

# Skills Formation Systems (Deliverable 7.1)

## Skills2Capabilities Report

November 2024

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### ABSTRACT

This working paper draws together evidence on skills formation systems in seven countries. Case studies were undertaken in each country focused on VET and careers guidance and counselling. It explores, using qualitative scientific methods, the role of legislation, policy, strategy, resourcing, stakeholders and career guidance and counselling services in VET systems. The working paper starts to build an understanding of the relationships between policy and practice at national and regional levels in seven case study countries. It evidences how national VET systems are supported by those delivering support programmes and services.

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Skills2Capabilities, a Horizon Europe study, is about understanding how skills systems need to develop if they are to assist people to make labour market transitions – i.e. between jobs, employers or sectors – and thereby reduce the level of skill mismatch which might otherwise arise.

This report is part of the Skills2Capabilities Work Package 7 entitled ‘The role of policy, services and stakeholders in supporting VET systems: innovative practice’.

For more information please visit [skills2capabilities.eu](https://skills2capabilities.eu)

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## Introduction to work package 7 – The role of policy, services and stakeholders in supporting VET systems: innovative practice

### Introduction

Work package 7 is one of two work packages researching the policy dimension which links individuals to VET and adult learning provision. Work package 7 is specifically focused on career guidance and counselling policy and practice in VET systems. Contemporary labour markets are dynamic and complex impacted by shocks such as the pandemic, war, political and societal changes, technology and economic changes. Career guidance and counselling span different policy areas with growing evidence of the benefits of guidance at the individual, economic and societal levels (see for example Cedefop, ETF, European Commission, ILO, OECD & UNESCO, 2021; Mayston, 2002; Percy, & Dodd, 2021; Whiston, Mitts, & Li, 2019). As a policy, career guidance or lifelong guidance is seen as one instrument which countries can use to variously enhance education outcomes, reduce school dropout rates, improve individual transitions from education to the labour market, address social inclusion and equity, and reduce unemployment levels (see for example Hooley, Sultana, & Thomsen, 2018; OECD, 2004; Robertson, & Borbély-Pecze, 2021; Herdman et al., 2024; Watts & Sultana, 2004).

Across Europe and internationally nations have been working towards more developed systems of lifelong guidance (Barnes et al., 2020; Herdman et al., 2024; Kadletz et al., 2021). At a European level, developments in lifelong guidance have been driven by 2004 Council of the European Union resolution lifelong guidance and its 2008 resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies. The establishment of the ELGPN (2015) guidelines for policies and systems development for lifelong guidance provided a reference toolkit in which policymakers and developers systematise national guidance services and programmes. Recent research reported that career development experts have aspirations for a more systemic and holistic system of lifelong guidance (Kettunen et al., 2023) with several countries evidencing progress towards a developed system (Barnes et al., 2020). Alongside aspirations for more comprehensive lifelong guidance systems, there is recognition that supporting individual engagement with learning and skills development throughout their life course meets the needs of a changing labour market (OECD, 2021). However, a range of mechanisms need to be in place to support individual skills development, including legislation, strategy, funding, labour market information and key stakeholders.

Work package 7 addresses recent advances in lifelong guidance with a focus on what constitutes effective systems which convert resources into capabilities. This work package is designed to explore, using qualitative scientific methods, the role of policy, different stakeholders (such as career guidance and counselling practitioners, educators, trainers, employers, etc.) and services in VET systems in order to understand the relationships between policy and practice at national and regional level in seven case study countries. This will enable an understanding of how national VET systems are supported or overlooked by those delivering support programmes and services. It will

assess how these services could develop and evolve now and, in the future, to resolve skills demands and mismatches. Lifelong guidance can be seen as a building block in VET systems by supporting the delivery of services but also supporting those undertaking a VET transition with guidance and labour market information including industrial insights and data on skills demands. It is, therefore, important to understand how systems are established, evolve and develop in response to changing labour markets, skills supply and skills demand.

### **Work package 7 objectives**

- To understand the role of policy, service and stakeholders in supporting VET systems to better understand how services and support programmes are operating in the current environment with the aim to build better VET transitions.
- To examine lifelong learning and lifelong guidance (or career guidance and counselling) legislation and strategies at national and EU level with a particular focus on support for VET systems and transitions.
- To explore impacts of different national contexts and skills formation systems on fostering positive transitions in the VET system and the extent to which different regulatory constraints in countries under study result in distinct strategies with regard to addressing skills mismatch.
- To explore the impact of current structures and dynamics in the economic and social environmental impact on national VET systems and what the implications of recent changes in these environments (for example COVID pandemic, economic and fiscal crises, industry trends, socio-demographic trends) entail for addressing skills mismatches at the local, regional and national level.
- To explore what areas of policy and delivery would benefit from greater intervention at a national and/or EU level.

### **Understanding national contexts and skills formation systems for VET**

This report is the first deliverable for work package 7. It provides an understanding of national contexts and skills formation systems for VET and the role of career guidance and counselling (or lifelong guidance) in those systems. A skills formation system is part of the education and training structure which support citizens to develop, maintain and improve their skills. It comprises a range of public and/or private sector organisations and actors that address the current and future skills needs of the labour market. Systems are variously governed at a national level by legislation, driven by data (from the education sector and the labour market) and delivered through a range of stakeholders. It encompasses vocational education and training delivered in compulsory and post-compulsory education, and in work for those active in the labour market. The aim of work package 7 is to explore these systems within their national contexts to understand the variations and how positive transitions in the VET system are supported by career guidance and counselling.

## Approach to the study

For deliverable 7.1, case studies focused on career guidance and counselling in VET were produced to create comprehensive profiles of systems of support in seven countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom. These countries were selected to represent different areas across Europe, types of economies and VET education structures (see table 1).

**Table 1: Overview of countries selected for case studies**

Country	Skills formation	Geographic location	Economy
<b>Austria</b>	Hybrid - collective/statist	Central	Coordinated
<b>Bulgaria</b>	Transitional	East	Transitional
<b>Estonia</b>	Transitional	East	Liberal
<b>Finland</b>	Statist	North	Coordinated
<b>Germany</b>	Collective	Central	Collective
<b>Norway</b>	Hybrid - collective/statist	North	Coordinated
<b>UK</b>	Liberal	North West	Liberal

Sources: Deliverable 2.1, Busemeyer & Trampusch (2012); Nyen & Tønder (2020); Peters (2021); Seitzl & Unterweger, (2022); Tutlys et al. (2022)

A desk-based review was conducted to gather, analyse and synthesise evidence on each country's VET system, focusing on the role of career guidance and counselling. The review covered recent evidence from existing sources, including academic and grey literature, government websites, reports and non-government agencies and institutions. Strategies identified in work package 2 were drawn upon for part 3 of the proforma. Data were collected using a shared proforma based on an analytical framework developed during previous research examining lifelong guidance systems and their development (see Barnes et al., 2020; Barnes et al., 2022; Cedefop, 2020; Kettunen et al., 2023). This framework was chosen as it provided a way to understand how an ecosystem is organised, coordinated, funded, delivered and structured. Data were collected and synthesised using the following analytical framework.

**Table 2: Analytical framework examining VET skills formation systems and the role of guidance**

Dimension of analysis	Elements examined and key questions guiding analysis
<b>Organisation</b>	

<b>VET legislation (and legislation referencing career guidance and counselling)</b>	<p>Examines regulatory frameworks, legislation and policy for VET focusing on career guidance</p> <p>Is legislation in place to support VET and the skills formation system? Aim of legislation in relation to VET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Who has leadership roles in the VET system?</li> <li>● Who has responsibility for the delivery of VET?</li> <li>● Who has responsibility and accountability for VET standards?</li> <li>● Are entitlements to VET detailed?</li> <li>● Are entitlements to VET support detailed?</li> <li>● Are funding mechanisms for VET legislated?</li> <li>● Is the role of the employer legislated?</li> <li>● Is the role of career counselling and guidance support detailed?</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy</b>	<p>Examines whether VET formation system is responding to changes in context (social, political, economic, technological)</p> <p>Are there national strategies in place to support VET and the skills formation system?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Aim of strategy in relation to VET</li> <li>● Link to other strategies</li> <li>● Who is responsible for the strategy?</li> </ul> <p>Are there strategies referencing career guidance and counselling?</p>
<b>Resources</b>	
<b>Funding</b>	<p>Examines funding for VET and guidance in VET system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How is VET support funded?</li> </ul>
<b>Data</b>	<p>Examines who collects data and what data are collected (including disaggregation) within the VET system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Who collects labour market data and information about VET?</li> <li>● What labour market data and information are collected and made available about VET (options, pathways, outcomes, etc.)?</li> <li>● How does labour market data and information inform VET system?</li> </ul>
<b>Guidance support</b>	<p>Examines what support is available in VET system. What career counselling and guidance support is provided to those:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Thinking about education pathways?</li> <li>● Considering VET?</li> <li>● Engaging in VET</li> <li>● Transitioning from VET</li> </ul>

Stakeholders	
<b>VET and guidance stakeholders</b>	Examines the stakeholders and key actors in the VET system provide career guidance and counselling services and support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Who are the key stakeholders in the VET system?</li> <li>● Who delivers services and support?</li> </ul>
<b>Cooperation</b>	Examines how stakeholders and key actors in the VET system work together to provide career guidance and counselling support and services.

Political, social, economic and cultural contexts differ so by examining specific elements or characteristics of a skills system and the role of career guidance and counselling, variations between national systems can be appreciated and their formation better understood. Data were synthesised under themes.

## The operation of guidance and support in VET systems

This section draws together and summarises the evidence on the organisation and management, resourcing of guidance and support, stakeholders in VET, and the digitalisation of career guidance and counselling from the seven countries.

### Organisation and management of VET systems

This theme provides an understanding of how VET is organised and managed through legislation and regulatory frameworks, strategy and quality standards. They can be seen as the foundation of a VET system. All country case studies had some form of VET system founded upon a legal framework.

### VET legislation (and legislation referencing career guidance and counselling)

This dimension examines the regulatory frameworks, legislation and policy for VET skills formation systems focusing on whether and how career guidance and counselling provision is part of the system, particularly in terms of legislation. Frameworks, legislation and policy all serve to guide, manage and control the provisions of VET and guidance services for all those involved in the system. These mechanisms can stipulate who has responsibility for support and services, VET institutions, delivery, resourcing, entitlements, quality standards and curricula. It may also set out how services and support are coordinated.

All the case study countries have legislation in place that supports the organisation, structure and management of VET systems. This legislation is explicit in all the case study countries. Explicit legislation covers the provision of services across sectors and contexts. Legislation guarantees individual rights to vocational, education and training that align with their interest and capabilities. The aim is generally to meet the demand for a skilled workforce to meet labour market and employer needs.



For instance, in Austria School Organisation Act (Federal Law) (SchOG), Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz (BAG)*), and the Compulsory Training Act - Education and Training up to 18 (Federal Law) (*Ausbildungspflichtgesetz (APfLG) (Bundesgesetz)*) govern VET. The aims of the legislation are to establish high-quality training standards and ensure alignment with labour market needs, promote access to vocational education across different levels of society, support a dual system that combines school-based and company-based training, and provide a legal framework that supports funding, regulatory oversight, and standardised assessment. The legislation is explicit with key stakeholders including the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy and social partners (e.g., the Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Labour, and vocational schools). These stakeholders collaborate to design apprenticeship curricula and training regulations.

Legislation is also in place that sets out legal entitlements to guidance in schools and in VET in all country case studies. It is noted that ministries and statutory bodies at the national level often work together to form the foundation of a coherent VET system where guidance and support are integrated. In terms of where career guidance and counselling provision sit within a VET system, most country case studies were noted to have an embedded approach to their legislation. This approach is typified by career guidance and counselling embedded or integrated into legislation specific to VET, education and/or employment. Similar to the explicit approach to legislation, individual entitlements to services, entry requirements, curricula and standards are set out.

One example of explicit legislation from Bulgaria includes entitlements to career guidance and counselling in VET. The Bulgarian Vocational Education and Training Act (VET act, *Zakon za Profesionalno Obrazovanie I Obuchenie*) enacted in 1999, governs the organisation, institutions, administration, and funding of the VET system in Bulgaria (Art. 1, VET Act). The law aims to: guarantee citizens' rights to professional education and training, in line with their individual interests and capabilities; satisfy the demand for a skilled workforce that is competitive in the labour market; create conditions for the operation and advancement of professional education and training system; validate professional knowledge, skills and competencies (Art. 1, paragraph 1 VET Act). Over several years the VET Act has been subject to multiple reforms, primarily focused on aligning VET with the demands of the labour market. Entitlements to guidance support through Centres for Vocational Training and Centres for Information and Vocational Guidance are regulated in the VET Act (Art. 22). These centres may be state-owned, municipal, private, Bulgarian with foreign participation, or entirely foreign. Additionally, the law defines the roles of ministries, municipalities, and social partners in VET. The VET Act defines vocational guidance as providing information, consultation and advice to students and other persons regarding the choice of profession and career development (Art. 5 VET Act). It is specified that career guidance is carried out by the Centres for Information and Career Guidance (*Centrove za informaciya I profesionalno orientirane*) (Art.21 VET Act).

In Bulgaria the Preschool and School Education Act (Article 49, paragraph 1)(*Centrove za podkrepa na lichnostno razvitie*) also sets out the activities educational institutions are responsible for, including for instance career guidance and counselling as part of personal development support.



Career guidance and counselling entitlements are also set out in the Employment Promotion Act (Article 71)(Pravilnika za prilagane na zakona za nasarchavane na zaetostta). Employment programs provide vocational guidance to help individuals, in line with their personal profiles and unique characteristics, choose a suitable profession, relevant training, and career progression.

Similarly, in Finland the Act on Vocational Education and Training (Laki ammatillisesta koulutuksesta 531/2017) governs vocational qualifications under Ministry of Education and Culture, the education required to acquire vocational skills, and the demonstration and certification of vocational skills. This operates alongside the Government Decree on Vocational Education and Training (Valtioneuvoston asetus ammatillisesta koulutuksesta 673/2017). Students have the right to receive instruction and career guidance that enables the achievement of professional requirements and learning outcomes in accordance with the degree or education criteria. The legislation includes access to career guidance and counselling.

In Norway, career counselling and guidance (or educational and vocational counselling) is required by law to be delivered in primary and secondary schools, and VET centres. The Education Act (Lov om grunnskoleopplæringa og den vidaregåande opplæringa (opplæringslova), 2024) regulated career guidance in schools. According to Section 9-2 of the Education Act, pupils have the right to the necessary advice on education, vocational options and vocational choice and on social issues. Educational and vocational guidance is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2024). VET institutions are required to provide career counselling and guidance. The legislation states that all local councils must have an offer of career guidance, which is free and open to all residents. Career centres are available across Norway and career counsellors are located within schools, both secondary and upper secondary. The leading stakeholders are the county administrations, who own the regional career centres, often in joint partnership with the Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) offices at the regional level.

Across all case study countries the role of employers in VET systems is legislated. The role of employers is focused on how they contribute to the development and currency of VET. This aim is to ensure that VET is relevant, up-to-date and meets the needs of a changing labour market. In Austria, for example, the role of the employer is legislated, and as part of this duty take on the role of guidance and counselling with their apprentices. In Estonia, the engagement of employers in VET is considered strong, in particular through a system of occupational qualification and standards, which underpins the development of programmes (Musset et al., 2019). At the national level, the chamber of commerce (Eesti Kaubandus-Tööstuskoda), employers' confederation (Eesti Tööandjate Keskliit) and confederation of trade unions (Eesti Ametiühingute Keskliit) all represent social partners (Cedefop, 2017b). Employers play an active and influential role in the professional councils (kutsenõukogud) drawing up standards for each occupation. At the local level, these partners participate in VET school counsellor boards (kutseõppeasutuse nõunike kogu), established under the Vocational Educational Institutions Act. The advisory bodies link VET schools and society, advising the school and its management on planning and organising educational and economic activities. As discussed later, employers also play a role in funding VET and providing data to inform the development of VET programmes.

## Strategy

Strategy and strategic leadership are key parts of a lifelong guidance system. This dimension refers to whether and how strategies are in place to guide and manage support for VET at a national, regional, and/or local level. Strategies aim to ensure VET is responsive to labour market needs. Career guidance and counselling often span different policy areas so strategies can be a mechanism to bring stakeholders together and address fragmentation. VET strategies variously set out stakeholders in a VET system, how support is organised ensuring transitions between educational institutions are smooth, and administratively managed, and whether responsibility is centralised or decentralised.

Across all case study countries, a VET strategy was available and often linked to other strategies so setting out mechanisms enabling cooperation and collaboration across a range of stakeholders in a VET system. Strategies were found to be independent guiding provision in their own sectors (for example in Germany, Norway and the UK).

Strategies were also noted to be more coordinated, integrated and interdependent (for example in Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia and Finland). This multi-level approach to strategy can enable the implementation of support and services at regional and local levels. So where national strategies are coordinated VET systems, particularly in terms of career guidance and counselling provision, could be seen to be more developed as strategies were addressing implementation at the regional and local level, as well as involving different stakeholders.

For instance, in Austria, the National Lifelong Guidance Strategy, Lifelong Learning Strategy, the National Strategy to Prevent Early Drop-out and the Strategy on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning operate across the VET system. These strategies support individuals with education and career decisions, remain in education and training until 18 and, for adults, to continue to develop their skills and engage in further training to remain employable. Responsibility for these strategies lies with inter-ministerial working groups under the Austrian Federal Government which can also include federal states, social partners and other relevant stakeholders.

In Bulgaria, a number of linked strategies set out requirements for career guidance and counselling provision. First, for instance, the Strategy for Development of Vocational Education and Training (Strategiya za razvitie na profesionalnoto obrazovanie i obuchenie) has ten challenges and four priority areas of impact. This strategy aims to ensure the quality and efficiency of VET; improve access to VET; improve the system of vocational education and training, in the context of lifelong learning; and to strengthen the participation and responsibilities of all stakeholders. This strategy links to Bulgaria's National Strategy for Lifelong Learning, 2014-2020 (Natsionalna Strategia za Uchene Prez Tseliya Zhivot); National Youth Strategy, 2010-2020 (Natsionalna Strategiya za Mladezhta); Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers, 2013-2020 (Strategiya za Namalyavane na Sluchaite na Prezhdevremenno Napuskane na Sistemata za Obrazovanie); and the Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2021-2030 (Strategiya po Zaetostta na Republika Bulgaria). This is one example of how cooperation and coordination in the field of VET are enabled. Second, the Strategic Vision for the Development of Dual Vocational Education and

Training in Bulgaria by 2030 (Strategicheska Visiya za Razvitie na Dualno Profesionalno Obrazovanie i Obuchenie v Bulgaria Do 2030) sets out the general framework for the development of dual vocational education and training in Bulgaria focussing on inter-departmental policies, partnerships working and the role of employers. This again links to a number of strategies and exemplifies the role of strategy in coordinating support and provision in VET.

Lifelong guidance strategies targeting youth and/or adults were found in Austria, Finland and Norway – all representing labour markets with coordinated economies. These strategies were significant as emphasised a more holistic approach to guidance supporting individuals across the lifespan with skills development and career planning. In Finland, the Lifelong Guidance Strategy (2020) aims to provide comprehensive support for individuals' educational and career planning throughout their lives. It emphasises the importance of continuous learning and skill development to meet the evolving needs of the labour market. The strategy is closely linked to VET, ensuring that individuals receive the necessary guidance and support to make informed decisions about their vocational education and career paths. It aims to enhance the accessibility and quality of guidance services to help individuals navigate their educational and professional paths. The strategy emphasises the importance of equal access to guidance services, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances, can benefit from lifelong guidance.

Linked to lifelong guidance strategies, lifelong learning and/or skills strategies were noted in all case study countries. All country case studies were found to have a number of strategies that could be linked to the VET system. These variously focused on economic development, youth, social inclusion, poverty reduction, early dropout prevention, digitalisation and ICT, high education and training for those up to 18 year olds. For example, in Finland the Lifelong Guidance Strategy (2020) highlights the need for coordinated efforts across different sectors to provide comprehensive and effective support. The strategy is part of a broader framework of educational and labour market policies aligning with the Lifelong Learning Strategy (Elinikäisen oppimisen strategia, 2020-2023), Reform of Continuous Learning (Jatkuvan oppimisen uudistus, 2019-2023) and other initiatives aimed at promoting continuous education and skill development.

Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Norway and the UK all have a strategy for the validation of non-formal and informal learning which aims to support those who have low levels of formal qualifications into formal learning or as a pathway to employment. It recognises skills and competencies developed outside of formal education.

### Quality

Evident across all country case studies was the importance of national quality frameworks and standards. These were found embedded in legislation and referenced in various strategy documents. These frameworks and standards are considered an integral part of a VET system. For instance, in Estonia the government approves national education policy, with the Estonian lifelong learning strategy 2020 guiding developments in education. The government also approves higher education and VET standards and framework requirements for teacher training. The VET standard defines: (a) a learning outcomes approach; (b) requirements for VET curricula: (i) the volume and

structure of programmes, including joint programmes, for example between VET and professional higher education; (ii) entry and completion requirements; (iii) key competences; (c) principles for curriculum updates; (d) principles for recognition of prior learning and work experience; (e) the list of programme groups, study fields and curriculum groups combining several programmes. Examples of the curriculum groups are ‘travelling and tourism’, ‘social work’ and ‘banking, finance and insurance’. The education ministry is responsible for delivering the strategy and its nine programmes, including the vocational education programme (MoER, 2015a). The education minister also approves national VET curricula.

## **Resourcing of guidance and support in VET systems**

This theme focuses on the resourcing of VET, and career guidance and counselling support VET systems. Resourcing is examined in terms of funding, labour market information and data that support the development of VET, plus information and data that support those delivering guidance in VET. Resourcing is also examined in terms of where career guidance and counselling is delivered and at what stage of individual’s VET pathway.

### **Funding**

The resourcing of career guidance and counselling support in VET systems is examined in terms of both the funding of VET and the funding of career guidance and counselling services. It is important to examine as it can indicate the functioning and precarity of a VET system. Funding indicates whether career guidance and counselling provision are embedded within the VET system or part of general education. Generally, VET is funded by learners, employers, governments and EU programmes.

All of the case study countries legislate funding for VET and, most, the provision of career guidance and counselling support and services. VET is funded directly from the government and allocated to providers at the regional and/or local level, such as in Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia and the UK. Vocational education is state-funded and mostly free of charge, regardless of age, educational background, and individual needs. In Estonia, financial assistance is available for VET learners to guarantee equal access to education, regardless of socioeconomic circumstances (Cedefop, 2017a).

Austria, Bulgaria, Finland and Germany all access European Social Funds (ESF) to resource VET. In these countries and the UK, non-governmental organisations (NGO) and the third sector support the resourcing of VET, but this is usually targeted at specific groups such as the social disadvantaged. The private sector whilst noted as a source of funding for VET in Bulgaria, Finland, Germany and the UK, was not considered significant.

Austria, Finland and the UK have an apprenticeship levy or employer contribution which supports the funding of VET. The levy is paid by large employers as part of their tax bill, while smaller employers pay a small percentage of the cost of training apprenticeships. The funds raised by the levy can then be accessed by employers wishing to recruit apprentices for approved training programmes. In the UK, there has been a shift to an employer-led skills system with the introduction

on the apprenticeship levy in 2017. For instance, in Wales, the Welsh Government and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales fund VET. In 2014, a longer-term skills strategy was published setting out how skills would be co-funded with employers (Welsh Government, 2014). This was followed up by the Apprenticeship Skills Policy which detailed investments to increase the numbers of school leavers taking up apprenticeships, the development of higher level apprenticeships and pathways. The overall aim was to ensure that the skills system was responding to the needs of the Welsh economy (Welsh Government, 2017). As part of these reforms the Wales Apprenticeship Board (WAAB), an independent employer-led body, was set up. WAAB advises the Welsh Government on apprenticeships, workplace learning and pathways.

## Data

Labour market information and data play an important role within a VET system. It is defined as information and data on the labour market and includes qualitative data on VET pathways, role descriptions as well as quantitative data on skills, occupational trends and forecasts. First, data and information are collected as part of VET to monitor enrolments, progression and outcomes contributing to understanding how the system functions. Second, data and information on the labour market and the economy inform the VET system. Together these data provide some understanding of labour supply and demand and can be used in educational planning. Finally, it is important to consider how these data are made available, disseminated and used by the stakeholders and actors in the VET system.

All country case studies were found to collect data which does (and could) feed into the VET system but how developed and established mechanisms for collecting and disseminating data are varied. Data are noted to be collected by governments and ministries, national statistical agencies, chambers of commerce and research centres (both publicly and privately funded). Data are variously collected and disseminated on: education, apprenticeship and training enrolments and outcomes; economic, occupation and skills forecasts and trends (e.g., Austria's [National Agency for Vocational Education and Training](#)). Websites that provide data on pathways were also noted (e.g., Norway's [Vilbli.no](#) and [Lærlingtorget](#) apprenticeship portal). Data are being used to inform curriculum development, programme evaluation, and the regional adaption of VET, as well as being used by employers, career guidance and counselling services, and policy makers.

Eurostat was noted as a source of data on learner enrolments, progression and outcomes, CVET and adult learning (e.g., [Pupils enrolled in upper secondary education by programme orientation, sex, type of institution and intensity of participation](#), Eurostat 2024).

Bulgaria, Finland, Germany and the UK all collect and disseminate data on employer skills needs and gaps. For instance, in Bulgaria the Institute for Market Economics (a non-governmental organisation conducting policy evaluation and analysis) produced an index analysing the link between VET and the economy (see Vocational Education and Economy Profile 2024 Correspondence Index – May 2024, [Indeks na sŭotvet-stviето mezhdu profesionalnoto obrazovanie i profila na ikonomikata 2024 – maĭ 2024](#)). The index showed VET by sector and compares it with the distribution of the labour force in different economic activities. This comparison revealed the



structural alignments and discrepancies between the education offered and the labour market's demands. Additionally, the data enables an analysis of the correlation between education and the labour market on a regional scale so it provides a good example of what data are available to inform the development of VET.

Most countries were noted to have forecast and/or trend data available. Some examples include

- The Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS) with Chamber of Commerce and Chamber of Labour collect and monitor labour market trends as part of the [AMS JobBarometer](#). It offers detailed forecasts on the job market and competence demands.
- The Estonia labour market needs monitoring and forecasting system, known as [OSKA](#), is managed by the qualifications authority (Kutsekoda). OSKA assesses skill needs by economic sector (such as information and communications technology, accounting) and develops new evidence and intelligence for stakeholders in education and the business world. The system comprises 23 expert panels of employer representatives, education professionals, researchers, public opinion leaders, trade unions and policy-makers (Cedefop, 2017b). The forecasting results (based on the data of the 2011 population census and labour force surveys conducted by Statistics Estonia) are used for career counselling, curriculum development and strategic planning at all education levels, including vocational education and training (Cedefop, 2017b).

Labour market information and data were collected by all countries as part of broader strategies but provide a resource to support VET and a range of stakeholders. Some forthcoming initiatives to improve the integration of data on VET with career guidance and counselling support were noted. For instance, in Bulgaria the 2024 employment policy aims to enhance the effectiveness of job mediation services by broadening the scope of services based on short-term and long-term skill demand forecasts. This is anticipated to result in the creation of career guidance systems, the adoption of innovative approaches and methods for professional guidance, labour counselling, profiling, workforce potential activation, and personalised services adapted to regional specificities (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, 2024, p. 15).

The availability of labour market data has increased over recent years with many countries recognising the value of these data for governance and planning. There is an increasing trend in enabling stakeholders to access data through national portals due to advancements in technology not only in the presentation of data but, significantly, the customisation and personalisation of data visualisation. This was noted in the case study countries. The provision of information and data to those providing support in the VET system is considered essential in helping individuals to make informed decisions but always enabling adaption to rapidly changing labour markets that have growing and varied skills needs.

Germany and the UK can be considered to have well-developed and established systems of labour market data collection and dissemination. These systems are defined as those with more systematic processes to collect and disseminate data, but to ensure it is embedded in planning and support mechanisms. Finland has a range of data available which is disseminated, but data

collected are not always systematic. Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, and Norway can be considered to have labour market information systems that are developing as they need more integration and coordination, particularly with VET. Most country data are available through European agencies (e.g., Cedefop's Skills Panorama, Eurostat, etc.), national government and ministry platforms, and national statistical agencies. Data dissemination through education and training institutions, non-governmental agencies and Chambers was less common across the countries studied. Finland, Germany, Norway and the UK all reported private sector platforms presenting labour market data and making it available in some form either as raw data or analysed with some interpretation. Regional platforms were reported in Finland, Germany and the UK. Austria, Estonia, Finland and Germany all reported that data are made available through their public employment services provider websites.

Previous research has found that labour market information and data collection, dissemination and use in career guidance and counselling varies between and within countries (Barnes et al., 2020; Barnes et al., 2022). The case studies started to highlight the variations between countries, but further research at a regional or local level is needed to better understand how this information and data contribute to and support those delivering guidance in the VET system.

### **Guidance delivery**

The delivery of career guidance and counselling support can be across sectors and in different contexts including compulsory and post-compulsory education, public and private employment services, training institutions, third sector and in the workplace. Guidance provision has been found to be most useful when context specific and personalised (Cedefop, 2008; Cedefop, ETF, European Commission, ILO, OECD and UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2004, 2021). Understanding where career guidance provision is embedded and when it is delivered can provide insights into where it sits within an individual's VET pathway and how it informs VET decisions.

In all of the country case studies, there is strong evidence that career guidance and counselling provision is resourced, organised and delivered (at a minimum) at key transition points within an individual's pathway through education and into the labour market. Previous European research has indicated that most European countries are developing systems of lifelong guidance (Barnes et al., 2020; Kettunen et al., 2023). The research found that all of the case study countries had established elements of a lifelong guidance system, such as legislation, strategies, resourcing and strong leadership to organise and manage guidance provision (Barnes et al., 2020).

