



VET in Denmark

Vocational education and training (VET) plays a key role in the Danish strategy for lifelong learning, alongside meeting the challenges of globalisation and technological change.

Danish education and training provides qualifications at all levels, from compulsory schooling to doctoral degrees, and a parallel adult education and continuing vocational training (CVT) system. The two systems offer equivalent qualifications at various levels, enabling horizontal permeability.

VET jurisdiction is with the Ministry of Education. Initial VET (106 programmes) is organised into four broad entry routes; care, health and pedagogy; office, trade and business services; food, agriculture and ‘experiences’ (an umbrella term for tourism and recreation); and technology, construction and transportation. Programmes are organised according to the dual principle, alternating between periods of college-based and work-based learning (apprenticeship training) in enterprises. A typical initial VET programme (EUD) lasts three-and-a-half years with a 2:1 split between workplace and college-based training, although there is considerable variation among programmes. Individual study plans are compiled for all students. VET colleges and social partners share the responsibility for developing curricula to ensure responsiveness to local labour market needs. Qualifications at this level provide access to relevant fields in academy profession (KVU) programmes and professional bachelor programmes at tertiary level.

Alternative routes to VET qualifications include:

- combined vocational and general upper secondary education (EUX, an academic preparation programme), a relatively new pathway, which lasts around four years. It enables highly motivated students to obtain access to higher education along with a vocational qualification;
- ‘new apprenticeship’ ⁽¹⁾ (*Ny Mesterlære*) programmes, where the entire training takes place at a company instead of partly at a VET college. Students with a practical approach to learning benefit from these programmes;
- basic VET (FGU) for lower secondary graduates, with a practical approach to learning. The programme caters to the young unemployed, lasts three to four years, and includes at least 75% of work-based learning (WBL).

Adult learning

VET for adults aged 25 or older (EUV) has been established as a specific track to offer the low-skilled an attractive and goal-oriented path to becoming a skilled worker.

Adults with at least two years of work experience can receive VET education without the basic programme and without internship. Adult vocational training (*arbejdsmarkedssuddannelse*, AMU) provides participants with skills and competences relevant to the labour market and is primarily geared to specific sectors and jobs. The programmes help learners either deepen their existing knowledge in a particular field or develop new knowledge in related fields. AMU programmes (around 500) are created, adapted or discontinued in response to labour market

needs. At tertiary level, further VET and adult education programmes lead to EQF level 5 qualifications.

Distinctive features of VET

The Danish VET system is characterised by a high level of stakeholder involvement. Social partners, vocational colleges, teachers and learners are all involved in developing VET based on consensus and shared responsibility. Stakeholders play a key role in advising the Ministry of Education on overall VET policy and determining the structure and general framework for training programmes within their field, cooperating in national trade committees. At local level, stakeholders cooperate in developing curricula to respond to local labour market needs.

Denmark has one of the highest rates of participation in adult education and continuing training in the EU. This reflects the national strategy to focus on knowledge-intensive specialist sectors and lifelong learning, as well as the large public sector and a tradition of strong ties between education institutions and social partners.

