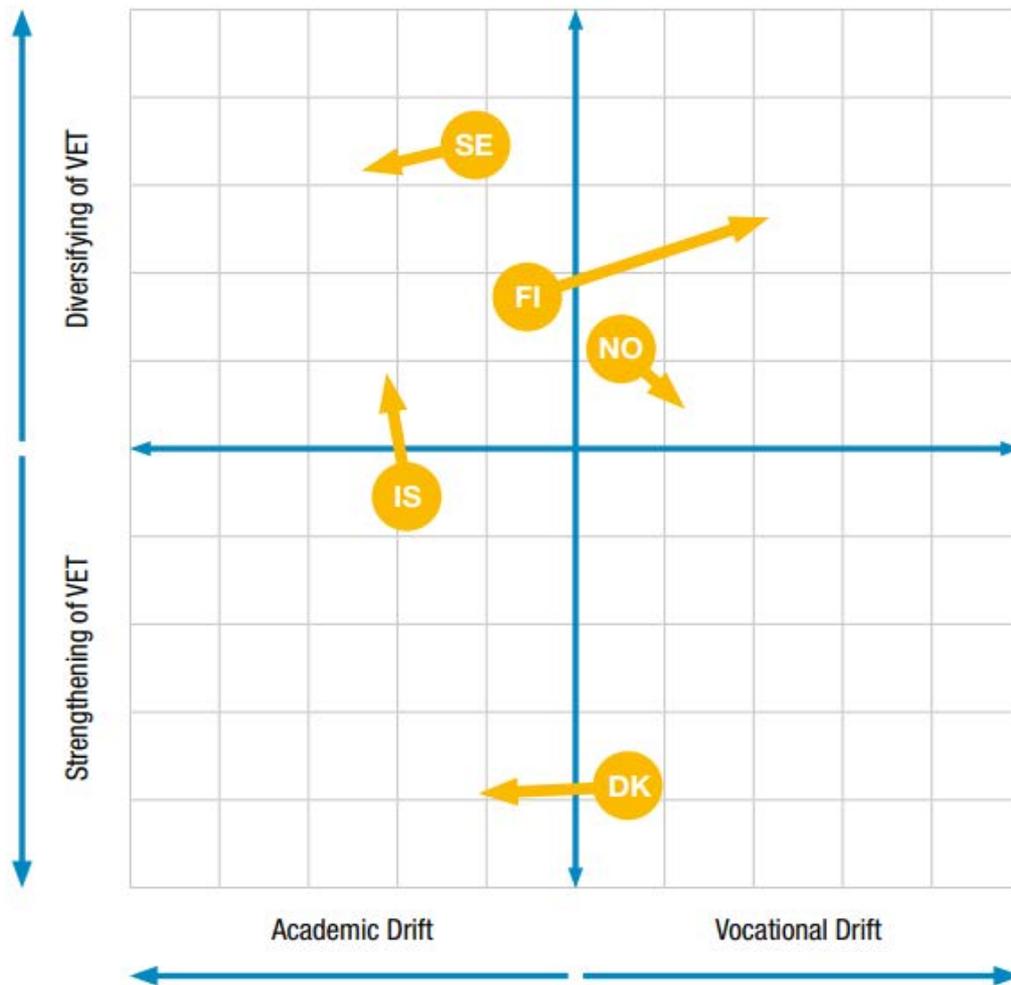
# Trajectories for the region of Germany, Austria and Switzerland, 1995-2015



Very similar VET systems with strong dual VET in 1990ies, but different trajectories since then:

- DE academic drift
- AT increasingly school based VET
- CH strengthening of dual VET

