
Poland

VET in Europe – Country report

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CHAPTER 1

1. External factors influencing VET

1.1 Population and demographics

Poland, a country with a total area of 312 679 km², has a population of 38 501 000 and is the sixth most populous country in the European Union².

Table 1: Demographic developments 2007-2011 (in thousands)

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Natural increase	0.7	35.3	32.7	38	13
Live births	387.9	414.5	417.6	418	388
Deaths	377.2	379.2	384.9	380	376
Balance of permanent international migration	-20.5	-15.4	-1.2	- 1.5	-4
Immigration	15	16	17.4	15.5	16
Emigration	35.5	31.4	18.6	17	20
Actual increase	-10	+20	+31	+36	
Population as at 31 December	38 116	38 135	38 167	38 204	

Source: Prepared by the author based on GUS, Podstawowe informacje o rozwoju demograficznym Polski w latach 2000 - 2010, Warszawa, 28.01.2011, (Basic information about demographic development of Poland in 2000 –2010, Warsaw, 28.01.2011), "Mały rocznik statystyczny Polski 2012" (Concise statistical yearbook of Poland 2012 national statistical Office, Warsaw 2012), GUS, Warszawa 2012

In 2011 population growth was positive – mainly as a result of growing number of births that amounted to about 388 000. Positive real growth is observed for the third year in a row. As regards migration, following a dramatic worsening of the situation in 2006, which can be explained by new opportunities for working abroad following Poland's accession to the European Union, there was a further decline in the number of people going abroad - both permanent and temporary residence in 2010 as in 2009. In 2011 a definitive negative net international migration amounted to 2 000 which was due to a significant decrease of the number of Poles going abroad permanently. Consequently, the gap between the number of emigrants and immigrants has become smaller as in the previous years.³

¹ GUS, Mały rocznik statystyczny Polski 2011, Warszawa 2011.

² Podstawowe informacje.. Op.cit p.16, Tab. 3.

³ Op.cit. 4, p.3.

Despite the changes taking place in Poland's demographic development in recent years, the age structure of the population is still characterised by a relatively high share of young people, especially when compared with the age structures of many other European nations (e.g. Germany). In 2011, (21.7%) of Poland's population were people in the 0-19 age group; 64.2% were people aged 20-64, and the 65+ age group accounted for 14% of the country's total population⁴. It should be added, however, that since the 1990s, demographers have observed a rapid decrease in the number of children and youth.

A comparison of the number of students in different types of schools in the academic years 2006/2007, 2007/2008, 2008/2009, 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 is quite interesting (Table 2) as the number of pupils/students is constantly decreasing. This tendency is an implication of the demographic changes described above. However, the drop in the number of adult learners and university students could additionally be due to the fact that -in a situation of a general trend of resuming education after a break and extending the learning period for those who start school- the number of people who would like to resume schooling at the secondary or tertiary level but have not done so yet is shrinking.

Table 2: Pupils and students in school years 2006/2007, 2007/2008, 2008/2009, 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 by type of school (in thousands)*

Type of school	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Primary	2 484.8	2 375.2	2 294.4	2 235.0	2 191.7	2 187.2
Lower secondary (<i>gimnazjum</i>)	528.8	1 453.2	1 381.4	1 322.2	1 261.4	1 210.0
Upper secondary	1 677.1	1 631.9	1 576.7	1 519.5	1464.9	1 401.1
Post-secondary	327.9	301.6	344.1	284.8	298.8	330.6
Higher	1 941.4	1 937.4	1 927.8	1 920.0	1 841.3	1 764.1
Adult education	273.8	265.1	282.2	274.6	289.2	286.8
Total	7 233.8	7 964.40	7 806.6	7 556.1	7 347.3	7 182.8

* - as at the beginning of the school/academic year

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of data from GUS, Mały rocznik statystyczny Polski 2011 [Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland], op. cit., Table I(133), pp. 235

It should also be added that in 2011/2012 school year nearly all children and youth aged 7-18 (varying from 94.4% to 96.4% depending on the group) participated in the education system, in the 19-24 age group only as few as 57.9% receive education.⁵ This can be due to the fact that continuing education (e.g. studies in a different city) does inevitably entail certain costs. For many young people combining studying and working turns out to be to a heavy burden. That is why in order to encourage young people to continue education

⁴ Rynek Pracy w Polsce 2011, MPiPS, Departament Rynku Pracy, Warszawa, 14.03.2011.

⁵ GUS, Mały rocznik statystyczny Polski 2012, Table 3(133), p. 242. (Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland 2012, GUS, Tab. 3(133), p. 242).

some measures based on the provision of financial support or adoption of solutions that would facilitate learning and working (e.g. new types of employment, working flexi-time), should be developed and promoted.

Population forecast until 2035

The trends in Poland's demographic development which could be observed so far are most likely to continue throughout the forecasting period, i.e. from 2010 until 2035, even if with some improvement⁶. Despite the fact that the number of births stopped falling in 2004, it is expected to grow further only until 2012. Then, it will start to grow smaller again. Therefore, the natural increase in Poland is envisaged to be negative again since 2014. To some extent, it will result from the fact of reaching the reproductive age by the not very numerous generation born at the turn of the century. During the forecasting period the fertility rate will increase from around 1.30 to around 1.45 child per woman. At the same time, the intensity of permanent international migration will increase. However, thanks to an expected rise in immigration flows the recorded negative balance is going to improve regularly⁷. In result, these processes will most likely lead to a depopulation of Poland by about 2 200 000 until 2035 (Table 3).

Table 3: Population forecast until 2035 (as at 31st December; in thousands)

AGE	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
0-24	10 981	10 139	9 630	9 336	9 029	8 437
25-64	21 958	21 948	21 246	20 258	19 572	19 198
65+	5 153	5 929	6 954	7 844	8 195	8 358
TOTAL	38 092	38 016	37 830	37 438	36 796	35 993

Source: Prepared by the author based on: Central Statistical Office, Podstawowe informacje o rozwoju demograficznym Polski do 2008 roku, op. cit., tab. 5, p. 17; Central Statistical Office, Prognoza ludności Polski na lata 2008-2035, Warsaw 2008,

This and other phenomena, such as lowered mortality rates and increased life expectancy will be reflected in the age structure of the population. In 2035, the number of children and youth aged 0-24 in the education category will be much lower. This will be accompanied by a progressing ageing of the Polish society, which will mean an increase of the population in the post-working age (65+) and a decrease of the working-age population (24-64) (Table 4). The shifts in relation between the particular age groups will result in a significant increase of an old age dependency ratio, which is estimated to grow from the level

⁶ Due to the increased number of births and intensified migration observed since 2004 the previous population forecast until 2030 (prepared in 2003) has been revised and became slightly more optimistic.

⁷ GUS, Prognoza ludności Polski na lata 2008-2035, Warszawa 2008, (Forecast of Polish population in 2008-2035) URL: http://www.stat.gov.pl/gus/5840_4559_PLK_HTML.htm, p. 3, 7-8.

of 18.98 in 2010 to 37.89 by the end of the forecasting period⁸. The anticipated changes in the age structure of Poland's population are likely to have far-reaching consequences for the country's educational system. The forecasted drastic reduction in the population groups comprised by school education at all levels (from the primary to the tertiary level) may lead to staff redundancies, reductions in the number of schools and limiting the training facilities and resources addressed to this group. On the other hand, however, a smaller number of pupils and students per one teacher could result in an improved quality of instruction. Also, more intense competition between educational establishments (as they will have to attract students) could lead to improved academic excellence. At the same time, it can be expected that competition for gaining access to tertiary education will be smaller, which could be seen as an incentive for entering the university.

Another likely consequence of the anticipated demographic changes will be a dynamic increase in the demand for training addressed to the economically active part of the population (e.g. expanded system of training aimed at updating and upgrading the competencies and qualifications of employees). In view of such an increased economic burden of the working-age population, it will be necessary to ensure that these people remain economically active for the maximum possible period, through such measures as, for instance, continuing education. In addition to that, modifications in the profiles of education and training, owing to an increased demand for medical services triggered by a growing number of old people will be inevitable.

1.2 Economy and labour market indicators

Employment structure by sectors of the economy

In 2011, there was not a significant change in the employment structure compared to the previous year. In 4th quarter of 2011, 12.3% of working people were employed in agriculture, as compared to 12.8% employed in 2010; 30.8% were employed in industry compared to 30.2% employed in the previous year. The level of employment in services did not change and amounted to 56.9%⁹. Even though more and more workers move from agriculture to other sectors of the economy, the share of agriculture in the overall employment structure in Poland remains higher than in countries with a highly developed market economy. The anticipated further shifts of labour between sectors will certainly stimulate demand for programmes supporting the retraining process (e.g. for people who want to start activity in tourism instead of agriculture). Such changes are also likely to encourage modifications in the training profiles for new labour market entrants to make them compliant with the needs of modern knowledge-based economy. It is also expected that as a result of such modifications the numbers of trainees in surplus and deficit occupations will be adjusted to suit the needs of the market.

⁸ Eurostat data, Guidelines and template for the 2009 edition of VET in Europe – Country Reports, Annex IIB, tabl. 2. Opracowała Karolina Czerwińska, Czerwiec 2009.

⁹ Kwartalna informacja o rynku pracy (IV kwartał 2011), Tab. II, str. 4, GUS, Warszawa 2012 (Quarterly information on the labour market (4th quarter 2011), Tab. II, p. 4.

Economic activity rate

In 2011, the economic activity rate in Poland reached 56.3%, and was slightly higher than the year before (55.8%).¹⁰ This change was due to increased activity of both women (from 48.2% in 2010 to 48.7% in the fourth quarter of 2011) and men (from 64.1% in 2010 to 64.7% in the fourth quarter of 2011). Nevertheless, men remain much more active on the labour market than women¹¹.

It should be noted that the activity rate of people with higher education (which for several years has oscillated at a level of ca. 80%) and secondary vocational education (which in the recent years has been around 67%) is much above the country's average. This stands in sharp contrast with the activity of the population with lower secondary and primary education, which is slightly above 18% in this group (Table 4).

Table 4: Economic activity rate for population aged +15 by level of education (in 4Q; in %)

Level of education	Total economic activity rate		
	2009	2010	2011
Higher (ISCED 5-6)	80.7	80.6	80.4
Secondary vocational* (ISCED 4)	66.9	67.8	67.1
Secondary general (ISCED 3A)	47.0	48.1	48.0
Basic vocational (ISCED 3C)	63.9	62.9	63.3
Lower secondary, primary and incomplete primary (ISCED 1-2)	19.1	18.6	19.7
Total	55.5	55	56.3

* including post-secondary non-tertiary schools

Source: prepared on the basis of: GUS, Monitoring rynku pracy. Kwartalna informacja o rynku pracy [Monitoring of the labour market. Quarterly labour market information], Warsaw, 23.02.2012, Table 1, p. 3.

In the IV quarter of 2011 43.7% of population was economically inactive of which 27.2% was in productive age (aged 15 and more). Retired people amounted to 45.6% of all inactive people. Other reasons for inactivity were: education and upgrading qualifications (21.8%), sickness and disability (14.3%), family responsibilities (11.5%).

In light of these data, the educational attainment of individuals can be seen as an important factor stimulating their economic activity. Therefore, all activities and efforts which

¹⁰ Rynek pracy w Polsce 2010. Ministerstwo Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, Departament Rynku Pracy, Warszawa, 2011 (Labour market in Poland 2010, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Labour Market Dept., Warsaw.

¹¹ GUS, Mały rocznik statystyczny 2010, Warszawa 2010, Tabela I(81), Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland 2011, GUS, Tab. I (81).

can encourage individuals to continue their education at a higher level, resume learning or start continuing training seem very desirable. Improved accessibility to schools and other training institutions is of particular importance (e.g. in financial terms – scholarships or grants for children from poor families, or improved infrastructure - upgrading transport links), in addition to extending assistance programmes for carers of the disabled or those with small children (e.g. ensuring care for the period the carer or guardian is in training or at school).

