



Vocational education and training policy briefs 2024

SPAIN



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1. Introduction

This VET policy brief ⁽¹⁾ produced by Cedefop presents a snapshot of vocational education and training policy developments in Spain between 2020 and the end of 2024 ⁽²⁾. It presents the context and the challenges the country faces, a selection of the latest VET-related statistics, as well as the national priorities until 2025 identified in Spain's national implementation plan. This VET policy brief provides information from Cedefop monitoring and analysis on the implementation of the [Council Recommendation on VET](#) and [Osnabrück Declaration](#) and contributes to shaping new EU priorities in VET as of 2026 and informing the mid-term evaluation of the Council Recommendation on VET.

2. National VET context and challenges

2.1 National VET context

Vocational education and training (VET) in Spain is a shared responsibility among the State (education ministry), the autonomous communities and municipalities, the VET centres and the social partners, at different levels and responsibilities (Cedefop, 2023a). Labour authorities are responsible for active labour market policies, which include non-formal upskilling and reskilling initiatives. Education and labour authorities share the same consultation bodies but keep their own respective governance and objectives (Cedefop, 2023b).

VET programmes are modular, allowing partial certification (units of competences), validation of non-formal learning and work experience, and re-engagement from a lifelong learning perspective. Work-based learning (WBL) is embedded in all VET programmes, and all of them require spending time in a real work environment (dual VET programmes) with different intensity options.

Formal education, from preschool to tertiary vocational programmes, is governed by the Organic Act No 3/2020 of 29 December on the amendment of the Act No 2/2006 of 3 May on education, known as LOMLOE. Specifically for VET, Organic Act 3/2022, of 31 March, on the organisation and integration of Vocational Training (hereinafter Organic Act 3/2022 on VET) establishes a single, modular and flexible offer of formal vocational training, structured in three level training pathways, from 'micro-trainings' to full qualifications, in full implementation by 2024/25 (Cedefop, 2023b).

The current vocational training catalogue features over 9 000 programmes, organised into 191 distinct qualifications at various levels: basic (ISCED 353), intermediate (ISCED 354) and higher VET (ISCED 554). Additionally, there are 588 professional certificate programmes corresponding to the set of units of competence that make up an occupational standard. The catalogue also includes 26 specialisation programmes for VET graduates.

⁽¹⁾ See also the previous edition: Cedefop. (2024). [Vocational education and training policy briefs 2023 – Spain](#). Cedefop monitoring and analysis of vocational education and training policies.

⁽²⁾ For some developments, the information available until mid-2025 has been included.

All VET programmes are designed based on learning outcomes, which allow for the mutual recognition of modules and the transfer of competences gained in one VET programme to another.

Core VET programme content is fixed at the state level, and regions can adapt up to 45% of the curriculum (or 55% if they have a joint official language) according to their regional characteristics. Adults can follow the same VET programmes as young people or enter a vocational programme of variable duration, leading to a professional certificate corresponding to an occupational profile, with multiple options for e-learning.

Non-formal VET includes a wide range of courses, designed for different needs and skill profiles, allowing upskilling or reskilling. It may be financed through public funds, mainly from company and worker contributions to social security. Upskilling and reskilling measures are an important feature of active labour market policies in responding to current and future needs.

Social partners are involved at different levels and play an active role both in the design of qualifications and in the governance of the whole VET system, particularly in the context of active labour market policies.

The First strategic plan for vocational training (MEFP, 2019), and the Plan for the modernisation of vocational training (MEFP, 2020) of the education authorities, set the roadmap for VET policy in the last few years, embodied in the national implementation plan. Many of the measures in these policy documents are included in the national recovery and resilience plan (RRP) (Spain, 2020).

The Spanish active employment support strategy (MITES, 2021), together with the annual plans for the promotion of decent employment are two of the main instruments for the coordination and implementation of active labour market policies, agreed between the State and the regions.

The agenda [Digital Spain 2025](#) (Spain, 2021a) sets the framework for improving digital inclusion and reducing the digital divide in various arenas, as reflected in the [National digital skills plan](#) (Spain, 2021b) and the Digital VET plan (*Plan FP Digital*).