Career guidance and counselling provision in VET is provided across a range of contexts in all the case study countries including in education and training sectors, both public and private. In these contexts, guidance is integrated and coordinated with other provisions utilising a range of stakeholders. This is often guided by legislation and national strategies but organised (and implemented) at the regional or local level (see for example Finland and Germany). Providers share quality standards, frameworks and approaches to support guidance delivery (see for example Austria).



Career guidance and counselling was noted to be delivered in the compulsory and post compulsory education institutions, the workplace, vocational training centres and training institutions, career guidance centres and the public employment services (PES). In Estonia, the career guidance and counselling services is co-ordinated by the PES. It offers career guidance services to adults and since 2015, the service also provides workshops for young people in schools – students of grades 8 to 12 – to introduce them to the labour market and working life. These workshops are mostly financed by the EU. Career information specialists and counsellors work in every PES department. All guidance services for young people provided by Rajaleidja centres and the PES are free of charge. They are offered in individual and group settings, often accompanied by computer-based activities. There are professional standards for career counsellors, career information specialists and career co-ordinators in schools.

Guidance for VET was less likely to be found in the private sector.

It is noted that none of the case study countries had established systems of lifelong guidance which would support VET transitions across the life course. Austria, Estonia, Finland and Norway all have lifelong guidance strategies but provision for all across their life course was not always evident. Support could, for instance, be targeted at particular groups.

Career guidance and counselling support is provided for those thinking about, considering and engaging in VET as well as those transitioning from VET. Guidance support for those continuing their training was less likely to be reported in the case study countries. However, in Austria support for those continuing their training is provided through the *Wiener Arbeitnehmer\*innen Förderungsfonds* (Vienna Employment Promotion Fund) offering continuing vocational education and training opportunities in Vienna. Working in collaboration with the PES, individuals can access career guidance and counselling services and personalised support. Similar work is undertaken in Estonia.

The use of technology to support the delivering of guidance in different contexts was evident, but further exploration of this in practice is needed (more of the digitalisation of support is provided later).

## Stakeholders in VET

This theme sets out the range of stakeholders and actors identified in the national VET systems in the country case studies. Stakeholders are broadly defined as those involved in the organisation and management of VET systems to those involved in the resourcing of VET, specifically those delivering career guidance and counselling support to those individuals on VET pathways.

### VET and guidance stakeholders

Stakeholders and actors supporting career guidance and counselling services within VET systems in the case study countries are multidimensional and distributed across different administrative sectors. In all countries, guidance services operate under the jurisdiction of state governance and are regulated by administrative documents. National ministries were noted to have leadership roles in the national VET systems studied. From there, the coordination is delegated to regions,

municipalities or local authorities, depending on the country's organisational structure. However, country-specific differences can be observed in the detailed implementation of these services. Table 3, below, provides an overview of the different types of stakeholders involved in VET systems by case study country.

Ministries have strategic and legislative responsibilities and establish policies and programs within their sectors that directly influence the provision and development of VET guidance. Their role also includes ensuring the alignment of national strategies with EU-level policies. In the countries examined, provision of guidance in VET falls under the jurisdiction of ministries responsible for education and employment.

Administrative bodies that include national and regional actors are responsible for the strategic coordination and implementation of career guidance and counselling policies in VET. These include national and regional governments, federal administrations, regional authorities and specific advisory bodies such as vocational advisory boards. These roles are often defined in legislation, and they act as comprehensive coordinators and resource allocators across various levels.

State and local actors are responsible for practical administrative tasks and public services, such as employment and welfare services. These include entities like public employment services and labour and welfare administrations. PES have a major role in supporting and/or coordinating VET provision, such as in Bulgaria. Local governance often plays a direct role in the implementation of career guidance and counselling in the education and training sector broadly, as well as in the VET system.

Actors in education and research, such as schools, universities, and vocational training centres (both public and private), are central to delivering career guidance and counselling. They are responsible for implementing guidance in practice and providing career guidance, counselling and information services in collaboration with national and regional actors. Some institutions engage in international collaborations or involve foreign actors. In addition, the group comprises, with country-specific variations, non-governmental organisations, trade unions, and private sector actors.

Social partners, including employers, trade unions, worker representative organisations) are also key stakeholders in the VET system. These variously provide career guidance and counselling support in the case study countries.

**Table 3: Overview of stakeholders and actors supporting guidance in VET system by country**

Stakeholder	Austria	Bulgaria	Estonia	Finland	Germany	Norway	UK
Ministry - education	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ministry - labour/economy	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ministry - others		x					
National agencies		x	x	x	x		

Chambers of Economy/Commerce	x			x	x		
Regional (public sector)		x	x	x	x	x	x
Social partners / NGOs	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Education institutions	x	x	x	x	x		x
VET and Training institutions/centres	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Vocational education and guidance centres	x	x		x	x		x
Employers	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Public Employment Services (PES)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Private Employment Services (PrES)							x
Communities				x			
Trade Unions		x	x		x		x
Professional associations, councils or advisory bodies			x				x

## Cooperation

As already indicated, a range of stakeholders and actors are present in VET systems but how these cooperate and collaborate provides an understanding of the complexity of the VET system. Cooperation and collaboration are seen as key mechanisms that need to be embedded in an ecosystem, particularly a lifelong guidance system (Barnes et al., 2020). This enables communication and support for those at any stage of their VET pathway from different stakeholders. Significantly cooperation between those providing guidance and support is needed in order to offer and deliver seamless support for those considering VET to those transitioning from VET to further training or the labour market.

While the case study countries' systems feature common stakeholder landscapes, their governance structures differ. The functions are distributed under the responsibility of multiple actors and therefore require comprehensive coordination. For example, VET in Estonia is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Research (Cedefop, 2017a). The Estonian parliament (Riigikogu), the government (Eesti Vabariigi Valitsus), including the education ministry, jointly oversee the VET system at the national level (Cedefop, 2024). They partner with the Estonian Association for the Promotion of VET, representing VET providers, social partners, advisory boards and other VET stakeholders implement policy and the national VET strategic objectives. The Association coordinate with local governments who prepare and implement local education development plans and coordinate the activities of municipal education institutions. Partnership agreements are in place to ensure coordination and cooperation across all stakeholders. In Bulgaria, there is a strategy for development of VET which aims to improve the coordination and cooperation between stakeholders for the development of career guidance. Its strength is that strategies are linked so there are stronger mechanisms in place for cooperation and coordination.

Finally in the UK, the Office for Students (OfS) gave the Open University power to partner with further education colleges in order to offer Level 4 and 5 vocational and technical courses to students (Office for Students, 2022). The initiative is co-funded by the Department for Education and the OfS, and is part of the Validation Partnerships (OUVP) team. It was implemented as part of the OfS 2022-25 Strategy to improve the quality and standards of vocational education and to improve equality of opportunity by increasing the availability of vocational courses and qualifications. This partnership was found to be successful and reported to be positive for both participants and employers (Alexander et al., 2023).

Whilst strategies and mechanisms for cooperation were in place, it was noted to be mostly ad hoc.

Figure 1, below, is a tentative mapping of stakeholders in the VET skills formation system. The mapping represents the complexity of the ecosystem and the range of stakeholders involved.

**Figure 1: Mapping of stakeholders in the VET ecosystem**

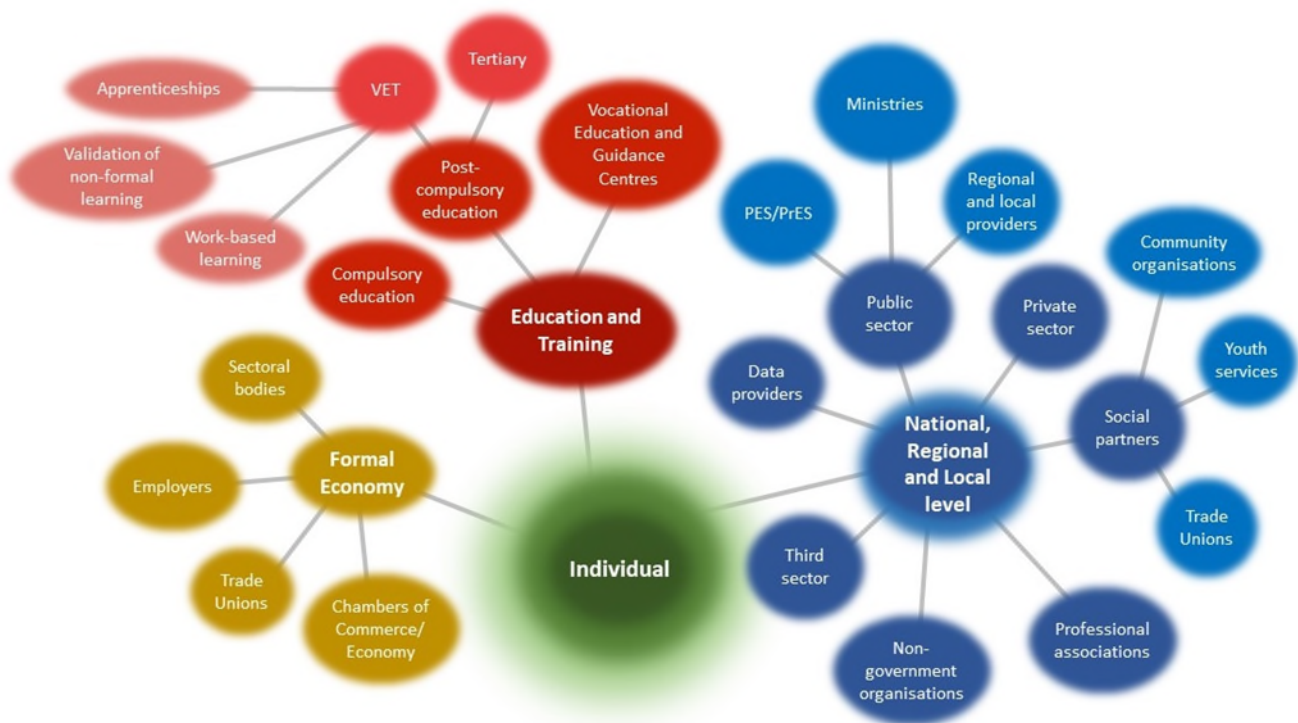


Figure 1 shows the individual at the centre of the VET ecosystem interacting with the economy, the education and training sector, and a number of institutions at the national, regional and/or local level. Each play a role in the organisation, management and delivery of resources and sources within a VET system. Whilst some are playing a key role in the provision of career guidance, support and information, others could be key to resourcing and improving the VET system for individuals thinking about and considering a VET pathway. This needs further exploration.

Cooperation in the country case studies was found to be multilateral in Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Norway and the UK. Multilateral cooperation is defined as cooperation and collaboration which occurs within sectors and vertically coordinated. So, for example, ministries would manage and

organise guidance provision in VET within their sector. In the UK, the governance of VET is devolved with England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each of which has different governance, regulatory and quality assurance bodies (Cedefop & UK Naric, 2019). This has resulted in a complex system of qualifications and awarding bodies in each devolved nation so cooperation is often vertically coordinated. Finland and Germany were, however, found to have multisectoral communication, engagement and coordination suggesting more systemic approaches to the provision of career guidance and counselling. Multisectoral is where cooperation and collaboration occur within and across sectors involving multiple stakeholders from different ministries, government agencies, the private sector, professional associations, trade unions and so on. This type of cooperation is represented by diverse stakeholders and actors that share diverse experiences, processes and approaches to career guidance and counselling delivery.

As evidence of cooperation and collaboration in VET was found in all case study countries, this could highlight its significance within a functioning ecosystem. Further exploration is needed to better understand how cooperation and collaboration happen in practice and the difficulties in enabling and ensuring they are effective and maintained. This could be through stronger legislation and strategies.

### **Digitalisation of career guidance and counselling supporting VET**

This theme focuses on the digitalisation of career guidance and counselling supporting VET. Across the case study countries, digitalisation was a reoccurring theme. Multi-stakeholder collaboration and digital transformation, where digital transformation is one key aspect of career guidance development in collaboration with a wide range of actors. The importance of national strategies in the country case studies emerged, particularly their focus on the multifaceted nature of digitalisation. National strategies highlighted several aspects of digitalisation such as infrastructure changes, and digital skills of the workforce across different occupational groups and within the education and training systems.

National programs and platforms were noted to be aimed at developing practices and systems that integrate existing and new methods. These efforts seek to provide educational and guidance services in a unified and accessible manner. The themes of digitalisation are deeply connected to the broader development of VET guidance and simultaneously support wider societal objectives, such as employment and sustainable society.

Data highlighted several examples of digital development but the stage of development was found to vary across countries depending on their individual contexts and variations in digital development. Particularly in the extent to which their strategies emphasise digital aspects of VET guidance.

The themes identified in the text align with the ongoing structural changes at the European level, particularly in the areas of the digital and green transition, these themes also support the findings highlighted in work package 2. As observed in work package 2, research also emphasises the need to enhance digitalisation skills while simultaneously integrating digital services into VET guidance



systems. Projects related to digitalisation address the evolving nature of work resulting from digital transformation. Further investigation is needed to better understand digitalisation in VET systems, particularly those related to the provision of career guidance and counselling.

## **Comparative overview of the provision of career guidance and counselling in VET systems**

The findings from this desk research highlight how different VET systems are in operation with varying degrees of legislation that specify entitlements or target particular disadvantaged groups, plus funding and delivery mechanisms. Through an examination of different regulations and strategies, the research is creating a comparative narrative on the impacts of different national contexts and skills formation systems on fostering positive transitions in the VET system. There are some suggestions on how career guidance and counselling systems could develop and evolve now and, in the future, to resolve skills demands and mismatches. However, research into practice is needed to better understand those engaged in VET and how they have accessed or are using career guidance and counselling support to inform their education and decisions.

A comparative overview of the dimensions and particular characteristics identified in the seven countries revealed variations in their development and establishment. Notably, variations included:

- Strong legislative environments for the management and organisation of VET systems, but differences in whether career guidance and counselling support is provided within VET systems, how support and services are delivered and, significantly, whether it is embedded across and within individual VET pathways as part of a system of lifelong guidance.
- Various education, learning, training and skills strategies were found in key sectors. However, these strategies were not always linked to VET. Where strategies were more coordinated, integrated and interdependent
- Labour market information and data collection and dissemination was evident across all country case studies. Whilst much labour market information and data on VET are made available to those providing career guidance and counselling services and support, more research is needed on its application in practice. It is unclear as to whether support and training in the interpretation of LMI and data are needed to better support the VET system.
- Career guidance and counselling services and support are evident within the education and training sector, but more needs to be understood regarding practice in the workplace and access to support across the life course, particularly older workers returning to work or changing career.
- Cooperation between stakeholder and actors in the VET systems delivering career guidance and counselling was found to be helpful. However, the extent of cooperation and how established the cooperation was varied significantly between countries. Good practice in this field could provide an opportunity for shared learning on what works.

- Digitalisation of career guidance and counselling services to support the VET system is emerging, but further research is needed to better understand practice and how effective it is in supporting individuals to make informed VET decisions throughout their life course.

**Table 4: Comparative overview of career guidance and counselling in VET skills formation systems**

	Characteristic of VET skills formation systems	Austria	Bulgaria	Estonia	Finland	Germany	Norway	UK
<b>Organisation</b>								
<b>VET legislation (and legislation referencing career guidance and counselling)</b>	Established whole country approach to VET – organisation and structure	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Legal entitlement to VET	x	x	x	x	x		x
	Curricular	x	x	x	x	x	x	
	Entry requirements	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Curricular	x	x	x	x	x	x	
	Legal entitlements to guidance in schools and VET	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Role of employer in VET legislated	x	x		x	x	x	
	Qualification profile of those delivering guidance	x	x					
<b>Strategy</b>	VET strategy	x	x	x	x	x	x	
	Guidance strategy	x		x	x		x	
	Education strategy	x		x	x			x
	Lifelong learning strategy	x	x	x	x	x		x
	Youth strategy		x		x			x
	Social inclusion strategy		x			x		x
	Validation of non-formal and informal learning	x	x			x	x	x
	Multisectoral strategies linked to skills and guidance	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Quality</b>	National quality framework and standards	x	x	x	x	x	x	x



	Characteristic of VET skills formation systems	Austria	Bulgaria	Estonia	Finland	Germany	Norway	UK
<b>Resources – Funding</b>								
	Set out in legislation	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Apprenticeship levy/employer contribution	x			x			x
<b>Vet support funded by...</b>	public sector	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	European Social Fund (ESF)	x	x		x	x		
	third sector/NGOs	x	x		x	x		x
	private sector		x		x	x		x
<b>Resources – Data</b>								
<b>Data - available in VET system</b>	employers' skills demands/needs		x		x	x		x
	education statistics	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	apprenticeship statistics	x				x		x
	forecasts	x	x	x	x	x		x
	enrolment/outcome trends	x	x		x	x		x
<b>Data available through...</b>	European agencies	x	x	x	x	x	x	
	government/ministry platforms			x	x	x	x	x
	national statistical agency		x	x		x	x	x
	regional platforms				x	x		x
	PES	x	x	x	x	x		
	Chambers	x	x			x		
	non-government agencies		x			x		x
	private sector platforms				x	x	x	x
	education and training institutions		x		x			x
<b>Resourcing – Guidance support</b>								

	Characteristic of VET skills formation systems	Austria	Bulgaria	Estonia	Finland	Germany	Norway	UK
<b>Guidance support for VET delivered in...</b>	initial VET in compulsory education	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	VET in post-compulsory education	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	VET in workplace	x	x		x	x		x
	vocational training centres/training institutions	x	x		x	x	x	x
	career guidance centres		x	x	x	x	x	x
	PES	x	x		x	x		x
	private sector		x				x	x
<b>Support provided for those...</b>	thinking about, considering and engaging in VET	x	x	x	x	x		x
	transitioning from VET	x	x	x	x	x		
	continuing their training	x	x	x	x	x		x
<b>Stakeholders</b>								
Cooperation and collaboration between stakeholders is...	multilateral	x	x	x			x	x
	multisectoral				x	x		

## Work package 7 next steps

The desk research undertaken for each country has highlighted where further exploration is needed to better understand the provision of career guidance and counselling support at a national, regional or local level. The next steps will be to identify national examples that support those considering, engaging in and transitioning out of VET to start creating an evidence base of innovative or good practice of lifelong guidance in VET systems. From the analysis undertaken here, the following indicate gaps in our understanding that could be further explored as part of task 7.2, including:

- The **organisation and management of a VET system** and where career guidance sits in practice.

- The **resourcing** of career guidance provision and the role various actors play in the delivery of services for individuals thinking about and considering a VET pathway.
- The collection, analysis and dissemination of **labour market information and data** to support those delivering career guidance services and those accessing the data as part of making informed decisions about their VET pathways.
- The use of technology to support the **delivery of guidance** within and across different contexts was evident.
- The extent and establishment of cooperation in practice between **stakeholders** and actors in VET.
- **Digitalisation** of the provision of career guidance and counselling in VET systems.

Case studies of innovation practice will be undertaken in seven countries with the aim of examining how legislation and strategies operate in practice at a national level by exploring services and programmes, funding and delivery mechanisms, cooperation between stakeholders and key actors, labour market information and digitalisation. These case studies will variously comprise in-depth interviews with key stakeholders in guidance service providers in VET systems, policy makers, service providers, employers and VET students. They will examine services in practice, exploring how they adapt to meet emerging challenges of the individual, employer and economy.

## Appendix: Country case studies

### Country case report – Austria

<p><b>Summary of skills formation system in the country</b></p>	<p><b>What is the role of VET in the education system?</b></p> <p>In Austria, VET plays a central role in the education system, with 70% of upper secondary students enrolled in VET programs. The VET system is designed to cover a diverse range of sectors, including business, engineering, healthcare, and agriculture, offering flexibility for students to either enter the workforce directly or pursue higher education.</p> <p><b>Initial VET and continuing VET</b></p> <p>School-based IVET (Initial Vocational Education and Training) accounts for nearly 40% of a youth cohort and more than half of all IVET participants in Austria. Although schools enjoy some autonomy, they must adhere to binding national curricula, which are typically fully updated over a long period (about 10 to 15 years), though partial updates can be made at short notice. Specialised administrative units, known as “Fachabteilungen,” within the Ministry of Education, are responsible for overseeing VET (Vocational Education and Training) colleges and schools in specific occupational fields (Cedefop, 2013, p. 61).</p> <p>CVET for adults includes offers provided within the formal education and training system, similar to the options available for youth, as well as a wide range of non-formal learning opportunities. A diverse range of institutions offers continuing training to complement or upgrade people's initial qualifications. These include programmes awarding or preparing for tertiary/post-secondary vocational qualifications, such as industrial master and master craftsperson certificates, certified accountants, or for law enforcement services. They also provide training within active labour market measures.</p> <p><b>Where does VET take place and who are key stakeholders?</b></p> <p>The two primary VET pathways are the Colleges for Higher Vocational Education (<i>Berufsbildende Höhere Schulen (BHS)</i>), which last five years (ISCED 5, NQF 5), and the Apprenticeship Training system (<i>Lehrlingsausbildung</i>) where training takes place in companies and part-time VET schools (<i>Berufsschulen (BS)</i>), which typically takes 3 to 4 years (ISCED 3, NQF 4). Additionally, there are Schools for Intermediate Vocational Education (<i>Berufsbildende mittlere Schulen (BMS)</i>), offering programs that last between 3 and 4 years (ISCED 3, NQF 4). Students can choose between these three pathways, each with distinct learning methods and curricula. However, only the qualification from the Colleges for Higher Vocational Education grants direct access to higher education, while graduates of other pathways must complete additional courses to qualify for university entrance.</p>
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	<p>University of Applied Sciences (<i>Fachhochschulen</i>), in contrast to (public and private) universities, offer scientifically based vocational training at university level. Both - the practical relevance to the profession as well as the education at university level - are central reference values in the design of degree programmes at universities of applied sciences in Austria. In the area of research, universities of applied sciences focus primarily on application-oriented research and development. With their vocational orientation, universities of applied sciences represent a very important pillar of the Austrian higher education system.</p> <p><b>What is the role of education institutions, career counselling and guidance institutions, employer?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main providers of guidance and counselling are the education institutions, the public employment service and the social partners.</li> <li>• Educational institutions provide career guidance through qualified counsellors, offering information about educational pathways, work placements, and skills development. Career counselling institutions, like the Austrian Public Employment Service (<i>Arbeitsmarktservice (AMS)</i>) and chambers, provide diverse services, including guidance talks, skills assessment, and job information. Employers contribute by offering apprenticeship placements and real-life work experience.</li> <li>• In Austria, counselling and guidance services are distinctly divided, with separate provisions for youth and adults.</li> </ul> <p>(Sources: Cedefop &amp; ibw Austria, 2022; Cedefop, 2018a, 2020a; Tritscher-Archan, 2016).</p>
<p><b>Is legislation in place to support VET and the skills formation system?</b></p>	<p><b>Overview of legislation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">School Organisation Act</a> (Federal Law) (SchOG), which covers the structure and organisation of school-based VET: Provisions governing the external organisation of public-sector general and vocational compulsory schools, medium and higher-level schools and teacher and supervisory-staff training establishments (except higher education and art academies as well as schools for agriculture and forestry), and in particular: the schools' tasks; structuring according to level and contents; general accessibility; freedom from tuition fees; curricula; pilot school projects (especially the introduction of pilot schemes to develop secondary level I), structure of the individual types of schools; admission requirements; forms of organisation, and the setting of the number of pupils per class.</li> </ul>

- [Vocational Training Act \(Berufsausbildungsgesetz \(BAG\)\)](#), regulating apprenticeship training, including agreements between companies and apprentices.
- Compulsory Training Act - Education and Training up to 18 (Federal Law) (*Ausbildungspflichtgesetz (APfLG) (Bundesgesetz)*): Since the 2016/17 school year, all youths who have not yet reached the age of 18 are required to engage in education or training after completing general compulsory schooling. This includes attending an academic or vocational upper secondary school, completing a dual education/training programme or attending a recognised vocational or training institution which prepares them for reintegration in continuing education and training offers. In addition, measures continue to rely on proven instruments such as youth coaching and production schools to prepare for training and to support in-company vocational training, and on coaching for apprentices as well as businesses that employ apprentices. Moreover, low-threshold measures and programmes in youth programmes outside of school also serve to support the integration of youth into the labour market, for example through employment by the hour. Older youths are provided with support in completing their education at later stages, in vocational training and supplementary qualifications.

#### **Aim of legislation in relation to VET**

- Establish high-quality training standards and ensure alignment with labour market needs.
- Promote access to vocational education across different levels of society.
- Support a dual system that combines school-based and company-based training.
- Provide legal frameworks that support funding, regulatory oversight, and standardised assessment.

#### **Who has leadership roles in VET system?**

- Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research: This ministry oversees the curriculum, standards, and general direction for school-based VET programs.
- Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy: This ministry is responsible for dual training standards, working with the Chamber of Commerce (Wirtschaftskammer) and the Chamber of Labor (Arbeiterkammer) to maintain industry relevance.

- **Social Partners:** These include the Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Labor, and vocational schools, which collaborate to design apprenticeship curricula and training regulations.

#### **Who has responsibility and accountability for VET standards?**

- Federal Ministry of Education for school-based VET; Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy for dual training; companies for implementation

#### **Are entitlements to VET detailed?**

- The entitlement to VET is detailed in the BAG, which mandates that all learners have access to standardised vocational training pathways.

#### **Are entitlements to VET support detailed?**

- Support entitlements, such as guidance and counselling services, are embedded in various laws, including the SchOG and AMMSG. These entitlements ensure that students and apprentices receive career guidance and information on training options.

#### **Are funding mechanisms for VET legislated?**

- The Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz (BAG)*) includes regulations for dual VET
- Vocational Training Levy: As per the BAG, companies contribute to a training fund that supports apprenticeships.
- Public Funding: The government allocates funds through the Schulorganisationsgesetz (SchOG) to support vocational schools
- The PES provides funding and subsidies for company-based apprenticeships.

#### **Is the role of the employer legislated?**

- Within the BAG: *The authorised instructor § 2. (1) Authorised apprentices within the meaning of this federal law are natural and legal persons as well as general partnerships and limited partnerships in which apprentices (§ 1) are professionally trained on the basis of an apprenticeship contract (§ 12) to learn an apprenticeship occupation listed in the list of apprenticeship occupations (§ 7) and work within the framework of this training (§ 9) in accordance with subsections 2 to 5.*
- They take in a role of guidance and counselling, but it is not legislated.

#### **Is the role of career counselling and guidance support detailed?**



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to career guidance services is provided nationwide and considers the differences between regions. As mentioned under Coordination and collaboration, Austria has extended guidance-related services complementing each other: guidance and counselling provided by education and training institutions; guidance services provided by the employment administration and other career guidance institutions.</li> <li>• Vocational orientation (<i>Berufsorientierung</i>) and career guidance in school has been regulated in general by the <a href="#">School Organisation Act</a> (<i>Schulorganisationsgesetz - SchOG</i>) since 1998/1999 and defined in more detail in the <a href="#">School Education Act</a> (<i>Schulunterrichtsgesetz - SchUG</i>). However, in the respective curricula of different school types and in various decrees of the Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), the <a href="#">Labour Market Service Act</a> (<i>Arbeitsmarktservicegesetz, AMSG</i>) stipulates that the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS) must provide information on the labour market and the world of work, as well as advice on issues such as the choice of occupation.” (Cedefop, 2020).</li> </ul> <p>(Sources: Cedefop, 2020a; Cedefop; &amp; ibw Austria, 2022; Euroguidance, 2019; Eurydice, 2024a)</p>
<p><b>Is there mention of career counselling and guidance in the legislation?</b></p>	<p>Educational and career guidance in Schools, “ibobb”: Information, counselling and guidance for education and careers (BMBWF, 2024)</p> <p><b>Training counselling in apprenticeship:</b></p> <p>§ 19a. The organisations of employers and employees that are subject to collective agreements shall promote qualified in-company training within their sphere of influence, motivate companies to train apprentices, encourage the establishment of joint training measures (§ 2a), offer assistance in special cases of conflict arising from the apprenticeship relationship and set up arbitration boards with equal representation in the event of disagreement.</p> <p>(Sources: Cedefop, 2020a; Cedefop; &amp; ibw Austria, 2022; Euroguidance, 2019; RIS, 2023)</p>
<p><b>Are their national strategies in place to support VET and the skills formation system?</b></p>	<p>Overview of strategies in relation to VET:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Lifelong Guidance Strategy (2006)</li> <li>• Lifelong Learning Strategy, LLL:2020 (2012) (see S2C Deliverable 2.1)</li> <li>• National strategy to prevent early drop-out (2012/2016)</li> <li>• Action Plan Compulsory Education and Training until 18 (2013)</li> </ul>

- Strategy on the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Austria (2017)
- Various regional LLL/skills strategies (2005-present), e.g. Qualification Plan Vienna 2030

### **National Lifelong Guidance (LLG) Strategy, since 2006**

Aim of strategy in relation to VET

- The implementation of basic competences in all curricula so that learners can make education and career decisions autonomously.
- A focus on process orientation and monitoring to enable high-quality decision-making processes.
- The professionalisation of counsellors and trainers.
- Quality assurance and evaluation of offers, processes and structures.
- The extension of access by creating offers for new target Groups.

Link to other strategies

- LLL:2020 Strategy

Who is responsible for the strategy?

- Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF)

### **Lifelong Learning Strategy, [LLL:2020](#) (2012)**

Aim of strategy in relation to VET

- 3. making up basic qualifications free of charge and ensuring basic skills in adulthood, 4. expansion of alternative transition systems into working life for young people, 6. strengthening community education approaches through municipal institutions and in organised civil society, 8. further training to secure employment and competitiveness, 10. procedures for recognising non-formally and informally acquired knowledge and skills in all education sectors

Link to other strategies

- Various regional LLL/skills strategies (2005-present), e.g. Qualification Plan Vienna 2030

Who is responsible for the strategy?

