



spotlight on VET

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VET in Portugal

Central government has overall responsibility for education and training. The Ministry of Education is responsible for most types of education, including school-based vocational education and training (VET), while the Ministry of Employment is responsible for the apprenticeship system, CVET and active labour market policies. The ministries share responsibilities for school-based VET and develop key policies, while the respective regional bodies are responsible for implementation. The national qualifications system (SNQ) reorganised VET in education and in the labour market into a single system.

Young people can choose different types of VET programme if they meet admission requirements in terms of age and educational background. Permeability is ensured between general and VET programmes.

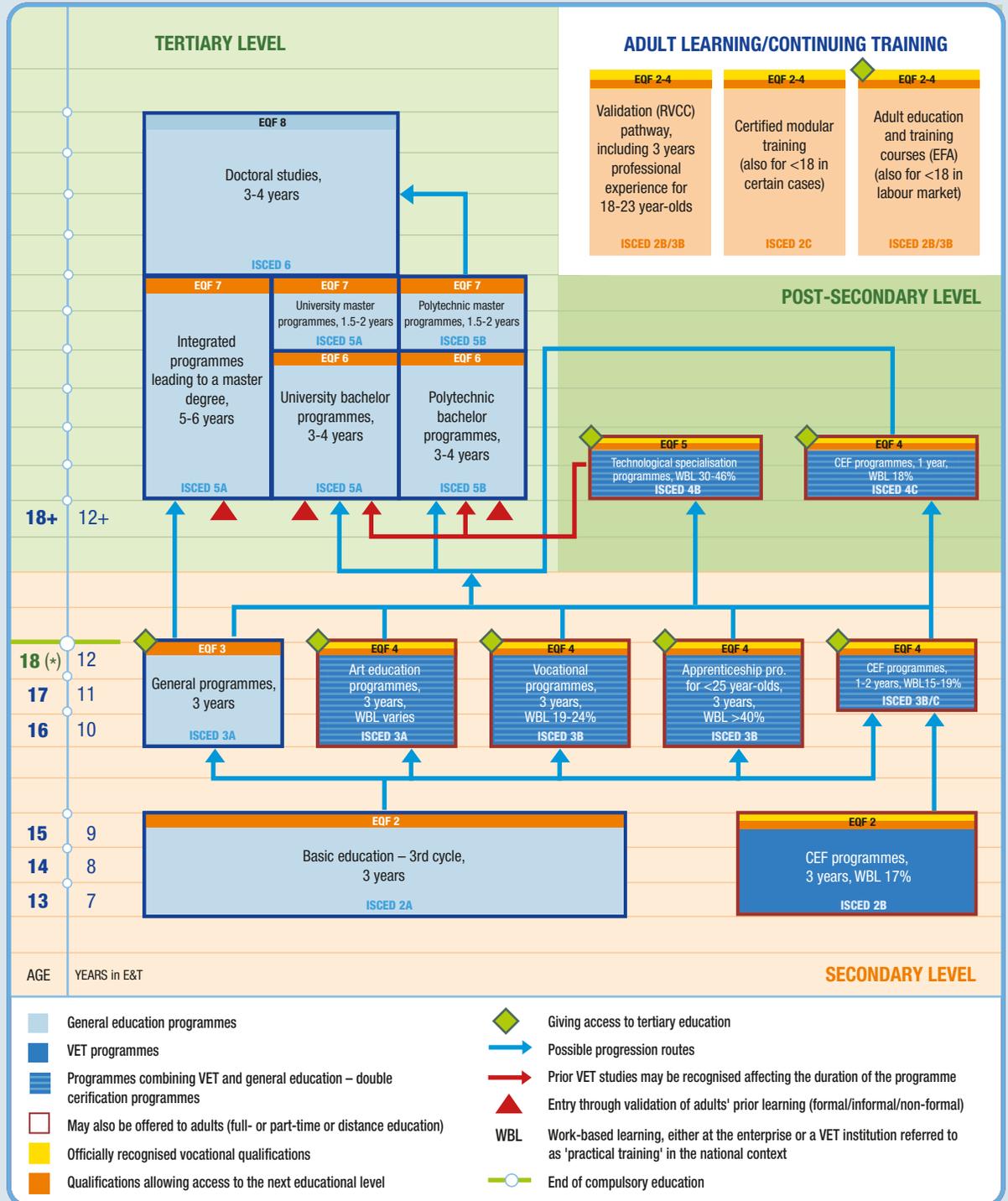
- **VET programmes at basic education level** (VET programmes for young people: *cursos de educação e formação de jovens* (CEF), ISCED 2B) are school-based and include work-based learning (WBL, referred to as ‘practical training’ in the national context). Learners need to be over 15 and should have completed the first cycle of basic education (four years). They award qualifications at level 2 of the national (QNQ) and the European qualifications framework (EQF). They are designed for young people at risk of leaving school early or who have already left the school system before completing their compulsory education; they allow progression to several types of programme, including other CEF programmes available at secondary and post-secondary level. Since 2012, vocational programmes for youngsters aged 13 or older have been introduced in some schools as pilot projects.
- **VET programmes at secondary education level** (vocational programmes, CEF and art education programmes, ISCED 3) are school-based and include WBL, except for some art education programmes. Learners need to be over 15 and should have completed basic education. Successful learners are granted both a secondary level education certificate and an occupational qualification at EQF level 4, which may lead either to employment or further education, including higher education.