2.2 Challenges

Spain's main challenges for the period 2020-24 included increasing medium-level qualifications to meet labour demand, and developing a broad-based vocational training system for all citizens. The skills system needed a comprehensive update to support the transition to a digital and sustainable economy and to address skills shortages and mismatches. The underlying goals were to improve the overall competitiveness of the Spanish economy, promote sustainability, and increase the capacity to create quality jobs over the next decade.

Spain's workforce is ageing (Cedefop & State Foundation for Training in Employment, 2023), and its qualification distribution is unbalanced, with a high proportion of low-skilled adults and a large number of university graduates. Compared to other European countries, there is a relatively low proportion of the population with medium-level qualifications,

leading to a high degree of qualification mismatch. Almost half of the Spanish working population still lacks certification to prove their professional skills.

In 2024, less than one in four adults aged 25-64 had an intermediate-level qualification (ISCED 3-4), the lowest rate in the EU-27. Despite the increase in enrolment in VET in the recent years, the share of upper secondary students enrolled in vocational programmes was ten percentage points lower than the EU-27 average (39.1% in 2022 compared to 49.1% in the EU-27). The early school-leaving rate still remains among the highest in the EU27.

Global technological and economic changes are pressuring businesses and individuals to up-skill and reskill, particularly for digital and green transitions and the world of work. Spain's low share of medium-skilled workers hampers future development, and many SMEs report in the Eurobarometer that skills shortages are constraining their overall business activities. The European Labour Authority 2024 EURES report identified labour shortages in specific occupations related to the green transition, such as electrical line installers and systems analysts (European Commission, 2024a). Skills demand forecasts point to the need to increase this proportion to meet current and future labour market needs and improve Spain's competitiveness (Cedefop & State Foundation for Training in Employment, 2023).

Vocational training in Spain had traditionally low social prestige, with insufficient investment in the provision of these programmes, resulting in a low percentage of VET graduates from the education system. VET also faced some organisational challenges, as governance and training provision (initial and continuous) was divided between education and employment authorities at national and regional levels for many years. This division did not provide an effective response to the needs of the new economy, as the Organic Act 3/2022 on VET acknowledges.

Attempts to implement apprenticeships in initial VET (IVET) (known as dual VET), had not been very successful, with less than 4% of VET students following programmes in the dual modality. The main challenges identified during the implementation of dual VET were the limited capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to hire trainees, a lack of appropriate training for in-company tutors, and differences in governance models across regions.

3. National VET policy priorities

The [national implementation plan](#) (NIP) (Spain, 2022) presents the actions Spain will take to implement the Council Recommendation on vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social justice and resilience, as well as the Osnabrück Declaration on vocational education and training as a factor in recovery and a fair transition to the digital and green economy.

The NIP aims to increase VET attractiveness, relevance and flexibility to facilitate the integration and permanence of the population in the labour market. This overall goal is addressed through the following objectives:

- (a) increase the flexibility and accessibility of VET from a lifelong learning perspective;
- (b) update VET pathways: digitalisation, sustainability, innovation, entrepreneurship, and internationalisation;
- (c) develop a dual vocational training framework in IVET and increase the involvement of the business sector in training;
- (d) up-skill and re-skill the working population.

4. Main policy developments 2020-24

4.1 Increasing VET flexibility and accessibility from a lifelong learning perspective

Several measures were implemented to make VET more attractive and flexible, modernising its system and making it more inclusive. State-level VET-related responsibilities and policies lie with the education ministry, which has strengthened the administrative structure. Measures were mainly led by the roadmap set out in the First strategic plan for vocational education and training 2019-22 and included in the NIP.

The unified VET system (initial and continuous VET), envisaged to [boost vocational education and training](#) as a crucial component of the country's economic development and social welfare, has become a reality, following the publication of Organic Act 3/2022 on VET. To this end, new regulations were approved:

- (a) the schedule for gradually implementing various aspects of Organic Act 3/2022 on VET (Royal Decree 278/2023) between 2023 and 2028; and
- (b) the detailed organisation of the Spanish VET system (Royal Decree 659/2023, of 18 July), consolidating a unified modular VET provision to increase its overall flexibility and global response capacity (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Royal Decree 659/2023 also defined the approach to [access the teaching profession](#) in Spain and specified the training requirements for teaching in the different types of vocational training offers integrated into the education system.

