



spotlight on VET

POLAND

VET in Poland

Management and administration of the vocational education and training (VET) system in Poland has a three-level structure: national (ministries), partially regional (school superintendents, mainly in pedagogical supervision), and district authorities (governing upper secondary schools). Social partners are involved in developing VET by giving opinions on planned changes.

Education policy at secondary level is governed by the Ministry of National Education and other ministries responsible for particular occupations. The Ministry of Science and Higher Education is responsible for VET at higher education level.

VET for young people

Formal VET is provided at upper-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary levels and is mainly school-based. At upper secondary level, students can acquire vocational qualifications in three-year (ISCED-P 353) or four-year (ISCED-P 354) school-based programmes. Both programmes combine general and vocational education. The share of work-based learning (WBL) is 50-60% depending on the programme. In addition to vocational qualifications up to technician level, graduates from four-year programmes can acquire the upper secondary school-leaving certificate (*matura*) giving access to tertiary education and a vocational qualification. General programmes bridging VET and higher education are provided for graduates of the three-year VET programmes.

WBL programmes (apprenticeships) are another VET option for young people. Apprenticeship schemes organised in small and medium-sized enterprises are possible; 60% of three-year upper secondary VET programme students undergo practical training in this form. Apprenticeship programmes start after completion of lower secondary education at age 16 and last 18 or 36 months. The longer programmes prepare for a vocational diploma attested by an external exam at a chamber of crafts or a regional examination board; short apprenticeships prepare only for executing particular tasks.

At post-secondary non-tertiary level, vocational qualifications can be acquired in one- to two-and-a-half year school-based programmes.

These programmes are strictly vocational and do not include general education. The share of WBL is 50-60% depending on the occupation. Such programmes are a good option for upper secondary general programme graduates who do not opt for university education and for four-year VET programme graduates who would like to obtain additional qualifications.

Adult learning and CVET

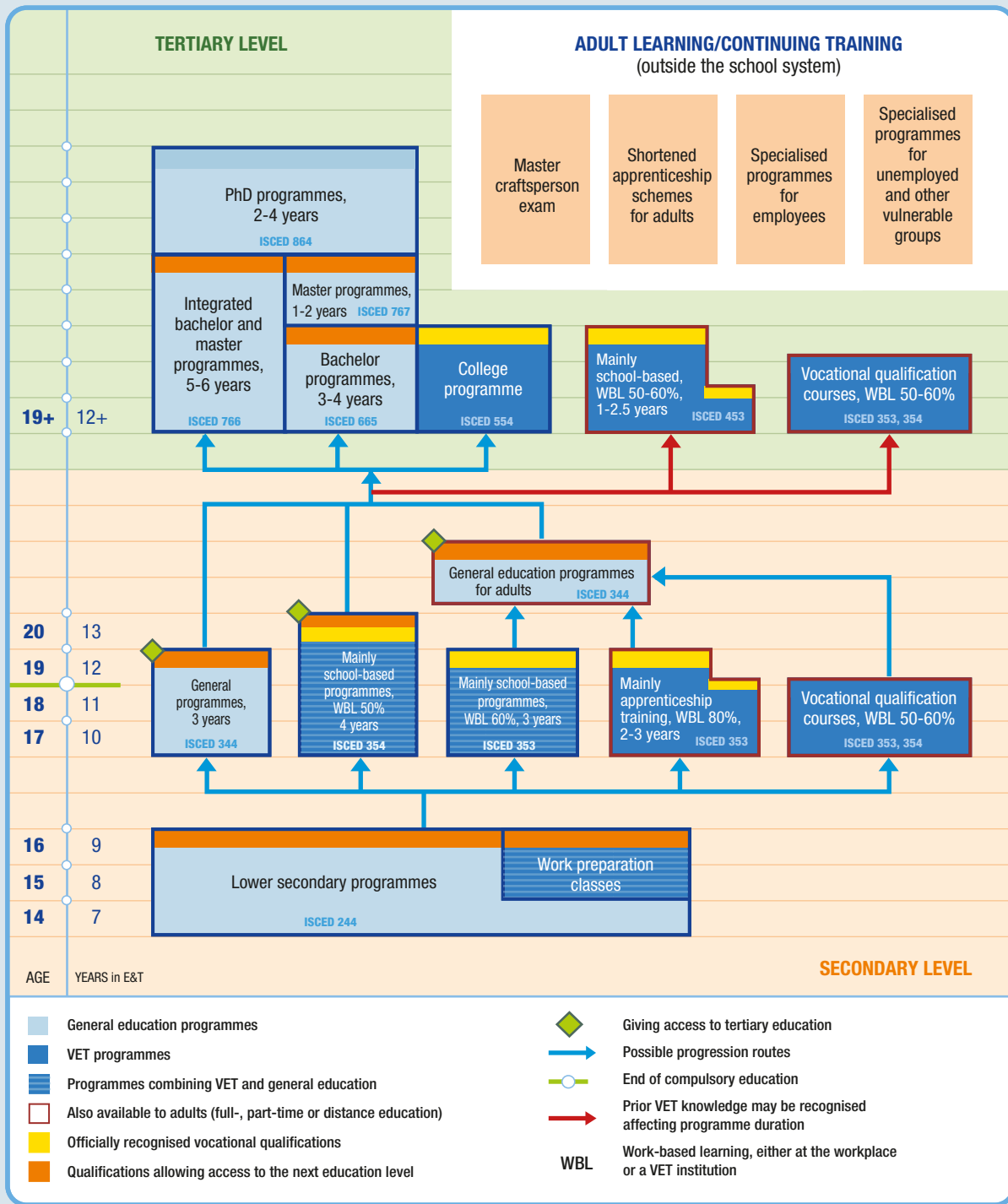
Since 1 September 2012, basic vocational and technical schools for adults have been replaced by a more flexible system of VET courses, enabling adults to acquire either partial or full qualifications. Introducing these courses has created a fast track for adults to gain vocational qualifications. IVET schools offering vocational education for young people now also offer the courses to adults.