- Drawn up by an inter-ministerial working group and adopted by the Austrian Federal Government. In addition to the ministries involved in education issues, social partnership organisations

and scientific expertise were also included. The strategy was steered by representatives of ministries with the involvement of a 'National Platform' (social partners, federal states, cities, municipalities, stakeholders from the education system, scientists).

**Action Plan Compulsory Education and Training until 18 (2013)**  
**(*AusBildung bis 18*)**

Aim of strategy in relation to VET

- The aim is to guide all young people towards a qualification that goes beyond the compulsory school leaving certificate and to counteract early drop-outs.

Link to other strategies

- Nationwide coordination centre, anchoring careers guidance in schools (see figure A1)

Who is responsible for the strategy?

- Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care, and Consumer Protection, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Research, the Federal Chancellery, as well as with the federal states, social partners, and other stakeholders.

Who are the key stakeholders in these strategies?

- Generally: Federal Government (especially the respective ministries for education (schools, adult education), social affairs (drop-out prevention, vulnerable groups), labour and economic affairs (IVET, CVET), internal affairs (migration)), Regional Governments (9 *Länder*), PES, social partners, *Sozialministeriumservice* (Social Security Office), Education Directorates, schools, universities, and implementing organisations (including NGOs)
- In Austria, guidance strategies are fundamentally divided into guidance targeted towards youth and adults
- For youths careers guidance is delivered according to the national IBOBB concept (*Information, Beratung und Orientierung für Bildung und Beruf*). Schools play an important role in vocational orientation (integrating the topic in all subjects + dedicated lessons depending on type of school). The PES has to provide information on the labour market and occupational choices (e.g. in regional information centres, various online tools and services, workshops for schools etc.). Social partners contribute with various information formats as do certain NGOs.

Universities and other providers have their own guidance services.

- The landscape of career guidance in Austria is quite fragmented, The PES (AMS) holds a responsibility mandated by law to provide career guidance for both employed and unemployed individuals (e.g. guidance for unemployed, orientation in career guidance centres (BIZ) that are also targeting youth). Some services for vulnerable groups are outsourced to (mostly non-profit) service providers specialised in outreach, social work etc. General educational guidance (centred on the individual's interest, not the labour market) for all adults is provided through a network directed by the Ministry of Education (BMBWF) and implemented together with the *Länder* and cofunded by the ESF. Some regions provide additional service, e.g. the City of Vienna via the labour market organisation waff. Furthermore, adult education and CVET providers, schools and universities offer guidance for interested adults.

**Figure A1: Coordination network for the AusBildung bis 18 (Compulsory education or training until 18 years old)**

**Abbildung 1.5: Netzwerk der Bundesweiten Koordinierungsstelle AusBildung bis 18 (BundesKOST)**



Quelle: BundesKOST, Screenshot [https://www.bundeskost.at/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Grafik\\_Netzwerk\\_BundesKOST\\_202211](https://www.bundeskost.at/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Grafik_Netzwerk_BundesKOST_202211)

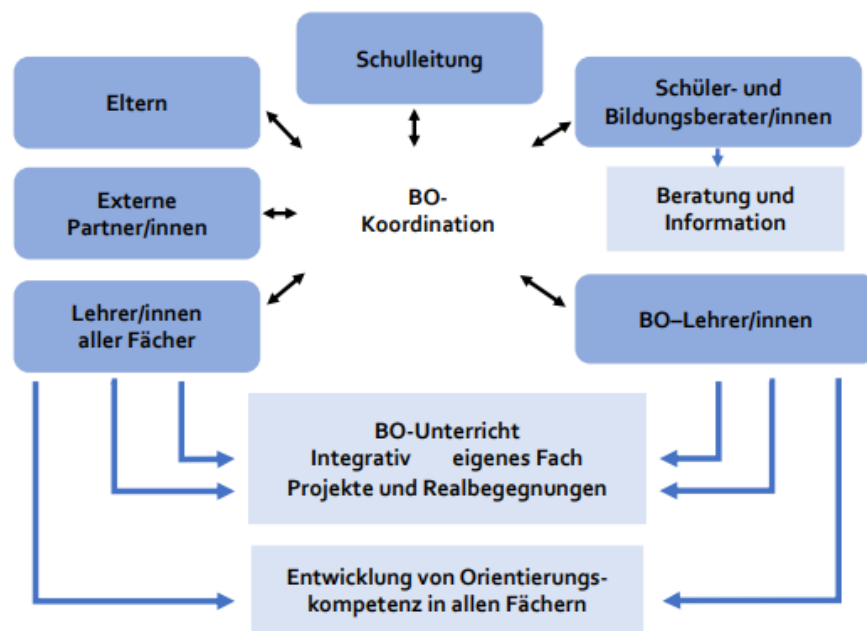
**Who are the key stakeholders in the VET system?**

- Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy (BMAW)
- Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship (B-BAB)
- Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research (BMBWF)
- Apprenticeship Offices (Lehrlingsstellen)
- Economic Chambers
- Regional Advisory Boards on Apprenticeship (Landes-Berufsausbildungsbeiräte, LBAB)
- Regional Educational Directorates (Bildungsdirektionen)
- Training companies
- Part-time vocational school

(Sources: BMAW, 2022, Cedefop, 2020a)

**Figure A2: The career orientation system provided at school level**

Abbildung 1.4: Koordination der schulischen Berufsorientierungsangebote



Quelle: Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung

Source: Hefler, Humpl, & Steinheimer (2023)

N.B. Stakeholders include teachers of all subjects, external experts, parents, school leaders, educational counsellors and teachers specialised in career orientation

**Who collects labour market data and information about VET?**

- The Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO) collects and publishes labour market and vocational training data

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy (BMAW) publishes the <i>Lehrlingsstatistik</i>, The Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy (BMAW) including apprenticeship facts and figures</li> <li>• Institut for educational research (ibw) brings out an Annual study on apprenticeship training at a glance: <a href="https://ibw.at/news/studie-lehrlingsausbildung-im-ueberblick-2023,23.html">https://ibw.at/news/studie-lehrlingsausbildung-im-ueberblick-2023,23.html</a></li> <li>• Statistik Austria, publishes detailed data on employment trends, unemployment rates, and educational attainment: <a href="https://www.statistik.at/statistiken/arbeitsmarkt">https://www.statistik.at/statistiken/arbeitsmarkt</a></li> <li>• Other occupation specific figures like, Forecast of nursing staff requirements for Austria published by the BMSGPK (Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection): <a href="https://www.sozialministerium.at/Themen/Pflege/Pflegepersonenl.html">https://www.sozialministerium.at/Themen/Pflege/Pflegepersonenl.html</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>What labour market data and information are collected and made available about VET (options, pathways, outcomes, etc.)?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apprenticeship statistics under <a href="https://www.wko.at/zahlen-daten-fakten/daten-lehrlingsstatistik">https://www.wko.at/zahlen-daten-fakten/daten-lehrlingsstatistik</a></li> <li>• Apprenticeship monitor 2024. Available under: <a href="https://www.oegj.at/meine-situation/ich-bin-lehrling/lehrlingsmonitor-2024">https://www.oegj.at/meine-situation/ich-bin-lehrling/lehrlingsmonitor-2024</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Lehrberufsliste</a>. (BIC, 2023)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Lehrberufe in Österreich</a> (BMAW, 2024)</li> </ul> <p>(Sources: BMAW, 2022; Cedefop &amp; ibw Austria, 2023; Dornmayr, &amp; Riepl, 2023)</p>
<p><b>How does labour market data and information inform VET system?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS) with Chamber of Commerce and Chamber of Labour collect and monitor labour market trends</li> <li>• <a href="#">AMS JobBarometer</a>, e.g., offering detailed forecasts on job market and competence demands</li> </ul>
<p><b>What career counselling and guidance support is provided to those at different stages of VET pathway?</b></p>	<p><b>Thinking about education pathway</b></p> <p>Early guidance for students, starting in lower secondary education.</p> <p>Chance pass (Chancen-Pass) from the beginning of the 7th grade: This helps pupils make the right choice of educational path. “Talent checks” are available for primary school pupils</p>



Also, NEET youth are counselled by the Social Ministry Service (SMS), through e.g. Youth coaching: targeting NEETS from age 15 to 19 and pupils at risk of dropping out or e “Training up to the age of 18” initiative launched jointly by social partners, provinces, different relevant institutions and companies, as well as the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Families and the Ministry of Economy (see above) to lead all young people towards qualification beyond compulsory schooling; e.g. low-threshold VET programmes are being made more available.

Individual Learning Support (ILB) at upper secondary level as a legally established support measure available to students from the tenth grade onward who receive an early warning about their academic performance. It provides voluntary, individualised assistance from learning facilitators to help students address learning deficits. Facilitators help students develop personalised learning strategies, motivation, self-responsibility, self-confidence, and exam management skills, as well as improve concentration and perseverance.

[Youth Coaching](#) is an assistance programme for young people at the end of their mandatory schooling or after they leave school to encourage them to move into further education (Euroguidance, 2019).

### **Considering VET**

Guidance when decided between general education and VET, during lower secondary education: career guidance became compulsory at secondary level in Austria with 1998. In 2009 the term was extended to “information, advice and guidance for education and work” (*Information, Beratung und Orientierung für Bildung und Beruf*, IBOBB). IBOBB teachers support in career aspirations, provide information on school-based and company-based education and training pathways, indicate possibilities and occupational fields, create job profiles and connect the world of training with the world of work.

### **Engaging in VET**

Students’ counsellors and educational counsellors: Students’ counsellors (at compulsory and general education schools) and educational counsellors (at VET schools) provide all pupils at secondary schools and their parents with information on education programmes, entry requirements and possible final qualifications.

Supra-company apprenticeship training (Überbetriebliche Berufsausbildung, ÜBA). It is aimed at people who have not been able to find a company-based apprenticeship place but still want to obtain a vocational qualification. As part of the training held in a training workshop of an educational provider, participants undergo training which is equivalent to a regular apprenticeship.



The [International Young Workers Exchange](#) (*Internationaler Fachkräfteaustausch, IFA*) informs pupils, apprentices, young employees and trainers about internships and job opportunities abroad.

### **Transitioning from VET**

Adult education and training: Low qualified people and early school leavers, People with special needs, People with a migration background

Erwachsenenbildung.at, the portal for teaching and learning for adults, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) provides a virtual platform which gives support in the form of different information offers to help people make education decisions.

Transition from VET to employment works well in most cases. Participants in dual VET are often proposed employment contracts in their training company. For graduates from VET schools and colleges, there is high demand on the labour market.

[Counselling and support institutions](#) (*Beratungs- und Betreuungseinrichtungen, BBE*), [non-profit employment projects](#) (*gemeinnützige Beschäftigungsprojekte, GBP*) and instruments such as the [counselling scheme on skills training measures for companies](#) (*Qualifizierungsberatung für Betriebe, QBB*). Various non-profit guidance centres aimed at specific target groups such as women (e.g. [abz austria](#)), migrants (e.g. [Counselling Centre for Migrants](#)) or people with disabilities (e.g. [biv integrativ](#)) have integrated educational counselling in their offer. For long-term unemployed the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Social Ministry Service (which acts on its behalf) and Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) is delivering support and guidance through socio-economic enterprises.

### **Continuing Training**

The *Wiener Arbeitnehmer\*innen Förderungsfonds* ([Vienna Employment Promotion Fund](#); waff) provides a range of Continuing Vocational Education and Training (CVET) opportunities in Vienna. Their offerings include various training programs aimed at enhancing the skills of employees and job seekers, particularly in sectors like social work, nursing, technology, and retail. One notable initiative is the Jobs PLUS Training program, which helps participants obtain vocational qualifications while simultaneously preparing for specific job openings. This program collaborates with the Vienna Public Employment Service (AMS) and provides financial support during the training phase.

*AMS Career Counselling*: The AMS provides comprehensive career counselling services that focus on individuals seeking further education and training options. This includes Individual Career Guidance: Personalized consultations to help individuals assess their skills and interests, explore educational pathways, and identify relevant CVET

	<p>opportunities. Or Workshops and Seminars: AMS organises workshops covering topics like job application skills, resume writing, and interview preparation, helping individuals transition effectively into the workforce.</p> <p><i>IBOBB (Information, Counselling, and Orientation for Education and Careers)</i> is specifically aimed at providing guidance to students in schools. It includes careers education classes and individual counselling sessions, focusing on options regarding CVET and further educational opportunities.</p> <p>(Sources: Cedefop, 2020; Eurydice, 2024; Petanovitsch, &amp; Tritscher-Archan, 2018)</p>
<p><b>How is VET support funded?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidance in Austria is generally funded by public authorities (Federal Gov), federal province governments (<i>Bundesländer</i>), municipalities, social partners or privately</li> <li>• School-based is funded by ministries</li> <li>• Adult guidance funded by AMS (public funding) or the BMBWF (partly by the ESF)</li> <li>• Socially disadvantaged groups are often funded by NGOS/ NFPs</li> <li>• Youth coaching is funded via Ministry of Social Affairs and ESF</li> <li>• Provincial differences in general</li> </ul> <p>(Source: Cedefop, 2020a)</p>

## Country case report – Bulgaria

<p><b>Summary of skills formation system in the country</b></p>	<p><b>What is the role of VET in the education system?</b></p> <p>Over the past ten years, Bulgaria has undertaken initiatives to broaden the scope of VET, largely in response to the country's employer demand for personnel with specialised professional skills. In 2022 the number of pupils enrolled in upper secondary education-vocational programme is 156, 257 and in general education is 128 870 (Eurostat, 2024).</p> <p>Despite ongoing efforts, the alignment between labour market demands and the curriculum of vocational schools in Bulgaria remains tenuous (Ilieva-Trichkova, Stoilova, &amp; Boyadjieva, 2015). Since 2015, a dual education system has been introduced, which aims to strengthen this connection and improve the effectiveness of VET.</p> <p><b>Explain initial VET and continuing VET</b></p> <p>VET targets two groups of learners: school-age learners and adults (16+ not in formal education and training) (Cedefop, 2024b, p. 4).</p>
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Initial VET in Bulgaria is conducted at the high school level, with most students entering a vocational program at age 14 (7 Grade) that is before the end of their compulsory level of education (at age of 16). Vocational and technical schools are prevalent in the country. The dual form of education is not yet widespread - in the academic year 2023/2024, only 8% of newly admitted students in vocational education are in a dual form of education (Slavova, 2024).

Continuing education is available to individuals aged 16 and older who wish to pursue further learning or enhance their knowledge and skills. While there is no upper age limit for enrollment in continuing VET, a certain level of completed education may be necessary.

**Where does VET take place (school, further education, higher education, workplace)?**

Initial VET is predominantly carried out in schools, whereas the continuing VET takes place mainly in Vocational training centres (Centrove za profesionalno obuchenie). At the vocational training centres individuals seeking development can receive training in a profession and specialty that suits them. These centres must have obtained a license from National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (Natsionalna Agentsiya za profesionalno obrazovanie i obuchenie, [National Agency for Vocational Education and Training](#))

**Who are key stakeholders?**

The main participants in the Bulgarian VET system are the Ministry of Education and Science; Regional Directorates of Education; schools and universities; National Agency for Vocational Education and Training; Ministry of Labor and Social Policy; employers and trade unions; educational service providers (Vocational Training Centres and Information and Vocational Guidance Centres); NGOs; Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Youth and Sports.

**What is the role of education institutions, career counselling and guidance institutions, employer?**

Educational institutions within the school system offer training for obtaining professional qualifications. A broad spectrum of organisations provide career counselling, offering guidance and information on choosing a profession and career development.

Employers and trade unions are involved in decision-making processes, including changes to the normative framework concerning VET. They contribute to the development of State Educational Standards (Darzhavni obrazovatelni standarti) and the revision of the so called “List of VET professions”. Additionally, they serve in a consultative capacity, with their representatives taking part in regional and national councils, as well as examination commissions established by VET providers.

**Is legislation in place to support VET and the skills formation system?**

**Vocational Education And Training Act (VET Act) – Zakon Za Profesionalno Obrazovanie I Obuchenie**

([https://lll.mon.bg/uploaded\\_files/zakon\\_professionalno\\_obrazovanie\\_2015\\_EN.pdf](https://lll.mon.bg/uploaded_files/zakon_professionalno_obrazovanie_2015_EN.pdf))

**Overview of legislation**

The law, enacted in 1999, governs the organisation, institutions, administration, and funding of the vocational education and training system in Bulgaria (Art. 1, VET Act). It defines the framework programs for acquiring different levels of qualification, the framework programs for students, and the framework programs for individuals aged 16 and over (Art. 10-12 VET Act). Through the years, it has been subject to multiple reforms, primarily focused on aligning VET with the demands of the labour market.

**Aim of legislation in relation to VET**

The law aims to govern public relations concerning:

1. Guaranteeing citizens' rights to professional education and training, in line with their individual interests and capabilities;
2. Satisfying the demand for a skilled workforce that is competitive in the labour market;
3. Creating conditions for the operation and advancement of the professional education and training system;
4. Validation of professional knowledge, skills and competencies (Art. 1, paragraph 1 VET Act).

**Who has leadership roles in VET system?**

The management of vocational education and training is conducted at national, regional, and local levels. The Ministry of Education and Science coordinates national policy on vocational education and training in Bulgaria. Sports and culture ministries are responsible for VET schools in the respective study fields (Cedefop, 2024b, p. 4). The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy also plays a role in executing the national policy in the field of VET. Additionally, municipalities are responsible for shaping and carrying out vocational guidance policies for students and the unemployed within their jurisdictions.

**Who has responsibility for the delivery of VET?**

Vocational Education and Training in the secondary education system is offered by vocational high schools, art schools, and sports schools. Additionally, other institutions such as profiled high schools, and schools in places of deprivation of liberty offer VET as a distinct program from the main curriculum (Cedefop, 2018b, p. 32).

Post-secondary VET, but not higher education, is provided by vocational colleges and in some vocational high schools.

Professional knowledge, skills and competences can also be acquired through non-formal education and informal learning in vocational training centres (Centrove za profesionalno obuchenie) licensed by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (Natsionalna Agentsiya za profesionalno obrazovanie I obuchenie).

Vocational guidance activities are conducted by a range of institutions, both public and private, and dedicated Information and Vocational Guidance Centres (Centar za informatsiya I profesionalno orientirane) have been established as well. (Art. 18 VET Act).

**Who has responsibility and accountability for VET standards?**

The National agency for vocational education and training (Natsionalna Agentsiya za profesionalno obrazovanie I obuchenie) is a key stakeholder responsible for developing State education standards (Darzhavni obrazovatelni standarti) that shape qualifications and curricula for all VET qualifications (Cedefop, 2024b, p. 4). For more details see description of main stakeholders in question: Who are the key stakeholders in the VET system

**Are entitlements to VET detailed?**

Applicants aspiring to enroll in vocational education and training programs must meet certain criteria, including a minimum age requirement, health status, initial education level, and qualification level (Art.14 VET Act).

The number of pupils who will be admitted to school vocational education is determined by the state, additional state and school admission plans, and are approved under the conditions and according to the procedure of the Preschool and School Education Act (Zakon za preduchilishtnoto I uchilishtnoto obrazovanie, Art. 14, Para. 2). Private schools determine their admission plan independently.

There is also a specific admission plan for state and municipal vocational training centres over 16 years of age.

The criteria and processes for student admissions are governed by the state educational standards for organising activities within school education (Darzhaven obrazovaten standart za organizaciyata na deinostite v uchilishtnoto obrazovanie).

The conditions and procedure for accepting persons over the age of 16 for vocational training are determined by the training institution (Art. 15 VET Act).

**Are entitlements to VET support detailed?**

The status of centres for vocational training and centres for information and vocational guidance is regulated in the VET Act (Art. 22). These centres may be state-owned, municipal, private, Bulgarian with foreign

participation, or entirely foreign. Additionally, the law includes a dedicated section outlining the roles of ministries, municipalities, and social partners in vocational education and training

**Are funding mechanisms for VET legislated?**

There is a state educational standard for the financing of institutions in the system of preschool and school education. Apart from through VET Act (Chapter 7), funding is regulated through the Ordinance on the funding of institutions in the preschool and school education system (Naredba za finansiraneto na instituciite v sistemata na preduchilishtnoto i uchilishtnoto obrazovanie) (<https://lex.bg/en/laws/ldoc/2137177162>).

The methods of funding for state and municipal schools, information and professional guidance centres and teacher training centres are specified in the VET Act:

- a. (a) the state budget;
- b. (b) budgets of municipalities;
- c. (c) sponsorships, donations, bequests;
- d. (d) own income;
- e. (e) national and international programs;
- f. (f) other sources.

The funding for vocational training following secondary education is covered by individuals, in accordance with the terms and conditions set by the Minister of Education. The training is financed by:

- a. (a) trainees;
- b. (b) employers;
- c. (c) the state budget (active labour market policies);
- d. (d) EU programmes (mainly from the ESF).

Private vocational schools can also apply for state funding, but they are a relatively small number. All adult VET providers are private. They can also receive public funding (Cedefop, 2018b, p. 44).

With the membership of Bulgaria in the EU (since 2007), many EU-funded programmes are implemented, focused on improving the professional qualifications of the unemployed and the vocational training of adults (Simeonova-Ganeva, Ganev, & Angelova, 2022).

**Is the role of the employer legislated?**

Article 56, Paragraph 1 of the VET Act outlines the roles of employers, such as contributing to the development, update, and harmonization of the List of Professions for Vocational Education and Training; involvement in the creation and revision of state educational requirements for professional qualifications; and participation in examinations for



professional qualifications. Additionally, the law delineates their responsibilities in dual education systems.

**Is the role of career counselling and guidance support detailed?**

The VET Act defines what vocational guidance includes - it provides information, consultation and advice to students and other persons regarding the choice of profession and career development (Art. 5 VET Act). It is specified that career guidance is carried out by Centres for Information and Career Guidance (Centrove za informaciya i profesionalno orientirane) (Art.21 VET Act).

**Preschool and School Education Act (Zakon Za Preduchilishtnoto I Uchilishtnoto Obrazovanie)**

([https://lll.mon.bg/uploaded\\_files/ZAKON\\_za\\_preduchilishtnoto\\_i\\_ucilishtnoto\\_obrazovanie\\_EN.pdf](https://lll.mon.bg/uploaded_files/ZAKON_za_preduchilishtnoto_i_ucilishtnoto_obrazovanie_EN.pdf))

**Overview of legislation**

The Preschool and school education Act (Zakon za preduchilishtnoto i uchilishtnoto obrazovanie) regulates the structure, functions, organisation, management and financing of the preschool and school education system. The creation of the Preschool and school education act was necessary due to the need to redefine the goals of Bulgarian preschool and school education, so that their focus is on the development of the personality of the child and the student, on the development of skills for handling constantly changing information and mastering learning methods, of key competences and lifelong learning attitude (Motives to the Preschool and School Education Act, 2016).

**Aim of legislation in relation to VET**

Preschool and school education Act (Zakon za preduchilishtnoto i uchilishtnoto obrazovanie) introduces a reform in education, which also leads to changes in VET Act. The main goal of the reforms is to achieve greater flexibility and permeability of educational paths, implementation of inclusive education (reducing the number of early leavers from the education and training system); improving the quality of VET; increasing the professional qualification of teachers and trainers (Cedefop, 2018b).

**Who has leadership roles in VET system?**

The Ministry of Education and Science (Ministerstvo na obrazovaniето I naukata) has the leading role regarding school vocational training.

**Who has responsibility for the delivery of VET?**

Vocational training is offered by high schools. Additionally, a dual education system includes work-based learning provided by employers who have agreements with the school.

**Who has responsibility and accountability for VET standards?**

Preschool and school education Act regulates the quality management process, including in VET. Assessment is carried out twice a year through self-assessment and inspection (Inspections by internal experts with the support of experts of the National Inspectorate of Education-Natsionalen inspektorat po obrazovanieto). Self-evaluation is part of the internal assessment of the quality of education. Vocational schools define their own self-assessment procedures and criteria under the conditions and order set by the State Educational Standard for Quality Management in Institutions (quality management is regulated in an Ordinance N<sup>o</sup> 16 from 2016) (Cedefop, 2018b, p. 61).

**Are entitlements to VET detailed?**

In Section IX of Preschool and school education Act the admission and transfer of pupils to school institutions is determined. At the beginning of the school year, the number of places in the different types of classes is determined in accordance with the state educational standard. Admission of students is based on the results of the national external assessment conducted at the end of the 7th grade.

**Are entitlements to VET support detailed?**

According to the Preschool and school education Act different in their activity Centres for support for personal development (Centrove za podkrepa na lichnostnoto razvitie) are created. According to Article 49, paragraph 1 of the Preschool and School Education Act, these centres, based on their activities, can be for:

1. development of interests, abilities, competences and performance in the field of sciences, technologies, arts and sports;
2. career guidance and counselling;
3. preventive, diagnostic, rehabilitative, correctional and resocializing work with children and students;
4. resource support for children and students with special educational needs;
5. pedagogical and psychological support;
6. implementation of support and training programs for families of children and students with disabilities.

**Are funding mechanisms for VET legislated?**

The Preschool and school education Act The basic principles of financing education, including vocational education and training (VET), are defined by the Ministry of Education and Science. Schools are allocated what are known as delegated budgets. These are calculated using a formula that considers the number of students, regional disparities, and variations

among VET programs. Recently, results-based funding has been incorporated into this formula (Abdul-Hamid, et al, p. 2021).

**Is the role of the employer legislated?**

In the Preschool and school education Act it is stated that curricula may be developed in collaboration with employer representatives (Art.83, Para. 8).

In connection with the dual form of training, Article 115 of the Preschool and school education Act regulates the need for a partnership between the school offering vocational training and one or several employers.

The role of employers in the composition of public councils, created for schools that provide training for the acquisition of a professional qualification, is also regulated. (Art. 266 Preschool and school education Act).

**Is the role of career counselling and guidance support detailed?**

Career guidance is provided to students as a component of the overall support for their personal development (Art. 178, Para. 1 Preschool and school education Act). The activities occur within the Centres for Personal Development, which are part of the system of preschool and school education. These centres organise activities that support the inclusion, education, and upbringing of children and students, as well as foster the development of their interests and talents. (Art.26, Para.1).

**Any additional information**

In Bulgaria, along with the two mentioned laws, numerous by-laws have been adopted to regulate access to education, as well as to provide support and guidance ([Educational support and guidance \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)).

These are, for example:

- The regulation on inclusive education (Naredba za priobshtavashtoto obrazovanie), [https://ruo-sofia-grad.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/5\\_0.pdf](https://ruo-sofia-grad.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/5_0.pdf);
- Ordinance № 5 of June 3, 2016 on preschool education (Naredba za preduchilishtnoto obrazovanie), <https://lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2136850647>;
- Ordinance No. 24 of September 10, 2020 on the physical environment and information and library provision of kindergartens, schools and personal development support centres (Naredba № 24 ot 10.09.2020 za fizicheskata sreda i informatsionnoto i bibliotechnoto osiguryavane na detskite gradini, uchilshta i tsentrovete za podkrepa na lichnostnoto razvitie), [https://ruo-sofia-grad.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/0\\_011.pdf](https://ruo-sofia-grad.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/0_011.pdf);
- Ordinance No. 1 of February 19, 2020 on the organisation and conduct of examinations for the acquisition of professional qualifications (Naredba № 1 ot 19.02.2020 za organizatsiyata i

provedaneto na izpitite za pridobivanje na profesionalna cvalifikatsiya),

<https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/naredba1izm-1.pdf>.

Bulgaria has in place national programs and strategies which support the implementation of priorities in VET, from updating the school infrastructure and equipment to developing digital skills and careers (Cedefop, 2024, p. 11):

- a. National program "Information and communication technologies (ICT) in the preschool and school education system (Natsionalna programa „Informatsionni i komunikatsionni tehnologii v sistemata na preduschilishtnoto i uchilishtnoto obrazovanie”) (<https://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=505>);
- b. National program "Digital qualification (Natsionalna programa “Digitalna kvalifikatsiya”);(<https://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=1583>);
- c. National development program BULGARIA 2030 (Natsionalna programa za razvitie Bulgaria 2030 (<https://www.minfin.bg/bg/1394>).

### **Employment Promotion Act (Zakon Za Nasarchavane Na Zaetostta)**

(<https://www.mlsp.government.bg/uploads/24/politiki/zaetost/zakoni/epa.pdf>)

#### **Overview of legislation**

Part of the legislation related to the provision of VET is the Employment Promotion Act. It not only promotes and preserves employment but also regulates vocational guidance and adult training (Article 1 of the Employment Promotion Act). Adult training programs and vocational guidance measures are part of the active labour market policy. (Art. 16 of the Employment Promotion Act).

#### **Aim of legislation in relation to VET**

The Employment Promotion Act is part of the state policy on promoting employment, protecting the labour market, vocational guidance, training of adults, to provide employment mediation services, to work with economically inactive persons and to study and analyse labour resources in the country. In Art. 58a the types of adult training are specified:

1. literacy training;
2. training to acquire a professional qualification;
3. training for acquisition and improvement of key competences.

#### **Who has leadership roles in VET system?**

According to Art. 58 of the Employment Promotion Act the Minister of Labor and Social Policy, in collaboration with the Minister of Education

and Science, develops and coordinates the national policy for adult education. They establish conditions for the assessment and recognition of adults' knowledge, skills, and competencies gained through non-formal education and informal learning.

**Who has responsibility for the delivery of VET?**

The training is carried out by the Employment Agency; The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training; vocational training centres; individuals or legal entities registered under current legislation (Art. 60). By region, the activities are conducted by regional administrations, local self-government bodies together with the territorial divisions of the Employment Agency, the territorial divisions of ministries, organisations and social partners (Art. 9). Employers can organise vocational training for unemployed individuals through qualification courses, on-the-job training, and various seminars and conferences. Additionally, non-governmental organisations, enterprises, and traditional Bulgarian community centres (Chitalishta) provide informal training opportunities. In smaller settlements, community centres frequently serve as the sole providers of library and Internet access (Cedefop, 2018b, p. 45)

**Who has responsibility and accountability for VET standards?**

During the training period, the Employment Agency and its territorial divisions exercise control over the fulfillment of the assumed contractual obligations (Article 68 PPZNZ), as well as the fulfillment of the obligations under the concluded vocational guidance contracts (Art. 71 of the Regulations for the implementation of the Employment Promotion Act).

