

spotlight on VET

CZECHIA

VET in Czechia

The main body responsible for initial vocational education and training (IVET) is the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Representatives of employers are involved in IVET curriculum development, both at national and provider levels.

IVET is part of upper secondary and higher education. It is mainly school-based, but work-based learning (WBL) is an integral part of all programmes. WBL may take place at companies' worksites and in school workshops or facilities. IVET predominantly begins following completion of 9-year compulsory education. Upper secondary level IVET programmes are available in several forms.

- 3-year ISCED 353 VET programmes (completed by a VET examination leading to a VET certificate at level 3 of the European qualifications framework (EQF)) enable graduates to enter the labour market directly and perform mainly manual occupations (bricklayer, hairdresser, etc.). The VET certificate also allows them to obtain a trade licence and set up their own business. Graduates of these programmes can continue to a 2-year follow-up VET programme (ISCED 354, EQF 4) and take a *maturita* examination, which opens access to higher education. In 2020/21, 23.3% continued to follow-up programmes.
- 4-year ISCED 354 VET and ISCED 344 *lyceum* programmes (completed with a *maturita* examination, EQF 4). VET programmes enable graduates to continue learning in higher education or perform mid-level technical, business, service, health and other similar jobs (construction technician, travel agent, etc.). *Lyceum* programmes, including 70% of general education subjects, mainly prepare their graduates for higher education or to enter the labour market.
- Performing arts programmes last 6 years (music and drama) or 8 years (dance), leading to a specialist's diploma (*diplomovaný specialista*, DiS., EQF 6), but learners may optionally obtain a *maturita* certificate (EQF 4).

- IVET programmes with lower requirements compared to other VET programmes target primarily learners with special education needs (SEN). They include 1-, 2- and, less often, 3-year programmes. These programmes can lead to a VET certificate and/or a school-leaving examination certificate (EQF level 2).

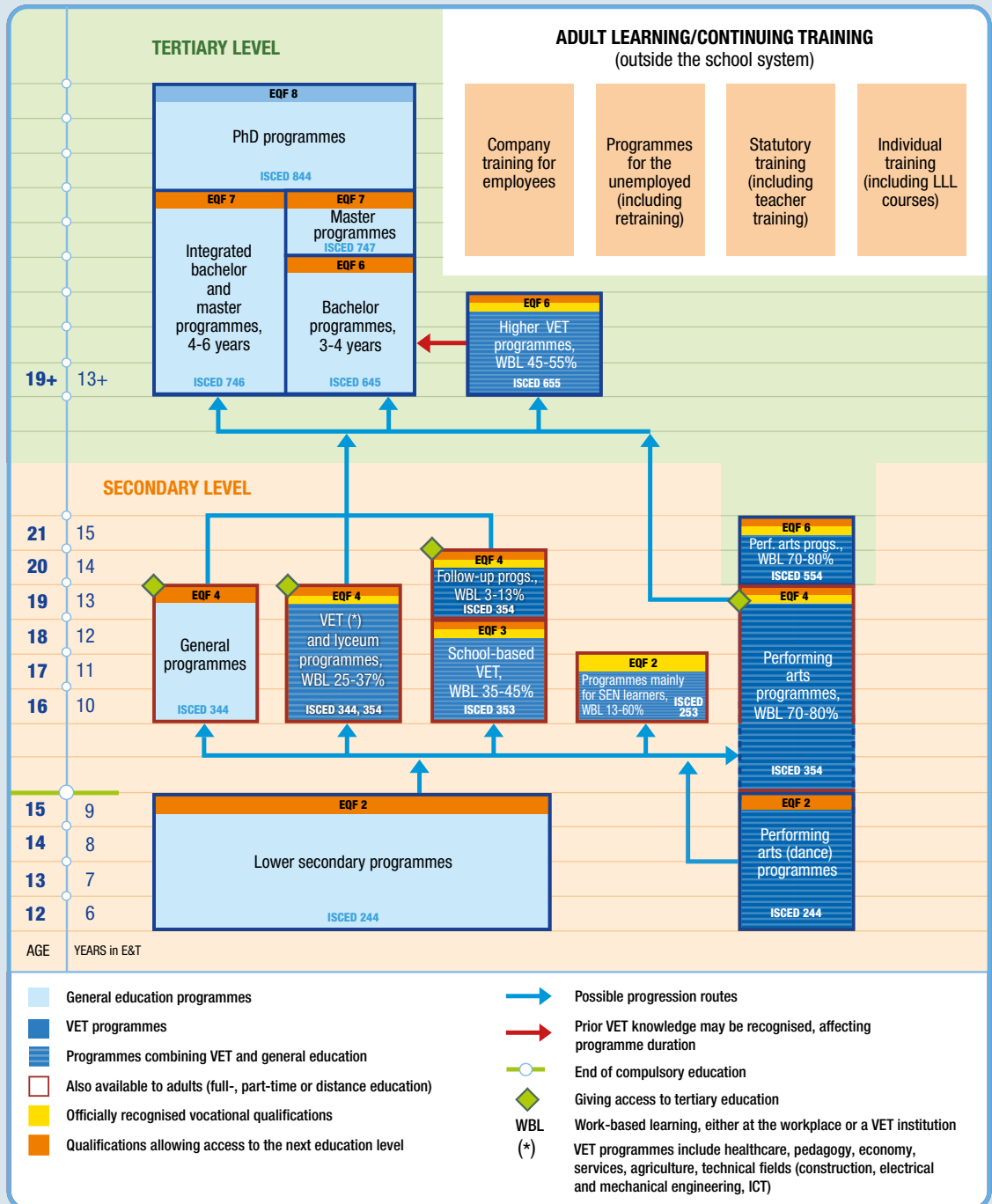
Both 3-year VET and 4-year VET and lyceum programmes can be offered as shortened programmes, targeting upper secondary education graduates who want to acquire a (second) qualification in another field, at the same EQF level; they are also suitable for adults and last 1 to 2 years.