VET for adults is organised mainly out of school, in forms, such as:

- vocational qualification courses: completing a vocational qualification course allows adults, if they pass an external examination, to acquire a vocational qualification under the same conditions as IVET students;
- occupational skills courses: courses for separate units of learning outcomes specified in a given qualification;
- courses meeting labour market needs, including those conducted in cooperation with labour offices for occupations and specialisations in the occupations register.

Apprenticeship for adults is the responsibility of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy. This is an active labour market programme, provided by local labour offices; it aims to improve employability of the unemployed and job-seekers by helping them to attest their skills and qualifications formally. Apprenticeship for adults is financed by the labour fund. The apprenticeship for adults programme, consisting of 80% practical training and up to 20% theoretical instruction, has two forms: occupational training lasting 12 to 18 months and leading to the journeyman exam; and training to perform a specific job lasting three to six months.

VET in Poland's education and training system



Distinctive features of VET

The following distinctive features and tools help improve VET quality and attractiveness:

- flexibility and permeability of the system, allowing a choice of different ways of acquiring vocational qualifications and changing the pathway at any point;
- a register classifying occupations and defining separate qualifications for every occupation at upper secondary and post-secondary level that can be acquired in IVET and CVET. The register is consistent with the classification of occupations in the labour market. Each occupation comprises one to three qualifications, which can be acquired through external examinations at a regional examination board. Only after passing exams and obtaining certificates for all qualifications required for a given occupation may a vocational qualification diploma be issued;
- autonomy of VET schools in choosing one of two optional curricula for VET; a subject-centred curriculum or a modular curriculum, which can be easily modified, depending on labour market needs;
- one VET core curriculum for all occupations (since 2012). Separate vocational qualifications within specific occupations are described in the core curriculum for vocational education as a set of expected learning outcomes: knowledge, occupational skills, as well as personal and social competences which allow students to handle their occupational tasks independently;
- possibility to acquire a separate distinctive vocational qualification in a fast and flexible way through vocational qualification courses (since 2012);
- possibility to validate qualifications acquired in different learning contexts, including professional experience, by taking external examinations.

Challenges and policy responses

The main challenges for Polish VET are:

- involving employers in identifying and forecasting skills and qualification needs in the labour market. This would ease developing guidelines for vocational schools in designing their education offer;
- increasing employer engagement in organising practical training in VET and encouraging cooperation between VET schools and higher education institutions;
- developing guidance and counselling for all age groups;
- supporting VET teacher and trainer access to professional development opportunities by encouraging traineeships for teachers and trainers in enterprises.

Several recent initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of National Education address these challenges:

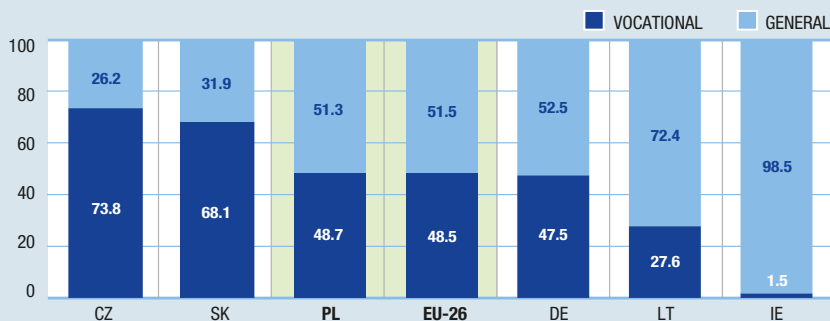
- amending the regulation on the special economic zones of 1st January 2015, which obliges the economic zones to cooperate with vocational schools to promote VET, support vocational counselling and guidance and inspire entrepreneurs and employers to take a more active role in VET development;
- signing an agreement between four ministries: the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, and the Ministry of Treasury to promote VET and support educational and vocational counselling and to encourage entrepreneurs to become more involved in developing education;
- introducing a 'dual system of vocational education and training' by amendment of the regulation on practical training of 15 December 2015, defined as organising theoretical education at school and the practical instruction at workplace. It can be organised both as a work contract signed between an employer and an apprentice/young worker and an agreement on practical training between a VET school principal and an employer.



