Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015–17

MALTA

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

Cedefop monitoring and analysis of VET policies

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This report was produced by Cedefop and reflects contributions from Cedefop's VET policy and systems team, and Cedefop experts working on common European tools and principles for education and training, and statistics. It is based on detailed information on VET policy implementation submitted by Cedefop's European network of expertise on VET (ReferNet) and other sources.

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Aspects of vocational education and training context in 2015

At the beginning of the reporting period, the proportion of upper secondary students enrolled in vocational education and training (VET) programmes in Malta was below the EU average: 13.3% in 2014 compared to 48% in the EU (Cedefop, 2017a, p. 97); 13% in 2015 compared to 47% in the EU ([1]). 12.7% of upper secondary initial vocational education and training (IVET) students were following work-based programmes in 2014, against 34% in the EU (Cedefop, 2017a, p. 97). Yet, the employment rate of recent upper secondary graduates was well above the EU average: 86.8% in 2014 (European Commission, 2015, p. 6) and 91.6% in 2015 (European Commission, 2015, p. 6) compared to 70.8% and 74.1% in the EU respectively. Adult participation in lifelong learning was low: 7.1% in 2014 (European Commission, 2015, p. 7) and 7.2% in 2015 compared to 10.7% on average in the EU in both years (Cedefop, 2017a, p. 97) (Table 1).

VET in the country was faced with the challenges of better adjusting the skills supply to labour market needs and strengthening partnerships between VET institutions and employers. Steps were being taken to develop a single national apprenticeship scheme, including incentives to ensure employer involvement, and a skills council in charge of ensuring the labour market relevance of VET programmes. On the lifelong learning side, a validation system was being put in place.

([1])   Eurostat, data for 2015.

Table 1. **Framework data: score on VET indicators in Malta and in the EU: 2010, last available year and recent trend**

Indicator label	2010		Last available year			Recent trend (per year)		
	MT [f]	EU [f]	Yr	MT [f]	EU [f]	Range	MT	EU
Access, attractiveness and flexibility								
IVET students as % of all upper secondary students	A	A	'14	13.3 [b]	48.0 [b] E1	'13-'14	▪ 0.4	▪ -0.9
IVET work-based students as % of all upper secondary IVET	A	A	'14	12.7 [b]	34.0 [b] E2	'13-'14	▪ 6.6	▪ 0.1
IVET students with direct access to tertiary education as % of all upper secondary IVET			'14	0.0	69.2 [E3]	'13-'14	▪ 0.0	▪ -1.4
Employees participating in CVT courses (%)	36.0	38.0 [e]	'10	36.0	38.0 [e]			
Employees participating in on-the-job training (%)	15.0	20.0 [e]	'10	15.0	20.0 [e]			
Adults in lifelong learning (%)	6.2		'15	7.2	10.7 [b]	'13-'15	↘ -0.2	→ 0.0
Enterprises providing training (%)	54.0	66.0 [e]	'10	54.0	66.0 [e]			
Female IVET students as % of all female upper secondary students	A	A	'14	11.0 [b]	42.7 [b] E1	'13-'14	▪ 0.1	▪ -1.0
Employees of small firms Participating in CVT courses (%)	15.0	25.0 [e]	'10	15.0	25.0 [e]			
Young VET graduates in further education and training (%)			'15	33.4 [b]	33.0 [b]	'14-'15	▪ 2.7	▪ -0.3
Older adults in lifelong learning (%)	3.2	5.3	'15	3.7	6.9	'10-'15	↗ 0.1	↗ 0.4
Low-educated adults in lifelong learning (%)			'15	2.4 [b] C	4.3 [b C]	'13-'15	↘ -0.1	↘ -0.1
Unemployed adults in lifelong learning (%)	15.7		'15	6.4 [u]	9.5 [b]			
Individuals who wanted to participate in training but did not (%)	23.6 [B]	9.5 [e] B	'11	23.6	9.5 [e]			
Job-related non-formal education and training (%)	94.4 [B]	80.2 [e] B	'11	94.4	80.2 [e]			
Skill development and labour market relevance								
IVET public expenditure (% of GDP)			'13	0.33 [b]	0.56 [b] E4	'12-'13	▪ 0.03	▪ -0.03
IVET public expenditure per student (1 000 PPS units)			'13	6.7 [b]	6.4 [b] E5	'12-'13	▪ 0.5	▪ 0.0
Enterprise expenditure on CVT courses as % of total labour cost	1.4	0.8 [e]	'10	1.4	0.8 [e]			
Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET			'14	1.0 [b]	1.0 [b] E6	'13-'14	▪ 0.0	▪ 0.0
STEM graduates from upper secondary IVET (% of total)	A	A	'14	42.9 [b]	30.0 [b] E7	'13-'14	▪ -8.7	▪ -0.4
Short-cycle VET graduates as % of first time tertiary education graduates			'14	14.7	9.3 [E8]	'13-'14	▪ -3.5	▪ 0.4
Innovative enterprises with supportive training practices (%)	36.9	41.5 [E9]	'12	31.2	41.6 [E9]	'10-'12	▪ -2.9	▪ 0.0
Employment rate for IVET graduates (20- to 34-year-olds)			'15	91.7 [b]	77.2 [b]	'14-'15	▪ -0.7	▪ 0.3
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over general stream)			'15	4.1 [b]	5.3 [b]	'14-'15	▪ -3.5	▪ -1.0

