



Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015–17

POLAND



Cedefop monitoring and analysis of VET policies

**Developments in vocational education and training
policy in 2015-17**

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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 Poland was above the EU average: 49.2% in 2014 compared to 48% in the EU (Cedefop, 2017c, p. 109); 50% in 2015 compared to 47% in the EU ⁽¹⁾. However, the employment rate of recent upper secondary graduates was lower than in the EU: 65.6% in 2014 (European Commission, 2015, p. 7) and 68.5% in 2015 (European Commission, 2015, p. 7) compared to 70.8% and 74.1% in the EU respectively); the employment rate for VET graduates only was 70% in 2015 (European Commission, 2015, p. 8), compared to 73% in the EU. Adult participation in lifelong learning was low at 4% in 2014 (European Commission, 2015, p. 8) and 3.5% in 2015 compared to 10.7% on average in the EU in both years (Cedefop, 2017c, p. 109) (Table 1).

VET in the country was facing the challenge of meeting labour market needs better, especially through reinforcing its practical training component and cooperation with employers. VET reform had been started in 2012-13. In 2014-15, a VET advisory committee had been set up to steer up reflection and bring suggestions forward. Measures to strengthen cooperation between VET and business, revise VET curricula, improve career guidance, monitor transition to work, and fund teacher training were being considered. From a lifelong learning perspective, measures in support to validation of non-formal and informal learning had just been adopted in 2014.

⁽¹⁾ Eurostat, data for 2015.

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

Indicator label	2010		Last available year		Recent trend (per year)			
	PL ^f	EU ^f	Yr	PL ^f	EU ^f	Range	PL	EU
Access, attractiveness and flexibility								
IVET students as % of all upper secondary students	A	A	'14	49.2 ^b	48.0 ^b _{E1}	'13-'14	▪ 0.4	▪ -0.9
IVET work-based students as % of all upper secondary IVET	A	A	'14	34.0 ^b	34.0 ^b _{E2}			
IVET students with direct access to tertiary education as % of all upper secondary IVET			'14	74.7	69.2 ^{E3}	'13-'14	▪ 0.7	▪ -1.4
Employees participating in CVT courses (%)	31.0	38.0 ^e	'10	31.0	38.0 ^e			
Employees participating in on-the-job training (%)	11.0	20.0 ^e	'10	11.0	20.0 ^e			
Adults in lifelong learning (%)			'15	3.5 ^b	10.7 ^b	'13-'15	↘ -0.4	→ 0.0
Enterprises providing training (%)	22.0	66.0 ^e	'10	22.0	66.0 ^e			
Female IVET students as % of all female upper secondary students	A	A	'14	38.8 ^b	42.7 ^b _{E1}	'13-'14	▪ 0.8	▪ -1.0
Employees of small firms participating in CVT courses (%)	9.0	25.0 ^e	'10	9.0	25.0 ^e			
Young VET graduates in further education and training (%)			'15	25.9 ^b	33.0 ^b	'14-'15	▪ -0.8	▪ -0.3
Older adults in lifelong learning (%)		5.3	'15	1.0 ^b	6.9	'13-'15	↘ -0.1	↗ 0.1
Low-educated adults in lifelong learning (%)			'15	0.6 ^b _C	4.3 ^b _C	'13-'14	▪ -0.1	▪ 0.0
Unemployed adults in lifelong learning (%)			'15	3.4 ^b	9.5 ^b	'13-'15	↘ -0.4	↘ -0.4
Individuals who wanted to participate in training but did not (%)	9.6 ^B	9.5 ^e _B	'11	9.6	9.5 ^e			
Job-related non-formal education and training (%)	85.2 ^B	80.2 ^e _B	'11	85.2	80.2 ^e			
Skill development and labour market relevance								
IVET public expenditure (% of GDP)			'13	0.54 ^b _F	0.56 ^b _{E4}	'12-'13	▪ 0.01	▪ 0.03
IVET public expenditure per student (1 000 PPS units)			'13	4.2 ^b _F	6.4 ^b _{E5}	'12-'13	▪ 0.2	▪ 0.0
Enterprise expenditure on CVT courses as % of total labour cost	0.5	0.8 ^e	'10	0.5	0.8 ^e			
Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET			'14	1.6 ^b	1.0 ^b _{E6}	'13-'14	▪ 0.0	▪ 0.0
STEM graduates from upper secondary IVET (% of total)	A	A	'14	44.5 ^b	30.0 ^b _{E7}	'13-'14	▪ 4.9	▪ -0.4
Short-cycle VET graduates as % of first time tertiary education graduates			'14	1.0	9.3 ^{E8}	'13-'14	▪ -0.2	▪ 0.4
Innovative enterprises with supportive training practices (%)	55.4	41.5 ^{E9}	'12	48.1	41.6 ^{E9}	'10-'12	▪ -3.7	▪ 0.0
Employment rate for IVET graduates (20- to 34-year-olds)			'15	74.6 ^b	77.2 ^b	'14-'15	▪ 1.9	▪ 0.3
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over general stream)			'15	2.3 ^b	5.3 ^b	'14-'15	▪ -0.4	▪ -1.0