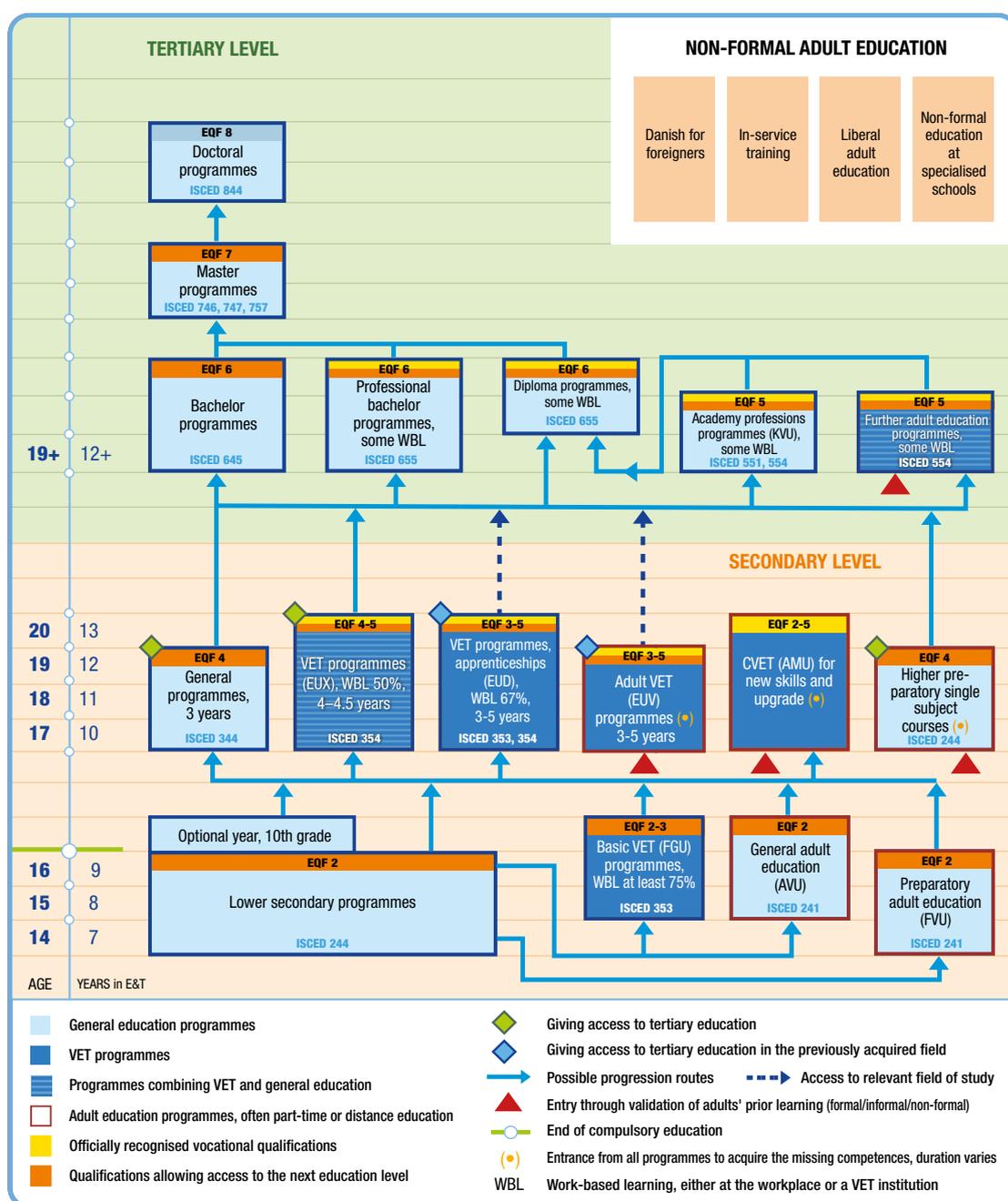
An integrated lifelong learning strategy introduced in 2007 improved horizontal and vertical permeability and guidance services and provided better opportunities for recognition of non-formal learning and qualifications through standardised procedures for validation of prior learning.

Public financing is central to the VET system, with colleges receiving performance-based block grants. Apprenticeships and employee further training are subsidised according to a solidarity principle, coordinated in the AUB system (*Arbejdsgivernes Uddannelses Bidrag*). Within this system, all enterprises, regardless of their involvement in VET, contribute a fixed amount per employee to a central fund. Enterprises are then partially reimbursed for providing training placements and for employee participation in continuing training.

Challenges and policy responses

Education and training are considered a key area. As demand for skilled labour continues to increase, IVET is expected to accommodate an increasingly heterogeneous learner population. Two reforms have had significant influence on VET development. The VET reform (2014) established VET learners’ minimum entrance requirements. Requirements for VET teachers were strengthened in 2010, since when all VET teachers must have a pedagogic diploma (60 ECTS) at EQF level 6. Both initiatives are expected to increase VET quality. Social assistance reform (2014) makes it mandatory for unemployed people under 30, receiving social benefits, to participate in education and training. This will increase the number of weaker learners entering VET.

⁽¹⁾ This is the minor pathway and therefore not presented in the VET in Denmark’s education and training system chart.



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Denmark, 2020.

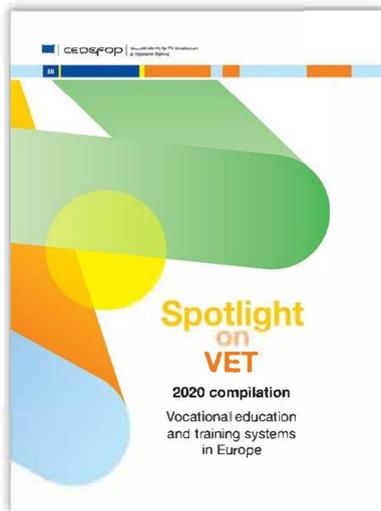
The 2014 VET reform has four main objectives for improving VET quality:

- more learners must enter VET directly from compulsory schooling: from 18% in 2015 to 30% by 2025;
- completion rates in VET must be improved: from 52% in 2012 to 67% in 2025;
- VET must challenge all learners so they reach their full potential;
- employer and learner satisfaction with VET must gradually be increased by 2020.

A lack of suitable training placements in enterprises is frequently cited as a primary reason for learner dropout. Several

policy initiatives seek to address the problem, but the Covid-19 crisis has further widened the gap between training place supply and demand. A tripartite agreement in 2016 aims to establish 10 000 new placements in 2025.

Unemployment, and particularly long-term unemployment, among young people with little or no work experience poses challenges for adult education and continuing training. Substantial upskilling and reskilling are necessary to avoid a considerable part of the workforce becoming permanently excluded from the labour market. Due to the Covid-19 crisis in 2020 the government has launched a plan for upskilling unemployed adults. In the training period it is possible to receive 110% of the unemployment benefits.



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