Indicator label	2010		Last available year			Recent trend (per year)		
	MT [f]	EU [f]	Yr	MT [f]	EU [f]	Range	MT	EU
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over low-educated)			'15	23.2 [b]	23.7 [b]	'14-'15	▪ 0.8	▪ -0.1
Workers helped to improve their work by training (%)			'15	91.9	83.7			
Workers with skills matched to their duties (%)	55.3	55.2	'15	59.5	57.3	'10-'15	▪ 0.8	▪ 0.4
Overall transitions and labour market trends								
Early leavers from education and training (%)		13.9	'15	19.8 [b][c]	11.0 [C]	'11-'15	↘ -0.7	↘ -0.6
30- to 34-year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)		33.8	'15	27.8 [b][c]	38.7 [C]	'11-'15	↗ 1.0	↗ 1.0
NEET rate for 18- to 24-year-olds (%)	10.4	16.6	'15	10.4	15.8	'10-'15	↘ -0.1	↘ -0.1
Unemployment rate for 20- to 34-year-olds (%)	6.4	13.1	'15	6.0	12.9	'10-'15	↘ -0.1	↗ 0.1
Employment rate of recent graduates (%)		77.4	'15	95.1 [b][c]	76.9 [C]	'11-'15	↗ 0.8	→ 0.0
Adults with lower level of educational attainment (%)		27.3	'15	56.5 [b][c]	23.5 [C]	'11-'15	↘ -2.0	↘ -0.8
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds (%)		68.6	'15	67.8 [b]	70.0	'11-'15	↗ 1.6	↗ 0.4
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds with lower level of educational attainment (%)		53.4	'15	54.7 [b][c]	52.6 [C]	'11-'15	↗ 1.2	↘ -0.1
Medium/high-qualified employment in 2020 (% of total)			'16	67.5 [D]	82.8 [D]			

(A)   UOE (UNESCO OECD Eurostat) back reconstruction of 2010 values based on ISCED (international standard classification of education) 2011 not yet available.

(B)   AES (adult education survey) 2011, used as proxy for 2010 baseline.

(C)   2014 b flags in Eurostat online tables ignored on the basis of other relevant Eurostat metadata.

(D)   Forecast made in 2016.

(E1)   Based on 28 countries; partial information for NL.

(E2)   Based on 25 countries (missing: ES, PL, RO); partial information for NL.

(E3)   Based on 27 countries (missing: NL); partial information for EL, IT.

(E4)   Based on 19 countries (missing: BE, DK, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, PT, SK).

(E5)   Based on 21 countries (missing: DK, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, PT).

(E6)   Partial information for NL.

(E7)   Based on 25 countries (missing: HR, IT, UK).

(E8)   Based on 23 countries (missing: BE, IE, FR, CY, UK).

(E9)   Based on 22 countries (missing: DE, IE, EL, NL, SI, UK).

(b)   Break after 2010, therefore baseline data not included.

(u)   Eurostat: 'low reliability'.

(z)   Eurostat: 'not applicable'.

(e)   Eurostat: 'estimated'.

NB: EU refers to EU-28, unless otherwise specified. Arrows ↗ or ↘ signal a positive or negative trend based on more than two data points and of magnitude 0.1 per year or more. Trends based on more than two data points but of smaller magnitude are indicated by →; trends based on two points only are marked ▪. Trends are estimated by means of regression models.

Source: Cedefop, 2017a, p. 97.

MTD 1 – All forms of work-based learning with special attention to apprenticeships

VET programmes are offered in Malta at lower and upper-secondary levels (European qualifications framework (EQF) levels 1, 2 and 3), post-secondary non-tertiary level (EQF levels 3, 4 and 5), and tertiary level, and through apprenticeship. At post-secondary and tertiary levels, VET programmes are offered by two state VET providers: the Malta College of Art, Science and Technology (MCAST), and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS).

1.1.   Policy priorities for 2016-20

For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this area ([2]), as set by the Director General for vocational education and training (DGVT), are:

(a) to explore new possible models for work-based learning including apprenticeship, to provide more placements leading to permanent employment;

(b) to promote and support a sense of entrepreneurship in youth;

(c) to ensure that curriculum is constantly tied to the needs of the labour market;

(d) to support the introduction of VET subjects in secondary compulsory education.

1.2.   Main actions taken in 2015-17

In April 2015, the Ministry for Education and Employment and the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology ([3]) issued *The national vocational education and training policy*, jointly presenting the country's VET policy. On apprenticeship and work-based learning more generally, the paper advocates:

(a) reviewing legislation, governance and monitoring schemes, as well as the curricula in terms of labour market needs;

([2]) According to a survey by Cedefop among Directors General for VET in early 2016.

