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Future-proofing VET in Europe – Progress, challenges and policy directions

**A synthesis of national policy
developments from 2020 to 2025**



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The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

(Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training, skills and qualifications. We provide information, research, analyses and evidence on vocational education and training, skills and qualifications for policy-making in the EU Member States. Cedefop was originally established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC)

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Foreword

The transition towards a green and digital Europe, reinforced by the Union of Skills strategy and the Herning Declaration, has placed vocational education and training (VET) at the very centre of the social and economic resilience of the European Union (EU). In this rapidly evolving landscape, Cedefop, in partnership with the European Training Foundation (ETF), continues to fulfil its mandate by providing the integrated monitoring necessary to turn these high-level European ambitions into tangible national approaches. This report serves as a bridge between the strategic visions set out in the Council Recommendation on VET and in the Osnabrück Declaration in 2020 and the practical steps taken by EU Member States, Iceland, Norway, as well as Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye, since then in the process to equip their citizens for the challenges of tomorrow.

Across Europe, a profound systemic transformation is taking place as countries work to make their VET systems more agile, innovative and responsive to the demands of the labour market. While the momentum behind modernising curricula and fostering excellence is undeniable, the findings of this report also highlight that truly successful VET and skills systems must be inclusive, attractive and meaningful for the ways of working and living that people have reason to value. While technical agility is growing, countries must increase efforts to ensure that VET is recognised as a high-value pathway to strong employability, quality jobs and personal growth for all learners.

With the first EU VET strategy to be published in late 2026, the insights gathered here provide a clear roadmap for future actions. To sustain this progress, Europe must move beyond fragmented approaches and address the recurrent structural challenges of governance, sustainable funding and the professional wellbeing of students, teachers and trainers. By learning from the diverse national actions captured in this report, stakeholders can jointly build a more competitive, modern and socially fair VET and skills ecosystem that empowers every individual to succeed in a changing world, while providing employers with the skilled workforce they need to contribute to a competitive and excelling European economy.

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The report is based on the valuable input from [ReferNet](#), Cedefop's network of expertise on VET in Europe. Information on candidate countries was collected by a network of national experts coordinated by the ETF.

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Executive summary

At a glance

Overall, European Union (EU) Member States, Iceland and Norway (the EU-27+) and the candidate countries (CCs) Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye have made significant progress in implementing the six vocational education and training (VET) priorities of the [Council Recommendation on VET](#) and the actions of the [Osnabrück Declaration](#) aiming to make national VET systems agile and resilient, flexible, innovative and excellent, attractive, inclusive and quality-assured. Further efforts are still needed in the priority areas of inclusiveness and attractiveness to ensure balanced and comprehensive implementation across all objectives.

Approximately 450 national measures in the EU-27+ and about 100 measures in the CCs were launched between 2020 and 2025 across all the abovementioned six VET priority areas.

Structural challenges across priorities, such as fragmented governance and limited coordination, capacity constraints and low societal recognition of VET, continue to influence implementation and progress.

Looking ahead, the next stage of European VET cooperation should be about taking integrated and systemic approaches to VET reforms, by strengthening governance and coordination, ensuring sustainable financing and embedding digital and green skills across systems. Advancing modular and microcredential pathways, consolidating centres of vocational excellence and promoting inclusion, gender balance and teacher development will be key in many countries to building a modern, innovative and socially just VET ecosystem aligned with the [Herning Declaration](#) (Danish Presidency of the European Union, 2025), for just societies.

This report provides an overview of the progress of the EU-27+ countries and five CCs ⁽¹⁾ in implementing the six VET priorities set out in the [Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience](#) (Council of the European Union, 2020; hereafter, the Council Recommendation on VET) and the actions in the [Osnabrück Declaration on VET](#) (German Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2020; hereafter, the Osnabrück Declaration). Developed by countries as a follow-up to the Council Recommendation on VET and the Osnabrück Declaration for the 2020–2025 period, [national implementation plans](#) (NIPs) outline the key national policy commitments across the EU VET priorities: agile and resilient, flexible, innovative and excellent, attractive, inclusive and quality-assured VET systems. The analysis of the implementation of NIPs supports ongoing EU cooperation and aims to inform the evolution of VET priorities and initiatives, taking into account the Union of Skills strategy's ambitious objectives, the [Herning Declaration](#) and the upcoming 2026 EU VET strategy.

The report relies on information from multiple sources: countries' NIPs and their measures; NIP measure-related policy developments ⁽²⁾ across the EU-27+ countries; interviews with national VET stakeholders; the outcomes of an online validation workshop (Cedefop, 2024, 31 October); data analysis of the [Cedefop European VET Policy Dashboard](#); ongoing Cedefop and European Training Foundation (ETF) work on monitoring; and ETF stakeholder consultation.

⁽¹⁾ This report covers the CCs that endorsed participation in the Osnabrück Declaration and, except for Türkiye, agreed to take part in the integrated monitoring of the 2020 Council Recommendation on VET: Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye.

⁽²⁾ Detailed fiches on NIP measure-related policy developments are available for CCs only for 2021, 2022 and 2023 on the ETF platform OpenSpace. See '[ETF monitoring of VET Recommendation and Osnabrück Declaration](#)'.

NIP measures and related policy developments were linked to the EU priorities using the integrated framework prepared by Cedefop and ETF and agreed upon by the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training ⁽³⁾ in 2021.

Key findings on progress towards EU VET priorities

The EU-27+ and CCs have advanced a broad set of policy measures in line with the six VET priorities, although progress varies across the priority areas. Notable achievements have been made in making VET systems innovative, excellent, flexible, agile, resilient and quality-assured. However, progress in strengthening VET attractiveness and inclusiveness varies across countries, indicating the need for further efforts in this regard. What came out as a transversal lesson, valid for all priorities, is the importance of sustainable and predictable funding (e.g. beyond donor support), allowing for flexible allocation of resources where needs and opportunities are greatest.

Agile and resilient VET

Across all countries, VET is being modernised by aligning curricula and qualifications with labour market needs and by embedding digital and green competences. Efforts centre on increasing stakeholder collaboration at different levels, with businesses, social partners and training providers jointly shaping programmes and occupational standards. Many systems are digitalising learning resources, improving graduate tracking and strengthening governance through formal and informal partnerships. EU-27+ countries are also prioritising transversal skills and science, technology, engineering and mathematics competences; all countries are expanding apprenticeships and aligning VET with broader national strategies for green and digital transitions. Despite progress, in many countries challenges remain in advancing VET coordination and stakeholder engagement, in funding and in integrating sustainability.

Flexible VET

EU-27+ countries are making VET more flexible through modular, learning-outcomes-based approaches, while all countries are doing this through the diversification of learning modes, including digital, blended and technology-enhanced models. Efforts are focused on recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning, and, mostly in the EU-27+, on introducing microcredentials and partial qualifications, and improving the use of EU transparency tools ⁽⁴⁾. Financial incentives are also being strengthened to support learners' participation in continuing vocational education and training, alongside initiatives to meet re- and upskilling needs linked to the green and digital transitions ⁽⁵⁾. However, fragmented governance, limited coordination, resource constraints and uneven adoption of advanced technologies continue to hinder the full flexibility of VET systems.

Innovative and excellent VET

To make the VET system innovative and excellent across the countries, the modernisation of VET infrastructure is focused on expanding both digital and physical capacities to improve initial vocational education and training and provision of continuing vocational education and training. Common actions include improving information and communication technology systems, developing e-learning and extended reality platforms, and upgrading training facilities and equipment. Efforts are increasingly aligning VET infrastructure with the green and digital transitions, linking skills development to labour market

⁽³⁾ Formed in accordance with Article 2 of Council Decision 2004/223/CE of 26 February 2004, the committee has the task of assisting the Commission in implementing an EU VET policy.

⁽⁴⁾ The European qualifications framework, Europass, European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations, the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (discontinued but its principles remain), the European quality assurance reference framework, and validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning tools.

⁽⁵⁾ Evidence on upskilling and reskilling is mostly available for EU-27+ countries, since no CC had selected it in its NIP.

needs. Support for centres of vocational excellence involves establishing new centres and strengthening existing ones to foster innovation, collaboration and regional development. The main obstacles include financial constraints, limited investment in developing the skills and training necessary for the green transition, and stakeholder resistance to change.

Attractive VET

Countries are progressing towards this priority through the development of dual training pathways and stronger links between VET and higher education and VET and the labour market. Continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers and trainers prioritises digital and pedagogical competences, with a growing focus on sustainability and skills for the green transition and the need to sustain their motivation at work, which in some cases represents a challenge. EU-27+ countries are also promoting VET through national campaigns, international cooperation and mobility initiatives, although permeability between learning pathways and staff mobility remains underdeveloped. Challenges persist in teacher recruitment, employer engagement in promotional activities and the improvement of society's perception of VET.

Inclusive VET

Across countries, efforts to promote equal opportunities and inclusiveness in VET are focused on improving access for vulnerable groups, supporting smoother school-to-work transitions and preventing early school leaving. Countries are also investing in teacher training to support inclusive education practices and financial support schemes to remove learning and economic barriers. Targeted mentoring, early warning systems and tailored competence programmes are helping reduce dropout rates, while gender equality initiatives – rare in CCs – are seeking to challenge stereotypes and promote women's participation in under-represented sectors. Limited funding, weak coordination and persistent socioeconomic and cultural barriers continue to hinder progress towards fully inclusive VET systems.

Quality-assured VET

Countries are advancing national VET quality assurance (QA) systems through comprehensive strategies, legislation and alignment with European frameworks. Efforts include strengthening provider self-assessment, developing external evaluation and accreditation processes and integrating graduate tracking to link VET outcomes with labour market needs. Fragmented regulations related to QA, limited resources and institutional resistance to reform hinder progress. Key challenges also include weak data management, a limited culture of policy evaluation and uneven stakeholder engagement.

Conclusions and way forward

The analysis of policy developments set out in the NIPs since 2020 signals significant progress in implementing policy measures across the six priority areas, with increasing alignment with labour market needs, the digital and green transitions, lifelong learning objectives, equal opportunities and the professional development of teachers and trainers – all supported by stronger stakeholder engagement. Systemic challenges persist in terms of fragmented governance, insufficiently sustainable funding, shortages of qualified and motivated teachers and trainers, and VET's social image, which continues to limit VET attractiveness.

To build VET systems that are agile, inclusive and responsive to evolving labour market demands, while also advancing broader societal goals, VET systems will benefit from:

- (a) strengthened governance and coordinated stakeholder engagement, with clear roles, shared objectives and institutionalised collaboration to improve system agility and alignment with national economic, social and inclusion priorities;

- (b) sustainable and well-balanced funding arrangements that reduce dependency on short-term project-based financing and enable strategic investment in infrastructure, technology, learning materials and stronger support for teacher and trainer initial education and CPD;
- (c) ongoing curriculum modernisation, embedding digital, green and transversal skills across VET programmes and supporting teachers and trainers in the use of advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence and immersive tools, to sustain the relevance of VET programmes and increase their attractiveness;
- (d) improved flexibility through modular learning and microcredentials, supported by robust QA, mechanisms for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, and cooperation between public and private providers to ensure transparency and skills portability;
- (e) targeted efforts to attract, support and retain VET teachers, combining professional autonomy, initiatives to improve wellbeing and working conditions, and tailored CPD that provides for pedagogical innovation and competences for the digital and green transitions;
- (f) active measures to improve the social image and attractiveness of VET, including targeted outreach to learners and families, clear communication on career opportunities, modernised curricula, and enhanced visibility through skills competitions and celebration of learner and teacher achievements.

Introduction

The first [Council Recommendation on vocational education and training \(VET\) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience](#) (hereinafter, the Council Recommendation on VET) and the [Osnabrück Declaration](#) marked the start of the current policy cycle in 2020. In combination with other strategic documents and policies, such as the [European Pillar of Social Rights action plan](#), the [European Skills Agenda](#) and the [Pact for Skills](#), they have given a fresh impetus to the Copenhagen process. In response to these, the European Union (EU) Member States, Iceland and Norway (EU-27+) and five candidate countries (CCs) ⁽⁶⁾ set ambitious [national plans](#) ⁽⁷⁾, namely to make their VET systems agile and resilient, flexible, innovative and excellent, attractive, inclusive and quality-assured. The [Union of Skills](#) strategy (March 2025), the [Herning Declaration](#) (September 2025) and the forthcoming implementation report of the Council Recommendation on VET are renewing the VET policy agenda to focus on attractive and inclusive VET for increased competitiveness and quality jobs. Efforts outlined in current strategic documents focus on further enhancing the attractiveness, innovation and inclusiveness of European VET, while strengthening its competitiveness – objectives that align closely with the priorities set out in the Council Recommendation on VET and the Osnabrück Declaration.

Cedefop and the European Training Foundation (ETF) have a long-term mandate, spanning more than two decades, and expertise in monitoring the implementation of EU common priorities on VET. Since 2020, Cedefop and ETF have been conducting ‘integrated monitoring’ proposed by the European Commission and agreed by the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT). The integrated monitoring covers the priorities of the two documents ⁽⁸⁾ and national implementation plans (NIPs), and includes tracking progress towards the following quantitative targets set by the Council Recommendation on VET to be reached by 2025:

- (a) the share of employed graduates from VET should be at least 82 %;
- (b) 60 % of recent graduates from VET should benefit from exposure to work-based learning (WBL) during their vocational education and training;
- (c) 8 % of learners in VET should benefit from learning mobility abroad.

This report summarises progress with the NIPs up to October 2025 across the EU-27+ and the CCs that had had their NIPs approved at the time of the report’s drafting. It also analyses data from the [European VET Policy Dashboard for the EU-27+](#). The report is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 sets the policy context and presents the methodology and approach used to prepare the report. Chapter 2 looks at the state of play on the quantitative targets. Chapter 3 presents a detailed analysis of the national policies, their progress and implementation challenges across the six priority areas. Chapter 4 summarises the key findings and challenges, and offers strategic policy pointers to support future VET priorities across the EU-27+ and CCs.

⁽⁶⁾ Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye.

⁽⁷⁾ The report covers the developments in EU-27 countries (except Czechia and Ireland), Iceland and Norway. Iceland and Norway committed to implementing the priorities set by the Osnabrück Declaration. All available NIPs are [here](#). Czechia and Ireland have not put in place NIPs and have followed their national strategic frameworks. However, some relevant examples from Czechia and Ireland are also used.

⁽⁸⁾ Except for Türkiye.

1.1. Approach and methodology

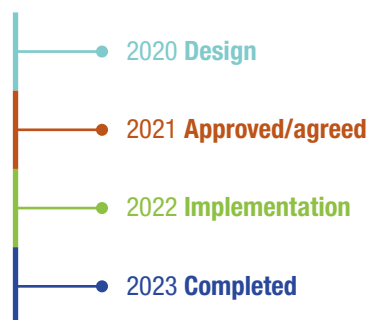
In the current report on monitoring and analysis of the implementation of EU priorities in the national VET systems of the EU-27+ and in the five CCs, Cedefop and ETF aim to establish:

- (a) to what extent the priorities established in the Council Recommendation on VET and the Osnabrück Declaration have been achieved, by looking at the progress of measures that the countries set in their NIP;
- (b) what challenges the countries have experienced in implementing the measures;
- (c) what steps can be taken in the future to keep the momentum and embrace the renewed priorities set in the Herning Declaration;
- (d) what the key conclusions and policy pointers stemming from the analysis are that can support future VET priorities across the EU-27+ and CCs.

For the EU-27+, Cedefop analysed the measures set out in the NIPs that most countries submitted in 2022 and about 450 policy developments reported by ReferNet, Cedefop's European network of expertise in VET, in 2020–2025 (Cedefop, 2025d; Cedefop & Refernet, 2024a; Cedefop & ReferNet, 2026). The analysis and drafting of the report was supported by the framework contract 'Support to integrated monitoring of national implementation plans (NIPs) in line with EU priorities 2021–2025 in EU-27, Norway, and Iceland'.