**Are entitlements to VET detailed?**

The employment agency coordinates adult training programs in line with labour market demands, employer requirements, and the institution's approved annual activity plan. (Art.63, Employment Promotion Act).

**Are entitlements to VET support detailed?**

Pursuant to the Regulations for the Implementation of the Employment Promotion Act (Pravilnika za prilagane na zakona za nasarchavane na zaetostta), scholarships, transport and accommodation expenses may be provided for participants in literacy training, for the acquisition of professional qualifications or key competences, for psychological support and referral to appropriate programs and measures for employment and training.

**Are funding mechanisms for VET legislated?**

Vocational training of registered unemployed is funded by the state budget, including EU-funded programs.

**Is the role of the employer legislated?**

	<p>Art. 22 of the Employment Promotion Act lists the rights and obligations of employers with regard to the information they must submit for vacancies and the training needs of employees and their own possibilities for organising it.</p> <p>The financing options for employers who ensure the maintenance and improvement of the qualifications of employed workers and employees are also specified, as well as the funds that employers receive for each open workplace for on-the-job training where an unemployed person, referred by the divisions of The Employment Agency, is hired (Art. 466).</p> <p><b>Is the role of career counselling and guidance support detailed?</b></p> <p>Career counselling is described in more detail in Art. 71 of Regulations for the Implementation of the Employment Promotion Act (<a href="https://www.az.government.bg/pages/pravilnitsi/">https://www.az.government.bg/pages/pravilnitsi/</a>). Employment programs as part of the Annual employment plans very often have a special component for career guidance. Vocational guidance is provided to help individuals, in line with their personal profiles and unique characteristics, choose a suitable profession, relevant training, and career progression.</p> <p><b>Any additional information</b></p> <p>VET is subject to wider national strategies and policies for economic development, education and lifelong learning (eg the Lifelong Learning Strategies discussed in D2.1). Alongside these, strategic documents specifically focused on VET have been developed, which will be discussed below.</p>
<p><b>Is there mention of career counselling and guidance in the legislation?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ministry of Education and Science organises the professional guidance. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is also involved in this activity. Municipalities develop and execute policies within their jurisdiction regarding vocational guidance for students, the unemployed, and other individuals. (<a href="#">Guidance and counselling in early childhood and school education</a>).</li> <li>• According to VET Act, art. 21 vocational guidance of pupils and other persons takes place in the Centres for information and vocational guidance, licensed by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training.</li> <li>• In the Preschool and school education Act counselling and guidance in preschool and school education is regulated. At least once a year, parents have the right to receive information, support and counselling in kindergartens or at school on matters related to the education, career guidance and personal development of their children.</li> <li>• The Preschool and school education Act determines the status of the Centres for support of personal development, incl. their role in career guidance and counselling (Art. 49, Para. 1,2), as well as support for the personal development of children and students,</li> </ul>



	<p>which also includes career guidance for students (Art.178, para. 1,6).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A National Career Guidance Portal has been established for students, offering access to a School-level Career Guidance Program for grades I to XII. Students can choose a career counselor to schedule an e-consultation or an on-site visit. These consultations are conducted by certified career counselors and are offered at no cost.</li> <li>• In the Employment Promotion Act relations for professional guidance are also arranged, which is carried out by the Employment Agency. The term "Professional guidance" is defined in the Employment Promotion Act: The Professional guidance is information, consultation and advice regarding the choice of profession and career development (Employment Promotion Act, Additional provisions (32).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Are their national strategies in place to support VET and the skills formation system?</b></p>	<p><b>Strategy for Development of Vocational Education and Training (2015-2020) (Strategiya za razvitie na profesionalното obrazovanie i obuchenie)</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/Strategia-POO-2014.pdf">https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/Strategia-POO-2014.pdf</a></p> <p><b>Overview of strategy:</b> The strategy defines ten challenges and four priority areas of impact: 1. Ensuring the quality and efficiency of VET; 2. Improving access to VET; 3. Improving the system of vocational education and training, in the context of lifelong learning; 4. Strengthening the participation and responsibilities of all stakeholders to ensure personnel with the necessary qualifications for the economy.</p> <p><b>Aim of strategy in relation to VET:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• transforming initial and continuing vocational education and training into appealing learning opportunity;</li> <li>• ensuring flexible access to training and qualification acquisition;</li> <li>• assumption of responsibilities by VET stakeholders through more active participation;</li> <li>• coordinated implementation and management of national and European instruments in the field of recognition of acquired competences, quality assurance, mobility and transparency of mechanisms and processes in the field of VET (Strategy for development of vocational education and training (2015-2020), p. 4).</li> </ul> <p><b>Link to other strategies</b></p> <p>National Strategy for Lifelong Learning (2008-2013); National Strategy for Lifelong Learning (2014-2020); National Youth Strategy (2010–2020); Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers (2013 – 2020); Updated Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2013 – 2020).</p> <p><b>Who is responsible for the strategy?</b></p> <p>Ministry of Education and Science.</p> <p><b>Who are the key stakeholders in the strategy?</b></p>

Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, Ministry of Finance, Employment Agency, Human Resource Development Centre, Universities, Business, Social partners, Vocational schools.

**Any additional information**

The strategy has been executed in line with the Action Plan for 2015-2017, which is part of the Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Bulgaria covering the period from 2015 to 2020. (<https://www.mon.bg/mon/strategii-i-politiki/strategicheski-dokumenti-2/arhiv-strategicheski-dokumenti/>).

**Strategic Vision for the Development of Dual Education in Bulgaria by 30 (Strategicheska Visiya Za Razvitie Na Dualnoto Profesionalno Obrazovanie I Obuchenie V Bulgaria Do 2030** ([https://www.mon.bg/nfs/2023/10/strategy-dual\\_17102023.pdf](https://www.mon.bg/nfs/2023/10/strategy-dual_17102023.pdf))

**Overview of strategy**

Outlines the general framework for the development of dual vocational education and training (dVET) in Bulgaria until 2030. It sets four strategic goals: 1. Comprehensive integration of dVET in the educational system; 2. Transforming business into a driving force of dVET; 3. Expanding the social and regional scope of dVET; 4. Institutional strengthening and expansion of partnerships with interested parties.

**Aim of strategy in relation to VET**

The strategic vision aims for dual professional education and training to grow into a leading form of professional education in Bulgaria; to be driven by the business, to work qualitatively and in response to the needs of the labour market; to be harmonized with interdepartmental policies to achieve quality employment and a strong economy in all regions and for all citizens of Bulgaria. Graduates from dual education systems are being equipped to tackle contemporary business challenges, which encompass digital and green skills, fundamental competencies, and transferable skills (Strategic vision, 2023, p. 7).

**Link to other strategies**

Bulgaria's National Recovery and Resilience Plan; Strategic Framework for Development of Education, Training and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 - 2030); National Strategy for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises 2021-2027; Assessment of the State of the Dual Training System and Recommendations for the Development of the DOMINO II project under the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Program (Strategic vision, 2023, p. 3).

**Who is responsible for the strategy?**

Ministry of Education and Science.

**Who are the key stakeholders in the strategy?**

Regional department of education, Vocational training centres, Centres of Vocational Excellence, schools, enterprises, employer organisations

**Any additional information**

The strategy envisages an action plan for the implementation of dVET, updating relevant regulatory documents, securing funding and administrative capacity for dVET implementation.

**National Lifelong Learning Strategy (2014-2020) (Natsionalna Strategia Za Uchene Prez Tseliya Zhivot 2014-2020)**

[https://www.mon.bg/nfs/2018/01/strategy\\_lll\\_2014\\_2020.pdf](https://www.mon.bg/nfs/2018/01/strategy_lll_2014_2020.pdf)

**Overview of strategy**

The document covers all forms of education, training and learning - formal, non-formal, independent and all areas of learning - pre-school education and training, general school education, vocational education and training, higher education, continuing adult education, validation of non-formal learning outcomes and self-learning (NSLLL 2014-2020, pp. 3-5). NSLLL (2014-2020) sets four main priorities: 1. New educational approach and innovations in education and training; 2. Improving the quality of education and training; 3. Providing an educational environment for equal access to lifelong learning, for active social inclusion and active civic participation; 4. Stimulation of education and training, tailored to the needs of the economy and changes in the labour market.

**Aim of strategy in relation to VET**

- Making VET an attractive and effective learning opportunity;
- Increasing the employability of VET graduates;
- In 2020, the share of those who have acquired a degree of professional qualification in the broad fields of "Informatics", "Technology", "Production and processing" and "Architecture and construction" should be at least 60%. (NSLLL 2014-2020, p. 32).

**Link to other strategies**

NSLLL (2008-2013); Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (2015-2020); Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers (2013 – 2020); National Youth Strategy (2010-2020); Updated Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2013 - 2020

**Who is responsible for the strategy?**

Ministry of Education and Science; National Lifelong Learning Council (NSLLL 2014-2020, p. 57).

**Who are the key stakeholders in the strategy?**

A wide range of state institutions - ministries and agencies – Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, Employment Agency, Trade unions, Employers organisations, NGOs, Academic institutions.

**Any additional information**

The implementation of National Strategy for Lifelong Learning (2014-2020) is conducted through annual action plans for the Strategy and includes reporting to the Council of Ministers. (NSLLL 2014-2020, p. 58-59).

**Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 - 2030) (Strategicheska Ramka Za Razvitie Na Obrazovaniето, Obuchenieto I Ucheneto V Republika Bulgaria)**

([https://www.mon.bg/nfs/2021/03/strategicheska-ramka\\_obrobuuchene\\_110321.pdf](https://www.mon.bg/nfs/2021/03/strategicheska-ramka_obrobuuchene_110321.pdf))

**Overview of strategy**

The Strategic framework (2021 – 2030) formulates nine priority areas of impact: 1. Early childhood development 2. Competences and talents 3. Motivated and creative teachers 4. Cohesive school communities and systematic work with parents 5. Effective inclusion, lasting inclusion and educational integration 6. Educational innovation, digital transformation and sustainable development 7. Realization in the professions of present and future 8. Lifelong learning 9. Effective governance and networking.

**Aim of strategy in relation to VET**

The focus is on expanding vocational education and training in accordance with the development of digitalisation and technology, the transition to a green economy and sustainable development. It aims to achieve quality and innovative professional education and training that meets the dynamically changing requirements of the labour market; updating curricula and programs to adapt to changes in the structure of professions; promotion of partnerships between vocational high schools, higher schools, enterprises and research centres for sharing material base and initiatives, as well as inclusion in regional, sectoral, national and European networks; increasing the share of the dual form of education (Strategic framework 2021, p. 38-39); improving the mechanisms for validating knowledge and skills in the field of vocational education and training acquired through non-formal education or informal learning, as well as based on acquired professional experience (Strategic framework 2021, p. 40).

**Link to other strategies**

Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers (2013 – 2020); National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014 – 2020; National Strategy for Promoting and Improving Literacy (2014 – 2020); Strategy for effective application of information and communication technologies in education and science of the Republic of Bulgaria (2014 – 2020); Strategy for Development of VET in Republic Strategy for the development of professional education and training in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2015 – 2020; National strategy for the development of pedagogical personnel; National strategy for Roma integration (2012 – 2020); Strategy for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities (2015 – 2020).

**Who is responsible for the strategy?**

Ministry of Education and Science.

**Who are the key stakeholders in the strategy?**

Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, Employment Agency, Universities, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Executive Agency “Programme Education”, Regional department of education, Vocational schools, Municipalities.

**Any additional information**

The strategic framework will be executed through three plans, monitored with two interim reports, and concluded with a final analytical report. The objectives, strategies, and performance/result indicators within it will be revised for two forecasted periods—2024 and 2027—to reflect the progress made or any shifts in the challenges faced. (Strategic Framework 2021, p. 3).

**The Employment Strategy of the Republic Of Bulgaria 2021–2030 (Strategiya Po Zaetostta Na Republika Bulgaria)**

(<https://www.mlsp.government.bg/uploads/26/zaetost/employment-strategy-2021-2030-2022.pdf>)

**Overview of strategy**

The strategic document defines the tasks and directing the efforts of all stakeholders in the labour market towards reducing the unemployment rate, increasing the economic activity of the population and increasing the labour potential of the country's workforce.

**Aim of strategy in relation to VET**

The development of skills, qualifications and the provision of opportunities for quality professional training are a key factor in achieving the objectives of the Strategy for increasing employment and in response to the modern needs of the labour market. Activities that concern VET are:

- application of pan-European tools for measuring the quality of VET - European Quality Framework for VET (EQAVET) and using the results for management and financing of the VET system;
- updating the state educational standards and curricula in order to increase the quality of the educational process and ensure compliance of acquired skills with the needs for successful professional realization and active civic behavior;
- reform of the adult training system in close cooperation with social partners (updating the existing model for monitoring and quality control of vocational training; internal and external monitoring of training results with the active participation of employers; improved communication between stakeholders; upgrading of the information system of VET, implementation of a system for peer evaluation of the quality of VET;
- more comprehensive implementation of the dual form in schools and its testing in higher education institutions (The Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021–30, p. 36).

**Link to other strategies**

	<p>Updated Employment Strategy 2013 r. – 2020; National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030; Bulgaria's National Recovery and Resilience Plan; Updated National Strategy for Demographic Development of the Population in the Republic of Bulgaria 2012 – 2030.</p> <p><b>Who is responsible for the strategy?</b> Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Employment Agency</p> <p><b>Who are the key stakeholders in the strategy?</b> Ministry of Economy and Industry, Ministry of Education and Science, National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, Employment Agency, employers' organisations, trade unions, NGOs, business, Centres of Vocational Education.</p> <p><b>Any additional information</b> The strategy unfolds via annual national employment action plans, encompassing programs, projects, and measures for training and employment. These plans detail specific objectives, principal activities, target demographics, and the institutions, organisations, and partners accountable for their execution, along with the allocated funding.</p>
<p><b>Is there mention of career counselling and guidance in the strategies?</b></p>	<p><b>The Strategy for Development of Vocational Education and Training (2015-2020)</b></p> <p>The necessary activities to achieve effective career counselling are formulated as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improvement of coordination and cooperation between stakeholders for the development of career guidance;</li> <li>• expanding access to the labour market through the development of lifelong career management skills;</li> <li>• development and implementation of a system for tracking the realization of VET graduates;</li> <li>• development and implementation of a feedback system taking into account the achievements of trainees in apprenticeships and work-based learning (dual learning);</li> <li>• provision of the career guidance system with quality information and methodical resources (Strategy for Development of VET (2015-2020), p. 17).</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategic Vision for the Development of Dual Vocational Education and Training in Bulgaria by 2030</b></p> <p>For the development of the dual VET model and its overall integration into the education system, activities are planned for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enhancing collaborations between schools and businesses from the earliest stages of education for fostering a lasting interest in in-demand labour market professions, including STEM fields. This can be achieved through initiatives like early exposure to companies, the working world, open days, and pre-professional assessments, etc.;</li> </ul>



- institutionalization of guidance and information structures in schools and beyond, along with providing permanent and systematic support for career guidance beyond project funding;
- addressing parents as a target group in the process of vocational guidance and counselling (Strategic vision 2023: Strategic objective 1, 1.6. Introduction of systematic vocational guidance, counselling and improvement of the public image of dVET, p. 10);
- localization of support as a priority in educational institutions and building sustainable centres to support the transition to dVET where schools and companies do not have the capacity to implement dVET; preparation and vocational guidance for dVET already in primary schools (Strategic Vision 2023: Strategic objective 3, 3.2 Strengthening the capacity of local partners in underdeveloped environments to implement dVET, p. 14);
- development of an integrated platform enabling: informing the general public about the goals of dVET and its implementation; access to regulatory documents and good practices; introduction and provision of information about the institutions included in the dVET model - current and potential employers and educational institutions; possibilities to search in the platform by: region, schools, companies, professions, etc. possibility to exchange and hold consultations between the institutions included in the dVET model - by presenting case studies and online counselling (Strategic Vision 2023: Strategic Objective 4, 4.2. Development of information resources for management and coordination of dVET, p. 15).

### **National Strategy for Lifelong Learning (2014-2020)**

This strategy deals with the concept of "career guidance" by defining it according to Art. 5 of the VET Act: "Provides information, consultation and advice to students and other persons regarding the choice of profession and career development" (NSLLL 2014-2020, p. 62). The strategic document includes activities to improve career guidance in four of the eight areas of impact of the Strategy:

- In Impact Area 3.4.1: activity envisaged for the development and expansion of the career guidance system and providing conditions for the formation and development of career planning skills, both among schoolchildren and students, and among adults (NSLLL 2014-2020, p. 23);
- In Impact Area 3.4.4. an activity is foreseen to provide conditions for early career guidance and professional choice, including through cooperation with all interested parties (NSLLL 2014-2020, p. 31);
- In Impact Area 3.4.5. an activity on the development of career guidance services is foreseen for the purpose of making decisions

about education, training and career development (NSLLL 2014-2020, p. 33);

- In Impact Area 3.4.6. an activity to improve career guidance and counselling services is planned (NSLL 2014-2020, p. 38).

### **Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 - 2030)**

addresses the following career counselling development activities:

- Provision of a system of accessible and quality services for systematic career guidance from early childhood and at school in connection with the successful realization in the labor market (Strategic Framework, Priority Area 7, p. 38).
- Systematic career guidance and counselling of students at every stage of education to discover their professional interests (Strategic Framework, Priority Area 8, p.40).
- Creation of an integrated system for career guidance and professional education and training for students and adults (Strategic Framework, Priority Area 8, p. 40).

### **The Employment Strategy Of The Republic Of Bulgaria 2021–2030**

Focuses on young people, incl. young people from the group of NEETs and advocates the active implementation of career guidance from an early stage in school, as an opportunity for early motivation for young people to educate themselves (The Employment strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021–2030, p. 39).

In National Employment Action Plans 2022 (<https://www.mlsp.government.bg/natsionalni-planove-za-deystvie-po-zaetostta>) the development of career guidance systems is listed among the goals in the development of a detailed toolkit for lifelong learning, laid down as a measure in Bulgaria's recovery and resilience plan (National Employment Action Plans 2022, p. 38), as well as part of efforts to improve mediation services for the unemployed, activation of inactive, including discouraged persons (National Employment Action Plans 2022, p. 40-41). “In 2022, the application of an innovative approach to vocational guidance continued. It provided individuals with opportunities to test their practical skills in a profession of their choice, to be able to take informed decisions in selecting their career path or professional development” (Cedefop, 2024b, p. 9).

### **National Youth Strategy (2021-2030)**

([https://nism.bg/bg/documents/nacionalni/bgstrategii?view=frontlist&catid\[0\]=45](https://nism.bg/bg/documents/nacionalni/bgstrategii?view=frontlist&catid[0]=45))

	<p>It recognizes the insufficient familiarization of young people with career guidance and realization initiatives and sets strategic goals for the promotion of youth employment and the inclusion in education and employment of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) (National Youth Strategy 2021, p. 42).</p> <p><b>National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Inclusion 2030</b>  <a href="https://www.mlsp.government.bg/uploads/35/sv/nsnbnsv-2030-dop-izm-2.pdf">https://www.mlsp.government.bg/uploads/35/sv/nsnbnsv-2030-dop-izm-2.pdf</a></p> <p>It encompasses measures to offer intermediary services to registered job seekers, including professional guidance, participation in job search workshops, and motivation for proactive engagement in the labour market (p. 40).</p> <p><b>Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers (2013 – 2020)</b>  <a href="https://www.mon.bg/nfs/2018/01/strategy_napusnali_obr_sistema_2013_2020.pdf">https://www.mon.bg/nfs/2018/01/strategy_napusnali_obr_sistema_2013_2020.pdf</a></p> <p>Career guidance and counselling is a measure to support early school leaver intervention policies. In this regard, it is considered necessary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To build and implement a system for career guidance and counselling in different age categories to motivate continuing education and acquiring qualifications;</li> <li>• To promote the benefit of acquiring a professional qualification as an opportunity for realization at the risk of premature school leaving (p. 30).</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2030</b> (<a href="https://www.mon.bg/nfs/2021/01/rms_strategia-vo_120121.pdf">https://www.mon.bg/nfs/2021/01/rms_strategia-vo_120121.pdf</a>)</p> <p>The strategy aims to enhance collaboration among higher education institutions, businesses, professional organisations, and the government in shaping curricula and programs, providing practical training, and offering career guidance to students. It includes measures to bolster student career guidance through career centres and the establishment of a national network of such centres (p. 40).</p>
<p><b>Who are the key stakeholders in the VET system?</b></p>	<p><b>Ministry of Education and Science (Ministerstvo na Obrazovaniето i Naukata)</b> (<a href="https://www.mon.bg/">https://www.mon.bg/</a>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develops and coordinates state policy regarding vocational education and training;</li> <li>• Coordinates the implementation of anticipated measures and adopted national programs in the field of Vocational Education and Training;</li> </ul>

- under the leadership of the Minister of Education or his/her deputies, advisory councils are created and operate for changes in the regulatory framework, for updating curricula, introducing novelties into the system.

**Vocational Education and Training Advisory Council at Ministry of Education and Science (Konsultativen savet za profesionalno obrazovanie i obuchenie)** (<https://www.mon.bg/profesionalno-obrazovanie/forum-poo/konsultativen-savet-po-profesionalno-obuchenie-i-obrazovanie/>):

- an advisory body that coordinates the efforts of all stakeholders to modernize and reform vocational education and training. It includes representatives of employer and trade union organisations, business, universities and vocational high schools, as well as experts from various institutions;
- assists the Minister of Education and Science in reforming VET;
- discusses changes to: the regulatory framework, the List of Professions for Vocational Education and Training, quality assurance of dual training, provision of digital learning materials for VET, tracking of VET graduates.

**Ministry of Culture (Ministerstvo na kulturata)** (<https://mc.government.bg/>):

- responsible for vocational schools in the field of arts; manages cultural institutions that provide non-formal and informal learning opportunities for persons of all ages;
- manages and finances VET in arts schools in the secondary education system; collects data on trainings coordinated and financed by the Ministry of Culture;
- participates in commissions and councils created at the Ministry of Education and Culture for changes in the regulatory framework, updating curricula and improving the quality of education.

**Ministry of Youth and Sports (Ministerstvo na mladezhta i sporta)** (<http://mpes.government.bg/Default.aspx>):

- responsible for professional schools in the field of sports; manages sports organisations that provide non-formal and informal learning opportunities for individuals of all ages;
- manages and finances VET in sports schools in the secondary education system; collects data on the trainings coordinated and financed by the Ministry of Youth and Sports;
- Participation in commissions and councils established by the Ministry of Education and Science for revising the regulatory framework, updating curricula, and enhancing the quality of education.

**The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (Ministerstvo na truda i sotsialnata politika) (<https://www.mlsp.government.bg/eng/>):**

- implements the state policy in the field of labour market, training of the workforce and integration of disadvantaged groups into the labour market;
- organises the study of employers' needs for a workforce with certain qualifications and maintains the National Classification of Professions and Positions;
- participates in advisory councils for changes in the regulatory framework, develops and implements programs and measures for employment and training of the workforce, methods for increasing the effectiveness of adult training.

**The Employment Agency (Agentsiya po zaetostta) (<https://www.az.government.bg/>):**

- implements the state policy for increasing the employment and provides information on career guidance, counselling and training to employed and unemployed persons;
- the "Labor office" directorates at Employment Agency provide career services such as: information on professional development; counselling and guidance for inclusion in appropriate employment and training programs/measures;
- participates in advisory councils for changes in the regulatory framework, develops and implements programs and measures for employment and training of the workforce, methods for increasing the effectiveness of adult training.

**The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (Natsionalna strategiya za profesionalno obrazovanie i obuchenie) (<https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/za-napool/>):**

- issues and revokes licenses for VET guidance; carries out activity control and evaluation of the quality of training in licensed institutions in the vocational training system issues and revokes licenses for vocational training and vocational guidance; conducts oversight and evaluates the quality of education within licensed institutions in the professional training system;
- develops and proposes to the Minister of Education and Science the List of vocational education and training professions, the state educational standards for acquiring qualifications in professions; maintains a register of vocational training centres and centres for information and vocational guidance, register of issued and revoked licenses; methodologically supports the professional training centres that perform validation of professional

knowledge, skills and competences in the system of professional education and training;

- coordinates the development of strategies for enhancing professional education and training; proposes improvements to the professional education and training system; and aids in the international recognition of vocational education and training credentials.

**The Centre for Human Resources Development (Tsentar za razvitie na choveshkite resursi)** ([https://hrdc.bg/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/USTROISTVEN-PRAVILNIK\\_HRDC\\_2022.pdf](https://hrdc.bg/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/USTROISTVEN-PRAVILNIK_HRDC_2022.pdf)):

- coordinates the management and administration of the EU Erasmus+ Programme and those of EU; organises, consults, coordinates and carries out projects and studies in the field of education, vocational education and training, labour market and human resources in Bulgaria;
- coordinates and manages activities within its competences related to the selection, financing, administration, monitoring, evaluation and control of projects in the field of training and education, including VET, and youth activities.

**Regional Department of Education (Regionalni upravleniya na obrazovaniето)**

(<https://egov.bg/wps/portal/egov/dostavchitsi%20na%20uslugi/spetsializirani%20teritorialni%20administratsii/regionalno%20upravlenie%20na%20obrazovaniето>):

- territorial administrations to the Minister of Education and Science for management and control of the preschool and school education system; implement the state policy in the field of VET at the regional level through projects, programs and development strategies, as well as by supporting the functioning and improvement of the VET system at the district level;
- supervises compliance with the state educational standards, Preschool and School Education Act, Vocational Education and Training Act and other normative acts in the preschool and school education system by the institutions on the territory of the respective district;
- coordinates the interaction between the participants in the system of preschool and school education; coordinates, supervises and/or participates in the implementation of national strategies and programs of the Ministry of Education and Science for the development of education.

**Vocational training centres (Tsentrove za profesionalno obuchenie):**

- educational service providers;



- provide professional and ongoing training and validation of knowledge; non-formal education and informal learning;
- participate in the implementation of national programs and strategies in the field of professional and continuing education and training.

**Centres for information and vocational guidance (Tsentrove za informatsiya i profesionalno orientirane):**

- provide professional guidance to students and other persons;
- provide individual and group consultations for determining personal knowledge and skills to achieve career goals and specific professional realization; inform about opportunities for education, continuing education and opportunities for career development;
- participate in the implementation of national programs and strategies in the field of professional and continuing education and training.

**Executive Agency “Programme Education” (Izpalnitelna agentsiya “Programa za obrazovanie”):**

- Managing Authority of the Operational Programme “Science and Education for Smart Growth” 2014-2020 and Programme “Education” 2021 – 2027;
- The program implements, manages, and controls tools that support science and education, including VET.

**Centres of Vocational Excellence (Tsentrove za visoki postizheniya v profesionalnoto obrazovanie i obuchenie):**

- provide an opportunity for modern vocational training for students within the framework of school education, responding to social transformations in the XXI century and the changing requirements of the labour market; are implemented under Bulgaria's recovery and resilience plan in 2023.

**Municipalities:**

- participate in the development of VET policies in their territory regarding: the need for personnel and vocational guidance of students, unemployed and other persons; the development of the material and technical base of schools, municipal vocational colleges, vocational training centres and centres for information and vocational guidance through financial means from the municipal budget.

**Employer**

**organisations**

(<https://www.mlsp.government.bg/eng/sotsialno-partnorsvo>):

- express the requests/views of employers regarding the need for changes in education;
- prepare opinions and proposals for the development of the normative framework and improvement of the quality of education; organise trainings to increase the qualification and requalification of employees in the enterprises that are members of their structures; participate in the organisation of dual education;
- engage in commissions and councils established by state institutions to revise the regulatory framework, update curricula, and enhance the quality of education; contribute to the development and execution of initiatives and projects aimed at elevating the standard of professional education; collaborate with international entities.

**Trade union organisations (CITUB; CL Podkrepa):**

- protect workers' demands/views and their rights in labour market transformations
- prepare opinions and proposals in defence of those working in the field of education for the development of the normative framework and improvement of the quality of education; organise professional and civic training, training for adults, including on-the-job training, training on key competencies, training of trainers, career guidance and counselling for workers that are members of their structures;
- participate in the preparation and implementation of programs and projects for the development of new skills needed in the labour market and improvement of the quality of professional education; interact with international structures.

**Higher schools:**

- universities, specialized higher schools and independent colleges providing, with the relevant specificity, training in higher education in professional directions and in specialties;
- participate in the implementation of programs for continuing education, qualification and retraining;
- engage in commissions and councils established by state institutions to revise the regulatory framework, update curricula, and enhance the quality of education; collaborate among peers, with businesses, professional organisations, and institutions to discuss study plans and programs, practical training, and career guidance for pupils.

