



# spotlight on VET

# DENMARK

## VET in Denmark

Vocational education and training (VET) plays a key role in Danish strategy for lifelong learning and meeting the challenges of globalisation and technological change. An inclusive and flexible initial VET system helps ensure that all young people have an opportunity to obtain relevant competences for smooth transition to the labour market. Adult education and continuing training respond to structural and technological changes in the labour market and provide the workforce with new and updated skills.

The Danish education and training system comprises a mainstream system providing qualifications at all levels, from compulsory schooling to doctoral degrees, and a parallel adult education and continuing training (CVT) system. The adult education and CVT system is designed to meet needs of adult learners, for example by offering part-time courses. The two systems offer equivalent qualifications at various levels, enabling horizontal permeability.

VET is under the Ministry of Education's jurisdiction, which maintains close dialogue with the social partners to respond to labour market needs. Initial VET is organised into 12 broad entry routes and includes technical, agricultural, commercial, social and healthcare programmes. Programmes are organised according to the dual principle, alternating between periods of college-based learning and work-based learning (apprenticeship training) in enterprises. A typical IVET programme (EUD) lasts three-and-a-half years with a 2:1 split between workplace and college-based training, although there is considerable variation between programmes. Individual study plans are compiled for all students, with VET colleges and the social partners sharing the responsibility for developing curricula to ensure responsiveness to local labour market needs. Qualifications at this level can provide access to relevant fields in academy profession (KVU) programmes or professional bachelor programmes at tertiary level.

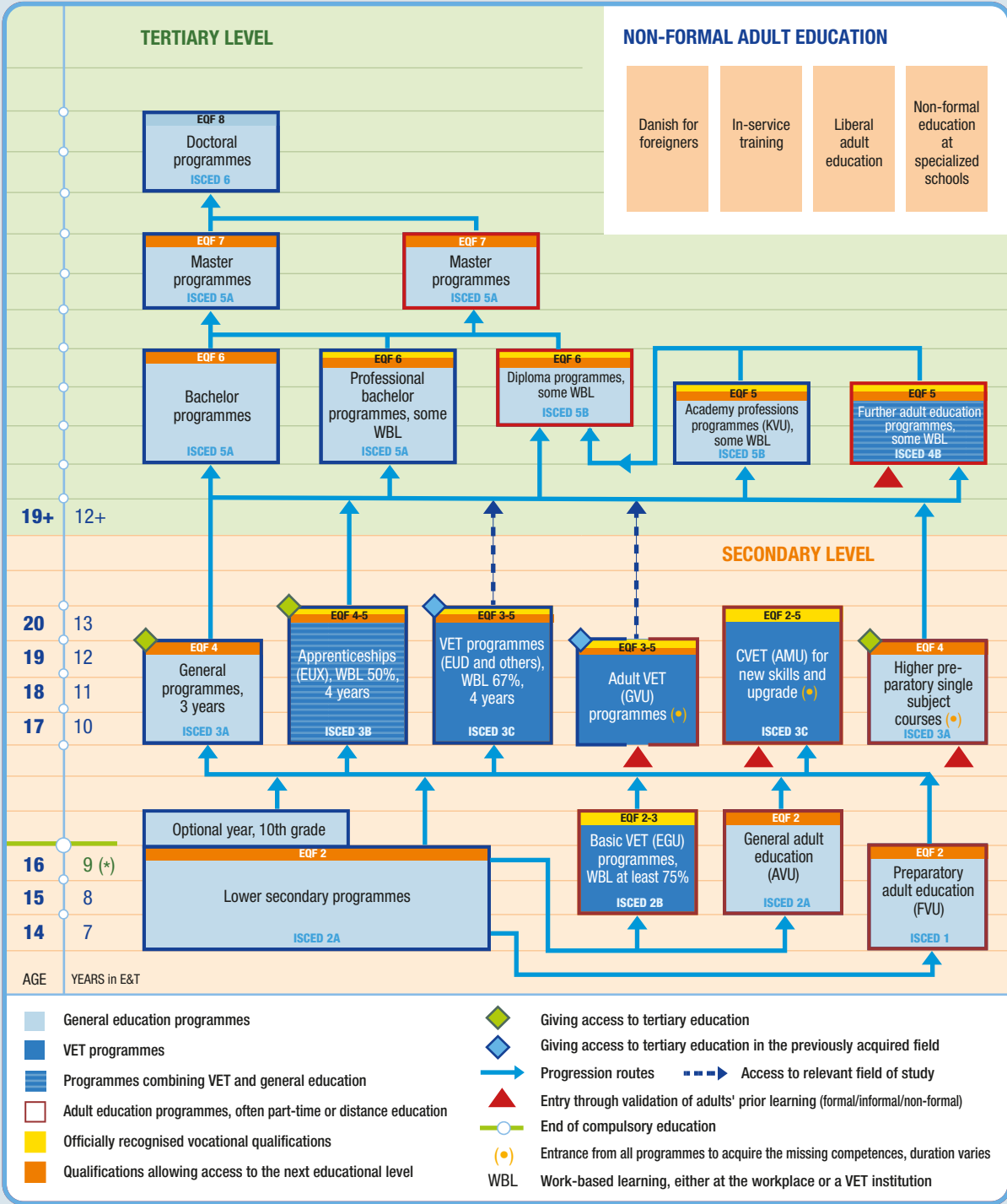
Alternative routes to VET qualifications include:

- combined vocational and general upper secondary education, EUX programme (new academic preparation programme) – a relatively new pathway, which lasts around four years, attended by highly-motivated students aiming at obtaining access to higher education along with a vocational qualification;
- new apprenticeship (*Ny Mesterlære*) programmes, where entire training is at a company instead of partly at a VET college. These programmes are attended by students with a practical approach to learning;
- individual VET programmes, attended by very few students, consist of single subject courses and elements from EUD programmes;
- basic vocational education and training (EGU), attended by lower secondary graduates with a practical approach to learning. The programme caters for young unemployed, and lasts for three to four years, with work-based learning (WBL) being at least 75%.

Basic adult education (*grunduddannelse for voksne*, GUV) provides qualifications equivalent to IVET. GUV is aimed at adults (minimum 25 years old) with at least two years relevant work experience, but without formal qualifications. Individual study plans, which recognise prior learning, are used. GUV study plans can comprise elements from other adult education programmes.

Adult vocational training (*arbejdsmarked-suddannelser*, AMU) provides participants with skills and competences relevant to the labour market and is primarily directed towards specific sectors and jobs. Programmes may either deepen a participant's knowledge in a particular field or extend it to related fields. AMU programmes (around 3 000) last an average of one week and are created, adapted or discontinued in response to labour market needs. At tertiary level, further VET and adult education programmes lead to EQF level 5 qualifications.

# VET in Denmark's education and training system



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

## Distinctive features of VET

The Danish VET system is characterised by a high level of stakeholder involvement. Social partners, vocational colleges, teachers and students are all involved in developing VET based on the principles of consensus and shared responsibility. At national level, stakeholders play a key role in advising the Ministry of Education on overall VET policy and determining the structure and general framework for training programmes within their field, by cooperating in national trade committees. At local level, stakeholders cooperate in developing local curricula to respond to local labour market needs.

Denmark has the highest participation in adult education and continuing training in the EU. High participation rates reflect the national strategy to focus on knowledge-intensive specialist sectors and lifelong learning, the large public sector, and a tradition of strong ties between educational institutions and the social partners.

An integrated lifelong learning strategy was introduced in 2007 and supported by implementation of a national qualifications framework. It improved horizontal and vertical permeability within the education and training system. It also improved guidance services and provided better opportunities for recognition of non-formal learning and qualifications through standardised procedures for validation of prior learning.

