



# Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015–17

## UNITED KINGDOM



Cedefop monitoring and analysis of VET policies

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

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WALES**

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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 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 <sup>(1)</sup>. 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 the country faced the challenge of regaining attractiveness. Of particular concern in Wales were the issues of measuring skills performance and upgrading skills supply to meet labour market demand.

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<sup>(1)</sup> 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 <sup>f</sup>	EU <sup>f</sup>	Yr	UK <sup>f</sup> EU <sup>f</sup>	Range	UK	EU
<b>Access, attractiveness and flexibility</b>							
IVET students as % of all upper secondary students	A	A	'14	42.7 <sup>b</sup> 48.0 <sup>b</sup> <sub>E1</sub>	'13-'14	▪ -1.1	▪ -0.9
IVET work-based students as % of all upper secondary IVET	A	A	'14	56.4 <sup>b</sup> 34.0 <sup>b</sup> <sub>E2</sub>	'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 <sup>E3</sup>	'13-'14	▪ -9.7	▪ -1.4
Employees participating in CVT courses (%)	31.0	38.0 <sup>e</sup>	'10	31.0 38.0 <sup>e</sup>			
Employees participating in on-the-job training (%)	30.0	20.0 <sup>e</sup>	'10	30.0 20.0 <sup>e</sup>			
Adults in lifelong learning (%)	20.1		'15	15.7 10.7 <sup>b</sup>	'13-'15	↘ -0.5	→ 0.0
Enterprises providing training (%)	80.0	66.0 <sup>e</sup>	'10	80.0 66.0 <sup>e</sup>			
Female IVET students as % of all female upper secondary students	A	A	'14	43.0 <sup>b</sup> 42.7 <sup>b</sup> <sub>E1</sub>	'13-'14	▪ -1.2	▪ -1.0
Employees of small firms participating in CVT courses (%)	25.0	25.0 <sup>e</sup>	'10	25.0 25.0 <sup>e</sup>			
Young VET graduates in further education and training (%)			'15	33.2 <sup>b</sup> 33.0 <sup>b</sup>	'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 <sup>c</sup> 4.3 <sup>c</sup>	'13-'15	↘ -0.6	↘ -0.1
Unemployed adults in lifelong learning (%)	19.5		'15	14.2 9.5 <sup>b</sup>	'13-'15	↘ -1.3	↘ -0.4
Individuals who wanted to participate in training but did not (%)	B	9.5 <sup>e</sup> <sub>B</sub>	'11				
Job-related non-formal education and training (%)	81.6 <sup>B</sup>	80.2 <sup>e</sup> <sub>B</sub>	'11	81.6 80.2 <sup>e</sup>			
<b>Skill development and labour market relevance</b>							
IVET public expenditure (% of GDP)			'12	30.46 <sup>b</sup> 0.56 <sup>b</sup> <sub>E4</sub>	'12-'13	▪ 0.07	▪ 0.03
IVET public expenditure per student (1 000 PPS units)			'13	6.1 <sup>b</sup> 6.4 <sup>b</sup> <sub>E5</sub>	'12-'13	▪ -0.5	▪ 0.0
Enterprise expenditure on CVT courses as % of total labour cost	0.7	0.8 <sup>e</sup>	'10	0.7 0.8 <sup>e</sup>			
Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET			'14				
STEM graduates from upper secondary IVET (% of total)	A	A	'14				
Short-cycle VET graduates as % of first time tertiary education graduates			'14				
Innovative enterprises with supportive training practices (%)		41.5 <sup>E9</sup>	'12				
Employment rate for IVET graduates (20- to 34-year-olds)			'15	79.0 <sup>b</sup> 77.2 <sup>b</sup>	'14-'15	▪ 1.0	▪ 0.3