For the EU-27+, policy developments have also been mapped against the measures set out in the NIPs. The stages of progress of each policy development over the years are as follows: design; approval/agreement; legislative process; implementation; and completion or discontinuity (see Figure 1). 'Little' progress was considered to have been made if the policy was at the design or legislative stage; 'some' progress was considered to have been made if the policy had been approved/agreed and was in the early stages of implementation; and those policies that were at the implementation stage or had been completed were considered to have made 'significant' progress. Such an approach provided for a structured comparison of progress across the countries; however, it does not allow one to measure the quality or effectiveness of the implemented measures, which requires more in-depth research and is outside the scope of monitoring.

Figure 1. **Example of the progress stages of a policy development**



Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2026).

The countries discussed in Chapter 3 are those that have dedicated measures in their NIPs addressing the issue and have reported relevant policy developments. Other countries may have implemented actions, but they have not reported them because they are not included in their NIPs.

The analysis of policy developments is complemented by findings from 239 interviews with national VET stakeholders that Cedefop carried out from April to September 2024. Representatives of ministries of education, labour and employment, national agencies for VET and other areas, employer and employee organisations, economic chambers, VET providers, public employment services and local authorities took part. ReferNet national representatives and coordinators provided valuable insights and guidance on their countries and liaised with national stakeholders, where needed.

ETF analysed the measures set out in the NIPs that all countries submitted in 2022 and about 100 policy developments reported by a network of national experts covering the period from 2021 to 2025. The policy developments are organised and analysed according to the analytical framework that translates EU priorities into thematic categories (see Annex, Table 2).

For the CCs, ETF consulted the Directors-General for Vocational Training and ACVTs during two in-person events: in 2024 ⁽⁹⁾, stakeholders were engaged in a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis of their experience as CC representatives participating in the Osnabrück monitoring process; and in 2025 ⁽¹⁰⁾, stakeholders started reflecting on persisting challenges and future priorities for VET for the 2026–2030 policy cycle.

⁽⁹⁾ See [‘VET Recommendation and Osnabrück Declaration peer learning event’](#).

⁽¹⁰⁾ See [‘VET developments in candidate countries: closing the Osnabrück cycle’](#). See also [‘Looking back and looking forward at VET developments in EU candidate countries’](#) for a summary of the event outcomes.

Quantitative targets – state of play

The Council Recommendation on VET set quantitative targets defined as EU average values to be achieved collectively by the EU-27 by 2025. Across the EU-27 ⁽¹⁾, the target share of VET learners benefiting from WBL (60 %) was achieved in 2021 and has since been exceeded (see Table 1 and Annex, Table 3 ⁽²⁾) (Cedefop & ETF, 2025). However, the extent to which the targets have been achieved and the progress made over time has varied across countries (see Annex, Tables 3 and 4).

Table 1. **Progress towards quantitative targets in VET, EU-27 average, 2020-2024**

Quantitative targets in the EU-27	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	EU target 2025
VET students with WBL for at least part of their studies (%)	—	60.5	60.3	64.6 (b)	65.3	60.0
Employment rate of VET graduates (%)	75.9	76.1 (b)	79.7	81.0	80.0	82.0
Initial vocational education and training learners with learning mobility abroad (%)	1.2	2.1 (d)	5.1 (v)	—	—	8.0

(b) Break in time series.

(d) Definition differs.

(v) Cedefop estimate.

(-) No data available.

Source: Cedefop's [European VET Policy Dashboard](#) (accessed 30 March 2026).

As regards participation in WBL, some countries have already surpassed this target by a wide margin, such as Germany (94.5 %), the Netherlands (94.3 %), Spain (90.8 %) and Austria (84.7 %), and have experienced little change over time. These countries have a long-standing tradition of attention to WBL, which they have continued to reinforce through reforms and innovations. However, some countries remain below the threshold and need to make considerable progress to achieve the target, for example Romania (7.2 %), Czechia (13.4 %) and Greece (15 %). Some countries experienced a decline in WBL participation between 2021 and 2024, for example Italy (from 31.8 % to 24.7 %), Austria (from 91.8 % to 84.7 %) and Finland (from 85.7 % to 79.3 %). Some countries showed a remarkable increase over the same period; for example, in Poland, the WBL participation rate increased from 11.6 % to 62 %, a 50.4 percentage point (pp) increase, while in Hungary it increased by 13.4 pp, from 29.7 % to 43.1 % (Cedefop, 2025a).

Most countries have made steady progress towards the target for the employment rate of VET graduates over time. Several countries had already surpassed the 82 % benchmark by 2024, including Germany (92.2 %), Cyprus and the Netherlands (both at 90.5 %), with Cyprus showing a remarkable increase of 26.1 pp since 2020. Some countries have experienced a decline in employment outcomes, moving further away from the 2025 target; for example, employment in Estonia decreased from 80.3 % in 2020 to 74.7 % in 2024 and in Bulgaria from 69.5 % in 2020 to 66.2 % in 2024 (Cedefop, 2025a).

⁽¹⁾ Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia agreed to the integrated monitoring of the Council Recommendation on VET and the Osnabrück Declaration. However, data for these CCs are not provided, since information was either missing or not suitable for international comparison; for example, it was provided by national statistical offices based on their definitions of the indicators, which are not always compatible with the EU ones. The latest available data are reported in the 2025 country reports for [Albania](#), [Montenegro](#), [North Macedonia](#) and [Serbia](#).

⁽²⁾ Data are provisional estimates and are affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Country-level data are not available for the reference year 2022.

Although direct causal links cannot be established, countries that have seen a remarkable increase in WBL participation rate have been implementing related national reforms to expand and improve WBL: in Poland, employer engagement in WBL has been strengthened, while Hungary has consolidated dual training through the establishment of sectoral training centres, which foster cooperation between VET institutions and businesses. Cyprus emphasised personalised career guidance as a cornerstone of youth employability in its NIP and, since 2023, career counselling has been institutionalised as a regular service through youth information centres in all five districts (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2026).

The third target focuses on initial vocational education and training (IVET) learners who have benefited from learning mobility abroad, with an EU objective of reaching 8 % by 2025, modified by the 'Europe on the Move' Council Recommendation to 12 % by 2030. With an EU average of 2.1 % in 2021, which is well below the ambitious target, most countries also remained below it, but with Cyprus (9.9 %), Lithuania (10.9 %) and Latvia (11.2 %) having exceeded the 8 %. They were followed by Estonia with 7.4 % and Slovenia with 7.2 %. Because the latest available data are from 2021 (Cedefop, 2025a; Cedefop, 2025b), it is difficult to assess the progress, but, based on these data, it can be assumed that the pace of progress is below the desired one.

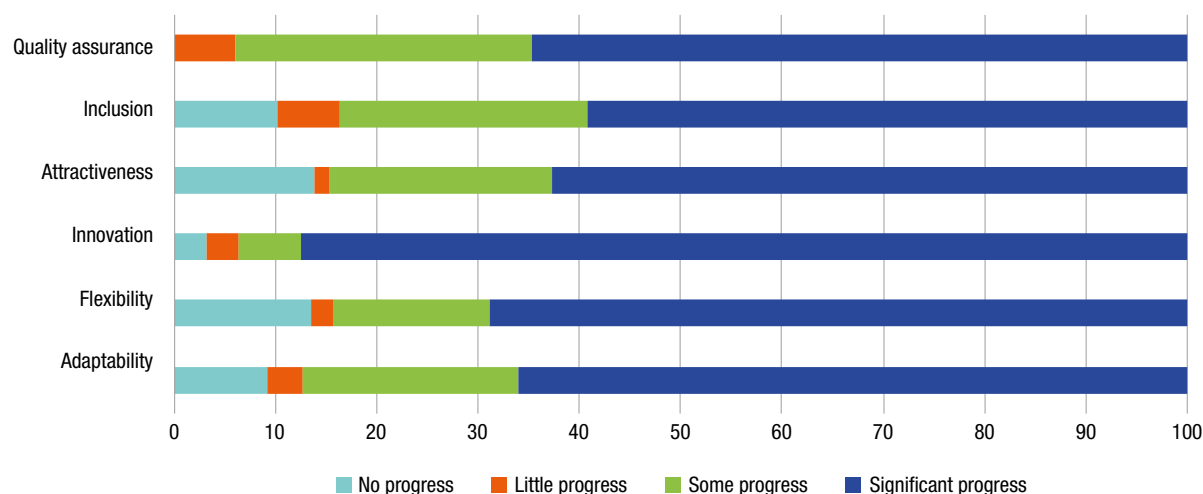
CHAPTER 3.

Key findings on national developments, by EU priority

The EU-27+ and CCs have advanced a broad set of policy measures in line with the six priorities, although progress varies across the priority areas; many policy developments have entered the implementation phase in recent years, starting from 2023–2024. The NIPs of the EU-27+ set out the largest number of measures aimed at making VET agile, attractive and flexible. Progress has varied across the priorities: while the most progress has been observed in the measures aimed at making VET flexible, excellent and quality-assured (see Figure 2), progress in strengthening VET attractiveness and inclusiveness varies across countries, indicating the need for further efforts in this regard. It should be noted that the methodology applied allowed the assessment of progress but not necessarily the quality or effectiveness of the individual measures.

Across the EU-27+, common trends point to a significant transformation of VET systems. Key advances include adapting them to evolving labour market demands, integrating the digital and green twin transitions, strengthening lifelong learning (LLL) pathways, promoting equal opportunities and enhancing the professional development of teachers and trainers. Stakeholder engagement has also become more institutionalised. While the pace and depth of progress vary across countries and regions, the overall trajectory indicates a systemic, future-oriented transformation of VET across Europe.

Figure 2. **Progress of NIP measures in the EU-27+ by EU priority and extent of progress, 2020–2025**



Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2026).

3.1. Adaptability of VET to labour market change

Agile and resilient VET is essential for addressing rapid labour market changes driven by technological innovation, demographic trends and the twin green and digital transitions. VET systems must adapt swiftly to evolving skills needs, ensuring both immediate workforce readiness and long-term economic and social resilience. This transformation requires developing and updating learning resources, building robust skills intelligence systems and strengthening stakeholder partnerships. VET capacity to respond and adapt quickly to evolving labour market needs is key to achieving attractiveness, innovation and inclusiveness.

Making VET agile and responsive to employers' skills needs is one of the priority areas on which the EU-27+ and CCs have made the most progress, in terms of the number of policy developments and the stage of implementation the various measures are at (Cedefop & ETF, 2025). Most measures show some or significant progress (see Annex, Figure 3, for the EU-27+) this was also confirmed by most of the interviewed stakeholders in the EU-27+.

Most countries ⁽¹³⁾ have been working on modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses ⁽¹⁴⁾ to ensure a balanced mix of vocational skills and key competences ⁽¹⁵⁾, including integrating skills and competences for the digital ⁽¹⁶⁾ and green ⁽¹⁷⁾ transitions, and supported by developing and updating learning resources and materials ⁽¹⁸⁾. Most countries continued reinforcing WBL, including apprenticeships ⁽¹⁹⁾. The establishment and development of skills intelligence systems ⁽²⁰⁾, including graduate tracking, and in particular their use to inform VET policies, has been the least reported measure so far ⁽²¹⁾. This may be explained by the fact that this area is quite new; half of the EU-27+ and four CCs set it as a priority in their NIP in 2022. All countries worked on involving stakeholders in VET governance, with more than half ⁽²²⁾ implementing targeted measures.

3.1.1. Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

A major area of progress is the updating of VET curricula and programmes, particularly to integrate digital skills. Many countries ⁽²³⁾ have been revising their educational standards and occupational profiles to embed competences relevant to the digital transition; in some countries, all newly revised or created VET qualifications systematically include digital competences. The integration of skills for the green transition and sustainability is another area of modernising VET standards and curricula, although observed more recently (from 2023 onwards) and to a lesser extent than the integration of skills for the digital transition; this may be related to the fact that discussions on defining these skills are ongoing. This includes embedding sustainability competences through activities such as workshops, competitions and conferences, alongside pilot projects to develop related vocational competences and implementing new occupational profiles in (dual) VET courses ⁽²⁴⁾.

⁽¹³⁾ Disclaimer: the countries indicated in the footnotes are those that have dedicated measures in their NIP directly addressing the issue and that have reported progress on these measures. Other countries may have implemented actions, but they have not been reported because they are not included in their NIPs (see also Section 1.1).

⁽¹⁴⁾ AL, AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, LU, LV, ME, MK, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK and TR.

⁽¹⁵⁾ AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, LU, ME, NL, PL, PT, RO, RS, SI and SK.

⁽¹⁶⁾ AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, LV, MT, PL, PT, RO, SI and SK.

⁽¹⁷⁾ AT, DE, DK, EE, FR, HU, PL, PT, SE and SI.

⁽¹⁸⁾ AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, DK, ES, HR, HU, LU, NL, NO, PL and PT.

⁽¹⁹⁾ AL, AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, LV, ME, MK, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK and TR.

⁽²⁰⁾ Skills intelligence is the outcome of an expert-driven process of identifying, analysing, synthesising and presenting quantitative and/or qualitative skills and labour market information. These may be drawn from multiple sources and adjusted to the needs of different users (Cedefop, 2019).

⁽²¹⁾ AL, BE-FL, CY, EE, FR, HR, HU, LV, MT, PL, RO, SI, SK and TR.

⁽²²⁾ AL, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, HU, IT, LT, LU, LV, ME, MK, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, RS and TR.

⁽²³⁾ AL, AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, LV, ME, MK, MT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, RS and TR.

⁽²⁴⁾ AL, AT, DE, DK, EE, FR, HU, ME, MK, PL, PT, SE, SI and TR.

Changes in curricula have been supported through the development and updating of learning resources and materials, for both learners and teachers and trainers ⁽²⁵⁾. It should be noted that the main focus of these actions was on the digitalisation and modularisation of learning content. Countries worked on the development of interactive digital platforms and digital learning resources; curricula built in modules, including green skills modules; and the use of innovative tools and applications, such as (mostly in the EU-27+) virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) and extended reality (XR).

Box 1. Modernising VET through integrating sectoral, digital and green skills: examples from Bulgaria, Portugal and Türkiye

In **Bulgaria**, amendments to the VET Act aim to strengthen the labour market relevance of VET through a sectoral approach. As part of this effort, pilot [Sector Skills Councils](#) (SSCs) are being established. These councils bring together representatives from VET schools, branch associations, employers, higher education institutions and local authorities. The SSCs contribute expert input to the development of state educational standards, support the modernisation of VET curricula – particularly the integration of digital and green skills – and assist in introducing new state educational standards. These activities are being carried out under the European Social Fund+ (ESF) for the 2023–2027 period. The new list of professions was adopted on 9 August 2024 by order of the education minister, while the development of corresponding state educational standards continued in 2025. The 20 SSCs, representing all economic sectors, are a key step towards establishing strong partnerships and ensuring continuous dialogue between different stakeholders.

Portugal continues to expand the [‘Youth + digital’ \(Jovem + Digital\) programme](#), which provides digital skills training for adults aged 18 to 35 years. By 2024, thousands of individuals had received training in key digital areas, including cybersecurity, e-commerce and data analysis. Moreover, Portugal is implementing the [green skills and jobs \(Trabalhos & Competências Verdes\) programme](#). This initiative offers short and medium-duration training courses targeting two main groups: employees of companies directly or indirectly affected by rising energy costs, and unemployed individuals aged 18 years or older who are registered with the public employment service (PES). The courses, focused on the environment and energy sectors, are included in the national qualifications catalogue (catálogo nacional de qualificações) and have a maximum duration of 375 hours.

In **Türkiye**, new types of vocational schools, such as specialised, sector-integrated, in-sector and regional schools, are expanding rapidly. They lead the way in building strong partnerships with industries and show how learning in school can be closely linked to real workplaces. These schools offer curricula tailored to specific industry needs, upgraded workshops and laboratories, and production-oriented activities. They are located in areas where relevant industries are concentrated. Their goal is to ensure that VET matches labour market needs by combining sector-specific skills with digital and green competences.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2024b; 2026); ETF (2023e; 2024e; 2026).

3.1.2. Reinforcing WBL, including apprenticeships

Countries across the EU-27+ focused on enhancing the quality and stability of apprenticeship provision, extending WBL opportunities into continuing vocational education and training (CVET) and expanding WBL as a means of supporting inclusion and the acquisition of qualifications by vulnerable groups. Countries continued building on the work started before 2020 with the support of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships ⁽²⁶⁾.

