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Education, training and  
life-long learning

# Vocational education and training

Skills for today and for the future

Employment,  
Social Affairs  
and Inclusion

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**1**

# Foreword

In Europe, we find ourselves in a period of transition. The green and digital transformations are essential for a sustainable future and bring both opportunities and challenges. We also aim to emerge stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic, using this transformational period to create new opportunities and jobs to boost Europe's recovery.



**Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights**

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As industries and occupations change, so too will the needs of employers and the demands put on workers. High-quality vocational education and training (VET) has a key role to play in ensuring people have the right skills to help tackle socio-economic challenges and thrive in their personal and professional lives. This applies both to the youth of today, to whom VET provides a smooth pathway into the labour market from compulsory education, and to adults who need to upskill and reskill to adapt to a changing world of work.

The European Union (EU) has long been leading the way in promoting and investing in VET. The Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, published in 2020, sets out the EU's comprehensive vision for the future of VET. Our aim is to make VET a high-quality, attractive option for all learners.

While the Commission leads the way with a wide range of policy initiatives, support tools and funding mechanisms at EU level, Member States have the power to make the required reforms a reality. Member States have already endorsed and committed to concrete actions through the Osnabrück Declaration. Now is the time to undertake these reforms and help achieve our collective vision for VET in Europe.

It is my great pleasure to provide the foreword to this brochure, which outlines our vision for VET and the assistance that is available to support Member States with this process. I strongly encourage Member States to take advantage of these tools to strengthen and modernise their VET systems, for the benefit of all VET stakeholders – and ultimately, learners – throughout Europe.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'N. Schmit'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

**Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights**



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# An introduction to vocational education and training

Everyone in Europe should be able to access education, training and life-long learning, whether they live in a large city or a remote, rural area. The [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU](#) recognises access to education and vocational and continuing training as a fundamental right.

The [first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights](#) is the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning, while the fourth principle, about active support to employment, also emphasises that everyone has the right to continued education and training, and support to improve their employment prospects.

These rights seek to ensure everyone can participate fully in society, transition successfully into the labour market, and thrive in their careers and lives. Employers also need workers with the right skills for the jobs of today and tomorrow, in order to support Europe's twin green and digital transitions and its recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Skills are at the heart of the EU's efforts to make this vision a reality. Through initiatives such as the [European Skills Agenda](#), the [European Education Area](#) and the [Digital Education Action Plan](#), the EU is working to develop better skills and to build resilient and forward-looking education and training systems that are fit for the digital age.

**Vocational education and training (VET)** is key to this process, as emphasised by the [Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience](#), adopted in November 2020. Alongside this, EU Member States and several other countries have endorsed the [Osnabrück Declaration](#), which sets out a commitment to work towards concrete actions to further develop VET in Europe by 2025.



## What is vocational education and training?

The Council Recommendation defines 'vocational education and training' as 'education and training which aims to equip young people and adults with knowledge, skills and competences required in particular occupations or more broadly on the labour market'. Such training may be provided in formal and non-formal settings, and at all levels of the [European Qualifications Framework \(EQF\)](#). VET is the sector of education and training closest to the labour market. This tailored form of education and training is hugely important and effective, as it provides skills that prepare workers for specific careers and occupations, while also providing valuable transferable skills and responding effectively to economic needs.

This brochure summarises the EU's comprehensive vision for the future of VET and the work the EU is doing with Member States to achieve this vision. It looks at the importance of VET reforms at national level and the key principles for these reforms, and presents key initiatives that are leading the way at EU level.

If you are a **VET stakeholder** – such as a national or regional authority, practitioner, school leader or teacher, trainer or training centre, employment service, or human resources manager – this

publication provides essential reading on the key reforms and initiatives being undertaken at EU level and possible financial support that is available.

If you are a **VET learner**, you can also read this brochure to find out more about VET and its benefits. This will help you understand how the EU and its Member States support you in your personal and professional development throughout your working life.

## The benefits of vocational education and training

Whether for young people getting started in their careers or adults looking to upskill and reskill, VET provides learners with skills that support their personal and professional development:

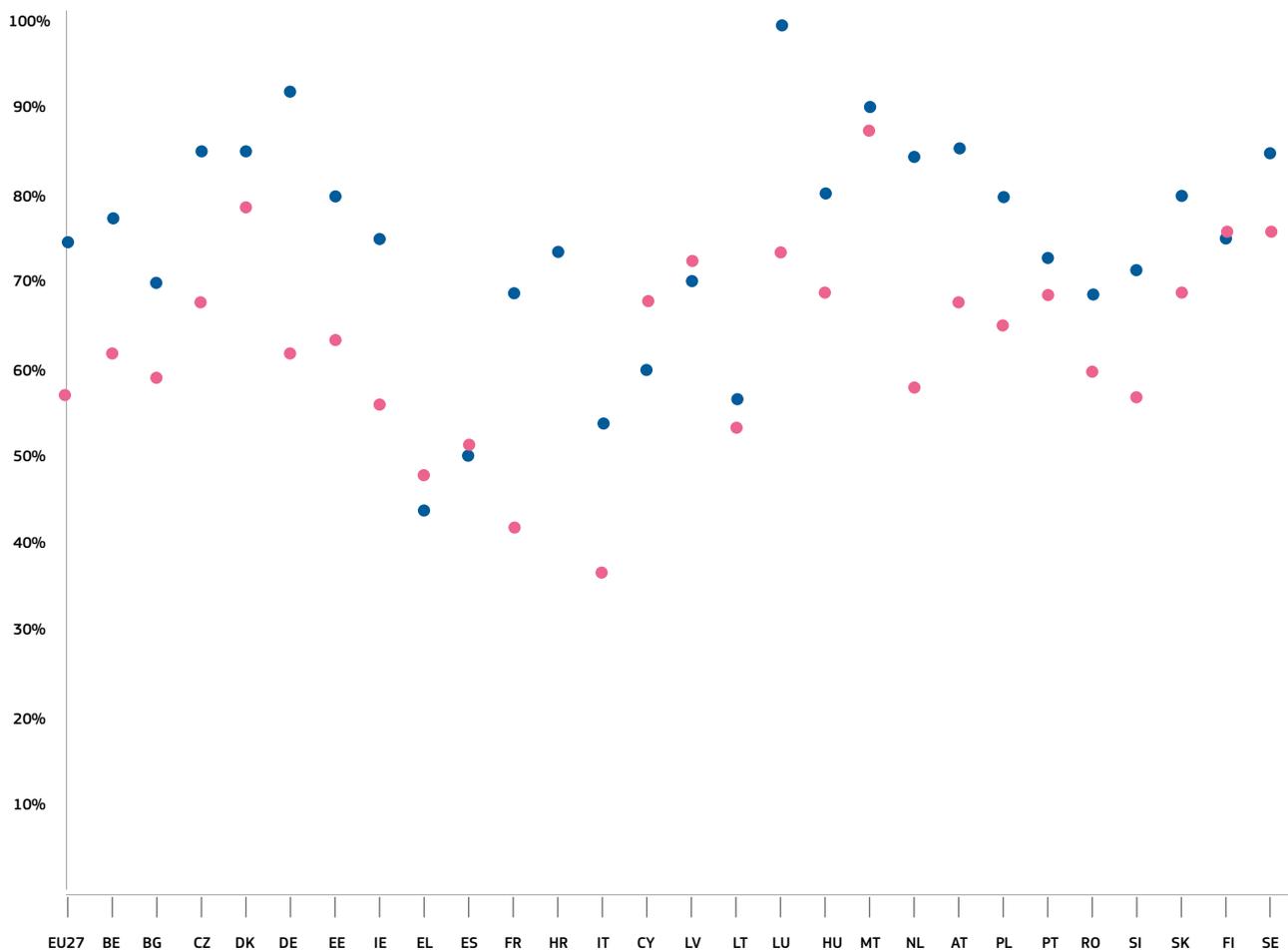
- VET prepares young people to successfully enter working life;
- it helps people in employment continuously upgrade their skills;
- it enables them to adjust to the changing demands of the working world or negotiate job changes;
- it helps unemployed people acquire the skills they need to re-enter the labour market;

- more generally, it empowers learners with the knowledge, skills and characteristics to thrive in their professional, social and personal development.

Across the EU, recent graduates of VET programmes (at upper secondary level and post-secondary level) tend to be significantly more employable than recent graduates of general education, as shown by the data in Chart 1 and in the annex. According to Eurostat, the employment rate of VET graduates aged 20–34 was 76.1 % in 2020, compared to just 58.3 % for general education graduates of the same age. This trend was also clear in individual countries, with 20 Member States displaying higher employment rates among recent VET graduates, and just five showing higher rates among general education graduates. These statistics demonstrate the effectiveness of VET programmes in providing skills that make learners more employable and prepared to enter the labour market.

**Chart 1: Employment rates of recent graduates of vocational education and training and general education (aged 20–34), 2020**

Source: Eurostat (EU-LFS, 2020)



● Recent graduates from VET<sup>1</sup>

● Recent graduates from general education<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Data for Luxembourg (LU) were not available for 2020 at the time of publication, therefore the chart shows the figure for 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Data for Croatia (HR) not available at the time of publication