Indicator label	2010		Last available year			Recent trend (per year)		
	PL ^f	EU ^f	Yr	PL ^f	EU ^f	Range	PL	EU
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over low-educated)			'15	28.0 ^b	23.7 ^b	'14-'15	▪ 0.6	▪ -0.1
Workers helped to improve their work by training (%)			'15	87.3	83.7			
Workers with skills matched to their duties (%)	59.8	55.2	'15	58.2	57.3	'10-'15	▪ -0.3	▪ 0.4
Overall transitions and labour market trends								
Early leavers from education and training (%)		13.9	'15	5.3 ^b	11.0 ^c	'13-'15	↘ -0.1	↘ -0.5
30- to 34-year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)	34.8	33.8	'15	43.4 ^c	38.7 ^c	'10-'15	↗ 1.7	↗ 1.0
NEET rate for 18 to 24-year-olds (%)		16.6	'15	14.7 ^b	15.8	'13-'15	↘ -0.8	↘ -0.7
Unemployment rate for 20 to 34-year-olds (%)	13.1	13.1	'15	10.6	12.9	'10-'15	↘ -0.4	↗ 0.1
Employment rate of recent graduates (%)		77.4	'15	77.4 ^b	76.9 ^c	'13-'15	↗ 2.1	↗ 0.7
Adults with lower level of educational attainment (%)	11.5	27.3	'15	9.2 ^c	23.5 ^c	'10-'15	↘ -0.5	↘ -0.8
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds (%)	64.3	68.6	'15	67.8	70.0	'10-'15	↗ 0.7	↗ 0.3
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds with lower level of educational attainment (%)	39.2	53.4	'15	39.8 ^c	52.6 ^c	'10-'15	→ 0.0	↘ -0.2
Medium/high-qualified employment in 2020 (% of total)			'16	95.6 ^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.

l 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, 2017c.

CHAPTER 1.

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

At the beginning of the reporting period, formal VET in Poland was offered at upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary levels and was mainly school-based. Upper secondary VET programmes included a major share of work-based learning. Apprenticeship was organised in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), mainly in handicrafts, mostly for young people. Employers offering practical training places could receive financial support according to the labour code. Entrepreneurship education was limited.

1.1. Policy priorities for 2016-20

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

- (a) for apprenticeship:
 - (i) increase the share of apprentices in basic vocational schools from 60% to 70%;
 - (ii) support the implementation of amended regulation of 6 August 2015 on practical learning;
- (b) for work-based learning in school-based VET, enhance cooperation between employers with vocational schools;
- (c) for increasing the number of social partners involved in VET:
 - (i) increase the share of social partners relevant for particular occupations from 40% (presently on the list of social partners actively cooperating with the Ministry of Education) to 80% and engage representatives of sectoral councils;
 - (ii) ensure long-term systemic cooperation with employer representatives for each occupation, aiming at better adjustment of VET graduate skills to labour market needs.

