

Spotlight
on VET 
DENMARK

Vocational education
and training systems
in Europe

2023

VET in Denmark

Vocational education and training (VET) plays a key role in the Danish strategy for lifelong learning, alongside meeting the challenges of globalisation and technological change.

Danish education and training provide qualifications at all levels, from compulsory schooling to doctoral degrees, and a system of parallel adult education and continuing vocational training (CVET). The two systems offer equivalent qualifications at various levels, enabling horizontal permeability.

VET jurisdiction is with the education ministry. Initial VET (around 100 programmes) is organised into four broad entry routes: care, health and pedagogy; office, trade and business services; food, agriculture and 'experiences' (an umbrella term for tourism and recreation); and technology, construction and transportation. Programmes are organised according to the dual principle, alternating between periods of college-based and work-based learning (apprenticeship training) in enterprises. A typical initial VET programme (EUD) lasts 3.5 years with a 2:1 split between workplace and college-based training, although there is considerable variation among programmes. Individual study plans are compiled for all students. VET colleges and social partners share the responsibility for developing curricula to ensure responsiveness to local labour-market needs. Qualifications at this level provide access to relevant fields in academy professional programmes (KVU) and professional bachelor programmes at the tertiary level. Professional bachelor programmes in Denmark correspond to EQF level 6, indicating that students' performance is equivalent to programmes at bachelor's and diploma degree and that students have acquired the required, advanced skillset.

Alternative routes to VET qualifications include:

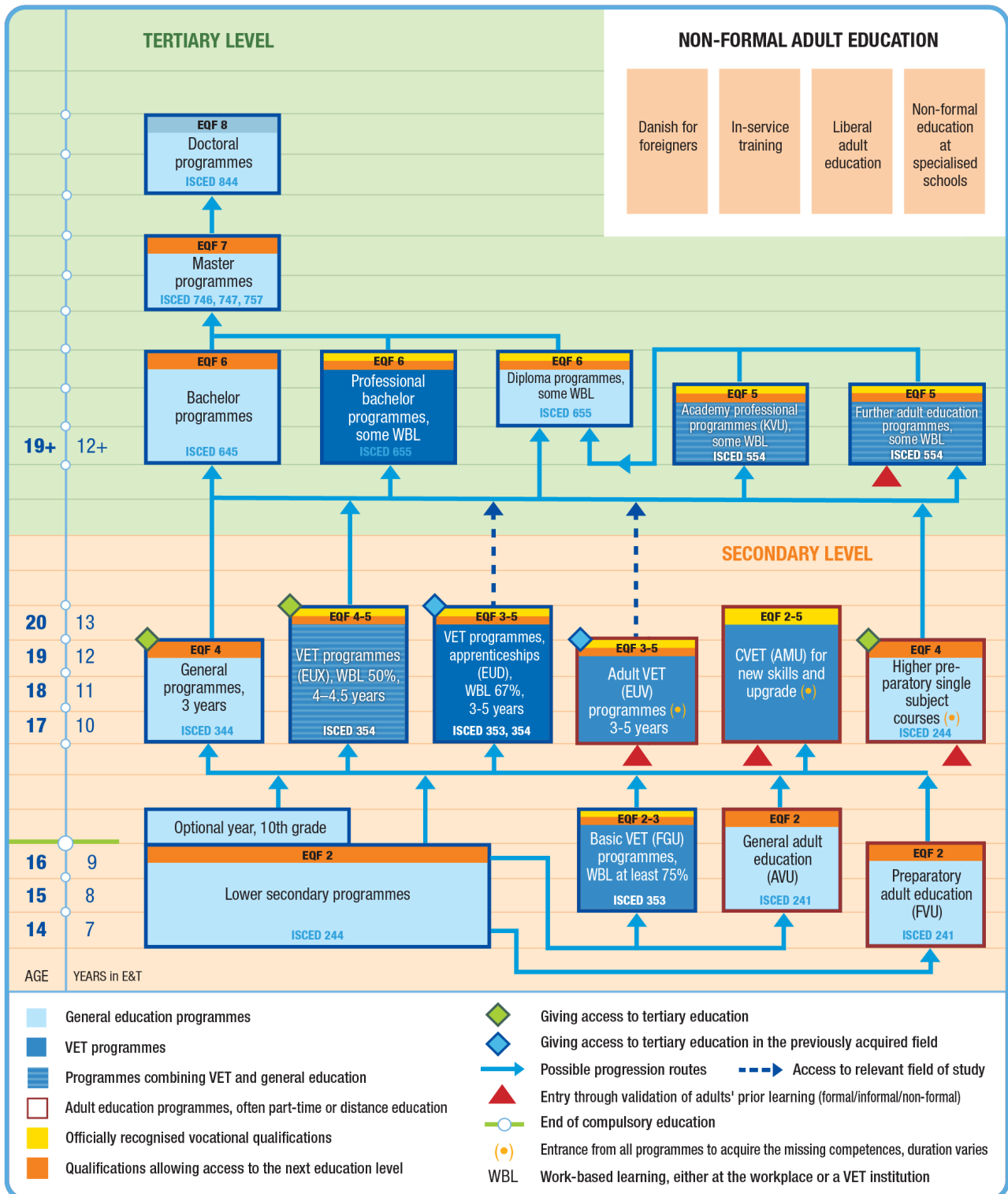
- combined vocational and general upper secondary education (EUX, an academic preparation programme), a relatively new pathway, which lasts around 4 years. It enables highly motivated students to obtain access to higher education along with a vocational qualification
- 'new apprenticeship' (Ny Mesterlære) programmes, where the entire first-year basic course takes place at a company instead of partly at a VET college. Students with a practical approach to learning benefit from these programmes
- basic VET (FGU) for lower secondary graduates, with a practical approach to learning. The programme caters to the young unemployed, lasts 3 to 4 years, and includes at least 75% of work-based learning (WBL).

