



VET in Finland

The Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) is responsible for strategic and normative steering of vocational education and training (VET) and leads national development. National VET objectives and core subjects are determined by the government.

Authorisations to provide VET are granted by the MoEC. They cover VET fields, number of learners, language of instruction, locations, special education tasks and other issues. VET providers may also be assigned tasks to organise labour policy education.

A VET provider may be a local authority, municipal training consortium, foundation or other registered association or State-owned company. These organise training in their areas, matching provision with local labour market needs. They decide independently on how the training is carried out, the use of learning environments and pedagogical solutions.

Around 42% of learners who completed basic education enrol in initial VET (IVET) immediately after; they obtain their VET qualifications at vocational institutions or through apprenticeships. Vocational qualifications are available for both young learners and adults.

There are 42 initial vocational qualifications (EQF 4), 67 further (EQF 4) and 56 specialist vocational qualifications (EQF 5). Admission to IVET programmes is based on a basic education certificate; for continuing VET (CVET: further and specialist) it is on a case-by-case basis, taking work experience into consideration.

IVET suits adults without a formal qualification or those who want to change profession. CVET programmes are mainly for adults with previous work experience. Adults may benefit from study leave. Leave that is two months or longer qualifies for the adult education allowance for up to 15 months, depending on the applicant's work history. The allowance is equal to the amount of the earnings-related unemployment allowance.

An initial vocational qualification requires 180 competence points (cp) comprising vocational units (compulsory and optional) and common units (communication, maths, science, citizenship and skills for working life) included in all IVET programmes. The nominal duration is three years, depending on the individual personal competence development plan. Further vocational qualifications usually require 150 cp and specialist vocational qualifications 180 cp, consisting mainly of vocational units. All include work-based learning.

The legislation does not stipulate a maximum or minimum amount on work-based learning (WBL). It is planned as part of the learner's personal competence development plan and implemented through an apprenticeship agreement (written fixed-term employment contract) or a training agreement. The latter does not establish an employment relationship with the training company; learners do not receive salary and employers do not receive training compensation.

WBL forms may alter within a programme: a learner may transfer from training to apprenticeship agreement when the prerequisites for concluding such an agreement are met.

All VET programmes ensure eligibility for higher education studies.

National qualifications requirements ensure standardised vocational competence and are the basis for evaluating learning

outcomes. The Finnish National Agency for Education develops them in tripartite cooperation between teachers, learners and education providers, employers and employees.

Representatives from enterprises contribute to developing national qualification requirements through sectoral working-life committees; they also organise and plan workplace training and competence tests, as well as assessing the tests.

Distinctive features of VET

Finnish vocational education and training is competence-based and learner-oriented. A personal competence development plan is drawn up for each learner. It charts and recognises the skills previously acquired by the learner and outlines any further competences the learner needs and how they can be acquired in different learning environments.

There are no final exams in VET. Once learners successfully complete their personal competence development plan, they acquire a qualification.

VET supports lifelong learning and learners' development as human beings and members of society. It provides learners with the knowledge and skills necessary in further studies and promotes employment.

VET is also an attractive choice. Nine out of 10 of all Finns think it is of high quality and provides skills needed for jobs. It is attractive because of its flexibility and good job and study prospects: graduates may enrol in higher education or enter the labour market. The fact that VET is developed and delivered in close cooperation with the labour market serves as a guarantee of its quality and attractiveness. Guided and goal-oriented learning at the workplace takes place in versatile learning environments, both at home and abroad, and is based on practical work tasks.