⁽²⁾ According to a survey by Cedefop among directors general for VET in early 2016.

1.2. Main actions in 2015-17

1.2.1. Amending regulation on practical occupational training

In August 2015, the Education Ministry amended the regulation on practical vocational training. The amendments came into force in September 2015, bringing important changes:

- (a) vocational schools need to ensure the provision of work-based learning in their vocational programmes to an extent which varies by education level (basic, upper secondary, post-secondary);
- (b) the legal basis for practical classes offered at employers' premises is an agreement concluded between an employer and either the learner or the school headmaster;
- (c) employers are entitled to influence the curriculum of vocational programmes by recommending changes in the study programme to school directors ⁽³⁾.

1.2.2. Strengthening cooperation between vocational schools and employers

In October 2015, the Ministry of Development launched the project *Vocational education for the economy* (co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF)), aiming to strengthen cooperation between vocational schools and employers. The project includes setting up a cooperation model between vocational schools and special economic areas, as well as preparation of guidelines for effective cooperation (including financial, legal and organisational topics). Certain elements of this model will be tested in a pilot phase.

Several public debates and a national conference took place in the first half of 2016; discussion included cooperation models between employers and schools and the strengthening of work-based learning elements in VET. The outcomes will be considered in the proposals for the new school system. Social partner forums and an employers' database have been set up (co-financed with ESF funds).

1.2.3. Modernising school infrastructures and equipment related to practical training

In the reporting period, several regions published calls for projects aimed at improving practical training-related infrastructures and equipment in vocational

⁽³⁾ The Republic of Poland, 2016.

schools. The projects include reconstruction of school workshops and laboratories, and equipping schools with tools and appropriate materials.

1.2.4. Erasmus+ programme for tailored apprentice support to SMEs

From October 2016 to September 2018, the *Erasmus+* project *Apprenticeship helpdesk for small and medium-sized enterprises* was established in Poland (and Cyprus), aiming to build the capacity of key intermediary bodies to support SMEs offering training places for apprentices. The main project goals are to:

- (a) set up a national apprenticeship support service for SMEs, offered by intermediary bodies such as chambers of commerce, professional and trade associations;
- (b) provide training to appointed staff acting as apprenticeship facilitators;
- (c) set up a national online apprenticeship resource centre as a central office providing support to SMEs and apprenticeship facilitators;
- (d) raise awareness of apprenticeship scheme benefits among SMEs and other national stakeholders.

CHAPTER 2.

MTD 2 - Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET and continuous information and feedback loops to IVET and CVET ⁽⁴⁾

In 2012, the Centre for Education Development was appointed as the quality assurance national reference point (QANRP). It covers initial vocational education and training (IVET), continuing vocational education and training (CVET) and adult learning. The national approach to quality assurance in general education, IVET and CVET is described in the regulation for pedagogical supervision; it requires headmasters to carry out internal evaluation and use the results to improve school performance. By 2015, quality standards had been developed using the European quality assurance in vocational education and training (EQAVET) framework (criteria, indicators) as part of an ESF project to support VET providers in self-assessment and to promote a culture of continuous improvement. All public and private institutions providing continuing education have been subject to accreditation since 2004.

There are national data collections on basic labour market indicators and some regional information on VET graduates. Regional labour market observatories monitor transitions annually within regional projects. Observatories in almost every region prepare labour market analysis and forecasts (skills,

⁽⁴⁾ 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:

http://www.eqavet.eu/Libraries/Annual_Network_Meeting_2016/Compendium_EQAVET_2016.sflb.ashx

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

qualifications) while VET schools analyse and identify regional and local educational and skills needs. They cooperate with regional and local employment councils, employers, regional labour market observatories, county and provincial labour offices. Funded by the ESF, two surveys on school-to-work transition were being prepared in 2015. More systematic graduate monitoring was planned.