([3]) MCAST is one of the two main state-run VET providers in Malta; since 2014 it has had total responsible for apprenticeship.

(b) reforming apprenticeships with a focus on stakeholder engagement, quality-assurance and local industry needs;

(c) setting up a support service to encourage micro and small businesses to train apprentices/interns;

(d) accrediting work-based learning schemes through a modular approach and ECVET (European credit system for vocational education and training);

(e) promoting work-based learning among providers, parents, students and enterprises.

In 2015-16, the Education and Employment Ministry and MCAST worked towards amendment of the legal Act governing apprenticeship ([4]),to mirror proposed changes to the apprenticeship system and governance, taking account of recommendations included in the review carried out by Cedefop in 2015, international research on internships, and best practices from other countries. Following consultation in 2016, a draft act has been proposed by the Ministry for Education ([5]) on a framework for developing quality work placements, apprenticeships and internships. It introduces:

(a) the status of employee for the duration of the practical training spent in the company ([6]) and financial incentives for learners (wage/hour paid by the employer complemented by a government subsidy to reach the national minimum wage);

(b) a governance structure to guarantee the rights and obligations of trainees and employers.

As a result of the reform, governance of the apprenticeship system was changed, and subsequently has been governed at national level by MCAST, under the supervision of the Ministry for Education and Employment. The ministry and MCAST cooperate with national and European stakeholders in developing policies and measures for quality apprenticeships in local industry. MCAST ensures relationships with sector and employer representatives to bring the education and business worlds closer together.

([4]) The employment and training services Act, Part VI, referring to apprentices and trainees.

([5]) Education and Employment Ministry:

http://education.gov.mt/en/Pages/Public%20Consultations/WBL.aspx

http://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Public%20Consultations/Work%20Based%20Learning%20and%20Apprenticeship%20Act.pdf

([6]) According to the employment and industrial relations act, young persons' employment regulations, social security Act and the respective subsidiary legislation.

Following the reform, the duration of apprenticeship programmes has been restricted to two years (instead of the three- or four-year programmes previously offered); it is more compact in nature, incorporating the summer period as an integral part of the training programme. Following successful completion of a probationary period in the training company, apprentices sign a contract, are registered with the national public employment services (PES, *Jobs plus*), and carry out practical training as employee in the training company.

The scope of apprenticeship has been extended being introduced in the reporting period in the following sectors:

(a) finance;
(a) business administration and marketing;
(b) electronics;
(c) electrical and mechanical engineering;
(d) agriculture;
(e) construction,
(f) applied science;
(g) hairdressing;
(h) beauty;
(i) sports.

Incentives have been introduced for learners. Apprentices are normally paid a monthly stipend while attending training, and employers pay remuneration for the on-the job training. Apprentices are also entitled to half of the statutory bi-yearly bonuses. An initiative introduced during the summer of 2015 grants apprentices EUR 200 on top of their remuneration for every four weeks spent on the job.

Measures have also been taken to strengthen the involvement of social partners and companies. Companies that participate in apprenticeship receive an MCAST certificate and can use a logo to promote themselves. Social partners, particularly employers, participate in the governing board of the two state VET providers (MCAST and ITS). Industry representatives in tourism and hospitality ([7]) participate in the scientific committee set up by ITS in 2016 to develop up-to-date training content for internships and apprenticeships. Many VET stakeholders (employer's associations, chambers, trade unions, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), teachers and education authorities) cooperate closely with the MCAST apprenticeship department and promote apprenticeships among their

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([7]) Such as the Malta hotels and restaurants association, the bar tenders guild, tour leaders and Air Malta.

members. MCAST offers a support tool for employers (*Gateway to industry - MG2I*, part-time tailor-made courses for SMEs and industries) to help them prepare training courses for apprentices in various disciplines.

CHAPTER 2.
MTD 2 – Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET and continuous information and feedback loops to IVET and CVET (^8)

The national commission for further and higher education (NCFHE) has been the quality assurance national reference point (QANRP) since 2013. A national quality assurance approach and a methodology for internal and external evaluation have been formally agreed, and were fully implemented by 2015. The approach covers IVET, continuing vocational education and training (CVET) and related work-based learning. It encompasses the quality cycle and the European quality assurance in vocational education and training (EQAVET) indicators. The policy document *The national quality assurance framework for further and higher education*, published in July 2015, is the guiding document for accreditation of providers and their periodic external quality assurance audits (every five years). The NCFHE ensures that all providers have an internal quality assurance policy fit for purpose. Under the national regulations, VET providers must have a clear quality assurance system in place and self-assess their performance periodically. Guidelines and quality standards at VET provider level are used to promote a culture of continuous improvement.