## An evolving vocational education and training landscape

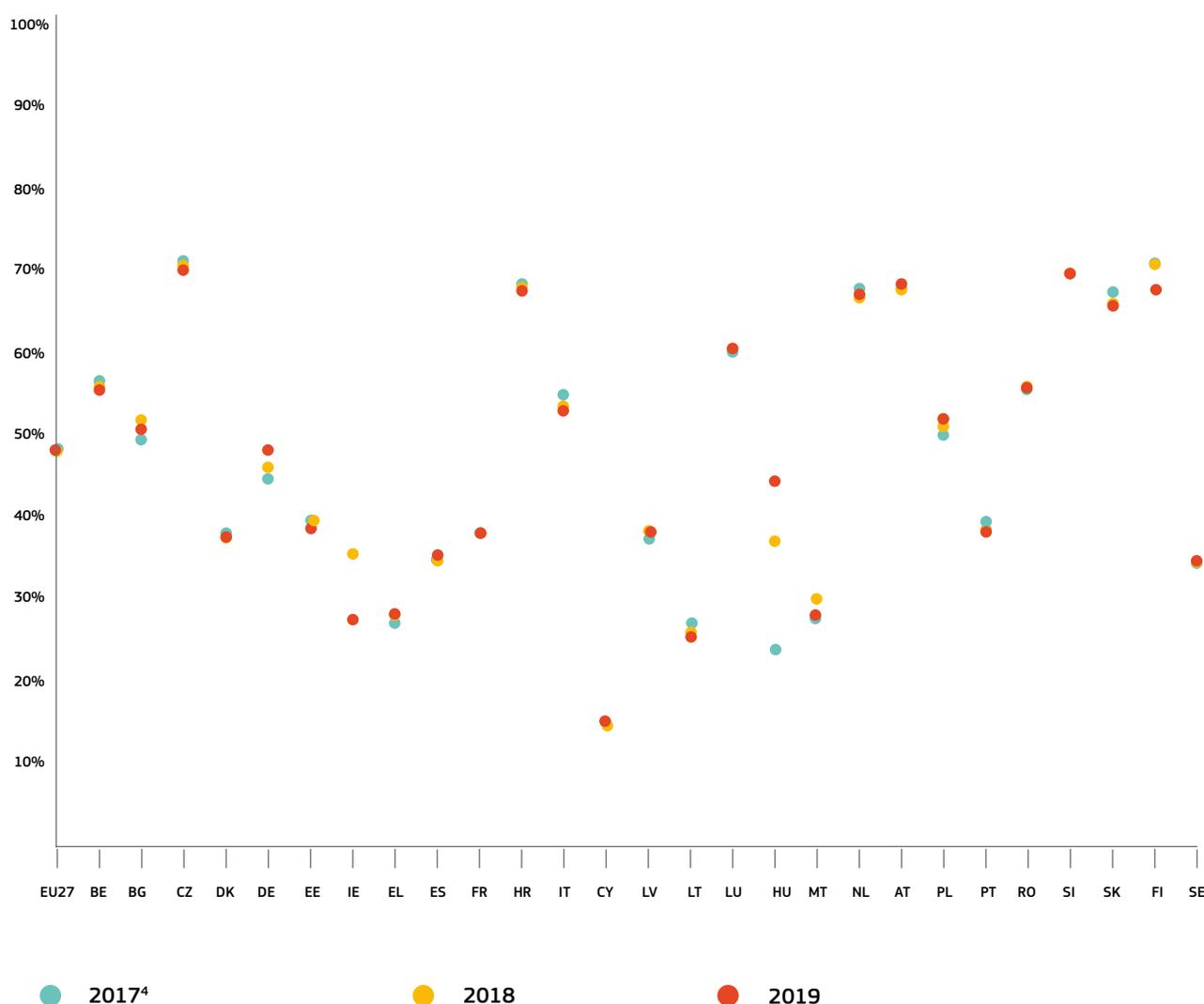
Traditionally, VET programmes have been seen as a way to prepare individuals for jobs in medium-skilled occupations. Even though such occupations may be in decline, they continue to represent the largest share of jobs currently available in the labour market. However, the need for higher-skilled workers has also paved the way for the expansion of VET qualifications to higher levels. Considering this – and given the benefits of VET’s highly tailored approach to education and training – VET should no longer be seen as catering only to medium-skilled occupations. VET can meet the needs of learners of all ages pursuing a wide range of occupations at different skill levels.

VET already plays a prominent role in the European upper secondary education landscape. Approximately half (48.4 %) of all learners enrolled in upper secondary education are enrolled in VET programmes. Overall participation figures vary greatly across Member States, from 70.8 % in Slovenia and 70.5 % in Czechia, to just 26.1 % in Lithuania and 16.9 % in Cyprus. In the period between 2017 and 2019, approximately half of EU Member States showed percentage increases in participation while the other half displayed decreases, revealing minor differences in the trends across Member States.<sup>3</sup> Figures for all Member States are shown in Chart 2 and included as a table in the annex.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the most recent available data are from 2019 and therefore do not yet reflect any possible impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Chart 2: Percentage of learners in upper secondary education enrolled in upper secondary vocational education and training, 2017–2019**

Source: Eurostat (UOE, 2019)



<sup>4</sup> Data for Ireland (IE) not available for 2017



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# The EU's vision for vocational education and training

Strong vocational policies are essential for promoting a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce and labour markets that are responsive to economic change. The EU has put in place the foundations to support the VET landscape in Europe through a range of initiatives, including key principles and targets for the future of VET.

### A brief background to EU vocational education and training policy

EU policies have long promoted and strengthened VET across Europe; as far back as 1963, the EU laid down general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy and established the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT). Since the turn of the 21st century, EU policy has focused heavily on VET, particularly following the launch of the European strategy for enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training in 2002 (the so-called 'Copenhagen Process'). Key tools such as [Europass](#) and the [EQF](#) were subsequently introduced to improve the transparency of skills and qualifications. Flagship funding programmes such as the [European Social Fund Plus \(ESF+\)](#) and [Erasmus+](#) support education, training, skills and life-long learning.