Indicator label	2010		Last available year		Recent trend (per year)			
	UK <sup>f</sup>	EU <sup>f</sup>	Yr	UK <sup>f</sup>	EU <sup>f</sup>	Range	UK	EU
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over general stream)			'15	-3.4 <sup>b</sup>	5.3 <sup>b</sup>	'14-'15	▪ -0.3	▪ -1.0
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over low-educated)			'15	21.9 <sup>b</sup>	23.7 <sup>b</sup>	'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
<b>Overall transitions and labour market trends</b>								
Early leavers from education and training (%)		13.9	'15	10.8 <sup>b</sup>	11.0 <sup>c</sup>	'11-'15	↘ -1.0	↘ -0.6
30- to 34-year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)		33.8	'15	47.8 <sup>b</sup>	38.7 <sup>c</sup>	'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 <sup>b</sup>	76.9 <sup>c</sup>	'11-'15	↗ 1.1	→ 0.0
Adults with lower level of educational attainment (%)		27.3	'15	20.3 <sup>b</sup>	23.5 <sup>c</sup>	'11-'15	↘ -0.8	↘ -0.8
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds (%)		68.6	'15	76.9 <sup>b</sup>	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 <sup>b</sup>	52.6 <sup>c</sup>	'11-'15	↗ 1.1	↘ -0.1
Medium/high-qualified employment in 2020 (% of total)			'16	84.6 <sup>d</sup>	82.8 <sup>d</sup>			

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

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

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

<sup>(D)</sup> Forecast made in 2016.

<sup>(E1)</sup> Based on 28 countries; partial information for NL.

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

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

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

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

<sup>(E6)</sup> Partial information for NL.

<sup>(E7)</sup> Based on 25 countries (missing: IT, HR, UK).

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

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

<sup>(b)</sup> Break after 2010, therefore baseline data not included.

<sup>(u)</sup> Eurostat: 'low reliability'.

<sup>(z)</sup> Eurostat: 'not applicable'.

<sup>(e)</sup> 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. The 2015 review of the apprenticeship system

A review of the apprenticeship system, including consultation <sup>(2)</sup> on aligning apprenticeships to the needs of the Welsh economy, was carried out in 2015. The review considered the following issues:

- (a) responsibility for design and accreditation;
- (b) moving more apprenticeship training above level 2 (European qualifications framework, EQF level 3);
- (c) making all apprenticeships occupationally-specific;
- (d) how to include key competences and Welsh language in apprenticeships;
- (e) what assessment should look like within the apprenticeship frameworks;
- (f) to what extent is compatibility with the apprenticeship system in England a priority <sup>(3)</sup>.

## 1.2. The 2017 apprenticeships skills policy plan

An apprenticeships skills policy plan *Aligning the apprenticeship model with the needs of the Welsh economy* <sup>(4)</sup> was published in February 2017. It set specific targets:

- (a) to create 100 000 all-age new apprenticeships between 2016 and 2022 (funds of GBP 111 million have been committed in the draft budget <sup>(5)</sup> for 2017-18);
- (b) attract more school leavers and young people aged 16 to 19 to apprenticeships;
- (c) developing apprenticeships in growth sectors and emerging job categories;

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<sup>(2)</sup> <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/consultation/150129-apprenticeship-model-consultation-en.pdf>

<sup>(3)</sup> <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/consultation/150701-sor-en.pdf>

<sup>(4)</sup> <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/170206-app-policy-plan-en-v2.pdf>

<sup>(5)</sup> <http://gov.wales/newsroom/finance1/2016/161018budget/?lang=en>

- (d) developing higher level skills including apprenticeships at level 4 (EQF level 5) and above;
- (e) integrating apprenticeships into the wider education system.

Key employer organisations (such as the regional skills partnerships analysing the labour market to identify new skills), employer representative bodies (the Confederation of British Industry, Federation of Small Businesses and the Recruitment and Employment Confederation) and the Council for Economic Development will be involved in the apprenticeship programme. The Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB), where trade unions are also represented, will have a key role in developing policy objectives to ensure that apprenticeships are aligned to changing needs of the industry.

Within the project action plan, the all-age apprenticeship programme started in August 2016, targeting those facing difficulties in (re)entering the labour market (mainly people over 50). It is also foreseen that level 2 apprenticeships (EQF 3) should allow automatic progression to level 3 apprenticeships (EQF 4) <sup>(6)</sup>.

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<sup>(6)</sup> <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/170206-app-policy-plan-en-v2.pdf>, p. 15.