In 2024, the technical committee for vocational guidance, a territorial cooperation body in charge of developing the [general strategy for vocational guidance of the vocational training system](#) worked on the definition of the principles of the guidance model to be designed and its instruments and resources.

As part of the integrated career guidance system envisaged in the Organic Act 3/2022 on VET, all vocational training diploma programmes include the vocational module titled 'Personal itinerary for employability', to ensure guidance actions suit VET students' career goals and boost their employability. This module focuses on developing transversal skills related to entrepreneurship and improving students' competences in the labour market.

The territorial cooperation programme (*Programa de Cooperación Territorial de Unidades de Acompañamiento y Orientación personal y familiar del alumnado educativamente vulnerable*) continued enabling information and guidance services, particularly in towns of less than 10 000 inhabitants, on training and professional itineraries and accreditation of professional competencies acquired through work experience and

other non-formal training channels. Vocational guidance tools were improved to provide better general access for individuals.

The formal [referencing process of the Spanish qualifications system \(MECU\) to the EQF was completed](#), and the 'compatibility certification' process was passed.

The initial goal of the 2020 Plan for the modernisation of vocational training, which aimed to create 200,000 training places in IVET schools within four years, was surpassed by 88% (MEFPyD, 2024). Overall, enrolment in VET increased by around 22% during the reporting period.

4.2 [Updating VET pathways: digitalisation, sustainability, innovation, entrepreneurship, and internationalisation](#)

Another set of measures implemented during the period focused on the renovation of the VET qualification system to allow for a lifelong approach. This reflects the urgent demand for skills related to the world of work and the twin transition, and other basic skills still in high demand. Other measures were also taken to support this renovation.

The [review of the national catalogue of occupational standards](#), initiated in 2018, was intensified during the reporting period, with occupational standards updated to align VET programmes with sector needs and improve employability. New standards focusing on digital and green skills were developed, and training modules on digitalisation and sustainability were added to all VET programmes. Specialisation courses for VET graduates were designed and implemented. The Ministry of Education created 215 new occupational standards, bringing the total to 783, and introduced 43 new diplomas, specialisation courses and professional certificates.

The Organic Act 3/2022 on VET promotes foreign language skills and internationalisation in vocational training, aligning with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. It allows for double degrees from two countries and regulates participation in international projects and training abroad.

The qualification update was reinforced by supporting teachers' [continuing professional development and international mobility](#). Online training activities focused on meeting teachers' needs for inclusion and educational equity by improving digital teaching skills and promoting accessible content and virtual learning environments. Their modular structure allows participants to organise their time and get a certification. Grants for training stays in companies for VET teachers were replaced with professional placements in schools across 16 European countries, both within and outside the EU, and USA.

The Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports offered direct VET teaching training in digitalisation applied to the different productive sectors. This training was designed for teachers involved in vocational diploma programmes and specialisation courses in areas such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, intelligent manufacturing and the digitalisation of industrial maintenance, among others. By 2024, specific training on digitisation for productive sectors had reached 49 901 teachers.

The [digital competence framework for teachers](#) was approved in 2022, followed by the regulation of the procedure for accrediting teaching digital competence in 2023. The

framework is now used to accredit and certify teachers' digital in a uniform way across the country, as autonomous communities are responsible for implementing and managing the accreditation process in their respective territories. Each autonomous community has already published the relevant regulations for this process.

Education policies were reinforced by the Digitalisation and digital skills plan for the education system (MEFP, 2021b). This promotes digital literacy in education through the digitisation of VET centres, the creation of digital resources and the use of advanced digital methodologies and AI for specialised learning environments, as included in the national digital competence plan.

The network of [national reference centres](#), initially under the employment ministry, was transferred to the education ministry, reaching 38 centres across autonomous communities, which serve as a hub for VET innovation, analysing labour market needs, promoting best practices, and establishing partnerships with businesses and universities. Additionally, from 2022, the education ministry has also been fostering a [State network of vocational training centres of excellence](#), funded by the national RRP. The 66 centres in the network focus on applied research, integrating technology into vocational training and organising teacher training. They also support the updating of curricula to meet emerging demands.