Following the financial crisis, EU policy sought to further invest in high-quality VET to foster smart, sustainable and inclusive growth to tackle high youth unemployment rates, focusing in particular on promoting work-based learning, quality assurance, enhanced access to VET, strengthening of key skills, and professional development of VET trainers. A key initiative in this context is the [Youth Guarantee](#), which has been using VET to ease the transition of young people into the labour market since 2013. More recently, the [Blueprint for sectoral cooperation](#) on skills has focused on addressing sectoral skills gaps, including through the development of VET programmes and qualifications, and the [European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations classification \(ESCO\)](#) has helped improve multilingual classifications of skills and qualifications.



### The main EU governance bodies for cooperation in vocational education and training

Member States, social partners and the Commission discuss initiatives relating to VET in the meetings of the [Advisory Committee on Vocational Training \(ACVT\)](#) and of the [Directors-General for VET \(DGVTS\)](#).

Since 1963, the ACVT has assisted the EU with the implementation of its VET policy. The ACVT in practice covers the broader field of VET and adult learning, reflecting the fact that VET policies are typically embedded in the wider education and training systems.

DGVT meetings bring together high-level representatives from ministries in charge of VET from 35 countries, together with the European social partners. The DGVT regularly discusses strategic VET policies and country-level reforms and takes a forward-looking role to provide direction for European VET cooperation.

Since 2002, DGVT meetings have contributed to enhanced cooperation in the field of VET between Member States, candidate countries, European Free Trade Association / European Economic Area countries and European social partners as part of the **Copenhagen Process**. This is a voluntary process undertaken by countries with the aim to improve the performance, quality and attractiveness of VET in Europe.



## EU agencies supporting cooperation in vocational education and training

[Cedefop](#), the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, has supported cooperation on VET and contributed to the evolving policy agenda since it was first established in 1975. Cedefop works with the European Commission, EU Member States and social partners to help develop, promote and implement VET, skills and qualifications policies.

Cedefop provides information, research, analyses and evidence at the crossroads of VET and the labour market. Its work covers: VET systems; apprenticeships; VET and upskilling pathways for adults; guidance, validation of learning and financing of VET; qualifications and qualifications frameworks; teachers and trainers; skills intelligence and the future of work, with a focus on green skills and digitalisation. As a platform for policymakers, social partners, researchers, experts and other VET and labour market actors, Cedefop promotes knowledge sharing and policy learning. It plays a key role in monitoring the implementation of the priorities and actions defined in the Council Recommendation on VET and the Osnabrück Declaration.

The [European Training Foundation \(ETF\)](#) assists neighbouring countries in reforming their education, training, and labour market systems. With more than 25 years of experience, the ETF works closely with governments, businesses, and social partners at EU level to make the most of people's abilities and skills. The ETF currently supports human development in 29 countries bordering the EU. It seeks to promote social mobility and inclusion, reform education and training systems, and balance systems with labour market needs.

The 2020 European Skills Agenda set quantitative objectives for upskilling (improving existing skills) and reskilling (training in new skills) over a five-year period. The Agenda's 12 actions focus on fostering collaboration between Member States, companies, and social partners to empower people to embark on life-long learning, and using the EU budget as a catalyst to unlock public and private investment in skills. The Agenda works in synergy with the European Education Area and the Digital Education Action Plan to enhance digital skills, and create a holistic, European space for learning which benefits all learners, teachers, and institutions.

The [Pact for Skills](#) is the first of the flagship actions under the European Skills Agenda and invites public and private organisations to join forces and take concrete action to upskill and reskill people in Europe. The European Skills Agenda has also announced an initiative on Individual Learning Accounts, with the aim to facilitate access to training for working-age adults and empower them to successfully manage labour market transitions.



## Vocational education and training in the wider EU policy context

Education, training and skills are at the heart of EU policy. The European Green Deal, New Industrial Strategy for Europe, Circular Economy Action Plan and EU Biodiversity Strategy all emphasise the important role of skills and training in supporting sustainable growth and the transition to a green economy. The SME strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe outlines the value of skills for businesses, while the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 highlights the importance of skills in tackling gender stereotypes and achieving a gender balance in many professions. NextGenerationEU, the plan to lead the EU out of the COVID-19 pandemic, also foresees dedicated funding for VET as it aims to make Europe and its economy greener, more digital and stronger than ever before.

### A new, comprehensive approach to vocational education and training

The **Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience** defines key principles to ensure VET provides quality learning opportunities for young people and adults. The Recommendation places a strong focus on increased flexibility, reinforced opportunities for work-based learning and apprenticeships, and improved quality assurance.

Inspired by the [2018 opinion from the ACVT](#) on the future of vocational education and training post-2020, the Council Recommendation sets out a vision for a VET policy which:

- equips young people and adults with the knowledge, skills and competences to thrive in the evolving labour market and society, to manage the recovery and the just transition to a green and digital economy, in times of demographic change and throughout all economic cycles;
- fosters inclusiveness and equal opportunities and contributes to achieving resilience, social fairness and prosperity for all;
- promotes European VET systems in an international context, so that they are recognised as a worldwide reference for vocational learners.