Adult learning

VET for adults aged 25 or older (EUV) has been established as a specific track to offer the low-skilled an attractive and goal-oriented path to becoming skilled workers.

Adults with at least 2 years of work experience can receive VET education without the basic programme and without an internship. Adult vocational training (*arbejdsmarkedsuddannelser*, AMU) provides participants with skills and competences relevant to the labour market and is primarily geared to specific sectors and jobs. The programmes help learners either to deepen their existing knowledge in a particular field or to develop new knowledge in related fields. AMU programmes (around 500) are created, adapted or discontinued in response to labour-market needs. At the tertiary level, further VET and adult education programmes lead to EQF level 5 qualifications.

VET in Denmark's education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011.
 Source: Cedefop, & University College Copenhagen (UCC). (2023). Vocational education and training in Europe – Denmark: system description.
 In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2024). Vocational education and training in Europe: VET in Europe database – detailed VET system descriptions [Database].
www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/denmark-u3

Distinctive features of VET

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

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

An integrated lifelong learning strategy introduced in 2007, improved horizontal and vertical permeability and guidance services and provided better opportunities for the recognition of non-formal learning and qualifications through standardised procedures to validate prior learning.

Public financing is central to the VET system, with colleges receiving performance-based block grants. Apprenticeships and further training for employees are subsidised according to a solidarity principle, coordinated by the Employers' reimbursement fund (*Arbejdsgivernes Uddannelses Bidrag-AUB*). Within this system, 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

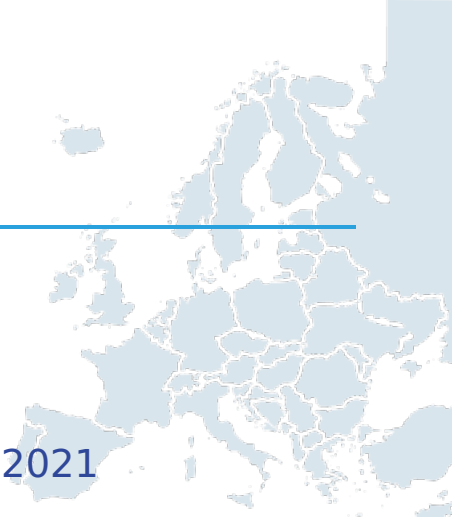
Education and training are considered a key area. As the demand for skilled labour continues to increase, IVET is expected to accommodate an increasingly heterogeneous learner population. Two reforms have had significant influences on VET development. The VET reform of 2014 established minimum entrance requirements for VET learners. [Requirements for VET teachers were strengthened in 2010](#), since when all VET teachers must have a teaching diploma (60 ECTS) at EQF level 6. Both initiatives are expected to increase VET quality. Social assistance reform (2014) makes it mandatory for unemployed people under 30 receiving social benefits to participate in education and training.