Two [calls for grants](#) were launched to support biennial projects on innovation, applied research and knowledge transfer in VET. These grants, which are funded by the national recovery and resilience plan, amounted to EUR 24 million in 2021 and EUR 30 million in 2023. Each project must involve at least two VET centres from different autonomous communities, along with a participating company. In 2023, a total of 257 projects were approved, engaging 659 publicly funded VET centres and 324 companies or entities (MEFP, 2021a).

More than 1 430 ATECA classrooms and nearly 1 800 entrepreneurship classrooms have been established in VET across Spain using national RRP funds (MEFPyD, 2024). ATECA classrooms simulate real work environments with advanced technologies to improve technical and soft skills, while entrepreneurship classrooms support students in developing business projects and promote self-employment.

By 2021, the State public employment service (SEPE) completed designing and implementing a [catalogue of training specialities](#), initiated in 2019. This catalogue provides a common reference for training programmes that fall under active labour employment policies, excluding those provided by companies to their employees. These specialities are also used as a reference for the accreditation and registration processes of training entities that want to be included in the [integrated State registry of training providers](#). The catalogue of training specialities is a support tool for career guidance within the public employment services, continuously updated as new specialities are defined and/or revised.

4.3 Developing dual vocational training and increasing business involvement

Organic act 3/2022, of 31 March, on the organisation and integration of vocational training, formalised the [dual approach](#) in VET and provided a standard framework for its implementation nationwide. It expanded the dual principle, considering not only the time spent in the company, but also the quality of that time spent and the learning outcomes achieved. Following this Organic Act, several additional regulations have been adopted to address various aspects of its implementation and to set out the timetable for its rollout.

Royal Decree 695/2023 is the most relevant of them. It provides specific guidelines for the practical implementation of the policies and principles set out in the Organic Act. It also regulates the roles of tutors from both the company and the VET centre and promotes shared responsibility between the VET centres and the surrounding enterprises to collaborate in delivering the curriculum effectively.

In May 2024, four royal decrees were approved, completing the regulatory framework for the Organic Act on VET. This marks the full implementation of the dual system for both intermediate and advanced training cycles. From the school year 2024/25, all VET programmes can adopt a dual format during the first year of intermediate and higher VET, as well as in specialisation courses for VET graduates that include work experience. The approved decrees also introduce various modules focusing on digitalisation, sustainability, entrepreneurship, and technical English.

The Organic Act on VET regulates dual vocational training, introducing two schemes: the general and the intensive schemes. It includes provisions for social security contributions for apprentices and establishes a paid relationship when workplace training exceeds 35% of the programme duration (intensive scheme). The data available before the end of 2024 shows that a total of 322 192 VET students were registered for Social Security contributions as of 1 January 2024, as assimilated to employees, allowing them to begin their contribution career, generating future rights and increasing coverage in the event of an accident.

The [Alliance for vocational training](#), a network created by the education ministry in 2021, reached a total of 173 partners by 2024, comprising public administrations, social partners, businesses, and third-sector entities. The Alliance promotes cooperation between companies, educational institutions and other social actors to improve the quality, innovation and sustainability of VET.

In December 2021, the Spanish government, trade unions, and employers agreed to modify the labour regulations, which affected the training and apprenticeship contract. A new training contract was introduced, with two different modalities. The first is an alternating training contract for VET learners, and the second is a training contract for recent graduates to obtain professional practice according to their level of studies (ReferNet Spain & Cedefop, 2022).

[FP Conecta](#) is a virtual social network designed to connect students, teachers, graduates, educational centres, companies, and public administrations involved in VET. It was launched in the autumn of 2023 by the Spanish education ministry as a tool for

[promotional actions to support WBL](#) Its functionalities include job offers, search for FP centres, networking, information on scholarships and grants, internship programmes, educational resources, career guidance, and collaboration with companies through job boards and partnership programmes.

4.4 Upskilling and reskilling the working population

During the period under review, the need for upskilling and reskilling the labour force was addressed by streamlining the validation process, providing facilities to improve digital literacy, and launching several active labour market policy measures.

