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Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015–17

UNITED KINGDOM

Cedefop monitoring and analysis of VET policies

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UNITED KINGDOM
NORTHERN IRELAND

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 the United Kingdom was decreasing and below the EU average: 43.8% in 2013 (European Commission, 2015, p. 9) against 48.9% in the EU; 42.7% in 2014 compared to 48% in the EU (Cedefop, 2017a, p. 137); 40% in 2015 compared to 47% in the EU ([1]). Yet, 56.4% 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. 137). The employment rate of recent upper secondary graduates was also higher than in the EU: 78.5% in 2014 (European Commission, 2015, p. 2) and 78.7% in 2015 (European Commission, 2016, p. 2) compared to 70.8% and 74.1% on average in the EU in respective years. Adult participation in lifelong learning was above the EU rate: 15.8% in 2014 (European Commission, 2015, p. 9) and 15.7% in 2015 compared to 10.7% on average in the EU in both years (Cedefop, 2017a, p. 137) (Table 1).

VET in Northern Ireland faced the challenge of increasing its labour-market relevance. Reforming the apprenticeship system and developing new VET programmes was being considered.

([1]) Eurostat, data for 2015.

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

Indicator label	2010		Last available year			Recent trend (per year)		
	UK [f]	EU [f]	Yr	UK [f]	EU [f]	Range	UK	EU
Access, attractiveness and flexibility								
IVET students as % of all upper secondary students	A	A	'14	42.7 [b]	48.0 [b] E1	'13-'14	▪ -1.1	▪ -0.9
IVET work-based students as % of all upper secondary IVET	A	A	'14	56.4 [b]	34.0 [b] E2	'13-'14	▪ -1.2	▪ 0.1
IVET students with direct access to tertiary education as % of all upper secondary IVET			'14	40.4	69.2 E3	'13-'14	▪ -9.7	▪ -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 (%)	30.0	20.0 [e]	'10	30.0	20.0 [e]			
Adults in lifelong learning (%)	20.1		'15	15.7	10.7 [b]	'13-'15	↘ -0.5	→ 0.0
Enterprises providing training (%)	80.0	66.0 [e]	'10	80.0	66.0 [e]			
Female IVET students as % of all female upper secondary students	A	A	'14	43.0 [b]	42.7 [b] E1	'13-'14	▪ -1.2	▪ -1.0
Employees of small firms participating in CVT courses (%)	25.0	25.0 [e]	'10	25.0	25.0 [e]			
Young VET graduates in further education and training (%)			'15	33.2 [b]	33.0 [b]	'14-'15	▪ -1.9	▪ -0.3
Older adults in lifelong learning (%)	14.5	5.3	'15	12.1	6.9	'10-'15	↘ -0.3	↗ 0.4
Low-educated adults in lifelong learning (%)			'15	6.8 [b] C	4.3 [b] C	'13-'15	↘ -0.6	↘ -0.1
Unemployed adults in lifelong learning (%)	19.5		'15	14.2	9.5 [b]	'13-'15	↘ -1.3	↘ -0.4
Individuals who wanted to participate in training but did not (%)	B	9.5 [e] B	'11		9.5 [e]			
Job-related non-formal education and training (%)	81.6 B	80.2 [e] B	'11	81.6	80.2 [e]			
Skill development and labour market relevance								
IVET public expenditure (% of GDP)			'13	0.46 [b]	0.56 [b] E4	'12-'13	▪ -0.07	▪ -0.03
IVET public expenditure per student (1 000 PPS units)			'13	6.1 [b]	6.4 [b] E5	'12-'13	▪ -0.5	▪ 0.0
Enterprise expenditure on CVT courses as % of total labour cost	0.7	0.8 [e]	'10	0.7	0.8 [e]			
Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET			'14	z	1.0 [b] E6			
STEM graduates from upper secondary IVET (% of total)	A	A	'14	[b]	30.0 [b] E7			
Short-cycle VET graduates as % of first time tertiary education graduates			'14	[b]	9.3 E8			
Innovative enterprises with supportive training practices (%)		41.5 E9	'12		41.6 E9			
Employment rate for IVET graduates (20- to 34-year-olds)			'15	79.0 [b]	77.2 [b]	'14-'15	▪ 1.0	▪ 0.3
Employment premium for IVET graduates			'15	-3.4 [b]	5.3 [b]	'14-'15	▪ -0.3	▪ -1.0