## CHAPTER 2.

# MTD 2 – Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET and continuous information and feedback loops to IVET and CVET <sup>(7)</sup>

A quality assurance reference point was set up in 2009. It covers IVET, continuing vocational education and training (CVET)/adult learning and non-formal learning. The quality and effectiveness framework (QEF), also introduced in 2009, aimed to improve the quality of post-16 education in Wales. The QEF was developed in cooperation with Estyn to align with the common inspection framework. This framework provides a set of key performance indicators for post-16 providers to use in self-assessment, as well as being the basis for inspection. It supports external and internal evaluation and promotes a continuous improvement culture. All providers are required to submit an annual self-assessment based on the common inspection framework (Estyn self-assessment guidance available for different VET providers/types). Assessment is followed up with quality development plans. Learner involvement is a key theme in the quality and effectiveness framework and all providers are required to have a formal learner involvement strategy, based on guidance published in 2010.

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<sup>(7)</sup> 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/#>

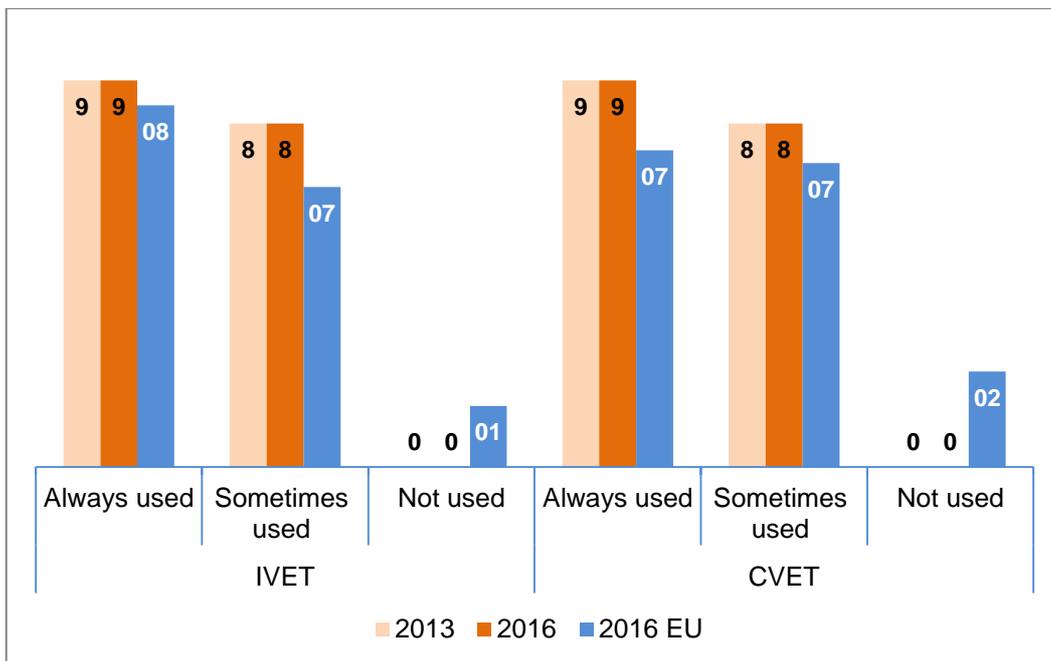
Education and training monitor 2016 country reports:

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/et-monitor\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/et-monitor_en)

## 2.1. Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET

The situation for the systematic use of the 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. Wales was above the EU average in IVET and CVET in 2016. All EQAVET indicators are used (mostly always).

Figure 1. Use of EQAVET indicators



NB: Of the 17 indicators suggested by the 2009 EQAVET recommendation, nine were 'always used' in IVET in 2013 and 2016 in Wales, 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 and continuing VET

The 2016 framework for post-compulsory education in Wales <sup>(8)</sup> proposes developing stronger links between education policy, provision, and social and economic goals to ensure the future needs of Wales are met. The Welsh government has been preparing measures to monitor achievement, post-16 value-added and destinations, with a view to giving a rounded picture of learner outcomes. This will provide comparable information on learners doing similar programmes in further education <sup>(9)</sup> and sixth form <sup>(10)</sup> settings. The new measures will be phased in from autumn 2017. Support and guidance will be given to learning providers on interpreting the data and using it to drive improvement.