The Organic Act 3/2022 on VET, and its operational development in RD 695/2023, consolidate and expand the validation process of non-formal and informal learning. This process was originally amended in 2021 by Royal Decree 143/2021 to simplify and improve access to [validation arrangements](#). The Act ensures that skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning are recognised and accredited, thereby improving individuals' employability and career advancement. The government is providing funding to regional authorities to implement a permanent system for assessing professional skills gained through work experience across all sectors. The government allocated funds to the regions to certify the skills of around 450 000 workers in 2021, to reach 3 million workers by 2024. By the end of 2024, nearly 60 000 individuals have accredited 112 000 units of competence.

To support the validation process, the Ministry of Education developed the *Acredita* web platform in 2023. The platform streamlines the application process with digital resources, offers virtual support and promotes cooperation with educational institutions and companies. On the *Acredita* website, citizens can find out how to complete their training for a vocational qualification and how to register for the accreditation process. The Ministry of Education has also launched an online space for counsellors and assessors involved in validation procedures, with additional resources beyond the *Acredita* website, including evidence guides and self-assessment questionnaires by sector.

In 2024, efforts to enrich validation processes have focused on enabling the participation of specific groups, including professional military personnel and individuals deprived of their liberty.

A network of 1 050 digital skills centres, fostered by the education ministry, was set up to improve the digital skills of citizens, particularly those in rural areas, people over 55 years old and those with low levels of education. The ministry has allocated more than EUR 60 million to the regions to boost this network (MEFPyD, 2023). Additionally, there are 146 digital training centres, financed to local entities, to which 113 new centres will be added in the call to be resolved in 2025. This action is part of the National digital skills plan, included also in the National recovery and resilience plan.

[Aulas Mentor](#) scheme has been upgraded and offers adults open, flexible and distance learning via the Internet to all citizens. This non-formal training consists of 240 short courses designed to improve personal and professional skills. It is also a partial and cumulative offer that can lead to obtaining accreditation of units of competence. Supported

by the national RRP, the target is to extend this network to 3 000 municipalities (MEFP, 2022), with already 1 480 Mentor classrooms in operation.

In 2020, the education ministry took on new responsibilities that provided funding opportunities for upskilling and reskilling various groups. Calls for subsidies have since been launched, with a particular focus on priority fields identified in the Plan for the Modernisation of Vocational Training, and on improving skills for the green and digital transitions.

Labour market policy initiatives continued to improve the skills of young people and workers, both employed and unemployed. Some initiatives are specifically aimed at increasing employability for ICT and the digital economy. The State Public Employment Service (SEPE), with the support of the State Foundation for Employment Training (Fundae), is responsible for the most important measures in terms of funding and participants. In 2023, the total budget for vocational training for employment in the workplace reached EUR 1 756 million and more than six million participants (SEPE, 2023).

Public-private and public-public collaboration between the State public employment service (SEPE) and Fundae, with other partners, provide workers with an important pool of free training resources, mainly in information technologies (ReferNet Spain, & Cedefop, 2020). New services and applications have been added, [Experiencia Fundae](#) (Fundae, n.d.) help individuals choose the training that best suits their needs or assess their digital skills. By 2024, over 2 000 resources were available, accumulating more than 5 million visits. These resources help improve employability and guarantee the right to lifelong learning.

Other labour market policies were implemented to help [unemployed young people](#) acquire key skills or [prevent and reduce long-term unemployment](#). The recovery and resilience plan supports new measures to improve active labour market policies. These initiatives focus on training addressing youth employment and women's employment, mainstreaming gender in public policies, and developing skills for digital and green transformation, with an implementation period from 2021 to 2025 (Cedefop, 2023b).

5. Statistical information in relation to EU targets

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the employment rate of VET graduates in Spain fell significantly to 50.3% in 2020, a more severe reduction than in other EU countries, and in line with the overall increase in youth unemployment. However, by 2023, 68.6% of recent VET graduates in the country were in employment, a significant increase compared to 2020, but still lower than the EU average of 80.0%.

The NEET rate in Spain has fallen to 12.0% in 2024. While this figure indicates progress towards the European average of 11.0%, reaching the target NEET rate of 9% by 2030 remains a challenge for Spain.