The Recommendation also establishes the following EU-level objectives, which it aims to achieve by 2025:

- at least **82 %** of VET graduates are employed;
- **60 %** of recent VET graduates benefit from any form of work-based learning during their studies;
- **8 %** of VET learners undertake learning abroad.

The first and third objectives build on existing ET 2020 benchmarks on graduate employability and mobility in VET, while the second builds on the March 2018 [Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships](#).



## Driving reform across Europe

Member States have committed to implementing actions to support VET reforms at national level, together with social partners and other relevant stakeholders. These national-level reforms are essential to delivering the vision for VET.

### Principles for national-level reforms

Reforms should be based on the following principles that state that VET should...

- **Be agile in adapting to labour market changes:** Member States should put appropriate frameworks and measures in place to ensure that VET provides a balanced mix of skills and responds swiftly to changing labour market demands (through skills anticipation mechanisms, for example). Work-based learning and apprenticeships, in particular, are effective approaches to ensure VET's relevance in the labour market.
- **Have flexibility and progression opportunities at its core:** Member States should ensure that VET programmes are personalised and learner-centred. This helps achieve strong engagement and make VET pathways more attractive, leading to increased employability. Vocational qualifications should be broken down into smaller units and relevant learning outcomes, allowing content to be updated flexibly and customised to suit individual needs.
- **Be a driver for innovation and growth:** VET should be a part of economic, industrial and innovation strategies, including those linked to recovery and the green and digital transitions. VET institutions should have state-of-the-art infrastructure and digitalisation strategies and VET training should be adapted and expanded to foster the learning of entrepreneurial, digital and green skills, especially for adults. This should help prepare Europe for the green and digital transitions and support occupations in high demand.
- **Be an attractive choice, based on modern and digitalised skills and training provision:** Member States should make VET more attractive through innovation and modernisation, notably in terms of new learning environments, tools, and teaching methods, with a particular focus on digitalisation. Education and training systems should enable vertical and horizontal pathways between VET, general school education, higher education, and adult education.
- **Promote equality of opportunities:** VET programmes should be inclusive and accessible for vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, people without skills or qualifications, minorities, people with a migrant background, and people who have fewer opportunities due to their socio-economic background or the area they live in. Targeted measures and flexible training formats can help prevent early leaving from education and training, and support transitions from school to work.
- **Be underpinned by a culture of quality assurance:** The [European Quality Assurance Reference Framework in Vocational Education and Training \(EQAVET\)](#) is based on a set of common indicative descriptors and common reference indicators for quality assurance in VET, applied both at system and provider level according to national context. The EQAVET National Reference Points (NRPs) have a role to play in bringing together national and regional stakeholders and helping to further develop and implement the EQAVET Framework.



## European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) & the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)

The Council Recommendation on VET of November 2020 replaces the previous Council Recommendations on EQAVET and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), which were adopted in 2009.

EQAVET sets out a reference framework to support Member States to improve the quality of their VET systems and increase transparency regarding quality assurance arrangements in VET. During its 10 years of implementation, EQAVET stimulated reforms in national quality assurance systems, although it did not contribute significantly to improving transparency around quality assurance arrangements. In addition, it was mostly applied in school-based initial VET.

EQAVET is reinforced by an updated EQAVET Framework, included in the VET Recommendation, which emphasises the quality of learning outcomes, certification and assessment, stakeholder consultation, the role of teachers and trainers, work-based learning, digital learning and flexibility. EU-level peer reviews of quality assurance are introduced for VET systems to improve mutual learning, make quality assurance more transparent, and reinforce mutual trust between Member States.

ECVET was established to improve the recognition, accumulation and transfer of learning outcomes. This aimed to support mobility and life-long learning, as well as the establishment of an EU credit system in VET. ECVET helped improve mobility through the use and documentation of units and related learning outcomes. The concept of ECVET points was generally not applied, however, and ECVET did not lead to the development of a European credit system in VET.

The Council Recommendation has replaced the ECVET Recommendation by including the key principles of the former ECVET instrument related to flexibility, while the tools supporting mobility of vocational learners (Learning Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding) will be further developed in the framework of other EU instruments (e.g. Erasmus+). For vocational qualifications at post-secondary and tertiary level, the [European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System \(ECTS\)](#) will continue to be used.

Actions taken by Member States, supported by EU cooperation on VET and the above principles, should make VET an agile, flexible, and attractive option based on equal opportunities and a culture of quality assurance. Specifically, the actions should:

- **Promote and support sustainable partnerships for the governance of VET** at regional and sectoral level, in accordance with national contexts and, where relevant, through public-private partnerships. Actions should involve social partners and all relevant stakeholders, including:
  - VET institutions;
  - industries and businesses of all sizes;
  - public and private employment services;
  - VET teachers and trainers, and their representatives;
  - intermediary bodies (such as chambers of industry, commerce and crafts);
  - professional and sectoral organisations;
  - national coordinators for the Youth Guarantee, ESF+, and other EU initiatives;
  - the information technology sector;
  - Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs);
  - clusters; learners' and parents' organisations; and local, regional and national authorities.