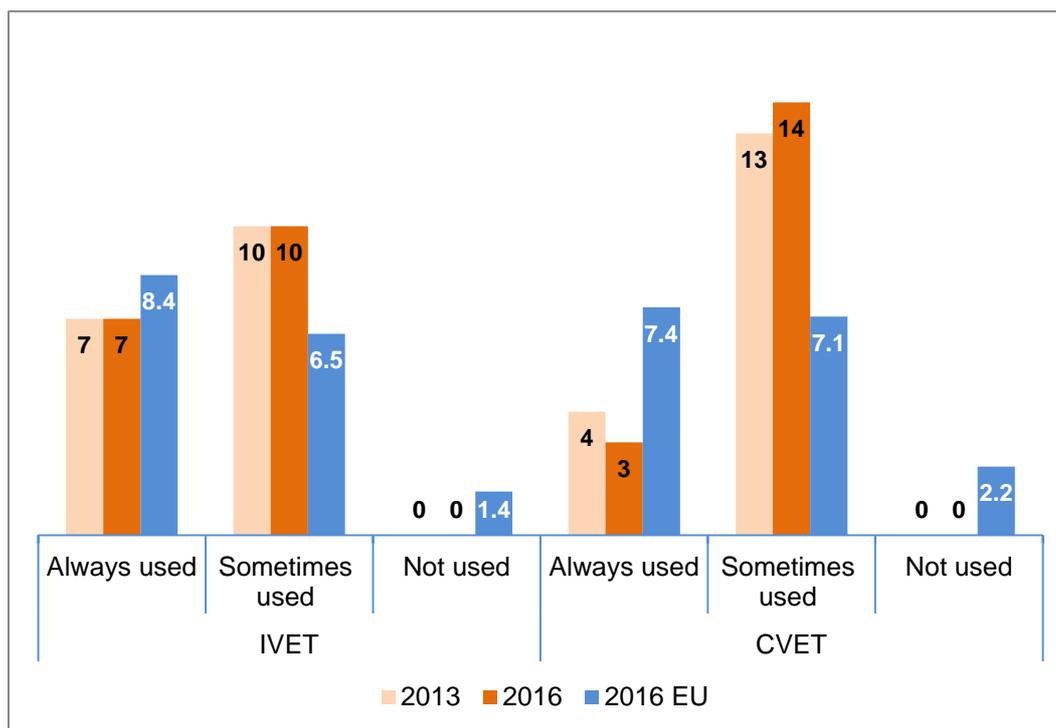
2.1. Quality assurance in line with EQAVET

For 2016-20, the country's priority in this matter, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is to update and enlarge the database of examination tasks in VET. The key measure guarantying the quality of VET is the external examinations system. Due to changing labour market needs, the profile of VET graduate skills is changing and the examination tasks database needs constant update. The enlarged database will help improve the quality and efficiency of vocational education and training.

In 2016 the Ministry of National Education started an ESF co-funded project to develop new vocational examination tasks with employers support. The objective is not just to develop the tasks but to strengthen the participation of employers in the examination process.

The situation in IVET concerning the systematic use of EQAVET indicators to monitor the VET system ('always used' item in Figure 1), has remained unchanged compared to 2013. In 2016, Poland was below the EU average in IVET and CVET. All EQAVET indicators are used (mostly sometimes).

Figure 1. Use of EQAVET indicators



NB: Of the 17 indicators suggested by the 2009 EQAVET recommendation, seven were 'always used' in IVET in 2013 and 2016 compared to 8.4 in the EU on average in 2016.

EU average was calculated based on available information for 31 out of 35 VET systems.

Source: Cedefop calculations based on EQAVET Secretariat surveys for 2013 and 2016 data.

2.2. Continuous information and feedback loops in initial VET and continuing VET

For 2016-20, the country's priority in initial VET, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is to develop and provide access to systemic tools for monitoring VET schools graduates.

The Educational Research Institute launched, in 2016, a three-year project (ESF co-funded) to develop a system to monitor educational and professional trajectories of VET graduates at national, regional, local and school level. The project will be using administrative data from social security (for professional trajectories) and educational resources (for educational trajectories) to monitor the trajectories of VET graduates. It will also include three rounds of qualitative and quantitative surveys to collect data on beneficiary needs and expectations, as well as information on the determinants of graduates' decisions.