A major area of focus involves improving the quality and ensuring the stability of apprenticeship offers. Countries have been assigning greater responsibility to VET schools for securing apprenticeship

⁽²⁵⁾ AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, DK, ES, HU, LU, ME, MK, NL, NO, PL and PT.

⁽²⁶⁾ All five CCs are members of the alliance.

placements, formalising cooperation with employer organisations and introducing new access points for adult learners into dual training systems ⁽²⁷⁾.

Countries (mostly in the EU-27+) worked to expand apprenticeships and WBL into CVET. Common measures include the development of dual training programmes, the piloting of new schemes and the promotion of on-the-job learning ⁽²⁸⁾. Many of these measures are accompanied by curriculum updates, increasing the scope and intake of dual training, and improved support for learners.

Many countries also use apprenticeships to promote social inclusion and improve qualifications for vulnerable groups ⁽²⁹⁾. This includes adapting WBL approaches for early school leavers, migrants, low-qualified adults and individuals outside traditional education and training pathways, assigning vocational training assistants, supporting access to education and expanding school-work exchange schemes.

Box 2. Advancing WBL: examples from Norway and CCs

Norway implemented the ‘[completion reform](#)’ to provide more options for completing upper secondary education for young people and adults, and to ensure that more learners get an apprenticeship, all with targeted support for learners. Additionally, the [social contract for VET](#) continues to promote fair and equal access to apprenticeship opportunities.

All CCs worked to improve dual education in their VET systems. Among these reforms, it is worth mentioning that in 2021–2022 **Albania** introduced school development units in all VET schools, which, among other tasks, oversee business-school liaison for work placements, career guidance, project development and implementation, and student tracking analysis. In 2025, **Montenegro** introduced a new Dual Education Support Fund. Financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, the fund serves as a vital mechanism for expanding and sustaining dual education by incentivising students to participate in dual education and by providing financial and logistical support to employers.

In 2025, **North Macedonia** introduced a new legal framework for dual education, which, among other provisions, envisages the appointment of a WBL coordinator in each VET school. **Serbia** has an Office for Dual Education, and introduced dual education in higher/tertiary education. **Türkiye** expanded apprenticeship opportunities through innovative models such as ‘sector-integrated schools’ (see Box 1).

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2024b, 2026); ETF (2023a, 2023b, 2023c, 2023d, 2023e, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2024d; 2024e, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c, 2025d, 2026).

3.1.3. Acquiring key competences

Countries across the EU-27+ are fostering the acquisition of key competences ⁽³⁰⁾ and basic skills throughout life, with the number of countries addressing this having increased compared with 2020. The most addressed key competences are digital skills, science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM), and literacy. The focus on key competences is expected to increase in line with the Union of Skills strategy, the EU action plan on basic skills, and work on the priorities of the Herning Declaration, which emphasises the need for basic and transversal skills, specifically in VET.

Most commonly this involves the systematic embedding of key competences and basic skills into qualifications and curricula ⁽³¹⁾. Countries worked on developing digital competences ⁽³²⁾ as stated above but also through modernising VET delivery and establishing recognised certification pathways for digital skills, and investing in online learning tools. Some countries have prioritised the acquisition of STEM com-

⁽²⁷⁾ AL, AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, HU, LT, LV, ME, MK, NL, PL, PT, RO, RS and SI.

⁽²⁸⁾ AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, LV, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI and SK.

⁽²⁹⁾ AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FR, HU, IT, LT, NL, PT, RO and TR.

⁽³⁰⁾ [Key competences](#) are knowledge, skills and attitudes needed by all for personal fulfilment and development, employability and LLL, social inclusion, active citizenship and sustainable awareness. They include literacy; multilingual skills; STEM; digital skills; personal, social and ‘learning to learn’ skills; active citizenship and entrepreneurship; and cultural awareness and expression (Council of the European Union, 2018).

⁽³¹⁾ AT, BE-FL, BG, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, LU, ME, NL, PT, RO and RS.

⁽³²⁾ AT, BG, CY, DE, ES, FR, IT, LT, LU, PL, PT and SI.

petences, often through targeted strategies and incentives ⁽³³⁾ to expand access to STEM pathways and, thus, address the growing demand for technical skills and support long-term economic competitiveness.

Despite broad advancements in key competences, entrepreneurial and citizenship competences were less addressed overall, although targeted efforts to develop these competences were observed in some countries ⁽³⁴⁾.

3.1.4. Establishing and developing skills intelligence systems

Efforts across the EU-27+ and a couple of CCs in this area primarily focused on building graduate-tracking systems, while the development of broader skills intelligence systems was less advanced. In particular, actions to embed skills intelligence into VET governance structures, which could help better connect VET with the labour market, remain limited.

Countries worked on developing and strengthening their skills intelligence tools ⁽³⁵⁾ to provide key labour market data, anticipate future skills needs, inform training provision and analyse graduate employability. However, few countries reported this and most systems are at an early stage of development.

The work on the establishment and development of graduate-tracking systems has been relevant. Such actions aim to collect and analyse data on graduate, including VET graduate, outcomes to inform programme development and improvement, support institutional self-assessment and guide learners in their career pathways ⁽³⁶⁾.

Box 3. Strengthening graduate tracking and skills forecasting: examples from Albania, Croatia, Estonia and Slovakia

Albania has made progress in preparing for the establishment of a skills intelligence system. The system will include an annual national tracking survey of VET graduates, skills needs assessments in the information and communication, tourism and hospitality sectors, and sectoral labour market analyses on green and digital skills. It will also include regional labour market analyses covering the northern, south-eastern, south-western and central regions. The Labour Market Information Observatory platform was designed during the monitoring period although it is not yet in place.

In **Croatia**, efforts to improve VET quality include introducing [graduate tracking](#) at the provider level. Following pilot phases and the development of a tracking application, work commenced on establishing a fully fledged system in 2023. Once completed, the application is expected to support self-assessment by training providers and strengthen the monitoring of graduate outcomes.

In **Estonia**, the [jobs and skills forecasting system, OSKA](#), has been improved through reforms in 2022. Key improvements include the development of region-specific forecasting methodologies and sectoral labour market demand surveys, and the monitoring of how OSKA recommendations are implemented. The dissemination of research findings has also been broadened to better inform policymaking and planning processes. During interviews with national VET stakeholders, it was confirmed that OSKA is actively used by the PES to support the alignment of training with labour market needs.

In **Slovakia**, an LLL and counselling strategy has introduced a [three-pillar model for graduate tracking](#). The first pillar, which relies on administrative data, has already been integrated into a draft act on LLL. The second pillar, involving national graduate surveys, was in development throughout 2024. The third pillar, centred on school-based tracking activities, was piloted and partially implemented between 2023 and 2024. The last pillar aims to provide feedback for adjusting secondary and tertiary programmes, which will be taken into account by supervising bodies, such as the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2024b, 2026); ETF (2023a, 2024a, 2025a).

⁽³³⁾ BE-FL, CY, LT, NL, PL and PT.

⁽³⁴⁾ AT, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, ES, IT and ME.

⁽³⁵⁾ AL, BE-FL, CY, EE, FR, PL, RO, SI and TR.

⁽³⁶⁾ AL, BE-FL, CY, HR, HU, LV, PL, RO, SI, SK and TR.

3.1.5. Stakeholder involvement

Stakeholder involvement plays a crucial role in VET and skills governance and implementing policies. Countries' efforts in this area focused on ensuring more inclusive, collaborative and labour-market-responsive governance structures that support the continuous improvement of VET provision. Countries continue to increase this involvement and institutionalised cooperation at all levels among governments, businesses, VET providers, experts and social partners, whose participation is of great importance in most reported policy developments. Stakeholder interviews in the EU-27+ indicated that effective VET governance increasingly depends on collaboration among diverse stakeholders.

Countries ⁽³⁷⁾ have worked on establishing and developing formal stakeholder engagement mechanisms through setting up national platforms, activating advisory councils and strengthening the role of sectoral committees and expert councils in shaping VET policy and programme content. In addition to formal cooperation, countries fostered informal cooperation ⁽³⁸⁾ through partnerships, networks and awareness-raising campaigns. These initiatives aim to create the conditions for regular collaboration among stakeholders, often through partnerships, networks and awareness campaigns.

Social partners participate in policy development and reform, curriculum development, quality assurance (QA), funding and resource allocation, and providing career guidance (see Sections 3.1.1., 3.4.4 and 3.6). Employers tend to advise on the skill demands when occupational standards and VET curricula are revised, and make WBL possible. Trade unions, in some countries, advocate for learner rights and quality of learning, and on access and equality issues. It has been observed that trade union representatives are less frequently involved than employer organisations at the implementation level (Cedefop & ETF, 2025).

3.2. Flexibility and progression opportunities

Flexibility in VET is a core principle for enabling continuous upskilling, reskilling and LLL in the face of digital, green and demographic transitions. Flexible systems can quickly adapt to technological change, climate challenges, demographic shifts and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Flexibility contributes strongly to making VET inclusive and attractive. Flexible pathways and approaches are learner centred and enable diverse learner groups and types to access VET and learn at their own pace throughout their careers and lives. EU-27+ national VET stakeholders emphasised that, by offering formats tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups, flexible VET fosters equity, innovation and resilience, strengthening both individual opportunities and societal cohesion.

Almost all the countries have worked on making their VET systems more flexible to facilitate access, ensure learning progression and contribute to making LLL a reality for all learners. This priority has been advanced, both in the number of measures in NIPs and in the progress made on most of them (either some or significant progress; see Annex, Figure 4, for EU-27+). This finding is supported by national VET stakeholders, who largely agreed that progress has been made towards greater flexibility in the VET system, with most reporting either some or significant advancements.

The priority has been implemented through providing opportunities for individuals' re- and upskilling ⁽³⁹⁾, the diversification of modes of learning ⁽⁴⁰⁾ and the use of learning-outcomes-based approaches ⁽⁴¹⁾. Countries have also worked on the development and application of microcredentials, of qualifications that are shorter than full ⁽⁴²⁾, and on enhancing learners' opportunities for validation, recognition and

⁽³⁷⁾ AL, BE-FL, BE-FR, CY, EL, FR, HU, IT, LT, LU, LV, MK, MT, PL, PT, RO, RS and TR.

⁽³⁸⁾ AL, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FR, HU, IT, LT, LV, MK, NL, PL, PT, RO and TR.

⁽³⁹⁾ AT, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, HU, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT, SE and SK. None of the CCs had flagged this thematic category as a national commitment. Therefore, no progress was reported, as explained in footnote 13, although countries may have shared evidence of relevant policy developments.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ AL, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, LU, LV, ME, MT, PT and SI.

⁽⁴¹⁾ BE-FL, BE-FR, CY, ES, HU, LT, LU, LV, PT and RO.

⁽⁴²⁾ BE-FL, DE, FI, FR, HR, HU, IT, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT and SK. None of the CCs had flagged this thematic category as a national commitment. Therefore, no progress was reported, as explained in footnote 13, although countries may have shared evidence of

accumulation of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally ⁽⁴³⁾, including through the use of EU transparency tools.

3.2.1. Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

In this area, most countries ⁽⁴⁴⁾ have been adapting existing CVET programmes or creating new ones to better meet the evolving needs of the labour market, specific sectors and individuals. They have also developed digital solutions to enhance access to CVET opportunities and facilitate the issuance of CVET credentials and certificates. In addition, they have developed targeted information that promotes the benefits of CVET and LLL, along with opportunities for learners to assess their skills before starting training.

Digital literacy, green skills and career transition support are most prominent in the reskilling and upskilling actions reported. Digital literacy is widely recognised as essential; hence, countries are offering digital skills training to diverse groups of adult learners ⁽⁴⁵⁾ and providing financial support to companies, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, to adapt to digital transitions ⁽⁴⁶⁾. Accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, countries ⁽⁴⁷⁾ have further worked on adopting digital solutions to access CVET and skills certification, by using e-learning platforms, digital resources and innovation hubs to facilitate distance and blended learning.

The development of skills for the green transition, while referenced in many countries' NIPs, remains less widespread in terms of concrete actions. Some countries ⁽⁴⁸⁾ have introduced training programmes aimed at employees in green sectors ⁽⁴⁹⁾, and upskilling and reskilling services for workers affected by the challenges of the twin transitions. They also offer career guidance and training for young people in emerging professions and sectors, including those related to ecology and sustainability.

Countries are developing new CVET programmes specifically designed to address high-demand skills ⁽⁵⁰⁾ and update their existing CVET offer to better align with emerging skill needs ⁽⁵¹⁾. Supporting individuals in career transitions through reskilling is another widely recognised need, and countries ⁽⁵²⁾ have implemented initiatives to promote career mobility and workforce adaptability.

To encourage participation, especially among low-qualified adults, targeted information campaigns and incentives have been implemented to highlight the benefits of CVET ⁽⁵³⁾ to the public, employers and employees through sectoral skills centres, free hotlines and workshops, and, through cooperation with social partners, raise awareness of digital skills and provide skills assessments ⁽⁵⁴⁾.

relevant policy developments.

⁽⁴³⁾ AL, AT, BE-FL, BG, CY, DE, ES, FR, HU, IT, LT, MK, MT, PT, RS, SE and SK.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ None of the CCs had flagged this thematic category as a national commitment in their NIPs. Therefore, no progress was reported, as explained in footnote 13, although countries may have shared evidence of relevant policy developments.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ BE-FR, CY and DE.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ DE, NL, PL, PT and SE.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ BG, CY, DE, ES, FR, HU, LV, LU, PL and PT.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ CY, FR, LV, PL and PT.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ Such sectors include renewable energy (green hydrogen, solar thermal, solar photovoltaic and wind energy), sustainable construction, transport and mobility (electrical vehicles, green transport and the blue economy), sustainable agriculture and forestry.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ CY, DE, FR and LV.

⁽⁵¹⁾ BE-FR, ES and FR.

⁽⁵²⁾ BG, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, LU, PT and SK.

⁽⁵³⁾ BE-FR, DE, DK, FR, HU, IT, LU, PL and PT.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ BE-FR, DE, FR, PL, PT and SK.

Box 4. Career mobility through reskilling and upskilling: example from Luxembourg

In Luxembourg, the 'FutureSkills' initiative has three key components. The first focuses on upskilling and reskilling employees. Through this effort, the PES raises awareness among companies and their employees about the impact of major trends, such as technological advancements, on skills and occupations, emphasising the importance of a strategic approach to workforce planning. The PES often helps identify viable pathways for internal job transitions, enabling companies to retain employees by adapting roles to evolving needs. Advisors support businesses in anticipating and developing the skills required for the future. Second, the PES develops new training offers for jobseekers to strengthen the skills that are most in demand on the labour market and transversal skills. Third, in 2023, the PES published sector-specific skills studies for social work and healthcare. Following this, in 2024, it released a skills study on the information technology (IT) profession. This study was conducted in close collaboration with the chamber of commerce, the Luxembourg Bankers' Association and the digital skills and jobs coalition initiative. Unlike previous sectoral studies, it analysed trends across IT professions regardless of the industry sector.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2024b, 2026).

3.2.2. Providing financial and non-financial incentives to learners, companies and VET providers

The EU-27+ countries ⁽⁵⁵⁾ are focused primarily on financial incentives for learners, with financial incentives for companies less frequently reported. Among other measures, optimising funding arrangements for VET providers and reforming mechanisms for allocating funds to VET schools were also reported. EU funds are often used for these purposes. It should be noted that national stakeholders in their interviews recognised the importance of targeted support to companies providing WBL and to VET institutions.

Across the EU-27+ countries ⁽⁵⁶⁾, financial incentives for learners remain the most common tool to enhance flexibility and attractiveness, with grants being the most widespread form of support, sometimes specifically targeting occupations experiencing labour shortages. Following the [Council Recommendation on individual learning accounts](#), countries ⁽⁵⁷⁾ are piloting and implementing initiatives to introduce or expand these, enabling learners to access training and skills development opportunities flexibly and autonomously. Other financial instruments for learners, such as loans, training leave, training funds and co-financing arrangements, were reported less frequently ⁽⁵⁸⁾. Non-financial incentives were reported to a lesser extent and are typically part of various forms of learner support ⁽⁵⁹⁾. These usually take the form of mentoring services, particularly for disadvantaged learners or learners with specific needs.