The Welsh government has also agreed with the UK government to take part in a data-linking programme known as the longitudinal education outcomes study (LEOS). The objective is to match learner records with the UK Department for Work and Pensions' data on employment, earnings and benefits, giving a more comprehensive picture of learners' destinations. The programme is being piloted in 2017.

In 2016-17, the quality assurance reference point has been using *Erasmus+* funds to carry out a research project in cooperation with the University of South Wales Business School to explore current and future skills and qualifications requirements as well as labour supply gaps.

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<sup>(8)</sup> *Towards 2030: a framework for building a world-class post-compulsory education system for Wales*, published in 2016:  
<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/160310-hazelkorn-report-en.pdf>

<sup>(9)</sup> Courses to students over 16 years of age.

<sup>(10)</sup> Courses to students in the age range 16 to 19.

## 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. Equal opportunity, equity and inclusion

### 3.1.1. More effective support to young people with learning disabilities

Reviews carried out by the inspectorate for education and training in Wales (Estyn), the Wales audit office and the National Assembly's former Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee identified that current assessment of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) is inefficient, bureaucratic and costly, as well as insufficiently child-centred/user-friendly. Needs are consequently sometimes identified late and interventions are not planned or implemented in a timely or effective way, resulting in children and young people not being able to reach their full potential.

The Welsh government has therefore developed the *Additional learning needs* (ALN) transformation programme <sup>(1)</sup>, to create a unified system for supporting learners from 0 to 25. The system aims to cover both children and young people of compulsory school age who have SEN and young people in further education who have learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD). A single statutory plan (the individual development plan) is to replace the variety of statutory and non-statutory SEN or LDD plans for learners in schools and further education.

An *Additional learning needs* bill was developed and introduced to an assembly committee in December 2016. On 8 February 2017, the Minister for Lifelong Learning announced plans for a total investment of GBP 20 million to fund the programme <sup>(2)</sup>.

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<sup>(1)</sup> <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/additional-learning-special-educational-needs/transformation-programme/?lang=en>

<sup>(2)</sup> <http://gov.wales/newsroom/educationandskills/2017/20m-investment-to-help-those-with-additional-learning-needs-announced/?lang=en>

### **3.1.2. Lifting barriers for disadvantaged people in apprenticeships**

To address equality issues in apprenticeships, the Welsh government has appointed an equality and diversity champion to work with education and training providers and under-represented groups within the community, taking forward action to help disadvantaged people overcome the barriers they encounter on apprenticeship programmes. A toolkit and bespoke equality and diversity training for the work-based learning network will be developed in response to a review carried out by the equality and diversity champion <sup>(13)</sup>.

## **3.2. Permeability and flexibility**

### **3.2.1. Bringing further education closer to higher education**

In 2015, the Welsh government published a review of programmes leading to levels 4 and 5 (EQF 5) in further education <sup>(14)</sup>. Several recommendations resulted: taking on board employer needs; encouraging clear progression pathways to higher education; expanding higher education at further education institutions in certain sectors; involving the higher education funding body (Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, HEFCW) and regional skills partnerships in planning; and considering strengthening guidance on franchise arrangements between colleges and universities.

### **3.2.2. Clarifying and coordinating the post-compulsory education landscape**

Published in 2016, *Towards 2030: a framework for building a world-class post-compulsory education system for Wales* <sup>(15)</sup> suggests that, while quality and performance of the further and higher education sector is good, the post-compulsory education and training landscape could support progression better. One issue is the variety of institutions often offering similar qualifications and courses and a range of different agencies, which render the landscape complex and confusing for learners and stakeholders. Pathways in general academic education are considered clearer than those in VET. The framework suggests setting up clear and flexible learning and career pathways and opportunities. Revision of age 16 as the end of compulsory schooling is also suggested, in view of increasing requirements in skills and competence levels.

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<sup>(13)</sup> <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/170206-app-policy-plan-en-v2.pdf>, p. 21.