Another long-standing concern is the high share of early leavers from education and training. Spain has significantly reduced the early school leaving (ESL) rate, which has dropped by 7 percentage points since 2015. Despite this progress, the ESL rate remains

at 13.0% in 2024, the third highest in the EU-27, with considerable variations across regions. This figure is 3.7 percentage points higher than the EU-27 average of 9.3%, but the gap with the EU target of 9% is narrowing.

All IVET programmes require students to spend at least 20% of their training in workplace settings. This approach contributed to achieving the highest work-based learning rate in Europe, with 98.6% of recent graduates benefiting from it in 2022. Although this rate fell to 90.8% in 2024, it remains significantly above the EU27 average of 64.5%, ranking as the third highest among member countries, following Germany and the Netherlands.

The percentage of adults with a learning experience in the last 12 months increased from 30.4% in 2016 to 34.1% in 2022. Despite closing the gap by 3.7 pp in this period, the current rate is still 5.4 percentage points below the European average (39.5%) and 12.9 pp below the target towards achieving the European Education Area (47%).

Spain is a relatively good performer in basic digital skills. The number of people in Spain with at least basic digital skills is above the EU-27 average (66.2% compared to 55.6%) and has significantly increased over the last few years.

Table 1. **European vocational education and training policy dashboard: Spain**

Type of indicator ⁽³⁾	Indicator	Last available year	ES	EU-27	Policy Document	EU target (year)
VET for developing a lifelong learning culture						
Progress	Adults (25 to 64-year-olds) with learning experience in the last 12 months (%) [*]	2022	34.1	39.5	Skills Agenda	50% (2025)
					Council Resolution on EEA	47% (2025)
					ESPR Action Plan	60% (2030)
Progress	Low-qualified adults with learning experience in the last 12 months (%)	2022	15.4	18.4	Skills Agenda	30% (2025)
Progress	Unemployed adults with learning experience in the last 4 weeks (%)	2024	18.8 ^d	15.3	Skills Agenda	20% (2025)
Context	Employment rate for 20 to 64-year-olds (%)	2024	71.4 ^d	75.8	ESPR Action Plan	78% (2030)
Context	Early leavers from education and training (%)	2024	13.0	9.3	Council Resolution on EEA	<9% (2030)
Context	NEET rate for 15 to 29-year-olds (%)	2024	12.0 ^d	11.0	ESPR Action Plan	9% (2030)
VET for Resilience, transitions, sustainability and excellence						
Progress	Adults (16 to 74-year-olds) with at least basic digital skills (%)	2023	66.2	55.6	Skills Agenda	70% (2025)
					ESPR Action Plan	80% (2030)
Progress	Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20 to 34-year-olds) (%)	2024	68.6 ^d	80.0	Council Rec on VET	82% (2025)
Progress	Recent IVET graduates (20 to 34-year-olds) with work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%)	2024	90.8 ^b	65.3	Council Rec on VET	60% (2025)
					Council Resolution on EEA	
Context	25 to 34-year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)	2024	52.6	44.2	Council Resolution on EEA	45% (2025)
Context	Gender employment gap (%)	2024	9.8 ^d	10.0	ESPR Action Plan	To be halved (2030)
Context	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (1000s)	2024	12 458	93 333	ESPR Action Plan	15 million decrease (2030)
Context	Employed ICT specialists (1000s)	2024	1 022.6 ^d	10 273 .6 ^e	2030 Digital Compass	20 million, with convergence between men and women (2030)
VET for the European Education Area						
Progress	Learners in IVET who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad (%) ^{**}	2021	1.4	2.1 ^{dV}	Council Rec on VET Skills Agenda	8% (2025)
Context	Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET	2023	0.4	1.2 ^d		

Available flags: b - break in times series, d - definition differs, e – estimated, V - Cedefop estimate.

* Eurostat data (Adult education survey, special calculation excluding guided on-the-job training)

** Provisional estimates affected by the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Cedefop. (n.d.). [European VET policy dashboard](#).

(3) [Definitions](#) on the type of indicators are available.

6. Conclusion

Spain has implemented significant reforms to its education and training systems aimed at equipping individuals with the skills needed in the labour market, promoting lifelong learning, and facilitating upskilling and reskilling. These reforms, alongside modernised labour policies, are intended to address long-standing gaps in education and the labour market.