Financial incentives for companies were less frequently applied and in many cases were part of EU-funded projects. Grants were the most widely used form, offered to cover tax incentives, subsidies, training credits and employee educational leave, and as bonuses for hosting internships ⁽⁶⁰⁾. Non-financial incentives for companies often aim to reduce administrative burdens or provide IT and administrative support to facilitate the provision of WBL.

While financial incentives for VET providers are generally rare, countries ⁽⁶¹⁾ worked to optimise VET provider funding through the establishment of training funds, surcharges for pedagogical staff, systemic reforms to financial guidance, and measures encouraging providers to develop their own investment and development strategies, including through development plans as part of quality assurance (QA).

⁽⁵⁵⁾ None of the CCs had flagged this thematic category as a national commitment in their NIPs. Therefore, no progress was reported, as explained in footnote 13, although countries may have shared evidence of relevant policy developments.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ BE-FL, BE-FR, DE, DK, EL, FR, HR, HU, NO, PT and RO.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ CY, FR and SK.

⁽⁵⁸⁾ BE-FL, DE, HU, NL, PL and SI.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ BE-FL, BE-FR, DE, ES, FR, HU and NL.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ BE-FL, BE-FR, CY, DE, DK, FR, HR, HU, NL and RO.

⁽⁶¹⁾ DK, FI, FR, LV, NO, PL and SK.

Box 5. Measures supporting workforce training and funding: examples from Denmark and Finland

The **Danish job rotation allowance** is a subsidy paid by local job centres to employers when an employee takes part in continuing training and an unemployed person is temporarily hired to replace them. The temporary hire is referred to as a ‘temporary worker’. The allowance is paid on an hourly basis covering the time the employee is both in training and employed as a temporary worker. Employers generally choose which training their employees attend. To qualify for the allowance, the training must be aimed at upskilling and it must be temporary, publicly or privately offered and open to participants from outside the company. It must also provide skills that are transferable to other workplaces. Temporary workers in job rotation can be recruited from specific groups, including recipients of unemployment or cash benefits, training aid or transitional benefits; recipients of self-support, a repatriation allowance or a transitional allowance under the self-support and return or introduction programmes; sickness benefit recipients who are not working or self-employed; people in job clarification or resource flow programmes; young people not in employment, education or training; and migrants and refugees.

Finland has focused on **improving financial guidance for VET**. The development of financial guidance aims to ensure an appropriate allocation of funding between compulsory education and continuous learning, maintain equitable funding levels for free compulsory education, improve funding predictability, simplify the calculation method and tailor funding criteria to meet the diverse needs of learners. Planned activities include developing funding criteria that support extended compulsory education for eligible students, differentiating funding between compulsory education and continuous learning, establishing suitable funding criteria for continuous learning objectives and streamlining the funding process for continuous learning. A proposal for a new VET funding model incorporating these improvements was drafted and submitted to parliament in 2024.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2024b, 2026).

3.2.3. Diversifying modes of learning

Countries have been developing environments that support digital and blended learning. During the interviews EU-27+ national stakeholders also highlighted growing interest in integrating advanced technological solutions into their country’s VET system.

To enhance digital and blended learning, countries have been strengthening infrastructure and updating policies to better incorporate digital media and technology into training processes. Among the approaches used is the development of innovative and open educational resources, such as online learning platforms, while reforming VET curricula and teaching materials ⁽⁶²⁾. Some countries ⁽⁶³⁾ are increasingly focusing on digital-only learning models, investing in the expansion of e-learning and distance learning opportunities and in modern equipment, while others ⁽⁶⁴⁾ are focusing more on blended learning. They are leveraging digital solutions to develop new learning methodologies and resources, and integrating advanced technologies into the learning process.

In terms of technological advancement, some countries are beginning to explore the use of cutting-edge educational technologies ⁽⁶⁵⁾, experimenting with XR, VR and artificial intelligence (AI) tools to enrich training methods and boost learner engagement. However, the use of these advanced technologies is still in the early stages and they have not yet been widely adopted across the EU-27+.

⁽⁶²⁾ AL, BE-FL, BE-FR, DE, ES, HU, ME, MT and SI.

⁽⁶³⁾ BG, CY, EL, FR, MT and PT.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ AL, FI, LU, LV and ME.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ BE-FL, DE and MT.

Box 6. Integrating advanced technology solutions: examples from Belgium (Flemish Community) and Malta

Belgium (Flemish Community) is advancing the digital transformation of IVET through the [digital education action plan](#) by equipping both students, particularly those from vulnerable groups, and teachers with appropriate ICT infrastructure, equipment and services. The initiative also promotes the development and use of XR technologies in VET. In 2022, part of this initiative was implemented, providing learners and teaching staff with digital learning materials and access to virtual platforms. In 2022, the Flemish government developed an [XR action plan](#), which included the creation of the XR Learning Network. This learning network combines the knowledge of researchers at several universities and university colleges who are experts in XR and everything digital related. Its expertise is offered in the form of information sessions and one-to-one guidance for schools, which focuses on the professionalisation of teachers and users through the use of evidence. The use of XR tools is expected to enhance course quality and increase learner engagement. The monitoring data of the XR plan implementation show an increased willingness among school leaders, teachers and students to sustainably integrate ICT into their educational practices. However, the XR plan has encountered implementation challenges, especially in finalising agreements for hardware and software, which involves strict deadlines and diverse province-level stakeholders, necessitating frequent coordination to ensure alignment and the timely resolution of problems.

Malta, on the other hand, is working to enhance the accessibility and flexibility of VET through the establishment of a national fund that VET institutions and providers can access by submitting project proposals aimed at supporting digital education. These projects may include the integration of advanced technologies such as AI, XR and VR. In addition, a key development highlighted during national VET stakeholder interviews is the Institute for Education's introduction of dedicated modules on IT-enhanced learning across all courses. This initiative ensures that teachers are equipped with the skills and knowledge to use digital tools and methodologies in their teaching effectively.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2024b, 2026).

3.2.4. Using learning-outcomes-based approaches and modularisation

Learning outcomes are being introduced in VET in a systemic way, covering many areas at the same time. EU-27+ countries ⁽⁶⁶⁾ continued embedding learning outcomes in IVET in qualification descriptors in the national qualifications frameworks, sectoral occupational standards and VET curricula, restructuring qualifications and programmes into blocks of skills and conducting diagnostic studies to anticipate the needs of learning-outcomes-based competence units ⁽⁶⁷⁾.

EU-27+ countries continued further establishing modular approaches ⁽⁶⁸⁾. They have also been introducing modular programmes in CVET to support adult learning, upskilling and reskilling, not only enabling the acquisition of partial qualifications but also tailoring skills to regional labour market needs ⁽⁶⁹⁾. In addition, modules have been particularly instrumental in integrating the digital and green transitions into VET programmes ⁽⁷⁰⁾.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ None of the CCs had flagged this thematic category as a national commitment in their NIPs. Therefore, no progress was reported, as explained in footnote 13, although countries may have shared evidence of relevant policy developments.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ EL, FR, HR, NO and PT.

⁽⁶⁸⁾ CY, ES, LT and LV.

⁽⁶⁹⁾ DE, ES and PT.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ ES, HU, LV and PT.

Box 7. **Certified modular training courses on the environment, energy and digitalisation: example from Portugal**

The [green skills and jobs](#) programme launched in 2022 in Portugal comprises short and medium-duration training courses, aimed at employees of companies directly or indirectly affected by the increase in energy costs, in addition to unemployed people, people aged 18 years or over and people registered with the PES. Four pathways in the environment and energy areas can be selected: green hydrogen; renewable energies – solar thermal; renewable energies – solar photovoltaic; and renewable energies – wind. All pathways are delivered as certified modular courses by public or private providers in an online or face-to-face format.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2024b, 2026).

3.2.5. **Developing and applying qualifications smaller/shorter than full**

Countries worked on the introduction and use of microcredentials, partial qualifications and digital badges. As regards microcredentials, countries have been developing legal frameworks and new regulations ⁽⁷¹⁾, exploring the field ⁽⁷²⁾ through preparatory studies and pilot projects, and developing digital platforms for issuing and accumulating microcredentials. Only a few countries reported developments in digital credentials or badges ⁽⁷³⁾.

Other countries are working on partial qualifications by creating and updating procedures for their development, establishing nationwide standardised partial qualifications (including for low-skilled and unskilled adults) in cooperation with employer organisations, and revising vocational occupation registers to incorporate partial qualifications and align with labour market needs ⁽⁷⁴⁾.

Box 8. **Chamber initiative for partial qualifications: example from Germany**

In Germany, the Chambers of Industry and Commerce initiated the '[Use opportunities!](#)' scheme to establish nationwide standardised partial qualifications for low-skilled and unskilled adults aged over 25 years. The initiative aims to develop training modules geared to regional needs and the certification of partial qualifications to give low-skilled and unskilled adults the opportunity to acquire a complete vocational qualification or at least an upgradable qualification. These qualifications were developed in consultation with employer organisations and are implemented with the participation of German employers, associations and business-related education institutions. It acts a quality seal for the partial qualification offer. Launched in 2017 with only half of the country's chambers taking part, the initiative has grown to expand countrywide, and most chambers now participate. In 2023, the key projects of the initiative were relaunched. In addition, a written section was developed and added to the digital competence assessment for partial qualifications.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2026).

3.2.6. **Accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally**

Countries have been adopting systemic approaches for validating and recognising prior non-formal and informal learning, with stronger emphasis on adult learners and their learning outcomes, including those acquired through WBL. The systemic approach includes adopting national strategies and legal frameworks to regulate validation processes, set standards, ensure quality and integrate recognition

⁽⁷¹⁾ BE-FL, HR, HU, LV, ME, PL and SK.

⁽⁷²⁾ LV, MT and NL.

⁽⁷³⁾ FR, IT and PL.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ BE-FL, DE, FI, HU and PT.

into formal qualification frameworks ⁽⁷⁵⁾. Other actions include involving chambers and employers in validation and recognition, providing financial incentives to adults seeking validation, offering guidance and piloting recognition mechanisms in selected sectors ⁽⁷⁶⁾. Some countries ⁽⁷⁷⁾ implemented projects to recognise competences gained through volunteering.

The most common trend is the use of validation and recognition in adult learning and CVET. Countries ⁽⁷⁸⁾ facilitate recognition involving economic operators, such as chambers of commerce and industry, provide financial incentives and guidance to those who seek validation, and pilot recognition mechanisms in specific sectors.

Box 9. Validation and recognition of learning outcomes: example from Italy

Italy began the process of validating non-formal and informal learning in 2012, marking a major milestone in 2018 with the introduction of interoperability guidelines for awarding bodies. By 2022, most regions had integrated these guidelines into their skills certification systems, supported by both the [Italian national qualifications framework](#) and the [national framework of regional qualifications](#). Implementation continues to expand. In 2024, [a decree was adopted](#) regulating the Ministry of Labour's responsibilities in recognising competences acquired through non-formal learning, such as universal civil service, apprenticeship contracts, entrepreneurship and self-employment support programmes, volunteering and collective utility projects. All qualifications databases across the regions and autonomous provinces are accessible online via their respective websites.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2024b, 2026).

3.3. VET as a driver of innovation and growth

Innovative and excellent VET is essential to equip learners with the skills needed for work, personal growth and active citizenship in a rapidly changing world. It supports broader goals such as the digital and green transitions, economic resilience and social inclusion, while also enhancing the overall attractiveness of VET. To advance this priority, countries worked on the modernisation of VET infrastructure ⁽⁷⁹⁾, including equipping VET institutions for the digital and green transitions and their national equivalents, and on supporting centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs) ⁽⁸⁰⁾. Both areas have shown significant progress since 2021 (see Annex, Figure 5, for the EU-27+).

3.3.1. Modernising VET infrastructure

Modernisation efforts across the countries focused on both IVET and CVET. The main focus was on the improvement of digital infrastructure for VET provision, including the development and enhancement of digital platforms, tools and environments to support both digital and general teaching and learning. Countries invested in ICT infrastructure ⁽⁸¹⁾, distributed digital devices such as laptops and tablets to students and teachers, and integrated advanced technologies.

Countries are modernising the physical infrastructure of VET institutions ⁽⁸²⁾ to align it with the current labour market and industry ⁽⁸³⁾. This includes rebuilding or renovating VET schools, upgrading laboratories

⁽⁷⁵⁾ AT, BE-FL, BG, CY, DE, ES, FR, HU, IT, LT, ME, MK, MT, PT, RS, SE and SK.

⁽⁷⁶⁾ BE-FL, CY, DE, FR, HU, MT, PT and SE.

⁽⁷⁷⁾ AT, CY and ES.

⁽⁷⁸⁾ BE-FL, CY, DE, FR, HU, MT, NO, PT and SE.

⁽⁷⁹⁾ AL, AT, BE-FL, BG, CY, DE, DK, EL, HU, IT, LT, LV, ME, MK, PL, PT, SI and SK.

⁽⁸⁰⁾ AT, BE-FR, BG, DE, DK, EE, ES, FR, HR, HU, LT, MK, PL, SK and TR.

⁽⁸¹⁾ AL, AT, BE-FL, DE, EL, LV, ME, MK, RS and TR.

⁽⁸²⁾ BG, CY, DK, IE, IT, LT, ME, MK, PL, PT, SK and TR.

⁽⁸³⁾ BG, DK, IT, MK, PT and TR.

with modern equipment, supplying new training machinery, investing in infrastructure (including in new facilities and new, modern equipment) and establishing sectoral skills centres that support hands-on, industry-relevant training.

Only a few countries ⁽⁸⁴⁾ reported dedicated efforts to green VET infrastructure. These include energy efficiency upgrades, installation of renewable energy systems and the transformation of institutions into environmentally sustainable campuses. Limited in number now, these initiatives are likely to expand as green policies continue to evolve, although often they may apply only to specific sectors, for example the food industry, agriculture, technology and construction.

Box 10. Modernising learning environments: examples from Greece, Cyprus and Poland

In **Greece**, an advanced [digital platform](#), ‘Digital School’, is being developed for both IVET and CVET. Launched in 2023, the platform aims to significantly enhance e-learning opportunities for both students and professionals. By providing a flexible, accessible and modern learning environment, this initiative aims to transform VET through the use of advanced digital infrastructure. The platform is designed to better align training with the evolving needs of the labour market, supporting a more dynamic and future-ready workforce. In 2024–2025, the development of the platform’s components continued.

In **Cyprus**, efforts to [modernise VET physical infrastructure](#) are well under way. The country is upgrading classrooms and laboratories in vocational schools and providing students with advanced technical equipment, including robots, robotic arms and interactive screens. As part of the Cyprus recovery and resilience plan, two new technical VET schools are planned. Construction of the school in Limassol began in 2023 and is near completion at the time of writing this report, while the construction of the second school in Larnaca began in September 2025. The schools will prepare professionals for work in green occupations and technology fields.

In **Poland**, efforts to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of its [sectoral skills centres](#) are progressing, through significant investment in both IVET and CVET infrastructure. This includes constructing new facilities, upgrading existing ones and procuring modern equipment, machinery, technical devices and other necessary materials. By March 2023, Poland had selected an initial 24 sectoral skills centres for implementation. This was followed by the establishment of 45 additional centres in 2024.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2024b, 2026).

3.3.2. Supporting centres of vocational excellence

Across the countries, support for CoVEs is being pursued in two main directions: either through the establishment of entirely new centres ⁽⁸⁵⁾ or through establishing or developing those on the basis of existing VET centres ⁽⁸⁶⁾. These include both CoVEs funded through Erasmus+, which were reported less frequently, and national equivalents serving similar objectives. The centres aim to address regional disparities and needs, align training more closely with labour market needs, and foster platforms for innovation, experimentation and collaboration between educational institutions and industry stakeholders. A key feature across countries is the use of European funding mechanisms – Erasmus+, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the ESF and the European Regional Development Fund among the EU-27+, and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance and the growth plan for the Western Balkans among the CCs – to support CoVE infrastructure, equipment, innovation projects and stakeholder cooperation.