Also in 2016, the Centre for Educational Development launched a project (co-funded by the ESF) to adjust VET to labour market needs by engaging

employers. Social partner sectoral teams (25 teams totalling 600 representatives of sectoral associations, employer organisations and trade unions) were set up to recommend changes in vocational curricula and classification of occupations. By March 2017, stakeholder teams were working on changes in VET curricula and classification of occupations, modernising 148 curricula for more than 50 occupations. Teaching plans and programmes were also designed.

CHAPTER 3.

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) support and popularise best practices in cooperation between VET schools and higher education institutions;
 - (ii) strengthen guidance in secondary schools;
- (b) for adults: increase learning provision, creating exemplary teaching programmes for vocational qualification courses.

3.2. Main actions taken in 2015-17

3.2.1. Guidance

In January 2016, the National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education (KOWEZIU) launched a two-year ESF co-funded project aimed at creating an effective guidance system in education and training. Framework programmes for guidance at all levels of education and training are foreseen, along with capacity building activities and guidelines for interactive guidance for practitioners. Several regions have also launched calls for ESF co-funded projects to support schools in developing guidance and counselling services for IVET learners. These include external guidance and counselling services for schools, creating information and career points in school, supporting teachers in acquiring counsellor qualifications and counsellors in upgrading and updating their qualifications.

3.2.2. Permeability and flexibility

3.2.2.1. VET structural reform

In December 2016, the Ministry of National Education introduced structural reform influencing the structure, length and progression routes within the education and training system. Changes in VET aim for better responsiveness to the modern economy. The main changes foreseen are:

- (a) four-year upper secondary VET programmes will be prolonged to five-year duration from 2019/20 school year;
- (b) a so-called two-stage sectoral school (*dwustopniowa szkoła branżowa*) will replace the existing three-year basic VET school. In this new structure:
 - (i) the first stage sectoral school will offer a three-year VET programme. Following this, learners can continue their education on a higher level;
 - (ii) a two-year second stage sectoral school will be introduced in the 2020/21 school year, enabling development of the VET qualification gained in the first stage. Completing this second stage will allow learners to enter higher education after passing the secondary school examination (*matura*) in three obligatory subjects and passing the qualification exams.

The new regulation modifying VET curricula is in the process of adoption. The new regulations modifying the organisation and structure of public schools were issued in March 2017.

3.2.2.2. Standardisation of compulsory subject teaching hours

In 2017, the Ministry of National Education adopted the regulation on the framework teaching plans for public schools ⁽⁵⁾, standardising the weekly number of teaching hours in compulsory subjects. The aim is to make horizontal permeability easier for learners.

3.2.3. Transparency, recognition, validation

3.2.3.1. National qualifications framework ⁽⁶⁾

The Polish qualifications framework (PQF) was referenced to the European qualifications framework (EQF) in May 2013. It is based on learning outcomes and has eight levels. It includes different layers of level descriptors (national, type

⁽⁵⁾ <http://dziennikustaw.gov.pl/DU/2017/703>

⁽⁶⁾ Cedefop, 2017a.

of education and training, and sector), which is an innovative approach allowing easier inclusion of qualifications awarded outside formal education and training, such as sectoral qualifications. The PQF can be considered to have reached (an early) operational stage: it was formally adopted by the Parliament on 22 December 2015 ⁽⁷⁾ and came into force in January 2016. The Law ⁽⁸⁾ opens up the framework to the inclusion of non-formal qualifications. While the Ministry of Education is responsible for overall coordination, an advisory stakeholder council was set up in September 2016. An update on the referencing report was presented in December 2016. Much work remains to be done, however, for the framework to reach a full or advanced operational level.