The same principles that apply to IVET on evaluation and review of VET providers are also applicable to CVET. In accordance with the Legal Notice No 296 of 2012, the NCFHE acts as the external verifier for VET providers.

(^8) Sources:

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop): http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en

ReferNet: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet

Priorities reported by Directors General for vocational training for the 2016-20 period;

EQAVET (2016 Secretariat survey, website, newsletters): http://www.eqavet.eu

2016 compendium of EQAVET NRP *Erasmus+* funding;

Council recommendations on the 2016 national reform programmes: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-semester/2016/#

Education and training monitor 2016 country reports: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/et-monitor_en

The national approach to quality assurance in VET includes a system that collects information on IVET graduates. In the official manual for quality assurance at VET provider level, one of the indicators follows up students and their transition to work. Information is collected by VET providers who forward their data to the NCFHE ([9]). VET providers use the information to introduce new VET programmes to tackle skills gaps identified by the industry. The NCFHE also collects information through the graduate tracer study, the employee skills survey (which collects evidence about the number of employees in different sectors), and the employability index study (which identifies students that may be at a risk of underemployment due to mismatch between their educational attainment and current occupation). The education Act empowers the NCFHE to collect data both from public and private education providers. At the beginning of the reporting period, there was no specific institutional framework for the anticipation of skill needs in Malta.

## 2.1. Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET

The country's priority in this matter for 2016-20 is to achieve full implementation of the quality assurance approach for VET providers.

During the reporting period, the QANRP received *Erasmus+* funding to organise training seminars for VET providers assisting them to develop and improve their self-assessment processes.

The systematic use of EQAVET indicators to monitor the VET system ('always used' item in Figure 1), has remained unchanged compared to 2013. Malta was above the EU average in IVET and CVET in 2016. Most EQAVET indicators are used, including those on the destination of VET learners on completion of their training, the utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace, and on mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market. Data on the prevalence of vulnerable groups are not available.

([9]) Since 2008, the NCFHE has published annual further and higher education statistics reports on student enrolment in further and higher education, data on graduates and student mobility: https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/research/Pages/FHE-Statistics.aspx

Figure 1. **Use of EQAVET indicators**
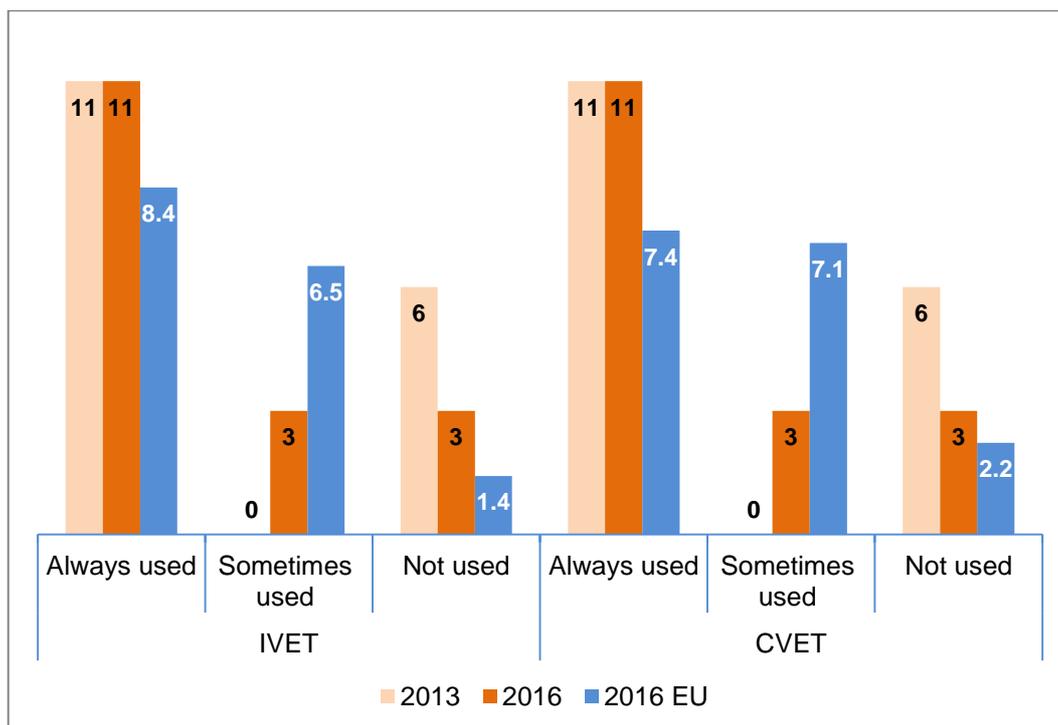
2.2. Continuous information and feedback loops in initial VET and continuing VET

The NCFHE, together with *Jobs plus* and Malta enterprise, has embarked on a 2014-16 research project funded by *Erasmus*+ on skill needs and supply, and the demand for workers in the labour market in Malta. The project objective was to collect evidence on the number of employees in different sectors of the Maltese economy and undertake a skills forecast in terms of the number of staff required/not required in the medium- and long-term.