<sup>(14)</sup> <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150630-fe-he-en.pdf>

<sup>(15)</sup> <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/160310-hazelkorn-report-en.pdf>

Based on the framework, the Cabinet Secretary for Education commissioned a report to examine issues such as the growing complexity, duplication and provision gaps across post-compulsory education and training. A resulting recommendation is to consult on establishing a single new oversight and coordinating authority for the post-compulsory education and training sector, including higher education funding and research and innovation. The new authority will develop strong links with others, including schools and business, so that learners can move smoothly to and through post-compulsory education and training, and find the opportunities that best meet their needs and aspirations. The report recommendations were accepted in January 2017 and the Welsh government is consulting until 23 October 2017 on establishing the new Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales <sup>(16)</sup>.

### 3.3. Transparency, recognition, validation

#### 3.3.1. National qualifications framework <sup>(17)</sup>

The credit and qualifications framework for Wales (CQFW) was introduced in 2002. Its module and credit-based approach eases learning and recognition. It can be seen as a second generation framework, based on learning outcomes, and encompassing higher education, general education and vocational qualifications. It is also open to formally and non-formally acquired qualifications. In 2010, it was linked to EQF as part of the overall UK referencing. A review of the CQFW was carried out in 2014; following this <sup>(18)</sup>, *Qualifications Wales*, a new Welsh government-sponsored <sup>(19)</sup> body, was established by the 2015 Qualifications Wales Act as an independent regulator of the Welsh regulated qualifications system. The Welsh government is in charge of managing the CQFW, in cooperation with the *Qualifications Wales* and HEFCW. Also, the regulated qualifications framework (RQF), which was adopted in England and Northern Ireland in 2015, influenced the CQFW. Since 2015, all regulated general and vocational qualifications refer to the knowledge and skills level

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<sup>(16)</sup> <https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/reformed-post-compulsory-education-and-training-system>

<sup>(17)</sup> Cedefop, 2017b.

<sup>(18)</sup> Implementation of changes is overseen by the Welsh government, a CQFW advisory group (2015) and *Qualifications Wales*.

<sup>(19)</sup> But independent of government and accountable to the National Assembly for Wales.

descriptors, while higher education and non-regulated qualifications continue to refer to the descriptors in terms of knowledge, understanding, skills, autonomy and accountability.

### **3.3.2. Validation <sup>(20)</sup>**

Although there are opportunities to have non-formal and formal learning recognised, Wales does not have an overall policy specifically for validation. The application of validation is generally devolved to the learning provider, or at times to departments within the learning provider. In principle, all qualifications are open to validation/recognition. The credit and qualifications framework for Wales is a way of recognising prior non-formal and formal learning through its quality assured lifelong learning (QALL) pillar. Full qualifications are rarely awarded through validation/recognition: it is most commonly used for admission and can also be used to award higher education credits. Awarding organisations are responsible for quality assurance. In higher education, the quality assurance agency (QAA) oversees how well individual universities and colleges meet their responsibilities, including for validation/recognition. During 2014-16, a project – *RPL Wales* – has been carried out in the higher education sector, bringing together a consortium of higher education providers to improve their recognition of prior learning (RPL) procedures.

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<sup>(20)</sup> Cedefop, 2017b; Cedefop et al., 2017.

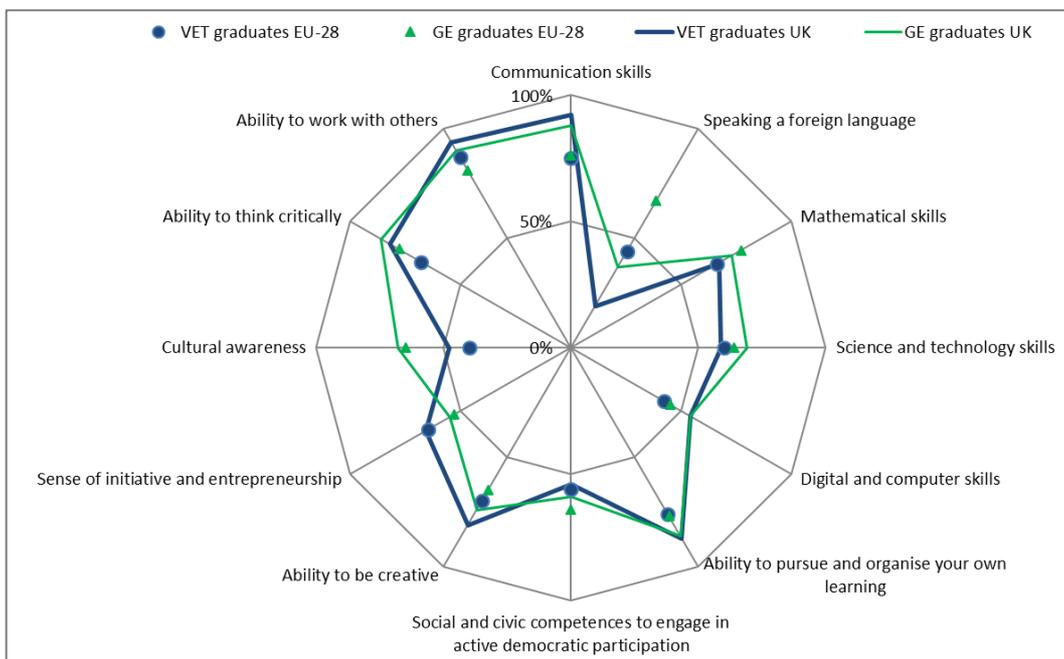
## CHAPTER 4.

