

VET in Bulgaria

The Ministry of Education and Science coordinates national policy on vocational education and training (VET). Sports and culture ministries are in charge of VET schools in the respective study fields. The VET Act defines two target groups: school-age learners and adults (16+ not in formal education and training). Young people usually enrol in VET from age 14.

The Pre-school and School Education Act (2015) and amendments to the VET Act (2016) rearranged the VET school network and increased the share of work-based learning in VET. It also introduced a more flexible two-stage secondary education.

VET programmes for school-age learners have a vocational and a general part; graduates acquire qualifications for both. VET programmes provided by training centres and colleges for adults do not include a general education part and lead to a VET qualification only. VET qualifications can also be acquired through validation of prior learning by passing an exam, as with regular VET learners.

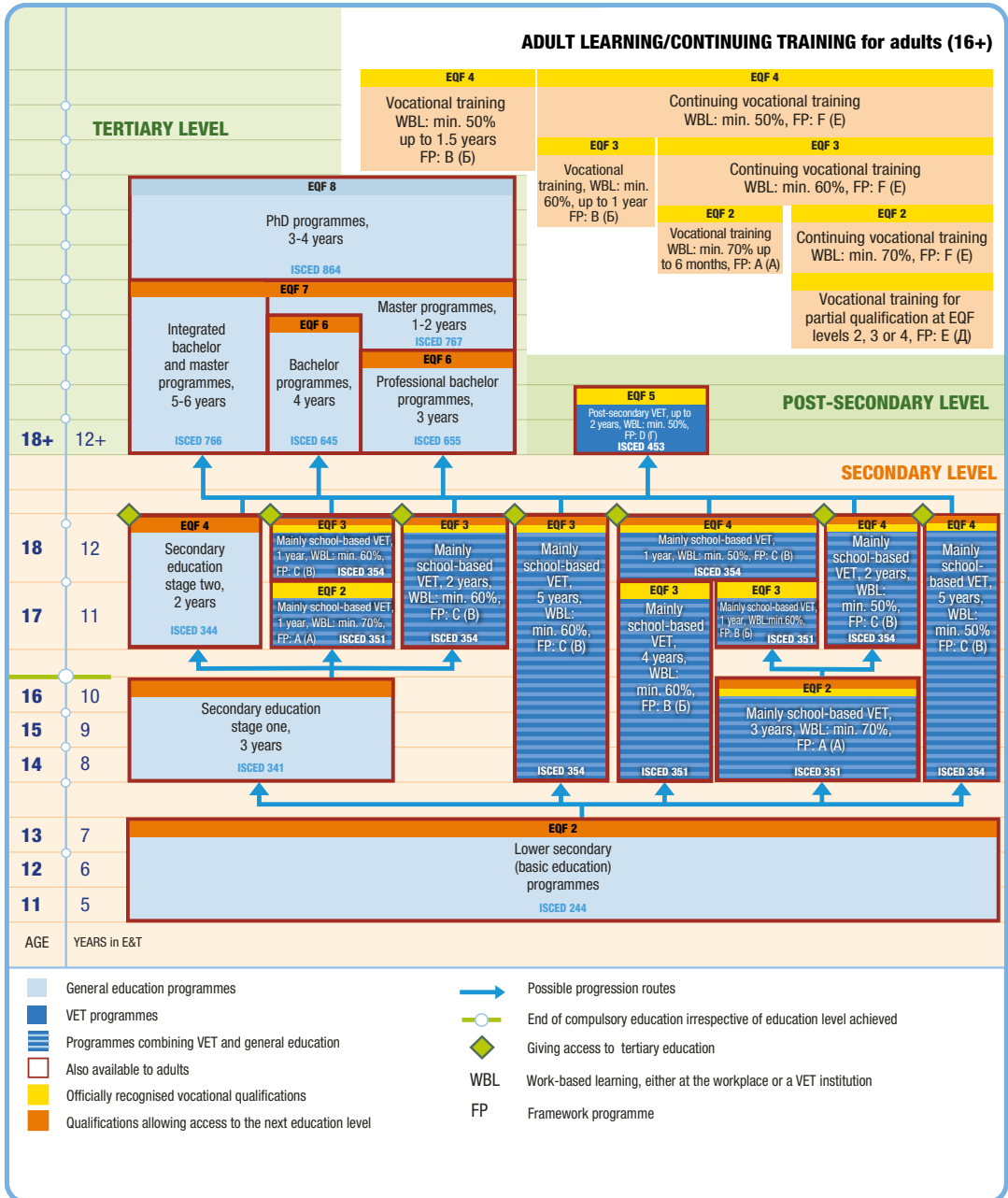
The main VET providers are the State, municipal or private schools, vocational gymnasiums, art and sports schools, VET colleges, and licensed vocational training centres. State education standards specify the content of VET qualifications. Four national VET qualification levels are referenced to the European qualifications framework. The legal framework distinguishes six types of initial and continuing VET (IVET and CVET) programme types (called ‘framework programmes’), that define EQF/NQF levels, age and entry requirements, and regulate educational form, content and duration.

- A (A): ‘second chance’ IVET programmes lead to EQF level 2 qualifications at schools and training centres. For school-age learners they last one or three years; for adults up to six months.
- B (B): IVET and CVET programmes leading to qualifications at EQF levels 3 (one or four years) and 3 and 4 in adult learning (up to one and a half years) at schools and training centres.
- C (B): mainstream IVET and CVET programmes leading to EQF level 3 and 4 qualifications at VET schools. Duration is one to five years and they give access to higher education, provided learners have passed final matriculation exams.

- D (Γ): IVET and CVET programmes for adults only leading to qualifications at EQF level 5 at VET schools and colleges with a maximum duration of two years.
- E (Δ): up to one-year IVET and CVET programmes leading to partial qualifications at EQF levels 2 to 4 at schools and training centres.
- F (E): CVET programmes for adults (16+) leading to qualifications at EQF levels 2 to 4: full or partial, updating qualifications already acquired. The programmes are provided by schools and training centres and duration is defined by training providers.

Work-based learning forms a substantial part (50% to 70% or more) of all VET programmes. Most is offered by schools, with the share of work-based learning decreasing with programme level. Since 2014, dual VET has started to evolve. Practical training in a company alternates with periods of theory in a school or another VET provider. School-age learners are trained by companies at least two to three days per week in the final grades (11 and 12). Both school-age learners and adults receive remuneration from the employer. While legislation encourages dual VET, its implementation is still mostly project-based.

Social partners have decision-making and advisory roles in shaping VET through the economic and social council, as well as other national councils. Employers are actively involved in designing and updating State education standards, a process coordinated by the National Agency for VET. Representatives from employers’ organisations and trade unions are members of examination boards set up by VET providers.



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

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