3.2.3.2. *Validation* ⁽⁹⁾

The 2012 national development strategy and the 2013 human capital development strategy underlined the need to develop a national recognition/validation strategy. Procedures to validate work experience were introduced by the 2012 regulation. Validation has been possible through extramural exams stipulated as part of the regular formal system; full or partial formal qualifications (below higher education) have been granted on passing these exams, which are available to people over 18. VET qualifications that can be acquired are based on units of learning outcomes. With the newly adopted Polish qualifications framework, it will be possible to use validation to acquire credits towards a qualification or learning outcomes in the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) and the European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS). The 2015 Law introducing the PQF provides a formal definition of validation and specifies the requirements for bodies carrying out validation and certification, along with the principles for quality assurance in validation. An important element of this system is the possibility of validating learning outcomes achieved outside school and higher education systems, including through non-formal and informal learning. Also, new rules on recognition of education obtained abroad were established in the March 2015 Act on the education system, with regards to the validation of skills for immigrants/refugees: their educational qualification levels are confirmed with the

⁽⁷⁾ *Ustawa z dnia 22 grudnia 2015r o Zintegrowanym Systemie Kwalifikacji* [Act of 22.12.2015 on the integrated qualifications system]. <http://www.infor.pl/akt-prawny/DZU.2016.008.0000064,ustawa-o-zintegrowanym-systemie-kwalifikacji.html>

⁽⁸⁾ Law of 22.12. 2015, Articles 9.1, 15.1 and 38.1.

⁽⁹⁾ Cedefop, 2017a; Cedefop et al., 2017.

provision of an original (or duplicate) of an education certificate or the authentication of such a document.

3.2.4. Training, reskilling and upskilling vulnerable groups, jobseekers and employees

3.2.4.1. Measures for NEETs

In 2016-17, the voluntary labour corps (*ochotnicze hufce pracy*, OHP) has several ESF and youth employment initiative projects aimed at comprehensive and individualised support measures for NEETs (not in education, employment, or training). The measures include individual action plans, vocational training, apprenticeships, individual counselling, and general education courses. Employers engaged in the projects are reimbursed for their costs. The total number of participants in these projects is 5 200.

3.2.4.2. Training scheme for adults in need: the LOWE project

In 2017-18, the Education Ministry has an ESF co-funded project aiming to support 45 VET schools to become local centres for education and knowledge (*lokalne ośrodki wiedzy i edukacji*, LOWE). The role of the centres is to help adults integrate into the labour market. Beneficiary groups include:

- (a) low-educated adults;
- (b) adults in unemployment or inactive;
- (c) people aged 45+;
- (d) adults subject to forms of social assistance and family support.

The measures include vocational qualification courses and other forms of adult education, as well as guidance and counselling.

3.2.5. Creating new qualification opportunities

In December 2015, the Ministry of National Education launched a call for proposals for creating programmes for vocational qualification courses for adults. By 2017, 70 programmes were to be created. The project is co-funded by the ESF and aims to support VET providers in expanding their offer for adults.

CHAPTER 4.

