



VET in Lithuania

The Ministry of Education and Science is the main body responsible for shaping and implementing vocational education and training (VET) policy. The Ministry of Economy participates in human resources development and VET policy. The Government Strategic Analysis Centre (STRATA) ensures the monitoring framework for VET and higher education, research and innovation, and human resources planning. It also forecasts needs for new qualifications.

VET is offered from lower- to post-secondary education (ISCED levels 2 to 4). To acquire a VET qualification, learners take a specified exam, after which a VET diploma is awarded. Programmes are modularised; the minimum duration is 30 credits acquired in a half year.

Lower secondary level VET programmes (up to three years, ISCED 252 and 254) lead to qualifications at EQF level 2. They are open to learners over 14 and training is mandatory until age 16. Those without completed lower secondary education can study VET along with general education.

At upper secondary level:

- programmes with duration of up to two years lead to a VET qualification at EQF level 3 (ISCED 352) and prepare students for entering working life;
- three-year programmes lead to a VET qualification at EQF level 4 (ISCED 354) and a *matura* diploma giving access to higher education and post-secondary programmes (ISCED 454). To receive a *matura* diploma a learner must take at least two *matura* exams. Graduates who apply to higher education ISCED 645 and ISCED 655 programmes in the same field of studies are awarded additional entrance points.

Post-secondary level VET programmes (up to two years, ISCED 454) lead to a VET qualification at EQF level 4. Six EQF level 5 VET programmes delivered jointly by VET institutions and colleges are being piloted in 2020.

Higher education college studies lead to a professional bachelor degree (ISCED 655) in three years. Implementation of EQF level 5 short-cycle programmes is being legislated.

Formal continuing VET (CVET) is for learners who want to improve an existing qualification or acquire a new one. It follows the same curricula as IVET with exception of short (less than six months) programmes aimed at acquiring a competence needed to do jobs specified in regulations. Non-formal VET programmes must follow a specified template and be registered in the Register of study, training programmes and qualifications.

Although VET is school-based, work-based learning (WBL) is a significant part. It takes place in school settings, with at least 110 to 220 hours period (90 to 180 hours for CVET) at the end of programme to be spent in a company. 42 sectoral practical training centres offer quality practical training environments. Progressing implementation of apprenticeship is a national priority and policy initiatives are in process.

Qualification exams are detached from the training process and are carried out by accredited institutions. Social partners, enterprises and employers' associations may apply for accreditation. Social partners participate in developing new quali-

cations, standards and VET programmes. The 2018 VET law boosted the role of sectoral professional committees in shaping VET qualifications and planning future apprentice intake.

Distinctive features of VET

Initial VET (IVET) is centralised and highly regulated by the State. Continuing VET (CVET) is delivered by IVET and other training providers, public or private organisations.

Following the new VET Law (2018), individuals can acquire two VET qualifications free of charge; for others, CVET programmes are offered for a fee, except for the unemployed and those at risk of unemployment whose training is supported from European social fund (ESF) projects. A voucher system allows the unemployed to choose the training provider. The provision of training is based on contracts between the local public employment service, the unemployed and, if applicable, the enterprise (which undertakes to employ the person after the training for at least six months).

Due to the demographic decline in the young population, the number of young IVET learners has decreased by 21.5% over six years. The share of adults in formal (C)VET programmes is steadily increasing, especially for ISCED level 4 programmes; in 2019 42% of all IVET and 69% of CVET learners were adults aged 25 to 64.

