



spotlight on VET
ESTONIA

2012/13



VET in Estonia

Vocational education and training (VET) in Estonia is key to ensuring a flexible and skilled workforce is able to adapt to changes in the labour market. VET is under the Ministry of Education and Research's jurisdiction. To respond better to labour market needs the social partners are closely involved in VET policy development.

According to new legislation (September 2013) both initial (IVET) and continuing (CVET) vocational education curricula are used in formal VET. IVET is provided at second, third, fourth and fifth levels of the Estonian qualifications framework, which corresponds to the European qualifications framework (EQF). At each level, students acquire learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and attitudes) in accordance with qualifications at the appropriate EQF level. At second (ISCED 2C) and third (ISCED 2B) levels there is no minimum education requirement for access. Curricula are designed for direct access to elementary labour market occupations. Generally, completion of lower secondary education is a prerequisite to start studies at fourth level. At this level, it is possible to do vocational studies (ISCED 3C) or study VET together with upper secondary general education (ISCED 3B) to obtain a certificate which allows access to higher education. Studies lead to qualifications necessary to work in more complicated jobs. The precondition for access to fifth-level IVET (ISCED 4B) is completion of upper secondary education. Graduates can be technicians or associate professionals. To graduate from a VET institution one has to achieve learning outcomes of a particular speciality and to pass a professional examination, administered by a VET school or by the occupational qualifications awarding body. CVET programmes are offered at fourth and fifth levels of the EQF. CVET aims to help individuals raise their qualifications or acquire new specialisations. CVET studies usually last up to one year.

Most VET studies are school-based. However, for some specialities apprenticeship training is also available. In school-based VET, practical training is half of the study volume and is usually divided equally between workplace training in

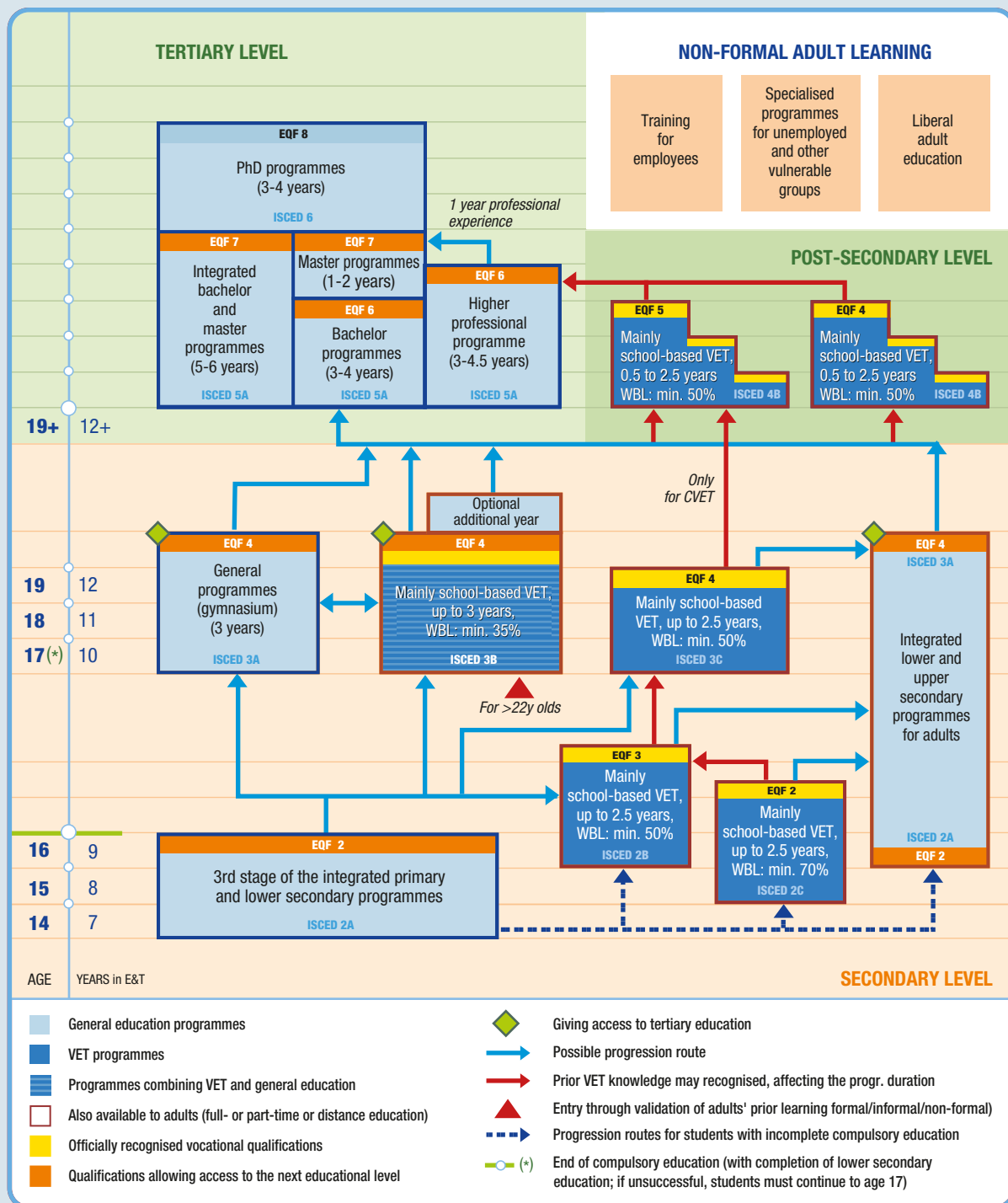
enterprises and practical training at school. For apprenticeships, practical training in enterprises is at least two thirds.