The 2014 VET reform has four main objectives for improving VET quality:

- more learners must enter VET directly from compulsory schooling, rising from 18% in 2015 to 30% by 2025;
- completion rates in VET must be improved, from 52% in 2012 to 67% in 2025;
- VET must challenge all learners, so that they reach their full potential;
- employer and learner satisfaction with VET must gradually be increased by 2020.

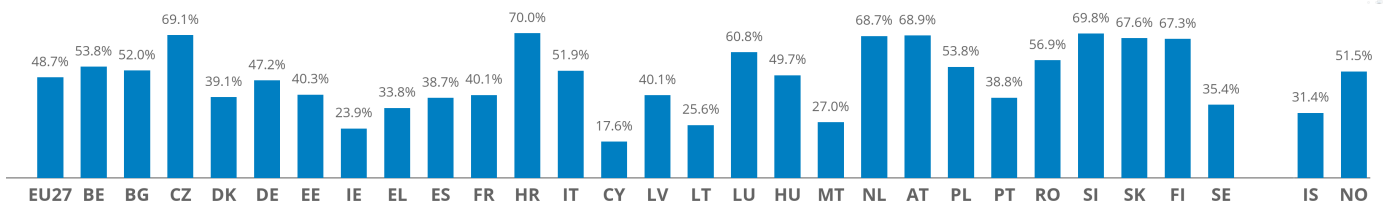
A lack of suitable training placements in enterprises is frequently cited as a primary reason for learner dropout. Under the 2020, Tripartite agreement to ensure more apprenticeships in Danish VET, 80% of VET students must have an apprenticeship at the end of the basic course. In 2022, this figure was 65%.

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 are necessary to avoid a considerable part of the workforce being permanently excluded from the labour market. The government launched [a plan for upskilling unemployed adults](#). In the training period, it is possible to receive 110% of unemployment benefits.