In November 2016, a national skills council was set up to establish the institutional framework for the anticipation of skills needs in Malta ([10]).

In 2016 the NCFHE published a further and higher education statistics report for the academic year 2014/15 on student enrolment in further and higher

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([10]) https://education.gov.mt/en/Pages/National-Skills-Council.aspx

education, data on graduate and student mobility. Its aim was to provide up-to-date and comprehensive information on developments in further and higher education and to monitor progress achieved over time.

MTD 3 – Access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible/permeable systems, guidance and validation of non-formal and informal learning

3.1. Policy priorities for 2016-20

For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this area, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, are two-fold:

(a) for young people:
   (i) ensure access to formal qualifications for those who left compulsory education with no formal qualifications;
   (ii) help young people improve their standard of education and acquire knowledge and skills to enter the labour market;
(b) for adults, offer courses to sustain a knowledge-based economy and to encourage learning as a key to success.

3.2. Main actions taken in 2015-17

3.2.1. Guidance

In June 2016, an act of parliament transformed the public employment service (previously employment and training corporation) into *Jobs plus*. The change brought with it an increased focus on career guidance, particularly through the development of individualised services, profiling, personal employment advisors, and individual action plans.

3.2.2. Permeability and flexibility

3.2.2.1. *Promoting progression to VET*

In 2015-16, VET subjects at Malta qualifications framework (MQF) level 3 were introduced in compulsory education in all lower secondary schools ([11]) in Malta.

([11]) The compulsory secondary education system in Malta comprises students from age 11 to age 16 (lower secondary) and two years of upper secondary education.

The objective of this programme is to broaden and enrich the secondary school curriculum, provide initial VET certification and establish parity of esteem between IVET and general academic education. The introduction of vocational subjects in secondary schools opens up opportunities for more students to progress to further and higher education. The areas covered are:

(a) hospitality;
(b) information technology;
(c) engineering technology;
(d) health and social care;
(e) agri-business.

3.2.2.2. *Flexibility to explore different VET areas: the skills kits programme*

To enable students explore different vocational areas, MCAST launched in October 2016 the *Skills kits programme*, an introductory level programme at MQF/EQF level 1. The kits cover various vocational areas (such as art, hairdressing, beauty, basic web design, caring for others, animal care, sport, installation of low voltage devices, and cultures) as well as personal and employability skills. Each kit comprises 20 hours of instruction. Students can choose the number of kits to study (up to 30 per year) and their own combination. Students who successfully complete 30 kits obtain the MCAST introductory skills certificate and are eligible to progress to level 2.

3.2.3. Transparency, recognition, validation

3.2.3.1. *National qualifications framework ([12])*

The Malta qualifications framework was introduced and linked to EQF and QF-EHEA (qualifications frameworks in the European higher education area) as well as the transnational qualifications framework of the small states of the commonwealth (TQF) by the end of 2009. It is operational under the responsibility of NCFHE. The referencing report was updated in 2011 and 2012. The 2016 referencing report ([13]) has updated the MQF by introducing two additional levels covering learning below level 1:

(a) introductory level A;
(b) introductory level B.

([12]) Cedefop, 2017b.

([13]) NCFHE annual report of 2016:
https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Annual%20Reports/NCFHE%20Annual%20Report%202016.pdf

These two new levels have no equivalence on the EQF.

3.2.3.2. *ECVET* [14]

There is a commitment to develop a credit system compatible with ECVET; a conversion system was tested at different EQF levels through participation in EU projects up to 2013. ECVET is used by MCAST at MQF levels 1 to 4, and will be rolled out for the entire IVET system, as well as for CVET. The referencing report published in 2011 already indicates the workload expressed in ECVET credit points for the VET awards on each of the MQF levels. A national coordination point (NCP) for ECVET has been appointed, and a community of practice is in place, although it needs to be further developed. The 2015 joint paper on the *National vocational education and training policy* [15] proposed measures to:

(a) mainstream modular structures (as they allow for unit transfer) by 2017;

(b) use ECVET for MQF/EQF levels 1 to 4 and ECTS for VET and academic qualifications at levels 5 to 8;

(c) base validation processes and assessment on ECVET.

3.2.3.3. *Validation* [16]

The 2012-14 amendments to the 2012 education Act [17] provide a framework for validation and for awarding qualifications that are in the MQF. According to legislation, obtaining qualifications through validation is possible up to level 5. NCFHE is responsible for introducing a national validation system, drafting guidelines aligned with the MQF, and ensuring that the learning outcomes approach is systematically used. NCFHE is supported in this work by sectoral skills units, each of which is composed of representatives from the sector, education and training, government and social partners. The unit is responsible for developing occupational standards relevant to the sector it represents, proposing regulations and mechanisms for validating informal and non-formal learning for all skills within the sector, developing and maintaining a sectoral qualifications framework referenced to the Malta qualifications framework, and providing guidance and counselling services to persons submitting their documented experiences for validation. In 2015, the joint paper on *National*

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[14] Source: ECVET users' group members.