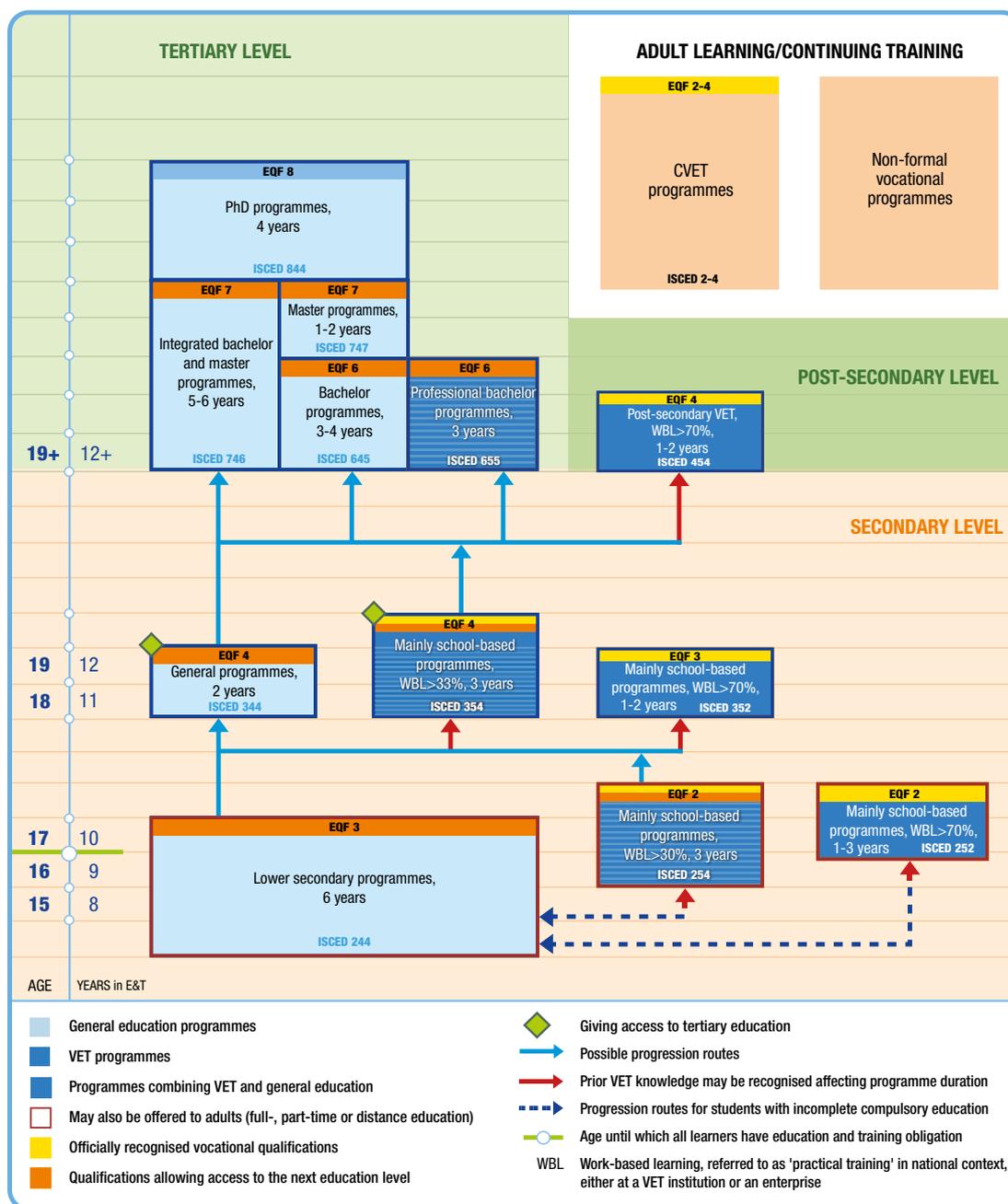
From 2002, VET curricula in Lithuania have been competence-based, with clearly defined learning outcomes. Since 2018, sectoral qualification standards are being developed for all economic sectors. Based on these standards, VET programmes are being gradually redesigned into modular programmes consisting of mandatory and optional modules. Modularisation allows learners to acquire a VET qualification by taking individual modules and choosing the most acceptable way and pace of learning.

Challenges and policy responses

Skills forecasts up to 2030 predict a significant loss of the labour force in the country, especially among those with medium-level qualifications. At the same time, it is expected that 51% of job openings will require medium-level qualifications. Reviewing the human resources development policy is key to guaranteeing labour force productivity and economic competitiveness.

The challenge remains to encourage participation in VET among young learners. To increase VET flexibility and attractiveness, from 2020 learners in the last four years of secondary (general) education (grades 9 to 12) can enrol in individual vocational modules offered in programmes delivered by VET institutions. Learners wishing to continue in the vocational stream may have their acquired competences recognised, thus shortening the duration of studies.

From 2019, the governance bodies of VET institutions include representatives from municipalities and businesses. Reforming VET institution networks and using their resources



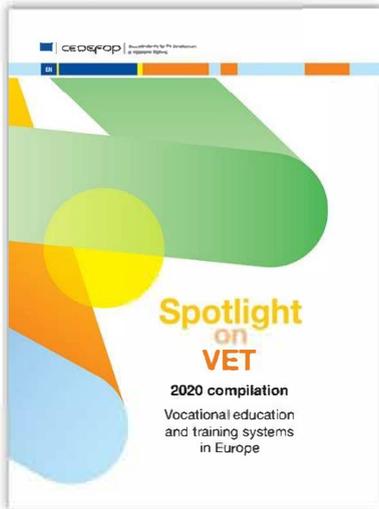
NB: ISCED-P 2011.
 Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Lithuania, 2020.

more effectively remains a policy priority. VET institutions (those with fewer than 200 students are being merged) should be reduced to 57 by the end of 2020 (73 in 2016).

Participation in lifelong learning remains low (7% in 2019). The national goal is to increase it to 12% by 2022. Ministries of Education and Science, Social Security and Labour and Economy plan various adult training opportunities for key competences development, with training of the (un)employed jointly funded by ESF. Measures foreseen include VET and lifelong learning promotional campaigns and strengthening career guidance services.

Participation in apprenticeship is low and needs better co-operation between VET institutions and companies through apprenticeship pilot projects in VET institutions, plus reimbursement of apprentice salaries.

Reforming VET management, financing schemes, competences evaluation and recognition, and quality assurance mechanisms are included in policy priorities to raise the prestige of VET among all stakeholders.



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