Cooperation among VET stakeholders at country level is crucial to ensure reforms are well designed and implemented and well understood at the level of practitioners and other stakeholders.

- **Make best use of transparency tools.** Actions should make use of tools, including the European Qualifications Framework, Europass, ESCO and ECTS, to enhance the recognition of skills, qualifications and outcomes of learning periods abroad. Through Europass, for example, learners can record their experiences, skills and qualifications in an online profile and access career guidance, information on mobility experiences and digital credentials, receive suggestions and search for learning and job opportunities.
- **Make best use of EU funds and instruments supporting reforms and/or investment in VET.** Actions should stimulate further investments in VET from both the public and private sector. See the 'Funding' section for examples of EU funds and instruments.
- **Define measures that build on existing national arrangements and financial frameworks by May 2022** (so-called 'national implementation plans'). These measures should focus on mainstreaming digitalisation and environmental sustainability across the entire VET sector.



The [Community of European VET practitioners](#) of the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe, for example, aims at strengthening the VET community across the EU. With a focus on online/distance learning, green skills, social inclusion, and learner mobility, it helps practitioners such as teachers, trainers and in-company tutors to be aware of policy initiatives at European level and cooperate among themselves to find interesting tools and resources for VET provision.

## Concrete commitments at national level

The [Osnabrück Declaration](#), which sets out a commitment to work towards various actions based on the VET Recommendation by 2025, has been endorsed by Ministers in charge of VET in the EU27, European Economic Area/European Free Trade Association and candidate countries, European social partners and the European Commission. EU VET providers' associations and learners' representatives have also supported the Declaration.

It complements the Council Recommendation by defining concrete actions for the period 2021–2025 at both national and EU level, focusing on four main areas:

- **Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive, and flexible VET:** Flexible and resilient VET should be able to adjust to disruptions and turn problems into opportunities. In this way, it will bring innovation, productivity and resilience in economies and societies at local, regional, national, and European level. While VET enables citizens to cope with change, it should also enable them to shape change. Innovation in VET is linked closely to new skills, curricula, teaching methods, and forecasting tools.
- **Establishing a new life-long learning culture:** A new life-long learning culture should enable individuals to benefit from career guidance throughout their lives. It should also help them

engage in quality and inclusive VET programmes, and acquire key skills to actively manage their education, training and employment with support from stakeholders.

- **Sustainability:** Companies, private sector organisations, and societal initiatives are major drivers for sustainability. Initial and continuing vocational education and training should strive to embed skills for sustainability in their regulations and practices. Technological developments are also driving growth in many sectors, including education and training. Open source/digital learning environments make education on sustainable development more accessible.
- **The European Education and Training Area and international VET:** The globalisation of markets and demographic trends means VET systems and institutions at national, regional, and sectoral level need to adapt and modernise. However, it also offers great potential to strengthen Europe as a hub of education and training.

The Declaration represents a clear commitment by Member States to improve VET systems across the EU over the coming years, in synergy with the principles and actions of the Council Recommendation on VET.



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## Actions and initiatives to support Member States

The EU has continually worked to support Member States in their VET reforms. The EU aims to encourage cooperation between Member States and facilitate coordination in the areas of employment and VET, while fully respecting the responsibility of Member States for the content and organisation of such training.

A number of EU initiatives provide useful tools and support for VET stakeholders and can help Member States improve the quality and transparency of their VET systems and make the EU's vision for VET become a reality across Europe.

## Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) Green and digital skills

[CoVEs](#) are transnational collaborative networks aimed at driving innovation and excellence in VET. They bring together a wide range of local and regional partners, including VET providers (at upper secondary and tertiary levels), employers, research centres, and social partners, to co-create 'skills ecosystems'. In doing so, they contribute to an innovative, inclusive, and sustainable economy.



The CoVEs initiative is aligned with the Skills Agenda and the European Education Area, and aims to establish 100 CoVEs, supported by Erasmus+ funding, between 2021 and 2027. It supports Member States, social partners, and VET providers to implement the objectives of the Council Recommendation on VET and the Osnabrück Declaration.

CoVEs have attracted the interest of many partners from all over the world – more than 1 700 organisations from 55 countries responded to the 2021 Erasmus+ call – which shows their potential to support the internationalisation of European VET and the establishment of long-term partnerships with organisations beyond Europe. CoVEs can be a key building block to deliver on the EU's aims to make Europe a world-class reference point for high-quality skills.

The EU has outlined the importance of actions promoting the twin green and digital transitions to make the European economy more fair, resilient, and sustainable. The twin transitions are at the heart of the Commission's political agenda, as evidenced by the 2020 European Skills Agenda, the Digital Education Action Plan and the European Green Deal.

VET institutions and systems are well placed to facilitate upskilling and reskilling, which are an essential condition for the transition to be fair and inclusive.

Erasmus+ and the [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#) (part of NextGenerationEU) can be leveraged to prepare people through VET for labour market opportunities resulting from the twin transitions.