# Trajectories for Nordic Countries 1995-2015



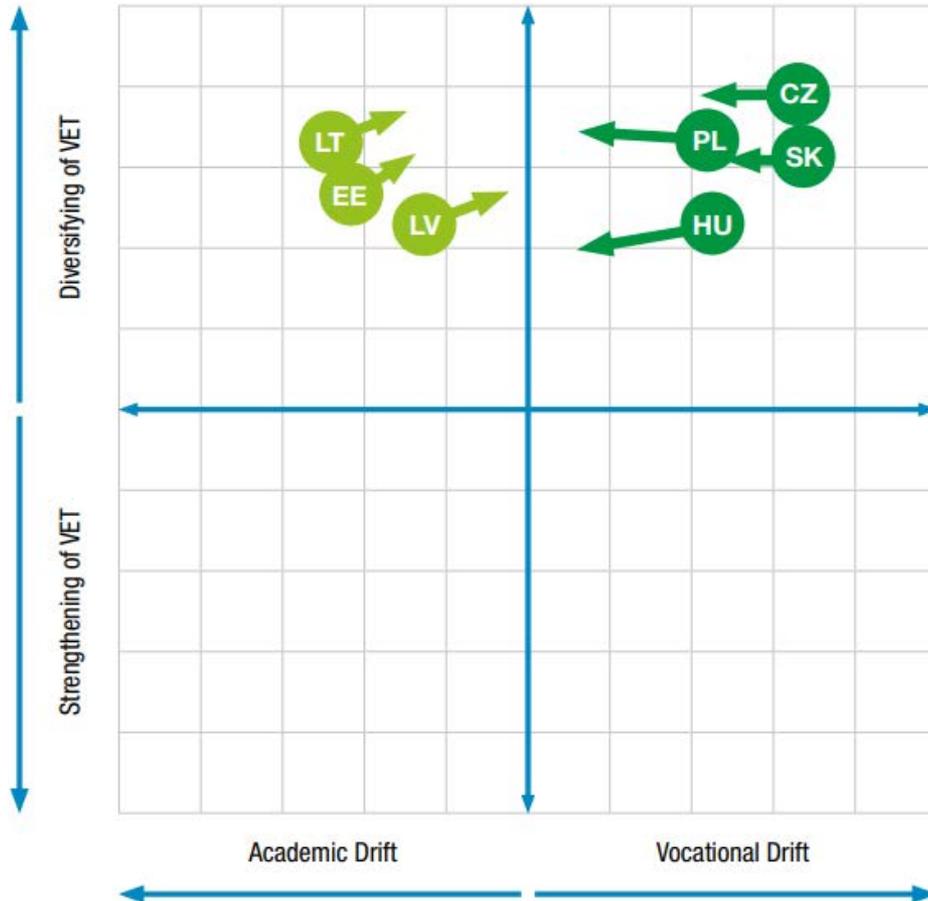
**Comparable Welfare systems**

**Quite different VET systems in 1990ies**

**Different trajectories**

**FI with strongest vocational drift in Europe**

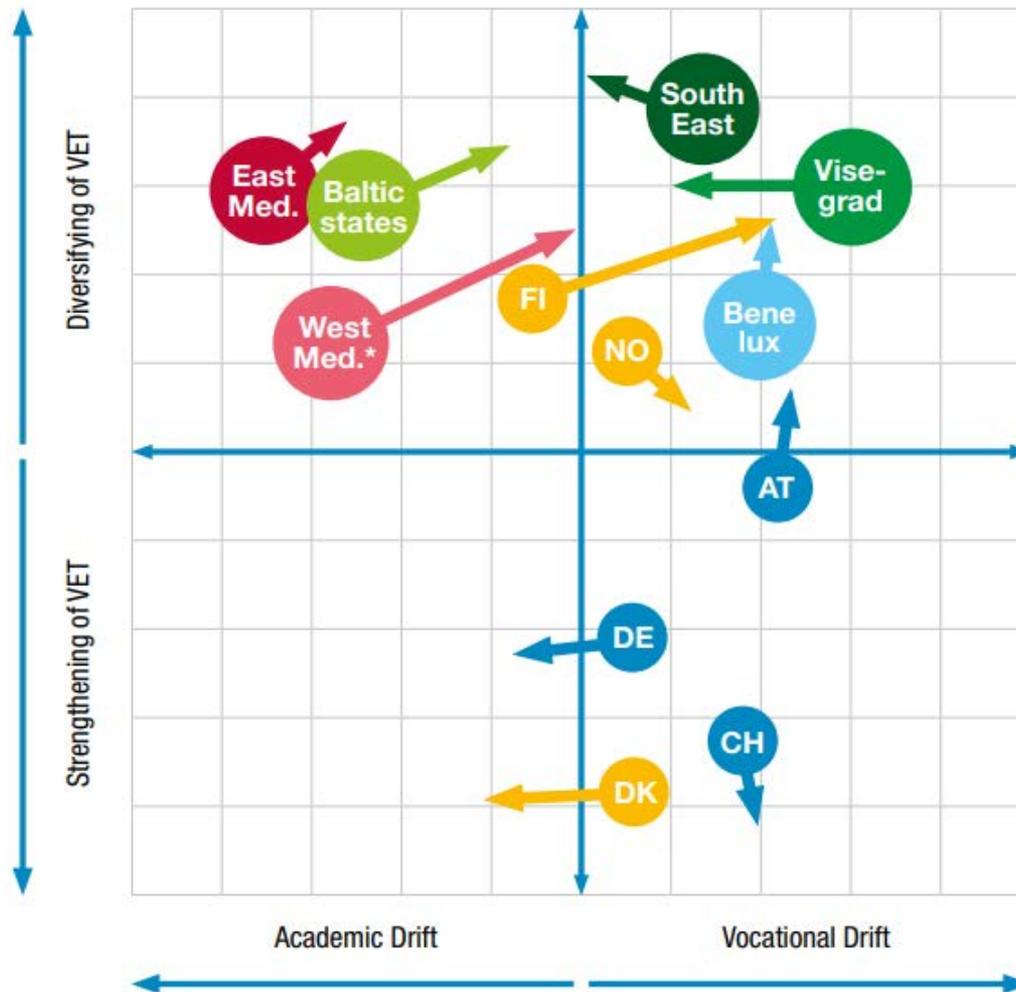
# Trajectories for Baltic and Visegrad Countries 1995-2015



Strong school-based VET in Visegrad countries has lost ground

Academic oriented school systems in Baltic countries have seen some vocational drift