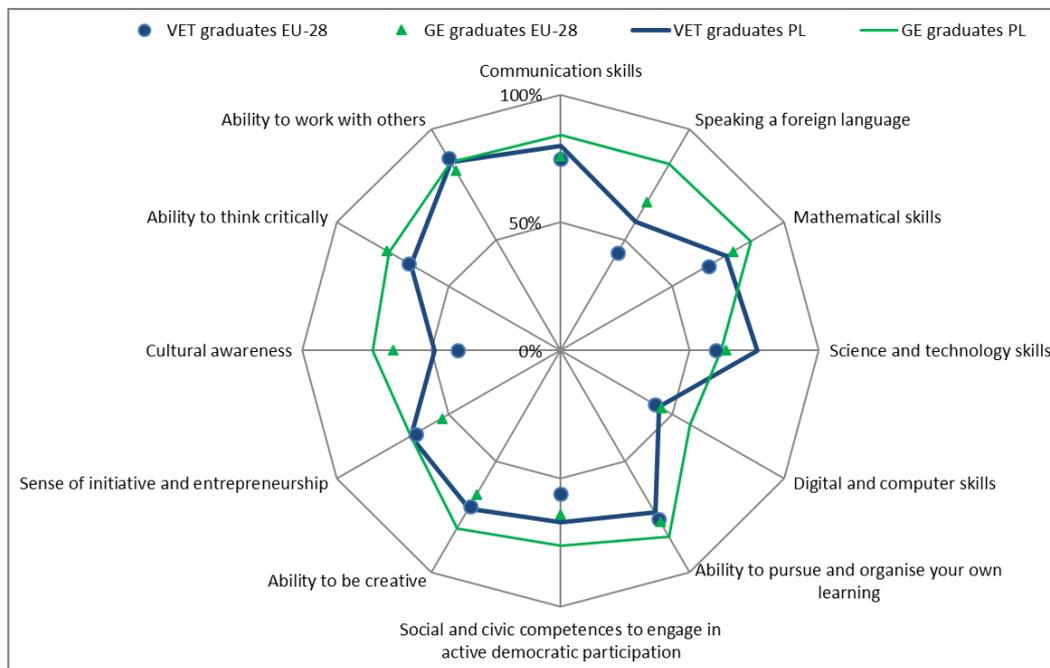
MTD 4 – Key competences in both IVET and CVET

4.1. Baseline

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

- (a) stronger or the same (ranged by priority):
 - (i) science and technology skills;
 - (ii) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
 - (iii) ability to work with others;
- (b) and weaker:
 - (i) foreign language speaking;
 - (ii) cultural awareness;
 - (iii) digital and computer skills (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Self-evaluation of acquired skills in general education and VET



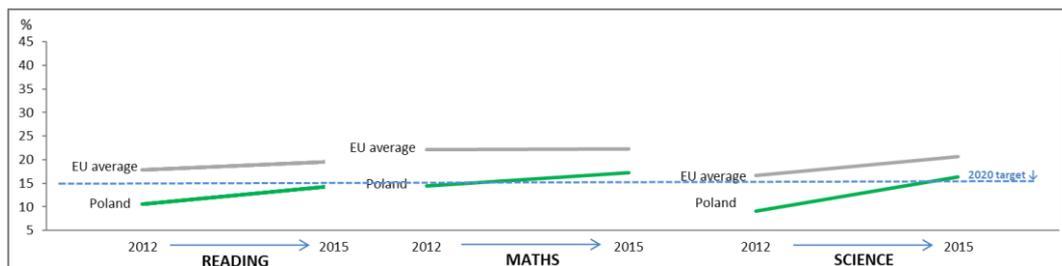
NB: GE stands for general education.

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, 2017b.

The context of key competences in 2015 was mainly characterised by an increasing share of young low achievers in reading, maths and science compared with 2012 (Figure 3). However, the share of low achievers in Poland was much lower than in the EU average, where the trend is similar.

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.

Source: OECD, 2014; OECD, 2016.

As VET enrolls 50% of all upper secondary learners in the country ⁽¹⁰⁾, this trend is likely to be reflected in the key competences trained for in VET programmes. Key competences are part of the national core curriculum for general education subjects in VET; most are acquired through stand-alone subjects. Polish, foreign languages, maths and science are compulsory. Transversal competences, such as interpersonal, intercultural, social and civic competences, cultural expression and learning to learn are usually integrated in other subjects and extracurricular activities. There are no unified assessment criteria and performance progress is not centrally monitored ⁽¹¹⁾.

4.2. Key competences in initial VET

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

- (a) improve VET graduates' skills in undertaking and conducting business activity;
- (b) improve foreign language skills, with special regard to vocationally oriented foreign language.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Calculated from Eurostat; data for 2015.

⁽¹¹⁾ For more information on key competences in VET see Siekiera and Luck, 2016.

To address the issue of VET learners having limited access to vocation-oriented language teaching and learning, and in some cases the lack of appropriate learning resources, in 2016 the education ministry launched an ESF project on developing e-resources for vocational foreign language learning in 10 vocational areas ⁽¹²⁾. The EUR 4 million project is also developing methodical resources for foreign language teachers.