Higher education takes place at EQF levels 6 to 8 (ISCED 5 and 6) and the first level of tertiary education has both an academic (BSc) and a professional branch (applied higher education); it is accessible to all graduates of both general and vocational upper secondary education, as well as graduates of post-secondary VET. To meet specific entrance requirements at some universities, vocational upper secondary graduates have an option to study general education subjects of their choice for an additional 35 study weeks following completion of VET studies.

Adults can obtain general, vocational and higher education in the formal education system. Outside formal education there are training courses available for employees, as well as for the unemployed and other vulnerable groups, to improve their professional skills and support employability. Training providers are mainly VET and higher education institutions, private training centres, enterprises and other public or private institutions. Adult training is funded by employers, the State or by participants themselves.

The adult population's participation rate in lifelong learning has been steadily increasing and was 12.9% in 2012, which is higher than the EU average. During the past five years the following measures have had a major impact on increasing participation rates in adult education: provision of State-funded study places, a voucher system for training the unemployed and grants to enterprises for training their employees, as well as incentives for individuals such as study leave and tax exemptions on training costs.

VET in Estonia's education and training system



NB: ISCED 1997 was used on the chart. Conversion to ISCED 2011 is ongoing.
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Estonia.

Distinctive features of VET

VET is accessible to everyone aged over 16. VET institutions have become important training providers of formal and non-formal training for adults. Recognition of prior learning has improved accessibility. VET is open to learners of diverse educational backgrounds and socioeconomic conditions. VET infrastructure has been renovated in recent years and financial assistance towards housing and travelling expenses is available to VET students.

Social partners are highly involved in VET. Their participation is regulated by national legislation as well as agreements with other stakeholders. At national level, social partners play an important role through their participation in sector skills councils, by developing the occupational qualifications' system and standards. They also participate in several workgroups on VET policy. At local level, their representatives belong to counsellors' boards of VET institutions.

Occupational standards in the new eight-level Estonian qualifications framework are outcomes-based. They are created and updated regularly and form the basis for national VET curricula, on which school curricula have to be based.

Various measures have been taken since the 1990s to integrate VET students with special educational needs. In 2010, an expert group and network of VET teachers was set up to create more activities to support VET students with special educational needs. To support disadvantaged learners in VET schools, training has been organised to raise awareness among and knowledge of VET teachers. Study materials adapted to students with special needs are being prepared.

Challenges

VET needs to be more relevant to the labour market. To implement new VET legislation, curricula reform has been launched. Many study programmes will be shortened, especially in post-secondary VET, to enable faster employment of graduates in companies. New CVET study programmes will be developed to raise qualifications and offer greater variety of specialisations. Certain steps have already been taken to implement EQF fifth level studies in VET. Also, to ensure relevance of teachers' skills, it is necessary to increase VET teachers' in-service training in companies. Another important step is to adapt learning content more to labour market needs by integrating general education and key competences of lifelong learning into speciality subjects.

VET should be more practical and quality of work-based learning should be emphasised. Effectiveness of work-based learning in enterprises and practical learning in VET institutions' workshops should be improved. Workplace study must also be supported and developed to engage more students and enterprises in the apprenticeship scheme.

Teachers and trainers should be supported in modernising the study process. Special efforts are being made to teach teachers and trainers to modernise the teaching process and focus more on students' personal and professional development. Formative assessment of students in the new learning-outcomes- and modular-based curricula system also needs a change of attitude from teachers. Teacher training (both initial and continuous) is the key to improve VET teachers' knowledge and skills. More attention should also be paid to training trainers in enterprises.

Helping students select relevant fields of study and careers and supporting them after graduation should be a priority, and efforts to reduce dropout should be intensified. It is planned to make compulsory educational and psychological counselling and career services available to all students in VET institutions. A new study allowance system for VET learners will be developed and implemented.

VET should become more popular among young people. Various measures are needed to raise awareness of VET such as skills competitions, information campaigns and providing information about VET on Internet, social media and other channels.