**Vocational high schools:**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide vocational training (initial VET) at the high school stage (after 8 grade) of the formal education system and offer vocational training to persons up to 16 years of age;</li> <li>• determine the school admission plan; determine self-assessment procedures and criteria under the conditions and order determined by the State Educational Standard for Quality Management; carry out career guidance and help students to choose education and/or profession;</li> <li>• interact with state institutions for the implementation of the state adoption plan, the implementation of strategies, programs and projects; interact with business (dual education).</li> </ul> <p><b>NGOs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• express the requests/views of different groups of civil society regarding the need for changes in education;</li> <li>• organise discussions about the need for changes in VET;</li> <li>• participate in commissions and councils created at state institutions for changes in the regulatory framework and improving the quality of education.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Who collects labour market data and information about VET?</b></p>	<p>Data and information are collected by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, <a href="https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/">https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/</a></li> <li>• National Statistical Institute (<a href="https://www.nsi.bg/">Education and Lifelong Learning   National statistical institute (nsi.bg)</a>)</li> <li>• Eurostat (<a href="https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/">Database - Eurostat (europa.eu)</a>)</li> </ul>
<p><b>What labour market data and information are collected and made available about VET (options, pathways, outcomes, etc.)?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Agency for Vocational Education and Training maintains registers of the Vocational Training Centres and the Information and Vocational Guidance Centres; register of issued documents and statistics of trained persons - <a href="https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/registri/">https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/registri/</a></li> <li>• National Statistical Institute collects statistics on Education and Lifelong Learning - number of students by type of school, by narrow fields of education, number of schools by their type; graduate students; participants in CVT, etc. <a href="https://www.nsi.bg/">Education and Lifelong Learning   National statistical institute (nsi.bg)</a></li> <li>• The National Adult Learning Information System monitors and summarizes changes in Bulgaria's adult learning sector. It provides details on the educational composition of the populace, vocational education and training (VET) participants, associated costs, professional qualification attainment, employment rates, and more.</li> <li>• In Eurostat you can find data on: Pupils enrolled in upper secondary education by programme orientation <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/">Statistics   Eurostat (europa.eu)</a>; adult learning; continuing vocational</li> </ul>

<p><b>How does labour market data and information inform VET system?</b></p>	<p>education in enterprises; education and training outcomes, early leaving from VET, etc.</p> <p>In 2022, the Employment Agency conducted surveys on employer workforce needs. Information was collected from employers about new specialties to be financed as protected by the state or as specialties leading to occupations/job posts with expected shortages in specialised staff (Cedefop, 2024, p. 9).</p> <p>In 2022 a Report on the ex-post impact assessment of the Vocational Education and Training Act has been prepared, in which all amendments to the regulatory framework in the period 2017-2022 have been examined. The results of the analysis serve as recommendations for follow-up actions related to amendments to the Vocational Education and Training Act. The main objective of the amendment of the Act in March 2024 is to facilitate the modernisation and improvement of the legal regulation of public relations in the field of vocational education and training. The changes are along the following directions: List of vocational education and training professions; Protected professions and professions for which there is an expected shortage of specialists on the labour market; Quality assurance of vocational education and training; Vocational Qualifications Framework Programmes; State educational standards; Distance learning in an electronic environment for persons aged 16 and over; Dual system of education; Training for the achievement of individual units of learning outcomes included in the state educational standards for the acquisition of qualifications in professions; Accumulation and transfer of units of learning outcomes in vocational education and training; Validation of professional knowledge, skills, and competencies; Reducing the administrative burden in the licensing, respectively registration, and procedures under the VET act; Introducing more favourable conditions for the operation of vocational training centres; Introduction of general professional competencies related to environmental protection and specific professional competencies in the use of information technology; Register of vocational colleges (Eurydice, 2024).</p> <p>Institute for Market Economics (non-governmental organisation conducting policy evaluation and analysis) elaborates an index of the correspondence between professional education and the profile of the economy in Bulgaria (<a href="https://ime.bg/analyses/novo-izsledvane-na-ipi-indeks-na-syotvetstviето-mezhdu-profesionalnoto-obrazovanie-i-profila-na-ikonomikata-2024/">https://ime.bg/analyses/novo-izsledvane-na-ipi-indeks-na-syotvetstviето-mezhdu-profesionalnoto-obrazovanie-i-profila-na-ikonomikata-2024/</a>). The index shows vocational training by sector and compares it with the distribution of the labour force in different economic activities. This comparison reveals the structural</p>
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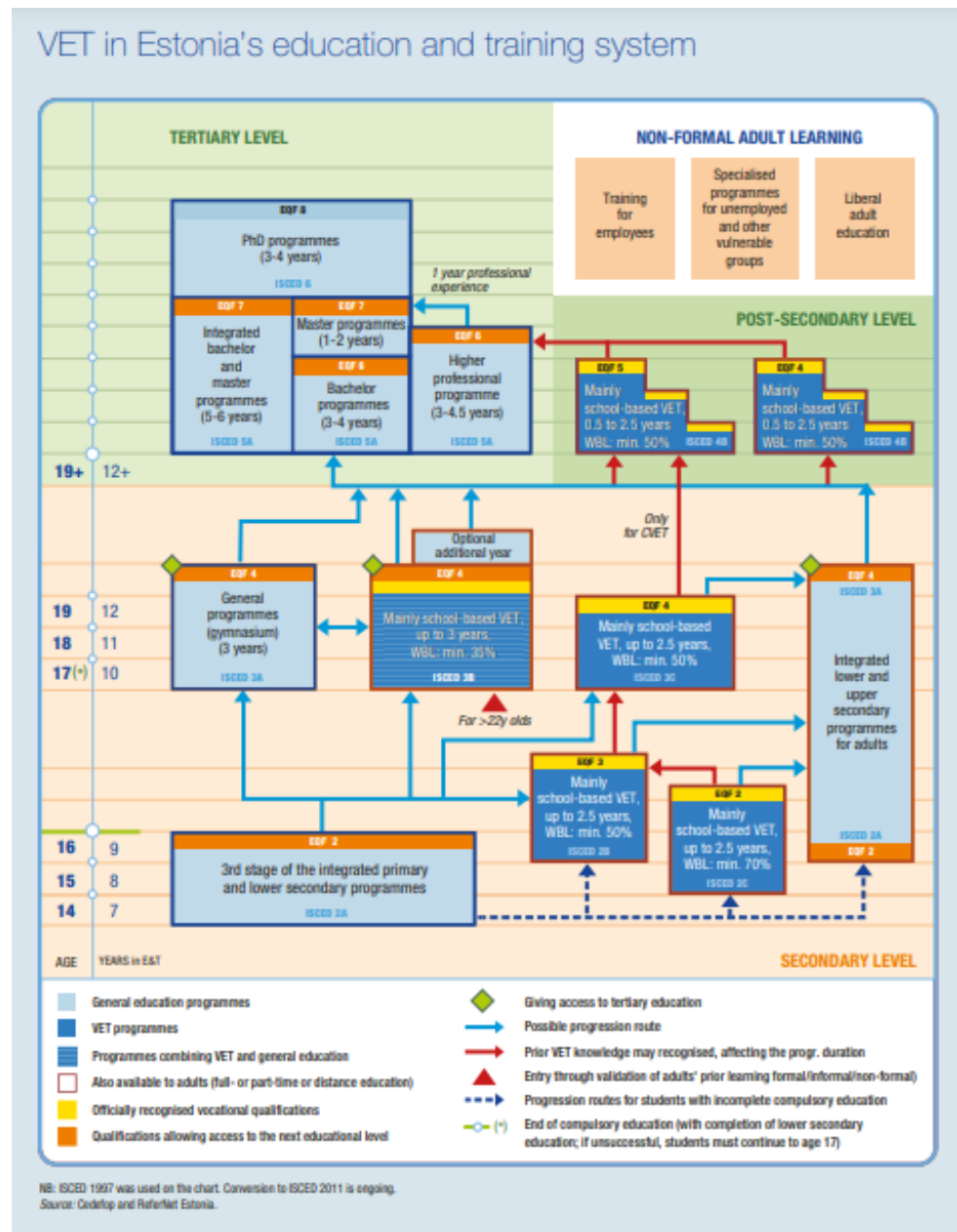
	<p>alignments and discrepancies between the education offered and the labour market's demands. Additionally, the data enables an analysis of the correlation between education and the labour market on a regional scale.</p> <p>The 2024 employment policy aims to enhance the effectiveness of job mediation services by broadening the scope of services based on short-term and long-term skill demand forecasts. This is anticipated to result in the creation of career guidance systems, the adoption of innovative approaches and methods for professional guidance, labour counselling, profiling, workforce potential activation, and personalised services adapted to regional specificities. (National Employment Action Plans 2024, p. 15).</p>
<p><b>What career counselling and guidance support is provided to those at different stages of VET pathway?</b></p>	<p>Please report on the stage support is provided, the type of support provided who is delivering support, and what information is used.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. According to a project co-financed by the European Union through the European Structural and Investment Funds, the Ministry of Education and Science is creating a website: National portal for career guidance of students: <a href="https://orientirane.mon.bg/">https://orientirane.mon.bg/</a>. It provides information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To pupils - regarding the choice of a profession, the types of professions and specialties in high schools, in order to facilitate the choice of young people for their educational and professional path, the direction of the interests and abilities of the students;</li> <li>- For parents: Up-to-date information on professions offered through secondary vocational education and training systems, as well as specialties available in higher education institutions;</li> <li>- For teachers - methodological resources are provided, tailored to the specific needs of different age groups of students, for conducting career guidance activities at school.</li> </ul> <p>The site provides thematic films, interactive games, through which young people can be supported in their choice of education and profession.</p> </li> <li>2. Career guidance within school education encompasses a range of activities that are interrelated, including information provision, assessment, counselling, mediation, and follow-up. These services aim to aid students in making independent and informed decisions regarding their education and/or career paths, while also bridging the gap between educational institutions and the job market. This guidance is provided by schools and centres dedicated to personal development support, as an integral component of overall personal growth assistance. (<a href="#">Guidance and counselling in early childhood and school education (europa.eu)</a>).</li> <li>3. The Employment Agency (through the local Directorates "Labour Bureau") offers as a service professional information, counselling and guidance aimed at jobseekers - unemployed and employed who wish to change their profession; pupils; students. Those</li> </ol>

	<p>seeking counselling services at the Employment Offices speak with an employment intermediary who can provide them with specialized informational materials - short descriptions and folders for occupations, videos, multimedia products and career guidance programs. Professional guidance can be individual or group. Information is provided about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- choosing a profession or changing the existing one;</li> <li>- raising the educational level;</li> <li>- increase in qualification or specialization;</li> <li>- acquisition of legal capacity;</li> <li>- training and availability of relevant training institutions;</li> <li>- inclusion in training organised and financed by the labour office;</li> <li>- inclusion in relevant programs and measures for employment and training.</li> </ul> <p>(<a href="https://www.az.government.bg/pages/profesionalno-informirane-konsultirane-i-orientirane/">https://www.az.government.bg/pages/profesionalno-informirane-konsultirane-i-orientirane/</a>).</p> <p>4. Participation in EPALE, National Support Service - Bulgaria   EPALE (europa.eu) – through Bulgaria's participation in EPALE, an exchange of good practices and research activities in the field of lifelong learning is carried out. The system provides a large amount of high-quality and accurate information relating to adult learners, supporting adult learning professionals, including adult educators and trainers, consultants and support staff, researchers, academics and policy makers. Information is provided on different types of courses. <a href="#">Course catalogue   EPALE (europa.eu)</a></p> <p>5. Annual holding of Adult Learning Days and other events, <a href="#">BG VET LLL June 22.pdf (eufunds.bg)</a>. Since 2013, events have been organised to promote adult learning opportunities, develop monitoring and partnership building skills, and exchange good practice.</p>
<p><b>How is VET support funded?</b></p>	<p>The financing of activities related to VET is carried out from the state budget (including funding from the EU) when they are carried out by institutions in school education; by projects, by employers and trainees, when the services are provided by continuing education centres.</p> <p>Municipal funding plays an increasingly important role in public spending on VET (Abdul-Hamid, et al., 2021, p. 64). Since 2014, the EU has borne an increasing share of the costs of acquiring and especially repairing assets (Abdul-Hamid, et al., 2021, p. 68).</p>



<p><b>Summary of skills formation system in the country</b></p>	<p><b>What is the role of VET in the education system?</b> Vocational education serves the purpose of fostering the knowledge, skills and attitudes, occupational know-how and social readiness required for working, participating in social life and lifelong learning (Lifelong Guidance in Estonia, 2023).</p> <p><b>Explain initial VET and continuing VET</b> (see also Figure A1): The Vocational Educational Institutions Act distinguishes between initial and continuing VET (Cedefop &amp; Ministry of Education and Research, 2022).</p> <p>Lifelong Guidance in Estonia (2023): initial vocational education is part of formal education that gives learners access to the next qualification level. Non-formal continuing VET is part of adult learning, its forms, duration and content vary. Vocational programmes correspond to the levels 2–5 of the Estonian Qualifications Framework, with level 2 being vocational education without the requirement of basic education, level 3 being based on basic education, level 4 being vocational secondary education (or based on secondary education) and level 5 being specialised vocational training.</p> <p>According to Cedefop (2019): In society, it is not well known how VET is divided (i.e. between IVET and CVET) and which different educational levels are there presented and which different opportunities are provided for learning. In public understanding, <i>kutseõpe</i> (vocational learning/training) usually includes students at formal vocational education institutions, including adult students, as in Estonia they are taught in the same schools; to some extent it may include also trainings (non-formal education) that are organised by the same formal education institutions. Nevertheless, it effectively excludes learning outside of vocational schools. For CVET, the terms that are used rather translate to "continuous learning" (<i>täiendõpe</i>) or "re-learning" (<i>ümberõpe</i>), therefore these terms are closer to VET - not continuous education, though, as the emphasis is on learning. There is no specific one term that would really cover CVET in wider sense, either in the meaning of (job-related) training or adults participation in IVET or other forms of formal education. There are two other terms that are used in the sense of including any learning occurring as adult/beyond initial formal education: adult education (this mainly has a connotation of non-formal education and training, (and perhaps more geared towards the liberal adult education); and lifelong learning (mainly understood as adults continuing their educational careers).</p>
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**Figure A1 VET in Estonia's education and training system**



Source: Cedefop (2017a).

### Where does VET take place (school, further education, higher education, workplace)?

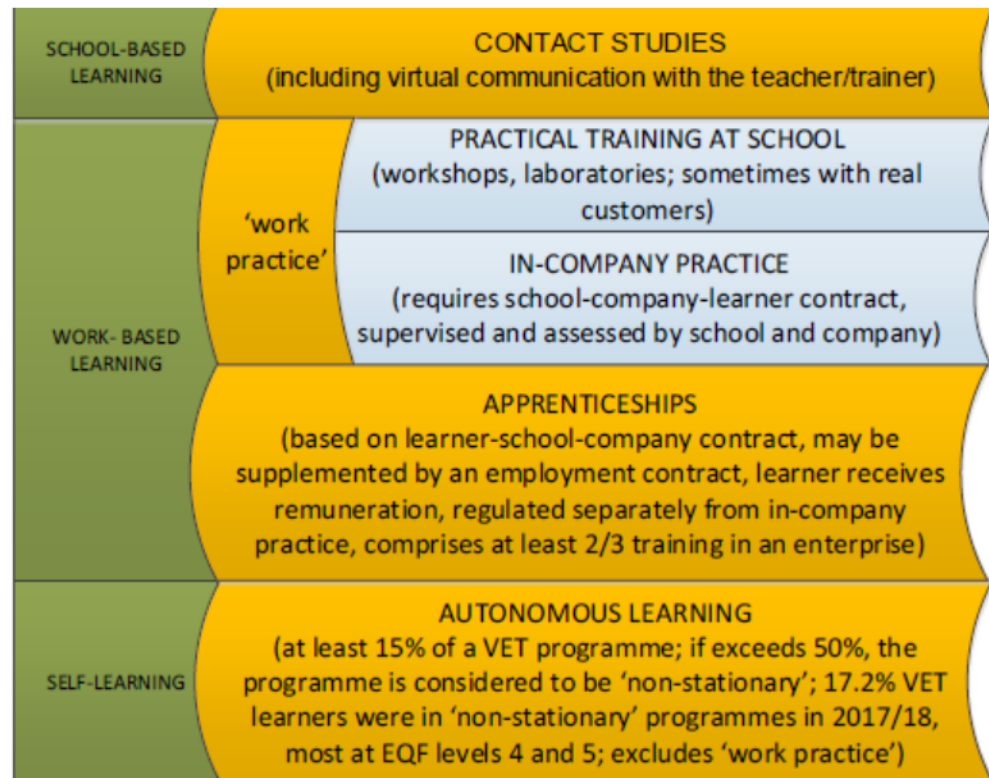
There are several VET learning options (Cedefop & Ministry of Education and Research, 2022), see also Figure A2:

- school-based learning (contact studies, including virtual communication with the teacher/trainer);
- work practice (practical training at school and in-company practice);
- self-learning (excludes work practice; at least 15% of a programme should be acquired through autonomous learning; if

it exceeds 50%, the programme is considered to be 'non-stationary'; 21% of VET learners were in 'non-stationary' programmes in 2020/21, mostly at EQF levels 4 and 5).

Apprenticeships were introduced to VET as a stand-alone study form in 2006.

**Figure A2 – VET learning options**



Source: Cedefop, & Ministry of Education and Research (2022)

**Who are key stakeholders?** According to the Ministry of Education and Research (2022a) in the development of vocational education and training, the Ministry of Education and Research cooperates closely with the central and professional associations of employers, contractor organisations, other ministries and educational institutions that organise vocational education and training. All the major partners are brought together by the Vocational Training Advisory Board. The Ministry's partner in implementing the strategic objectives of vocational education is the Estonian Society for the Development of Vocational Training.

**What is the role of education institutions, career counselling and guidance institutions, employer?** Vocational education is developed in cooperation with the programmes of closer labour market and learning, digital transformation, teachers and heads of educational institutions, study and career guidance, adult education and school network (Ministry of Education and Research, 2022a).

**Is legislation in place to support VET and the skills formation system?**

- **Overview of legislation** (Lifelong Guidance in Estonia, 2023): Vocational education system in Estonia is regulated by the [Vocational Educational Institutions Act](#) and general requirements for the organisation of vocational education studies have been established in the [Standard of Vocational Education](#). Vocational upper secondary studies are regulated by 21 national curricula within various fields.
- **Aim of legislation in relation to VET** (Ministry of Education and Research, 2022a): Vocational Educational Institutions Act provides the basis for the establishment, maintenance, transfer, reorganisation and closure of vocational educational institutions, the basis for the right to provide instruction, management, organisation of studies, state-commissioned education and financing, the rights and obligations of members of schools, and state supervision over the activities of schools. Uniform requirements for vocational training are regulated by the Vocational Education Standard.
- **Who has leadership roles in VET system?** Vocational education and training (VET) in Estonia is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Research (Cedefop, 2017a). Based on Cedefop (2024) the parliament (Riigikogu), the government (Eesti Vabariigi Valitsus), including the education ministry, jointly oversee the VET system at national level. The ministry's partner in implementing the VET strategic objectives is the Estonian Association for the Promotion of VET, representing VET providers, social partners and other VET stakeholders. Several other advisory bodies and social partner organisations participate in policy implementation. Local governments prepare and implement local education development plans and coordinate the activities of municipal education institutions. Social partner participation in VET is regulated by national legislation and partnership agreements.
- **Who has responsibility for the delivery of VET?** Vocational education and training (VET) in Estonia is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Research (Cedefop, 2017a).
- **Who has responsibility and accountability for VET standards?** Cedefop (2017b) states the following: the parliament adopts legal acts. The government approves national education policy, with the Estonian lifelong learning strategy 2020 guiding the most important developments in education. The government also approves higher education and VET standards and framework requirements for teacher training.  
The VET standard (Government, 2013) defines: (a) a learning

outcomes approach; (b) requirements for VET curricula: (i) the volume and structure of programmes, including joint programmes, for example between VET and professional higher education; (ii) entry and completion requirements; (iii) key competences; (c) principles for curriculum updates; (d) principles for recognition of prior learning and work experience; (e) the list of programme groups, study fields and curriculum groups combining several programmes. Examples of the curriculum groups are 'travelling and tourism', 'social work' and 'banking, finance and insurance'. The education ministry is responsible for delivering the strategy and its nine programmes, including the vocational education programme (MoER, 2015a). The education minister also approves national VET curricula.

- **Are entitlements to VET detailed?** There are no minimum admission requirements at second and third levels but learners must be at least 17 years old to enrol. Curricula are designed to meet labour market needs in elementary occupations. Entry to fourth level studies usually requires completed basic education but there are exceptions (for ISCED 354 programmes) for those over 22 without basic education. The qualification achieved in vocational secondary education gives graduates access to higher education provided the entry requirements are met. This may require learners to pass state examinations that are compulsory for general education graduates: an optional additional year of general education is available for vocational secondary education graduates (ISCED 354) to help prepare. Upper secondary education gives access to EQF level 5 initial VET programmes (ISCED 454). These post-secondary programmes prepare learners for technical and associate professional occupations. Continuing VET is offered at EQF levels 4 and 5. To enrol, learners need to have a VET qualification or relevant competences in addition to completed upper secondary education. Tertiary VET does not exist in Estonian legislation, though the first cycle of tertiary education comprises both academic and professional branches. These are accessible to all graduates of both general and vocational secondary education, as well as graduates of post-secondary VET. (Cedefop, 2017a)
- **Are entitlements to VET support detailed?** Vocational education is free of charge, regardless of age, educational background, and individual needs. Nearly half of all vocational students are adults (Lifelong Guidance in Estonia, 2023).

Financial assistance is available for VET learners to guarantee equal access to education, regardless of their socioeconomic circumstances (Cedefop, 2017a).

- **Are funding mechanisms for VET legislated?** Cedefop & Ministry of Education and Research (2022) refer that the total expenditure on VET has decreased from EUR 129 million in 2010 to EUR 114 million in 2018 due to reduced investment in infrastructure and equipment as several big VET investment projects have been completed. Public VET expenditure as a share of total government expenditure has also decreased, from 0.6% in 2012 to 0,4% in 2019, because total government expenditure has increased nominally more than the expenditure on VET. Nearly 60% of total expenditure is staff remuneration.

Formal VET is mostly State-financed (Cedefop & Ministry of Education and Research, 2022). In 2018/19, 99% of the 23,387 initial and continuing VET learners were in State-financed programmes. Until 2018, the education minister defined the number of learners to be financed from the state budget for the following three years according to curriculum group and VET provider. Since 2018, a new model for financing vocational education was introduced, which no longer proceeds solely from the number of State-commissioned student places. Instead, the school, its activities and performance will be financed as a whole. The new financing model consists of basic financing and performance-based financing. This secures the budgetary stability of the management and HR expenses of schools.

- **Is the role of the employer legislated?** At national level, the chamber of commerce (Eesti Kaubandus-Tööstuskoda), employers' confederation (Eesti Töoandjate Keskliit) and confederation of trade unions (Eesti Ametiühingute Keskliit) represent social partners (Cedefop, 2017b). Employers play an active and influential role in the professional councils (kutsenõukogud) and drawing up standards for each occupation. At local level, social partners participate in VET school counsellor boards (kutseõppeasutuse nõunike kogu), established under the Vocational Educational Institutions Act (Parliament, 2013). The boards comprise at least seven members in total. Advisory bodies link VET schools and society, advising the school and its management on planning and organising educational and economic activities.

The engagement of employers in Estonia's VET system is strong, in particular through a system of occupational qualification and



standards, which underpins the development of programmes (Musset et al. 2019).

**Is the role of career counselling and guidance support detailed?** According to Musset et al. (2019) since 2009, the career counsellor network in the labour market sector has been co-ordinated by the public employment service. It offers career guidance services to the adult population. Since 2015, the service also provides workshops for young people in schools – students of grades 8 to 12 – to introduce them to the labour market and working life. These workshops are mostly financed from the EU budget. Career information specialists and counsellors work in every public employment service department. All guidance services for young people provided by Rajaleidja centres and the public employment service are free of charge. They are offered in individual and group settings, often accompanied by computer-based activities. There are professional standards for career counsellors, career information specialists and career co-ordinators at schools.

Lifelong guidance has been practiced in Estonia for years (Euro guidance, 2024): services have been provided for different target groups by different service providers and have also been known by different names – the latest version being *karjääriteenused* (direct translation in English career services). Content-wise, both lifelong guidance and career guidance are used meaning “A range of activities that enable citizens of any age, and at any point in their lives, to identify their capacities, competences and interests; to make meaningful educational, training and occupational decisions; and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competences are learned and/or used” as agreed by the ELGPN members in 2013. Career guidance, standing in three pillars – career education, career counselling and career information provision, is provided by both education and employment systems. Career education is integrated in curricula at different education levels and has a long tradition. However, career information provision and career counselling outside school has been organised differently over the years and been often influenced by resources available.

Based on the information of Euro guidance (2024), in 2018, the Estonian government acknowledged that there was room for improvement regarding both access to and the quality of the career services and a reform concerning the provision of the services was launched. Accordingly, starting from 2019, career counselling and career information have been provided by public

	<p>employment offices under the Ministry of Social Affairs. The role of general education, vocational education and higher education institutions is to ensure access to lifelong guidance for their students and support them in reaching the learning outcomes set in curricula.</p> <p>Lifelong Guidance in Estonia (2023) refers that until the end of the academic period 2019/2020, supporting the development of career management skills took place in vocational education both through vocational training and generic skills modules. In every vocational education curriculum, there is a generic skill module which deals with career-related topics and the principles of entrepreneurship. In autumn 2020 the ‘Learning path and working in a changing environment’ module was introduced. According to national curricula, the module is compulsory at level 4 (vocational secondary education) and recommended at levels 2-5. A new elective module ‘Entrepreneurship training at workplace’ offers opportunity to develop career management and entrepreneurship competencies in enterprises. The aim of the studies is for students to be capable of developing their careers in a modern economic, entrepreneurial and working environment based on the principles of lifelong guidance. Passing the module will help learners acknowledge professional studies as one step in their career path and take responsibility for their learning and development. The implementation of the module is decided by the educational institutions themselves. Some VET schools have their own career counsellor or educational counsellor, who supports learners throughout the learning process from admission, some invite external professionals from PES or private sector. Amendments to the Vocational Educational Institutions Act, adopted in December 2018, opened up the possibility for vocational educational institutions to carry out Choice of profession training. The curriculum (30 or 60 ECTS) mainly focuses on career management skills and their development, with the aim of supporting young people in making decisions about their future education pathway or transition to the labour market. The main target group consists of dropouts of primary school, upper secondary school or vocational school, young NEET, students with special needs, those lacking Estonian language skills or need extra help to adapt in the cultural or educational space, e.g. war refugees.</p>
<p><b>Is there mention of career counselling and guidance in the legislation?</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Vocational Educational Institutions Act</a></li> <li>2. <a href="#">Education strategy 2021-2035</a></li> <li>3. <a href="#">Standard of Vocational Education</a></li> </ol>

**Are their national strategies in place to support VET and the skills formation system?**

- **Overview of strategy** (Ministry of Education and Research, 2022a): the development of Estonian vocational education is based on the documents, policies and development plans of the European Union and Estonia. The Member States of the European Union adopted the *European Skills Agenda* (01.07.2020), the *Vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience* (24.11.2020 and the *Osnabrück Declaration* (30.11.2020). The *Estonian Vocational Training Action Plan 2022-2030* has been prepared on the basis of the recommendation of the Council of the EU and the [Estonian Education Development Plan 2021-2035](#) (Officially referred to as the “Education Strategy 2021-2035”). The development of vocational education and training in Estonia is also based on the *Estonian Education Development Plan 2021-2035*<sup>4</sup> and its Operational Program Education and Youth 2021-2024.

The strategic development of the field of education and training in Estonia, including VET and lifelong learning, is ensured through goalsetting in long-term development plans (Ministry of Education and Research, 2022b). The Education Strategy for 2021-35 (the follow-up to the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 guides the most important developments in all education sectors, and continues to address the remaining and emerging challenges in VET in the context of lifelong learning. The Education Strategy contributes to the achievement of the goals of the national long-term development strategy ‘Estonia 2035’. Among the thematic areas of the Estonia 2035 strategy, Education Strategy contributes more to the area of skills and labour market, where the goal is to develop an education system that is learner-centred, flexible and forward-looking. The Education Strategy supports the development of people's knowledge and skills in line with the needs of the labour market and changes in the economic structure, as well as migration and integration policies.

