



VET in Malta

Overall responsibility for vocational education and training (VET) in Malta lies with the Ministry for Education (MFED). The Ministry for Tourism is in charge of VET for the tourism sector. The two main State providers – the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS) – are self-accrediting further and higher VET institutions offering VET qualifications at EQF levels 1 to 7. There is also an increasing number of private VET providers.

Lower and upper secondary level

The *My Journey* reform has introduced a new compulsory secondary school system that aims to increase enrolment in vocational and applied subjects, to enhance the flexibility of educational pathways and increase the attractiveness of VET. In school year 2019/20, almost 30% of learners are enrolled in upper secondary VET programmes (EQF/MQF level 3), continuing the upward trend recorded in the past five years.

Qualifications

The Maltese qualifications framework (MQF) sets the overall parameters for VET programmes at EQF levels 1 to 5 in terms of distribution of key competences (decreasing with level), sector skills and underpinning knowledge (increasing with level). Both VET State providers offer study courses ranging from foundation programmes up to master degrees.

Available VET qualifications and progression pathways are:

- certificate courses at EQF/MQF levels 1 or 2, giving access to programmes at the next EQF/MQF level in the same field: these are introduction and foundation certificate programmes, which include a component of work experience:
 - for learners without a qualification;
- certificate courses at EQF/MQF level 3, comprising a percentage of work-based learning, which provide access to programmes at the next level:
 - for foundation certificate holders and those with an EQF/MQF level 2 compulsory education qualification;
- national diploma courses at EQF/MQF level 4 (two- to three-year duration);
- for learners with a general education or VET EQF/MQF level 3 qualification. These courses include mandatory work experience through apprenticeship schemes. Higher national diploma courses at EQF/MQF level 5 (one- to two-year duration):
 - for learners with an EQF/MQF level 4 VET qualification;
- both State VET institutions offer a suite of tertiary qualifications at bachelor and master levels. VET degree programmes are also provided by the University of Malta's Faculty of Health Sciences.

Adult learning/continuing VET

Continuing VET is mainly provided by MFED's directorate for research, lifelong learning and employability, MCAST and the ITS. Most courses are part-time and take place in the evening. Pegging CVET courses to the EQF/MQF ensures the quality and value of all learning.

Adult learning is mainly provided by MFED's directorate for research, lifelong learning and employability, MCAST and the University of Malta. The latter two enrol individuals as regular students based on the maturity clause. Besides targeting the unemployed, Jobsplus (PES) is increasingly refocusing courses towards reskilling and upskilling employees. This will help meet the demand for new skills in emerging economic sectors and so improve employability and career prospects.

Distinctive features of VET

The 2016 Eurobarometer opinion survey on vocational education and training showed that, of all the EU countries, VET is most appealing and attractive in Malta.

VET features as a central theme in Malta's education policy in the *Framework for the education strategy for Malta, 2014-24*.

Developing excellence in VET and higher education through research, effective licensing, programme accreditation, quality assurance and recognition of qualifications is entrusted to the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE).

Malta was the first EU country to reference its qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (EQF) and the qualifications frameworks in the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) in 2009. VET is referenced at all qualification levels, allowing for flexible progression pathways and permeability between education and training sectors.