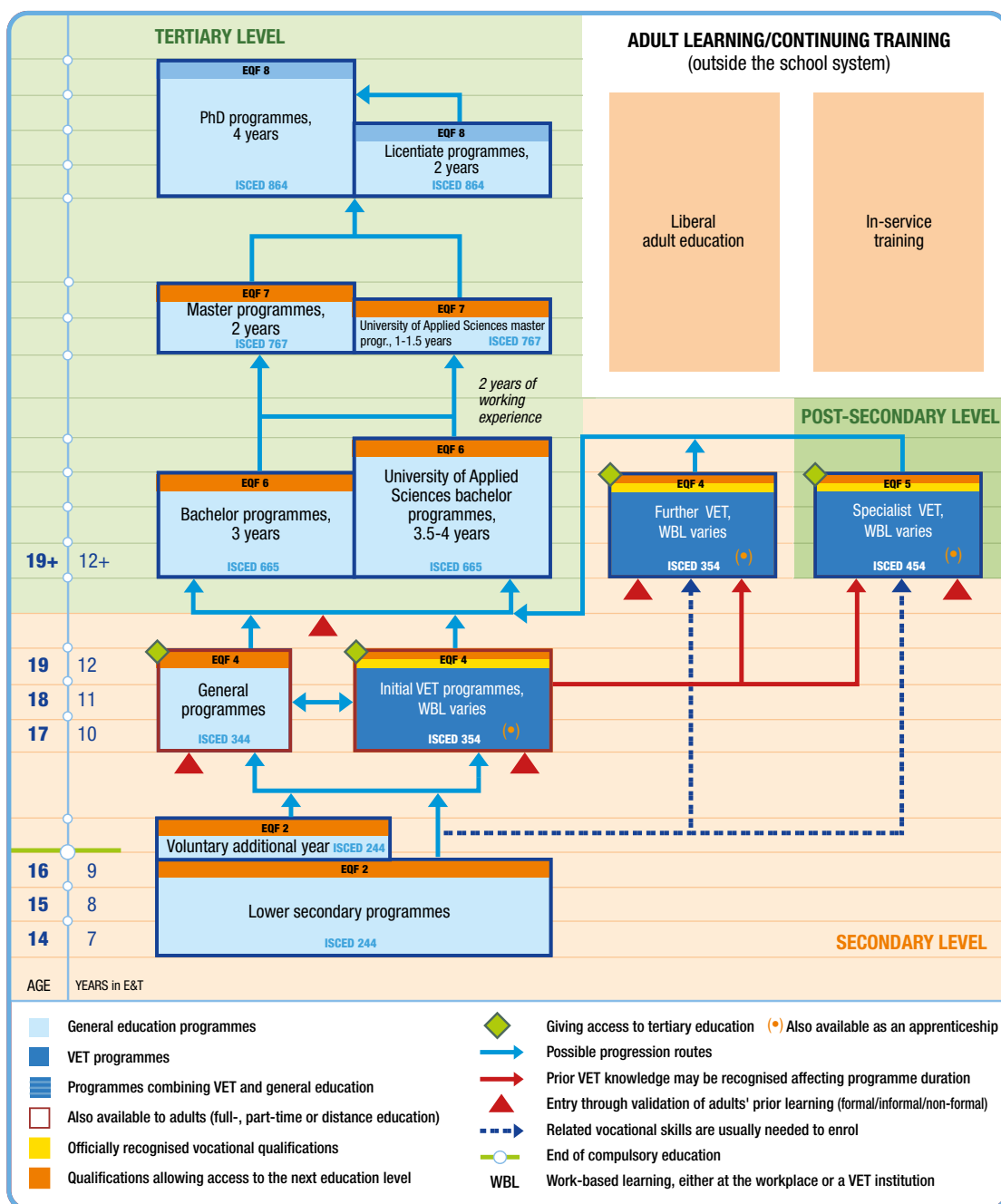
VET teachers and trainers are respected professionals. A career as a VET teacher is generally considered attractive. This is reflected in the high number of learners applying for VET training programmes, which invariably exceeds intake. Recently, about 30% of eligible applicants were admitted to training.

Challenges and policy responses

Finnish VET has recently undergone the most extensive reform in almost 20 years, aiming at more efficient and flexible, competence-based and customer-oriented VET that better matches qualifications to labour market needs.

The need to increase the share of WBL is one of the challenges it addresses. Further developing pedagogical thinking and practices, improving learning environments, and cooperation between workplaces and VET providers is required to achieve this objective. A sufficient number of workplaces and competent trainers, support and guidance and quality assurance are also key.

The Covid-19 pandemic has complicated the organisation of WBL, especially in the service branch where it has become difficult to find workplaces for learners. VET provider own facil-



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

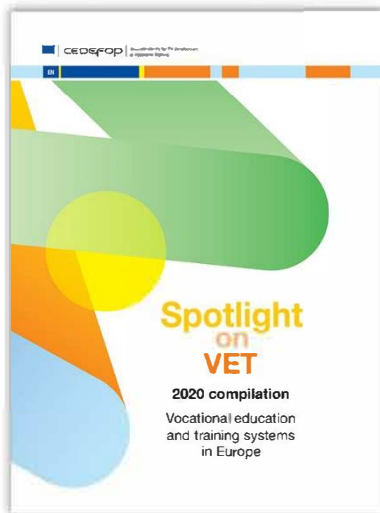
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Finland, 2020.

ities, such as school restaurants, can be utilised in this exceptional situation.

Teachers' jobs include more guidance: individual study paths increase the importance of the guidance and support provided for learners. EUR 80 million has been allocated through the government programme for recruiting vocational teachers and instructors in 2020.

The reform also changes how VET is financed. Since 2018, a single funding system with uniform criteria has covered all VET programmes, including CVET and apprenticeships. The financing model has gradually started to move towards performance

and efficiency funding; this will increase to 20% and 10% respectively by 2022, reducing the core funding to 70% from the current 95%. Performance funding is based on the number of completed qualifications and qualification units; effectiveness funding is based on learners' access to employment, pursuit of further education and feedback from both learners and the labour market.



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