- **Aim of strategy in relation to VET** (Cedefop, 2024): The [Estonian national implementation plan](#) that the country prepared in response to the [2020 Council Recommendation on VET](#) and the [Osnabrück Declaration](#), sets three main priorities (strategic goals) until 2035 (Cedefop, 2024):
  - (a) diverse and accessible VET enabling smooth transitions between education types/levels;
  - (b) competent and motivated VET teachers, trainers and school management;
  - (c) VET responsive to the labour market and society needs

	<p>These priorities are aligned with the <a href="#">Estonian Education strategy 2021-35</a> (follow up of the Lifelong strategy 2020) <a href="#">steering the developments in education and training</a>, including VET. The strategy is implemented through four-year implementation programmes, which are updated annually. It contributes to the <a href="#">Estonia 2035 national long-term strategy</a> in the area of skills and labour market aiming to develop an education [and training] system that is learner-centred, flexible and forward-looking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Link to other strategies</b> (Cedefop, 2024): The national implementation plan is also linked to the Youth sector development plan 2021-35, reducing early leaving from education and training, supporting transitions to labour market and validation of learning outcomes, the Research and development, innovation and entrepreneurship strategy 2021-35 that strengthens cooperation between VET and universities, research institutions and enterprises, the Estonian language strategy 2021-35 (including education and training), and regional development plans also form an integral part of the national implementation plan.</li> <li>• <b>Who is responsible for the strategy?</b> The Ministry of Education and Research. The Ministry of Education and Research's partner in implementing the strategic objectives of vocational education is the Estonian Society for the Development of Vocational Training. (Ministry of Education and Research, 2022a)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Who are the key stakeholders in the VET system?</b></p>	<p>In the development of vocational education and training, the Ministry of Education and Research cooperates closely with the central and professional associations of employers, contractor organisations, other ministries and educational institutions that organise vocational education and training (Ministry of Education and Research, 2022a). All the major partners are brought together by the Vocational Training Advisory Board, whose main task is to advise the Ministry of Education and Research and educational institutions on strategic planning in the field of vocational education, organisation of the network of educational institutions, planning and financing of training areas and other important issues in the field of vocational education. The Ministry's partner in implementing the strategic objectives of vocational education is the Estonian Society for the Development of Vocational Training. Vocational education is developed in cooperation with the programmes of closer labour market and learning, digital transformation, teachers and heads of educational institutions, study and career guidance, adult education and school network.</p>
<p><b>Who collects labour market data</b></p>	<p>Education system data are collected in the <a href="#">Estonian education information system</a>. This has information on education providers, learners, teaching staff, curricula and diplomas. The visual educational</p>

<p><b>and information about VET?</b></p>	<p>statistics database <a href="https://www.haridussilm.ee/en">HaridusSilm</a> allows comparing schools according to selected indicators.</p> <p>Since 2003, the ministry has produced labour market needs forecasts and updated them annually. Its quantitative data analysis shows demand in the national economy for employees by sector and qualification level. Over the years, the methodology has been updated. Forecasts are based on the data of the 2011 population census and labour force surveys conducted by Statistics Estonia. The forecasts reflect changes in employment and the need to replace employees leaving the labour market. The latest forecast considers the period 2016-24 (MoEC, 2016). In 2015, the education ministry launched a new labour market needs monitoring and forecasting system, known by its Estonian acronym <a href="https://oska.kutsekoda.ee/en/">OSKA</a>. Managed by the qualifications authority (Kutsekoda), it assesses skill needs by economic sector (such as information and communications technology, accounting) and develops new evidence and intelligence for stakeholders in education and the business world. The system comprises 23 expert panels of employer representatives, education professionals, researchers, public opinion leaders, trade unions and policy-makers.</p> <p>Source: (Cedefop, 2017b)</p>
<p><b>What labour market data and information are collected and made available about VET (options, pathways, outcomes, etc.)?</b></p>	<p><a href="https://oska.kutsekoda.ee/en/">https://oska.kutsekoda.ee/en/</a>  <a href="https://www.haridussilm.ee/en">https://www.haridussilm.ee/en</a>  <a href="https://andmed.stat.ee/en/stat">https://andmed.stat.ee/en/stat</a>  <a href="https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/countries/estonia">https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/countries/estonia</a>  <a href="#">ANDRAS</a></p>
<p><b>How does labour market data and information inform VET system?</b></p>	<p>The forecasting results (based on the data of the 2011 population census and labour force surveys conducted by Statistics Estonia) are used for career counselling, curriculum development and strategic planning at all education levels, including vocational education and training (Cedefop, 2017b).</p>
<p><b>What career counselling and guidance support is provided to those at different stages of VET pathway?</b></p>	<p>Based on Musset et al. (2019) overview: career guidance underwent a major and welcome change in 2014-15. Before 2014, guidance services were provided by a range of different institutions from both public and third sectors resulting in a service which was recognised as fragmented and uneven. Career guidance services are now provided by sixteen youth guidance centres (Rajaleidja) located in every county. The centres operate within a unified quality assurance system and have adopted common procedures and standards in an attempt to ensure that the quality of provision is consistent. Rajaleidja centres offer schools a variety of different services: Career information; Career counselling; Social and pedagogical counselling; Psychological counselling; Special</p>

	<p>education counselling; Speech therapy. The profession of guidance counsellor is clearly and appropriately structured (Foundation Innove). Provision acknowledges, and to some extent addresses, the importance of parents as influencers of young people. Employers are also actively engaged in delivery. With guidance located in regional centres, impartiality can be expected to be less of a concern than in countries where it is schools which fully deliver provision. Following the spirit of school autonomy, it is schools and teachers who are responsible for organising career guidance activities and this has led to large variation in practice. Some schools engage actively in the offer and ensure that students engage in counselling sessions, visit job fairs and other exploratory activities including rich engagement with employers. Others do not or do so in an inconsistent fashion. The Foundation Innove reports that fewer than half of young people in grades 7 to 9 receive individual career services as do fewer than one in ten of students enrolled in vocational schools (Foundation Innove, 2018). This partial take-up of the guidance offer raises concerns. Opportunity exists for a clearer statement of what all young Estonians should be able to expect in terms of guidance support. The goal is that in Estonia lifelong learning strategy, by 2020, 100% of basic school graduates have had career guidance (Ministry of Education and Research, 2014).</p> <p>Based on the information stated in Lifelong Guidance in Estonia (2023), in vocational education, the new ‘Learning path and working in a changing environment’ module was introduced in autumn 2020, which is compulsory at level 4 (vocational secondary education) and recommended at levels 2-5. This module consists of career topics integrated with entrepreneurship competencies and aims to help students develop their careers in a modern economic, entrepreneurial, and working environment based on the principles of lifelong guidance. Career development competencies are also developed throughout the course. Emphasis is placed on practice, and feedback from supervisors helps learners understand their studies, set goals and determine the need for development. Furthermore, vocational educational institutions have the possibility to include career development as an elective subject. Some VET schools have their own career counsellor or educational counsellor who supports learners throughout the learning process, while some invite external professionals from PES or the private sector. In December 2018, amendments to the Vocational Educational Institutions Act opened up the possibility for vocational educational institutions to carry out choice of profession training. This curriculum mainly focuses on career management skills and their development, with the aim of supporting young people in making decisions about their future education pathway or transition to the labour market.</p>
<p><b>How is VET support funded?</b></p>	<p>Vocational education is free of charge, regardless of age, educational background, and individual needs. Nearly half of all vocational</p>



	students are adult (Lifelong Guidance in Estonia, 2023). Formal VET is mostly State-financed (Cedefop & Ministry of Education and Research, 2022).
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## Country case report – Finland

<p><b>Summary of skills formation system in the country</b></p>	<p><b>What is the role of VET in the education system?</b></p> <p>In Finland, Vocational Education and Training (VET) is integral to the education system, providing pathways for students to gain practical skills and qualifications needed for specific careers. VET complements general education by equipping students with competencies that align with labour market requirements, thus enhancing employability.</p> <p><b>Explain initial VET and continuing VET</b></p> <p>Initial VET in Finland targets young individuals typically following their completion of basic education (comprehensive school). It encompasses both theoretical and practical training, often incorporating workplace learning through apprenticeships, preparing students for immediate entry into the workforce or further education. In contrast, Continuing VET is designed for adults seeking to enhance their skills or adapt to changing job demands, promoting lifelong learning and enabling individuals to acquire new competencies and remain competitive in the labour market.</p> <p><b>Where does VET take place (school, further education, higher education, workplace)?</b></p> <p>VET occurs across various environments in Finland, including vocational schools, further education institutions, and workplaces. Vocational schools primarily deliver initial VET programs, while further education institutions focus on adult education and skill enhancement. Higher education institutions, such as universities of applied sciences, offer advanced vocational training and degrees. The workplace is also a critical component, providing practical experience and on-the-job training that complements classroom learning.</p> <p><b>Who are key stakeholders?</b></p> <p>Key stakeholders in Finland’s VET system include educational institutions, employers, industry organisations, trade unions, and</p>
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	<p>government agencies. Educational institutions develop and implement VET curricula, ensuring alignment with industry needs. Employers offer apprenticeships and training opportunities, while career counselling and guidance institutions assist students in making informed educational and career choices. This collaborative approach among stakeholders helps maintain the relevance and effectiveness of VET in responding to labour market dynamics.</p> <p><b>What is the role of education institutions, career counselling and guidance institutions, employer?</b></p> <p>In Finland, educational institutions, career counselling and guidance institutions, and employers play vital roles in the VET system. Educational institutions design and deliver programs that integrate theoretical knowledge with practical skills. Career counselling institutions support students by providing information on vocational options, facilitating informed decision-making. Employers collaborate with educational institutions to ensure training reflects industry needs, enhancing the effectiveness of VET and supporting students in their career pursuits.</p>
<p><b>Is legislation in place to support VET and the skills formation system?</b></p>	<p><b>Laki ammatillisesta koulutuksesta 531/2017</b> (Act on Vocational Education and Training)</p> <p>Overview of legislation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Law governs vocational Qualifications under Ministry of Education and Culture, the education required to acquire vocational skills, and the demonstration and certification of vocational skills.</li> </ul> <p>Aim of legislation in relation to VET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Aim to modernize and enhance the vocational education and training system in Finland, more responsive and effective VET system that meets better the labour market needs and supports individuals in their personal and professional development.</li> </ul> <p>Who has leadership roles in VET system?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ministry of Education and Culture, National Agency for Education, VET institutions, Regional Authorities, Employer Organisations</li> </ul> <p>Who has responsibility for the delivery of VET?</p>

- VET education institutions (the main role, directly responsible, curricula etc.), Regional Authorities (responsibility for providing education lies with the municipalities), Employers and Industry partners (apprenticeship programs and work-based learning), Ministry of Education and Culture (guidelines, funding)

Who has responsibility and accountability for VET standards?

- Ministry of Education and Culture, National Agency for Education, VET institutions

Are entitlements to VET detailed?

- Right to education, Qualifications and Pathways, Support services and Access to Learning Opportunities

Are entitlements to VET support detailed?

- Guidance and Counselling -> all learners must have access to guidance, Support for diverse learners -> inclusive and accessible VET for all individuals, financial support -> for example allowances that can help participation in VET

Are funding mechanisms for VET legislated?

- Yes. State Funding, Performance-Based Funding, Local and Regional Contributors and Project Funding

Is the role of the employer legislated?

- Yes. Key points: importance of collaboration between VET institutions and employers, Expectation of work-based learning, Feedback and input for graduates about their skills and competencies, Responsibilities related to mentoring and supervising learners

Is the role of career counselling and guidance support detailed?

- Yes. Access to guidance, Support for transitions, Individualized Guidance and collaboration with stakeholders

**Valtioneuvoston asetus ammatillisesta koulutuksesta 673/2017**  
(Government Decree on Vocational Education and Training)

Overview of legislation:

- Students have the right to receive such instruction and guidance that enables the achievement of professional requirements and learning outcomes in accordance with the

	<p>degree or education criteria and supports the development of students into good, balanced and educated people and members of society</p> <p>Aim of legislation in relation to VET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Detailed Guidelines on the organisation and implementation of VET programs, Quality Standards and Assessment and Evaluation (the criteria for assessing learner competencies and evaluating VET programs)</li> </ul> <p>Who has leadership roles in VET system?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ministry of Education and Culture, National Agency for Education, VET institutions</li> </ul> <p>Who has responsibility for the delivery of VET?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Same as previous</li> </ul> <p>Who has responsibility and accountability for VET standards?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Agency for Education and Culture</li> <li>● Institutions</li> </ul> <p>Are entitlements to VET support detailed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Guidance Services and Support for Diverse Learners</li> </ul> <p>Are funding mechanisms for VET legislated?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● State Funding and Local Contributors</li> </ul> <p>Is the role of the employer legislated?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collaboration and training</li> <li>● Providing work-based learning</li> </ul> <p>Is the role of career counselling and guidance support detailed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Access to Counselling</li> <li>● Collaboration with Stakeholders</li> </ul> <p>Additional Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Focus on Competence-Based Education</li> <li>● Quality Assurance Mechanisms</li> <li>● Innovation and Development</li> </ul> <p><b>Oppivelvollisuuslaki (114/2020)</b></p>
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	<p><b>Asetus opetustoimen henkilöstön kelpoisuusvaatimuksista 986/1998</b></p>
<p><b>Is there mention of career counselling and guidance in the legislation?</b></p>	<p><b>Laki ammatillisesta koulutuksesta 531/2017, 42 § ja 61 § (Finlex)</b> (Act on Vocational Education and Training)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 42 § Guidance and Counselling: responsibility of educational institutions to provide guidance and counselling services to students</li> <li>• 61 § Cooperation: importance of collaboration between educational institutions and employers in the context of career counselling</li> </ul> <p><b>Opinto-ohjaajan kelpoisuudesta säättää 1998/986 (Finlex)</b> (Act on the Qualification of Study Counselors)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualifications: educational requirements and professional qualifications necessary</li> <li>• Role in Career Guidance</li> <li>• Continuous Professional Development: outline of the requirements for ongoing training and development</li> <li>• Collaboration with Educational Institutions</li> <li>• Focus on Student Needs: personal guidance, aspirations and strengths</li> </ul> <p>Aiemmin hankitun osaamisen tunnistamisesta ja tunnustamisesta säädetään ammatillisen koulutuksen laissa (531/2017) 46 ja 47 §:ssä. Valtioneuvoston asetuksen (673/2017) 10 §:ssä säädetään tarkemmin tutkintokoulutuksen opiskelijan aiemmin hankitun osaamisen tunnustamisen menettelytavoista.</p>
<p><b>Are their national strategies in place to support VET and the skills formation system?</b></p>	<p><b>Lifelong Guidance Strategy (2020)</b></p> <p><b>Overview of strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Lifelong Guidance Strategy aims to provide comprehensive support for individuals' educational and career planning throughout their lives. It emphasizes the</li> </ul>

importance of continuous learning and skill development to meet the evolving needs of the labour market.

#### **Aim of strategy in relation to VET**

- The strategy is closely linked to vocational education and training (VET), ensuring that individuals receive the necessary guidance and support to make informed decisions about their vocational education and career paths. It aims to enhance the accessibility and quality of guidance services to help individuals navigate their educational and professional paths

#### **Link to other strategies**

- The Lifelong Guidance Strategy is part of a broader framework of educational and labourmarket policies. It aligns with the Lifelong Learning Strategy and other initiatives aimed at promoting continuous education and skill development.

#### **Who is responsible for the strategy?**

- The strategy is overseen by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including educational institutions, employers, and labourmarket organisations.

#### **Who are the key stakeholders in the strategy?**

- Ministry of Education and Culture and OPH
- Educational institutions: Schools, universities, and vocational training centres.
- Employers: Companies and organisations that provide employment and training opportunities.
- Labourmarket organisations: Unions and employment agencies that support job seekers and workers.
- Individuals: Students, job seekers, and employees who benefit from guidance services.

#### **Any additional information**

- The strategy emphasizes the importance of equal access to guidance services, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances, can benefit from lifelong guidance. It also highlights the need for coordinated efforts across different sectors to provide comprehensive and effective support.

#### **Vocational Education Reform (2018)**

#### **Overview of Strategy**



- The 2018 reform of vocational education and training (VET) in Finland aimed to modernize and streamline the VET system to better meet the needs of students and the labour market. The reform introduced a more flexible and individualized approach to education, emphasizing competence-based learning and practical training in workplaces.

#### **Aim of Strategy in Relation to VET**

- The primary aim of the strategy was to ensure that VET could quickly adapt to changes in the labourmarket and future skill requirements. This included creating personalized learning paths for students, increasing workplace learning opportunities, and implementing a new funding model to reduce dropout rates and improve the effectiveness of education.

#### **Link to Other Strategies**

- The VET reform is linked to broader educational and employment strategies in Finland. It aligns with the national goals of improving employment rates, reducing youth unemployment, and enhancing lifelong learning opportunities. The reform also supports the integration of education and work, promoting continuous professional development.

#### **Who is Responsible for the Strategy?**

- The Ministry of Education and Culture is primarily responsible for the VET reform. They oversee the implementation and ensure that the objectives of the reform are met. Additionally, the Finnish National Agency for Education plays a significant role in supporting and guiding educational institutions through the changes.

#### **Who are the Key Stakeholders in the Strategy?**

- Students: Beneficiaries of the personalised and flexible learning paths.
- Educational Institutions: Responsible for implementing the new curriculum and training models.
- Employers and Industry Representatives: Collaborate with educational institutions to provide practical training and ensure that the skills taught meet industry needs.
- Teachers and Trainers: Adapt to new teaching methods and support students in their individualized learning paths.

#### **Additional Information**

- The reform also introduced a unified funding system that incentivises educational institutions to reduce dropout rates and focus on the employability of graduates. The number of

vocational qualifications was reduced to make the system more efficient, and the qualifications themselves were broadened to cover a wider range of skills.

**Jatkuvan oppimisen uudistus (2019-2023)**(reform of continuous learning)

Overview of strategy

- Continuous learning system to meet future needs. Vision-based, regularly monitored objectives and annually tracked indicators defined for continuous learning.
- Promoting employment requires a strong investment in education and skills
- The demands of a changing work environment increase the need for updating one's skills and continuous learning
- A particular challenge is that those who need education the most participate in it the least
- Focus on job-related learning of adults, who completed their initial education and entered the labour market

Aim of strategy in relation to VET

- Adaption to labourmarket needs
- Lifelong learning/continuous learning
- Flexible learning paths
- Collaboration with different stakeholders
- Digitalisation and innovation to enhance learning
- Modernizing the VET in Finland to prepare learners better for continuous professional development

Link to other strategies

- National education policies, skill strategy, guidance framework and continuous learning framework

Who is responsible for the strategy?

- Ministry of Education and Culture
- Various stakeholders involved in the implication

Who are the key stakeholders in the strategy?

- Ministry of Education and Culture, Vocational institutes, Regional and Local authorities, Employers and Industry, Guidance services, Students and learners

Any additional information

- The reform established a new national service centre: the service centre for continuous learning and employment (SECLE)

<p><b>Who are the key stakeholders in the VET system?</b></p>	<p><b>Parliament:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role: VET legislation, structure of VET qualifications, Annual budget allocations to VET, Maximum number of student years, Amount of strategy funding</li> </ul> <p><b>Government:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role: Development of VET in the Government Programme, Structure of common units, including the number of competence points</li> </ul> <p><b>Ministry of Education and Culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role: Preparation of VET legislation, Qualifications structure, Licence to provide VET, Steering, regulating, financing and monitoring</li> </ul> <p><b>Finnish National Agency for Education:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role: Preparation of the national qualification requirements, Developing VET through funding projects</li> </ul> <p><b>Finnish Education Evaluation Centre:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role: Evaluating the outcomes of the education and training system (thematic and systematic evaluations)</li> </ul> <p><b>VET providers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role: Within the limits of the licence, they decide independently on the allocation of their education offer, how and in which educational institutions and learning environments the education is organised.</li> <li>• Support: Support is embedded to the providers work, same with interaction</li> </ul> <p>Source: Cedefop, &amp; Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI), (2023)</p> <p>Support and interaction are very close and overlapping, every stakeholder has their own areas of responsibility, but the collaboration is tight.</p>
<p><b>Who collects labour market data and</b></p>	<p>The stakeholders indicated but also research centres and higher education institutions</p>

<p><b>information about VET?</b></p>	
<p><b>What labour market data and information are collected and made available about VET (options, pathways, outcomes, etc.)?</b></p>	<p>Tilastokeskus (2024). Suomen virallinen tilasto SVT: Opiskelijat ja tutkinnot [verkkojulkaisu]. [Viitattu: 11.10.2024]. <a href="https://stat.fi/julkaisu/clm7f9ciuoj660avymzz040m0">https://stat.fi/julkaisu/clm7f9ciuoj660avymzz040m0</a></p> <p>Vipunen (2024) Education Statistics Finland. <a href="https://vipunen.fi/en-gb/">https://vipunen.fi/en-gb/</a></p> <p>Vipunen (2024). Ammatillinen koulutus. <a href="https://vipunen.fi/fi-fi/ammattillinen">https://vipunen.fi/fi-fi/ammattillinen</a></p> <p>Vipunen (2024). Ennakointi. <a href="https://vipunen.fi/en-gb/ennakointi">Ennakointi (vipunen.fi)</a></p> <p>Reports on the financing system of education and culture (2024). <a href="https://vos.oph.fi/rap/">https://vos.oph.fi/rap/</a></p> <p>Studyinfo. (2024). Vocational education and training (VET). <a href="https://opintopolku.fi/konfo/en/sivu/vocational-education-and-training-vet">https://opintopolku.fi/konfo/en/sivu/vocational-education-and-training-vet</a></p> <p>TEM (2024). Employment bulletin – August 2024. <a href="https://www.temtyollisyyskatsaus.fi/graph/tkat/tkat.aspx?ssid=21082322560067&amp;ely=&amp;lang=en">https://www.temtyollisyyskatsaus.fi/graph/tkat/tkat.aspx?ssid=21082322560067&amp;ely=&amp;lang=en</a></p> <p>Tilastokeskus (2024). Sijoittuminen koulutuksen jälkeen [verkkojulkaisu].</p> <p>[Viitattu: 11.10.2024] <a href="https://stat.fi/julkaisu/cln4dktbh55nz0avt6u8oux9g">https://stat.fi/julkaisu/cln4dktbh55nz0avt6u8oux9g</a></p> <p><a href="#">OECD Data Explorer</a></p> <p><a href="#">Skills anticipation in Finland (2023 Update)   CEDEFOP (europa.eu)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Finland - 2023 Skills forecast   CEDEFOP (europa.eu)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Koulutuksen kehittämissuuntia (OEF) 0.pdf (oph.fi)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Osaaminen 2035.pdf (oph.fi)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Etusivu :: Skills Finland</a></p> <p>OPH (n.d.). Ammattialojen työvoiman kysynnän ja tarjonnan kohtaanto vuonna 2028 <a href="#">Microsoft Power BI</a></p> <p>Osaamisen ennakointifoorumi OEF (2023). <a href="#">Toimenpide-ehdotukset Julkaisuersio_28112023.pdf (oph.fi)</a></p>

	<p><a href="https://www.osaamistarvekompassi.fi/fi">https://www.osaamistarvekompassi.fi/fi</a></p> <p><a href="#">Key figures on vocational education and training in Finland (oph.fi)</a></p> <p>Miettinen, R., Pehkonen, L., Lang, T. ja Pihlainen, K. (2021). Euroopan Unionin elinikäisen oppimisen avaintaidot, Eurooppalainen tutkintoviitekehys ja oppilaitosten opetussuunnitelmien kehittäminen. Ammattikasvatuksen aikakauskirja, 23 (2), 13-31.</p> <p><a href="#">Euroopan Unionin elinikäisen oppimisen avaintaidot, Eurooppalainen tutkintoviitekehys ja oppilaitosten opetussuunnitelmien kehittäminen - pdf (journal.fi)</a></p>
<p><b>How does labour market data and information inform VET system?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum Development (how to develop and to which direction)</li> <li>• Skills Forecasting</li> <li>• Program Evaluation</li> <li>• Collaboration with Employers</li> <li>• Career Guidance (viable paths and training options)</li> <li>• Policy Development</li> <li>• Regional Adaption</li> <li>• In general: responsiveness and effective preparing</li> </ul>
<p><b>What career counselling and guidance support is provided to those at different stages of VET pathway?</b></p>	<p><b>Thinking about education pathway?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced personal guidance is provided to basic education students who need additional/extra support in applying for further studies. A personal study plan for further education is developed for the student receiving enhanced personal guidance. (<a href="https://www.oph.fi/fi/koulutus-ja-tutkinnot/tehostettu-henkilokohtainen-oppilaanohjaus">https://www.oph.fi/fi/koulutus-ja-tutkinnot/tehostettu-henkilokohtainen-oppilaanohjaus</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Engaging in VET</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School counsellors, teachers and group advisers</li> <li>• ECVET module of career education</li> <li>• career education integrated in the vocational subjects</li> <li>• Individual customised development plan (44 § 531/2017) (kaikissa opintojen osissa, päivitetään opintojen edetessä)</li> <li>• Cooperation with labourmarket</li> </ul>
<p><b>How is VET support funded?</b></p>	<p>Government Funding (central government funding, educational budget and additional support programs), Municipal Funding (municipalities play significant role in VET -&gt; costs of vocational institutions and facilities within their regions. They also get additional funding from government), private sector (employer</p>

	contributions, apprenticeships), EU funding, Research and development funding.
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## Country case report – Germany

<p><b>Summary of skills formation system in the country</b></p>	<p><b>What is the role of VET in the education system?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plays an important role in education and training systems around the world → across OECD countries, 44% of learners in upper-secondary education are enrolled in vocational programmes</li> <li>• Provides learners with essential skills enhancing their employability, supporting their personal development and encouraging active citizenship</li> <li>• It boosts enterprise performance, competitiveness, research and innovation</li> <li>• The German VET System is in the international context recognized as a successful model (because of the dual system, which leads to high-quality vocational qualifications and enables smooth education-to-work transitions)</li> <li>• Vocational orientation takes place on the level of compulsory education within the German education system (early vocational orientation and the fostering of cross-cutting core skills help ensure a seamless transition from school to the working world)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is part of the career guidance and counselling process (which has two sides):</li> <li>- (1) There are young people who are seeking to orient themselves towards their own interests, competences and objectives, (2) The Requirement of the world of work, to which young people are guided</li> <li>- Both sides constantly need to be rebalanced → Vocational orientation provision supports young people in mastering this process</li> <li>- Vocational Orientation Programme (BOP): “Supporting vocational orientation in inter-company vocational training centres and comparable VET centres”</li> <li>- It wants to offer school students all over Germany a vocational orientation process that will enable them to develop a realistic idea of their own abilities and interests and to gather practical experience in a variety of occupational fields</li> <li>- Funding is provided for an analysis of potential (Potenzialanalyse) and for workshops (BIBB, n.d.; BIBB, 2019a)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The dual system is the central element of the German VET</li> </ul>
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system

- It takes place at two learning venues: in the company and at the vocational school
- Trainees/Apprentices conclude a training contract with a company, where they undergo training in one of more than 300 training occupations (skills areas) recognised in accordance with the Vocational Training Act (BBlG) or the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (HwO)
- A passing final exam certifies that they are in possession of employability skills in one of the state-recognised occupations
- The combination of practice and theory which forms the basis of the dual system of vocational education and training in Germany is held in high international regard (BIBB, 2019b)

### **Explain initial VET and continuing VET**

#### **Initial VET (I-VET):**

##### **School-based initial training in the German VET system**

- Apart from the dual system, school-based initial training is the main form of training in some sectors (for example the health sector)
  - This training is supplemented by several internships and practical stages in companies or institutions
- Full-time vocational schools fall within the remit of the federal states
  - Formal conditions of entry normally apply to attendance at such schools
  - Completion of training is in accordance with the regulations applicable to the occupation in question and takes place via a school-based examination in which the Schools Inspectorate is also involved
- Students at partially qualifying vocational schools are mostly obtaining school leaving qualifications via the second-chance route or else are undergoing basic vocational training  
→ They are significant to the so-called transitional sector between school and work (BIBB, 2024)

#### **Continuing VET (C-VET)**

##### **Continuing education and training in the German Vet system**

- Vocational education and training takes lifelong learning into account and is the classical field for courses to deepen and supplement vocational knowledge, competencies and skills
  - In practice, a distinction is made between retraining, advanced training and adaptation training
  - Continuing training is playing an increasingly important role in improving employability

- It is characterised by a wide variety of providers (a training market) and a comparatively low degree of regulation by the state (Only a small part of provisions lead to formal qualifications regulated by the Vocational Training Act)
- Courses to prepare for these advanced level qualifications are offered by chambers or schools (Fachschulen, master craftsmen schools)
- In Germany, many senior jobs are held by persons with vocational qualifications
- Dual training offers a wide range of development opportunities, both during the period of initial VET and in particular upon completion of the training programme
  - Additional qualifications supplement initial VET by including extra contents and may be acquired during or after training
  - Updating training enables employability skills to be retrained and adapts them to meet new requirements in the workplace
  - Upgrading training extends employability skills into new task areas and offers the chance to climb the career ladder by acquiring qualifications (BIBB, 2019c)

**Where does VET take place (school, further education, higher education, workplace)?**

**Dual study programmes in the German VET system gain in importance on the level of higher education**

- Dual study programmes were created as a form of educational provision offering both an academic and a practical vocational qualification → is aimed at supporting learning transfer and hence achieving a benefit over purely academic or purely hands-on forms of initial vocational training
- Dual study programmes that take place at institutes of higher education or vocational academies in cooperation with companies represent a special type of programme (There has been a significant increase in the number of such courses in Germany)
  - Differs from conventional higher education study in that students in some cases receive at least one qualification from the VET sector in addition to an academic degree
  - Interplay of two learning venues – the Institute of Higher Education and the company
- The high practical relevance and good career opportunities are the primary motives for school leavers to choose this form of study (BIBB, 2019d)

### **Higher education study programmes within the German VET system**

- Higher education programmes are mostly academic programmes but some of them offer vocational elements that link them to the vocational education system and the world of work
- Practical semesters, brief practical placements and dual programmes all facilitate an insight into the world of work during the course of study itself
- In the wake of higher education study reforms in Europe, Germany's traditional "Diplom" and "Magister" degrees have been replaced by Bachelor and Masters qualifications (enjoy considerable popularity worldwide)
- A state examination is mandatory for some courses of study
- Dual courses of higher education study which are integrated with training are particularly significant to vocational education and training (they culminate with a qualification in a recognised training occupation and a Bachelor's degree from an institute of higher education) (BIBB, 2019e)

### **Who are key stakeholders?**

- The main stakeholders of the German dual VET systems are the federal government, the federal states, the social partners and the chambers (BIBB, 2019f)

### **What is the role of education institutions, career counselling and guidance institutions, employer? (Euroguidance, 2024b)**

The German Guidance system provides in principle access to educational and career guidance services for all citizens at any stage of their lives – whether they are in education or training, employed, unemployed or looking for continuing education.

The provision of career guidance is traditionally based on the distinction between educational guidance and vocational guidance in the vocational training and employment sector.

- Educational guidance comprises: School Guidance and counselling, Guidance on educational paths, School Psychological Service, Vocational and Career Guidance by the Federal Employment Agency (FEA), Higher Education (HE) counselling services.
- Vocational guidance includes: Placement and counselling in the local Employment Agencies (EA)/Job Centre, Career guidance in the FEA, Municipal educational guidance / Adult education centres, Career Guidance in the chambers (eg. Industry and Commerce, Crafts) and Guidance by providers of further training.