[15]
https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Policy%20Documents/National%20Vocational%20Education%20and%20Training%20Policy.pdf

[16] Cedefop, 2017b; Cedefop et al., 2017.

[17] Government of Malta, 2012.

vocational education and training policy ([18]) (Section 1.2) highlighted the need for training programmes for staff involved in validation, and for validation for learners with disability or learning difficulties. Malta's lifelong learning strategy 2020 ([19]), also adopted in 2015, set a target for having in place a transparent and sustainable system of validation. Reflection on a national plan for recognition of the skills and competences of the whole labour force by 2024 has been initiated.

3.2.4. Training support for early school leavers and NEETs

In school year 2015/16, the Prince's Trust *XL programme* – from a UK-based charity founded in 1976 by the Prince of Wales – was introduced in lower and upper secondary schools in Malta. It aims to re-engage 13 to 16 year-olds at risk of exclusion or underachievement through informal learning to foster self-confidence. The programme covers:

(a) personal and social development;
(b) life skills;
(c) active citizenship;
(d) preparation for work.

It leads to an award, certificate or diploma in personal development and employability skills. It is jointly funded by the Ministry for Education and Employment and HSBC Malta Foundation.

The *Guze Ellul Mercer* school (GEM16+) was also introduced in 2015. It offers early school leavers a second chance to obtain EQF level 3 qualifications in basic subjects. GEM16+ cooperates with MCAST and the ITS.

The *Jobs plus* NEET (not in education, employment, or training) activation scheme II, launched in 2016, aims to reintegrate NEETs under 25 through personalised assistance and motivational and behavioural training to prepare for further education or work exposure schemes.

([18])
https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Policy%20Documents/National%20Vocational%20Education%20and%20Training%20Policy.pdf

([19]) Malta lifelong learning strategy 2020 (2015):
https://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Malta%20National%20Lifelong%20Learning%20Strategy%202020.pdf

MTD 4 – Key competences in both IVET and CVET

4.1. Baseline

Compared with general education graduates, those who completed VET programmes feel they have:

(a) stronger (ranged by priority):

    (i)   ability to be creative;

    (ii)   science and technology skills;

    (iii) ability to work with others;

(b) weaker:

    (i)   cultural awareness;

    (ii)   foreign language speaking;

    (iii) mathematical skills (Figure 2).

Figure 2.   **Self-evaluation of acquired skills in general education and VET**
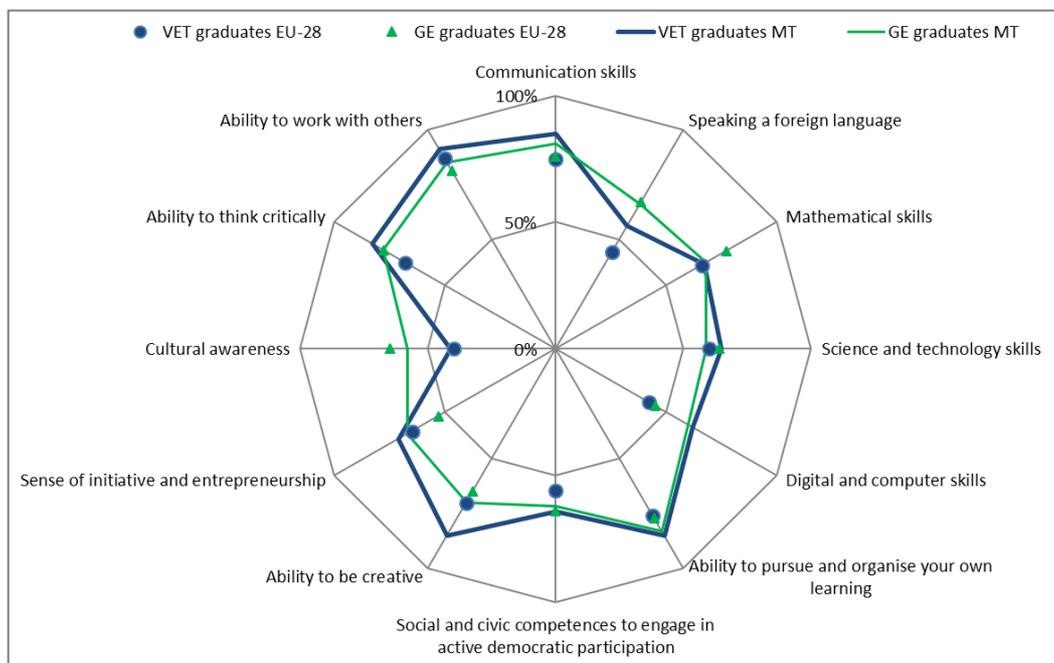
NB: Respondents who attended upper secondary education. Interviewees were asked in summer 2016 about their overall experience in upper secondary education. Aggregated data do not take account of different types and sectors of VET and age groups of respondents.