Education and training in figures

Upper secondary students (ISCED 2011 level 3) enrolled in vocational and general programmes

% of all students in upper secondary education, 2013

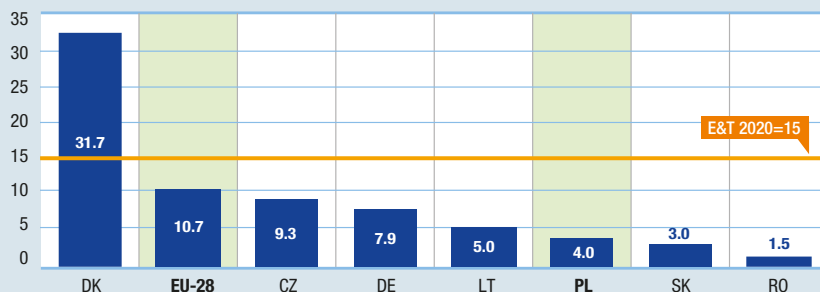


NB: 48.5% is the provisional weighted EU average for 2013 based on available country data (26 countries).

Source: Cedefop calculations, based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 22.7.2015.

Lifelong learning

% of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2014

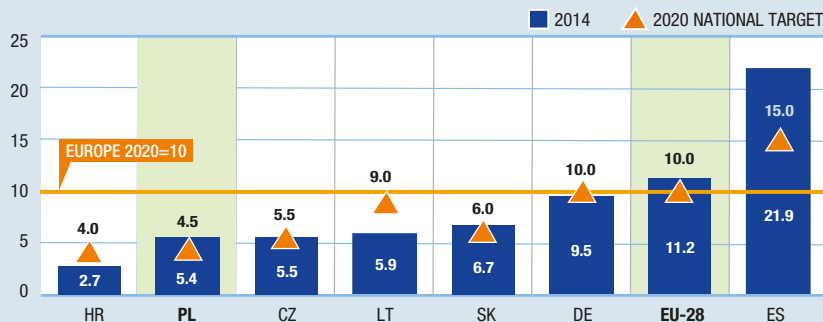


E&T 2020=15

Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 22.7.2015.

Early leavers from education and training

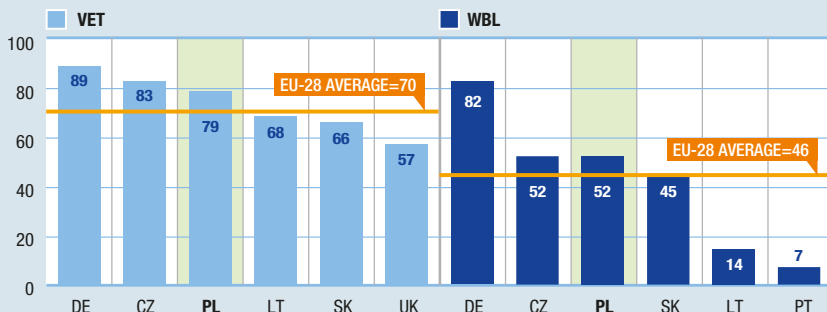
% of early leavers from education and training, 2014



NB: Break in time series in all countries; low reliability in HR; definition for national target differs in LT, DE and ES.

Source: Eurostat labour force survey, date of extraction 22.7.2015.

Share of employees (aged 24-65) with medium-level education (ISCED 3-4) who obtained a vocational qualification, and whose highest level of education involved some learning in a workplace (%, 2014)



EU-28 AVERAGE=70

EU-28 AVERAGE=46

NB: VET: respondents of the survey described their highest qualification as vocational;

WBL: studies involved some learning at a workplace (such as apprenticeships, internships, other forms of work-based learning).

Source: Cedefop European skills and jobs survey, 2014.



Further information

- Cedefop ReferNet Poland (2015). VET in Europe: country report Poland. http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2014/2014_CR_PL.pdf
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www.men.gov.pl	Ministry of National Education
www.mpips.gov.pl	Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy
www.eng.nauka.gov.pl	Ministry of Science and Higher Education
www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl	ESF programmes in Poland
www.stat.gov.pl	Central Statistical Office
www.psz.praca.gov.pl	Public employment services

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