⁽⁸⁴⁾ DK, HU, PT and SI.

⁽⁸⁵⁾ AT, BE-FR, BG, ES, HR, HU and SK.

⁽⁸⁶⁾ DE, DK, EE, FR, LT, MK, PL and TR.

As a general trend, there is a strong focus on creating institutional conditions that support excellence. Actions are aimed at consolidating networks, improving infrastructure, expanding partnerships and embedding CoVEs more firmly in the national or regional VET systems. This includes empowering centres to play a broader role in areas such as curriculum development, teacher training, applied research and cross-sector collaboration. Common efforts also include increasing VET responsiveness to the labour market, aligning CoVEs with the emerging economic sectors and increasing their role in supporting the continuous upskilling and reskilling of the workforce. In some cases, this involves transforming existing VET institutions into competence centres with extended responsibilities and improved capacity to serve learners and employers.

Box 11. **Building innovation hubs for skills: examples from Austria, Bulgaria, Spain and CCs**

Austria aims to establish [CoVEs specifically for green innovation](#). It plans to define cluster areas for centres of excellence, determining in which areas of Austria's Green Deal these clusters can be set up. The implementation of the projects of the competence centres is planned for 2024–2029. The Green Tech Academy (GRETA), coordinated by Graz University of Technology and Joanneum University of Applied Sciences, was established in 2022. GRETA promotes cooperation and networking within the knowledge triangle of research, the economy and education, into which regional vocational schools are also integrated.

In **Bulgaria**, [CoVEs are being established to foster local partnerships and enhance regional training ecosystems](#). Supported by the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the initiative includes the modernisation and equipping of 28 VET schools – one in each of the 28 regions of the country. By 2025, the modernisation of 14 VET schools (half of the target) were at the final stage of project implementation, including six fully operational CoVEs. The CoVEs provide modern and innovative education and training for professions and skills in demand in the local/regional labour market and offer opportunities for a smooth transition from school to work. The establishment and progress of the CoVEs marks an important step towards strengthening the capacity of VET institutions, promoting a learning environment and fostering their potential for innovation, establishing partnerships with businesses, and aligning vocational education with sectoral and regional labour market needs.

In **Spain**, the objective was to establish a [network of 52 national reference centres](#) – public institutions specialising in various professional fields. These centres are tasked with driving VET innovation and experimentation, as well as providing training for teachers and tutors. As of 2024, this network had grown to include 66 centres. The network of centres of excellence comprises strategic sectors such as aeronautics, agri-food, audiovisuals, automobiles, cybersecurity, building and energy sustainability, the social and care economy, renewable energies, automated manufacturing, catering, AI and big data, maritime and fisheries, mechatronics, chemistry, sanitation, IT, transport and logistics, and tourism.

Many schools in most CCs are recognised as CoVEs as part of [ETF's Network for Excellence](#). **North Macedonia** has set up seven regional VET centres set to drive innovation, adult learning, validation of non-formal and informal learning, and labour market collaboration. Since 2021, **Türkiye** has established 15 CoVEs, embedded within 14 VET schools covering 25 fields. These centres focus on professional development, WBL and Industry 4.0 readiness. This initiative includes industry-owned CoVEs, fostering partnerships with social partners and sector associations, and bridging the education–labour market gap. **Montenegro** plans to set up regional centres of excellence for young people and adults in 2026.

3.4. Attractive and modern VET

Attractiveness of VET continues to be high on the agenda of most countries, as some are seeing a decline in IVET enrolments and low participation in CVET despite significant efforts in this area in the past. Attractive VET plays a crucial role in motivating learners, increasing the occupational reputation of teachers and trainers, reducing early school dropout and increasing participation in education and training.

Making VET attractive is among the priorities that have the most measures in the NIPs, and have shown some or significant progress (see Annex, Figure 6, for the EU-27+). National stakeholders in their interviews shared similar views on progress, at the same time noting the importance of attractive VET for meeting evolving labour market needs and increasing its relevance.

Most countries ⁽⁸⁷⁾ worked to advance the priority through investing in teachers and trainers and their initial and continuing professional development (CPD), and enhancing the attractiveness of the teaching and training professions. Countries ⁽⁸⁸⁾ worked on increasing permeability and smooth transitions between IVET and other education pathways, such as general education, higher education or CVET. Other areas of action were expanding VET programmes to higher qualification levels, namely European qualifications framework (EQF) levels 5 to 8 ⁽⁸⁹⁾; the internationalisation of VET through dedicated strategies and international initiatives ⁽⁹⁰⁾; promoting and supporting mobility of learners and staff ⁽⁹¹⁾; developing lifelong guidance ⁽⁹²⁾ and targeted promotion and campaigns for VET and LLL ⁽⁹³⁾.

3.4.1. Permeability across education and training subsystems

To ensure permeability between general and vocational pathways, countries established arrangements to enable learners to complete their upper secondary education, that is, prepare and take matura examinations, in parallel with or following vocational training ⁽⁹⁴⁾. It is worth mentioning that some countries already had such arrangements in place before 2020 and they are part of their systems.

Efforts to strengthen the permeability between VET and higher education vary: some countries ⁽⁹⁵⁾ have been working to establish or reform higher VET pathways, while others are working to raise the status of the existing higher VET provision ⁽⁹⁶⁾ by creating closer links with higher education; recognising prior learning and validating work experience (Section 3.2.6); broadening eligibility criteria for higher education entry; and developing short-cycle higher technical programmes aligned with EQF level 5.

Box 12. Supporting permeability between education and training pathways: examples from Romania and Sweden

Romania is working to strengthen LLL and recognition of competences by introducing a [transferable credit system](#) for adult professional training. The system defines how transferable credits are granted based on a methodology that covers key, technical and occupation-specific competences. It supports mobility and ensures compatibility with national education and training frameworks. A new framework law, adopted in 2023, laid the foundation for this system. In 2024, the methodology was updated to include revised calculations for translating study hours into transferable credits.

⁽⁸⁷⁾ AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI and SK.

⁽⁸⁸⁾ AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, HU, LT, NL, PT, RO, SE, SK and TR.

⁽⁸⁹⁾ AT, DE, IT, MK, PT, RO, RS and SK.

⁽⁹⁰⁾ AT, CY, DE, DK, EE, EL, HR, LV, PT and PL. None of the CCs had flagged this thematic category as a national commitment in their NIPs. Therefore, no progress was reported, as explained in footnote 13, although countries may have shared evidence of relevant policy developments.

⁽⁹¹⁾ AT, BE-FL, DE, DK, FR, HR, LT, LV, MT, NL and PL. None of the CCs had flagged this thematic category as a national commitment in their NIPs. Therefore, no progress was reported, as explained in footnote 13, although countries may have shared evidence of relevant policy developments.

⁽⁹²⁾ AL, AT, BE-FR, CY, DE, DK, ES, FR, HU, ME, MK, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SK and TR.

⁽⁹³⁾ AT, BG, DE, DK, EE, HR, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT and RO. This thematic category was not in the originally agreed analytical framework. Therefore, since data collection did not consider this thematic priority, it was not possible for ETF to identify which countries expressed a relevant commitment in their NIPs and reported progress accordingly.

⁽⁹⁴⁾ AT, BE-FR, CY, DE, LT, ME, MK, PT and RS.

⁽⁹⁵⁾ AT, CY, DK, FR, MK and RS.

⁽⁹⁶⁾ BE-FL, EE, FI, PT and SE.

In 2022, **Sweden** adopted an [amendment to the Education Act](#) that mandates that all VET programmes include all necessary subjects for tertiary education eligibility, thereby increasing permeability between VET and higher education. These expanded programmes offer both more content and additional teaching time. The goal is to increase VET enrolment in upper secondary school, improve skills supply and make it easier for young people to enter the labour market.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2024b, 2026).

3.4.2. Expanding VET programmes to EQF levels 5–8

The expansion of VET programmes to EQF levels 5 to 8 remains relatively limited across the countries, although interest and the number of targeted actions are gradually increasing. Most countries are currently focusing on EQF level 5, which is widely viewed as a strategic entry point into higher level VET. Fewer countries are actively pursuing VET development at EQF levels 6 and 7 ⁽⁹⁷⁾ or setting dual training pathways at EQF level 5 ⁽⁹⁸⁾.

Box 13. Establishing higher VET: examples from Austria and Serbia

Austria has [established higher VET as a separate education segment](#) since 2019. The main objectives of this initiative are consolidating the heterogeneous field of higher VET; establishing a legal basis for a common understanding of higher VET; and introducing higher VET as a label with a clear message to make the qualifications more visible and better known. A first draft of the Higher VET Act was prepared by autumn 2022, and, after many consultations with national stakeholders, the act was published on 28 February 2024 and came into effect on 1 May 2024. The implementation started in the second half of 2024 with the development of guidelines and aids for the implementation of the act at the level of the qualification providers. Additionally, the development of pilot qualifications was initiated.

Serbia has continued to advance qualification standards and higher level apprenticeships. By 2022/2023, 34 dual study programmes were available at 10 institutions, involving 95 accredited companies. In 2025, nearly 700 students were enrolled in 54 dual programmes. A revised methodology for higher education qualification standards has produced 250 qualification descriptions.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2024b, 2026); ETF (2023d, 2024d, 2025d).

3.4.3. Teachers and trainers: attractiveness of the profession, and initial and continuing professional development

VET teacher and trainer CPD plays a crucial role in embracing all the changes and evolving challenges facing VET, and there is a trend towards more needs-oriented CPD.

Most countries have developed VET teachers' CPD, with a particular emphasis on teacher and trainer digital skills, and green skills to a lesser extent so far. Career schemes or incentives to attract teachers and trainers to VET remain relatively limited in application.

Countries ⁽⁹⁹⁾ worked to modernise CPD content by introducing innovative teaching methods and personalised learning approaches in cooperation with the world of work, such as practical experience with companies, trainer internships at VET schools and school–industry exchanges.

Digital competence remains a cross-cutting theme, with some initiatives in the EU-27+ incorporating immersive technologies such as XR. Countries are also responding to the demands of digital and blended learning environments, and preparing teachers to work in these through upskilling teachers in ICT, hybrid teaching, and integrating advanced technologies such as AI, robotics and programming.

⁽⁹⁷⁾ AT, DE, IT, PT, RO, RS and SK.

⁽⁹⁸⁾ AT and PT. RS introduced dual education at the higher education (tertiary) level and MK developed post-secondary education at level 5B but not necessarily dual education.

⁽⁹⁹⁾ BE-FL, CY, HR, HU, IT and LV.

Some have introduced or updated digital competence frameworks and self-assessment tools to ensure CPD is tailored to current technological needs ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾. Other actions involve the creation and development of digital infrastructure, digital resources and content databases, and secure platforms for teaching ⁽¹⁰¹⁾ that support teachers in accessing techno-pedagogical tools and promote the sharing of good practices.

Box 14. Measures advancing digital readiness in teaching: examples from Belgium (French Community), Germany, Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia

In **Belgium** (French Community), the Pedagogical Resource Centre supports teachers by offering techno-pedagogical resources. In non-compulsory education, e-learning implementation is facilitated through a good-practice-sharing platform for adult education institutions. The ‘e-classe’ platform complements this by publishing content on topics such as women in the digital world and cybersecurity in schools. A partnership with the [Pix group](#) is also exploring the use of Pix as a tool for teacher self-evaluation. Introduced in 2023, the Pix tool helps teachers identify suitable training and online resources by assessing their digital skills. In 2024, further actions were introduced, including new publications on AI and XR, an extension of the Pix pilot project and additional initiatives targeting non-compulsory education.

In **Germany**, the [digital pact for schools](#) initiative – extended as ‘Digital Pact 2.0’ until 2030 – invests in upgrading digital infrastructure and improving teachers’ digital competences. In 2024, the ‘HubbS’ platform was launched to support vocational school teachers in dual training. Moreover, the ‘Leando’ portal, launched in 2023, provides information and CPD on daily training practice and the examination system. Other projects, such as ‘Digi Gap’, assess digital divides in education, and initiatives like ‘digiMINT’ and ‘Mixed reality interactive training MITHOS’ address the pandemic’s impact on teachers’ acceptance of digital tools.

The ETF Foundation supported the piloting of the ‘Selfie for Teachers’ tool in **Albania** and **North Macedonia** in 2024 ⁽¹⁰²⁾ as part of a regional initiative to assess and strengthen teachers’ digital competences, with results informing national professional development strategies. **Montenegro** will also use the Selfie for Teachers self-assessment tool to identify gaps and guide targeted professional development. The country has significantly strengthened teachers’ digital competences through nationwide training, access to digital tools, hands-on experience with emerging technologies and work on a forthcoming digital competence framework for teachers.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2024b, 2026); ETF (2025a, 2025c); [Selfie for Teachers in Albania](#); [Selfie for Teachers in North Macedonia](#).

To stimulate participation in teacher CPD, countries ⁽¹⁰³⁾ worked on diversifying CPD provision through flexible formats such as e-learning, massive open online courses (MOOCs) and modular courses. These approaches integrate pedagogical, technical and transversal competences.

CPD has also been developed to prepare teachers for the green transition. Countries have provided dedicated teacher training aligned with new or adapted curricula that integrate green skills, climate response and STEM-related sustainability topics ⁽¹⁰⁴⁾. Alongside CPD focused on green competences, countries are adapting curricula, developing teaching principles related to sustainability, creating new green-related teaching professions and integrating sustainability themes into apprenticeships and VET programmes.

Some countries have extended CPD to include school leaders, to train them in implementing new curricula or effective management, while company managers and trainers are trained on ensuring high-quality WBL in companies, for example on legal frameworks, student rights, pedagogical approaches and support to learners from vulnerable groups ⁽¹⁰⁵⁾.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ AL, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, EE, ME and MK.

⁽¹⁰¹⁾ ES, FI, IT, LT, LV, PT and SI.

⁽¹⁰²⁾ [Selfie for Teachers in Albania](#) and [Selfie for Teachers in North Macedonia](#).

⁽¹⁰³⁾ BG, DK, EE, ES, LT, PT, RO and SK.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ AL, AT, DE, DK, ES, FR, ME and SI.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ AL, AT, BG, DE, EE, HR, ME, PT and RO.

To increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession and address the teacher shortages that some countries face, countries are modernising their initial teacher training ⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ through implementing screening or entrance tests to tailor the training to individuals' needs from the outset; defining or reinforcing competence requirements, particularly in digital skills; and providing structured support, such as mentoring and coaching. Countries ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ are encouraging professionals from the labour market to enter teaching by introducing flexible career entry pathways, financial incentives, recognition schemes for skills acquired on the job and other supportive initiatives.

Box 15. **Supporting teachers' professional development: examples from Estonia, Hungary and Albania**

Estonia is placing strong emphasis on [strengthening in-service training for VET teachers and trainers](#). Key activities focus on enhancing schools' capacity for VET content development, delivering pedagogical, methodological and subject-specific training, and supporting school teams, support staff and traineeship instructors. Additional efforts target content training, language-integrated learning and language teaching methods. In 2023, two ESF measures were introduced: the VET and higher education development programme (PRÕM+) and an initiative on teacher succession, pedagogical approaches and learning environments. PRÕM+ supports traineeships and WBL by offering training, seminars and counselling to VET providers. In 2024, a new phase of CPD for VET teachers and trainers was launched.

Hungary is working to enhance the relevance, scope and quality of in-service training for teachers and mentors, while also introducing a new model of hybrid teachers and trainers. Since 2021, training has been delivered through a [unified teacher further training system and sectoral training centres](#). By 2024, a wide range of online courses had been made available, covering digital competences, language skills, vocational and in-company training, and teaching methodologies. A digital content and learning materials database has also been developed.

To support in-company trainers working with dual VET students, the **Albanian** national training programme 'Mentoring in dual vocational education' was developed by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Qualifications in 2024, and formally adopted by the Ministry of the Economy in 2025. The programme aims to equip in-company mentors with the skills and knowledge required to effectively plan and implement practical learning processes, fostering professional and personal competences in students for successful integration into the labour market.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2024b, 2026); ETF (2024a, 2025a).