Source: Cedefop, 2017d.

The context of key competences in 2015 was mainly characterised by high share of young low achievers. The share is 1.8 times higher in reading, 1.3 times in maths and almost 1.6 times in science compared with EU average (Figure 3).

Figure 3.   **Share of 15-year-olds with low achievement in reading, maths and science**
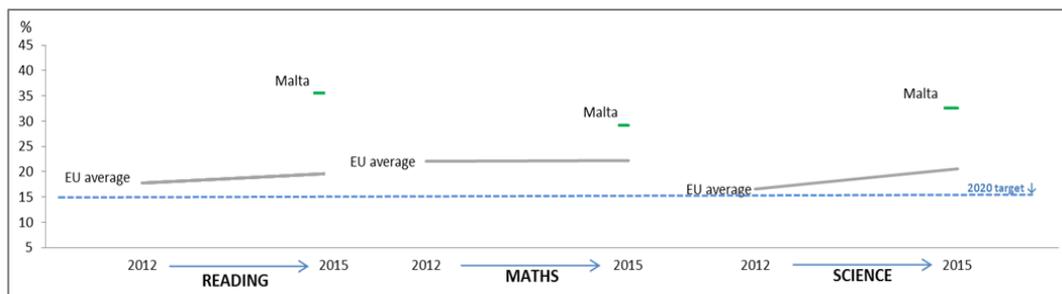
NB: Low achievement means failing level 2 on the PISA (programme for international student assessment) scale. The 2012 data for Malta is not available.
Source: OECD, 2014; OECD, 2016.

Key competences in the national qualifications framework are an integral part of all national vocational qualifications at levels 1 to 5, both in school-based VET and apprenticeships. The framework defines the share of credits to be dedicated to key competences by qualification level, which can amount up to 70%. The 2015 joint paper on the *National vocational education and training policy* (Section 1.2) advocated approaches where basic skills are embedded in VET to support low-skilled workers ([20]).

4.2.   Key competences in initial VET

The country's priority in this area for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is to design IVET programmes using an outcome-based approach and to ensure all include both key competences and vocational skills.

In 2016, a unit on employability skills and personal development training was piloted at MCAST's Institute of Community Services and Institute of Engineering and Transport at MQF/EQF level 2, with learners studying for a qualification in electrical and electronics engineering. This unit, comprising 30-hours of training

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([20]) For more information on key competences in VET see National Commission for Further and Higher Education, 2016.

complemented by work placements related to learners' field of study, covered several themes: communication skills, problem solving, personal management, organisational skills, teamwork, negotiation skills, career exploration and developing and presenting information. Developing similar units in other disciplines/MCAST institutes is foreseen.

In 2017, the government is developing a system of assessment, recognition and validation of informal and non-formal learning to address the challenge of devising training and education programmes which not only equip their learners with technical skills but also provide them with core skills that enable them to take on future challenges.

MTD 5 – Systematic initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors

The lifelong learning strategy 2020 ([21]), issued in 2014, included references to the need to focus on teachers and trainers and innovative pedagogies, support teachers in acquiring a high level of digital literacy skills, improve career paths and ease mobility. It also included the intention to design a distinctive adult educator profile with its own programme/curriculum. The need for training teachers and in-company mentors was highlighted in the 2015 apprenticeship reform (Section 1.2).

With the introduction of VET bachelor programmes in 2009 at MCAST, VET lecturers have been awarded masters' scholarships for studies in specialist areas, including 12-week research placements abroad. VET lecturers at MCAST are also expected to take up a one-year post graduate certificate programme in VET pedagogy at EQF/MQF level 6 organised by the college with European Social Fund (ESF) support. The programme gives lecturers the opportunity to develop practical teaching methods based on research insights and enables them to gain new vocational teaching experience locally and abroad (Cedefop, 2017c, p. 38).

5.1. Initial training for teaching/training staff in VET schools

For 2016-20, the country's priority in this area, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is to provide training for teaching in VET Schools.

The 2015 national vocational education and training policy (Section 1.2) acknowledged the importance of VET teachers being trained in pedagogy as well

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([21])
https://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Malta%20National%20Lifelong%20Learning%20Strategy%202020.pdf

as needing to keep abreast of developments in industry. To this end, industry placements/internships were proposed.

In 2015, a teacher training programme on content, pedagogy and assessment of vocational subjects was offered by the Institute for Education within the Ministry for Education and Employment to:

(a) fourth-year students following the bachelor of education (hons);

(b) post-graduate certificate in education students who expressed an interest in teaching the vocational subjects at secondary schools.

In October 2016, based on a 2014 decision introducing a master degree (MQF/EQF level 7) as a requirement to access the teaching profession as of 2018, the faculty of education at the University of Malta started a two-year master degree in teaching and learning (MTL) for first-cycle degree graduates ([22]). From September 2017, the Faculty of Education will be introducing MTL initial teacher training courses in 11 vocational subjects.