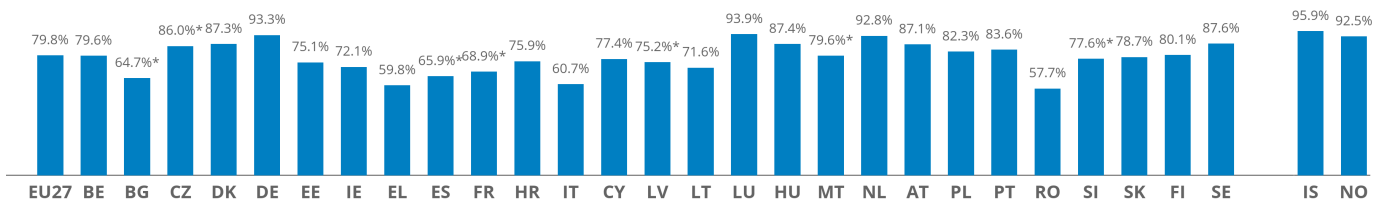


Education and training in figures

IVET students as % of all upper secondary students, 2021

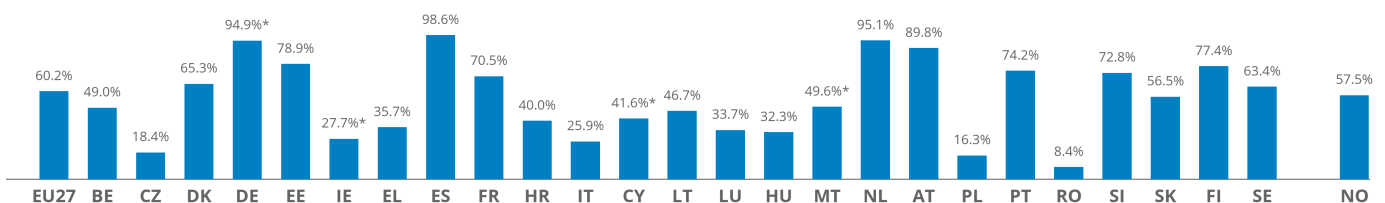


Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) (%), 2022



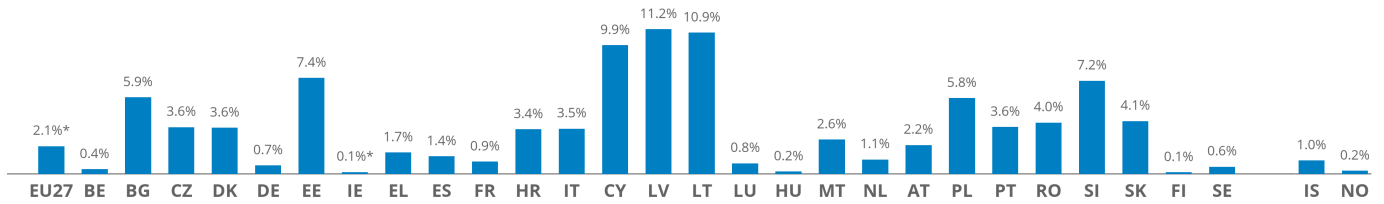
Notes: Bulgaria, Latvia, Malta and Slovenia: (u) low reliability, Czechia: (b) break in time series, Spain and France: (d) definition differs

Recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) with a work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%), 2022



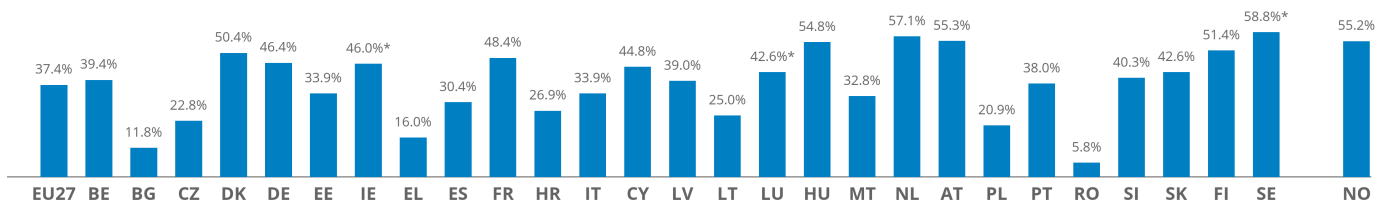
Notes: Germany, Ireland and Cyprus: (u) low reliability

IVET learners who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad (%), 2021



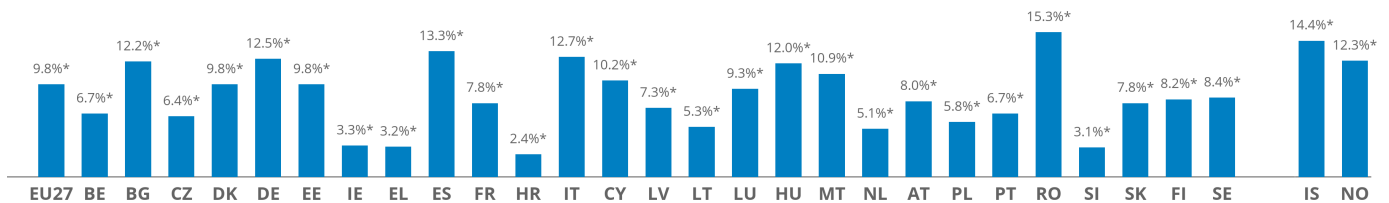
Notes: EU27: (d) definition differs (V) Cedefop estimate, Ireland: (d) definition differs, Croatia, Cyprus, Netherlands and Slovenia: (z) not applicable

Adults (25-64 year-olds) with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%), 2016



Notes: All values: (b) break in time series

Early leavers from education and training (%), 2021



Notes: EU27, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway: (b) break in time series, Croatia and Slovenia: (b) break in time series (u) low reliability

Source: Cedefop's Key indicators on VET



Further information

- Cedefop and ReferNet (2023). *Timeline of VET policies: Denmark*
- European Commission (2023). *Education and training monitor: Denmark*
- Eurydice (2024). *National Education systems: Denmark*

http://www.uvm.dk	Ministry of Children and Education
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