

VET in Norway



The Ministry of Education and Research has overall responsibility for education and training at all levels. In upper secondary vocational education and training (VET), both curricula and the VET system structure are laid down in national regulations, and providers are required to comply with them. There is cooperation on upper secondary and tertiary VET, between education and training authorities and the social partners.

The regional county authorities are responsible for general education and VET provision, distributing VET financing provided by the State budget and ensuring apprenticeship placement and supervision.

All young people completing compulsory schooling have a statutory right to three years of upper secondary education. Half of them choose between 10 VET programmes.

Upper secondary VET is conducted both in schools and in public and private enterprises. The county authorities must approve training establishments. The main model includes two years in school, where students also participate in practical training in workshops and enterprises, followed by two years of formalised apprenticeship (training and productive work) in enterprises. The first year of training consists of an introduction to the vocational programme. During the second year, VET students choose specialisations and courses are more trade-specific but core general education subjects are also included. Some trades and crafts follow other models, with three years in school or one year in school followed by three years of formalised apprenticeship.

In the main model, upper secondary VET (2+2) is completed with a practical-theoretical trade or journeyman examination (*Fagprøve* or *svenneprøve*) leading to an EQF level 4 qualification: a trade certificate (*Fagbrev*) for industrial and service trades or a journeyman certificate (*Svennebrev*) for traditional crafts. The 10 programme areas offer 197 different certificates. Some crafts are for three years of school-based learning, completed by a final exam and a EQF level 4 qualification.

There are many possible routes to higher academic education via upper secondary VET. With a trade or journeyman certificate, the options to higher academic education are:

- via a one-year bridging course in core subjects (*påbyggingsår*);
- direct admission to certain specially designed bachelor programmes (*Y-veien*).

Options without a trade or journeyman certificate are:

- five years' experience gained in work and/or education and passing courses in core subjects (for those aged 23 or older);
- recognition of relevant formal, informal, and non-formal learning for people aged 25 or older, who do not meet general entrance requirements;
- completing the bridge course in core subjects after completing the first two years of a VET programme;
- successfully completed two years higher vocational education (EQF5).

Legal rights shape VET and contribute to making vocational skills visible. Those over 25 are entitled to upper secondary

education or training, adapted to their needs and life situation. Adults also have a right to have prior learning assessed towards national curricula, which may result in exemption from parts of training. The experience-based trade certification scheme enables adults to sit a trade or journeyman examination on proof of sufficient relevant practice. The candidate must demonstrate comprehensive experience in the trade or craft, normally over a minimum of five years.

VET colleges offer a wide range of vocational programmes at EQF level 5 for students with a trade or journeyman certificate. Some programmes at this level are also accessible for students with upper secondary general education.

Master craftsman programmes are for holders of a relevant trade or journeyman certificate with several years' work experience. The programmes are provided by vocational colleges (*Fagskoler*), both private and public, and combine general business management, marketing, and vocational theory.

Distinctive features of VET

Norway has a long-standing tradition of close national and regional cooperation between education authorities and the social partners. National cooperation is organised in the National Council for VET (*Samarbeidsrådet for yrkesopplæring*, SRY), 10 vocational training councils (*Faglige råd*), one for each programme area, and national appeal boards (*Klagenemnder*). Regional cooperation involves county vocational training boards (*Yrkesopplæringsnemnder*) and examination boards (*Prøvenemnder*).