To develop specialisations for teaching VET subjects, a working group has been set up with experts from the University of Malta, MCAST, the ITS, the Institute for Education, as well as Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences (Finland). The qualifications or the type of teacher training that the rest of VET teachers at post-compulsory level should possess, are not specified. It is up to VET providers to justify the standards that they apply within their institutions. However, qualifications and courses accredited by the NCFHE specify that accredited vocational courses at MQF levels 1 to 4 should have tutors/VET trainers qualified at least with a relevant full qualification at level 5. For vocational courses at MQF levels 5 to 6, as well as academic courses at levels 6 to 7, tutors should have a full relevant qualification at least one level up from the course provided. Also, for vocational courses up to level 5, when there is clear evidence that the local market does not provide tutors of the required qualification level, the NCFHE considers proposals for twinned provision. This involves a highly-experienced and effective tutor with a lower qualification level being mentored by a colleague with a qualification at the appropriate level, who is preferably also involved in assisting delivery, to ensure that the required level of learning outcomes delivery and assessment is maintained.

Since October 2016, the Institute for Tourism Studies has been developing and putting in place a master degree in hospitality management in conjunction with the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences (Finland) to upskill its

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([22]) http://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/250128/MTLbls.pdf

academic staff. A total of 19 lecturers at ITS participate in this project, the specific objectives of which are to:

(a) ensure compliance with European Quality Assurance Standards in relation to quality of teaching and learning;
(b) develop curriculum programmes at a degree level (MQF level 6);
(c) implement, manage and review degree level programmes in the near future;
(d) enable ITS teachers to equip existing and the future workforce in tourism and hospitality with appropriate competences and underpinning knowledge.

Upskilling staff through the degree programme in hospitality management developed by Haaga-Helia University makes it possible for ITS to offer bachelor degree programmes in the hospitality and tourism sector as from 2017.

5.2. Initial training for trainers and mentors in enterprises

A pilot mentor training programme has been launched as part of the apprenticeship reform that started in 2015. It aims to train VET teachers on how to prepare and conduct on-site visits to apprentices at the workplace. The learning agreements, which include learning outcomes and estimated time for obtaining each of them, mean a need to train VET teachers and trainers/workplace mentors in their new roles within the new apprenticeship schemes.

5.3. Continuing professional development for teaching/training staff in VET schools

In 2015, an institute for education was set up, with responsibility for continuing professional development and training of educators. The institute also acts as a platform for sharing experience and promoting education leadership. Its activities, which include developing a wide array of accredited teacher training opportunities and establishing international partnerships, are jointly financed by the Ministry for Education and Employment and EU funds.

The activities of the pilot mentor training programme (Section 5.2) also cover the CPD (continuing professional development) of VET teachers.

5.4. Continuing professional development for trainers and mentors in enterprises

Provision of CPD for mentors is still in its initial stages. In 2017, MCAST is preparing an ESF project that specifically targets the training of apprenticeship in-company mentors. The aim is to improve the quality of the apprenticeship experience.

Conclusion

Since 2015, Malta has been renovating its apprenticeship system, streamlining its governance and organisation, making it more attractive to learners, and strengthening social partner and employer involvement. Steps have been taken to improve quality assurance mechanisms and the information system that guides the development of VET. Measures to improve progression to VET have been adopted, reform of the Malta qualifications framework has started, and new training opportunities have been put in place supporting early school leavers and NEETs. Initiatives for the development of key competences in initial VET were taken. Progress is also being made towards developing and structuring the initial and continuing training of VET teachers and in-company trainers and mentors.

The actions carried out show that the main lines of the Riga conclusions and the country's policy priorities for 2016-20 are being addressed. Yet, information currently available to Cedefop suggests that further consideration could be given to initiatives supporting key competences in continuing VET. It may also be worthwhile setting out policy priorities for the remaining period until 2020 for:
(a) continuous information and feedback loops in CVET;
(b) key competences in continuing VET;
(c) initial and continuing training of in-company trainers and mentors.

List of abbreviations

AES	adult education survey
CPD	continuing professional development
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
ECVET	European credit system for vocational education and training
EQAVET	European quality assurance in vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESF	European Social Fund
Eurostat	statistical office of the European Union
GDP	gross domestic product
GE	general education
GEM16+	Guze Ellul Mercer school
ISCED	international standard classification of education
ITS	Institute of Tourism Studies
IVET	initial vocational education and training
MCAST	Malta College of Art, Science and Technology
MQF	Malta qualifications framework
MTL	master degree in teaching and learning
NCFHE	national commission for further and higher education
NCP	national coordination point
NEET	not in education, employment, or training
NQF	national qualifications framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PES	public employment services
PISA	programme for international student assessment
PPS	purchasing power standards
QANRP	quality assurance national reference point
QF-EHEA	qualifications frameworks in the European higher education area
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
STEM	science, technology, engineering and math programme
TQF	transnational qualifications framework of the small states of the commonwealth
UOE	UNESCO OECD Eurostat
VET	vocational education and training

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