# MTD 4 – Key competences in both IVET and CVET

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

- (a) stronger (ranked 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**



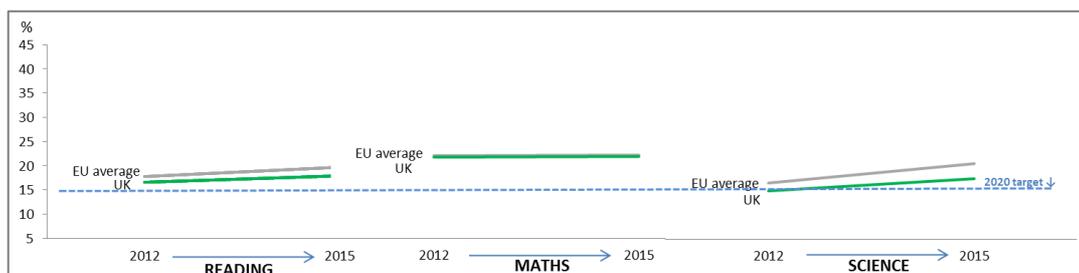
NB: GE stands for general education.

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 enrolls 40% of all upper secondary learners in the country <sup>(21)</sup>, this trend is likely to be reflected in the key competences trained for in VET programmes.

The Welsh baccalaureate is achieved by many Welsh learners. It comprises academic and vocational subjects at EQF level 4, including three key skills/essential skills Wales qualifications. At least one of the skills must be application of number, communication or digital literacy <sup>(22)</sup>.

#### 4.1. Key competences in initial VET

Since 2015, a new baccalaureate framework has supported achievement of a skills certificate, which consists of a community challenge, a global citizenship challenge and an enterprise and employability challenge, as well as a personal investigation. Through the challenges and personal investigation, the skills certificate assesses learner development in <sup>(23)</sup>:

- (a) literacy;
- (b) numeracy;

<sup>(21)</sup> Calculated from Eurostat; data for 2015.

<sup>(22)</sup> Requirements for the advanced diploma.

<sup>(23)</sup> For more information on key competences in VET see UK NARIC, 2016.

- (c) digital literacy;
- (d) critical thinking and problem solving;
- (e) planning and organisation;
- (f) creativity and innovation;
- (g) personal effectiveness.

A mathematics task and finish group reported on their work <sup>(24)</sup> in November 2015, suggesting that all schools should develop a strategic approach to teaching mathematics, if such an approach is not already in place. The Welsh government accepted the recommendations of this report.

A consultation <sup>(25)</sup> on a Welsh government draft strategy *A million Welsh speakers by 2050* was held between 1 August and 31 October 2016. Responses related to the further education sector included support for expansion of provision of Welsh-medium education in colleges to meet demand and to increase the opportunities available for people to continue with their education through the medium of Welsh. Comments also considered how to attract people to Welsh-medium courses in further and higher education, along with creating a clear route for students through the education system into jobs where Welsh language skills are needed in the workplace.