Indicator label	2010		Last available year			Recent trend (per year)		
	UK [f]	EU [f]	Yr	UK [f]	EU [f]	Range	UK	EU
(over general stream)								
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over low-educated)			'15	21.9 [b]	23.7 [b]	'14-'15	▪ 2.7	▪ -0.1
Workers helped to improve their work by training (%)			'15	84.9	83.7			
Workers with skills matched to their duties (%)	52.6	55.2	'15	57.8	57.3	'10-'15	▪ 1.0	▪ 0.4
Overall transitions and labour market trends								
Early leavers from education and training (%)		13.9	'15	10.8 [b] [c]	11.0 [C]	'11-'15	↘ -1.0	↘ -0.6
30- to 34-year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)		33.8	'15	47.8 [b] [c]	38.7 [C]	'11-'15	↗ 0.5	↗ 1.0
NEET rate for 18- to 24-year-olds (%)	17.8	16.6	'15	14.5	15.8	'10-'15	↘ -0.7	↘ -0.1
Unemployment rate for 20- to 34-year-olds (%)	9.9	13.1	'15	6.8	12.9	'10-'15	↘ -0.7	↗ 0.1
Employment rate of recent graduates (%)		77.4	'15	85.8 [b] [c]	76.9 [C]	'11-'15	↗ 1.1	→ 0.0
Adults with lower level of educational attainment (%)		27.3	'15	20.3 [b] [c]	23.5 [C]	'11-'15	↘ -0.8	↘ -0.8
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds (%)		68.6	'15	76.9 [b]	70.0	'11-'15	↗ 0.9	↗ 0.4
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds with lower level of educational attainment (%)		53.4	'15	59.7 [b] [c]	52.6 [C]	'11-'15	↗ 1.1	↘ -0.1
Medium/high-qualified employment in 2020 (% of total)			'16	84.6 [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.

(^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. 137.

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

1.1.   Piloting the Northern Ireland strategy for youth training

Generating our success: the Northern Ireland strategy for youth training ([2]) (Section 3.4.2) aims at developing a new broad-based baccalaureate-style programme for young people at level 2 (European qualifications framework, EQF 3). It integrates structured work-based learning primarily as a method for developing skills; piloting started in autumn 2015. The programme was created as a stepping stone towards VET at EQF level 4 and new apprenticeship programmes at level 3 (EQF 4) in Northern Ireland.

1.2.   *Further education means success*: the Northern Ireland strategy for further education

The Northern Ireland strategy for further education *Further education means success* (Section 3.2.2) was adopted in 2016. It aims to develop employability skills through high-quality work placements, simulated work environments using virtual reality technology and project-based learning, developing entrepreneurial spirit, creativity and the ability to innovate. The implementation programme of the strategy was published in March 2016. The allocated budget of GBP 15 million aimed to create 300 higher-level apprenticeships in various industry sectors in the academic year 2017/18.

1.3.   Piloting the new system of traineeships (EQF 3) and apprenticeships (EQF 4)

A new traineeship and apprenticeship system will apply as of 2018. It will offer traineeships at level 2 (EQF 3) and apprenticeships at level 3+ (EQF4). In the

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([2])   https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/del/youth-training-strategy.pdf

reporting period, models of delivery, curricula (^{3}) and programmes are being piloted. Sixteen traineeship pilots were launched in September 2016 across a range of occupational areas. This type of two-year programme is designed for young people aged 16 to 24 to acquire the skills needed for improving their employability prospects. The programmes comprise project- and work-based learning as well as English and mathematics and can be completed while in employment or through training that includes structured work experience. All available traineeships will be accessible through a web portal for employers to advertise, and learners to find, suitable programmes (^{4}). A few level 3 (EQF level 4) apprenticeships are testing out a new curriculum (^{5}). Around 30 higher-level apprenticeships pilots at level 4 (EQF level 5) and above are also running until September 2017.