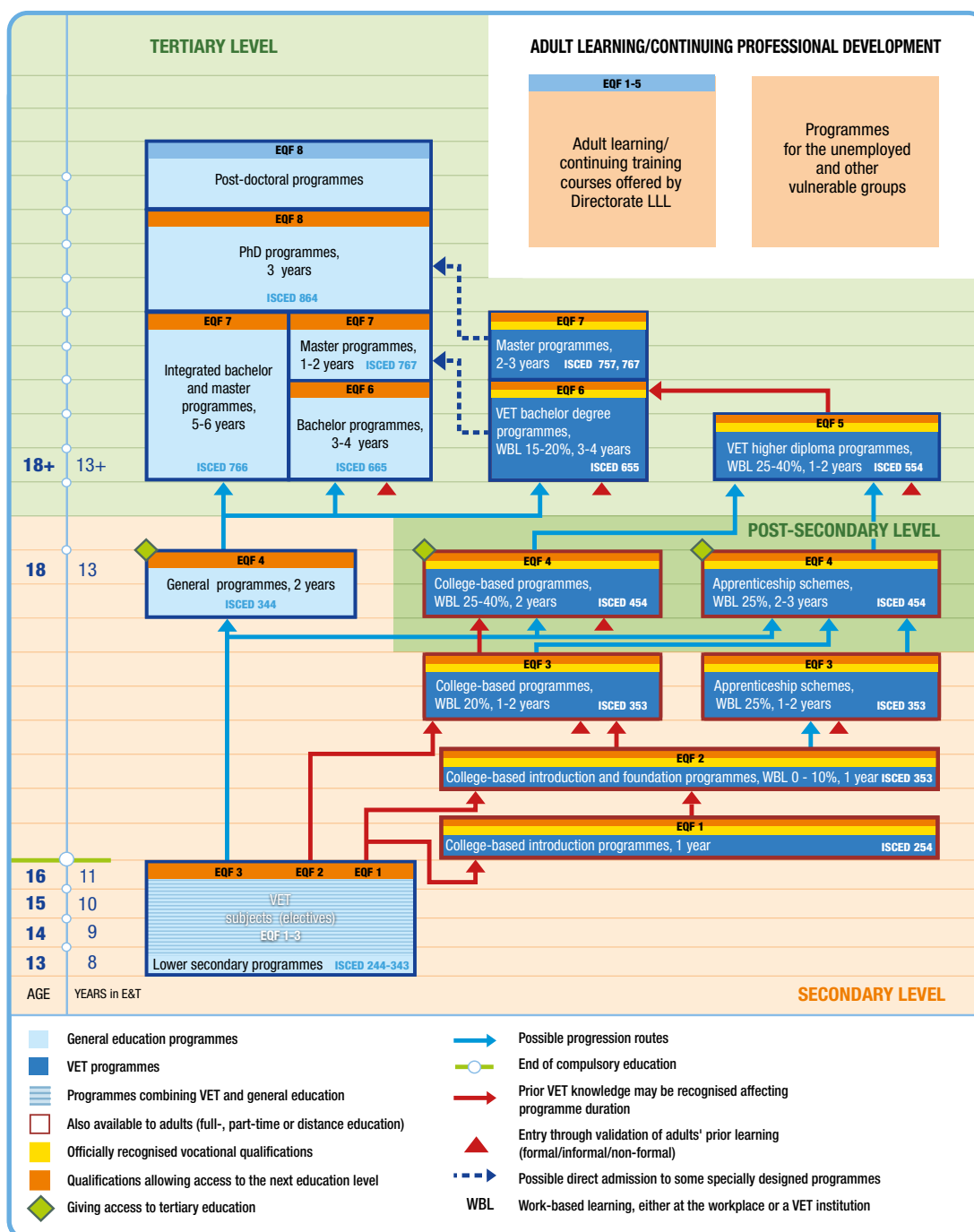
VET education now starts in compulsory lower and upper secondary education. All VET programmes at upper secondary level combine VET with general education. The 2018 Act regulating work-based learning and apprenticeship established work-based learning as central to VET. Apprentices receive remuneration for the on-the-job training from employers and a stipend from the government.

Stakeholders strongly support VET. The chamber for commerce, enterprise and industry, the Malta employers' association and the unions are involved and sit on the boards of State VET providers. Many employers promote apprenticeships, with dialogue between VET providers and industry as a key feature in qualification design.

Challenges and policy responses

Skills shortages and mismatches are the result of demographic challenges, low unemployment and strong economic growth. The domestic labour supply cannot meet the increase in demand. Consequently, over the past few years, there has been an increase in an influx of foreign employees. Employers face difficulties recruiting skilled workers in the healthcare, financial and ICT sectors and frequently rely on foreign workers to meet their needs.

The focus of VET and employment policies is to increase skilled workforce supply by helping more young people complete education or training, make a successful transition to a job and by increasing employment among inactive ageing people.



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

The new legislation strengthening the regulation of apprenticeship and work-based learning is part of the measures.

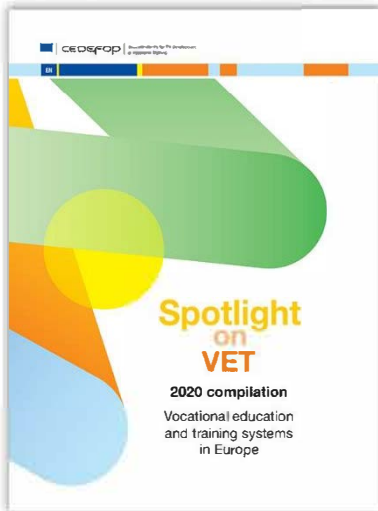
Early school leaving from education and training, although falling faster than other countries, is the second highest in the EU. Measures to reduce it include:

- a strategic prevention plan launched in 2014;
- second chance education options;
- more progress monitoring in the education ministry.

Introducing vocational subjects in lower secondary education has also proved effective in preventing early school leaving.

Motivating more adults to engage in upskilling and reskilling in lifelong learning is a priority. The national lifelong learning strategy paves the way for empowering people through personalised and innovative learning approaches.

A National Skills Council (NSC) was set up in 2016 to improve skills governance and forecasting. It recommends policy changes – relevant to its mandate – to the government.



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