Public financing is central to the VET system. VET colleges receive performance-based block grants. Apprenticeships and further training of employees are subsidised according to a solidarity principle – coordinated in the AUB system (*Arbejdsgivernes Uddannelses Bidrag*, employers educational contribution) where all enterprises, regardless of their involvement in VET, contribute a fixed amount per employee to a central fund. Enterprises are then partially reimbursed for providing training placements and for employee participation in continuing training.

## Challenges and policy responses

Education and training are considered a key area as demand for skilled labour continues to increase. As a result, IVET is expected to accommodate an increasingly heterogeneous student population. Two reforms will have significant influence on development of VET in Denmark. The VET system reform (2014) establishes VET teachers' minimum qualification requirements and VET students' minimum entrance requirements, thus increasing quality in VET. A new social assistance reform (2014) makes it mandatory for unemployed people under 30 receiving social benefits to participate in education and training. Thus, numbers of weaker learners entering VET will increase.

It is a challenge to improve completion rates in IVET. The government has set a target that by 2015, 95% of each youth cohort should complete an upper secondary education programme. It will be a huge challenge to keep a focus on both weaker and stronger learners, increased quality in VET, VET teachers' professional development and the new structure of provision resulting from the ongoing VET reform.

Lack of suitable training placements in enterprises is frequently cited as a primary reason for student dropout. Several policy initiatives seek to alleviate the problem, but the current global financial crisis has further widened the gap between supply and demand of training places. Implementation of 50 practical training centres (2013) and the planned 1000 new placements in 'Vækstplan 2014' (growth plan, 2014) are expected to alleviate this problem.

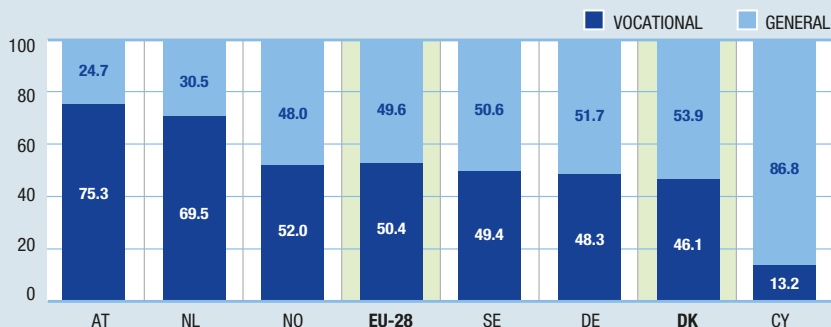
Unemployment, and particularly long-term unemployment, among young people with little or no work experience poses challenges for adult education and continuing training. Substantial upskilling and reskilling is necessary to avoid a considerable part of the workforce becoming permanently excluded from the labour market. The 2014 growth plan includes funding for the unskilled to become skilled workers through targeted adult VET programmes.



## Education and training in figures

### Learners in upper secondary education enrolled in vocational and general programmes

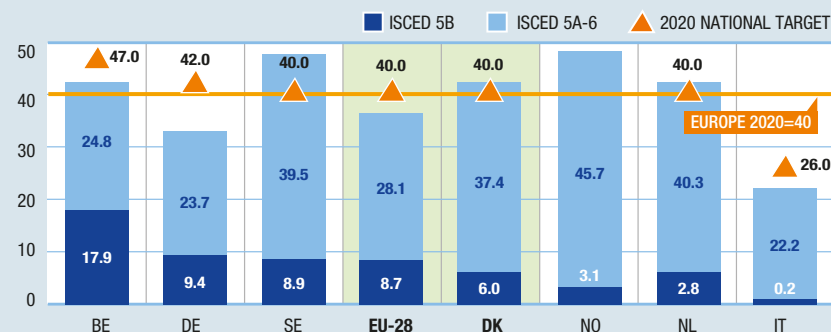
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2012



Source: Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 30.5.2014.