1.4. Funding apprenticeship

Since April 2017, employers in Northern Ireland with a wage bill in excess of GBP 3 million have to contribute annually to an apprenticeship levy (0.5% of the employer's annual pay bill) to supplement government apprenticeship funding.

(^{3})   http://www.anic.ac.uk/apprenticeships.aspx

(^{4})   http://www.collegesni.ac.uk/apprenticeships.aspx
        https://www.theyworkforyou.com/ni/?id=2016-03-01.5.46

(^{5})   https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/types-apprenticeships   ,
        https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/higher-level-apprenticeships

CHAPTER 2.

MTD 2 – Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET and continuous information and feedback loops to IVET and CVET (^{6})

2.1.   Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET

Systematic use of European quality assurance in vocational education and training (EQAVET) indicators to monitor the VET system ('always used' item in Figure 1), has remained unchanged compared to 2013. Northern Ireland was above the EU average in IVET and continuing vocational education and training (CVET) in 2016. All EQAVET indicators are used (mostly always).

(^{6})   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 (DGVTs) 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

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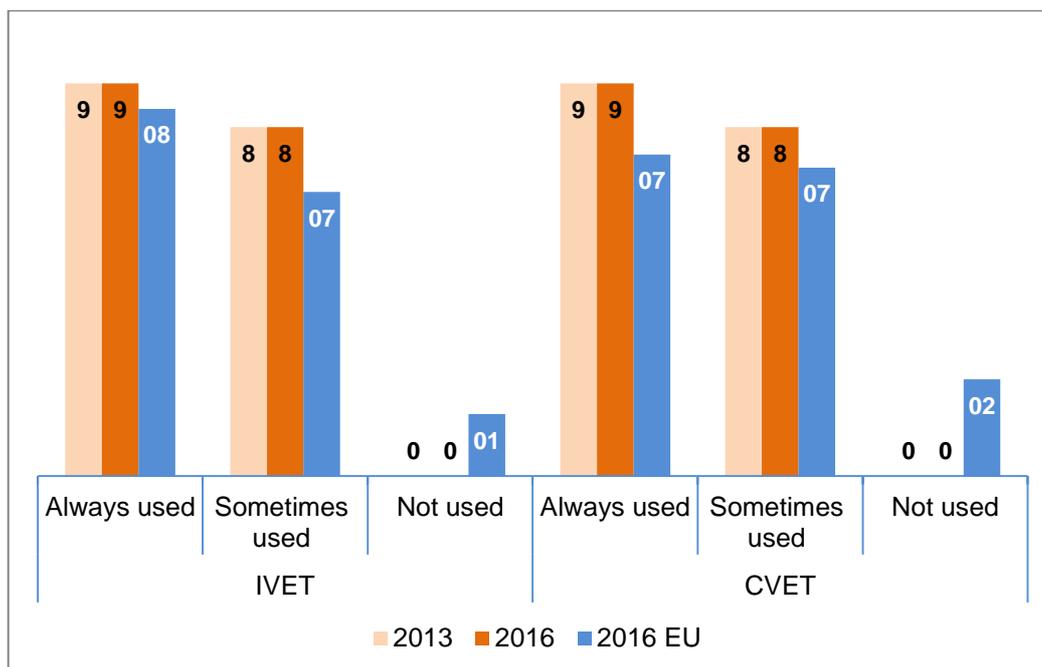
2.2.   Continuous information and feedback loops in initial and continuing VET

As a follow up to the 2016 Northern Ireland strategy for further education *Further education means success*, the Department for the Economy, supported by colleges, has started the process of identifying and collecting information on learner progression and learner destinations after leaving college. As of September 2017, colleges are expected to publish information on learner achievements, learner progression and learner destinations on their websites.

A three-year sponsorship arrangement started in 2015 between the Department for the Economy and the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre to build a skills-barometer model to estimate future skill needs and gaps by level, sector and subject area across a range of economic outcomes.

As of May 2016, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) regulation is the only Northern-Ireland-based qualifications regulator responsible for policy advice and regulation of professional and technical qualifications.