Employment rate¹²

In recent years, the employment rate in Poland has been growing steadily, a process which has certainly been fostered by falling unemployment. However, in a situation of an economic downturn this trend is likely to be reversed. In the fourth quarter of 2011, 50.8% of the aggregate population aged +15 were employed. Nevertheless, the employment rate is still lower than the EU average. Similarly to the previous years, the rate of increase was faster in the case of men than in the case of women. In the fourth quarter of 2011, 58.9% of men and 43.4% of women were employed¹³.

It should be noted that, similarly to the economic activity of the population, the employment rate figures vary depending on the level of education (Table 5). For the category of people with higher education and for the category of people with secondary education, it has been consistently higher than the average employment rate nationally (a considerable increase in employment in the recent years). On the other hand, the share of the employed among people who ended their education at the lower secondary or primary school level is very low.

Table 5: Employment rates by highest level of education attained (%)

Level of education	Employment rate by highest level of education attained (%), 2008, 2010, 2011		
	2008	2010	2011
Higher (ISCED 5-6)	77.8	76.9	76.1
Post secondary and secondary vocational (ISCED 3A -4)*	62.6	60.8	61.1
basic vocational (ISCED 3-4)	60.2	57.1	57.4
Lower secondary, primary and incomplete primary (ISCED 0-2)	17.8	16.3	17.1
Total	51.0	50.6	50.8

* including post-secondary non-tertiary schools

Source: prepared on the basis of: GUS, Monitoring rynku pracy. Kwartalna informacja o rynku pracy [Monitoring of the labour market. Quarterly labour market information], Warsaw, 23.02.2012, Table 2, p.6.

¹² As a percentage of the employed in the population aged 15 or over.

¹³ Mały rocznik statystyczny 2012, Tabela I (77) p. 139.

In general terms, regardless of the education level, lower employment in the youngest age group may indicate difficulties in the labour market entry for those school leavers who have not acquired any job experience and have relatively low skills. On the other hand, the lower percentage of the employed in the 50-64 age group may be partly explained by the fact that their competences and experience are gradually becoming outdated. However, a conclusion may also be that a higher level of education and of vocational or professional competences not only makes labour market entry much easier, but that it also facilitates maintaining employment throughout the entire period of occupational activity. Although a university diploma does not guarantee its holder finding a job quickly, unemployment statistics provided below strongly indicate the higher the individual's qualifications the lesser risk of problems on the labour market, also during an economic downturn.

Registered unemployment rate¹⁴

At the end of 2011, the total registered unemployment rate in Poland was 12.5%. The increasing tendency was noticeable during the whole year. At the end of 2011, 1 982 700 unemployed people were registered i.e. about 28 000 more than the previous year. The number of people previously not employed decreased slightly from 4 051 000 in 2010 to 3 944 000 in 2011. This is partly due to the fact that less tertiary education graduates became unemployed in 2011 (33 000 compared to 34 800 in 2010). However, more school leavers joined the group (1 239 000 in 2011 compared to 1 226 000 in 2010).

In 2011, the unemployment rate was highest among people with lower secondary, primary and lower education (17.1%) and lowest among the people with tertiary education (5.3%). As in the previous year young people (15-24) still constitute the largest age group of all the registered unemployed (26.5%).

¹⁴ As a percentage of the registered unemployed in the total civil economically active population and in a given category.

Table 6: Unemployment rates by age group and highest level of education attained (%)

Age group	Unemployment rates by age groups and highest level of education attained		
	2008	2010	2011
15-24	17.1	23.6	26.5
25-34	6.4	9.7	9.9
35-44	5.0	6.6	7.0
45 and more	5.2	7,1	7.1
Total in the working age (15-64)	6.8	9,4	9.9
Level of education EU			
Lower secondary, primary and incomplete primary (ISCED 0-2)	11.4	17.2	17.1
Secondary vocational, post secondary (ISCED 3-4)	6.5	9.1	9.3
basic vocational (ISCED 3C)	7.0	10.5	11.3
Higher (ISCED 5-6)	3.6	4.7	5.3
Total	6.7	9.3	9.7*

* data from the last quarter of 2011

Source: prepared on the basis of: GUS, Monitoring rynku pracy. Kwartalna informacja o rynku pracy [Monitoring of the labour market. Quarterly labour market information], Warsaw, 23.02.2012, Table 3, p.9.

1.3 Educational attainment of the population

In 2011, the percentage of early school leavers in Poland amounted to 5.4%. It was a relatively low figure compared to the average 14.1% in EU. A decreasing tendency is noticeable since 2002 (17.0% in the EU and 7.2% in Poland) although in Poland a slight increase can be seen since 2008. Despite of this tendency in Poland it generally seems that society's awareness of the need for education increased. It can mean that the awareness of the need for good education is growing in society, enhanced by conditions of the labour market – people with lower education have fewer chances for jobs.

Table 7: Early school leavers (%) 2008-2011

	2008	2009	2010	2011
EU 27	14.9	14.4	14.1	13.5
Poland	5.0	5.3	5.4	5.6

Source: Eurostat - Tables, Graphs and Maps Interface (TGM) table "Early leavers from education and training", 2012-04-02 Description: Percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training

**Table 8: Total population having completed at least upper secondary education
Population aged 25 to 64 (%)**

		2009	2010	2011
PL	T	88.0	88.7	89.1
	F	87.6	88.5	88.9
	M	88.4	88.8	89.2
EU 27	T	72.0	72.7	73.4
	F	70.9	71.7	72.7
	M	73.1	73.7	74.2

M=males; F=females; T= total

Source: Eurostat. Tables, Graphs, Maps Interface (TGM) table (2012-04-02).

CHAPTER 2

2. Providing vocational education and training in a lifelong learning perspective

Compulsory education obligation in Poland is fulfilled by attending primary and lower secondary schools. Compulsory education starts at the beginning of the school year, in the calendar year in which a child becomes seven years old¹⁵ and continues until graduation from a lower secondary school (usually at the age of 16).

Compulsory schooling lasts until the person is 18 years old, and can be achieved by attending a public or non-public upper secondary school; attending extracurricular classes in public and non-public institutions; attending classes carried out as a part of educational activities provided by legal and natural persons; or by accomplishing vocational training at an employer's (subject to separate regulations).

Compulsory general education is fulfilled in 6-year primary school (*szkoła podstawowa*) and 3 –year lower secondary school (*gimnazjum*).

Upper secondary general education or vocational education in schools starts at the age of 16. It lasts between two and six years depending on the type of school. Most vocational students complete their IVET at the age of 19 or 20.

The following types of schools provide initial vocational education at upper secondary:

- (a) four-year technical upper secondary school (*technikum*);
- (b) 3-year supplementary technical upper secondary school (*technikum uzupełniające*) - due to the new reform, this type of school is going to cease in three years;
- (c) three-year basic vocational school (*zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa*);
- (d) 3-year profiled general upper secondary school (*liceum profilowane*). Due to the new reform, this type of school is going to cease in three years which means that starting from 1 September 2012 there is no recruitment to this type of school;
- (e) three-year special needs school preparing for work students mentally or physically handicapped (*szkoła specjalna*).

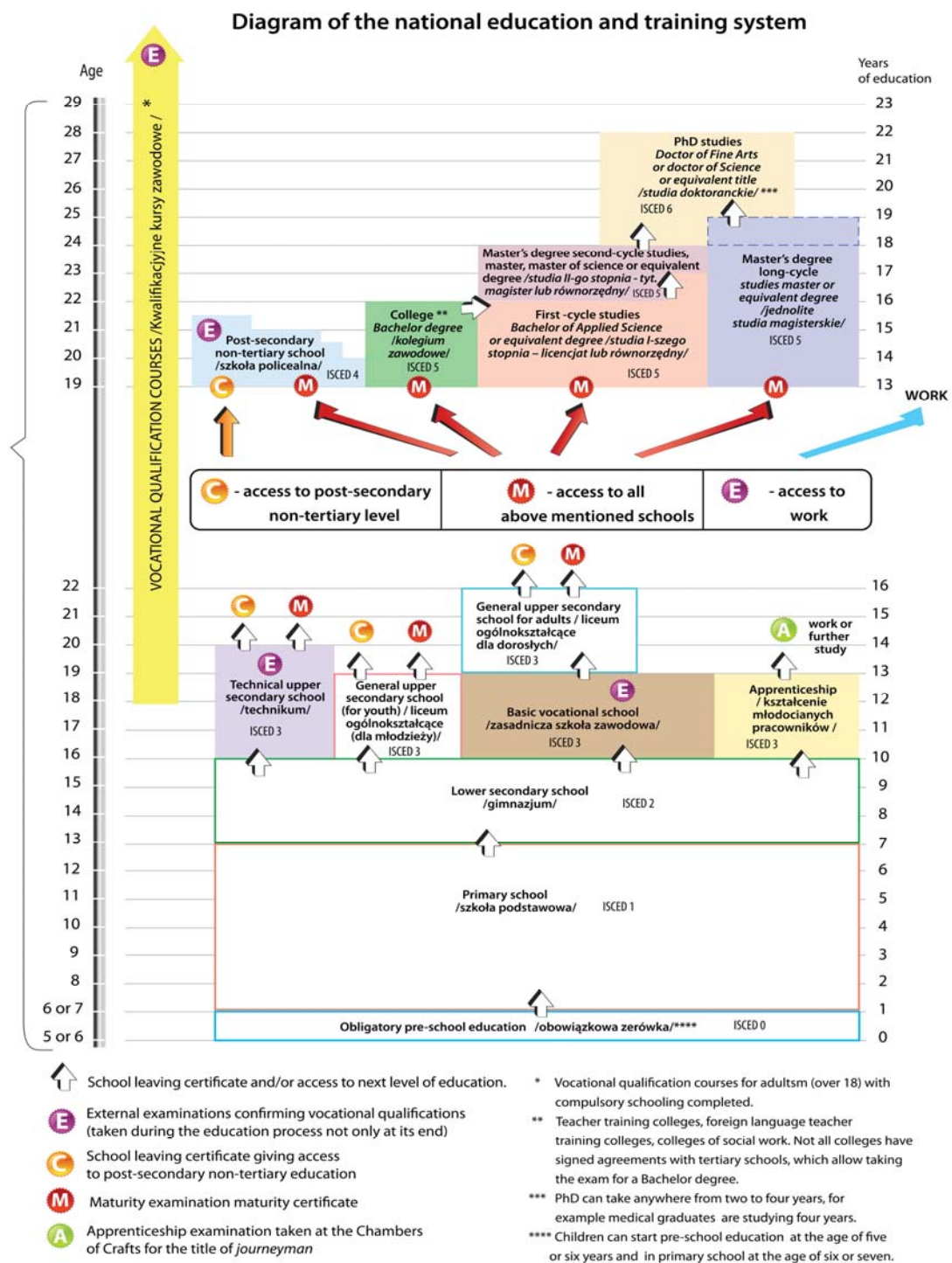
Vocational education is also provided in post-secondary schools:

- (f) one, one and a half, two, two and a half year post-secondary non-tertiary school (*szkoła policealna*);

As mentioned above, until the end of compulsory school, vocational training can also be conducted outside the school system in the form of an apprenticeship.

¹⁵ Additionally, since 2004/05 school year children aged six are obliged to attend '0 grade', preparing for primary education.

