

## VET in Poland



Vocational education and training (VET) has three governance levels: national (ministries), regional (school superintendents, mainly in pedagogical supervision) and county (governing schools). The Ministry of Education and Science is in charge of secondary and higher VET, supported by other ministries responsible for particular occupations. Social partners advise policy-makers on necessary changes in VET.

Since September 2017, the Polish education system has been undergoing substantial restructuring, to be finalised in the 2022/23 school year. VET is provided mainly in school-based upper secondary and post-secondary programmes. Upper secondary programmes combine general and vocational education. Learners can acquire vocational qualifications in:

- three-year first stage sectoral programmes (*branżowe szkoły I stopnia*, ISCED 353) leading to a vocational qualification diploma for a single-qualification occupation (after passing State vocational examinations). Graduates can enrol in the second year of general upper secondary programmes for adults or in a second stage sectoral programme;
- two-year second stage sectoral programmes (*branżowe szkoły II stopnia*, ISCED 354), launched in the 2020/21 school year. These further develop the vocational qualifications attained in first stage sectoral programmes. General education is provided in full-time day or evening classes, or extramurally. Graduates can acquire an upper secondary school leaving certificate (*matura*) providing access to tertiary education;
- five-year vocational programmes (*technika*, ISCED 354) leading to a vocational qualification diploma for occupations consisting of two qualifications after passing State vocational examinations. Graduates can acquire an upper secondary school leaving certificate (*matura*) giving access to tertiary education;
- three-year special job training programmes (*szkoły specjalne przysposabiające do pracy*, ISCED 243) for special education needs (SEN) learners leading to a job training certificate;
- work preparation classes for SEN learners aged 15 and above already in primary school (*oddziały przysposabiające do pracy*).

At the post-secondary non-tertiary level, vocational qualifications are acquired in one- to two-and-a-half-year school-based programmes (*szkoły policealne*, ISCED 453).

College programmes of social work (*kolegium pracowników służb społecznych* – ISCED 554) are part of tertiary education. They combine school-based learning and in-company training leading to a diploma at EQF level 5. Learners should hold a *matura* certificate.

Work-based learning (WBL) is compulsory for all VET-oriented programmes. It takes place in school workshops, continuing education centres, vocational training centres or can be organised partially or fully by an employer, including apprenticeships. A distinctive form is on-the-job-training (traineeship) lasting 4 to 12 weeks, depending on the occupation; this is compulsory for upper secondary vocational, post-secondary and second stage sectoral programmes.

### Adult learning and CVET

Adult learning, continuing and out-of-school VET are available in continuing education centres, practical training centres, further training and professional development centres, and initial VET schools, offering:

- vocational qualification courses based on curricula for a qualification in a given occupation; learners can take the State vocational examination and obtain a vocational qualification certificate;
- vocational skills courses based on the VET core curriculum, including learning outcomes for a qualification or common learning outcomes for all occupations;
- minimum 30-hour general skills courses based on the general education curriculum;
- theoretical courses for juvenile employees.

Since 2016, curriculum-based qualifications attained in courses offered by training companies and other non-formal education institutions can be included in the integrated qualifications register.