**Is legislation in place to support VET and the skills formation system?**

### **Berufsbildungsgesetz (BBiG)**

- This law aims to create a framework for vocational education and training.
- aims to ensure high quality and improve training opportunities for young people, irrespective of their social or regional origin.
- In order to cope with the changes in the world of work, the law was amended by the Vocational Training Reform Act in 2005.
- the legal framework was updated again. To offer apprentices and companies the best possible conditions for successful training. The new Vocational Training Act entered into force on 1 January 2020.
- Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (22.02.2024). Das Berufsbildungsgesetz (BBiG). [https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/de/bildung/berufliche-bildung/rahmenbedingungen-und-gesetzliche-grundlagen/das-berufsbildungsgesetz-bbig/das-berufsbildungsgesetz-bbig\\_node.html](https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/de/bildung/berufliche-bildung/rahmenbedingungen-und-gesetzliche-grundlagen/das-berufsbildungsgesetz-bbig/das-berufsbildungsgesetz-bbig_node.html)
- Bundesministerium der Justiz (o.J.). Berufsbildungsgesetz. [https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/bbig\\_2005/](https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/bbig_2005/)

### **Handwerksordnung (HwO)**

- The Craft Trades Code (Handwerksordnung) is the legal basis for the craft trades. It defines the organisation and determines which occupations belong to the craft trades
- came into force on 24 September 1953
- uniform legal basis for the craft trades
- large certificate of competence (the master craftsman's examination (Meisterprüfung)) was enshrined in the Craft Trades Code as access to the practice of a craft trades as a standing trade
- 125 occupations (today 53) are listed
- Craft Trades Code (Handwerksordnung) amendment in 1965 the so-called craft trades. They can be practised without a master craftsman's examination.
- The economic importance has increased steadily. There are 53 trades that can be practised similar to crafts.
- Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks (o.J.). Die Handwerksordnung. <https://www.zdh.de/daten-und-fakten/handwerksordnung/>
- Bundesministerium der Justiz (o.J.). Gesetz zur Ordnung des Handwerks. <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/hwo/>

### **Jugendarbeitsschutzgesetz (JArbSchG)**

- Law for the Protection of Young People at Work

- contains special provisions for the protection of children and young people in the world of work
- objective protection against overworking
- protects young people from work that starts too early, takes too long, is too heavy, endangers them or is unsuitable for them
- child labour is prohibited
- protects young people under the age of 18
- persons under the age of 15 are considered as children
- adolescents are persons aged between 15 and 18
- adolescents who are still in full-time compulsory education are subject to the same provisions as children
- Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales (06.01.2021). Jugendarbeitsschutz. <https://www.bmas.de/DE/Arbeit/Arbeitsrecht/Arbeitnehmerrechte/Jugendarbeitsschutz/jugendarbeitsschutz.html>
- Bundesministerium der Justiz (o.J.). Gesetz zum Schutze der arbeitenden Jugend. <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/jarbschg/>

#### **Aufstiegsfortbildungsförderungsgesetz (AFBG)**

- Objective: To provide financial support to participants in vocational upgrading training measures and to encourage them to set up their own businesses
- Supports the expansion and expansion of vocational training, thereby strengthening the motivation for future skilled workers to continue training and offers potential entrepreneurs an incentive to venture into self-employment after successful completion of the training and thus to create training and jobs.
- Contributes to securing and qualifying skilled workers and managers, thereby helping to secure Germany's innovative and competitive position as a business location
- Since 1996, there were a total of over 3.74 million grants approved Under the Promotion of Advancement Further Training Act
- Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (o.J.). Weiterkommen mit dem Aufstiegs-BAföG. [https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/de/bildung/finanzierung-bafoeg-andere/weiterkommen-mit-dem-aufstiegs-bafoeg/weiterkommen-mit-dem-aufstiegs-bafoeg\\_node.html](https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/de/bildung/finanzierung-bafoeg-andere/weiterkommen-mit-dem-aufstiegs-bafoeg/weiterkommen-mit-dem-aufstiegs-bafoeg_node.html)
- Bundesministerium der Justiz (o.J.) Gesetz zur Förderung der beruflichen Aufstiegsfortbildungen. <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/afbg/>

#### **Arbeitsförderungsgesetz (SBG VIII)**

- The main objective of this law is to reduce the incidence of unemployment, to shorten the duration of unemployment, to support the balance of supply and demand on the training and labour market and to improve individual employability.
- Various support measures are available to provide comprehensive assistance.
- Promotion of vocational training is a central element of labour market policy measures.
- Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales (31.01.2024). Leistungen der Arbeitsförderung.  
<https://www.bmas.de/DE/Arbeit/Arbeitsfoerderung/Leistungen-der-Arbeitsfoerderung/leistungen-der-arbeitsfoerderung.html>

#### **Aim of legislation in relation to VET**

- Ensuring and promoting the quality of training
- Equal opportunities through legislation on training
- social protection for children and young people

#### **Who has leadership roles in VET system?**

- Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung BMBF) - provide support and finance projects
- Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung BiBB) - collects data on the labour market, records and supports these changes
- Federal states are responsible for the school-based part of dual training
- Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (o.J.). Bildung und Forschung sind der Schlüssel.  
<https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/de/ueber-uns/aufgaben-und-aufbau/bildung-und-forschung-sind-der-schluesel/bildung-und-forschung-sind-der-schluesel.html>
- Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung 06.08.2024). BiBB-Präsident Esser: „Modernisierung der beruflichen Bildung mutig voranbringen!“. Jahresbericht 2023 veröffentlicht.  
[https://www.bibb.de/de/pressemitteilung\\_192306.php](https://www.bibb.de/de/pressemitteilung_192306.php)

#### **Who has responsibility for the delivery of VET?**

- Training companies - completion of the practical part of the training
- Vocational schools - “theoretical knowledge” and general and general vocational education
- Chambers of commerce and industry and crafts - quality monitoring,
- registration of employment contracts, organisation and



	conduct of examinations
<p><b>Is there mention of career counselling and guidance in the legislation?</b></p>	<p>Vocational guidance is set out in two paragraphs in the third law book of Social Security</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• §29 SGB III (third law book of Social Security): This paragraph deals with the tasks of the Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) and sets out by law which tasks are to be performed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ "The Employment Agency shall offer vocational guidance, including continuing education guidance, to young people and adults who are or wish to take part in working life, and to employers labour market guidance, including training guidance."</li> <li>○ the type and scope of guidance provided according to needs;</li> <li>○ gender-sensitive advice - to broaden the range of career choices of women and men</li> <li>○ Advice on the consolidation of an apprenticeship or employment relationship after starting or starting a job</li> <li>○ to draw on knowledge of the labour market of the European Economic Area and experience gained from cooperation with the employment services of other countries.</li> <li>○ Bundesministerium der Justiz (o.J.). Sozialgesetzbuch (SGB) Drittes Buch (III) – Arbeitsförderung (Artikel 1 des Gesetzes vom 24. März 1997, BGBl. I S. 594) §29 Beratungsangebot. <a href="https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/sgb_3/_29.html">https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/sgb_3/_29.html</a> .</li> </ul> </li> <li>• § 30 SGB III (third law book of Social Security): This paragraph covers vocational guidance in general and defines the tasks of providing information and advice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Of the choice of occupation, professional development, change of occupation and possibilities for the recognition of foreign vocational qualifications</li> <li>○ Of the situation and development of the labour market and occupations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Of opportunities for vocational training and the improvement of individual employability and the development of individual occupational perspectives</li> <li>○ Of the search for training and a job</li> <li>○ Of employment promotion services</li> <li>○ Of matters relating to student support and school education, as they are relevant to the choice of occupation and vocational training</li> </ul> <p>Bundesministerium der Justiz (o.J.). Sozialgesetzbuch (SGB) Drittes Buch (III) – Arbeitsförderung (Artikel 1 des Gesetzes vom 24. März 1997, BGBl. I S. 594) §30 Berufsberatung. <a href="https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/sgb_3/30.html">https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/sgb_3/30.html</a>.</p>
<p><b>Are there national strategies in place to support VET and the skills formation system?</b></p>	<p><b>Pact for vocational training (Der Berufsbildungspakt) (since 2017)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A collaborative initiative funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research for the development of a modern, attractive and dynamic vocational education and training through diverse activities and cooperation between various stakeholders</li> <li>● Main aim: To improve vocational training opportunities, increase attractiveness, and ensure a skilled workforce.</li> <li>● Measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) modernising the framework conditions of VET, particularly in view of digitalisation;</li> <li>b) improving permeability and transparency through provision of vocational guidance, designating equivalent qualifications and improved progression opportunities;</li> <li>c) modernising infrastructure in VET schools and training centres, particularly in view of digitalisation;</li> <li>d) continuing professional development of VET teachers and trainers to enable them to face the challenges of digitalisation and diversity of apprentices;</li> <li>e) supporting small and medium-sized enterprises in providing training;</li> <li>f) supporting disadvantaged learners to complete a VET qualification;</li> <li>g) strengthening the international perspective of VET with increased mobility of apprentices and acquisition of intercultural, social and linguistic competences.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Key stakeholders: Government, industry representatives, small and medium sized Enterprises, educational institutions (VET providers), and unions; learners, teachers, trainers.</li> </ul> <p>Source: Cedefop &amp; Refernet (2023a)</p> <p><b>Alliance for Initial and Further Training (2023-2026)</b></p>

The Alliance for initial and further training is one of the primary implementation instruments of the Pact for VET.

- It operates as a public-private partnership aimed at enhancing the attractiveness, quality, effectiveness, and integrative strength of dual vocational training.
- The overarching goal is to provide as many individuals as possible with the opportunity to achieve a recognized vocational qualification.
- On May 25, 2023, the current "Alliance Declaration 2023-2026" was signed by Alliance partners, including representatives from the Federal Government, the Federal Employment Agency, industry associations (BDA, BFB, DIHK, and ZDH), trade unions, and federal states, with the BMWK overseeing the Alliance.
- Focused on both entry-level training and advanced skill development.
- The fields of action for the alliance partners can be divided into "before the training", "during the training" and "after the training". These action areas also encompass cross-cutting issues that impact multiple or all stages and are closely related to ongoing challenges in the training market, particularly those driven by digitalisation, demographic shifts, and the economic and societal transformation toward decarbonisation.

Sources: Bundesagentur für Arbeit (2021); Cedefop & Refernet (2023b)

#### **Pakt für berufliche Schulen**

- A joint initiative of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.
- The pact pursues the objectives of making vocational schools fit for the future with regard to social and economic challenges on the one hand and enhancing their public profile as leaders in education and social integration on the other hand.
- The Pact for Vocational Schools provides the impetus for strengthening the innovative capacity and further development of vocational schools.
- Key stakeholders: Federal state governments (Federal Ministry of Education and Research Federal, Ministry of Economics and Climate Protection, Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs), Federal institutions (BIBB, Federal Employment Agency), industry associations (BDA, BFB, DIHK, DGB and ZDH), Teachers' Associations (BvLB, GEW), school administrations

(German Association of Cities, German Association of Rural Districts, German Association of Cities and Municipalities), and educational policymakers (KMK).

Source: Kultusminister Konferenz (n.d)

### **Federal Government's skilled labour strategy (2022)**

- Overview of strategy: A national strategy to secure a sustainable skilled labour supply across sectors.
- Main aim: To ensure vocational education aligns with labour market needs, helping to fill skills gaps.
- 5 action fields:
  - 1) Up-to-date education
  - 2) Targeted professional development and training. (The Federal Employment Agency will be establishing a "National Online Continuing Education Platform" with financial support from the Federal Government to provide orientation for people interested in continuing education and training. As an additional funding instrument, a part-time education plan will also be introduced.)
  - 3) A more effective increase in labour potential: higher labour force participation (increase women's participation in the labour market)
  - 4) Improving the quality of work and changing work culture
  - 5) Modern immigration policy
- Responsible entity: Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF); other stakeholders: Federal Ministry of Labour, the Federal Ministry of Economics and the Federal Ministry of Finance.

Source: The Federal Government, Germany (2022)

- Sub-initiative: Excellence for VET initiative  
A targeted program within the Federal Skilled Labour Strategy to elevate the quality of vocational training  
Launched at the end of 2022 with a budget of over EUR 750 million until 2026.

The measures of the initiative fall into three fields of action:

- promoting opportunities for talent in VET;
- establishing an attractive and innovative VET landscape;
- expansion of international orientation in VET.

Sources: Cedefop & Refernet (2023c, 2023d)

### **National Skills Strategy (Nationale Weiterbildungsstrategie)**

- A national continuing education strategy launched by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) in November 2018

- A coordinated effort to improve skills development and lifelong learning
- Focus on SMEs, micro enterprises and people in need of help to increase their opportunities on the labour market
- Responsible entity: BMBF, BMAS, BIBB, BA.
- Key stakeholders: the Federal Government, Federal States, industry, trade unions and the Federal Employment Agency.

Source: Cedefop & Refernet (2023e)

**Strategy of the Federal Government on international cooperation in vocational education and training** (originally adopted in 2013, was formally extended on 22 May 2019)

- GOVET supports the Federal Government in the implementation and further development of its strategy.
  - advises international VET cooperation stakeholders and interested parties from home and abroad
  - collates and provides information relating to cooperation agreements between international VET cooperation stakeholders
  - prepares analyses on countries, vocational education and training systems and specialist topics.
- Responsible entity: the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Source: Bundesagentur für Berufsbildung (2019)

**Digital Strategy 2025** (2016-2025)

- Target audience: Digital skills for the labour force, Digital skills for ICT professionals and other digital experts, Digital skills in education.
- The strategy's initiatives are financed from the German federal state budget, EU funds, as well as private initiatives and partnerships
- In total, there are 20 projects and 83 implementation steps in the field of digital education.
- The federal and state governments are jointly strengthening digital skills at around 43,000 schools in Germany. The federal government enables all schools to have fast internet connections and an efficient digital learning infrastructure. The federal states ensure that teachers are well qualified. All schools should be able to implement digital education.
- The strategy also includes initiatives to support universities, companies and adult education institutions in providing digital trainings.

Source: Digital Skills and Jobs Platform (2022)

	<p><b>National education platform (NOW!) (2021)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National education platform project is embedded in the Digital education initiative</li> <li>• A digital platform to facilitate and professionalize the digitisation of educational resources and training nationwide based on common standards</li> <li>• Aim: to integrate existing and new digital education platforms into a nationwide platform system, providing every user with central access to education offers. The digital education area is based on common standards, formats and interoperable structures that are compatible with the rest of Europe in the sense of a national education platform.</li> <li>• Responsible entity: Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)</li> </ul> <p>Source: Cedefop &amp; Refernet (2023f)</p>
<p><b>Who are the key stakeholders in the VET system?</b></p>	<p><b>The Role of the Federal Government</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dual vocational training based on nationally recognised professions and vocational training regulations guarantee a national standard</li> <li>• She is responsible for the design of dual VET content for the professions</li> <li>• In most cases, the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy (BMBF) always required approval from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)</li> <li>• It monitors developments in the VET and publishes an annual report</li> <li>• The task of the Federal Government is also to promote dual vocational training (permanent funding programmes as well as special funding programmes)</li> <li>• The Federal Government is also involved in programs and strategies to strengthen the CVET</li> <li>• She regrets funding for special research projects</li> </ul> <p><b>The role of the states</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility for education rests with the states</li> <li>• Necessary for consistency and comparability</li> <li>• Advice</li> </ul> <p><b>The role of the social partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close cooperation between employers, unions and government</li> <li>• have a significant influence on the content and forum of vocational training</li> <li>• Responsible action as a prerequisite for the efficiency of the dual VET system</li> </ul>



- You are involved in the development of requirements for professional standards or in the development of new training regulations

#### **The role of competent bodies**

- Tasks: Monitoring training in companies and ensuring the quality of in-house training
- Advice to companies, trainers and trainees
- Organisation of the examination system and the conduct of final examinations

Source: Cedefop & Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) (2023)

#### **The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB):**

- The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) is recognized as a centre of excellence for vocational research and for the progressive development of vocational education and training (VET) in Germany
  - works to identify future challenges in VET, stimulate innovation in national and international vocational systems, and develop new, practice oriented solutions for both initial and continuing vocational education and training
- Is in charge of overall programme management (“Supporting vocational orientation in inter-company vocational training centres and comparable VET centres”)
  - Institutions apply for funding to the BIBB
  - They conclude a cooperation agreement with the participating schools for the implementation of the programme
  - BIBB supports the programme by providing evaluation and academic research and technical expertise
  - It also monitors progress and identifies any amendments that may be required

Source: BIBB (2019a)

The main stakeholders of the German dual VET systems are the federal government, the federal states, the social partners and the chambers

#### **The federal government:**

- has legislative powers for company-based vocational education and training
- is responsible for the content structure of the company-based element of the training occupations it has recognised
- recognises training occupations via a legal ordinance and stipulates binding requirements for the respective training and examination in training regulations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• funds measures for the support and innovation of vocational education and training and measures relating to the transitions at interfaces within VET</li> <li>• promotes vocational education and training research</li> </ul> <p><b>The federal states:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bear full and sole responsibility for the school system in Germany</li> <li>• draw up skeleton curricula for the vocational school which are harmonised with the training regulations for company-based training</li> <li>• finance teaching staff (municipal authorities and local government districts are responsible for buildings and inventory)</li> <li>• exercise legal scrutiny of the chambers</li> </ul> <p><b>The social partners:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work together to develop proposals for the creation of new training occupations or for the modernisation of existing occupations</li> <li>• appoint experts to prepare training regulations and skeleton curricula within the respective area of responsibility</li> <li>• conclude regulations in collective wage agreements relating to matters such as the amount of training allowances</li> </ul> <p><b>The chambers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advise companies and trainees</li> <li>• monitor company-based training</li> <li>• ascertain the suitability of companies and trainers</li> <li>• register training contracts</li> <li>• conduct examinations</li> <li>• set up a Vocational Education and Training Committee</li> </ul> <p>Source: BIBB (2019f)</p> <p><b>Das Berufsbildungsgesetz (BBiG)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creates a framework for vocational training</li> <li>• It ensures high quality and improves training opportunities for young people regardless of their social or regional background</li> <li>• It regulates the objectives and the rights and obligations of the trainee and the trainer in vocational education and vocational training</li> <li>• It also contains provisions on examination and the organisation of vocational training</li> </ul> <p>Sources: Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (2024); Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (n.d.)</p>
<b>Who collects labour</b>	Government:

<p><b>market data and information about VET?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA):</b> Carrying out and collecting statistics of the German labour market and education opportunities (Bundesagentur für Arbeit. Statistik (o.J). Statistik der Bundesagentur für Arbeit. <a href="https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/">https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/</a> )</li> <li>• <b>Statistische Bundesamt (Destatis):</b> Raising statistics of Germany's labour market and education problems (DESTATIS. Statistisches Bundesamt (o.J). <a href="https://www.destatis.de/DE/Home/_inhalt.html">https://www.destatis.de/DE/Home/_inhalt.html</a> )</li> </ul> <p>Commercial enterprises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Statista:</b> has statistics e.g. about the labour market or the VET in Germany (Statista. Empowering people with data (o.J). <a href="https://de.statista.com/statistik/suche/?q=Berufsbildung&amp;p=1">https://de.statista.com/statistik/suche/?q=Berufsbildung&amp;p=1</a> )</li> </ul> <p>Institutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Bildungsforschung (IAB):</b> is writing texts, publishing statistics and data and doing conferences and workshops about the German labour market (Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Bildungsforschung. Die Forschungseinrichtung der Bundesagentur für Arbeit (o.J.). <a href="https://iab.de/">https://iab.de/</a> )</li> <li>• <b>Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (BIBB):</b> information about vocational education national and international, about different jobs, about transitions from learning a job to being finished and working, about options of further education and training (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (o.J.). <a href="https://www.bibb.de/">https://www.bibb.de/</a> )</li> </ul> <p>Government, education institutions, VET providers, etc.</p>
<p><b>What labour market data and information are collected and made available about VET (options, pathways, outcomes, etc.)?</b></p>	<p>Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unemployment and underemployment - The latest developments in a nutshell - September 2024 <a href="https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/DE/Navigation/Statistiken/Fachstatistiken/Arbeitsuche-Arbeitslosigkeit-Unterbeschaeftigung/Aktuelle-Eckwerte-Nav.html">https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/DE/Navigation/Statistiken/Fachstatistiken/Arbeitsuche-Arbeitslosigkeit-Unterbeschaeftigung/Aktuelle-Eckwerte-Nav.html</a></li> <li>• Employment - Current developments in a nutshell - September 2024 <a href="https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/DE/Navigation/Statistiken/Fachstatistiken/Beschaeftigung/Aktuelle-Eckwerte-Nav.html">https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/DE/Navigation/Statistiken/Fachstatistiken/Beschaeftigung/Aktuelle-Eckwerte-Nav.html</a></li> </ul> <p>Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (BIBB)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The VET report <a href="https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/de/bildung/berufliche-bildung/strategie-und-zusammenarbeit/der-berufsbildungsbericht/der-berufsbildungsbericht_node.html">https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/de/bildung/berufliche-bildung/strategie-und-zusammenarbeit/der-berufsbildungsbericht/der-berufsbildungsbericht_node.html</a></li> </ul>

- The data Report (Datenreport)
  - The data report is published by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education.
  - The data report contains comprehensive information and analysis on vocational education and training in Germany.
  - It provides an overview of federal and state programmes to promote vocational training and provides information on international indicators and benchmarks.
  - <https://www.bibb.de/dokumente/pdf/bibb-datenreport-2024-final.pdf>

#### Career guidance portals

- There are portals that educate young people about different training professions.
- For example, the Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) has websites on which you can find profiles of the various professions. There you can learn a lot about the respective profession, but also what school degrees the beginners had  
<https://web.arbeitsagentur.de/berufenet/beruf/steckbrief/9910>
- Statistische Bundesamt (Destatis):
  - published article "2.1 % more new training contracts in dual vocational training in 2023"  
[https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2024/08/PD24\\_328\\_212.html](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2024/08/PD24_328_212.html) or  
"33,600 nursing professionals successfully trained in 2023"  
[https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2024/07/PD24\\_284\\_212.html](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2024/07/PD24_284_212.html)
  - Table: Vocational education statistics Numbers of trainees in Germany <https://www-genesis.destatis.de/datenbank/online/statistic/21211/table/21211-0001>
- Statista
  - Number of recognised apprenticeships in Germany from 2004 to 2023  
<https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/36268/umfrage/anzahl-neuer-ausbildungsberufe-in-deutschland-seit-1998/> ; Annual Overview:  
<https://www.bibb.de/dienst/publikationen/de/19757>
  - Vocational training report 2024. The report on vocational training aims to present the current state of and likely future development of vocational training  
<https://www.bmbf.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/de/2024/>

	<p><a href="#">240508-berufsbildungsbericht-24.pdf?_blob=publicationFile&amp;v=1</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Distribution of the population with and without a migrant background by vocational education and training attainment in Germany in 2023 <a href="https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/245781/umfrage/bildungsstand-verteilung-der-bevoelkerung-nach-migrationshintergrund-und-beruflichem-bildungsabschluss/">https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/245781/umfrage/bildungsstand-verteilung-der-bevoelkerung-nach-migrationshintergrund-und-beruflichem-bildungsabschluss/</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>How does labour market data and information inform VET system?</b></p>	<p>Different data can help vocational education and training to innovate and improve the system. This could be possible data on the labour market:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It can be recognised that there are problems in distributing apprenticeships to apprenticeship seekers. Many seekers do not sign a contract with the company and remain seekers (vgl. Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, 2024, S.4).</li> <li>• Apprentices with migration background (vgl. Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, 2024, S. 5)</li> <li>• What school qualifications do those who are still looking for training have? (vgl. Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, 2024, S.8)</li> <li>• More apprenticeships than applicants (vgl. Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, 2024, S.8-9)</li> <li>• The data report (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, 2024a, 2024b) provides insights into the current labour market situation and its requirements (for example: corona pandemic). This insight can influence the vocational training system. For example, it reports on the supply and demand of training places and it takes a look into the future and makes assumptions about the supply and demand for training places for 2024</li> </ul> <p>Orientation Website for students Berufenavi.de <a href="https://www.berufenavi.de/">https://www.berufenavi.de/</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The website “Berufenavi.de” (job navi.de) is a portal of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Federal Institute for Vocational Education.</li> <li>• It is aimed directly at young people and is intended to briefly inform about vocational orientation and show good links.</li> <li>• It suggests occupations according to specific subject areas (technology, creativity, figures and facts, nature, people) and describes them in a plug-in.</li> <li>• Young people can therefore inquire about professions very quickly and easily. The Site may also provide information</li> </ul>

	<p>about job openings or refer to Internet pages that may provide such information for certain occupations.</p> <p>Berufsorientierung Plus (BO+) <a href="https://berufsorientierung-plus.de/portale-bo/">https://berufsorientierung-plus.de/portale-bo/</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This page, offers a collection of different links and providers, for self-assessment tests and questionnaires to find an education suitable for the student</li> </ul>
<p><b>What career counselling and guidance support is provided to those at different stages of VET pathway?</b></p>	<p>Orientation for students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consulting hours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Career guidance can take place in the school. One member of staff (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) comes to the school and gives advice to anyone who is interested.</li> <li>- Consultation hours at different schools can be found on the Internet, for example in the area around Dortmund</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Berufsinformationszentrum (BiZ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- find everything you need for your choice of study, career or job search.</li> <li>- You can get useful tests and information about possible jobs or fields of study to match you. Information about occupations and job openings.</li> <li>- Information about education, school and studies in your region.</li> <li>- Information and exercises on how to create an application.</li> <li>- Bundesagentur für Arbeit (o.J.). Berufsinformationszentrum (BiZ). <a href="https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/bildung/berufsinformationszentrum-biz">https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/bildung/berufsinformationszentrum-biz</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Online offers (planet-beruf.de) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- is a platform that offers information and interactive tools that is specifically geared towards students and their career choices</li> <li>- from “Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA)”</li> <li>- planet-beruf.de. Meine Zukunft. Meine Ausbildung (o.J.). <a href="https://planet-beruf.de/schuelerinnen">https://planet-beruf.de/schuelerinnen</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Advice for apprenticeship seekers and prospective students of an University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Career counselling will help you choose your studies and career, during your apprenticeship or studies.</li> <li>- A personal counselling interview will help you clarify important questions about your future career.</li> <li>- The offer is available free of charge.</li> <li>- Bundesagentur für Arbeit (o.J.). Berufsberatung der Agenturen für Arbeit. <a href="https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/bildung/berufsberatung">https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/bildung/berufsberatung</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Berufsorientierungsprogramm (BO)</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The vocational orientation programme is aimed at pupils from the seventh grade onwards.</li> <li>- They first explore their strengths in a potential analysis, then test out different occupational fields in the practice-oriented vocational orientation days</li> <li>- the program exists since 2008</li> <li>- the program is run by the Ministry “Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung”</li> <li>- Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (o.J.). Allgemeine Informationen zum Berufsorientierungsprogramm. <a href="https://www.berufsorientierungsprogramm.de/bop/de/pr ogramm/allgemeine-informationen/allgemeine-informationen_node.html">https://www.berufsorientierungsprogramm.de/bop/de/pr ogramm/allgemeine-informationen/allgemeine-informationen_node.html</a></li> <li>• internships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In German schools, internships of about two weeks are carried out. The structure of the internships is organised differently in each state.</li> <li>- an example from the state of North Rhine-Westphalia: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The student work placement is intended to give students insight into working and professional life mediate.</li> <li>○ The student intern is meant to impart knowledge of a profession.</li> <li>○ “They are supposed to learn the activities typical of this profession. They are not allowed to do dangerous work carried out because it is not necessary to achieve the internship goal.”</li> <li>○ <a href="https://www.mags.nrw/system/files/media/document/file/leitfaden_schuelerbetriebspraktikum.pdf">https://www.mags.nrw/system/files/media/document/file/leitfaden_schuelerbetriebspraktikum.pdf</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>How is VET support funded?</b></p>	<p>Support for vocational education and training is financed by the public authorities (Federal states and the Government), employers and support programmes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public authorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- finance teachers, teaching materials, school buildings and technological equipment</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Support programmes for students include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Berufsausbildungsbeihilfe (BAB) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Funding over “Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA)”</li> <li>- will support with a grant under certain conditions</li> <li>- Assistance during training with a monthly allowance</li> <li>- Bundesagentur für Arbeit (o.J.). Berufsausbildungsbeihilfe (BAB). <a href="https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/bildung/ausbildung/beruf">https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/bildung/ausbildung/beruf</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

[sausbildungsbeihilfe-bab](#)

- Aufstiegs-BAföG
  - Funding over the Gouvernement
  - The Aufstiegs-BAföG supports you if you are preparing for a further education qualification
  - There is no age limit for the funding
  - Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (o.J.). Wer wird mit dem Aufstiegs-BAföG gefördert?  
<https://www.aufstiegs-bafoeg.de/aufstiegsbafoeg/de/die-foerderung/wer-wird-gefoerdert/wer-wird-mit-dem-aufstiegs-bafoeg-gefoerdert.html>
- Qualifizierungschancengesetz
  - It ´s a law that is covering further education and training
  - Funding over the “Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA)”
  - Can cover all or part of the training costs, depending on the type of qualification and the size of the company, and reimburses your employer up to 100% of the salary costs
  - Bundesagentur für Arbeit (o.J.).  
Qualifizierungschancengesetz für Arbeitnehmer.  
<https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/vor-ort/bruehl/qualifizierungschancengesetz>
- WeGebAU- Programm
  - Funding over “Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA)”
  - Training for the low-skilled and older workers
  - aim of the support is to counteract the growing shortage of skilled workers and to promote the financing of continuing vocational training
  - primary aim is to give employees the opportunity to gain additional qualifications through further training or even to obtain vocational qualifications without having to leave the jobs (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2011)
- Bildungsgutschein
  - Funding from “Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA)”
  - Improving continuing vocational training and individual employability
  - usually limited in time, regionally limited and limited to a specific educational objective
  - training provider that is chosen and the continuing vocational training must be approved
  - training costs will be covered
  - further training is necessary to avoid:
    - Ending unemployment
    - the threat of unemployment
  - Bundesagentur für Arbeit (o.J.). Bildungsgutschein.  
<https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/karriere-und-weiterbildung/bildungsgutschein>

	<p>Support for businesses through subsidisation and direct payments is rather rare. As a rule, the state provides infrastructure and services. However, an example is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bundesprogramm „Arbeitsplätze sichern“ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trigger: Coronavirus pandemic/containment measures</li> <li>- Many businesses were partially closed, more reluctant to hire new staff (including trainees)</li> <li>- "To support small and medium-sized enterprises that are still committed to training, the "Secure Training Places" programme was launched in August 2020. The programme allowed small and medium-sized businesses to work with any Graduates who will receive a bonus if they complete their training.</li> <li>- Businesses could also be supported with grants to avoid short-time work, takeover bonuses or the Lockdown II Special Grant</li> <li>- Bundesagentur für Arbeit (Oktober 2022): Bundesprogramm „Ausbildungsplätze sichern“. <a href="https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/DE/Statischer-Content/Statistiken/Themen-im-Fokus/Corona/Generische-Publikationen/AM-kompakt-Bundesprogramm-APS.pdf?__blob=publicationFile">https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/DE/Statischer-Content/Statistiken/Themen-im-Fokus/Corona/Generische-Publikationen/AM-kompakt-Bundesprogramm-APS.pdf?__blob=publicationFile</a> .</li> <li>- Companies can receive funding if they train or train people with disabilities.</li> <li>- If the company provides in-house training or further training for people with disabilities, the Employment Agency can provide support by issuing a grant in the form of a training allowance or work remuneration</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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### Country case report – Norway

<p><b>Summary of skills formation system in the country</b></p>	<p><b>What is the role of VET in the education system?</b></p> <p>VET plays a central role in post-compulsory schooling in Norway. Approximately 50% of all students choose a vocational programme in upper secondary education. However, many bridge across to general academic programmes after two years. There are also higher vocational education colleges, but these have relatively few students (31,400 in 2023).</p> <p>If one considers the education of nurses, engineers and other professions to be part of VET, there is also VET education at higher education level.</p> <p><b>Explain initial VET and continuing VET</b></p>
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Initial VET offers 10 different programmes for VET qualifications and 5 programmes for General Studies. The initial VET qualifications are predominantly apprenticeship based (about 88% of students), but there are also some school-based VET qualifications. The Norwegian VET qualification is a four-year programme, and is a 2+2 education. The two first years take place in schools and the 1<sup>st</sup> year is a broad entrance to the field and the 2<sup>nd</sup> year covers a more specialised field or occasionally a single 'occupation'. Year 3 and 4 are dedicated to apprenticeships in companies/institutions.