2.1 Diagram of the national education and training system



Different types of schools pursue different educational objectives. General secondary schools (*licea ogólnokształcące*) prepare students for passing a *matura* exam and for pursuing their education in higher-education institutions. Technical upper secondary school prepares both for the *matura* exam and entering the labour market. While basic vocational schools and post-secondary non-tertiary schools are focused on providing vocational qualifications. That is why the curricula in vocational schools are different and their educational process includes practical training in the work place.

In technical upper secondary schools, basic vocational schools or post-secondary non-tertiary schools, vocational education is provided for occupations included in the classification of occupations for VET (MENiS, 2007), which is consistent with the classification developed for labour market needs (MPiPS, 2010b). In the 2011/12 school year, there were 4 477 upper secondary vocational schools for young people including 448 special needs schools (*szkola specjalna*)¹⁶.

2.2 Government-regulated VET provision

IVET at lower secondary level

IVET at the lower secondary level is limited to 0.86% in 2011/2012¹⁷ of the total lower secondary population. Lower secondary schools (*gimnazjum*) with work preparation classes are addressed to pupils who, after a year's instruction in the *gimnazjum* and reaching the age of 15 do not seem to be able to complete the school in the prescribed period. Such pupils are experiencing difficulties due to learning problems and truancy. Most usually, such pupils are also members of the Voluntary Labour Corps (*OHP*), the mission of which is to educate through work. The Corps is a state organisation (under the Ministry of Labour) focused on facilitating education for disadvantaged youths (those who are going through difficult financial, family or personal circumstances; experiencing difficulties at school, school dropouts; coming from dysfunctional, broken or jobless families; or from orphanages) providing a range of training, further training and employment opportunities and work.

In the work preparation classes, general education is based on the relevant core curriculum, to the extent and in forms corresponding to the pupils' abilities and needs. The special preparation for work curriculum is developed by the teacher on the basis of selected learning contents included in the core curriculum for a given occupation. Preparation for performing a given job can be provided in or outside the school, on the basis of an agreement concluded by the school headmaster with such entities as schools offering vocational education, continuing education centres, or employers. Typically, pupils are in the 15–17 age brackets.

¹⁶ Mały rocznik statystyczny Polski 2012. [Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland 2012], Central Statistical Office (GUS), Tab. I (131) p. 237, 238.

¹⁷ Mały rocznik statystyczny Polski 2012. [Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland 2012], Central Statistical Office (GUS), Tab. I (131) p. 238.

Vocational education in those classes comprises 570 hours in the entire cycle of education, what makes 25% of the whole curriculum.

The school does not award a vocational title. Those who complete such preparation training do not have any vocational qualifications except preliminary skills needed for performing a given job. They are awarded *gimnazjum* leaving certificates with an annotation that they attended this particular class and completed such preparation training based on the core curriculum for a specific occupation. The marks in the preparation for performing a given work subjects are shown both on all *gimnazjum* certificates, including the leaving certificate.

IVET at upper secondary level (school-based)

The basic criterion for admittance to all schools at the upper secondary level is completion of the lower secondary school (*gimnazjum*). Other criteria depend on the type of school and are usually comprised in the school statute. They may take into account the number of points obtained at the final *gimnazjum* exam, a pupil's marks in Polish language and three other compulsory subjects and their special achievements.

Technical secondary schools (*technikum*) enable the acquisition of upper secondary school-leaving certificate (*matura*) and vocational qualifications to the level of technician. Pupils start their education in technical secondary schools at the age of 16 and finish in 4 years. In the school system two types of upper secondary technical school are functioning: **technical secondary schools** for *gimnazjum* leavers and **supplementary technical schools** for basic vocational school leavers, the last will gradually cease in 2012/2013. In the school year 2011/2012 there were 532 062 pupils in both types of those schools, including 212 917 girls¹⁸. The most popular vocations offered by technical secondary schools are: accountant, mechanic, electronics specialist, and salesperson.

Obtaining a secondary school-leaving certificate (*matura*) at the end of their 4th year opens the door for graduates to higher education institutions.

The only vocational school at the upper secondary level that awards a vocational qualification diploma but does not lead to a *matura* is the **basic vocational school** (*zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa*), which confers the qualifications of a skilled worker. Education in this type of school starts at the age of 16 and lasts 2 or 3 years, depending on the vocation. The duration of education for particular vocations is indicated in 'The Classification of Vocations for Vocational Schooling' (*klasyfikacja zawodow szkolnych*). The most popular vocations in the 2-year schools are: shop-assistant, cook and gardener, and in 3-year schools: automobile mechanic, hairdresser and baker. Since 1st September 2012 the basic vocational schools will all be 3 year-schools, but those who started education in a basic vocational school in a shorter cycle will complete it within an unchanged period.

¹⁸ Mały rocznik statystyczny Polski 2012. [Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland 2012], Central Statistical Office (GUS), Tab. 13 (143) p. 251.

In the 2011/2012 school year, basic vocational schools were educating 210 910 pupils¹⁹.

Three-year special needs schools (*szkola specjalna*) offering preparation for performing a given job are foreseen mostly for mentally disabled pupils and for pupils with complex disabilities who completed lower secondary school. Their curricula and organisation are adapted to the needs and capabilities of disabled pupils. At completion, pupils receive certificates confirming their preparedness performing a given job, but do not have full vocational qualifications.

The proportions between general education (general subjects, e.g. Polish language and one foreign language in basic vocational schools and 2 foreign languages in secondary technical schools, history, introduction to sociology, mathematics, physics, chemistry, etc.) and vocational education (including theoretical and practical vocational subjects) are specified in general teaching plans relevant for the given type of school which at the same time serve as a basis for organising education in the given types of schools. The general school timetables are prepared by the Minister of Education. In the case of technical upper secondary schools, vocational subjects consumed 36% of all hours envisaged for learning in the entire cycle of education in 2011/2012. In basic vocational schools, vocational subjects consumed 53% of all hours envisaged for education. However, according to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 7th February 2012 on the framework for school timetables in public schools the proportion of vocational education hours to the hours of general education will be 55% for VET in technical schools and 65% for VET in basic vocational schools.

Practical vocational training is organised in the form of practical training classes at school or vocational placements. Practical training classes are aimed at the acquiring vocational skills necessary for a particular vocational career. They may be carried out in school workshops and laboratories, school farms, continuing education centres or practical training centres. In basic vocational schools, practical training consumes around 60% of all hours envisaged for vocational subjects. In technical secondary schools this proportion starting from 1st September 2012 equals 50%.

There is no collective and comprehensive data showing what percentage of pupils (of basic and secondary vocational schools) obtains their practical vocational training in enterprises and in school workshops, and what percentage in practical training centres (CKP) and continuing education centres (CKU). However, it can be stated that employers (apart from craftsmen) are not interested in training the pupils and that the percentage of pupils who receive their practical vocational training in an employer's company is fairly small. In 2002 the Ministry of National Education and Sport, in co-operation with other ministries, initiated activities designed to change those proportions. So far the Ministry of National Education has concluded agreements with ten social partners aimed at the establishment of a network of companies which will offer practical training for pupils and teachers and will support schools' technical base. Vocational placements in all types of vocational schools

¹⁹ Mały rocznik statystyczny Polski 2012. [Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland 2012], Central Statistical Office (GUS), , Tab. 10 (140) p. 249.

lasting 4 weeks are organised once or twice in the education cycle. However, there are occupations in which placements last up to 12 weeks. Because vocational placements are meant to deepen pupils' vocational knowledge and skills and to teach them how to apply the knowledge and skills in real work conditions, they take place in enterprises, in any place that can be their employment place in the future or at individual farms.

In the education system the number of hours of practical vocational training cannot exceed 6 hours daily for pupils up to 16 years old and 8 hours for pupils over 16 regardless the type of school.

The scope of knowledge and skills acquired by pupils during practical instruction and vocational placements as well as the number of hours are defined by curricula for particular vocations. Starting from September 2012 there is one core curriculum for occupations in which there are defined interdisciplinary skills which have to be mastered in every occupation, such as social and interpersonal competences, entrepreneurship knowledge and skills and management skills (for occupations at upper secondary technical schools).

During the educational cycle or after completion of the vocational secondary school, graduates may take an external exam confirming their vocational qualifications. The exam is based on nationwide examination requirement standards. It consists of two parts: written, which examines the knowledge and abilities connected with a specific job and running a business activity, and a practical one, which examines the skills necessary to perform the job (see chapter 3).

According to the National Statistical Office²⁰ over the last three years a gradual increase in the number of special job training schools has been recorded. In 2010/2011 there were almost 2.4% more establishments of this type (compared with the previous year), whereas the enrolment rose by 3.4% over the same period.

The number of basic vocational schools, preparing students for particular occupations, did not change significantly compared with previous years. The most popular occupations taught in basic vocational schools included those in engineering-technical services, production and processing, and architecture and construction.

The number of technical upper-secondary schools decreased by 59 compared with the previous year. The number of students attending regular technical upper-secondary schools decreased by almost eight thousand, whereas the number of enrollees of supplementary technical schools increased by 355. Male students tend to outnumber female students in this type of programme. In 2010/2011 school year the most popular occupations taught in technical upper-secondary schools included engineering, IT science, and services.

²⁰ GUS „Oświata i wychowanie w latach 2010-2011”, Warszawa 2012. [„Education in 2010/2011 school year”], Warsaw 2012

Apprenticeship

In the Polish education system, apprenticeship training is regarded as a special type of VET. The main condition to participate in this type of training is completion of the lower secondary school (*gimnazjum*) and being at least 16 years of age. However, in special situations, the law allows for some exceptions to this rule.

Apprenticeship training is organised in small and medium enterprises, mainly in handicrafts. The employers are usually members of a guild or a chamber of handicrafts. A particular chamber of handicrafts or appointed guild supervises apprenticeship training.

According to data provided by the Polish Association of Crafts (*Związek Rzemiosła Polskiego*), in 2011, in 26 078 enterprises, 86 837 juvenile workers were participating in apprenticeship training and from this number 84 384 juvenile workers were trained in enterprises and 2 456 youths were trained to receive a certificate stating the acquisition of particular skills in a particular occupation. Apprenticeship in crafts is offered in 116 occupations and the most common occupations were: hairdresser, carpenter, baker and confectioner.

Agreements between apprentices and employers can be time bound or open-ended. Where the apprentice is attending theoretical training at school, then the terms of the agreement must be concluded before the start of the school year. If other forms of theoretical training are pursued, then the agreement can be concluded at any time. The agreement always sets out the theoretical education to be followed by the apprentice.

Apprenticeship can take either of the following two forms:

- apprenticeship as occupational training (ISCED 3) leading to qualifications of an apprentice or a skilled worker. It comprises practical vocational training at the employer's organisation and theoretical training. Trainees/students (under the age of 18) can choose the form of theoretical training — it can take place in the school system or non-formal education forms. Most trainees/students (88%) complete their theoretical education in basic vocational schools. Training lasts between 24 and 36 months and finishes with the apprentice exam organised by the chamber of crafts;
- apprenticeship as training to perform a specific job (ISCED 2) and covering only selected work activities. It is limited to a small group of youths who, for different reasons, did not complete lower secondary school and are at least 15 years of age. The employer defines the curriculum considering existing core curricula. Training takes three to six months. After passing a test, the trainee receives a certificate stating acquisition of particular skills in a particular occupation. The certificate is issued by the enterprise where the training took place and is recognised by the education system. After finishing training, the young workers (between 16 and 18 years old) can continue their vocational education in the apprenticeship leading to a qualification (the duration of the first is included into the duration of the latter).

VET at post-secondary non-tertiary level

In the 2011/12 school year there were 2 830 post-secondary non-tertiary schools (*szkoła policealna*) educating 330 836 people²¹. Entry criteria for some post-lyceum school leavers are completion of upper secondary school, and for others, an upper secondary school-leaving certificate (*matura*). Students usually start their education in post-secondary schools aged 19–21 years, but every 6th student is over 25.