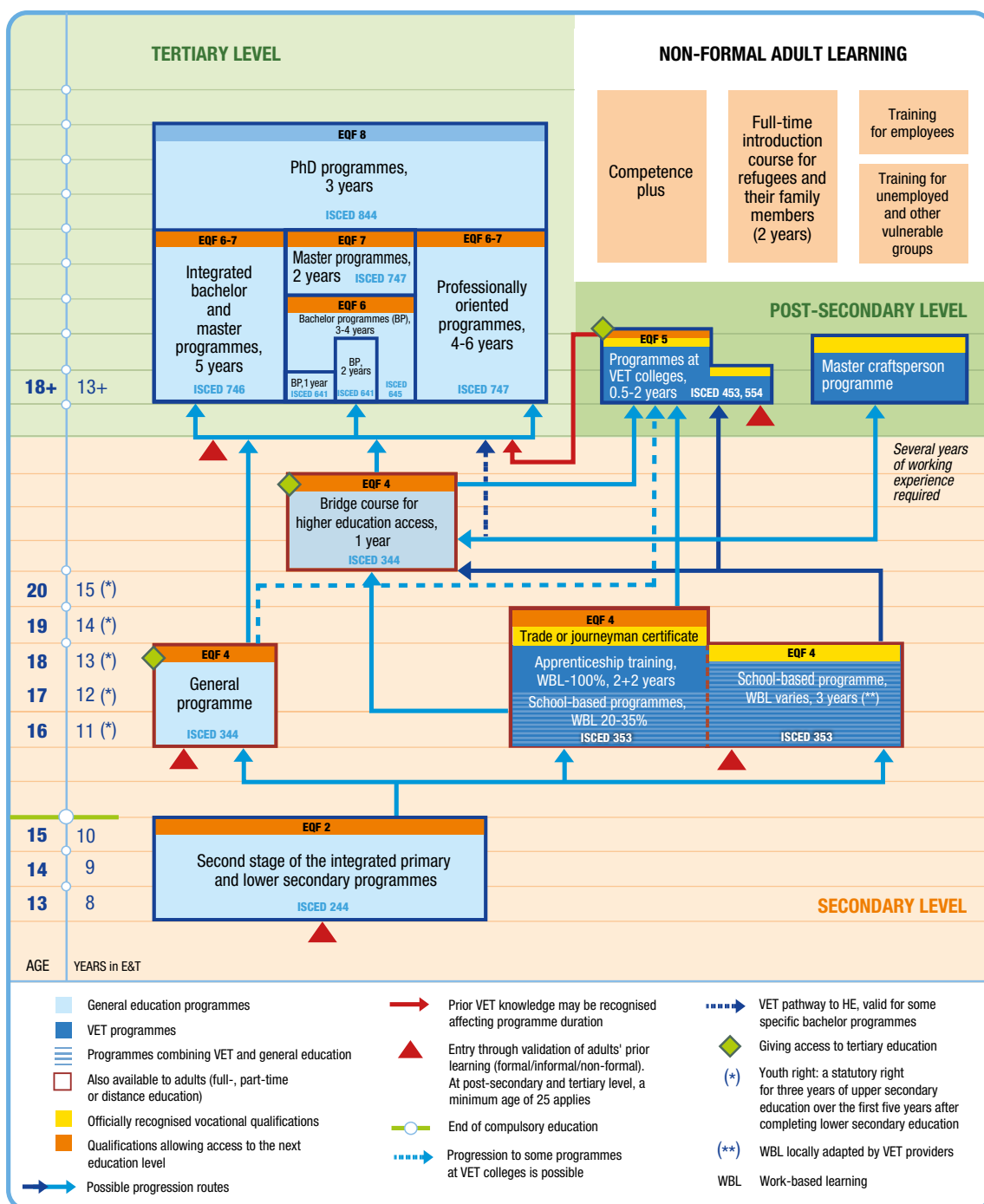
Tripartite cooperation aims to ensure that training provided to Norwegian VET learners meets labour market and skill needs. It informs changes in the VET structure, curriculum development, regional structure and volume of VET provision, the framework of examinations leading to trade or journeyman certificates, and quality control at all levels. At EQF level 5, the social partners participate in the National Council for higher VET (*Nasjonalt fagskoleråd*). In higher education, institutions are requested to set up a consultative council for cooperation with social partners.

Norway has a unified education and training system including both VET and general education as equal. Most education at upper-secondary level is provided by public schools. Young people have a right to attend upper secondary education, and most choose to do so. They also have the right to enrol in one of their top three choices.

More than half of trade and journeyman certificates are awarded to people over 25.

Challenges and policy responses

Skilled workers with VET qualifications will play an important role in the reorganisation of the Norwegian economy. Figures from the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) show that many enterprises lack such employees and consequently



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

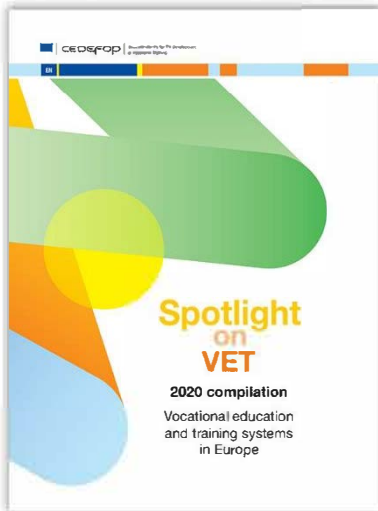
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Norway, 2020.

lose business. Statistics Norway (SSB) estimates a shortage of almost 100 000 skilled workers in 2035.

Initiatives aimed at increasing the number of students who complete their education, as well as teacher competences including digital, are in process. About 50 measures from the white paper *Skilled workers for the future (Fagfolk for fremtiden)* have been implemented, increasing VET attractiveness and labour market relevance. A new programme structure in upper secondary VET, including new curricula, was implemented from 2020/21.

Important changes took place in 2019/20:

- several suggestions on changes for a better upper-secondary education, both general and VET (NOU 2019:25);
- proposal for a new Education Act for primary and upper secondary education has been presented (NOU 2019:23);
- the Government has suggested several measures to ensure education and work during Covid-19;
- it is a priority to increase the digital teaching competence and establish more study places in higher vocational education;
- a regulation for higher vocational education (EQF 5) was adopted.



Publication:

Spotlight on VET – 2020 compilation:
vocational education and training systems in Europe.

Access the full publication at:

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4189>

Please cite this chapter as:

Cedefop (2021). VET in Norway. In: Cedefop (2021). *Spotlight on VET – 2020 compilation: vocational education and training systems in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. pp. 56-57.
<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4189>

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