## 4.2. Key competences in continuing VET

Following a review of qualifications carried out in 2012, a set of essential skills <sup>(26)</sup> qualifications at levels 1 to 3 (EQF 2-4) was designed to assess the skills that learners need for successful learning, employment and life. Essential skills include communication, application of number, digital literacy, critical thinking and problem solving, planning and organisation, creativity and innovation, and personal effectiveness. Guidelines for teaching and assessment of these essential skills entered into force in September 2015.

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<sup>(24)</sup> <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/151214-maths-task-and-finish-group-report-en.pdf>

<sup>(25)</sup> <https://beta.gov.wales/consultations>

<sup>(26)</sup> <http://qualificationswales.org/english/qualifications/essential-skills-wales/>

## CHAPTER 5.

# 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

Following the 2014 education (Wales) Act, a new Education Workforce Council (EWC) was set up in April 2015 as the independent regulator for further education teachers (who teach vocational subjects in school-based VET settings) and learning support staff. The EWC replaced the General Teaching Council Wales. Further education lecturers have to register with the EWC. From April 2016, registration requirements were extended to further education learning support workers. Learning support workers who are eligible for registration but are not currently registered cannot commence work until they are registered. Any practitioner who is ineligible for registration in the category of registration for the work they wish to undertake should not be employed. Colleges and supply agencies are supposed, from this date on, to make pre-employment checks on the online EWC register <sup>(27)</sup> to ensure that the practitioner is registered in the relevant category of registration prior to commencing work.

Professional standards are being developed for further education and work-based learning practitioners. These have several aims: improving the quality of teaching and learning, providing a framework for initial and continuing professional training, supporting improved practice informed by evidence-based reflection, aiding understanding of the professionalism of the sector, and providing a reference point for organisations to use in their thinking about professional development. The standards are being developed with a working group of practitioners and other stakeholders, and are due to be in place for use by learning providers from October 2017 onwards.

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<sup>(27)</sup> <http://ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/registration/applying-for-registration>

## 5.2. Initial training for VET trainers and mentors in enterprises

The Welsh government decided to extend to all workplace learning practitioners the obligation to register with the Education Workforce Council as of 2017. Prior consultation was carried out from January to April 2016, as registration to the council has implications in terms of extending specific entry standards to workplace trainers, providing them with professional status and raising public trust and confidence. As a result, work-based learning practitioners are required since 1 April 2017 to register with the EWC. This includes any person employed to coordinate, deliver and assess or support work-based learning, for example as a trainer, assessor, learning coach or mentor, but not quality assurer (internal or external). Employers are required to employ only registered work-based learning practitioners and conduct pre-employment checks of the EWC register. There will be no qualification prerequisite for registration. Registration of work-based learning practitioners with the EWC will provide, for the first time, comprehensive information on the workforce, levels of qualifications, and development needs <sup>(28)</sup>.

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

The Education Secretary announced in November 2016 that a national network of excellence for mathematics <sup>(29)</sup> is to be set up to boost standards in Welsh schools. This was followed by an announcement in January 2017 to establish a national network of excellence for science and technology. The networks will involve schools, universities and regional consortia working together to provide a structured approach for support for ages three to 18 in schools and colleges. The networks will support leadership development, helping teachers, teaching assistants, further education lecturers and others to develop improved classroom practice, providing guidance, access to conferences and events on effective teaching practice for schools and colleges, as well as accredited evidence-based professional development programmes for staff to improve their subject knowledge and subject teaching and learning. Schools will receive support and

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<sup>(28)</sup> <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/170206-app-policy-plan-en-v2.pdf>

<sup>(29)</sup> <http://gov.wales/newsroom/educationandskills/2016/new-national-network-of-excellence-for-mathematics-to-be-created/?lang=en>

knowledge from experts and specialists, including information on tried and tested approaches to improving attainment and high-quality teaching resources.

Implementation of the common contract for further education colleges, fully in place for general further education colleges since September 2016, has specified a requirement for a minimum amount of continuing professional development (CPD) per year for each member of staff.

The *Additional learning needs* transformation programme also focuses on skills development for the education workforce to deliver effective support to learners with ALN in the classroom. The programme will be focused on core skills development for all practitioners. A two-year funding grant to local authorities and further education institutions will support developing person-centred practice skills across the workforce <sup>(30)</sup>.