Higher VET programmes offered by tertiary professional schools prepare learners for demanding professional tasks (such as nurse or social worker). Studies last 3 to 3.5 years and are completed with an *absolutorium* examination (EQF 6). These programmes lead to a *DiS*. Although many graduates enter the labour market, vertical permeability to higher education institutions is also possible. Higher VET programme graduates who continue in bachelor programmes may have some of their subjects and exams recognised.

Adults can study any VET programme in the formal school system. Many programmes permit combination with working life, but overall adult participation is low.

The wide variety of continuing VET (CVET) programmes provided outside the formal system is not generally regulated; nevertheless, a system of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (VNFIL) has been gradually developing since 2007.

VET in Czechia's education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Czechia, 2022.

Distinctive features of VET

VET has always been a fundamental part of the Czech education system. In 2020, the share of learners in VET programmes at upper secondary level was 70.5% (second highest in the EU). A first choice between general and vocational upper secondary education pathways comes at age 15. By age 17 to 19, most VET learners have acquired a vocational qualification recognised on the labour market.

General subjects are a strong component in all types of VET programmes, but their proportion varies depending on the programme, from 30% to 70% of the total instruction time.

The rate of early leavers from education and training has lately increased but remains relatively low (6.4% in 2021), partly due to a wide choice of education pathways and horizontal permeability. In 2021, the employment rate of VET graduates (aged 20 to 34, ISCED levels 3 and 4) was 82.1%, higher than the EU-27 average of 80.5%.

Since 2020, learners participating in 4-year VET programmes in specific fields have the possibility to gain two vocational qualifications at different EQF levels (3 and 4). This measure aims to increase the attractiveness of upper secondary VET programmes and also prevent leaving school without any qualification. These programmes have been positively received by employers, as they include more practical training.

Graduate tracking of IVET learners based on periodic sample surveys has been in place for almost 20 years.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning focuses on validation of vocational competences. The main tool for validation is the National register of qualifications (NSK). The NSK offers more than 1 440 qualifications at EQF levels 2 to 7.

Challenges and policy responses

A crucial challenge is the ageing teaching population, as the average age of teachers in upper secondary education is 49.4 years.

Although average salaries were increased, the teaching profession suffers from low attractiveness.

Improving the quality and attractiveness of IVET by encouraging in-company WBL, thus easing graduates' transitions from school to the labour market, is a key national priority. In autumn 2020, the *Strategy for the education policy of the Czech Republic up to 2030* was adopted, promoting the introduction of dual system elements in VET, fostering cooperation between the worlds of school and business, improving vertical permeability within the VET system, and strengthening links between formal and non-formal education.

Further improvement in matching of skills supply and demand is needed. Several projects targeting better skills matching have been introduced but a national system is still not in place. Linking IVET programmes to relevant qualifications in the NSK should support labour market need responsiveness and flexibility. Further promoting recognition and validation of prior learning is also necessary. The main challenge is ensuring significant support for lifelong learning, developing a systemic environment in further education, and increasing participation in further education. Getting adults into education is the goal of both the National recovery plan (2021) and the envisaged individual learning accounts.