3.4.4. Lifelong guidance

Most countries primarily focused on improving career support for students, especially young students, developing and providing targeted and user-friendly information on careers in VET and available financial support; it should be noted, though, that lifelong guidance is not limited to VET.

Countries have worked on developing their career guidance in a systemic way ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ to increase accessibility and quality, ensuring good outreach to all learners. In addition, countries have been embracing digitalisation to improve their career guidance services ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ through developing digital platforms, applications and online tools that provide career information, personalised advice and interactive resources. Lifelong guidance has been crucial for adult learners, and countries ⁽¹¹⁰⁾ focused on expanding access to tailored guidance and flexible training, particularly for vulnerable groups such as older adults and

⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ AT, BE-FL, LV, NL and RO.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ BE-FL, BG, CZ, DE, HU, LU, LV, NL, PL and SK.

⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ AL, BE-FR, CY, DE, ES, HU, ME, MT, NL, PT, SE and TR.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ AT, DE, ES, HU, MT, NL, PL, SE and SK.

⁽¹¹⁰⁾ DE, MT, NL, RO, SE and SK.

low-skilled workers. Some countries ⁽¹¹¹⁾ invested in developing the competences of career guidance professionals through specialised training and CoVEs, often promoting collaboration among stakeholders and ensuring guidance is inclusive, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Box 16. Developing lifelong guidance: examples from Hungary, Slovenia and Montenegro

Hungary is focused on enhancing learners' understanding of transversal competences and available progression pathways. Likewise, career guidance and counselling continue to be strategic priorities. Between 2023 and 2024, key initiatives in this area progressed under the [GINOP framework](#), including the development of the Career Orientation Portal, the expansion of the career path development programme and the introduction of dedicated modules designed to highlight the benefits of VET.

In **Slovenia**, digital tools are being developed to identify labour market needs and support career decision-making. A [national tool](#) in the final phase of development, as part of the 'NOO' project, aims to [forecast VET-related labour market demands](#) and includes features such as graduate tracking, enrolment statistics, academic performance data, application deadlines and exchange opportunities. This tool is designed to guide students in making informed career choices, help VET schools adapt open curricula, and support the broader modernisation of vocational standards and programmes across the VET system.

In 2025, with support from ETF, **Montenegro** developed career guidance standards for career counsellors in secondary education. This work included the development of a [career management skills framework](#), a competence profile for career guidance practitioners and a code of ethics for practitioners. Montenegro also developed the [career guidance and counselling strategy 2025–2030](#). This process was carried out for the first time but with the broad involvement of relevant stakeholders, aimed at the integration of career education into the formal education system at all levels of education. A similar process was supported by ETF in North Macedonia and in Serbia.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2024b, 2026); ETF (2025b).

3.4.5. VET internationalisation and enhancing the mobility of learners and staff

Countries ⁽¹¹²⁾ have been working to open up their VET systems to international cooperation through VET internationalisation strategies ⁽¹¹³⁾. In some, internationalisation is part of broader education and training strategies and plans, while others are developing transnational projects. Internationalisation policies and activities follow different goals – they relate not only to promoting VET and education in general but also to supporting the business interests of national companies in other countries, for example supplying a skilled workforce or ensuring the same quality of training as in the home country. Some countries ⁽¹¹⁴⁾ have been increasingly using international skills competitions, such as EuroSkills and WorldSkills, to enhance the profile and attractiveness of VET.

Box 17. Strategic approach to internationalisation: example from Germany

Germany's [internationalisation strategy for VET](#), operational since 2013 and updated in 2019, aims to strengthen the global vocational competences of VET students and graduates. As part of this strategy, the German Office for International Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (GOVET), which is the federal government's central

⁽¹¹¹⁾ AL, BE-FR, DK, ES, HU, ME, MT, RO, SE and TR.

⁽¹¹²⁾ None of the CCs had flagged this thematic category as a national commitment in their NIPs. Therefore, no progress was reported, as explained in footnote 13, although countries may have shared evidence of relevant policy developments.

⁽¹¹³⁾ DE, EE and HR.

⁽¹¹⁴⁾ AT, CY, DE, DK, EL, HR, LV, PT and PL.

coordination office, and the Round Table for International Vocational Training Cooperation, managed by GOVET, have been established.

Under this strategy, numerous bilateral cooperation projects are funded and coordinated with countries including China, Costa Rica, Ghana, Greece, India, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, South Africa and the United States. In 2023 and 2024, Germany further expanded its international engagement by launching new projects, reinforcing governance structures, promoting sustainability and deepening global partnerships through events, bilateral initiatives and publications. Key programmes such as 'Skills experts', 'CooperationVET', and the 'Competence Centre for International VET' supported training across more than 50 countries. Designed to promote excellence within the country while supporting German businesses and VET providers abroad, it stands out for its structured, long-term commitment.

In addition, the iMOVE (international marketing of VET) networking platform initiated by the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space informs interested parties around the world about German competence in the field of vocational training and continuing education, along with 'made in Germany' qualifying opportunities.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2026); Cedefop (2025c).

Most actions to support mobility focus on VET learners ⁽¹¹⁵⁾, mostly IVET learners, including apprentices (Cedefop, 2025b; Cedefop & ReferNet, 2026). Fewer targeted efforts have been made to promote the mobility of VET staff, such as teachers, trainers and guidance professionals ⁽¹¹⁶⁾. Staff mobility serves the modernisation of teaching practices and cross-sectoral exchanges, and enhances experience to increase the attractiveness of the profession. Countries have implemented national or regional projects to operationalise exchanges and strengthen transnational cooperation through EU, Erasmus+ (mainly) and international programmes. Mobility is increasingly embedded and institutionalised in VET systems, and monitoring is in place to track it. Some countries have expanded mobility, targeting non-EU countries ⁽¹¹⁷⁾.

Box 18. Expanding VET mobility: examples from Lithuania and Norway

In **Lithuania**, group mobility, a new, more flexible VET option under Erasmus+, has been implemented since 2024. It focuses on life competences, cultural understanding and networking with peers from other schools, not only on WBL activities. This softer approach to mobility aims to benefit students with access to fewer opportunities. Other mobility support actions have also been implemented. For example, in 2022, the VET National Team of experts (PROMET) drafted a publication on how to prepare training contracts for mobility. In addition, a national mobility scheme was set up to support the practical skills of VET students at [sectoral practical training centres](#), which are spread throughout the country.

Norway has set a clear objective to increase the participation of vocational colleges in various international education programmes, while [actively promoting international cooperation and mobility](#), specifically through Erasmus+ and the European education area. In addition to Erasmus+, Norway is also involved in other [key EU programmes](#), including Horizon Europe, creative Europe and EU4health.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2026).

⁽¹¹⁵⁾ AT, BE-FL, DK, FR, HR, LV, MT and PL.

⁽¹¹⁶⁾ BE-FL, DE, HR, LT, LV, MT, NL and PL.

⁽¹¹⁷⁾ AT, DE and MT.

3.5. VET promotes equal opportunities and inclusion

Inclusive VET is a central priority across the EU, aimed at ensuring equal access to quality education and LLL for all, particularly vulnerable and under-represented groups. Most countries ⁽¹¹⁸⁾ worked on this priority but progress has been modest (see Annex, Figure 7); this was confirmed by the national EU-27+ stakeholders interviewed, who had observed only some progress and stressed the importance of inclusiveness in making VET flexible, attractive and aligned with labour market needs.

The countries' approaches focused on making VET systems accessible to people with disabilities, migrants, ethnic minorities, people with a low level of skills or qualifications and individuals from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, to increase their participation in LLL. Inclusiveness aims to support smoother transitions from education or unemployment to employment and to prevent early leaving from education and training. In addition, some countries worked to promote gender equality and combat gender stereotypes.

Box 19. Measures supporting inclusion and access to VET for specific vulnerable groups: examples from Latvia, Poland, Spain and Türkiye

One of the key objectives of **Latvia** is to facilitate the [integration of asylum seekers](#) from Ukraine into Latvian society by improving their skills and enhancing their employment prospects. These measures adopt a systemic approach and include access to VET programmes aligned with national labour market needs, provision of Latvian language courses, recognition of prior learning and competences, and personalised counselling and guidance services.

In **Poland**, the [strategy for persons with disabilities 2021–2030](#) aims to ensure equal opportunities, inclusion and full participation in all areas of life for individuals with disabilities, including access to VET LLL. Among Polish projects aimed at learners with special educational needs, the project 'An accessible school for all', which was launched in 2023 and ran until September 2025, aimed to enhance formal education, including VET, by improving teachers' ability to support learners with diverse developmental and educational needs, including children displaced from Ukraine. The project involved 1 120 specialist teachers, 11 200 preschool/school teachers, academics and non-governmental organisations, with teacher training supported by the academic community. Around 30 000 children, including those with special education needs and children displaced from Ukraine, were expected to benefit from the project.

In **Spain**, the needs of vulnerable groups have been addressed through strengthened guidance and counselling services, notably under the 2018 [integrated career guidance system](#) and the [action plan for youth employment 2019–2021](#). These initiatives recognise the key role of counselling in supporting young immigrants by offering personalised career guidance, legal and administrative assistance, and help with language and cultural integration. This approach was reinforced with the launch of the youth guarantee plus plan 2021–2027, which continued to prioritise tailored support for young people. In 2022, vocational guidance units were introduced to expand access to career services, particularly in towns with fewer than 10 000 inhabitants.

Türkiye has provided comprehensive support to Turkish students and young Syrians under temporary protection through programmes offering both educational support in vocational schools and essential social integration services. The VET4job programme brought 135 337 new students, including 14 665 Syrians, into the apprenticeship system and supported 18 350 adults with vocational courses, creating paths to sustainable employment and social cohesion through 755 activities reaching over 57 000 individuals.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2024b, 2026); ETF (2023e).

⁽¹¹⁸⁾ AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, LU, LV, ME, MK, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI SK and TR.

The specific policies implemented and the vulnerable groups targeted varied across countries based on their national contexts; for example, countries with large migrant populations or experiencing significant migration inflows often implement more targeted measures for these groups, while those with marked urban–rural disparities tend to prioritise actions that address these regional inequalities.

Countries worked on awareness raising and lifelong guidance ⁽¹¹⁹⁾ for young people, migrants, refugees and other at-risk groups, often cooperating with local stakeholders, including schools, training providers, companies and public services (Section 3.4.4). Some countries ⁽¹²⁰⁾ invested in the professional development of teachers to enable them to better support learners with special education needs and disabilities (Section 3.4.3). These efforts include in-service training, education programmes and national initiatives to adapt teaching methods and educational content, along with infrastructure upgrades to ensure accessibility.

Preventing early leaving from education and training, particularly among vulnerable groups, has been yet another area of action across the countries. Three main approaches were widely adopted to address this challenge: early identification and monitoring systems, the provision of social support and guidance, and the development of tailored competence development programmes. Early identification and monitoring systems ⁽¹²¹⁾ help detect students at risk of dropping out, through data-driven tools, early warning mechanisms and tracking systems, enabling timely and targeted interventions. Such systems not only assist in identifying those at risk but also contribute to refining the definition of target groups. Social support and guidance measures include mentoring, counselling and personalised pathways, often extending this support until young people complete their studies or successfully enter the labour market ⁽¹²²⁾. Tailored competence development programmes ⁽¹²³⁾ allow for more flexible course duration based on student ability, different teaching methods and the use of distance learning to help maintain learner engagement and reduce dropout rates.

While few countries explicitly address gender stereotypes, some have launched initiatives to build more gender-inclusive VET systems ⁽¹²⁴⁾. These include support for women under-represented in certain sectors or occupations and efforts to challenge gender stereotypes in education and the workplace through awareness raising, mentoring, career guidance and financial incentives like scholarships or fully funded programmes. Some also provide flexible training options and support the development of entrepreneurial skills, particularly for disadvantaged women. Additionally, initiatives are in place to encourage men to pursue careers in traditionally female-dominated sectors.

Box 20. Fostering gender equality: example from Austria

In **Austria**, since 2016, the Austrian Economic Chamber, on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs, has offered up to 100 % [financial support for initiatives aimed at improving the quality, gender balance and social integration of apprenticeship programmes](#). A core focus has been on supporting the placement and successful completion of apprenticeships for young women and men in fields where their gender is under-represented (30 % or less).

Additionally, the project '[Women entrepreneurs go to school](#)' encourages girls to explore entrepreneurial paths by connecting them with female business leaders and promoting leadership opportunities in non-traditional sectors.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2026).

⁽¹¹⁹⁾ AT, BE-FR, CY, DE, ES, FR, LU, ME, NL, PT and RO.

⁽¹²⁰⁾ DE, EE, LT, MK and PL.

⁽¹²¹⁾ AT, BE-FL, HU and SK.

⁽¹²²⁾ AT, DE, DK, NL, RO and SK.

⁽¹²³⁾ FR, HU and SK.

⁽¹²⁴⁾ AT, BE-FL, CY, DE, DK, FR, MT, NL and SI.

In addition to targeted measures, countries have also applied broader policies mentioned in other sections of this report to serve the learning needs of vulnerable groups, in particular the development of modular training and flexible learning pathways ⁽¹²⁵⁾, and financial support schemes ⁽¹²⁶⁾. Tuition waivers, training vouchers, scholarships and targeted funding for institutions and individuals, particularly those who are long-term unemployed, low-skilled or from disadvantaged backgrounds, help remove economic barriers to their participation.

3.6. Strengthening quality assurance in VET

QA in VET is essential for building trust, consistency and transparency across the diverse systems in the EU. It guarantees that qualifications remain relevant to global labour market demands and rapid technological changes, making them transferable across countries. Although represented by fewer measures in the NIPs than other priorities, quality-assurance-related measures implemented by half of the countries ⁽¹²⁷⁾ have shown significant progress (see Annex, Figure 8, for the EU-27+). Interviewed EU-27+ national stakeholders, in contrast, observed some progress and recognised the importance of QA for employability, learner mobility and credibility of VET.

The policies include developing external evaluation processes, including in WBL ⁽¹²⁸⁾; strengthening self-assessment by VET providers ⁽¹²⁹⁾; and introducing graduate tracking as part of the overall QA system ⁽¹³⁰⁾. QA for WBL has been advanced through self-assessment tools for apprentice training centres, WBL-specific QA principles and indicators, verification procedures and accreditation methodologies for companies ⁽¹³¹⁾.

Moreover, countries have strengthened QA in CVET, higher VET and adult education ⁽¹³²⁾ by introducing self-assessment and external evaluation of adult education providers and introducing a quality label for CVET providers. Some have also expanded accreditation of providers and programmes to non-formal VET provision ⁽¹³³⁾.

Among key trends in further developing national QA systems is the adoption of new strategies and legislation that address both IVET and CVET, aligning national QA systems with the European quality assurance reference framework (EQAVET) and setting quality awards and incentives for providers for continuous quality improvement ⁽¹³⁴⁾. Since 2022, many countries ⁽¹³⁵⁾ have participated in [EQAVET peer reviews](#), as stipulated in the Council Recommendation on VET, aimed at sharing good practices, providing mutual learning opportunities, furthering the development of QA and promoting trust in VET systems among EU Member States.

⁽¹²⁵⁾ AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, DE, EE, ES, FR, HU, LU, PT and RO.

⁽¹²⁶⁾ CY, DE, DK, HU, NL, PT, RO and SK.

⁽¹²⁷⁾ AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, CY, EE, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, LV, ME, MK, MT, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SI, SK and TR.

⁽¹²⁸⁾ BE-FL, CY, EE, HU, IT, LT, LV, ME, MK, MT, PL, PT, RO and RS.

⁽¹²⁹⁾ HU, LV, ME, MK, RS, SI, SK and TR.

⁽¹³⁰⁾ HR, HU, LV, SK and TR (see Section 3.1.4).

⁽¹³¹⁾ FR, IT, LV, MT, PL and RO.

⁽¹³²⁾ AL, AT, ES, FR, HR, LV, PT and RO.

⁽¹³³⁾ BE-FL, CY and NO.