The new VET system seeks to better align with future economic needs and bridge labour supply and demand gaps by unifying initial and continuing vocational training and adopting a dual approach in IVET programmes. Investments from the RRP and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) are increasing VET placements focused on relevant skills, with recent enrolment demand outpacing other educational paths (European Commission, 2024a). Career guidance has been established within the VET system to support individual development and is supporting validation of prior learning, although improvement is needed in aligning expectations and training provision availability with labour market needs.

Regular updates to the national catalogue of occupational standards improve the workforce's adaptability, particularly regarding digital and green transitions. New modules on digitalisation and sustainability have been added to all IVET programmes, and specialisation courses in these areas have been created. Aligning the Spanish qualifications system (MECU) with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) boosts the recognition of Spanish qualifications and facilitates learning pathways for individuals and employers. A stronger interconnection between the catalogues established by the ministries of education and labour could help address future challenges.

The modular VET system allows for personalised learning pathways, enabling individuals to acquire partial certifications. Flexible validation processes recognise existing workforce skills, promoting social equity and reflecting current skill levels. Authorities will need to adopt innovative strategies to address diverse upskilling and reskilling needs within their ecosystems while ensuring efficient use of available resources to maximise the benefits of this modular system.

Collaboration with stakeholders in developing new training courses ensures that education meets real-world demands. Public-private partnerships also aim to increase the number of ICT specialists and improve training visibility. Cooperation among national reference centres and the network of vocational centres of excellence will improve training quality and support digitalisation and sustainability efforts, ensuring the workforce is equipped for upcoming transitions. The relationship between these two networks is necessary to avoid overlaps, effectively meet the training needs of teachers and learners, and ensure that the workforce has adequate skills to support the twin transitions. However, additional measures are needed to improve visibility and access to training options (European Commission, 2024a).

Bringing vocational training teachers on a par with those in general education has been a significant step towards improving the image of vocational training. The digital competence framework for teachers and the multiple upskilling options in the digital domain

are contributing to ensure a well-qualified teaching force. Nevertheless, the initial and continuous development of VET teachers needs a stronger framework and further improvement regarding other areas. Alongside measures in the RRP to increase the labour market relevance of education, the pending reform of the teaching profession could further help boost the future employability of young people (Sancha Gonzalo, 2022).

The Organic Act on VET promotes work-based learning tailored to company needs, although challenges exist, especially with intensive dual programmes given the prevalence of SMEs. Initiatives like the Alliance for vocational training and FPconecta aim to address these challenges, requiring ongoing support and effective communication among relevant stakeholders to fully realise their potential.

Spain is making significant progress in empowering individuals through validation and by promoting lifelong learning opportunities for everyone in the digital economy. Measures from the National digital competences plan and other policy instruments within active labour policies (i.e. [Experiencia Fundae](#) platform) contribute to improving the digital skills of the overall population, facilitating the digital transformation of the education system and boosting employability. However, the shortage of ICT specialists (European Commission, 2024b) needs to be addressed.

Significant investment is being made to improve the VET system and up/reskill the working population, but achieving 60% adult participation in training by 2030 remains a challenge, exacerbated by basic skills shortcomings and socio-economic disparities reflected in the PISA 2022 results. Improved governance and communication across administrative levels, along with national data collection and informed decision-making, are crucial. Addressing regional disparities in innovation, education, and unemployment is essential for promoting equity and social fairness and policies must be strengthened to ensure equal access to training. Additionally, supporting vulnerable groups in finding and retaining jobs is crucial for reskilling, particularly given the importance of private investment in skill development (European Commission, 2024a).

Abbreviations

EQF	European qualifications framework
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
ESL	early school leaving
EU	European Union
Fundae	State Foundation for Employment Training
ICT	information and communications technology
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
IVET	initial vocational education and training
LOMLOE	Organic Act 3/2020, of December 29, amending Organic Act 2/2006, of May 3, on Education.
MECU	Spanish qualifications framework
MEFPyD	Ministry of education, vocational training and sports (previously, Ministry of education and vocational training - MEFP)
MITES	Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Economy
NIP	national implementation plan
PISA	programme for international student assessment
RRP	Recovery and resilience plan
SEPE	State public employment service
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
VET	vocational education and training
WBL	work-based learning

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