Education in post-secondary non-tertiary schools takes up to 2.5 years. The duration of training for individual occupations is determined in the Classification of Occupations for Vocational Schooling and depends on earlier training, either in a profiled secondary school preparing for a given occupation or in another school offering full secondary education.

A post-secondary non-tertiary school provides vocational education according to a curriculum from the list of curricula approved by the Minister of Education for the school use or in accordance with the national procedures works out its own curriculum. A curriculum developed by a teacher must be approved for the use in the particular school after the acceptance of the regional educational superintendent. Classes devoted to vocational training can be conducted in other organizational entities, such as: higher education institutions, continuing education centres (CKU), practical training centres (CKP), companies and agricultural farms, after fulfilling conditions necessary for proper provision of vocational education and preparing students for the exam confirming their vocational qualifications and for work.

Post-secondary school leavers acquire qualifications of technician or skilled worker, which they may confirm through an external vocational exam. The vocational profiles these types of schools offer include: technical sciences, economics and commerce, administration, general services, medical and social services, agriculture, culture and arts. Every 3rd student graduates from IT or economics and commerce profiles.

VET at tertiary level

Students typically start tertiary education aged 19 (after upper-secondary general schools and profiled upper-secondary general schools called *lycea*), or 20 (after technical upper secondary schools). Entry criteria to tertiary education is passing the matriculation exam (a final general education exam at the end of an upper secondary school) and obtaining upper secondary school-leaving certificate (*matura*). Tertiary education providers can decide on other admission criteria, which may include entrance exams, interviews or the grades achieved at the end of upper-secondary school.

VET at the tertiary level is provided by 3 types of colleges and higher education institutions.

²¹ Mały rocznik statystyczny Polski 2012. [Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland 2012], Central Statistical Office (GUS), Tab. I (131) p. 237, 238.

Teacher training colleges (*kolegia nauczycielskie*) aim to practically and theoretically prepare students to become teachers in nursery schools, primary schools, as well as in other educational, and care and education centres. Colleges are the institutions organised by local self-government of voivodships, social organisations, natural persons etc. or within the framework of higher education institutions. The programme lasts 3 years (6 semesters).

Foreign language teacher training colleges (*nauczycielskie kolegia języków obcych*) prepare candidates for the teaching profession. Graduates obtain qualifications for teaching a foreign language in primary, lower and upper secondary schools. The language of instruction in foreign-language teacher-training colleges is foreign language. The course in these colleges lasts 3 years and is conducted in a day, evening and weekend cycle. Graduates may obtain a Bachelor's title and apply to master's studies (2nd cycle programmes) on the basis of agreement on scientific-didactic tutorship. The programme lasts 3 years (6 semesters).

Colleges of social work (*kolegia pracowników służb społecznych*) educate for the social worker profession and the organisation of social support. They offer a day, evening or weekend cycle of education. The programme lasts 3 years (6 semesters).

In 2005 important changes were introduced in higher education as a result of a new legislative act: the 'Law on Higher Education'. The act legitimized 3-level system of studies, and the higher education institutions, depending on their competence, may be academic or vocational. Both types are entitled to provide first and second level studies as well as uniform master studies, however, vocational ones are not eligible to offer doctoral studies. First level studies, 4-year engineer programmes or 3-year bachelor programmes, are focused on preparing graduates for a particular profession. The essential element of these programmes is 15 weeks of practical training. The graduates from bachelor and engineer studies are entitled to continue education at supplementary 2 or 2.5-year master's courses.

All higher education institutions offering bachelor or engineer studies are obliged to include teaching standards for particular strands and level of education in their curricula. The standards indicate subjects of general education, basic subjects and vocational subjects. Subjects of general education are mandatory for all types of education and should comprise 15-20% of all teaching hours. General education subjects include foreign languages, physical education and some electives.

In the case of engineer programmes, *FEANI (Fédération Européenne d'Associations Nationales d'ingénieurs)* accreditation criteria are recommended. According to them, non-technical subjects should take up about 10% of all teaching hours, basic subjects – 35% and technical subjects – 55% of instructional time.

In the 2009/2010 academic year 1 900 000 students were educated in all types of higher education institutions, in the 2010/2011 academic year 1 841 300 and in the 2011/2012 academic year 1 764 100 students were attending these institutions.²²

⁽²²⁾ Mały rocznik statystyczny Polski 2012. [Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland 2011], Central Statistical Office (GUS), Tab. 16 (146), p. 254.

VET for adults

Due to the new reform introduced on 1 September 2012, schools for adults (the same types as for young people) are recommended to be combined into “centres of vocational and continuing education”. Such centres should comprise at least one vocational school and provide qualificational vocational courses and vocational information and guidance.

The qualificational vocational courses were introduced by the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 11 January 2012 on continuing education in non-formal forms as a short way to acquire a separate vocational qualification. Such course is based on the core curriculum for particular occupation but relates only to one separate qualification.

Completing such a course enables taking an external exam confirming the qualification. Attending several qualification courses a person can gain a whole set of qualifications belonging to a particular occupation.

The Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 11 January 2012 on extramural examinations facilitates access to VET for adults. Due to the new regulation adults can undertake extramural examinations and receive the certificate of completion of general education at primary, lower secondary and upper secondary level as it was possible before 2012, but the new regulation provides also the possibility to confirm the basic vocational education level. A similar possibility is foreseen for those who gained vocational experience at work or their education at a vocational school and would like to confirm/validate their skills, requalify or upgrade their qualifications taking extramural vocational exam. The new regulation is binding since 1 September 2012. The first exams enabling to confirm vocational qualifications and validating the level of basic vocational education (in general subjects) are foreseen to take place in 2013.

Adults who need to acquire underdeveloped key competences, according to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 11 January 2012 on continuing education in out-of-schools forms, will be able to do so through short forms - generic competences courses offered by public centres/units of continuing education e.g. continuing education centres (CKU), practical training centres (CKP) since 1 September 2012.

According to the Regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 7 April 2009 *on vocational preparation of adults* they can participate in apprenticeship similarly to young workers. However, due to their earlier work experience the programmes for adults are shorter (occupational training lasts 12 to 18 months and training aimed at preparation for performing a specific job 3 to 6 months).

Institutional framework for VET

Schools and educational establishments can be public, non-public or non-public with the rights/entitlements of a public school. A non-public school can obtain the entitlements of a public school, if it implements the minimum programme as well as applies the principles of classifying and promoting students as established by the Ministry of National Education, allowing students to obtain state certificate or diplomas. Central administration entities and

local authorities can administer public schools only. Primary schools and lower secondary schools can be public or non-public with the entitlements of a public school only.

Tertiary education can be public and non-public. Non-public higher education institutions are established on the basis of a permit of the Minister of Science and Higher Education.

The management and administration of the education system, including the VET system, has a 4-level structure resulting from the administrative division of the country.

National Level

Educational policy is formulated and implemented centrally at the level of the Ministry of National Education. The Minister of National Education, by means of regulations and detailed arrangements, creates a legal framework for functioning of all educational establishments, including vocational education and training. The Minister co-operates with other branch ministers supervising vocational schools: the Minister of Culture and National Heritage (artistic schools), the Minister of Agriculture (agricultural schools) and the Minister of Environment (forestry schools). The ministry of National Education collaborates also with other ministries responsible for particular occupations e.g. Ministry of Economy, Transportation, Health etc. The Minister of National Education approves the textbooks that can be used in both general and vocational education.

Furthermore, the Minister of National Education supervises the operation of school superintendents (*kuratorzy*).

Regional Level

The regional authorities (*województwa*) mainly play a co-ordinating role: they supervise the implementation of national policy and provide pedagogical supervision. The representative of the educational authority at this level is a school superintendent (*kurator*), who is appointed by the head of the regional government (*wojewoda*). The regional authorities also run schools and educational establishments of regional significance, including schools for medical staff and social workers, public establishments for teacher training and development, as well as teachers' libraries.

District Level

The district authorities (*powiaty*) and their heads (*starosta*) are in charge of managing upper secondary education (including vocational education), post-secondary schools and special schools (primary and secondary), sports schools and schools of sports mastery, practical and continuing education centres, psychological and pedagogical centres.

Local Level

In Poland, the local level is the municipality (*gmina*). All kindergartens, primary schools and lower secondary schools (*gymnasium*) are run by local governments.

School Level

The headmaster of a school or educational establishment, elected in a competition for a 5-year period, approves curricula, provides pedagogical supervision, hires and dismisses personnel, and manages the school budget. Headmasters have autonomy in concluding cooperation of their schools with industry and business in order to organize practical training or teachers' development, modernize curricular content or school equipment but do this in cooperation with local/regional authorities.

Financing of VET

The system of financing education in Poland is underpinned by the principle of free education for children and youth up to 18 years of age in all types of public schools, enshrined in the Constitution.

Regulations governing the financing of public schools, including all types of vocational schools, as well as public education and training institutions (such as continuing education centres, practical training centres and further education centres) are laid down in the Act on the education system (*Ustawa o systemie oświaty*) of 1991 (as amended) and other legislative acts relating to public finance, revenues of local government units (LGU) and regional development. The budget allocation for all types of educational activities, including vocational training, is defined annually in the Budget Act.

District government units (*powiat*) are responsible for financing initial vocational education and training schools. In most cases, tuition fees are the main source of financing in non-public schools, although such schools may also apply for subsidies from DGU budgets on the condition that the funds received are expended solely on the school's current expenses²³. Due to the lack of data showing the scale of private spending on non-public vocational schools, this analysis concerns only DGU expenditures. However, it should be added that the number of students attending non-public IVET schools is marginal²⁴; therefore, it may be assumed that the volume of DGU co-financing shows a true picture of IVET financing in Poland.

District government units finance vocational education from the following sources: their own revenues²⁵, the general subsidy and grants. The general subsidy is the most important.

²³ It should be stressed that all students are entitled to financial support irrespective of the type of school they attend (that is, students in a difficult financial condition and those who are highly successful academically).

²⁴ In the 2009/2010 school year, public schools accounted for 93.9% of vocational schools for youth (excluding special schools), non-public schools with rights accorded to public schools – 6.05%, non-public schools – 0.05% (GUS 2010).

²⁵ The most significant are the revenues from Personal Income Tax (PIT) and Corporate Income Tax (CIT), as well as from the district assets.

Its major portion concerning education (known as the education subsidy) is earmarked for the financing of DGU tasks stipulated in the Act on the education system²⁶ and depends on individual type of school, different groups of students of schools operating in the area of a given local government (e.g. blind and visually impaired students, students from ethnic minorities or from schools located in rural areas). As of 2000, a separate weight has been introduced for vocational school students in apprenticeship training, students of specialised secondary schools and students of special schools offering training to perform a specific job.

According to the publication “Education in 2010/2011 school year” public expenditure on education in 2010 (both state budget and local government units) amounted to 56 billion Polish zloty (approx. 12.7 billion EUR)²⁷ which accounted for 4% of GDP. The educational portion of the general subsidy transferred to schools via local government units amounted to 35 billion Polish zloty (i.e. 8 billion EUR approx.). Apart from these subsidies the state budget allocated 2.1 billion Polish zloty (approx. 477 million EUR) on education and other educational establishments²⁸.

Teachers

Types of teachers and trainers

Teachers and academic teachers, distinguished in the legislation as separate categories, work within the education system and provide both initial and continuing education. Teachers work in institutions which provide training below the higher education level, and academic teachers in higher education institutions.

Teachers whose primary responsibility is related to the teaching in a classroom include:

- general subject teachers or college teachers;
- theoretical vocational subject teachers;
- practical vocational training teachers.