# The 'big picture': Selected countries' trajectories



Both academic and vocational drift

No fundamental system change

Still large variety

Some convergence towards balance of VET and GE

Pluralisation as common trend

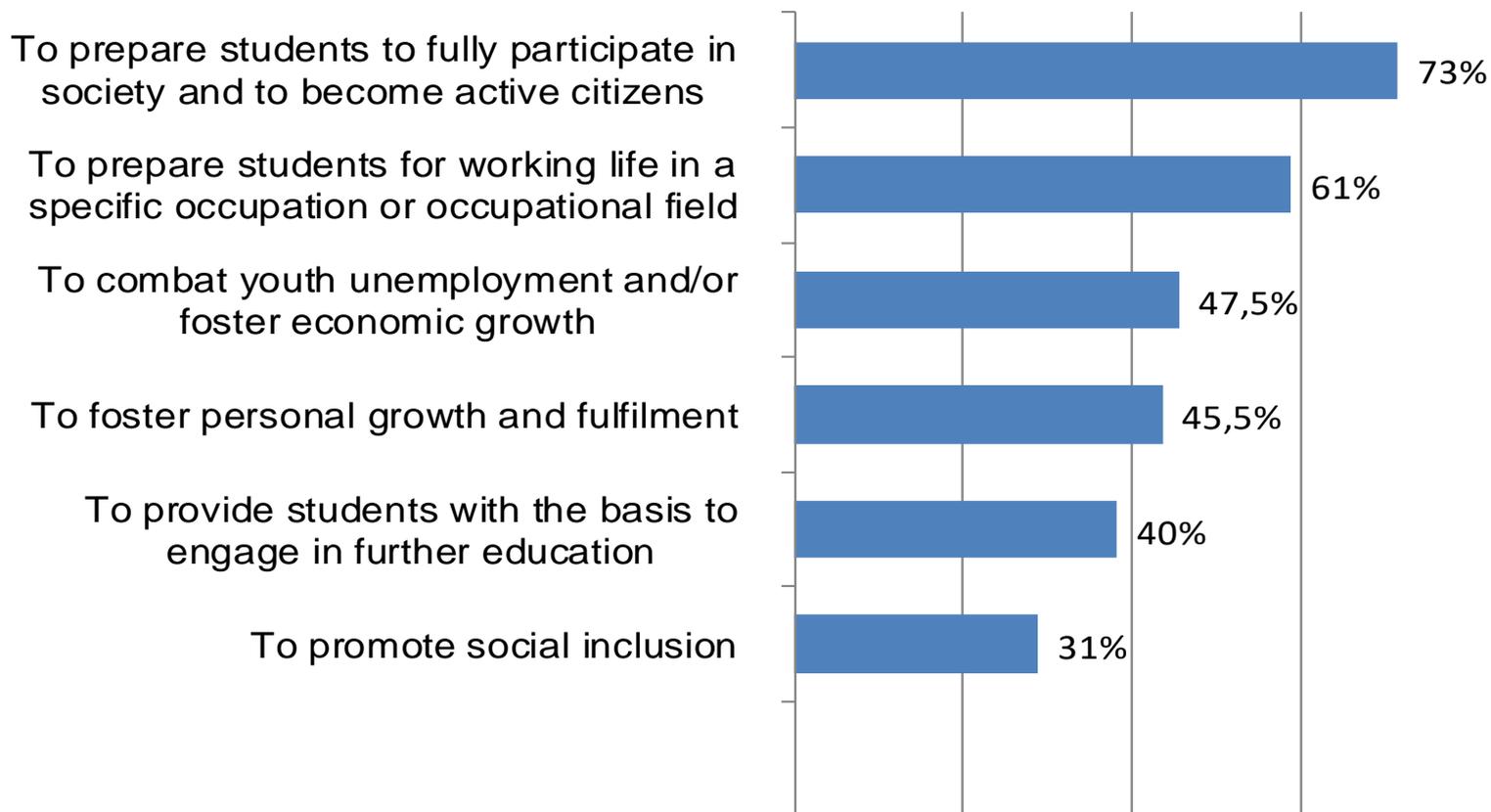
A photograph of two scientists in a laboratory. A woman on the left, with her hair in a bun, is smiling and looking towards a man on the right. The man is wearing glasses and is looking down at a microscope he is holding. They are both wearing white lab coats. The background shows a typical lab setting with a whiteboard and various pieces of equipment.

# Reflecting on the future European VET scenarios 2035

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# Desired VET profile – stakeholder views

Views of more than 1300 VET experts



Source: Cedefop survey, Changing VET 2035 (2018), n= 1308 Multiple answer question



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developments  
1995-2015**



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factors  
influencing  
VET**



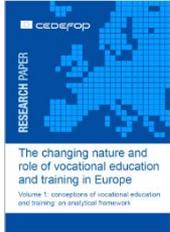
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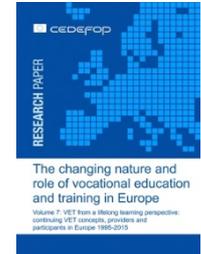
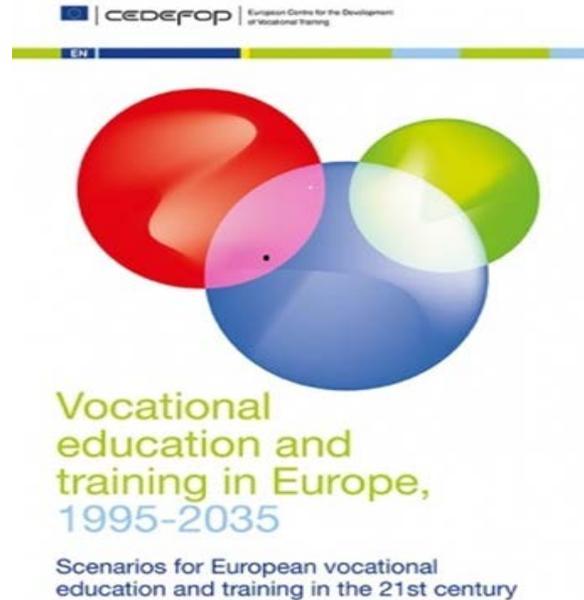
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# Thank you

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