The EWC has developed the learning exchange, launched in September 2016, as part of a centrally-funded platform allowing teachers and pupils to access digital resources in the classroom. The learning exchange provides practitioners with access to a searchable database of regional, national and international learning opportunities for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), information and communication technology (ICT) and computing subjects <sup>(31)</sup>.

The EWC was also commissioned by the Welsh government to develop the professional learning passport (PLP), officially launched in September 2016. The PLP is an e-portfolio hosted on the EWC website as a free online resource available to all registered practitioners. It offers a national platform where registered practitioners can record their career-long professional learning centrally in a way which can be transferred easily if they move between employers. A key part of the professional development of the registered education workforce, the PLP will support practitioners with their professional learning through their careers, in recording and allowing for reflecting on the development of their practice at different career stages. The EWC highlights several benefits to using the PLP as central storage of all learning documentation: recording development activities; gathering evidence of individual performance reviews and development cycle; assisting progress towards a qualification or professional standard; helping plan career progression; accessing links to resources to help with planning, recording and reflecting; and possible

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<sup>(30)</sup> <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/additional-learning-special-educational-needs/transformation-programme/?lang=en>

<sup>(31)</sup> <http://www.ewc.wales/learningexchange/index.php/en/>

sharing and collaboration of a group project, or sharing information with a line manager <sup>(32)</sup>.

In November 2016, the EWC launched the first education workforce survey on behalf of the Welsh government. Separate online surveys have been developed for school and further education teachers and support workers. The surveys included questions in key areas such as preparedness for reforms, workload and the relationship between continuing professional development and performance management.

#### 5.4. Continuing professional development for VET trainers, mentors in enterprises

The *Essential skills Wales* (ESW) implementation, delivery and assessment guidance for practitioners, assessors and learners' document was issued in April 2016. The document prepares and supports practitioners to deliver the new ESW suite of qualifications (Section 4.2). It provides information and guidance on the rationale for the qualifications and outlines their characteristics; it includes subject-specific (application of number skills, communication skills, digital literacy skills and employability skills) guidance on assessment and access requirements for those involved in implementing and/or quality assuring the qualifications.

Registration with the EWC brings access to the professional learning passport (Section 5.3) and other CPD resources and opportunities exclusively available to EWC registrants.

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<sup>(32)</sup> <http://ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/professional-development/professional-learning-passport>

## Conclusion

Since 2015, Wales has been reforming its apprenticeship system, aligning it to the needs of the economy. Information and feedback loops to guide the strategy for VET development have been reinforced. Initiatives were introduced for more equity and inclusion in the access for all to VET and qualifications. Actions were initiated to support progression in further education and from further education to higher education. Work was carried out on the credit and qualifications framework for Wales and validation of prior learning. Developments were supported in the acquisition of key competences both in initial and continuing VET. Wales was also active in structuring and strengthening the initial and continuing training of further education teachers, learning support staff, and in-company trainers and mentors.

The actions carried out show that the main lines of the Riga conclusions are being addressed but information available to Cedefop at the time suggests issues which could benefit from further consideration. Further developing education and career information, advice and guidance for VET learners, and the provision of training opportunities for groups in need (for example the unemployed), seem to have been overlooked over the past three years. Setting out policy priorities for all five Riga medium-term deliverables for the remaining period until 2020 could also be considered.

## List of abbreviations

AES	adult education survey
ALN	additional learning needs
CPD	continuing professional development
CQFW	credit and qualifications framework for Wales
DGVT	Director General for vocational education and training
EQAVET	European quality assurance in vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESW	Essential skills Wales
Eurostat	statistical office of the European Union
EWC	Education Workforce Council
GDP	gross domestic product
HEFCW	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
ICT	information and communication technology
ISCED	international standard classification of education
IVET	initial vocational education and training
LDD	learning difficulties or disabilities
LEOS	longitudinal education outcomes study
NEET	not in education, employment, or training
PISA	programme for international student assessment
PLP	professional learning passport
PPS	purchasing power standards
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QALL	quality assured lifelong learning
QEF	quality and effectiveness framework
RPL	recognition of prior learning
RQF	regulated qualifications framework
SEN	special education needs
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
VET	vocational education and training
WESB	Wales Employment and Skills Board

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