- **Apprenticeship programmes** (ISCED 3B) include 40% workplace training. A contract between the enterprise and the apprentice is compulsory. Access is possible for learners below 25 who have completed basic education. Courses are specifically designed to help young people enter the labour market, although they also allow further studies in higher education. Successful learners are granted double certification at EQF level 4.
- **Programmes at post-secondary non-tertiary level** (ISCED 4) combine general, scientific and technological training in school with work-based learning. WBL is 30 to 46% in technological specialisation programmes (TSP) and 18% in post-secondary CEF. Learners need to be over 18, have acquired EQF level 4 or be in the last year of secondary education or have a higher education diploma. These programmes award qualifications at EQF level 4 (CEF) or 5 (TSP) and a technological specialisation diploma and can also be provided in higher education institutions.

Over the past decade, policy developments have aimed at raising adults’ qualifications by widening access to VET to increase participation.

- **Adult education and training courses** (EFA, ISCED 2B/3B) are flexible training schemes available for people over 18 who wish to complete basic or secondary education and/or obtain an occupational qualification (EQF levels 2-4).
- **Certified modular training courses** (ISCED 2C) are credit-based and allow learners to select individual units. They generally address people over 18 who have not completed basic or secondary education/training. Upon successful completion of each module, and assessment by a technical committee, a final certificate and diploma are issued (EQF levels 2-4).
- **Recognition, validation and certification of competences** (RVCC, ISCED 2B/3B) is based on the principle of lifelong learning and targets people over 18. The two different RVCC processes (general ‘academic’ and vocational) can lead to either a basic or secondary level education certificate (at EQF levels 2-4) or an occupational certificate (VET qualification at EQF levels 2-4). Adults lacking competences required for a qualification are guided to relevant training programmes to acquire them.

VET in the Portuguese education and training system



NB: The vertical axis is for reference purposes and applies only to the general education programmes. ISCED 1997 was used on the chart. Conversion to ISCED 2011 is ongoing.
 Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Portugal.

Distinctive features of VET

Key principles of VET provision are the wide range of programmes accessible to young people and adults, the link between VET provision and labour market needs, and flexibility in type and duration of courses for adults. VET learners have many possibilities to access programmes at higher levels or higher education. Programmes at post-secondary level award credits that may be recognised when applying to a higher education programme in the same field of study. Another feature promoting transition is that adults over 23 can access higher education through exams and have their training and professional experience recognised. Transparency of qualifications to learners and employers, and compatibility between EQF and QNQ, are also key principles. Certification of publicly-funded VET providers and trainers is mandatory and, along with aspects such as external evaluation, ensures VET quality.

In 2007, VET was reformed and the national qualifications system (SNQ) was established. Its aims were to promote upper secondary education as the minimum level of attainment for all, to expand IVET options and provide flexible paths to adults. The reform was a milestone in tackling the qualification deficit and the high rate of early leaving from education and training. To modernise the institutional framework, the SNQ adopted a governance model based on involvement of the different VET providers, sector councils, and social partners, establishing common objectives and instruments. To support the SNQ, the following complementary instruments were created:

- QNQ, the national qualifications framework (designed in line with EQF) has eight levels and a set of descriptors specifying learning outcomes at different qualification levels;
- CNQ, the national catalogue of qualifications (in line with the QNQ) is a strategic tool to manage and regulate all qualifications, except those at higher level. The purpose of the catalogue is to:
 - develop competence-based qualifications, to regulate double certification, and to aid designing learning programmes;
 - provide a reference framework for RVCC processes;
 - promote the transparency of qualifications to learners and employers;
 - promote efficiency of public funding;
 - modularise the training offer.
- The *Individual booklet of competences* is an official document used to register the competences acquired throughout life, those within and outside the CNQ. It gives employers an instrument to assess the competences of the candidates for jobs.

Challenges and policy responses

Education and training challenges high on the policy agenda still include:

- further reducing early leaving from education and training and preventing the entry of unqualified young people in the labour market;
- reinforcing efforts to increase educational attainment of the adult population by widening access to learning through modularisation;
- modernising learning provision by developing new learning methodologies and providing a wider variety of VET courses leading to competence-based qualifications;
- organising IVET and CVET provision more in line with present and future labour market requirements and the needs of emerging economic sectors;
- developing the qualification level of vulnerable groups and promoting their socioprofessional integration.

Important reforms have been introduced to address lack of progress in education and training in the past. The New opportunities initiative (2005-10) increased VET at upper secondary level, ensured that IVET courses lead to double certification, and was a catalyst for the RVCC system development. To encourage further progress, national authorities are reinforcing measures such as creating centres specialised in high-quality career guidance for young people and adults and expanding the apprenticeship offer.