In addition, intensive digital training courses will be further promoted, and DigComp (the EU Digital Competence Framework) will be updated to reflect new and emerging technological developments such as artificial intelligence, the 'datafication' of all aspects of life, and green skills. A similar [competence framework on sustainability](#) has been developed to build a common understanding of the key competences needed for the green transition.

[SELFIE](#) (Self-reflection on Effective Learning by Fostering the use of Innovative Educational technologies) is a tool that supports the digitalisation of schools. The tool is available free of charge and can be customised by schools, including VET schools, to understand and embed digital technology in their teaching and learning practices. SELFIE gathers anonymous feedback from students, teachers, and school leaders through questionnaires on how technology is used in their school. The tool then generates a report of the school's strengths and weaknesses in their use of technology.

In October 2021, the EU launched an [extension](#) of SELFIE which focuses on work-based learning. The new module incorporates the views of in-company trainers, thereby involving companies in the exercise, as well as learners, teachers, and school leaders. This enables VET schools and training companies to jointly discuss how best to digitalise the education and training they provide. For now, this extension is available in all 24 official EU languages as part of the main SELFIE tool.

## Strengthened support for apprenticeships

Initiatives such as the Youth Guarantee, the [European Alliance for Apprenticeships \(EaFA\)](#) and the [Apprenticeship Support Services](#) bring together governments and stakeholders to strengthen support for apprenticeships and enhance awareness and commitments to improve VET.

The renewed EaFA promotes national coalitions, supports SMEs and reinforces the involvement of social partners, including at sectoral level. The EaFA also mobilises local and regional authorities and supports the representation of apprentices in the Member States. It encourages green, digital and inclusive apprenticeships that benefit both employers and young people, building a skilled labour force in a wide range of sectors. The Alliance's Support Services work to improve the quality of apprenticeships in Europe by providing online resources and networking opportunities, enabling individuals to connect, learn, and act.

Both the EaFA and the Apprenticeship Support Services will be reinforced and boosted by the EU.

## European Vocational Skills Week

Since 2016, the [European Vocational Skills Week](#) (VET Week) has brought together local, regional, and national organisations to celebrate VET achievements across Europe. The annual event raises awareness of the potential of VET to create jobs and support careers and provides opportunities to exchange information and good practices.



The VET Week is full of events and activities organised by partners all over Europe, and has a different theme each year which recognises the importance of VET and skills. Numerous experts are involved as speakers, sharing their insights with

participants at conferences or online exchanges. The Week is also a celebration of Awards for VET Excellence which puts inspiring people and organisations in the spotlight.

## European Vocational Core Profiles

European Vocational Core Profiles are another innovative element of VET excellence and internationalisation. These profiles can define a common set of learning outcomes that can be used in the development of joint vocational education and training curricula, qualifications, and micro-credentials. The profiles can facilitate the mobility of learners and workers and support the automatic recognition of VET qualifications and outcomes of learning abroad. The profiles would be part of the Europass platform and complemented where possible by digital vocational content.

## Peer reviews of quality assurance at vocational education and training system level

Peer reviews are a type of voluntary mutual learning that aims to make quality assurance systems more transparent and effective. The VET Recommendation cites peer reviews of quality assurance at VET system level as a concrete action to help reinforce trust and transparency between Member States and improve mutual learning across the EU. The EU will work with Member States to enhance the transparency of national VET developments through peer reviews of quality assurance, building on the work of EQAVET, which has contributed to several reforms in national quality assurance systems.

## Micro-credentials

A micro-credential is a record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. The Council Recommendation on VET calls on the European Commission to 'explore the concept and use of micro-credentials'. Micro-credentials allow for targeted, flexible acquisition of skills to meet new and emerging needs in society and the labour market, while not replacing traditional qualifications. Micro-credentials can be designed and delivered by a variety of providers in diverse formal, non-formal and informal learning settings.

In December 2021, a Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on micro-credentials for life-long learning and employability outlined a common definition and format for describing micro-credentials, as well as a set of principles for designing and issuing them. These building blocks can be used by providers of micro-credentials across the EU, including continuing VET providers, to support the trust, quality and uptake of micro-credentials.

## Funding

EU funding plays a key role in the delivery of the actions described above and ensuring VET can be sufficiently developed and strengthened across Member States.

EU funds and programmes such as NextGenerationEU and its pillars, the Recovery and Resilience Facility and REACT-EU, ESF+, Erasmus+, the European Regional Development Fund, InvestEU, Horizon Europe, Interreg, Digital Europe, the Just Transition Mechanism, and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development are available to support the realisation of national commitments to the future of VET.

The Erasmus+ programme for 2021–2027 also includes funding to support the international mobility of almost 2 million VET learners and staff, as well as a budget of €400 million to fund 100 CoVE networks during this period.

These funding opportunities can help reinforce support for apprenticeships, digitalisation of VET institutions, and VET reforms to improve reskilling programmes, especially for those working in sectors deeply impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.



