

## VET in Czechia



The main body responsible for IVET is the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT).

Representatives of employers are involved in curriculum development and participate in 28 sector skill councils responsible for creation of occupational and qualification standards.

Vocational education and training (VET) is provided both at lower and upper secondary level, as well as at tertiary level.

IVET is mainly school-based, but work-based learning (WBL) is an integral part of the programme (25-45% of instruction time). WBL may take place at companies' work-sites or in school workshops or facilities.

VET predominantly begins following completion of compulsory education. Lower secondary IVET programmes (EQF 2) last two years and are designed primarily for students with special education needs. These programmes are completed with final exam or with a 'VET certificate'.

Upper secondary level VET programmes (EQF 3-4) last three to four years. There are the following options:

- three-year VET programmes at EQF 3 (completed by a VET examination leading to a 'VET certificate') enable graduates to enter the labour market directly and perform manual occupations (bricklayer, hairdresser, etc.). Graduates of these programmes can follow a two-year follow-up programme (EQF 4) and take a *maturita* examination, which opens an access to higher education;
- four-year VET programmes (completed with a *maturita* examination, EQF 4) enable graduates to continue learning in higher education or perform mid-level technical, business, service, health and other similar jobs (construction technician, travel agent, etc.);
- four-year lyceum programmes with a high proportion of general education (up to 70% of the curricula) prepare their graduates for studies at higher education institutions or to enter labour market;
- programmes offered by conservatories have a different set-up, preparing for performance in demanding music, dance, singing and drama activities. Studies are completed with an *absolutorium* (tertiary professional education, EQF 6), but students may also take a *maturita* examination (secondary education, EQF 4);
- learners who have already completed upper secondary education have an option to acquire a (second) qualification in another field in the so-called shortened programmes. Those with *maturita* (EQF 4) can acquire a VET certificate or another *maturita* certificate in a different field; those with a VET certificate (EQF 3) can only acquire another VET certificate in a different field. Shortened courses are suitable also for adults and last one to two years.

Tertiary professional programmes prepare secondary school graduates (with *maturita* certificate) for demanding professional tasks (nutritionist, etc.). Studies last three to three-and-a-half years and are completed with an *absolutorium* (EQF 6). These programmes provide practically oriented tertiary education and are closely aligned to employers' skill needs.

Although many graduates enter the labour market, vertical permeability to higher education institutions is also possible. Graduates who, upon completion of their studies, continue in bachelor programmes at universities, may have some of their subjects and exams from tertiary professional school recognised.

The share of EQF 4 VET graduates continuing towards tertiary education was 61% in 2018.

Any adult can study any VET programme in the formal school system. Many programmes permit combination with working life, but overall adult participation is low.

The wide variety of continuing VET (CVET) programmes provided outside the formal system is not generally regulated; nevertheless, a system of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (VNFIL) has been gradually developing since 2007, when the Act on validation and recognition of prior learning came into force.

### Distinctive features of VET

VET has always represented a fundamental part of the Czech education system. The share of learners in VET programmes at upper secondary level was over 71% in 2018.

General subjects are a strong component in all types of VET programmes, but their proportion varies depending on the programme from 30% to 70% of the instruction time.

A first choice between general and vocational upper secondary educational pathways comes at age 15. By age 17 to 19, most VET students have acquired a vocational qualification recognised on the labour market.

Early leaving from education and training is still quite low (6.7% in 2019), partly due to a wide choice of education pathways and horizontal permeability.

Demographic developments have led to a decreasing number of young learners; IVET schools have become more active in providing CVET programmes for the general public. This is an opportunity for school teachers to develop their skills in teaching adults, but also helps increase young and adult learners' awareness of CVET as an integral part of life.