For an overview of different programmes and trajectories, see (Vilblino, 2024).

Continuing VET (VET education for adults that provides the same qualification as initial VET) have several different pathways for VET qualifications.

These include:

- Experience-based trade certification (an opportunity for experienced unskilled workers to register for the trade certificate exam and test on the basis of practical experience)
- Trade certificate at work (combination of education in school and apprenticeship)
- Apprenticeships for adults (4 years of full-time apprenticeships)
- There are also higher vocational education colleges and other training options from various providers and suppliers. These do not offer trade certificates but other training and courses.

**Where does VET take place (school, further education, higher education, workplace)?**

- Initial VET take place in schools and in the workplace, further education, higher vocational education colleges, and workplace.

**What is the role of education institutions, career counselling and guidance institutions, employer?**

VET institutions in Norway are required to provide career counselling and guidance.

- It is legislated that all county councils must have an offer of career guidance, which is free and open to all residents. There are career centres in all counties.
- There are career counselors at schools, both secondary and upper secondary.
- The right and duty for newly arrived refugees and immigrants to participate in career guidance is related to the Norwegian

	<p>Strategy for Skills Policy 2017-2021, and it is stated in the integration act (<a href="https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2020-11-06-127">https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2020-11-06-127</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The leading stakeholders are the county administrations, who own the regional career centres, often in joint partnership with the Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) offices at the regional level.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Is legislation in place to support VET and the skills formation system?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Overview of legislation</b> The Education Act, and related regulations: <a href="https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2023-06-09-30">https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2023-06-09-30</a></li> <li>• <b>Aim of legislation in relation to VET</b> The Act must facilitate that children, young people and adults receive good education in a good environment.</li> <li>• <b>Who has leadership roles in VET system?</b> National education authority and local government</li> <li>• <b>Who has responsibility for the delivery of VET?</b> Counties are responsible for initial VET. Higher vocational education colleges provide continuing VET, and these are both private and public.</li> <li>• <b>Who has responsibility and accountability for VET standards?</b> Ministry of Education and Research, but Norway has been considered a hybrid between statist and collective model – pointing to the role of social partners in develop VET standards.</li> <li>• <b>Are funding mechanisms for VET legislated?</b> Yes, companies are entitled to apprenticeship allowance.</li> <li>• <b>Is the role of the employer legislated?</b> The employers role is legislated and they have a responsibility for providing education during the apprenticeship period. They also have a formal role in the development of the VET system.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Is there mention of career counselling and guidance in the legislation?</b></p>	<p>Career counselling and guidance is required by law. Career guidance in schools is regulated in the Education Act and is referred to in the Act as educational and vocational counselling. According to Section 9-2 of the Education Act, pupils have the right to the necessary advice on education, vocational options and vocational choice and on social issues. The law is elaborated in regulations to the Education Act's chapter 22 The right to necessary advice. Educational and vocational guidance is discussed Kunnskapsdepartementet (2024).</p>

<p><b>Are their national strategies in place to support VET and the skills formation system?</b></p>	<p>There are no separate national strategies to support VET and skills formation system. There are skills strategies where VET is included are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The latest policy document on upper secondary education, Meld.St. 21 (2020-2021) The Completion Reform (The Norwegian Government, 2021).</li> <li>• The Norwegian Strategy for Skills Policy 2017 - 2021 is the overall policy for development, mobilisation and utilisation of skills in the entire Norwegian society and labour market (The Norwegian Government, 2017)</li> <li>• The latest policy on higher vocational education seeks to strengthen higher vocational education in Norway (Cedefop &amp; Refernet, 2023g)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Who are the key stakeholders in the VET system?</b></p>	<p>Ministry of Education and Research: The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for formulating national VET policies, setting standards, and allocating funds. Together with social partners, national level employer associations, the National Council for Vocational Education and Training, as well as Vocational Training Councils, the Ministry ensures that VET qualifications align with national education goals and labour market needs.</p> <p>Counties: Norway's 11 county authorities have direct responsibility for implementing VET programs, including overseeing vocational schools, coordinating with apprenticeship programs, and providing career counselling services. This is done in collaboration with county-level Vocational Training Boards, which consists of representatives from employee- and employer organisations.</p> <p>Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training: Supports the Ministry of Education in developing curricula, managing exams, and ensuring quality standards in the VET sector. The directorate also works closely with the different partners mentioned above.</p> <p>Social Partners (Employers and Trade Unions): Organisations like the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) and the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) collaborate with the Ministry, Directorate, counties and VET institutions to ensure that the curriculum is aligned with industry needs.</p>



	<p>Apprenticeship Training Agencies: These offices, typically operated by groups of employers, organise and manage apprenticeship placements, oversee training quality, and facilitate collaboration between schools and companies.</p> <p>Vocational Schools and Training Providers: deliver the school-based part of VET programs, providing students with foundational knowledge and skills that are then applied in apprenticeships (where they also learn theory).</p> <p>Students and Apprentices: Participants in and beneficiaries of the VET system. They contribute feedback through various channels, helping to shape improvements in programs and support services.</p>
<p><b>Who collects labour market data and information about VET?</b></p>	<p>The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, with support from Statistics Norway, to collect data after the trade examination.</p>
<p><b>What labour market data and information are collected and made available about VET (options, pathways, outcomes, etc.)?</b></p>	<p>Data are made publicly available by Statistics Norway:  <a href="https://www.ssb.no/en">https://www.ssb.no/en</a></p> <p>The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training provide statistics about VET outcomes:  <a href="https://www.udir.no/in-english/">https://www.udir.no/in-english/</a></p> <p>There are also websites that provide information about VET options and pathways:  <a href="https://www.vilbli.no/en/no/">https://www.vilbli.no/en/no/</a>  <a href="https://laerlingtorget.vigo.no/">https://laerlingtorget.vigo.no/</a></p>
<p><b>How does labour market data and information inform VET system?</b></p>	<p>Labour market data and information is being used in policy development. There is no structure in place for using such knowledge to inform the VET system, but it is still common to draw on such data in producing new policies and developing the VET system.</p>
<p><b>What career counselling and guidance support is provided to those at different stages of VET pathway?</b></p>	<p>During secondary schooling, students are provided with career counselling both during school-based part of education for information about VET pathways and during the apprenticeship for further career options.</p>

	<p>Career counselling is available to everyone above 19 years of age, including those who are seeking to transition from VET.</p> <p>There is a public career counselling website offering guidance about education and work: <a href="https://karriereveiledning.no/">https://karriereveiledning.no/</a></p>
<p><b>How is VET support funded?</b></p>	<p>The funds for VET support prior to entering VET training are covered by the local municipality. Upper secondary education is funded by county councils, and these also fund the VET support for students. Companies are entitled to apprenticeship allowance covered by public funds.</p>

### Country case report – United Kingdom

<p><b>Summary of skills formation system in the country</b></p>	<p><b>Overview of VET in the UK</b></p> <p>The governance of VET is devolved in the UK with England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have different governance, regulatory and quality assurance bodies (Cedefop &amp; UK Naric, 2019). Responsibility for VET policy therefore resides with different ministries in each devolved nation: the Department for Education in England; the Department of Education and the Department for the Economy are responsible in Northern Ireland; and the Scottish and Welsh governments in Scotland and Wales respectively. This complex system means there are a range of qualifications and awarding bodies (Cedefop &amp; UK Naric, 2019; Social Mobility Commission, 2021). However, there have been recent policy interventions to improve the standing and uptake of VET, including the introduction of the apprenticeship (currently being reformed), the introduction of T Levels in 2019 and set up of new VET providers (Social Mobility Commission, 2021).</p> <p>The Social Mobility Commission (2021) in its review of VET identified three problems with the UK VET system: “(1) the fragmented nature of the system, with limited central governance; (2) low social status historically associated with VET qualifications, and (3) neoliberal traditions that have turned the VET system into a quasi-market with a hugely diverse offering of types of qualifications, at different levels of study, and different levels of quality.”</p> <p>With the new Labour Government, Skills England was launched in Autumn 2024. Skills England is a new body which aims to bring</p>
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together key partners (different government departments, further and higher education sectors, Migration Advisory Committee, Unit for Future Skills) in the UK skills system to address skills shortages. Skills England policy paper notes that skills are important for economic growth and improving individual outcomes (Department for Education, 2024). The aim is to create a high performing skills system and address fragmentation in the skill system. A new industrial strategy is in development (Department for Trade and Industry, 2024).

**Where does VET take place (school, further education, higher education, workplace)?**

The UK VET system is comprised of lower secondary schools, school sixth forms, sixth form colleges, further education colleges, higher education institutions, private training organisations and work-based learning providers (Cedefop & UK Naric, 2019). Unlike other European countries, transitions to VET mostly take place at the end of secondary education (Social Mobility Commission, 2021).

**What is the role of VET in the education system?**

Whilst there are some VET, specialist occupational programmes and workplace learning in schools (compulsory education), VET is usually part of general academic study. Learners from the age of 15-16 years can access VET programmes in secondary schools, further education colleges and higher education institutions (EQF levels 2-7)(Cedefop & UK Naric, 2019). Most learners undertake VET qualifications at EQF level 3 and 4 in further education colleges (Cedefop & UK Naric, 2019). VET is offered as part of workplace training. Apprenticeships can combine learning with technical and occupational learning both on and off the job (Cedefop & UK Naric, 2019). Apprenticeships are available at a range of levels from Intermediate (level 2), Advanced (level 3), Higher (levels 4, 5, 6, and 7), to Degree (levels 6 and 7) (UK Government, 2024).

**Explain initial VET and continuing VET**

Initial VET usually takes place within the education sector and is classed as introductory leading to the development of skills. Continuing VET is classed as higher level qualifications leading to occupational competencies (Ofqual, CEA & QAA, 2019). Qualifications include: National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), Business and Technology Education Councils (BTECs)(Award,

National Award First Awards, Certifications, Diplomas), Professional Development Awards, Higher National Certificates (HNCs), Higher National Diplomas (HNDs), Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), National Certificates (Scotland); National Progression Awards (Scotland) (QAA, 2023). An overview of the UK qualifications and credit framework is available at: <https://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/qualifications-and-credit-framework-qcf.html> More information on the qualification levels are available on the UK Government website: <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels>

### **Who are key stakeholders?**

There are a range of stakeholders across the UK and within the devolved nations. In each devolved nation qualification authorities are responsible for programmes, quality standards and ensure links between education policy, education and training providers, VET provision and career guidance and counselling services. The aim is to ensure that employer and economic needs are met.

### **What is the role of education institutions, career counselling and guidance institutions, employer?**

The National Careers Service (England), Skills Development Scotland (Scotland), CareersWales (Wales) and NIDirect (Northern Ireland) are all key stakeholders delivering career guidance and counselling services for VET across the UK. These are government funded services. Career guidance and counselling support is embedded across the education, further and higher education sectors, and in the public employment services. Larger employers also provide guidance services to employees. The provision of career guidance and counselling in the UK is at key transition points from education to the labour market, and during periods of unemployment.

Employers have a significant role in the VET system in the UK supporting and advising on the curricula, standards and requirements. Employers are involved in the:

- **Sector Skills Councils** specify occupational competencies and update the National Occupational Standards;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>National Skills Academies</b> develop the infrastructure and learning resources needed to deliver specialist skills to industry relevant in the current job market;</li> <li>• <b>Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB)</b> aims to strengthen employer engagement in apprenticeships and to ensure that apprenticeships are linked to areas of economic growth and job opportunities. SAAB oversees the development of apprenticeship frameworks and standards.</li> <li>• The <b>Wales Apprenticeship Advisory Board</b> develop policy objectives to ensure that apprenticeships are aligned to changing needs of the industry in Wales. (Cedefop &amp; UK Naric, 2019).</li> </ul> <p>Quality standards are legislated with regulators and VET accredited agencies with responsibility, including: Ofqual (previously Qualifications and Curriculum Authority); Ofsted; Scottish Qualifications Authority; Qualifications Wales; and Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), Northern Ireland.</p>
<p><b>Is legislation in place to support VET and the skills formation system?</b></p>	<p><b>Key legislation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Education Act 1996</li> <li>• Enterprise Act 2016</li> <li>• Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009</li> </ul> <p><b>Overview of legislation:</b></p> <p>Who has leadership roles in VET system?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department for Education</li> <li>• Local authorities</li> <li>• Qualification authorities</li> </ul> <p>Who has responsibility for the delivery of VET?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools, colleges, training institutions, higher education institutions, employers</li> </ul> <p>Who has responsibility and accountability for VET standards?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ofsted – inspects apprenticeship training at levels 6 and 7 (both degree and non-degree), and training at levels 2 to 5.</li> </ul> <p>Are entitlements to VET detailed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set out in The Education Act 2022, Enterprise Act 2016 and the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009</li> </ul> <p>Are funding mechanisms for VET legislated?</p>

- Funding legislated, apprenticeship levy introduced in 2017
- Is the role of the employer legislated?
- Employers are embedded within the VET system through several strategic and industry bodies advising on skills needs, programme development, occupational standards
- Is the role of career counselling and guidance support detailed?
- Career guidance and counselling are freely available through government services and educational institutions. Services are legislated.

### **Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Act 2022**

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/13/contents>

Overview of legislation

- An Act to extend the duty to provide careers guidance in schools.

### **The Technical and Further Education Act 2017 (The Baker Clause)**

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/19/contents>

Overview of legislation

- The aim of this Act is to make provisions for technical and further education. The amendment to this Act known as The Baker Clause requires every school to give training provider and colleges a cess to pupils aged 8 and 13 to discuss technical education and apprenticeships.

Aim of legislation in relation to VET

- To rename The Institute for Apprenticeships to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.
- To ensure the Institute is able to inform learners about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Who has leadership roles in VET system?

- Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education
- Department for Education
- Local authorities

Is the role of career counselling and guidance support detailed?

- Learners are to be informed about VET pathways at aged 13 and 18

### **Enterprise Act 2016**

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/12/contents>

### Overview of legislation

- It was part of the UK Government's regulatory reform agenda to support economic growth. The purpose of the legislation was to support business and develop individual growth by encouraging businesses to invest in skills. A range of measures were introduced to make it easier for young people to access vocational training. The overall aim of the legislation was for businesses of all sizes to develop the skilled workforce they need to innovate, to compete and to grow in the years ahead ((Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2016). The Bill is protecting and strengthening the apprenticeship brand and ensure hard working apprentices have access to high quality training (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2015).

### Aim of legislation in relation to VET

- The creation of the Institute for Apprenticeships - an independent employer-led body which will regulate the quality apprenticeships, and see that standards are driven by the needs of employers. It also has an advisory role on funding allocations for each apprenticeship standard.
- To introduce apprenticeship targets for public sector bodies in England.
- To create approved apprenticeships ensuring training is provided in accordance with the apprenticeship framework.
- To raise the age of compulsory participation in education or training to 18

### Who has leadership roles in VET system?

- Department for Business, Innovation & Skills

### **The Careers Guidance in Schools Regulations 2013**

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2013/709/>

### Overview of legislation

- These Regulations are made under section 46 of the Education Act 1997 and apply to schools in England. They extend the relevant phase during which a pupil must be provided with independent careers guidance under section 42A of that Act. Section 42A previously applied only to pupils from school year 9 to 11. These Regulations extend the relevant phase so that section 42A applies to pupils from school year 8 to 13. Regulation 3 disapplies, in respect of pupils over compulsory school age, the requirement in



section 42A(4)(b) for careers guidance to include information on options concerning 16 to 18 education or training.

### **The Education Act 2011**

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/21/contents>

Overview of legislation

- This Act and all reforms set out the legal framework for education in England and Wales, including vocational education. Role and responsibilities for local education authorities and educational and training institutions in relation to vocational education.
- An Act to make provision about education, childcare, apprenticeships and training.

Aim of legislation in relation to VET

- To implement the legislative proposals in the Department for Education's schools White Paper, 'The Importance of Teaching' and measures from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills relating to skills and the reform of higher education funding.
- To secure provision for apprenticeship training, support and set out responsibilities

Who has leadership roles in VET system?

- Department for Education, devolved administrations
- Local authorities
- Employers

### **Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009,**

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/22/contents>

Overview of legislation

- The Bill introduces a wide range of measures covering apprenticeships, learning and skills and educational provision.
- It sets out the provision of apprenticeships, education, training and children's services; to amend the Employment Rights Act 1996; to establish the Young People's Learning Agency for England, the office of Chief Executive of Skills Funding, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation and the School Support Staff Negotiating Body. The Act sets out the role of those involved in the implementation of provision, to make provision about the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority; to make provision

	<p>about schools and institutions within the further education sector; to make provision about student loans; and for connected purposes.</p> <p>Aim of legislation in relation to VET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides for a statutory framework for apprenticeships and creates a right to an apprenticeship for suitably qualified 16-18 year olds</li> <li>• Introduces a right for employees to request time away from their duties to undertake training, and places a corresponding duty on employers to consider such requests seriously and to be able to refuse them only for specified business reasons</li> <li>• Transfers the responsibility for funding education and training for 16-18-year-olds to local authorities</li> <li>• Makes provisions with respect to the education of offenders</li> <li>• Creates the Young Person’s Learning Agency, the Skills Funding Agency, a new regulatory body for qualifications (Ofqual), and a new agency to carry out the non-regulatory functions currently performed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority</li> <li>• Creates the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education</li> </ul>
<p><b>Is there mention of career counselling and guidance in the legislation?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Act 2022</li> <li>• The Technical and Further Education Act 2017</li> <li>• Enterprise Act 2016</li> <li>• The Education Act 2011</li> <li>• Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009</li> </ul>
<p><b>Are their national strategies in place to support VET and the skills formation system?</b></p>	<p>In the UK, there have been two key reviews of VET which have informed the development of VET, qualifications and standards and the overall skills strategy of the UK. First, the <b>Wolf review</b> (2011) set out how VET for younger learners could be improved to enable successful progression into the labour market and into higher level education and training routes. Second, the <b>Whitehead review</b> (2013) set out a model for employer-led collaborations and industrial partnerships which would provide occupational standards for industry. It was recommended that vocational qualifications engage with employers at the local level to ensure relevance.</p>

**Key skills strategies:**

The 2010 Department for Business Innovation & Skills strategy document, **Skills for Sustainable Growth** focused on developing a skills system which responded to individual and economy needs. The aim of the strategy was to create sustainable economic growth, social inclusion and social mobility underpinned by improving skills.

In 2017 the Conservative Government launched the **Industrial Strategy** to boost the economy and to improve productivity through investment in skills, industries and infrastructure (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2017). Following this strategy, a number of initiatives were developed in response. The Office for Students (OfS) gave the Open University power to partner with further education colleges in order to offer Level 4 and 5 vocational and technical courses to students (Office for Students, 2022). The initiative is co-funded by the Department for Education and the OfS, and is part of the Validation Partnerships (OUVP) team. It was implemented as part of the OfS 2022-25 Strategy to improve the quality and standards of vocational education and to improve equality of opportunity by increasing the availability of vocational courses and qualifications. This partnership was found to be successful and reported to be positive for both participants and employers (Alexander et al., 2023).

In 2017 the **National Careers Strategy** was published by the Department for Education and followed on from the Industrial Strategy. The aim of the strategy was to ensure provision was in place to ensure that all were able to build a rewarding career. The careers strategy was part of the government plan to make Britain fairer, improve social mobility and offer opportunity to everyone - 'Excellent careers guidance makes sure there is equality of opportunity.' The strategy set out how individuals were given opportunities to understand the range of education, learning and career opportunities available to them, to learn from employers about work and the skills and to experience the workplace (Department for Education, 2017). It stated that individuals should be informed about both academic, technical and vocational routes and learning, and be provided with personal guidance.

	<p>The <b>International Education Strategy</b> focuses on attracting international students to develop the skills system as well as create international partnerships for shared skills learning (Department for International Trade &amp; Department for Education, 2019).</p> <p>The Department for Education as part of the <b>Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy</b> (2022) is delivering a programme of skills development for the green economy.</p> <p>A <b>new Industrial Strategy</b> is being developed by the Labour government. The consultation – <a href="#">Invest 2035: The UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy</a> – closed in November 2024 (Department for Trade and Industry, 2024).</p>
<p><b>Is there mention of career counselling and guidance in the strategies?</b></p>	<p>In the 2017 <b>Industrial Strategy</b> career development is noted as key to the skills system and establishment of technical/vocational qualifications and apprenticeship as viable alternatives to traditional higher education (Cedefop 2020c).</p> <p>Different parts of the careers systems were brought together in the 2017 <b>National Careers Strategy</b>. In relation to VET the strategy set out access to information on technical and vocational pathways and data on vocational outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Who are the key stakeholders in the VET system?</b></p>	<p>Ministerial departments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department for Education (DfE)</li> <li>• Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)</li> <li>• Department for Business and Trade (DBT)</li> <li>• Department for Energy Security and Net Zero</li> <li>• Devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland</li> </ul> <p>Non-ministerial departments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ofqual (previously Qualifications and Curriculum Authority)</li> <li>• Ofsted</li> </ul> <p>Executive agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)</li> <li>• Migration Advisory Committee</li> </ul> <p>Executive non-departmental public bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction Industry Training Board</li> <li>• Engineering Construction Industry Training Board</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education</li> <li>• Office for Students</li> <li>• Student Loans Company</li> </ul> <p>Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills England (including Unit for Future Skills)</li> <li>• The Industrial Strategy Council (ISC)</li> <li>• JobCentre Plus (PES)</li> <li>• National Careers Service</li> <li>• The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education</li> <li>• Careers &amp; Enterprise Company</li> </ul> <p>In the devolved nations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Scottish Government</li> <li>• Scotland’s Department for Education</li> <li>• Skills Development Scotland</li> <li>• Scottish Qualifications Authority</li> <li>• Welsh Government</li> <li>• Wales’s Department for Education</li> <li>• Qualifications Wales</li> <li>• Careers Wales</li> <li>• Northern Ireland’s Department for the Economy</li> <li>• Northern Ireland’s Department for Education</li> <li>• Northern Ireland Careers Service</li> <li>• Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), Northern Ireland</li> </ul>
<p><b>Who collects labour market data and information about VET?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office for National Statistics (ONS) – (the Census of Population; Business Register and Employment Survey; Workforce Jobs Series; Labour Force Survey; and Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings)</li> <li>• Skills England</li> <li>• Local Enterprise Partnerships and Regional Hubs and Observatories</li> <li>• Regional Development Agencies</li> <li>• Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)</li> <li>• Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)</li> <li>• Government departments</li> </ul>
<p><b>What labour market data and information are collected and</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Office for National Statistics</a> (ONS)</li> </ul>

<p><b>made available about VET (options, pathways, outcomes, etc.)?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills England – <a href="#">Unit for Future Skills Job and Skills data and Occupations in Demand 2024</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">National Careers Service</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Skills Development Scotland</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Careers Wales</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">UCAS</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">nomisweb</a></li> <li>• Skills Councils and associations such as <a href="#">Creative Industries Council</a>, <a href="#">Engineering UK</a></li> <li>• A number of third and private sector organisations such as <a href="#">Lightcast</a>, <a href="#">SkillsPlanner</a>, <a href="#">Edge Foundation</a></li> <li>• Local council, skills and/or intelligence hubs such as <a href="#">Buckingham Skills Hub</a>, <a href="#">Black Country Intelligence Hub</a>, <a href="#">Hampshire County Council</a></li> <li>• Sector/industry specific websites such as <a href="#">Enguinity</a>, <a href="#">Technicians Make it Happen</a></li> <li>• Government commissioned research, including the <a href="#">Labour market and skills projections</a>, the <a href="#">Employer Skills Survey (ESS)</a></li> </ul> <p>More sources are listed in: Barnes, S-A., &amp; Bimrose, J. (2021). <i>Labour market information and its use to inform career guidance of young people. An overview of the Labour Market Information System for Careers Guidance in England</i>. Coventry: University of Warwick.  <a href="https://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/ier-gatsby-lmis-landscape-2021-final.pdf">https://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/ier-gatsby-lmis-landscape-2021-final.pdf</a></p>
<p><b>How does labour market data and information inform VET system?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum and programme development</li> <li>• Development and updating of occupational standards</li> <li>• Skills forecasting</li> <li>• Programme monitoring and evaluation</li> <li>• Collaboration with employers and other key stakeholders</li> <li>• Career guidance and counselling (learning and occupational paths and training options)</li> <li>• Policy development</li> </ul>
<p><b>What career counselling and guidance support is provided to those at</b></p>	<p>England has a marketised approach to career provision to it is considered a complex and fragmented system (Cedefop, 2020c). The provision of career guidance and counselling in the UK is at key</p>

<p><b>different stages of VET pathway?</b></p>	<p>transition points from education to the labour market, and during periods of unemployment.</p> <p>The National Careers Service (England), Skills Development Scotland (Scotland), CareersWales (Wales) and Northern Ireland Careers Service (Northern Ireland) are all key stakeholders delivering career guidance and counselling services for VET across the UK. These are government-funded services. Career guidance and counselling support is embedded across the education, further and higher education sectors, and in the public employment services. Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) in England supports schools, academies and colleges by ensuring statutory requirements for encounters with employers are met and by ensuring young people are informed of different academic and vocational routes. This is achieved through Career Hubs which are partnerships between CEC, combined and local authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnerships.</p> <p>The Education and Skills Funding Agency provides the <a href="#">Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge Programme</a> to schools in England. This ensures that teachers are able to promote apprenticeships (Cedefop 2020c).</p> <p>Recent reviews suggest that VET has low status and is often not viewed as a valid pathway by young people and their parents (Social Mobility Commission, 2021; Wolf, 2011). Research has shown that VET students in a further education setting are more likely to seek support from family and friends, rather than from mainstream career guidance services (Atkins &amp; Flint, 2015). Whilst careers guidance is embedded within the education system, access can be variable.</p> <p>For adults, career guidance is provided through the National Careers Services, PES and further education colleges for those considering further training. Whilst there are not regulatory requirements for HEIs to provide career guidance, it is common practice to support students and graduates.</p>
<p><b>How is VET support funded?</b></p>	<p>VET in the UK is government funded with employers increasingly funding workplace training.</p>



In England, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) sponsored by the Department for Education funds education, skills training and VET in further education colleges. In 2017, the apprenticeship levy was introduced to create sustainable investment in to VET and encourage employers to take on apprentices (Department for Education, 2023). Large employers pay an apprenticeships levy to the government. This funding can then be accessed by all employers to fund the training of an apprentice. It is reported that the levy funds 650 different types of apprenticeships (Department for Education, 2023). In 2024, Skills England was introduced by the new Labour Government reforming the apprenticeship system in England (Department for Education, 2024). To enable greater flexibility, the levy is changing to allow shorter apprenticeships to be funded with a greater emphasis on younger learners. The levy will be replaced by the growth and skills levy.

In Northern Ireland, the Department for the Economy funds further education and specific Government-funded training programmes.

In Scotland, the Further and Higher Education Funding Council funds tertiary education and VET schools in Scotland. Skills Development Scotland funds Modern apprenticeship programmes and other government funded programmes of learning.

In Wales, the Welsh Government and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales fund VET. In 2014, a longer-term skills strategy was published setting out how skills will be co-funded with employers (Welsh Government, 2014). This was followed up by the Apprenticeship Skills Policy which detailed investments to increase the numbers of school leavers taking up apprenticeships, the development of higher level apprenticeships and pathways. The overall aim was to ensure that the skills system was responding to the needs of the Welsh economy (Welsh Government, 2017). As part of these reforms the Wales Apprenticeship Board (WAAB), an independent employer-led body, was set up. WAAB advises the Welsh Government on apprenticeships, workplace learning and pathways.

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