In 2017, the education ministry also launched an ESF project on developing e-resources on entrepreneurship in the same 10 vocational areas. This EUR 0.6 million project foresees creating methodical resources for teachers.

⁽¹²⁾ Arts and services; administration and services; services; construction; electrics and electronics; mechanics; mining and metallurgy; agriculture and forestry; tourism and gastronomy; social and medical services.

CHAPTER 5.

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

5.1. Continuing professional development 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 increase the skills of VET teachers.

Following an agreement between the relevant ministries, the January 2015 ordinance on the special economic zones called on employers to take a more active part in VET (including teachers' continuous professional development). Calls for projects supporting schools to act as sector-oriented centres for vocational and continuous education (*centra kształcenia zawodowego i ustawicznego*, CKZiU) have also been launched in several regions (*województwa*). They include upgrading vocational teachers' qualifications and equipping schools with tools and materials so that the education process can be adjusted to labour market needs. Other aspects covered include initiating school-enterprise cooperation, creation of vocational school networks in a given sector, creating specialised examination centres, guidance and counselling services, and apprenticeships for future vocational teachers. Projects to support schools in developing guidance and counselling services for IVET pupils have also been called for, with actions including support to teachers in acquiring counsellor qualifications.

The Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE), as the Polish national agency for the *Erasmus+* programme, is implementing the project *Mobilność kadry edukacji szkolnej* (teacher mobility). In 2016, calls for proposals have been launched within the framework of this project for teaching assignments (teaching in partner schools abroad), teacher training (participation in organised training abroad), and job shadowing.

5.2. Continuing professional development for trainers and mentors in enterprises

For 2016-20, the country's priority in this area, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is to increase the skills of practical training instructors in enterprises.

Several regions (*województwa*) have launched calls for projects aimed at continuing professional development (CPD) for in-company mentors. The projects are co-funded by the ESF and implemented as regional programmes. They include the development of VET suited to the socioeconomic environment and the implementation of high quality vocational apprenticeships, which includes the upgrading and updating of the qualifications of trainers and mentors at the enterprise.

Conclusion

Since 2015, Poland has further reformed its VET system, in particular through strengthening practical training and cooperation with employers and providing support to SMEs involved. There has been action to improve quality assurance mechanisms and the information system (especially in transitions monitoring) to guide VET development strategy. Initiatives are being taken to develop guidance and increase flexibility and permeability in the education and training system, including VET. Further progress has been made in the Polish qualifications framework and the system for validation of non-formal and informal learning. NEETs and adults in need were provided with new training opportunities, and new qualification opportunities for adults were set up. Projects were launched to support the development of key competences in initial VET and the continuous professional development 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 available to Cedefop at the time suggests issues which could benefit from further consideration:

- (a) supporting the development of key competences in continuing VET;
- (b) initial training of VET school teachers and in-company trainers and mentors;
- (c) making more systematic use of EQAVET indicators to monitor VET developments.

Setting out policy priorities on continuous information and feedback loops in CVET for the remaining period until 2020 could also be considered.

List of abbreviations

AES	adult education survey
CKZiU	<i>centra kształcenia zawodowego i ustawicznego</i> sector-oriented centres for vocational and continuous education
CPD	continuing professional development
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
DGVT	Director General for vocational education and training
ECTS	European credit transfer and accumulation system
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
FRSE	Foundation for the Development of the Education System
GDP	gross domestic product
GE	general education
ISCED	international standard classification of education
IVET	initial vocational education and training
KOWEZIU	national centre for supporting vocational and continuing education
LOWE	<i>lokalne ośrodki wiedzy i edukacji</i> local centres for education and knowledge
NEETs	not in education, employment, or training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHP	<i>ochotnicze hufce pracy</i> voluntary labour corps
PISA	programme for international student assessment
PPS	purchasing power standards
PQF	Polish qualifications framework
QANRP	quality assurance national reference point
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
STEM	science, technology, engineering and math programmes
UOE	UNESCO OECD Eurostat
VET	vocational education and training

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