⁽¹³⁴⁾ BE-FL, BE-FR, EE, HR, HU, LT, LV, ME, MK, PL, RS, SI and SK.

⁽¹³⁵⁾ In 2022–2023: AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FI, HR, HU, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PT, RO, SI and SK. In 2024–2026: AT, BE-FR, BG, CZ, HR, FI, DE, EL, ES, HU, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, PT, RO, RS, SI and SK.

Box 21. Further development of QA: examples from Slovenia and North Macedonia

In **Slovenia**, the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training is actively working with the Ministry of Education to [promote QA in VET](#). It is working with school principals and the directors of VET schools to establish QA systems. It also implemented the activity 'networking for quality' for VET schools, in which schools present to other schools their achievements in the field of QA and learn from each other. The same approach applies to WBL and apprenticeships. Slovenia also actively participates in the EQAVET peer reviews.

North Macedonia took a comprehensive approach to QA during the monitoring period. The new regulatory framework (2025) not only introduced the state vocational matura but it also mandates regular revisions, at least every five years, of qualification standards and corresponding study programmes. The country also improved the integral evaluation mechanism used to assess VET school performance. These changes aim to better capture VET-specific characteristics, strengthen alignment with labour market needs and support ongoing developments in dual education and regional VET centres, while also fostering deeper cooperation between educational authorities and the business community.

Source: Cedefop & ReferNet (2026); ETF (2023c, 2025c).

Conclusions

4.1. Common trends and systemic developments

The Council Recommendation on VET (2020) and the Osnabruck Declaration (2020) set common priorities that were reflected in NIPs. Overall, since 2020, the EU-27+ and CCs have made significant progress, with some variation among priorities and countries in moving their national VET systems towards greater agility and resilience, flexibility, innovation and excellence, attractiveness, inclusiveness and QA. This applies to both work towards quantitative targets ⁽¹³⁶⁾ and the implementation of national measures. Many policy developments moved to implementation in 2023–2025, demonstrating significant momentum for policy reform and system transformation in the next policy cycle, renewed by the Herning Declaration in 2025.

Making VET systems agile and resilient, able to adapt to rapid labour market changes, is one of the policy priorities that have seen the most progress across countries. Progress has been achieved primarily by modernising VET standards, curricula and programmes to incorporate a balanced mix of vocational skills and key competences, with particular focus on the systematic integration of digital skills, which was observed to a greater extent than the integration of green skills and sustainability. The establishment and development of robust skills intelligence systems, including the systematic use of graduate tracking for VET policies and QA, are in most cases at an early stage.

Countries have shown their commitment to enhancing flexibility and progression opportunities within VET and making LLL a reality for all. This flexibility is being strengthened through the adoption of learning-outcomes-based approaches and curricula and programme modularisation; establishing microcredentials and partial qualifications; and increasing opportunities for the validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired outside formal systems. Countries are diversifying modes of learning by strengthening infrastructure for digital and blended learning and, in the EU-27+, exploring cutting-edge educational technologies such as VR, AR and AI. It should be noted that measures on microcredentials and the use of advanced technologies are still in the early stages, and these have some way to go until they reach their full potential in VET.

Significant progress has been observed in promoting excellence, innovation and QA across the VET sector. Countries are modernising VET infrastructure by investing heavily in both digital platforms and physical facilities, aligning them with current industry needs. Support for CoVEs is expanding through the establishment of new centres or the development of existing ones, often funded through European mechanisms. Countries focusing on QA have also made good progress, with about half of the countries working on new strategies to align national QA systems with EQAVET, strengthen self-assessment and increase stakeholder involvement in governance.

Finally, countries have worked to increase the attractiveness of VET by addressing permeability, building the capacity of the teaching and training force, and internationalisation. This has been done through expanding VET programmes to higher qualification levels (EQF levels 5–8), improving the permeability between VET and higher education, and investing in initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers and trainers. While progress on promoting equality of opportunities appears to be less advanced, with a remarkable lack of initiatives to promote gender inclusiveness, countries are implementing targeted measures for vulnerable groups, such as preventing early school leaving through early identification and social support, using flexible learning pathways to increase participation in LLL, and providing lifelong guidance and financial incentives.

⁽¹³⁶⁾ The available quantitative evidence for the CCs does not enable the drawing of conclusions (Chapter 2).

4.2. Recurring implementation challenges

Despite overall positive progress, the implementation of national VET reforms and policies continues to face a range of recurring institutional, financial and cultural structural challenges (Cedefop, 2024, 31 October; Cedefop, 2025d; Cedefop & ETF, 2025; Cedefop & ReferNet, 2024b). These are not confined to one priority but cut across multiple areas, highlighting deeper systemic weaknesses in VET governance and delivery. The most common recurring challenges and barriers encountered when implementing measures to advance the EU's VET priorities are outlined below ⁽¹³⁷⁾.

First, governance and coordination remain fragmented. Responsibility for VET in the context of LLL is frequently spread across multiple ministries, institutions and governance levels. Strong coordination frameworks and actions are required, which often are not in place or are inefficient, if they exist at all. In combination with burdensome and lengthy bureaucratic processes and resistance to change, fragmented and uncoordinated work can delay reforms and innovation and limit agile responses to evolving challenges. Political instability and changes in leadership also affect policy continuity and implementation.

Second, availability and sustainability of financial resources pose a challenge, in particular to infrastructure modernisation and the digitalisation of VET. Many such initiatives rely, heavily or fully, on EU or other donor funding and do not have long-term funding provision once this funding stops. This is especially relevant for covering the maintenance costs of physical and digital infrastructure and for the mainstreaming of initiatives that offer financial incentives to learners, providers or companies, with potential negative effects on the engagement of learners from vulnerable groups.

Third, adult participation rates remain low in many countries. Although EU-27+ countries have been developing and promoting LLL opportunities for all, many reskilling and upskilling measures tend to target learners from vulnerable groups, in particular low-skilled and unemployed people, leaving those in employment less served.

Fourth, VET systems experience persistent and evolving capacity constraints in their teaching and training workforce. Many countries face shortages of qualified teachers, particularly those with expertise in fast-evolving areas like digital technologies and green skills. In addition, it is becoming more and more difficult to retain skilled teaching professionals, as VET often offers less attractive working conditions and lower wages than the business sector. Increasing demands on teachers' and trainers' skills and competences, along with their expanding roles, call for systemic and multifaceted CPD, which is often uneven and does not cover all areas. This and a lack of support prevent teachers from effective implementation of new curricula, teaching new skills (e.g. digital or green) and adopting innovative pedagogies, including those based on advanced technologies, such as VR, XR or AI. The measures aimed at VET trainers, especially in companies, remain limited.

Fifth, persistent low societal awareness of VET and cultural resistance to change continue to limit VET attractiveness and VET enrolments. VET is still perceived by learners, their families and society at large as less prestigious than the academic pathway, and VET qualifications as limiting career prospects and financial wellbeing. Similar stereotypes and limited awareness of available opportunities, exacerbated by vulnerable economic and social situations, make LLL less attractive to adults.

4.3. Way forward

Modernisation of VET in the context of LLL calls for clear governance and strong coordination across actors. Countries may look for ways to align VET with broader national strategies and policies, such as economic, employment, labour market and social strategies/policies. Cooperation and involvement of stakeholders are crucial where clear roles, shared objectives and responsibilities, and regular, institu-

⁽¹³⁷⁾ These were also emphasised during interviews with EU-27+ national VET stakeholders and during reflections with CCs' Directors-General for Vocational Training and ACVTs during the in-person events organised by ETF in 2024 and 2025.

tionalised cooperation can help reduce long bureaucratic processes and help VET systems to be agile and responsive to evolving labour market and societal needs. The potential of CoVEs for modernising VET systems needs to be taken forward in order for them to become permanent features supporting innovation and relevance.

Sustainable funding arrangements contribute to VET system stability in the long run and to the sustainability of reform outcomes. As heavy reliance on EU project-based funding creates some risks to the sustainability of results, countries would benefit from ensuring smooth transitions from project-based reform funding to coordinated and monitored national, regional, local and sectoral funding. This will also help in planning investments in infrastructure, technology, learning materials, and teacher and trainer CPD, which are key factors for high-quality learning, and ensure the flexibility of resource allocation to the areas where the potential or need is the highest.

Modernisation of the curriculum remains essential to keeping VET relevant and increasing its attractiveness, especially taking into account the current evolving geopolitical and economic context, in particular the digital and green transitions. Countries should continue to work on integrating digital, green and transversal skills into all VET programmes to ensure that VET graduates are equipped with the skills needed for evolving and changing jobs. Using advanced technologies, such as AI and immersive tools, and supporting teachers and trainers, will continue to contribute to the quality and attractiveness of VET programmes.

Flexible learning pathways in VET in view of LLL continue to be supported by expanding the use of modular learning and microcredentials. While modularisation has already been established in VET programmes, efforts on microcredentials need to move beyond design and address QA and recognition. Involving a wide range of public and private providers, raising their awareness and improving their cooperation, is crucial for microcredential transparency and skill portability.

Focusing on VET teachers and trainers, recruiting and retaining talent in the profession remains a high priority and a central condition for VET systems' resilience, attractiveness and quality. Combining professional autonomy and physical and mental wellbeing with targeted and customised professional development can help keep the teaching profession attractive to young people and professionals from the labour market (side entrants). CPD may contribute to motivation and support when it provides for a mix of pedagogical innovation and digital/technological proficiency, and equips teachers and trainers with the skills necessary to embrace the twin transitions, inclusion, new curricula and QA. CPD is most effective if supported by diversified delivery modes.

Last but not least, although vocational occupations have been in high demand and some countries report gradual changes in the social perception of VET and increased enrolments, further improving the image of VET as a valuable and future-oriented pathway for learners remains crucial. To this end, systematic policy evaluation is needed, providing the necessary evidence for companies, students and families to engage in VET. Additionally, active outreach to learners, schools and families; clear communication about career opportunities and benefits; updated curricula that embrace modern technologies; and skills competitions and celebrating achievements can help overcome the still prevailing traditional perceptions of VET.

Working along these lines will help countries continue to move towards excellent, inclusive and attractive VET that contributes to resilient and inclusive societies and increased competitiveness (Danish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2025). However, evidence on the progress of NIP implementation in some countries suggests that the selection of policy priorities should be based on a thorough evaluation of past reforms and take into account countries' institutional capacity to embrace new ones. For progress to be sustainable, a balance between ambition and realistic expectations is needed.

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List of abbreviations

ACVT	Advisory Committee for Vocational Training
AI	artificial intelligence
AR	augmented reality
CC	candidate country
CoVE	centre of vocational excellence
CPD	continuing professional development
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
EQAVET	European quality assurance reference framework
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESF	European Social Fund
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GRETA	Green-TechAcademy (Austria)
HE	higher education
ICT	information and communication technology
IT	information technology
IVET	initial vocational education and training
LLL	lifelong learning
NIP	national implementation plan
PES	public employment service
pp	percentage point
QA	quality assurance
SSC	Sector Skills Council (Bulgaria)
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
VET	vocational education and training
VR	virtual reality
WBL	work-based learning
XR	extended reality

List of country codes

Country	Country code used in the report
Albania	AL
Austria	AT
Belgium (Flemish Community)	BE-FL
Belgium (French Community)	BE-FR
Bulgaria	BG
Croatia	HR
Cyprus	CY
Czechia	CZ
Germany	DE
Denmark	DK
Estonia	EE
Finland	FI
France	FR
Greece	EL
Hungary	HU
Ireland	IE
Iceland	IS
Italy	IT
Latvia	LV
Lithuania	LT
Luxembourg	LU
Malta	MT
Montenegro	ME
Netherlands	NL
North Macedonia	MK
Norway	NO
Poland	PL
Portugal	PT
Romania	RO
Serbia	RS
Slovakia	SK
Slovenia	SI
Spain	ES
Sweden	SE
Türkiye	TR

Annex

Table 2. **Summary of countries implementing EU priorities in line with their NIP (2020–2025), by priority and thematic category**

EU priority area	Thematic category	Countries reporting developments
Agile and resilient VET, adaptive to labour market needs	Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses	AL, AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, LU, LV, ME, MK, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK, TR
	Integrating digital skills and competences into VET curricula and programmes	AL, AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, LT, LU, LV, ME, MK, MT, PL, PT, RO, RS, SI, SK, TR
	Integrating green transition and sustainability into VET curricula and programmes	AL, AT, DE, DK, EE, FR, HU, ME, MK, PL, PT, SE, SI, TR
	Developing and updating learning resources and materials, mostly digital	AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, DK, ES, HR, HU, LU, ME, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, SI
	Establishing and developing skills intelligence systems, including graduate tracking	AL, BE-FL, CY, EE, FR, HR, HU, LV, MT, PL, RO, SI, SK, TR
	Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET	AL, AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, HU, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, TR
	Acquiring key competences	AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, LU, ME, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SI, SK
	Reinforcing WBL, including apprenticeships	AL, AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, IS, IT, LT, LV, ME, MK, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SI, SK, TR
Flexible VET, providing progression and LLL opportunities	Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs	AT, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, LU, LV, NL, NO, PL, PT, SE, SK
	Providing financial and non-financial incentives to learners, VET providers and companies	BE-FL, BE-FR, CY, DE, DK, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK
	Diversifying modes of learning: face-to-face, digital and/or blended learning; and adaptable/flexible training formats	AL, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, LU, LV, ME, MT, NO, PT, SI
	Using learning-outcomes-based approaches and modularisation	AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, LT, LU, LV, NO, PT, RO
	Developing and applying qualifications smaller/shorter than full	BE-FL, DE, FI, FR, HR, HU, IT, LV, ME, MT, NL, PL, PT, SK
	Learners' opportunities for accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally	AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CY, DE, ES, FR, HU, IT, LT, ME, MK, MT, NO, PT, RS, SE, SK
Innovative and excellent VET	Supporting CoVEs	AT, BE-FR, BG, DE, DK, EE, ES, FR, HR, HU, LT, MK, NO, PL, SK, TR
	Modernising infrastructure for vocational training, including for digital and green skills	AL, AT, BE-FL, BG, CY, DE, DK, EL, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LV, ME, MK, NO, PL, PT, RS, SI, SK, TR

EU priority area	Thematic category	Countries reporting developments
Attractive VET, based on modern and digitalised provision	Permeability between IVET and CVET and general and vocational pathways, academic and professional higher education	AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, HU, LT, ME, MK, NL, NO, PT, RO, RS, SE, SK
	Expanding VET programmes to EQF levels 5–8	AT, DE, IT, MK, NO, PT, RO, RS, SK
	Systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuing professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers, including for digital and green skills	AL, AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CZ, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, LU, LV, ME, MK, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK
	Lifelong guidance	AL, AT, BE-FR, CY, DE, DK, ES, FR, HU, IS, ME, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SK, TR
	Mobility of learners and staff	AT, BE-FL, DE, DK, FR, HR, LT, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL
	Internationalisation in education and VET, including international skills competitions	AT, CY, DE, DK, EE, EL, HR, LV, NO, PT, PL
	Promotion of and targeted campaigns on VET and LLL	AT, BE-FR, BG, DE, DK, EE, FR, HR, HU, IT, IS, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO
Inclusive VET	Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training	AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, ME, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR
VET underpinned by QA	Further developing national QA systems	AL, AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, CY, CZ, EE, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, LV, ME, MK, MT, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SI, SK, TR
	Carrying out EQAVET peer reviews	AT, BE-FL, BE-FR, BG, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FI, HR, HU, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PT, RO, RS, SI, SK

Table 3. **Recent VET graduates (20–34 years old) with work-based training for at least part of their studies (%; change over time in pp), 2021–2024**

Time	2021	2022	2023	2024	Change over time (pp)
EU-27	60.5 ***	60.3	64.6	65.3	▲ 4.8
BE	45.1 ***	49.0	44.8	48.8 ***	▲ 3.7
BG	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
CZ	21.2 ***	18.4	16.1	13.4	▼ -7.8
DK	n/a	65.3	70.6	78.8	n/a
DE	96.2 **	94.9 *	94.1 *	94.5 ***	▼ -1.7
EE	73.5 ***	78.9	83.7	79.8	▲ 6.3
IE	27.8 **	27.7 ***	39.2	48.7 ***	▲ 20.9
EL	18.6 ***	35.7	35.4	15.0 ***	▼ -3.6
ES	95.0 ***	98.6	96.7	90.8 ***	▼ -4.2
FR	70.3 ***	70.5	68.3	82.4	▲ 12.1
HR	39.5 ***	39.6	39.7	38.3	▼ -1.2
IT	31.8 ***	25.9	25.9	24.7	▼ -7.1
CY	33.2 **	42.6 *	35.2 *	n/a	n/a
LV	n/a	n/a	n/a	34.9 *	n/a
LT	48.7 ***	46.7	57.5	59.5	▲ 10.8
LU	32.1 ***	33.7	34.5	n/a	n/a
HU	29.7 **	32.4	25.6 *	43.1	▲ 13.4
MT	47.2 ***	49.6 *	55.7	52.6 *	▲ 5.4
NL	95.1 ***	95.1	94.9	94.3	▼ -0.8
AT	91.8 ***	89.8	91.2	84.7	▼ -7.1
PL	11.6 ***	16.3	58.4 **	62.0 *	▲ 50.4
PT	76.8 ***	75.3	74.2	77.8	▲ 1.0
RO	7.1 ***	8.4	8.1	7.2	▲ 0.1
SI	73.9 ***	72.8	70.8 b	75.1	▲ 1.2
SK	56.9 ***	56.5 ***	62.1	58.5	▲ 1.6
FI	85.7 ***	77.4	76.7 *	79.3 *	▼ -6.4
SE	65.9 ***	63.4	65.7	64.6	▼ -1.3

(*) Low reliability.