Moreover, there are four categories of teachers performing the role of learning facilitators:

- teachers-pedagogues who provide educational support to students;
- teachers-psychologists who provide psychological support to students, teachers and parents;

²⁶ Prior to 2003, a fixed part of the anticipated State revenues (12.8%) was earmarked for the education subsidy. As of 2004, the amount of the education subsidy cannot be lower than it was in the previous fiscal year. In 2010, expenditure on education and development accounted for ca. 30% of all local government expenses (and amounted to EUR 11 489.5 million). Cf. IBE (2011a), MF (2011), BDL GUS. It should be stressed that local governments themselves decide what portion of the education subsidy will be spent on education.

²⁷ All expenditures referred to in the text have been converted using the NBP exchange rate as at 24.10.2011, where EUR 1 = PLN 4.3934.

²⁸ “Oświata i wychowanie w roku szkolnym 2010/2011” (Education in 2010/2011 school year), GUS 2012, <http://www.stat.gov.pl>.

- teachers-methodological advisers who provide support to teachers and school teaching councils;
- teachers-consultants who develop teaching materials, design and deliver in-service training courses for teachers and education managers, etc.

Advisers and consultants may be either the primary role or an additional role of teachers.

Academic teachers are divided into five categories according to their responsibilities: research and teaching staff, teaching staff, research staff, and qualified librarians, qualified scientific documentation and information staff. However, only the first two categories are involved in teaching.

Trainers are not distinguished as a distinct occupational category. Trainers may include:

- practical vocational training instructors who, as defined in the legislation, are employees, employers or private farm owners providing practical vocational training as part of IVET and CVET at the workplace or in a farm;
- trainers-specialists who, while not defined in the legislation, may include various groups of practitioners providing training as their primary or additional activity, mainly as part of CVET outside the education system.

Qualification requirements

In terms of qualification requirements, there is no distinction between teachers, academic teachers, practical vocational training instructors and trainers-specialists working in initial and continuing vocational education thus entry requirements, pre-service and in-service arrangements for a given category of practitioners in continuing education are the same as for those working in initial education.

Teachers must have a specific level of subject/occupational qualifications, depending on the level and/or type of training to be provided and pedagogical qualifications.

Academic teachers are not required to hold pedagogical qualifications, and there are no general qualification requirements applicable to all academic teachers. Additional requirements may be laid down in the statutes of individual higher education institutions.

Teachers-methodological advisers and teachers-consultants, involved only in continuing education as teacher trainers are required to:

- hold a master's degree and a pedagogical qualification;
- have obtained the professional promotion grade of appointed teacher or chartered teacher (the third and fourth grade, respectively, in the four-grade promotion system);
- have at least five-year of experience in teaching.

Thus prospective advisers and consultants first complete pre-service training necessary to become teachers, following one of the training paths outlined above, and take

on their roles only in the course of their professional career. Although no specific training is required, many prospective advisers and consultants take training courses for teachers working with adult learners. In-service training for advisers and consultants is organised in the same way as for other teachers, but there are also courses addressing specifically this group.

Practical vocational training instructors must hold specific occupational qualifications, which do not depend, however, on the level of training provided, and a pedagogical qualification.

Trainers-specialists are only required by the legislation to have occupational qualifications which are appropriate for the type of training provided. Specific requirements are laid down by individual VET providers.

2.3. Other forms of training

In Poland different training providers offer various forms of training, apart from these of formal nature: vocational improvement training sessions, courses, seminars, lectures, and workshops. The basic aim of the aforementioned kinds of trainings is the improvement of actual professional skills or the achievement of new skills in order to be more competitive on the market.

Training sessions offered by Labour Offices

In Poland, one of the main institutions involved in the organisation of such additional training is the Labour office (*Urząd Pracy – UP*). The Labour offices are municipal, regional and local and they organise training. The target groups of such training includes employees who want to improve their skills, the unemployed, both long-term as those who actively search for a job, the disabled, prisoners, elderly people and others vulnerable threatened by exclusion in the labour market. Among the different courses and training sessions offered by UPs, it is necessary to distinguish between individual training sessions, group training sessions (both for the unemployed and the disabled) and training directed to employees. The costs of training sessions are covered by the Labour offices which get funds from the Labour fund (*Fundusz pracy*) every year. The schedule of group training sessions is established at the beginning of every year. The number and the date of the realisation of planned training sessions depend on the funds obtained by UPs. In 2011, 54 000 unemployed were directed to vocational training sessions and it was the lowest number of participants for 10 years. Comparing to 2010, there was a decrease of 70.5%. The reason was that in 2011 limited funds in comparison with 2010 were planned for vocational training sessions due to a difficult situation in the Polish economy²⁹. Most of participants were sent to take part in group vocational training sessions. The dominant age group participating in such training sessions was 25-34 year olds (30%). Analysing the educational level of trainees who completed the training, the most numerous group consisted of people with post-secondary (3.7%; in 2010 –

²⁹ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2011

12.3%) and general education level (3.7%; in 2010 – 12.9%) and university education level (3.6%; in 2010 – 12.9%), however during the last five years the participation in training of people from these groups has decreased. Taking into account the structure of participants, the participation of long-term unemployed amounted to 2.2% (in 2010 – 7.5%), the disabled – 3.2% (in 2010 – 7.3%), above 45 years old – 2.4% (in 2010 – 6.8%). In 2011 vocational training sessions were terminated by 3.5% of men (in 2010 – 10.7%) and 2.1% of women (in 2010 – 7.5%).

In 2011 prisoners had a chance to supplement their education on courses organised by penitentiary units. Training was mainly directed to adult prisoners with no vocational skills or who required re-qualifications and to prisoners who ended to their sentence. Training aimed at the improvement of their chances in the labour market. Sessions were organised in cooperation with UPs. The scope of training sessions was adjusted to the needs of the local market requirements. In 2011 there were 1 104 courses organised for prisoners (in 2010 – 1 172 training sessions). There were 12 808 participants of such courses (in 2010 – 13 291), among which 12 547 finished courses (in 2010 – 13 012) (Ministry of Justice, 2011).

In 2011 UPs also commissioned the realisation of the vocational training to 5 683 of training providers, who organised 18 984 training courses. In comparison with 2010, the cooperation of the training providers with UPs decreased strongly and the number of contracted trainings decreased by c.a. 63%. The providers of trainings commissioned by UPs included: natural persons, associations, legal entities, centres of vocational improvement. UPs also get funds for training sessions from the Human Capital Operational Programme, especially within Priority VI (improvement training sessions organised for the unemployed, mainly for people who are long-term unemployed or people who actively search for a job, women, elderly people, people from rural areas and young people who enter the labour market).

Training sessions offered by vocational education centres

Other state institutions, which offer different forms of vocational training (apart from the formal training) are: centres for continuing education (*centrum kształcenia ustawicznego*), centres for practical education (*centrum kształcenia praktycznego*) and centres for education and improvement (*ośrodek dokształcenia i doskonalenia zawodowego*). Their cooperation with the UPs within the organisation of trainings for the unemployed is relatively low. In 2011, there were 2.4% of such institutions organising the training (in 2010 – 3.3%). However, it is expected that the changes introduced in 2011 in the Education Law will cause the improvement of the above numbers.

Training sessions offered by centres for continuing education include among others, vocational courses for qualifications (*kwalifikacyjny kurs zawodowy*) which offer preparation to take vocational exam(s) and obtain vocational qualifications after passing exams. The participant obtains a certificate of the termination of a course which gives the possibility to take up an external exam conducted by the district exam commission (*okręgowa komisja egzaminacyjna*). Centres offer courses in traditional or e-learning formulas. All courses are free of charge. Still, the participants may cover some costs, e.g. the

cost of materials. These courses are financed directly from the state or from the European programmes, among others, the Human Capital Operational Programme.

Centres for practical education aim at the organisation of vocational training sessions within the practical preparation of youth and adults. Such trainings are commissioned by schools and other institutions, e.g. UPs and they are financed from the budget of the district government and from own funds of the centre. In 2011 centres for continuing education and centres for practical education organised training sessions on the commission of Labour offices for 1 656 people (in 2010 – for 5 885 people).

Centres for education and improvement organise courses for young employees and adults in accordance to the needs of the local labour market. The centres also organise education for students of basic vocational schools within theoretical vocational subjects in order to prepare students to take up an exam for a craftsman. In 2011 the centres organised training for 4 517 people (in 2010 – for 17 833 people), which were commissioned by Labour offices.

Labour offices also commissioned the organisation of vocational training to R&D institutions (in 2011 – 84, in 2010 – 368 trained people), universities (in 2011 – 209, in 2010 – 425 trained people), associations (in 2011 – 7 903, in 2010 – 23 086 trained people), natural persons (in 2011 – 8 083, in 2010 – 20 327 trained people), enterprises (in 2011 – 302, in 2010 – 638 trained people), training and rehabilitation centres (in 2011 – 21, in 2010 – 10 trained people) and other institutions (in 2011 – 31 483, in 2010 – 113 151 trained people).

In Poland there are also centres for vocational improvement (*zakłady doskonalenia zawodowego*), which are kind of associations or other legal entities conducting educational activity within vocational education mainly in crafts (courses, trainings for vocational improvement, special courses undertaken within the funds of the Human Capital Operational Programme and courses for teachers).

Vocational training offered by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development

Different kinds of training, mainly for employers and employees are offered by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (funded from European resources). However, it seems that such forms of vocational improvement are not popular particularly among employers.

In 2009 there were 82 000 employers who applied for training refunds for 285 000 employees (the total number of employees 12.4 million) in comparison with 2011, when the low level of the engagement of entrepreneurs in organising such training for employees was perceived, which arises from the fact that such support is given from the public funds. The number of enterprises organising the trainings decreased from 70-84 in the last five years to 57 in 2011. The most popular trainings organised by employers for their employees were compulsory industrial safety courses.

Vocational training offered by employers

Employers can improve qualifications of employees by supporting their education in secondary schools, post-diploma universities and in the form of short courses, e.g. technical courses related to the profession of an employee. In 2010 only 54% of employers trained their employees (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2011). Most of these enterprises were state institutions (89%). Employers mostly invested in technical vocational training related to the construction and industry sector (20%), industrial safety, law and marketing (17%).

Other institutions offering vocational training sessions

Apart from the aforementioned institutions, other bodies, e.g. private schools or private natural persons offer vocational training sessions, courses and workshops. Financing for such activities comes from European resources, but many courses have to be fully paid by the participants. Correspondence courses are also offered. The topics of such courses include among others: vocational improvement related to different professions, accountancy, gardening etc. Many e-learning courses are offered by universities. There is even one university which offers not only courses, but also formal education in e-learning.

The educational offer for elderly people is also broad. The most popular educational form is the participation in training organised by the University of the third age. Such universities offer activities aiming at improving knowledge and development of interests. Currently, there are more than 360 kinds of universities. Among the types of the Universities of the third age we can indicate these under the patronage of universities and those created by the associations. Their educational offer includes: lectures, seminars, some kind of vocational courses (e.g. photography, marketing, art activities). Financing of the Universities of the Third Age comes from different sources: member fees, co-financing from district government, sponsoring, grants.

Training can be also taken up at the Universities of the second age, which started to appear and which offer general as well as vocational courses, e.g. accounting, photography, etc. The Universities of the second age target people between 35-55.

Different training sessions are also organised in senior clubs, most often created at the libraries, community centres, district clubs or churches. The topics of training sessions often concern art and handicraft activities. Training can be free of charge, if it is financed from European programmes (e.g. Leonardo da Vinci programme), or paid by participants (members of such clubs often pay a yearly fee that covers the participation in such activities).

District clubs and community centres also offer some kinds of training for different target groups, e.g. youth, elderly people, the disabled. Activities are free of charge if they are sponsored from the EU resources.

European Union resources can be used for training especially from the Lifelong Learning Programme which offers many forms of training, both for young people and adults.

Especially in Leonardo da Vinci programme, which is directed mainly to people threatened by social exclusion.

To sum up, in Poland there are about 10 000 training institutions. Private and vocational counselling institutions are dominant and cover 83% of the market. Mostly they are micro (43%) and small (43%) institutions, seldom medium (12%) and very big (2%). Half of the institutions organised training sessions with the use of European Union funds and 60% of training providers are going to apply for such funds in the future. Most of institutions organise vocational training for individual and groups. Individuals are mainly interested in transport and specialised IT skills training sessions. The most popular educational form of training is the participation in traditional courses and trainings, however more and more institutions offer e-learning and coaching (25%) with such courses as e.g. entitlement for drivers.

In 2011 20% of people between 18-64 (ca. 5 million) took up any kind of education. 14% of people took part in courses and trainings. The market within non-formal education included 3.4 million of clients. Only 12% of people self-educated (2.8 million people). There is no change in comparison with 2010.

Employees took up education more often (18%), whereas only 12% of the unemployed took up any education. The most popular form of training was traditional training (67% of participants) and trainings in the workplace (20%). More than half of training for employees were fully financed by employers, 20% were financed by the participants and other institutions.

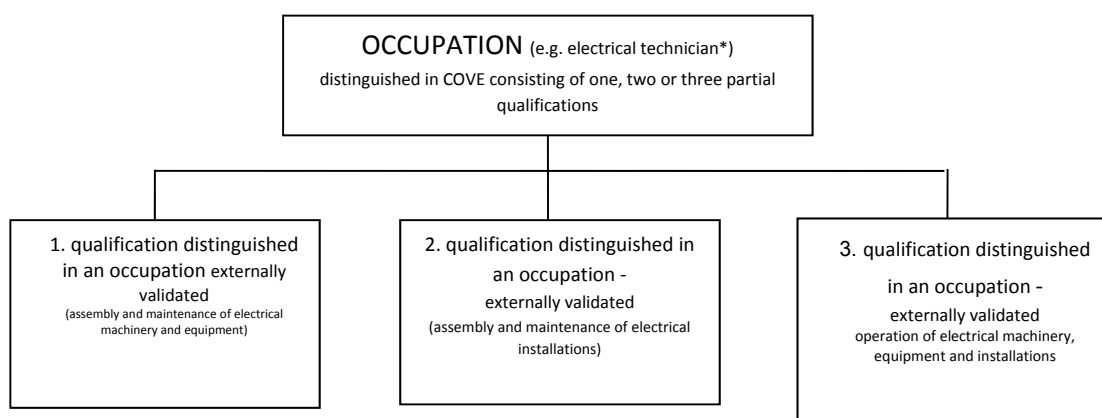
3. Shaping VET qualifications

3.1 Relations between occupational standards, educational standards, core curricula and school programmes

The basis for designing the educational offer in the formal VET sector in Poland is defined at the central level by three decrees issued by the Ministry of National Education concerning: the classification of occupations for vocational education (COVE); the core curriculum for vocational education (CCVE) and the core curriculum for general education (CCGE).

The COVE includes the list of ‘occupations’ (i.e. compound qualifications), in which schools can provide education and training. Within the specific occupations, qualifications are distinguished. Each occupation can be made up of either one, two or three qualifications. Altogether COVE includes 200 occupations which encompass 251 qualifications. Fig. 1 presents the relation between occupation and qualifications. Each qualification covers specific sets of learning outcomes, expressed in terms of knowledge, occupational skills and personal and social competence and is externally validated.

Figure 1. Distinguishing qualifications within the occupations defined in the classification of occupations for vocational education (COVE) at the example of the occupation of electrical technician.



*In occupation (i.e. compound qualification) electrical technician, in COVE, three partial qualifications are distinguished: (1) assembly and maintenance of electrical machinery and equipment; (2) assembly and maintenance of electrical installations; (3) operation of electrical machinery, equipment and installations.

Source: ReferNet Poland.

The structure of the COVE and the occupations enlisted therein has been in line with the occupations and the structure of the Polish Classification of Occupations and Specialization (COZ)³⁰, developed on the basis of ISCO-08, since 2012. The classification is used by the Central Statistical Office in its labour market research, as well as by public employment services in the regional labour market. The recent integration of the two classifications is beneficial, since it enables designing vocational programmes based on the direct use of the information provided by the public employment services, regional labour market observatories and the Central Statistical Office (cf. Gruza 2012).

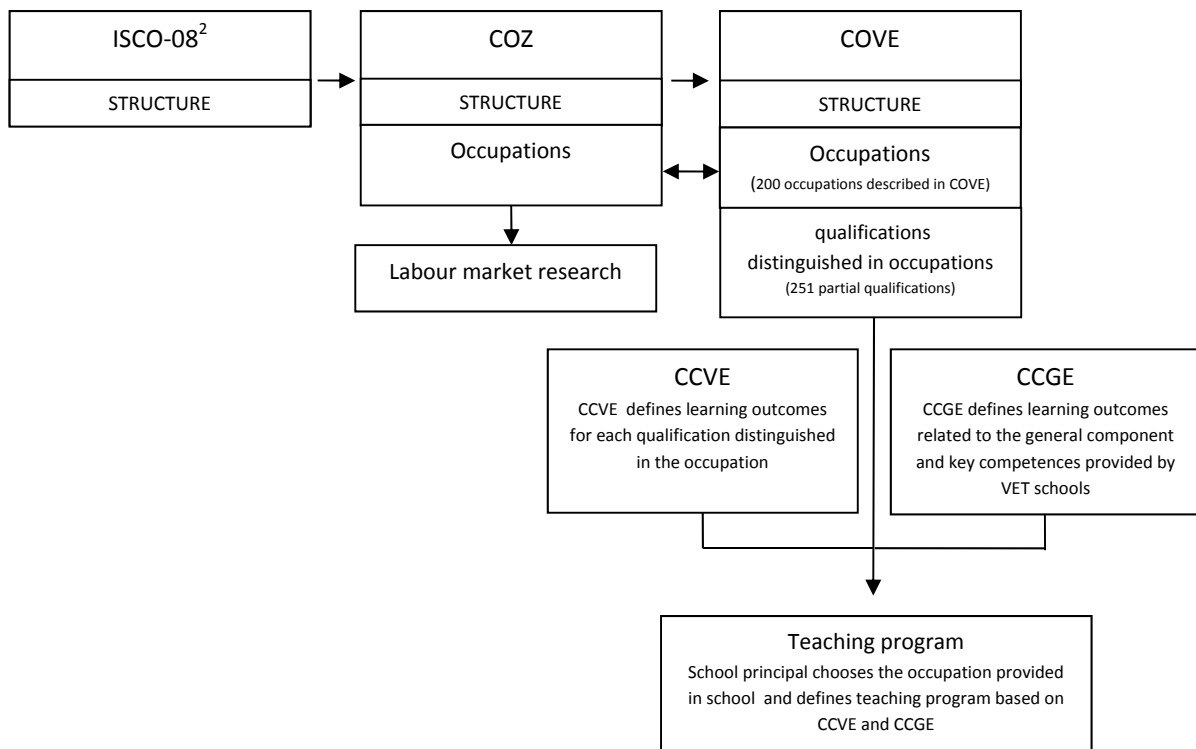
The CCVE determines the learning outcomes to be obtained by a person taking the vocational education and training, and the CCGE determines the learning outcomes related to the general education component and key competences which both (general and vocational) are provided by VET schools.³¹ The decision on opening education for a particular qualification (described in the COVE) is made by the school principal upon receiving the opinion from Regional and Local Employment Councils. Thus, the classification of school occupations forms a certain kind of 'menu' for making choices which occupations to provide for the local and regional labour market.

Teaching programs are also developed at the school level. The school principal is responsible for incorporating the learning outcomes and the organisational requirements provided for by the relevant core curriculum in the set of teaching programmes. Learning outcomes have been specified for the qualifications distinguished within the occupations, they also serve as examination requirements. The core curriculum for vocational education also sets forth the conditions for implementing practical training (e.g. as for equipment). The interdependencies between the COVE, the COZ, as well as core curricula and the teaching programmes are presented in Fig. 2.

³⁰ It shall be added, however, that the description of occupational tasks listed in the COZ is of limited use in the context of development of core curricula and teaching programs although now work is being conducted to modernise them.

³¹ For secondary technical schools, it also defines the learning outcomes that must be achieved by a person taking the qualification of the matura certificate.

Figure 2. Interrelations between the Polish Classification of Occupations and Specialization (COZ) the classification of occupations for vocational education (COVE); the core curriculum for vocational education (CCVE), the core curriculum for general education (CCGE) and the teaching program.



Source: ReferNet Poland elaboration based on Gruza 2012.

Since 2012 a modernised version of the COVE has been in force and a new CCVE is being implemented. Introduction of changes to the documents fits the broader context of changes to the structure and contents of vocational education in Poland, adjusting it to the labour market changes and reforms recommended at the European level, related to the Copenhagen Process, ECVET and EQAVET recommendations. The developments are also an element of the actions aimed at modernisations of the Polish qualifications system, the central element of which shall be the Polish Qualifications Framework (see Chłoń-Domińczak, Dębowski, Sławiński 2011).

3.2 Match between labour market needs and VET provision

The institutional and legal solutions adopted in the Polish formal VET system have been planned to respond to the requirements posed by the modern labour market by ensuring communication with the employers and employees organisations. That channel of exchange of information is used both at the central level (when defining the educational standards, core curricula and quality assurance principles) and at the local level (when designing the teaching programs by VET schools).

Educational standards

The COVE is developed by the Minister of Education in cooperation with the ministers responsible for the other areas of economy. To anticipate labour market needs at the development stage, the COVE is subject to consultations with representatives of employers. Employers can also submit applications for entering a new occupation into the COVE.

The mode of entering occupations to the COVE is determined by the Act on the education system. The minister responsible for a given sector of economy submits the proposal to incorporate an occupation in the classification. Professional associations, economic self-governments and other economic organisations may submit their own proposals to establish a new occupation. To do so, they need to submit an application to the minister responsible for a given sector of economy. The minister prepares the proposal, which includes a description of the occupation with a set of occupational skills, justification of the need to train in the occupation, the name and place of the occupation in a given group of the classification of occupations and specialisations (COZ), documentation on the demand of the labour market for that occupation and the opinion of the central representative organisation of employers. After the proposal has been approved, the Minister of Education enters the occupation into the COVE, and at the same time appoints a working group to design the core curriculum for training in that occupation. The group contacts the institution which submitted the proposal of a new occupation to determine the learning outcomes, as well undertakes consultations with other experts in the field. It is assumed that this procedure of introducing a new occupation in the classification will guarantee that the developments of the labour market are followed and the COVE is adequate for the employers' needs.

The decision on which occupation shall be offered by a given VET school is made by the school principal in agreement with the local authorities (*poviat government*). To ensure adequacy to the needs of the labour market, the decision of the principal must be made after asking the local (*poviat*) or regional (*voivodeship*) employment council for opinion concerning compliance with regional labour market needs. The employment councils are advisory bodies to local or regional labour offices³². The new occupations, which are to be offered by a given school, are first approved by the local board and then the education superintendent's office (*kurator oświaty*).

³² The Voivodeship Employment Council comprises people appointed by the Marshall of the Voivodeship from the following institutions operating on the territory of the voivodeship: (1) the voivodeship structures of each representative organisation of trade unions; (2) voivodeship structures of each representative organisation of employers; (3) social and professional organisations of farmers and agricultural chambers; (4) non-governmental organisations which deal with labour market issues according to their statutes, (5) representatives of the world of science – delegated by the Committee on Labour and Social Policy Sciences at the Polish Academy of Sciences; (6) representative of the voivode.