### Tertiary education by type

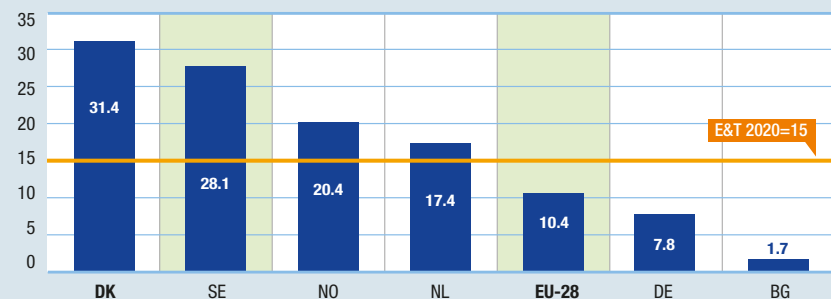
% of 30-34 year-olds with tertiary education by type, 2013



Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 19.5.2014.

### Lifelong learning

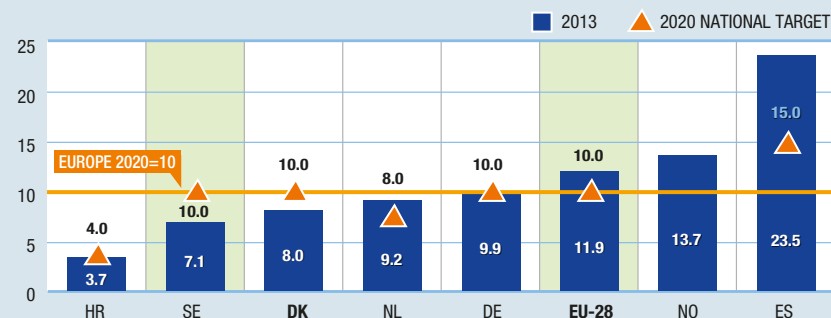
% of population aged 25-64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2013



Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 19.5.2014.

### Early leavers from education and training

% of early leavers from education and training, 2013



Source: Eurostat labour force survey, date of extraction 19.5.2014.



## Further information

- Cedefop ReferNet Denmark (2012). *VET in Europe: country report Denmark*.  
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<http://eng.uvm.dk/~media/UVM/Files/English/PDF/140708%20Improving%20Vocational%20Education%20and%20Training.pdf>
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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <a href="http://eng.uvm.dk">http://eng.uvm.dk</a>                                                                                                                                                           | Danish Ministry of Education                                 |
| <a href="http://ufm.dk/en">http://ufm.dk/en</a>                                                                                                                                                             | Ministry of Higher Education and Science                     |
| <a href="http://www.uk.bm.dk">www.uk.bm.dk</a>                                                                                                                                                              | Ministry of Employment                                       |
| <a href="http://ufm.dk/en/the-minister-and-the-ministry/organisation/danish-agency-for-higher-education">http://ufm.dk/en/the-minister-and-the-ministry/organisation/danish-agency-for-higher-education</a> | Danish Agency for Higher Education                           |
| <a href="http://www.statbank.dk">www.statbank.dk</a>                                                                                                                                                        | National Statistics Office / StatBank Denmark                |
| <a href="http://www.fagligeudvalg.dk">www.fagligeudvalg.dk</a>                                                                                                                                              | Skills and labour market analyses                            |
| <a href="http://www.ug.dk/programmes/aboutugdk">www.ug.dk/programmes/aboutugdk</a>                                                                                                                          | Danish Ministry of Education guide to education and training |
| <a href="http://eng.uvm.dk/Fact-Sheets/Upper-secondary-education">http://eng.uvm.dk/Fact-Sheets/Upper-secondary-education</a>                                                                               | Factsheet of upper-secondary education                       |
| <a href="http://www.eng.uvm.dk/service/Publications.aspx">www.eng.uvm.dk/service/Publications.aspx</a>                                                                                                      | Publications on IVET and adult education                     |
| <a href="http://www.praktikpladsen.dk">www.praktikpladsen.dk</a>                                                                                                                                            | Information on training placements                           |
| <a href="http://www.phmetropol.dk/Refernet">www.phmetropol.dk/Refernet</a>                                                                                                                                  | ReferNet Denmark                                             |

This spotlight is based on input from ReferNet Denmark.