(**) Break in time series, low reliability.

(***) Break in time series.

(n/a) Not applicable.

NB: Legend 1. Colours in the yearly data columns indicate progress towards the target. Green – the target has been achieved or the value exceeds the target; yellow – the target has not been achieved but progress is close, as the value is within 10 pp of the target; red – the target is still far from being achieved, with the value more than 10 pp below the target. Legend 2. Colours in the change over time column indicate the direction of change over time, regardless of target achievement. Green – positive change over time; red – negative change over time. The change is expressed in pp.

Source: [Cedefop European VET Policy Dashboard](#) and [Eurostat data](#).

Table 4. **Employment rate of VET graduates (20–34 years old) (%; change over time in pp), 2020–2024**

Time	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Change over time (pp)
EU-27	75.9	76.0 ***	79.7	80.9	80.0	▲ 4.1
BE	76.5	71.5 ***	79.6	80.9	63.9 ***	▼ -12.6
BG	69.5 *	72.2 **	64.7 *	78.4	66.2 **	▼ -3.3
CZ	84.8	84.1 ***	86.0	85.2	88.3	▲ 3.5
DK	84.4	83.9 ***	87.3	90.6 ***	87.7	▲ 3.3
DE	91.0 ***	91.5 ***	93.2	92.6	92.2 ***	▲ 1.2
EE	80.3	70.6 ***	75.1	84.6	74.7	▼ -5.6
IE	73.5	79.6 ***	72.1	81.8	89.9 ***	▲ 16.4
EL	43.7	50.4 ***	59.8	67.4	69.5 ***	▲ 25.8
ES	50.3	66.5 *d	65.9 d	65.8 d	68.6 d	▲ 18.3
FR	68.5	68.3 *d	68.9 d	75.6 d	73.0 d	▲ 4.5
HR	73.7	71.3 ***	76.5	69.8	75.7	▲ 2.0
IT	53.4	53.9 ***	60.7	62.2	63.7	▲ 10.3
CY	64.4 *	74.7 **	78.3	71.4 *	90.5 *	▲ 26.1
LV	70.2	73.5 **	75.2 *	74.8 *	69.7 *	▼ -0.5
LT	56.8	69.8 ***	71.6	71.3	76.6	▲ 19.8
LU	n/a *	77.0 ***	93.9	80.0	n/a *	n/a
HU	80.0	82.4 ***	87.2	83.8	84.2	▲ 4.2
MT	87.9	76.8 **	79.6 *	95.8 *	90.5 *	▲ 2.6
NL	84.7	92.0 ***	92.8	91.6	90.5	▲ 5.8
AT	85.4	86.0 ***	87.1	89.2	85.3	▼ -0.1
PL	78.0	75.6 ***	82.3	78.7	75.4	▼ -2.6
PT	73.4	63.3 ***	82.8	76.7	75.5	▲ 2.1
RO	68.7	61.4 ***	57.7	66.2	65.7	▼ -3.0
SI	71.6	78.0 ***	77.6 *	82.8 **	80.6 *	▲ 9.0
SK	80.7	75.3 ***	78.7 ***	76.8	85.6	▲ 4.9
FI	74.6	72.4 ***	80.1	80.6	77.0	▲ 2.4
SE	85.3	90.1 ***	87.6	86.2	84.9	▼ -0.4

(*) Low reliability.

(**) Break in time series, low reliability.

(***) Break in time series.

(d) Definition differs.

(*d) Break in time series, definition differs.

(n/a) Not applicable.

NB: Legend 1. Colours in the yearly data columns indicate progress towards the target. Green – the target has been achieved or the value exceeds the target; yellow – the target has not been achieved but progress is close, as the value is within 10 pp of the target; red – the target is still far from being achieved, with the value more than 10 pp below the target. Legend 2. Colours in the change over time column indicate the direction of change over time, regardless of target achievement. Green – positive change over time; red – negative change over time. The change is expressed in pp.

Source: [Cedefop European VET Policy Dashboard](#) and [Eurostat data](#).

Figure 3. EU-27+ progress of measures to make VET agile, by thematic category, 2020–2025

	Significant progress	Some progress	Little progress	No progress
Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses - Integrating green transition and sustainability into VET curricula and programmes - Integrating digital skills and competences into VET curricula and programmes	AT 8 BE-FR 1 BE-FL 2 BG 3 CY 3 DE 6 DK 6 EE 2 EL 2 ES 3 FR 3 HR 3 HU 5 IT 1 LU 2 LV 1 NL 1 NO 1 PL 7 PT 5 RO 2 SE 1 SI 4 SK 3	IT 2 LT 2 NL 1 PT 1 RO 1 SI 1	BG 1 CY 1	CY 2 DK 1 FI 1 MT 1 PL 4 SE 2
Developing and updating learning resources and materials	BG 3 DE 2 LU 2 PL 5 PT 2	AT 1 BE-FL 1 CY 1 DE 2 ES 1 HR 1 HU 4 NL 1 NO 1		DK 1
Establishing and developing skills intelligence systems	CY 3 HU 2 LV 1 PL 2 SI 1	FR 1 HR 1 SK 1	BE-FL 1 EE 1	MT 1 PL 2 SI 1
Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET	BE-FL 3 ES 1 DE 3 BG 2 LV 2 LT 2 PL 3 NL 1 HU 1	NL 2 SK 2		IT 1 MT 2 SK 1
Acquiring key competences	AT 2 BE-FR 2 BG 1 CY 2 DE 3 DK 1 ES 2 FR 1 HU 7 IS 1 LU 1 NL 1 PT 4 SK 1	AT 1 BE-FL 1 CY 1 DE 4 DK 1 IT 3 LT 2 NL 2 PL 2 RO 2	CY 1	NL 1 PL 6

	Significant progress	Some progress	Little progress	No progress
Reinforcing WBL, including apprenticeships	AT 5 BE-FL 2 BE-FR 1 CY 2 DE 4 DK 1 EL 1 ES 2 FR 1 HR 1 HU 7 IT 3 LT 2 LV 1 NL 2 NO 1 PL 2 PT 2 RO 2 SI 1	AT 2 EE 2 ES 1 FR 2 PL 2 LV 1 SI 1		DK 1 SK 1
Developing national qualification frameworks	AT 2 BE-FL 2 FR 2 HU 1 IT 1 LV 1 NO 1 PL 2 PT 2	AT 1	BG 1 EE 1 FI 1 NO 1 SE 1 SK 3	PL 1
Coordinating VET and other policies	BE-FR 2 BG 2 CY 2 DE 4 FR 1 HU 3 IS 1 IT 2 LT 1 LV 2 PL 1 PT 1 RO 1 SK 1	BE-FR 1 DE 3 DK 1 HU 6 LU 1 PL 1 SK 1		

NB: The figure shows progress on NIP measures for each country, meaning that a single country can have measures at different stages of progress. Each EU-27+ country code is followed by the number of measures analysed (see Section 1.1 for an explanation of the progress stages).

Source: [Cedefop & ReferNet](#) (2026).

Figure 4. EU-27+ progress of measures to make VET flexible, by thematic category, 2020–2025

	Significant progress	Some progress	Little progress	No progress
Using learning-outcome-based approaches and modularisation	BE-FR 1 CY 1 HU 1 PT 2 BE-FL 1 ES 2 LT 1 RO 1	LV 1		LU 1
Diversifying modes of learning	BE-FR 1 BG 1 EL 1 HU 3 BE-FL 2 DE 2 ES 1 PT 2			FI 1 SI 1 MT 1
Using EU transparency tools	AT 1 ES 1 BG 1 PL 1			
Developing and applying qualifications smaller/shorter than full	BE-FL 2 FI 1 LV 1 PL 1 DE 1 FR 1 NL 1 PT 1		SK 1	IT 1 PL 1 MT 2
Learners' opportunities for accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally	CY 1 ES 1 PT 1 DE 1 HU 1 SE 1	AT 2 BG 1 IT 1 BE-FL 1 FR 1 SK 1		AT 1 SE 1 MT 1 SK 1
Optimising VET funding and providing financial and non-financial incentives to learners, companies and VET providers	CY 2 DK 5 ES 2 HR 1 LV 1 NO 2 RO 2 SK 2 DE 3 EL 1 FR 2 HU 2 NL 2 PT 1 SI 1	BE-FL 1 FR 1 SK 1 BE-FR 1 HU 1	CY 1 FI 1	
Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs	BE-FR 2 DE 2 EE 1 FR 2 LU 2 NO 1 PT 3 SK 1 CY 3 DK 6 ES 1 HU 2 LV 2 PL 1 SE 1	BG 1 ES 1 LV 1 SE 1 DE 3 FR 1 PT 2		AT 1 PL 4 NL 1

NB: The figure shows progress on NIP measures for each country, meaning that a single country can have measures at different stages of progress. Each EU-27+ country code is followed by the number of measures analysed (see Section 1.1 for an explanation of the progress stages).

Source: [Cedefop & ReferNet](#) (2026).

Figure 5. **EU-27+ progress of measures to make VET excellent and innovative, by thematic category, 2020–2025**

	Significant progress	Some progress	Little progress	No progress
Modernising infrastructure for vocational training - Improving digital infrastructure of VET provision - Making VET institutions sustainable and green	AT 1 BE-FL 1 BG 1 CY 3 DE 2 DK 1 EL 1 HU 4 LT 1 LV 1 PL 1 PT 1 SI 1	BE-FL 1		CY 1
Supporting CoVEs	BG 1 HR 1 DK 1 ES 1 HU 2 LT 1 NO 1 SK 1	AT 2	EE 1	

NB: The figure shows progress on NIP measures for each country, meaning that a single country can have measures at different stages of progress. Each EU-27+ country code is followed by the number of measures analysed (see Section 1.1 for an explanation of the progress stages).

Source: [Cedefop & ReferNet](#) (2026).

Figure 6. **EU-27+ progress of measures to make VET attractive, by thematic category, 2020–2025**

	Significant progress	Some progress	Little progress	No progress
Expansion of VET programmes to EQF levels 5-8	AT 2 PT 1 RO 1	DE 1		SK 1
Systematic approaches to, and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers - Attractiveness of the teaching and training profession/career - Supporting teachers and trainers for the green transition and sustainability - Supporting teachers and trainers for and through the digital transition	AT 2 BE-FL 4 CY 3 DK 2 ES 1 HU 2 LT 1 PT 1 SI 2 BE-FR 1 BG 2 DE 3 EE 1 FR 1 LV 1 PL 1 RO 3	HR 2 IT 1 LV 2 LT 1 NL 1	CY 1	AT 2 FI 1 SK 1 SI 1
Promoting strategies and campaigns for VET and LLL EU and international skills competitions	DE 2 EE 1 NL 1 PT 2 DK 1 HR 1 PL 4	AT 1 DE 1 LV 1 NL 2 PL 1 PT 1 RO 1		AT 1 BG 1 IS 1 MT 1 PL 1
Permeability between IVET and CVET and general and vocational pathways, academic and professional HE	AT 1 CY 1 DK 1 FR 1 HU 2 NL 1 RO 1 SK 1 BE-FL 1 DE 1 FI 1 ES 1 LT 1 NO 1 SE 1	AT 1 BE-FR 1 EE 1 FR 1 DE 1 HU 1 NL 2 PT 1		AT 2 DK 1
Lifelong guidance	AT 1 CY 1 DK 1 FR 1 BE-FR 1 DE 2 ES 1 PL 1	HU 2 IS 1 NL 1		AT 1 MT 1 PL 1
- VET internationalisation strategies - Transnational VET initiatives, including joint VET programmes	AT 1 EE 2 NO 1 DE 1 LV 1	HR 1 LV 1		AT 1
Mobility of learners and staff	AT 1 DE 1 FR 1 LV 1 BE-FL 1 DK 1 HR 1 PL 1		AT 1	MT 1

NB: The figure shows progress on NIP measures for each country, meaning that a single country can have measures at different stages of progress. Each EU-27+ country code is followed by the number of measures analysed (see Section 1.1 for an explanation of the progress stages).

Source: [Cedefop & ReferNet](#) (2026).

Figure 7. **EU-27+ progress of measures to make VET inclusive, by thematic category, 2020–2025**

	Significant progress	Some progress	Little progress	No progress
Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training	AT 4 BE-FR 1 BE-FL 1 CY 1 DE 2 DK 3 ES 1 HU 3 IS 1 LV 1 NL 3 NO 1 PL 1 PT 4 SK 2	AT 1 BE-FL 2 DE 1 ES 1 FR 1 LT 1 LV 1 NL 3 RO 1	CY 1 EE 1 FI 1	AT 1 FR 1 LU 1 PL 1 SE 1

NB: The figure shows progress on NIP measures for each country, meaning that a single country can have measures at different stages of progress. Each EU-27+ country code is followed by the number of measures analysed (see Section 1.1 for an explanation of the progress stages).

Source: [Cedefop & ReferNet](#) (2026).

Figure 8. **EU-27+ progress of measures to make VET quality-assured, by thematic category, 2020–2025**

	Significant progress	Some progress	Little progress	No progress
Further developing national quality assurance systems	AT 1 CY 1 EE 1 FR 1 HR 1 HU 1 LT 1 LV 1 PL 1 SI 1	BE-FR 1 BE-FL 1 HU 1 PT 1 SK 1	RO 1	

NB: The figure shows progress on NIP measures for each country, meaning that a single country can have measures at different stages of progress. Each EU-27+ country code is followed by the number of measures analysed (see Section 1.1 for an explanation of the progress stages).

Source: [Cedefop & ReferNet](#) (2026).



Future-proofing VET in Europe – Progress, challenges and policy directions

A synthesis of national policy developments from 2020 to 2025

This joint Cedefop and ETF publication examines how EU Member States, Iceland, Norway and five candidate countries have implemented the common vocational education and training (VET) priorities set out in the Council Recommendation on VET and in the Osnabrück Declaration.

The report is based on integrated monitoring that covers national implementation plans, policy developments, interviews with national stakeholders and statistical data. It synthesises developments between 2020 and 2025, reported by the countries on how they worked to make their VET systems agile and resilient, flexible, innovative, excellent, attractive, inclusive and quality-assured.

The analysis shows substantial progress in modernising curricula, strengthening work-based learning, expanding flexible learning pathways and upgrading infrastructure, while progress on inclusiveness and attractiveness has advanced more unevenly. Looking forward, the report concludes that coordinated governance, sustainable funding, investment in teacher and trainer professional development and realistic reform ambitions are essential for competitive, inclusive and future-ready VET systems.



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