New core curriculum for vocational education

Vocational education is provided on the basis of:

- core curriculum for general education;³³
- core curriculum for vocational education, which is binding in vocational schools providing training in the occupations defined in the classification of occupations for vocational education.

Implemented since September 2012, the CCVE is aimed at improvement of the link between vocational education and training offer and labour market needs. It has been developed as a result of the project implemented by the National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education (NCSVCE) “Improvement of core curricula as the key for modernisation of vocational education” under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education. Under the project, broad consultations were carried out with representatives of employers’ organisations, representatives of the world of science, experts on occupations, employers’ representatives of the Central Examination Board and regional examination boards, vocational school teachers. The work on new core curriculum involved around 600 people (authors and reviewers), including 271 employers and representatives of higher education institutions.

The new core curriculum is also important for promotion of vocational education for adults interested in obtaining additional qualifications for the purpose of retraining. It results from the fact that distinguishing qualifications in an occupation provides the foundation for making the process of vocational education flexible and more open to persons who achieved their professional competences through non-formal and informal learning (see section below). In the event of demand for a specific qualification emerging on the labour market, the provision of the qualification will take much less time. In the context of the previously valid core curriculum, training an appropriate specialist required completion of a whole educational cycle in a given occupation, in a basic vocational school (2 or 3 years of study) or a secondary vocational school (4 years of study). As a consequence, in view of the dynamic developments in the economy, such a situation caused a mismatch between the educational offer of vocational schools and the labour market demand.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

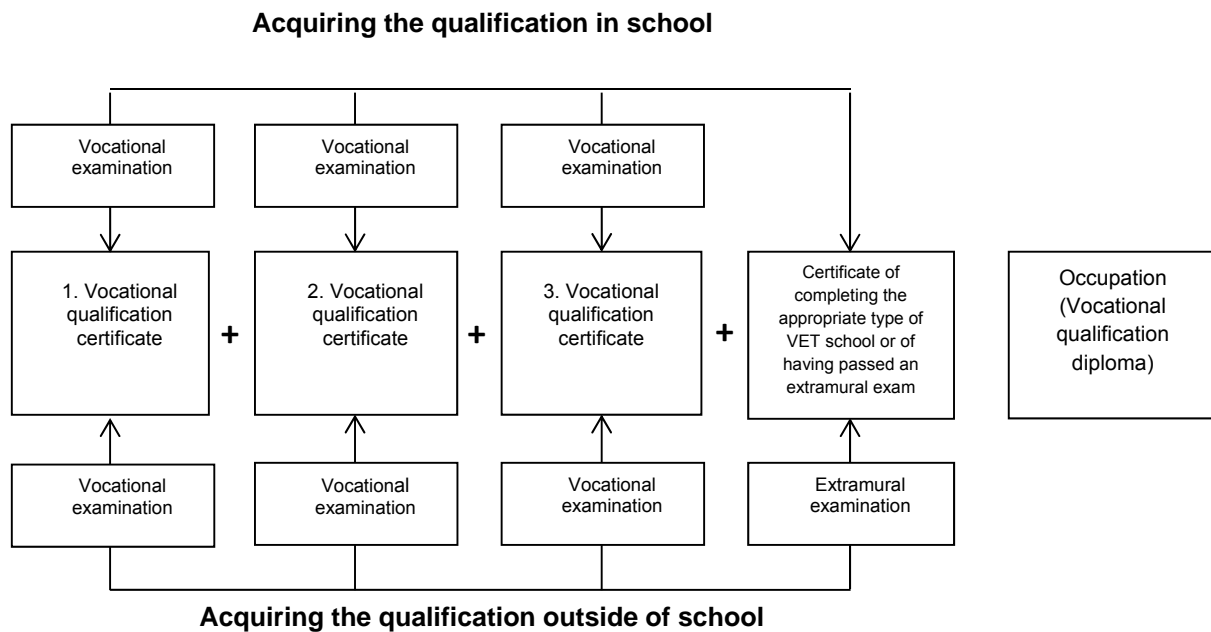
As of 1 September 2012³⁴, learning outcomes attained outside of schools can be confirmed by the validation arrangements. Previously, persons who acquired vocational skills through informal learning, i.e. at an employer, were unable to validate their learning outcomes by taking examinations organised by regional examination boards (OKE).

³³ The core curriculum for general education is binding for all kindergartens, primary schools, lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools.

³⁴ Ustawa z dnia 19 sierpnia 2011 r. o zmianie ustawy o systemie oświaty oraz niektórych innych ustaw [Act of 19th of August 2011 on changes in the Act of educational system and other acts] Journal no 205, pos. 1206.

At present, the educational law sets forth that people who are over 18 years old³⁵ may take extramural external examinations, carried out by regional examination boards. After successful passing the examinations, learners may obtain a certificate of completion of a given type of school and/or the vocational qualification acquired in that school (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Acquiring vocational qualification certificates confirming qualification in an occupation and diploma confirming vocational qualifications



Source: IBE.

3.3 Quality assurance in VET

Quality standards for vocational education are being developed. They include quality standards for the work of the school/institution providing vocational education and quality standards for the educational process of preparation of a student for an occupation. These are presented in a comprehensive document covering all aspects of vocational education and training categorised into ten thematic areas. These standards are one of the ways in which Poland is implementing the EQAVET European reference framework for quality assurance in vocational training.

Significance of core curricula in the qualification quality assurance system

The core curricula of general education and vocational education describe the requirements for skills, competences and knowledge expected from graduates in terms of learning outcomes. Teaching programmes are developed by schools. The school principal is

³⁵ Detailed conditions that need to be met by people taking extramural examinations depend on the type of examination.

responsible for incorporating the relevant core curriculum in the teaching programmes. The functioning system of pedagogical supervision in schools and the external examination system use core curricula as the fundamental criterion to assess work quality in schools and the learning outcomes achieved by children and youth.

The system of pedagogical supervision

Pedagogical supervision serves to ensure the quality of teaching and the quality of qualifications awarded by schools (including VET schools).

This supervision is based on:

- evaluating the status and conditions of didactic, developmental and care activities carried out by schools and teachers;
- analysing and evaluating the outcomes of didactic as well as other statutory activities of schools;
- providing assistance to schools, and teachers in their work of teaching, child development and pupil care;
- inspiring teachers to undertake innovative pedagogical, methodological and organisational activities.

The Superintendent of Education (*Kurator oświaty*) supervises education in schools in a region. The Superintendent prepares an annual report on the results of educational supervision and presents it to the Minister responsible for education. Superintendents also support school principals and teachers in improving the quality of education.

The system of external examinations

The system of external examinations is a key element for ensuring and improving the quality of education and qualifications acquired in schools. The Central Examination Board (CKE) and eight regional examination boards (OKE) are responsible for organising external examinations. The external examination system is supervised by the Minister of Education.

In the external examination system, all examinees solve the same problems to verify whether they have achieved the learning outcomes defined in the core curriculum. Exam results are rendered anonymous and assessed according to uniform criteria for the entire country. Trained examiners registered at the regional examination boards assess exam results.

The examination consists of a written part (conducted in the form of a test) and a practical part. The exams are conducted only in centres possessing the necessary infrastructure to carry out the practical part of the examination. The practical part may be assessed by practitioners working in the field in which the exam is conducted.

School information system

The collection and dissemination of information on the formal general and vocational education system by the School information system (SIO) is an important element in assuring the quality of qualifications in Poland.³⁶ The SIO is a tool for improving the effectiveness of managing education at the national, regional, local and school levels. The ability to easily access (on-line) data configured according to the needs of educational policy makers creates opportunities to make informed decisions on the various functional aspects of the school, which in many cases directly impact the quality of the educational process, and as follows, the quality of the qualifications obtained in the school system.

The School information system is maintained in electronic form and uses the internet to provide information collected under the terms of a legal act. Each user group has access to its relevant part of the data base. Some information is available to the public. The system has been implemented in this form since 2012.

3.4 Challenges

The current changes in Poland in the area of vocational education and training are an element of the national development strategy for the next years. They also fit the broader context of reforms recommended in Europe and related to building the competitiveness of economy and strengthening social cohesion. Both at the central level, when defining the COVE and core curricula and at the local level when designing teaching programs by VET schools, certain mechanisms have been designed to anticipate labour market needs. It does not mean, however, that the scope of activities is sufficiently broad and all procedures are efficient. In this area, several challenges related to the Polish VET can be brought to attention.

As was described in the above sections, the basic channel used to anticipate labour market needs at the central level is consultation with employers or employers' organisations. There is no functioning system of comprehensive and cyclic surveys of labour demand comprising both components of qualitative and quantitative research.

Another problem is the fact that central employers' organisations are relatively weak and dispersed in Poland (four organisations function at the central level, which jointly represent enterprises employing only around 40% of employees) and they rarely show high interest in shaping the vocational education policy or do not have adequate resources. In many countries, the social dialogue at the central level between employers, trade unions and the government contributes to better adjustment of the VET provision to labour market needs. In Poland, the dialogue at the central and regional level infrequently focuses (for which responsibility is borne by both the social partners and the government) around the problems of adjustment of competences to the needs of the evolving economic situation (cf. Bukowski, Dębowski 2011).

³⁶ See the Act of 15 April 2011 on the school information system (Journal of Laws 2011, No. 139 item 814).

In addition, social partners can only give their opinions rather than make decisions, and they do not have the veto power with respect to solutions proposed by the government.

At the local level, beside the insufficiency of information on the labour market situation, in particular with reference to the 'surplus' and 'scarce' occupations (which is primarily related to the low predictive value of analyses prepared by public employment services), weak cooperation between schools and labour offices and other labour market institutions has been identified (cf. Jeruszka 2012). Also the involvement of employers in development of school teaching programmes and organisation of internships is limited, which results from both organisational weakness of employers and, in many cases, low awareness of the long-term return from this kind of investments, as well as relatively low financial incentives provided by the state to promote such cooperation (Dębowski, Lis, Pogorzelski 2010).

Several studies reveal (cf. Jeruszka 2012; Chlon-Domińczak, Holzer 2012) that a small proportion of school principals gather information on the future and situation of their graduates, and few of those who obtain such information take them into account when making decisions on the structure of instruction. School principals are not obliged under the law to examine the labour market situation both at the regional and national level. The opinions of the district employment councils are only of supportive nature. Vocational schools are under no legal obligation to monitor the professional careers of their graduates either.

Another problem that increases the scale of mismatch of vocational education to labour market demand is the method of financing vocational education. Inadequate reflection on the costs of vocational education of students from the education subsidy (related to the development of competence for a specific occupation) often makes local governments decide on running vocational schools that require the lowest financial expenditure, despite lack of demand for the qualifications (cf. Herbst, Herczyński, Levitas 2009, Dębowski Ziewiec 2011). In other words local governments run schools that are cheap in maintaining not the ones that are really needed in the market.

4. Promoting participation in vocational education and training

The reform of vocational education³⁷ implements the new approach to VET. The reform introduced changes in the organisation of didactic process in basic, upper-secondary and post-secondary VET schools, as well as changes in learning content and the form of the exams. The aim of the new reform is to enable people to supplement education and to be more competitive on the labour market.

Apart from legal changes, the participation in vocational education and training in Poland is promoted in different ways that are of a financial and a motivational nature. Incentives of financial nature include among others: the support of different political structures for vocational education and training such as loans, vouchers etc. Incentives of motivational nature mainly include guidance and vocational counselling and legal conveniences linked to VET.

