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# What is vocational education and training (VET)?

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# AGENDA

1. What is vocational education and training (VET)?
2. EU priorities for VET
3. Latest developments
4. How is the EU promoting VET?

# 1

**What is vocational  
education and training  
(VET)?**

## What is vocational education and training (VET)?

Vocational education and training (VET) responds to the needs of the economy, but also provides learners with skills important for personal development and active citizenship. VET can boost enterprise performance, competitiveness, research and innovation and is a central aspect of successful employment and social policy.

VET systems in Europe can rely on a well-developed network of VET providers. These networks are governed with the involvement of social partners, such as employers and trade unions and in different bodies, for example chambers, committees and councils. Vocational education and training (VET) systems consist of initial and continuing VET.



## What is vocational education and training (VET)?

**Initial vocational education and training (I-VET)** is usually carried out at upper secondary level before students begin working life. It takes place either in a school-based environment (mainly in the classroom) or in a work-based setting, such as training centres and companies. This varies from country to country, depending on national education and training systems, and economic structures.

**Continuing VET (C-VET)** takes place after initial education and training, or after beginning working life. It aims to upgrade knowledge, help citizens to acquire new skills, retrain and further their personal and professional development. C-VET is largely work-based with the majority of learning taking place in a workplace.

On average, 50% of young Europeans aged 15-19 participate in I-VET at upper secondary level. However, the European Union (EU) average masks significant geographical differences in participation ranging from 15% to more than 70%.



# 2

## EU priorities for VET

## EU priorities for VET

European cooperation on vocational education and training has been further enhanced by the [Bruges Communiqué](#) and the [Riga Conclusions](#).

EU institutions, Member states, candidate and European Economic Area countries, social partners and European VET providers have agreed on a set of deliverables for the period 2015-2020:

- To promote work-based learning in all its forms with special attention to apprenticeships, by involving social partners, companies, chambers and VET providers, as well as stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship
- To further develop quality assurance mechanisms in line with the Recommendation on the establishment of a [European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training \(EQAVET\)](#), and to establish continuous information and feedback loops in I-VET and C-VET systems based on learning outcomes
- To enhance access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible and permeable systems, notably by offering efficient and integrated guidance services and by enabling the validation of non-formal and informal learning
- To strengthen key competences in VET curricula and provide more effective opportunities to acquire or develop those skills through I-VET and C-VET
- To introduce systematic approaches to, and opportunities for, initial and continuous professional development for VET teachers, trainers and mentors in both school- and work-based settings

The Advisory Committee on Vocational training endorsed an [opinion](#) on the future of VET which will contribute to the European Commission's policy beyond 2020.



# 3

**Latest developments**

## Latest developments

On 1 July 2020, the Commission put forward an ambitious agenda to guide COVID-19 recovery efforts in the fields of employment and social policy. The focus is on skills and VET.

The proposals are an important contribution to President von der Leyen's Recovery Plan for Europe. The proposals include:

- The [Commission Communication on a European Skills Agenda](#) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience. The Communication puts forward 12 EU actions aiming to support partnerships for skills, up- and reskilling and empowering lifelong learning.

A major deliverable within the Communication will be a new Pact for Skills to be launched in November 2020 during the skills week. It sets ambitious quantitative objectives at the EU level and outlines how the EU will support investments for skills.

- The Communication is accompanied by a [Commission Staff Working Document on the Evaluation of the 2012 Council Recommendation](#) on the validation of informal and non-formal learning.

- The [Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation](#) on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience seeks to ensure that VET equips the workforce – young and old – with the skills to support the COVID-19 recovery, as well as the green and digital transitions, in a socially equitable way.

The proposal puts forward actions at the EU level to support VET reform with clear quantitative objectives. The proposal is accompanied by a [Commission Staff Working Document](#).



## Latest developments

The Commission's work on VET is supported by two agencies:

The [European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training \(Cedefop\)](#) helps to develop European VET policies. It contributes to their implementation underpinned by its research, analyses and information on VET systems, policies and practices, as well as skill needs and demands in the EU.

The [European Training Foundation \(ETF\)](#) contributes, in the context of EU external relations policy, to the development of professional skills and competences.



# 4

**How is the EU promoting  
VET?**

# How is the EU promoting VET?

The European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) makes it easier for VET learners to receive validation and recognition of work-related skills and knowledge acquired in different systems and countries. Further information can be found on the ECVET website.

The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET) is a reference instrument designed to help EU countries to promote and monitor the continuous improvement of their VET systems based on commonly agreed references. Further information can be found on the EQAVET website.

The Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships identifies 14 key criteria that EU countries and stakeholders should use to develop high-quality and effective apprenticeships.

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships, established in 2013, has effectively mobilised EU Member States, European Free Trade Association and EU candidate countries and over 230 stakeholders to engage in enhancing the supply, quality and image of apprenticeships. Recently the mobility of apprentices has also been added to the objectives of the Alliance.



# How is the EU promoting VET?

The European Apprentices Network was established to ensure that the voice of young apprentices is heard in discussions related to VET and apprenticeships.

The annual European Vocational Skills Week, launched in 2016, is a Europe-wide campaign with the aim to improve the attractiveness and image of VET.

The ET2020 Working Group on VET aims to help policymakers and other stakeholders to design policies and practices. The current Working Group focuses on innovation and digitalisation in VET and higher VET at system level. The Interagency Group on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (IAG-TVET), led by UNESCO, ensures the coordination of activities among key international organisations, among others the Commission, involved in policy, programmes and research on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).



# How is the EU promoting VET?

Financial instruments supporting VET policy:

The Erasmus+ Programme has an indicative financial envelope of €14,774 billion. Of this amount, almost €3 billion is assigned to VET over the period 2014-2020. Every year, around 130,000 VET learners and 20,000 VET staff benefit from Erasmus+ mobility opportunities. In addition, almost 500 VET projects each year are financed under the Erasmus+ Strategic partnerships. The programme also finances other activities, such as Sector Skills Alliances.

The European Social Fund (ESF) is an important financial lever for VET. From 2014 until 2020, the ESF has a thematic objective which assigns a significant budget to actions supporting VET. Nearly €15 billion were dedicated to, among other goals, enhance equal access to lifelong learning, to promote flexible pathways and improve the labour market relevance of education and training systems.



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