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. Guidance: the 2015-20 careers strategy

A careers strategy, *Preparing for success 2015-20* ([7]), jointly agreed between the Department for the Economy (then Department for Employment and Learning) and the Department of Education, was published in March 2016. The strategy has committed to having an accountability and quality assurance framework to ensure delivery of impartial careers services; introducing new and innovative delivery channels, including online web chat and social media with up-to-date labour market information; ensuring equality of opportunity; offering face-to-face advice to young people at key transition stages, providing additional support to those at risk of becoming disengaged and those with barriers, and providing more advice to parents; and providing young people with access to an e-portfolio to record activities undertaken to improve their employability, including work experience, voluntary and part-time work, careers learning, sporting achievements, and other relevant extra-curricular activities alongside education qualifications.

3.2. Permeability and flexibility

3.2.1. Introducing flexibility: changes to the *Entitlement framework*

The *Entitlement framework*, which sets out the post-14 curriculum, became statutory in 2013 and reached full implementation in 2015. It ensured a wide, pupils' needs-led offer at school through more learning options and two-third general and one-third applied courses. Schools were also required to offer at

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([7])   https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/preparing-success-2015-2020-strategy-careers-education-and-guidance

https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/new-strategy-careers-education-and-guidance-launched-0

least 24 courses at lower secondary level and 27 in the post-16 category, a minimum of one third being vocational. However, due to resource and budget restraints, along with giving schools more autonomy, a January 2017 decision [8] gives schools more flexibility to reduce the number of courses. From September 2017 onwards, schools may offer 21 courses at lower secondary and 24 at post-16 level.

3.2.2. Supporting progression: the 2016 further education strategy

The 2016 Northern Ireland strategy for further education *Further education means success* (Section 1.2) recommends that further education colleges particularly focus on developing increased provision at level 3 (EQF 4) and above, in areas that will help rebalance/rebuild the economy. The qualifications system, innovative teaching and clear pathways should ease progression to studies at higher levels. The strategy also suggests rationalising and simplifying the qualifications landscape to make it more easily understood by users. Colleges are encouraged to support companies in ensuring that employees have the required knowledge, skills and qualifications, or can acquire them in flexible ways. The strategy recommends reviewing the funding model through allocating incentives to colleges which support sector strategic priorities; this includes provision of full-time training, which is important for up-skilling the workforce.

3.3.   National qualifications framework [9]

The qualifications and credit framework (QCF) was adopted and introduced in 2008, building on previous frameworks since the 1980s. In 2010, it was referenced to the EQF. The framework had limited scope as it mainly covered VET qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and was open to those awarded by the private sector. It was not a comprehensive framework and operated in parallel to the framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ) and the previously devised national qualifications framework (NQF) [10], which included general education qualifications. As a credit framework, the QCF allowed for the combination and accumulation of units of qualifications.

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[8] https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/weir-announces-changes-entitlement-framework

[9] Cedefop, 2017b.

[10] An NQF existed in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, alongside the QCF, mainly for the school/general (academic) qualifications (general certificate of secondary education (GCSEs) and general certificate of education GCEs).

In October 2015 a new, regulated qualifications framework (RQF) was introduced for England and Northern Ireland, replacing the QCF and the NQF ([11]). A total of two years is foreseen for the full implementation of the RQF. The RQF covers all academic and vocational qualifications regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) ([12]) and by CCEA regulation ([13]). The RQF uses the same eight levels (plus three entry levels) as the QCF but introduces some changes in the way qualification size ([14]) is calculated. Unlike the QCF, the RQF does not have a regulatory role and does not set qualification design rules. The RQF was designed to be more descriptive and less prescriptive than the QCF and help people better understand the qualifications controlled by the qualifications regulators in England and Northern Ireland (Ofqual and CCEA regulation respectively), and how they relate to each other. Ofqual is responsible for the daily running of the framework. One of the main principles applying to all qualifications in the RQF (after consultation carried out in spring 2015) is using guided learning hours (GLH) and total qualification time (TQT) ([15]). GLH is composed of activities completed by the learner under the direct instruction or supervision of a lecturer. TQT is made up of the GLH plus all other time taken in preparation without supervision. TQT will be indicated for all RQF qualifications by the end of 2017. Awarding organisations are also expected to review their

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([11]) Relevant documents:
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofqual-to-introduce-new-regulated-qualifications-framework

([12]) Register of regulated qualifications: http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/

([13]) CCEA: http://ccea.org.uk/about_us/what_we_do

([14]) Award, certificate or diploma, depending on the indicative time a standard learner might need to study a qualification.