4.1 Financial incentives

Vocational training organised by Labour Offices

The Labour Fund³⁸ is an important mechanism for transferring state support within vocational educational and training. The Labour Fund promotes participation in VET by granting resources for vocational training initiatives. The grants of the Labour Fund are obtained by interested people through the Labour offices (*Urząd Pracy - UP*). UPs promote VET by granting both, group as well as individual, vocational training. The content of training is indicated by UPs every year and the number of training sessions depends on the funds obtained from the Labour Fund. Training is mainly directed to unemployed people. The participants of group training have a right to receive a training grant that amounts to 120% of the unemployment benefit, but the condition is that the number of training hours is not less than 150 hours per month. The cost of the individual training cannot exceed 300% of average monthly salary in the country. In 2011, UPs provided ca. 54 000 people with the aforementioned types of training, which compared to the previous year (2010) was a decrease of 70.5% (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2011). Since 2010 most of the clients of the UPs – c.a. 80% – were directed to group training. In 2011, the participation in group training decreased by c.a. 67% and UPs preferred to direct the unemployed to individual training sessions. As a result, between 29-75% of participants of these training pathways found employment in 2011.

³⁷ Act of 19th of August 2011 on changes of the Act on the educational system, introduced on 1st of September 2012.

³⁸ The Labour Fund - *Fundusz Pracy* - is a state-special purpose fund which operates - under the Act of 20th of April 2004 on promoting employment and labour market institutions.

The financing rules for training disabled people are similar to those that apply to the unemployed. However, in 2011, only 6% of the disabled were participating in individual or group trainings, whereas in 2010 this only was 4%.

Finally, UPs, on the request of the unemployed, can cover the costs of exams and thus help them achieve certificates, diplomas, other professional entitlements or professional titles. They can also cover the costs of licences necessary for undertaking a profession, if it is useful. However, such financial help can be granted for once a year only. UPs also support the organisation of a vocational training for employees, but only on the request from entrepreneurs (the condition of obtaining such support is that the entrepreneur must have a special training fund in his/her enterprise). Up to 50% of the training costs can be refunded from the Labour Fund, but not more than the amount of the average monthly salary. In the case of people aged 45 and over, the refund limit is 80% of training costs, but not more than 300% of the average salary. In comparison with 2010, the number of employees, for whom the employers obtained the funds, decreased 10 times. In 2011 there were only 8 employers whose expenditure on personal training was refunded and 43 employees who started the training and whose employers received the refund for the training.

UPs also fund apprenticeship organised in enterprises. After the amendment of the Act on promotion of employment and institutions of labour market in 2009³⁹, apprenticeships are available for all groups of the unemployed, not only for young people as was the case in previous years. In 2011, 101 600 people up to 25 years old terminated the apprenticeship (24%). The number of people directed to the apprenticeship decreased by 63% compared to 2010. In 2011 the probability of employment after the termination of apprenticeship and vocational preparation increased by 10% and 6% compared to 2010. The likelihood of employment after termination of apprenticeship was 53%, and after the termination of vocational preparation 42%.

The European funds help to co-fund vocational trainings, courses, vocational apprenticeships and other projects whose aim is to improve the Polish labour market. The training offer is directed to the representatives of small, medium and big enterprises as well as individual people.

Loans

Apart from directly funding vocational training, the UPs offer the unemployed loans for financing training costs. The funding is up to 400% of the average monthly salary. The loan is to enable people to take up or keep the employment. There is no interest on the loan and the time of the repayment cannot exceed 18 months. However, in 2011 only 17 people obtained this kind of support. UPs also support the funding of post-graduate studies and the costs of exams. It is possible to finance studies up to 100% of the costs, but the amount cannot exceed more than 300% of the average monthly salary. During the participation in studies, the unemployed have a right to obtain a grant that amounts to 20% of the

³⁹ Act of 20th of April 2004 on promotion of the employment and institutions of the labour market

unemployment benefit. In 2011, 2 001 people completed post-graduate studies, however this was six times lower than in 2010.

It is also possible to apply for a student's loan⁴⁰. The only restriction is that at the time of application the student cannot be older than 25. The loan is granted for the whole period of study. Repayment starts two years after graduating. During the twelve years of the functioning of students' loans, the banks gave them to 350 000 students. In the academic year 2010/2011 the banks got 24 246 credit applications and 99.4% fulfilled the required criteria. The most interested students were from universities (35.8%), technical universities (21.2%) and non-public schools (16%).

Vouchers

In Poland there was no voucher system, but there are debates in order to introduce such a system. As a result of discussions, there is currently a big programme being organised at the national level, engaging all the UPs. They offer different vouchers to the unemployed:

- vouchers for the unemployed who find an employer offering employment for at least 6 months. After the training, the employer will receive a grant from the UP for about 350 EUR;
- vouchers for training – an unemployed person will get a voucher for a maximum amount of 3 646 PLN (about 920 EUR) to cover training costs. The unemployed person can decide on the type of training session and provider;
- vouchers only for vocational training directed to people who want to improve their vocational qualifications. The maximum amount is 7 292 PLN (about 1 300 EUR) in the first year of training;
- vouchers for entrepreneurs who promise to provide employment to a graduate.

The vouchers are proposed within the “Young on the labour market” programme, developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

Scholarships

Many universities offer students scholarship of different types, among them scientific, social, international and scholarships directed to disabled people. Scientific scholarships are linked to the level of education of a student, whereas the social scholarship depends on the level of earnings in the family of a student.

Scholarships for good grades are also granted in basic vocational schools (scholarships from district governments, scholarships from the Prime Minister (Decree of 14th of June 2005 on scholarships of the Prime Minister).

⁴⁰ Decree on detailed rules and criteria of giving, repaying and remitting students' credits and loans, 2010

There is the all-Polish scholarship programme (rules on scholarships for children and youth in the school year 2012/2013) for primary, lower-secondary and secondary schools. The objective of the programme is to support the best students.

4.2 Statutory rights to training leave

Training leave is provided to an employee during working days. These can be used for the preparation to the exam and its sitting or the preparation of the thesis and its defence. The training leave amounts to 6 days in case of A levels and the exam confirming vocational qualifications. Increased training leave (21 days) can be provided to the employee who is a student of the last year of studies and prepares the thesis or the exam. The training leave is payable to an employee if an employer directs him/her to a training or agrees to improve his/her vocational qualifications. The agreement of the employer should be made before the start of training. The training leave is not provided in every case of training, but only if the training is taken up after obtaining the agreement of an employer or due to his/her initiative. Training leave cannot be provided if an employee uses another form of leave, e.g. unpaid extended post-maternity leave.

4.3 Motivational incentives

Cooperation between schools and employers

Vocational schools cooperate closely with enterprises. The students can connect the theoretical basis of a profession with practice and get apprenticeship in enterprises. Another form of cooperation is the organisation of didactic visits to enterprises where students can get information about the profession. Moreover, many schools cooperate with vocational foreign schools, e.g. from Germany, where students can be trained as apprentices. However, most entrepreneurs (80%) consider cooperation with schools in terms of additional costs, not investments. Entrepreneurs frequently complain about the lack of financial incentives, bureaucracy, legal problems and personal problems with possible trainees or necessity to engage current employees in looking after trainees.

Polish small and medium craftsmen enterprises organise trainings for students, which include practical vocational preparation in the craftsman enterprise and theoretical part at school or in courses. The vocational preparation takes place in a non-school system. The amount of the salary for the trainee is not less than 4% (1st year of training), 5% (2nd year of training) and 6% (3rd year of training) of the average monthly salary, however the employer can indicate another amount of salary for the trainee (not smaller than indicated above).

Vocational counselling and guidance

Vocational guidance is under the remit of two departments, education (Ministry of National Education), responsible for providing guidance and counselling services to young people at school, and labour (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs), responsible for guidance and counselling services to adults.

Due to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 17 November 2010, schools and other educational entities are obliged to provide students and teachers with pedagogical and psychological assistance, including vocational information and guidance, helping students in choosing their educational pathways and careers. The counsellors offer information which occupations are in demand on the labour market and health requirements for particular occupations.

The number of vocational counselors employed at schools and other educational establishments is steadily increasing – in 2007 there were 689 counselors working at schools, in 2008 – 772 and in 2011 – 1 385.

Counselling and guidance services for adults are available in labour offices (UPs) for those unemployed, who actively search for a job. The number of vocational counsellors is still increasing and in 2011 there were 1 786 counsellors (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2011). The scope of vocational counselling includes individual and group counselling. Individual counselling aims at motivating the client to talk about and solve professional problems.

In 2010, the number of clients using individual vocational counselling reached 514 009, 276 131 of which were women (54%).

Group vocational counselling is related to such issues as: professions, labour market, possibilities of vocational training, services on the labour market, etc. In 2010 there were 9 573 groups organised and 78 979 people got the group advice, including 48 837 women (61.8%). That is a small decrease compared to 2009.

Moreover, it is possible to get individual or group vocational information. In 2010 there were 379 283 individual visits of clients who used vocational information. As regards group vocational information, there were 20 263 group meetings in which 232 724 people participated, including 121 747 women (52.3%). That is also a small decrease compared to 2009.

In order to promote VET, there is also guidance for entrepreneurs available in UPs, which is linked to such information as: identification of requirements for a candidate for a specific post, disclosure of information on the unemployed, proposition for trainings for employees or unemployed people etc. In 2010, there were 2 511 applications from entrepreneurs and employers who were interested in the support within vocational counselling. 2 409 employers applied for help in identifying necessary requirements for particular posts and selecting suitable candidates for these posts. 102 employers and entrepreneurs applied for their own and their employees' vocational development. Most of them (92%) were from the private sector.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BDL – Bank Danych Lokalnych – Local Data Bank

CCVE – Core Curriculum Vocational Education – program nauczania dla kształcenia zawodowego

CCGE – Core Curriculum for General Education – program nauczania dla kształcenia ogólnego

CIT – Corporate Income Tax – podatek dochodowy od osób prawnych

CKE - Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna – Central Examination Commission

CKP - Centrum Kształcenia Praktycznego – Practical Training Centre

CKU - Centrum Kształcenia Ustawicznego- Continuing Education Centre

COVE – Classification of Occupations for Vocational Education – klasyfikacja zawodów szkolnictwa zawodowego

CVET – Ustawiczne Kształcenie i Szkolenie Zawodowe – Continuing Vocational Education and Training

CVET – Ustawiczne Szkolenie Zawodowe – Continuing Vocational Training

DGU – jednostka samorządu powiatowego – District Government Unit

ECVET – Europejski System Punktów Edukacyjnych w Kształceniu Zawodowym – European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training

EQAVET – European Quality Assurance References Framework for VET – Europejskie ramy odniesienia na rzecz zapewnienia jakości w kształceniu i szkoleniu zawodowym

EU – European Union – Unia Europejska

FEANI – Federacja zrzeszająca zawodowe stowarzyszenia inżynierów – Federation Europeenne d'Associations Nationales d'Ingenieurs

GDP – Produkt Krajowy Brutto – Gross Domestic Product

GUS - Główny Urząd Statystyczny – Central Statistical Office/National Statistical Office

IBE – Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych – Institute for Educational Research

ISCED – International Standard Classification of Education – Międzynarodowa Standardowa Klasyfikacja Kształcenia

IVET – Wstępne Kształcenie i Szkolenie Zawodowe – Initial Vocational Education and Training

LGU – jednostka samorządu lokalnego – Local Government Unit

MENIS - Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu – the Ministry of National Education and Sport

MPiPS – Ministerstwo Pracy i Polityki Społecznej – the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy

NBP – Narodowy Bank Polski – the Polish National Bank

NCSVCE – National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education – Krajowe Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej

OHP – Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy – Voluntary Labour Corps

OKE – Okręgowa Komisja Egzaminacyjna - Territorial Examination Commission

PIT – Personal Income Tax – podatek dochodowy od osób fizycznych

PLN – Polski złoty – Polish zloty

SIO – System Informacji Szkolnej - School Information System

UP – Urząd Pracy – Labour Office

VET – Kształcenie i szkolenie zawodowe – Vocational Education and Training