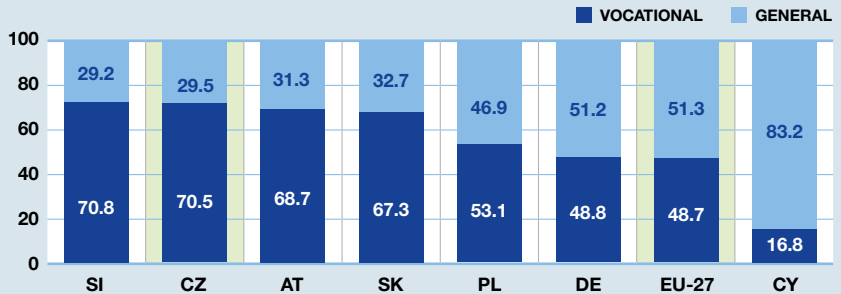
The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the digital skills gap and pointed out a need for digital transformation, and increasing and improving digital capacity. At the same time, it has speeded up the development of digital skills and competences of VET teachers and learners.

The education ministry intends to modernise and equip schools, to boost the introduction of digital technologies, support innovation, revise curricula and carry out new methods of instruction and assessment. The ministry will also focus on initial and continuing teacher training, and the professional development of headmasters. In VET curricula renewal, emphasis will be placed on developing a common basis among relevant fields of study, allowing for a more gradual career choice, and postponing early specialisation. The number of fields of study will be reduced from the current 281.



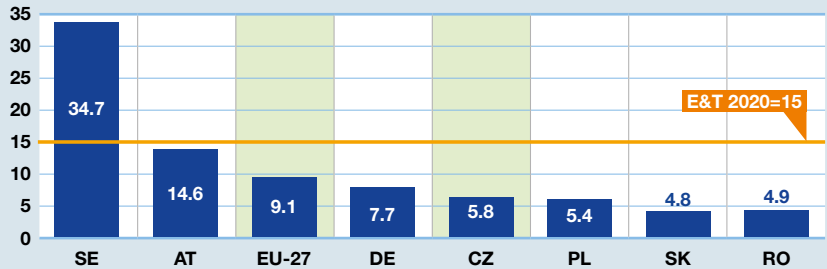
Education and training in figures

Upper secondary students (ISCED 2011 level 3) enrolled in vocational and general programmes
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2020



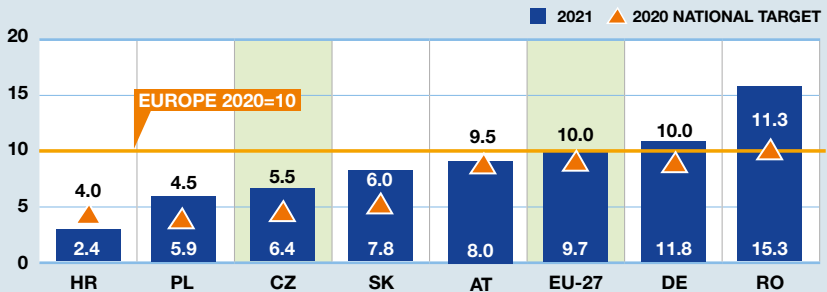
Source: Cedefop calculations, based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 18.05.22.

Lifelong learning
% of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the 4 weeks prior to the survey, 2021



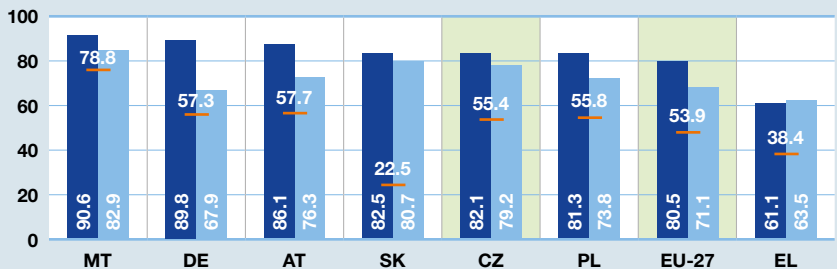
Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 18.05.22.

Early leavers from education and training
% of the population aged 18 to 24 with, at most, lower secondary education and who were not in further education or training during the 4 weeks prior to the survey, 2021



Source: Eurostat labour force survey, date of extraction 23.05.2022.

Employment rates of young graduates
% of 20 to 34 year-olds no longer in education and training, 2021



Legend:
 ■ Upper vocational secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)
 ■ Upper general secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)
 — Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2)

Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 18.05.2022.



Further information

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www.msmt.cz	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
www.mpsv.cz	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
www.npi.cz	National Pedagogical Institute of the Czech Republic
www.refernet.cz	ReferNet Czechia
www.nvf.cz	National Training Fund
www.czso.cz	Czech Statistical Office
www.vupsv.cz	Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs
www.narodnikvalifikace.cz	National register of qualifications

This Spotlight is based on input from the National Pedagogical Institute of the Czech Republic (ReferNet Czechia 2022) and the National Training Fund.



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