If you are a VET stakeholder, these initiatives provide support, guidance and useful tools to help us deliver the EU's comprehensive vision for the future of VET together. VET is key to ensuring people in Europe have the right skills for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

By following the path set out by the Recommendation, as outlined in this brochure, Member States can contribute to Europe's twin green and digital transitions, while ensuring everyone in Europe has access to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning, so they can participate fully in society, transition into the labour market, and ultimately thrive in their careers.

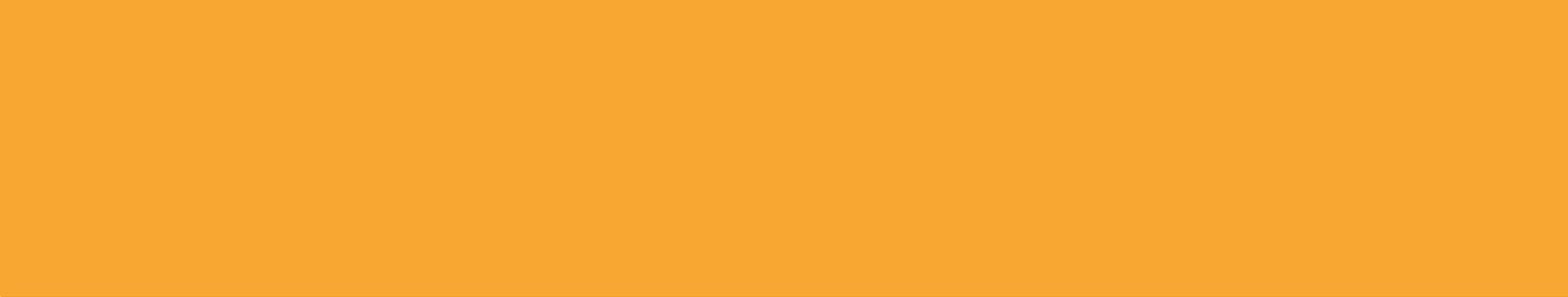


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**Annex**

	Learners enrolled in upper secondary VET out of total learners in upper secondary education <sup>5</sup>			Employment rate of recent graduates from VET (age 20-34)			Employment rate of recent graduates from general education (age 20-34)		
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	2017	2018	2019	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020
EU27	48.1	48.4	48.4	79.0	79.1	76.1	63.7	62.8	58.3
Belgium	57.8	56.8	56.2	76.7	77.1	76.5	43.9	61.6	61.3
Bulgaria	50.7	52.9	52.1	66.4	73.5	69.6	68.6	63.0	59.3
Czechia	72.4	71.3	70.5	87.7	86.8	84.8	80.6	75.9	68.5
Denmark	38.9	37.7	37.3	85.0	84.7	84.5	77.1	77.1	79.1
Germany	45.6	46.5	48.1	92.4	93.4	93.4	68.7	66.8	61.4
Estonia	40.7	40.1	39.8	76.6	86.2	79.9	68.8	62.6	63.9
Ireland	n/a	35.7	27.6	76.9	75.9	73.5	71.5	69.9	56.0
Greece	28.8	28.5	29.1	50.5	50.9	43.7	45.2	51.3	48.4
Spain	35.3	35.8	36.4	70.0	66.0	50.3	64.1	53.6	51.5
France	39.9	39.3	39.3	72.2	68.8	68.5	47.2	50.8	43.0
Croatia	69.6	69.2	69.0	68.8	73.9	73.7			
Italy	55.3	53.6	53.0	53.9	56.6	53.3	36.2	38.3	37.0
Cyprus	16.7	16.7	16.9	67.3	70.2	59.0	69.4	73.8	68.8
Latvia	38.6	38.9	38.9	75.8	65.6	70.2	73.4	74.2	72.9
Lithuania	27.4	26.8	26.1	79.2	67.3	56.8	75.6	69.6	53.0
Luxembourg	61.6	61.6	61.9	95.4	100.0		71.9	73.7	73.4
Hungary	23.0	38.0	44.0	87.1	86.3	80.0	75.7	71.7	69.4
Malta	27.1	28.5	27.7	91.0	91.2	89.5	91.2	86.0	88.0
Netherlands	68.2	67.5	67.5	87.9	90.4	84.7	89.1	78.7	58.6
Austria	68.6	68.4	68.8	87.3	88.0	85.4	77.4	64.0	69.6
Poland	51.7	52.1	52.5	78.4	78.9	78.0	72.5	71.0	65.7
Portugal	40.7	39.7	39.0	77.4	76.0	73.0	69.7	70.9	69.1
Romania	56.2	56.2	56.2	69.0	67.7	68.7	62.8	63.6	60.4
Slovenia	70.9	70.9	70.8	84.5	79.1	71.6	66.6	77.3	57.9
Slovakia	68.9	67.8	67.5	84.7	84.6	80.7	84.3	86.8	69.3
Finland	71.6	71.6	68.7	78.5	80.4	74.6	76.9	82.9	76.4
Sweden	34.1	35.4	35.2	88.0	87.4	85.3	79.4	83.0	77.5

<sup>5</sup> Please note that the colour coding of the columns in the table indicates the colours used in Charts 1 and 2.



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