### Distinctive features of VET

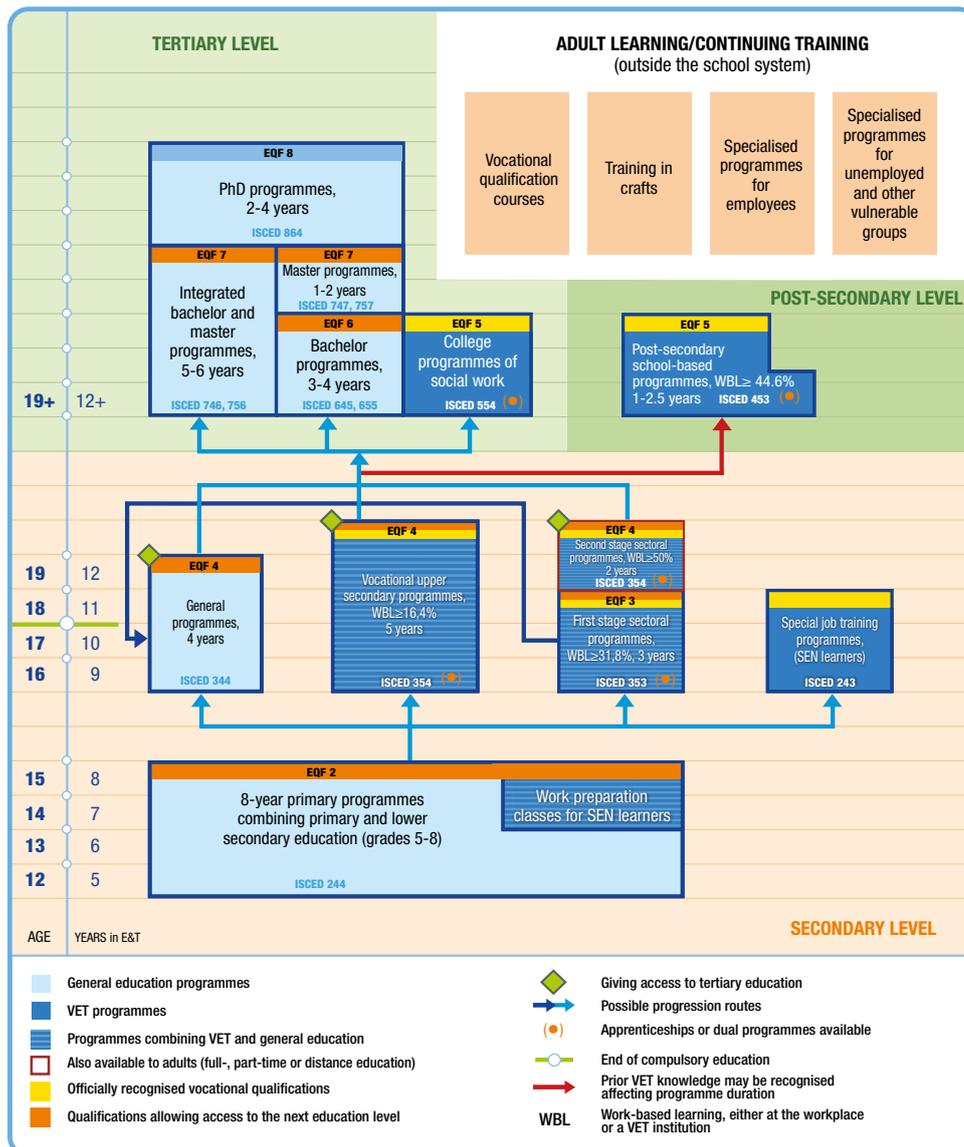
The key features of Polish VET are:

- flexibility allowing changing pathways at any point;
- classification of occupations, updated by various stakeholders in line with labour market needs. Each occupation consists of one to two qualifications that can be attained through IVET and CVET programmes, and is linked to a core curriculum. A VET qualification diploma can be issued only when all qualifications required for an occupation are obtained (via State vocational examinations) together with a school leaving certificate;
- autonomy of VET schools in developing core curriculum-based programmes, easily modified for labour market needs;
- uniform, centrally organised external vocational examinations;
- vocational qualification courses allowing adults to acquire qualifications;
- validation of non-formal and informal learning via extramural examinations.

### Challenges and policy responses

The main challenges for VET are:

- raising the attractiveness of VET in society;
- increasing employer engagement in practical training, identifying and forecasting labour market needs for skills and qualifications, reviewing VET curricula;
- improving VET teachers' qualifications and competences;
- encouraging lifelong learning among adult learners;
- encouraging sustainable cooperation between VET schools and higher education institutions to transfer good practices in teaching, training and developing teachers' competences;
- ensuring high quality guidance and counselling for all age groups;



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

- providing high quality infrastructure for VET schools to ensure teaching and training in line with labour market needs;
- further developing training programmes.

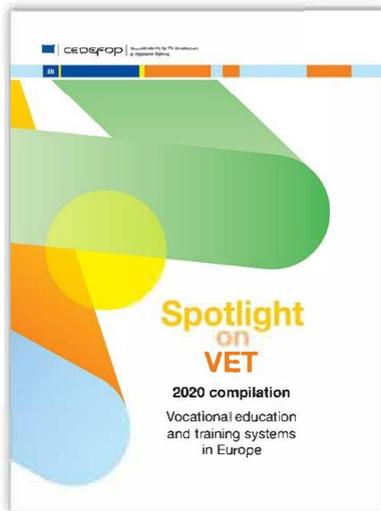
New measures introduced in November 2018 strengthen mechanisms involving employers in VET and systematically adapt VET to labour market needs, particularly in such areas as:

- practical training and teacher professional development in enterprises via 40-hour workplace training cycles;
- expanding work-based learning in VET;
- annual forecasts of the demand for employees in VET occupations;
- directing more funds to high demand occupations;
- strengthening quality assurance;
- enhancing the accreditation system for CVET providers;
- organising shorter forms of vocational courses for adult learners;
- introducing the student apprenticeship (*staż uczniowski*) for learners in vocational upper secondary and first-stage sectoral programmes who are not juvenile workers;

- building a monitoring system to track the educational and professional trajectory of graduates.

Several other education ministry initiatives address the main challenges for VET:

- enabling non-statutory CVET qualifications to be included in the integrated qualifications register;
- strengthening school guidance and counselling;
- introducing new VET core curricula developed by the public sector, the Centre for Education Development (ORE), employers and stakeholders;
- setting-up new sector skills councils giving a voice to stakeholders regarding competence demands;
- launching the national Integrated skills strategy, developed and adopted in 2019 covering all education levels, and providing coherent policies on skills development;
- identifying VET professions having particular significance for national culture and heritage.



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