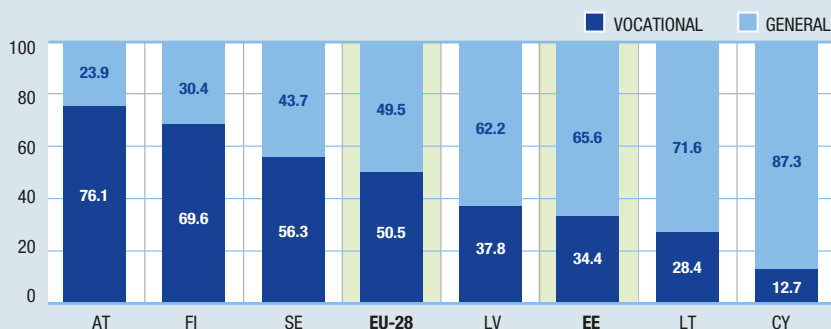
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Education and training in figures

Learners in upper secondary education enrolled in vocational and general programmes

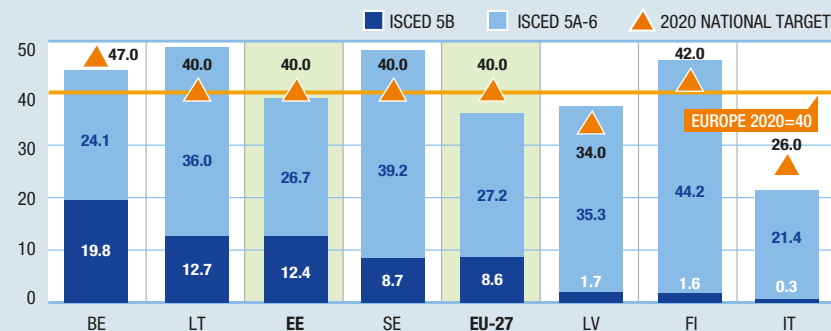
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2011



Source: Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 28.6.2013.

Tertiary education by type

% of 30-34 year-olds with tertiary education by type, 2012

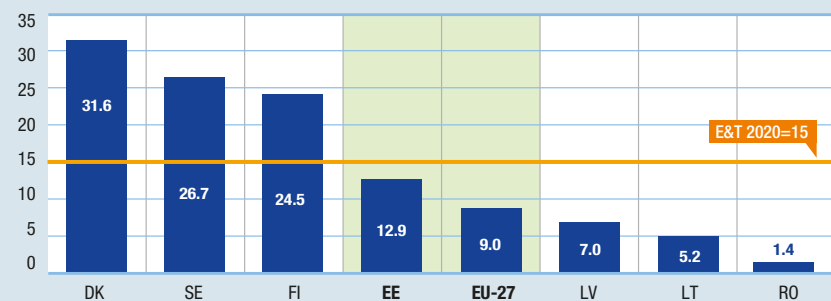


NB: Data for Latvia have low reliability.

Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 8.7.2013.

Lifelong learning

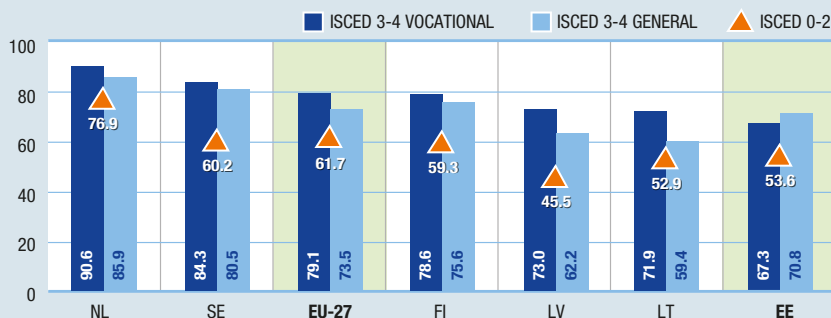
% of population aged 25-64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2012



Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 3.7.2013.

Employment rates by highest level of educational attainment

20-34 year-olds no longer in education by highest level of educational attainment, 2009



Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, 2009 ad hoc module of the EU labour force survey, date of extraction 19.9.2012.



Further information

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www.sm.ee	Ministry of Social Affairs
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www.kutsekoda.ee	Estonian Qualifications Authority
www.eitsa.ee	Information Technology Foundation for Education
www.andras.ee	Association of Estonian Adult Educators (Andras)
www.archimedes.ee	Foundation Archimedes
www.stat.ee	Statistics Estonia
www.eakl.ee	Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions (Eesti Ametiühingute Keskliit)
www.employers.ee	Estonian Employers' Confederation
www.tootukassa.ee	Estonian unemployment insurance fund
www.ekka.archimedes.ee	Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency