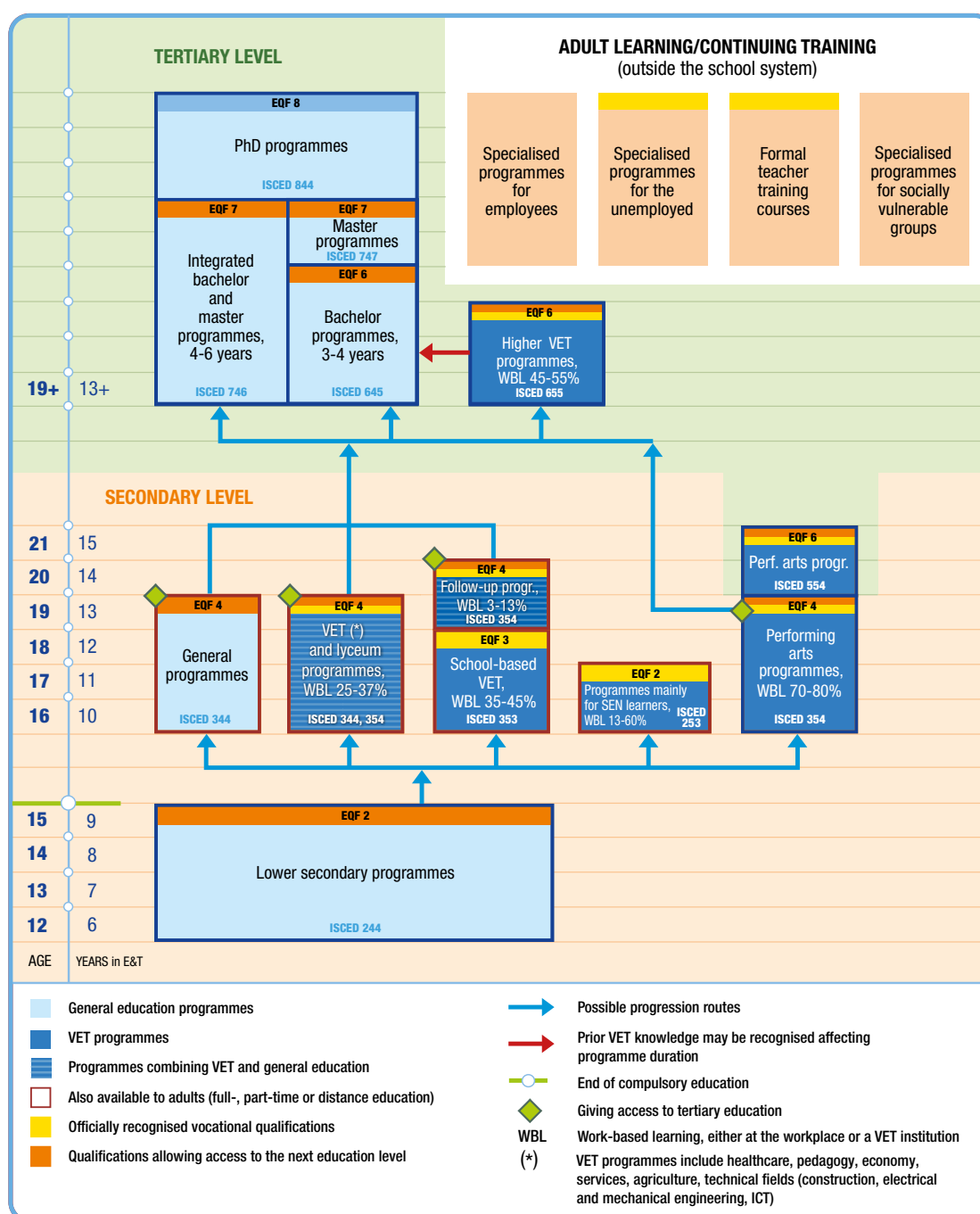
A graduate tracking system has been in place for almost 20 years.

### Challenges and policy responses

One of the main challenges in VET is to improve the quality and attractiveness of secondary VET by encouraging WBL in companies, supporting the school-to-work transition of graduates.

Legislative measures adopted after 2014 supported cooperation between schools and employers through tax incentives, obligatory participation of employers in VET examinations and *absolutorium* or direct involvement of experts from the business world in instruction at schools.

Linking IVET programmes with relevant qualifications in the National register of qualifications (NSK) should support responsiveness and flexibility to labour market needs. The reform of for-



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Czechia, 2020.

mal education funding introduced in January 2020 brought an increased level of centralisation. School funding is no longer based on a per capita approach but on the number of lessons taught.

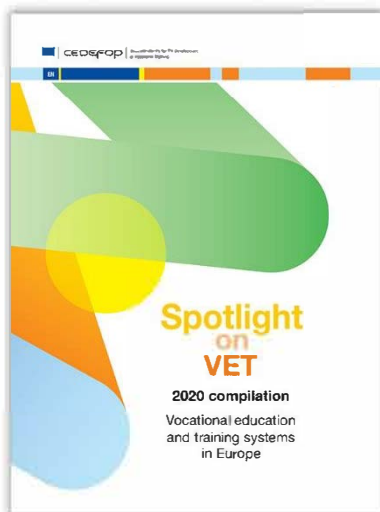
A crucial challenge is the ageing of pedagogical staff, as the average age of upper secondary school teachers is 49.4 years. Despite an increase in average salaries, demanding teaching jobs up to tertiary level still suffer from generally low attractiveness.

Better matching of skills supply and labour market demand is another challenge. Several projects targeting better skills

matching have been introduced but there is still no such system at national level.

As a policy response to Covid-19, an Amendment to the School Act from August 2020 introduced obligatory online education in case of emergency.

The new Strategy for the education policy of the Czech Republic 2030+ was adopted in autumn 2020. The revision of national VET curricula documents shall start in line with its principles.



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