([15]) All qualifications registered in the framework will be assigned a measure of (c) size, expressed in total qualification time and guided learning hours. Total qualification time is the number of notional hours which represents an estimate of the total amount of time that could reasonably be expected to be required for a learner to achieve and demonstrate the achievement of the level of attainment necessary for the award of a qualification. TQT comprises the number of hours which an awarding organisation has assigned to a qualification for guided learning (GL), and an estimate of the number of hours a learner will reasonably be likely to spend in preparation, study or any other form of participation in education or training, including assessment, which takes place as directed by – but, unlike guided learning, not under the immediate guidance or supervision of – a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.
Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/awarding-organisations-must-justify-sizes-of-qualifications
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/597612/total-qualification-time-criteria.pdf

existing qualifications by the end of 2017. The framework level is displayed on all certificates for qualifications referenced to the framework. There are no plans to introduce EQF levels on certificates. The EQF level is, however, displayed along with the RQF level for each qualification in the register of regulated qualifications. The replacement of the QCF and NQF with the RQF implies that the UK referencing report, for England and Northern Ireland, needs to be updated.

3.4. Training, reskilling and upskilling vulnerable groups

3.4.1. The 2016-21 *Employment strategy for people with disabilities*

The *Employment strategy for people with disabilities* ([16]) (2016-21) launched in March 2016 aims to help people of all ages with disabilities achieve their full employment and career potential through enhanced working partnership arrangements between government departments and the local disability sector. A clear and simple pathway into employment that makes choosing the most suitable programmes easy is to be established. Assistance will be provided by specialist disability employment officers together with health professionals, education transition officers, careers advisers, occupational psychologists and employment service staff. There will be particular focus on young people who are transitioning through school, further and higher education, skills training, apprenticeships and employability programmes.

3.4.2. Training for the young low-qualified: *Strategy for youth training*

The *Strategy for youth training* ([17]) adopted in June 2015 (Section 1.1) highlights the importance of support measures in helping young people complete their training and progress into employment or higher level VET. All 16- to 24-year-olds who require training at level 2 (EQF 3) will have the opportunity to participate: those not in employment, those starting a new job, and those in jobs. A central service will be established, supported by industry consultants, to market, promote and support youth training and apprenticeship provision. Financial assistance and additional support (for example for individuals with a

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([16]) https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/del/Disability%20Strategy%20report%20%28Web%29.pdf

([17]) https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/del/youth-training-strategy.pdf

disability) will be provided for young people participating in the scheme. Building on the current review of careers, the *Careers service* will work in tandem with the new central service to provide impartial advice and guidance for young people considering the youth training and apprenticeship pathway.

MTD 4 – Key competences in both IVET and CVET

4.1.   Baseline

In the United Kingdom, compared with general education graduates, those who completed VET programmes feel they have:

(a) stronger (ranged by priority):

   (i)   sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;

   (ii)   ability to be creative;

   (iii)   ability to work with others;

   (iv)   communication skills;

(b) weaker:

   (i)   cultural awareness;

   (ii)   foreign language speaking;

   (iii)   science and technology skills (Figure 2).