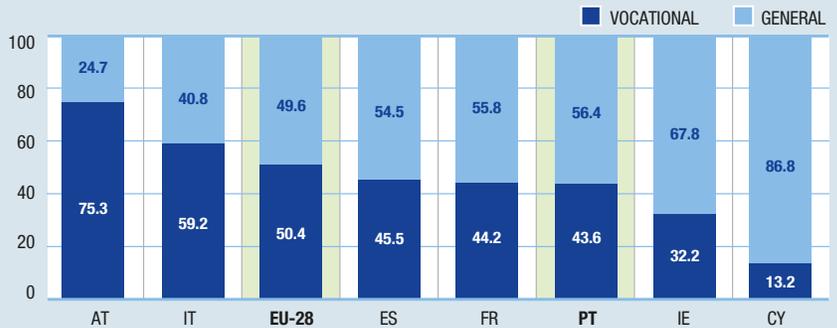


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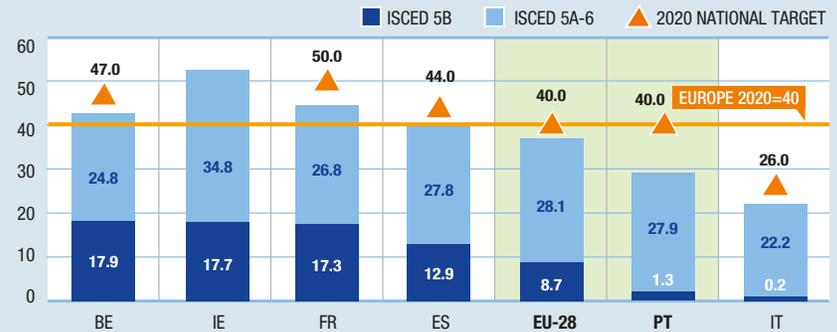
Education and training in figures

Learners in upper secondary education enrolled in vocational and general programmes
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2012



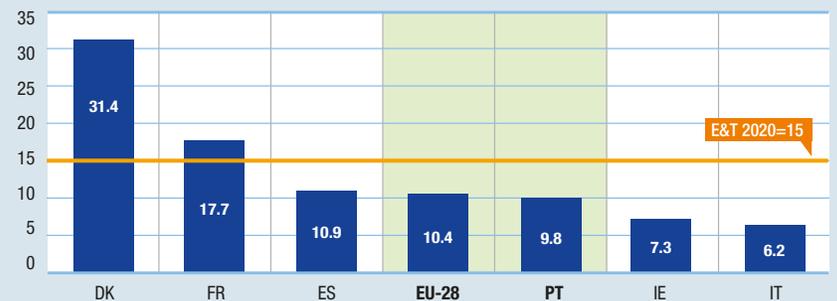
Source: Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 30.5.2014.

Tertiary education by type
% of 30-34 year-olds with tertiary education by type, 2013



Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 19.5.2014.

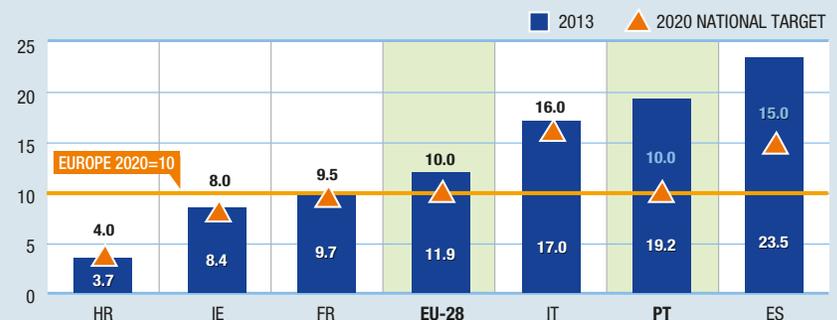
Lifelong learning
% of population aged 25-64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2013



NB: Break in series for France.

Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 19.5.2014.

Early leavers from education and training
% of early leavers from education and training, 2013



NB: Break in series for France.

Source: Eurostat labour force survey, date of extraction 19.5.2014.



Further information

- Cedefop ReferNet Portugal (2013). *VET in Europe – Country report*. http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2013/2013_CR_PT.pdf
- Eurydice (2013). Portugal: overview. In: European Commission (ed.). *Eurypedia*. <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Portugal:overview>

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www.anqep.gov.pt/default.aspx	National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training
www.iefp.pt	Institute for Employment and Vocational Training
www.cnedu.pt	National Council of Education
www.catalogo.anqep.gov.pt	National catalogue of qualifications
www.garantiajovem.pt	Youth guarantee
www.adcoesao.pt/index.html	Cohesion and Development Agency
www.poph.qren.pt	Human potential operational programme
www.ine.pt	Statistics Portugal

This spotlight is based on input from ReferNet Portugal.



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