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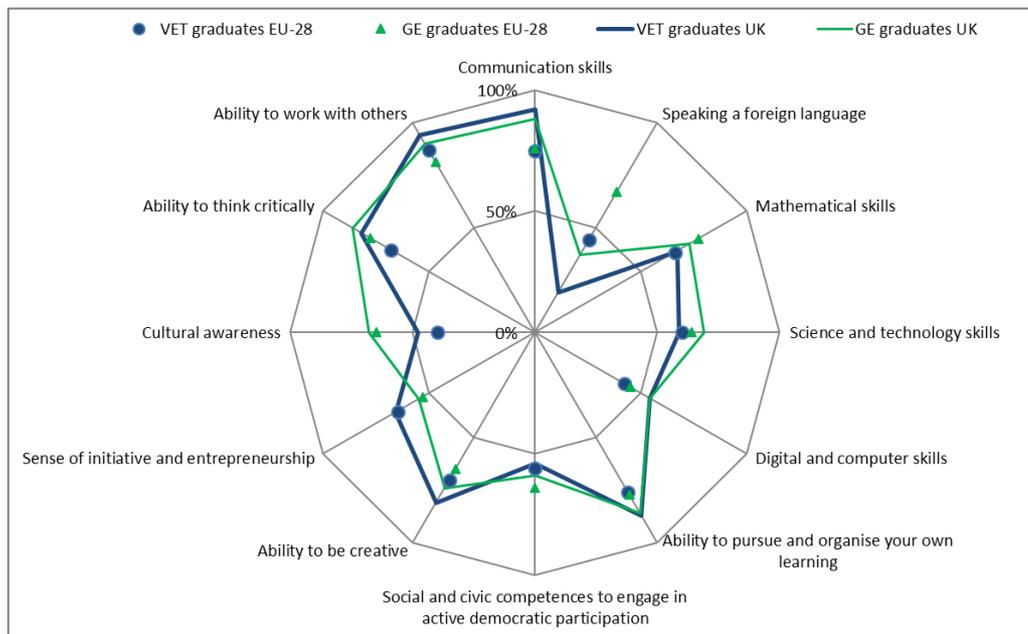

NB: GE stands for general education.
      Respondents who attended upper secondary education. Interviewees were asked in summer 2016 about their overall experience in upper secondary education. Aggregated data do not take account of different types and sectors of VET and age groups of respondents.

Source: Cedefop, 2017c.

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

Figure 3.   **Share of 15-year-olds with low achievement in reading, maths and science**
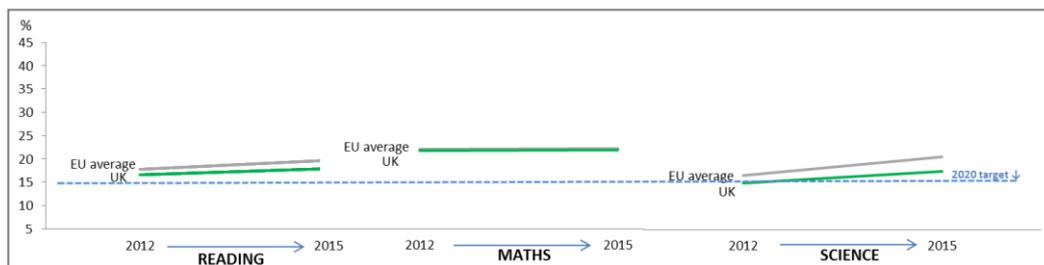
NB: Low achievement means failing level 2 on the PISA (programme for international student assessment) scale.

Source: OECD, 2014; OECD, 2016.

As VET enrols 40% of all upper secondary learners in the country ([18]), this trend is likely to be reflected in the key competences trained for in VET programmes.

In Northern Ireland, key competences are embedded in the areas of learning which schools must provide (at least one course per area). However, such requirements are not binding for VET, the majority of which is delivered in the further education and skills sector (age 16+). Adult literacy and numeracy are part of essential skills qualifications mostly offered in colleges for 16- to 19-year-old learners ([19]).

4.2.   Key competences in initial VET

The 2016 strategy for further education *Further education means success* (Sections 1.2 and 3.2.2) recommends that colleges raise the level of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) competence by adopting the new qualifications being developed through the refreshed *Essential*

([18]) Calculated from Eurostat; data for 2015.

([19]) For more information on key competences in VET see UK NARIC, 2016.

skills strategy ([20]) and the reviews of GCSEs (general certificates of secondary education) in English and mathematics. There is renewed focus on developing learners' applied numeracy, literacy and problem-solving capabilities within pre-16 provision. The youth training system will provide a new broad-based baccalaureate-style professional and technical award at level 2 (EQF 3), equating to a minimum of five GCSEs at grades A* (the highest) to C. It includes English and mathematics qualifications at level 2 (EQF 3) and additional qualifications deemed relevant to the needs of individual sectors. Online technologies will be used to prepare young people for the workplace. The refreshed qualifications comprise new content, revised standards and externally marked assessment. First teaching started in September 2016.

([20]) https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/Essential%20Skills%20Interactive%20PDF%20%28revised%29.pdf

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

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

The *Further education means success* strategy adopted in 2016 (Sections 1.2 and 3.2.2) puts forward a number of recommendations, including establishing a new teacher education framework with renewed focus on high quality initial teacher education (and continuing professional development) for all lecturing staff in colleges. Minimum standards for pedagogy and subject qualifications are referenced.

5.2. Initial training for trainers and mentors in enterprises

The *Strategy for youth training* [21] adopted in June 2015 (Sections 1.1 and 3.4.2) foresees that workplace trainers (buddies) assigned to learners in the workplace will be required to have appropriate recent experience of their industry and undertake introductory training. A quality assurance project under development since 2015 will develop a quality assurance model to ensure high quality youth training provision through, *inter alia*, established criteria for teaching and workplace buddies.

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[21] https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/del/youth-training-strategy.pdf

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

The *Strategy for youth training* (²²) adopted in June 2015 (Sections 1.1 and 3.4.2) foresees that tutors delivering the non-work-based elements of youth training will be required to have recent experience of their industry and relevant occupational and pedagogical qualifications. All tutors will be expected to spend periods of time updating their skills and knowledge of their industry, as defined by the relevant sectoral partnership.

The recommendations of the *Further education means success s*trategy adopted in 2016 (Section 5.1) include renewed focus on continuing professional development for all lecturing staff in colleges. College staff should also have the opportunity to undertake relevant and good quality industrial placements to ensure that they understand the needs of employers and workforce development. Continuing professional development (CPD) courses have since been developed in conjunction with University of Ulster, both in relation to industry placements and essential skills teaching.

The quality assurance project for training company trainers and mentors (Section 5.2) will include criteria for continuous professional development and continuing performance monitoring of both trainers and teachers.

5.4. Continuing professional development for trainers and mentors in enterprises

The requirement of the 2015 *Strategy for youth training* (²³) on in-company trainers having appropriate recent experience of their industry and the related quality assurance project (Section 5.2) also covers their continuing training.

(²²) https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/del/youth-training-strategy.pdf

(²³) https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/del/youth-training-strategy.pdf

Conclusion

Since 2015, Northern Ireland has been piloting reforms of its work-based learning, apprenticeship and traineeship systems. Development of tools to monitor VET learner transition to the labour market and forecast labour market trends and skills needs has been initiated. Strategies to support guidance and study progression have been launched. Plans to provide groups in need (people with disabilities, young low-qualified) with new training opportunities have been set up. Major progress has been achieved with the introduction of the regulated qualifications framework, bringing together the qualifications and credit framework and the national qualifications framework. Steps have been taken to support the development of key competences in initial VET and reinforce the initial training and continuing professional development of VET teachers and in-company trainers and mentors.

The actions carried out show that the main lines of the Riga conclusions are being addressed. However, information available to Cedefop at the time of writing this report, suggests that further supporting the development of key competences in continuing VET/adult learning is an issue deserving further consideration in the future. Also, further developing entrepreneurship education and quality assurance mechanisms in VET seem to have been overlooked since 2015. Setting out policy priorities in the areas of all five Riga medium-term deliverables for the remaining period until 2020 could also be considered.

List of abbreviations

AES	adult education survey
CCEA	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
CPD	continuing professional development
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
DGVT	Director General for vocational education and training
EQAVET	European quality assurance in vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
Eurostat	statistical office of the European Union
FHEQ	framework for higher education qualifications
GCE	general certificate of education
GCSE	general certificate of secondary education
GDP	gross domestic product
GE	general education
GLH	guided learning hours
ICT	information and communication technology
ISCED	international standard classification of education
IVET	initial vocational education and training
NEET	not in education, employment, or training
NQF	national qualifications framework
NRP	national reference point
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
Ofqual	Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation
PISA	programme for international student assessment
PPS	purchasing power standards
QCF	qualifications and credit framework
RQF	regulated qualifications framework
STEM	science, technology, engineering and math programmes
TQT	total qualification time
UOE	UNESCO OECD Eurostat
VET	vocational education and training

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