
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

POLAND

SYSTEM DESCRIPTION



VET IN EUROPE 2023

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CHAPTER 1.

Summary of main elements and distinctive features of VET

Summary of main elements

Vocational education and training (VET) has three governance levels: national (ministries), regional (school superintendents, mainly for pedagogical supervision) and county (governing schools). The Ministry of National Education is responsible for secondary and higher VET, supported by other ministries (responsible for particular occupations), social partners, the Vocational School Directors Council and Regional VET coordinators. Legislation changes in 2011-15 and organisational ones in 2017-23 helped improve the VET system. VET is provided in school-based upper secondary education and post-secondary programmes. Learners can acquire vocational qualifications in:

- 3-year first stage sectoral programmes (*branżowa szkoła I stopnia*, ISCED 353) leading to a vocational qualification diploma for a single-qualification occupation (after passing State vocational examinations). Graduates can enrol in the second year of general upper secondary programmes for adults or in a second stage sectoral programme;
- 2-year second stage sectoral programmes (*branżowa szkoła II stopnia*, ISCED 354), starting in 2020/21. These develop the vocational qualifications attained in first stage sectoral programmes and lead to vocational qualification diplomas for occupations consisting of two qualifications (after passing State vocational examination in the second qualification). General education is provided on a full-time, evening or extracurricular basis. Graduates can acquire an upper secondary school leaving certificate (*matura*) providing access to tertiary education;
- 5-year vocational upper secondary programmes (*technikum*, ISCED 354) leading to a vocational qualification diploma for occupations consisting of two qualifications after passing State vocational examinations. Graduates can acquire an upper secondary school leaving certificate (*matura*) giving access to tertiary education;
- 3-year special job training programmes (*szkoła specjalna przysposabiająca do pracy*, ISCED 243) for special education needs (SEN) learners leading to a job training certificate;
- work preparation classes for SEN learners aged 15 and above already in primary school (*oddział przysposabiający do pracy*).

At the post-secondary non-tertiary level, vocational qualifications are acquired in 1-2.5- year school-based programmes (*szkoła policealna*, ISCED 453).

Social work college programmes (*kolegium pracowników służb społecznych*, ISCED 554) are tertiary education that combines school-based learning and in-company training, leading to an EQF 5 diploma.

Work-based learning (WBL) is mandatory for all VET-oriented programmes and takes place in various educational settings, industry competence centres (*branżowe centrum umiejętności*) or with employers, including apprenticeships. On-the-job training lasts 4-12 weeks, depending on the type of occupation, and is compulsory for vocational upper secondary, post-secondary and second-stage sectoral programmes.

Adult learning, continuing and out-of-school VET offer:

- vocational qualification courses based on curricula for a qualification in a given occupation;

learners can take the State vocational examination and obtain a vocational qualification certificate;

- vocational skills courses based on the VET core curriculum, including learning outcomes for a qualification or common learning outcomes for all occupations;
- minimum 30-hour general skills courses based on the general education curriculum;
- theoretical courses for juvenile employees;
- vocational training - minimum 15-hours specialised training based on curriculum which includes professional knowledge or skills in one of the professional fields specified in the regulations, useful for practising a profession;
- other courses to acquire and supplement knowledge, skills and professional qualifications or the change of professional qualifications. As of 2016, the Integrated qualifications register can include curriculum-based qualifications attained in courses offered by training companies and non-formal education institutions.

Distinctive features

The key features of Polish VET are:

- flexibility, allowing changing pathways at any point;
- classification of occupations updated by various stakeholders in line with labour market needs. Each occupation consists of one to two qualifications that can be attained through IVET and CVET programmes, and is linked to a core curriculum. A vocational diploma can be issued only when all qualifications required for an occupation are obtained (via State vocational examinations) together with a school leaving certificate;
- autonomy of VET schools in developing core curriculum-based school programmes, easily modified for labour market needs;
- uniform, centrally organised external vocational examinations;
- vocational qualification courses allowing adults to attain qualifications;
- validation of non-formal and informal learning via extramural examinations;
- compulsory work-based learning;
- student apprenticeship (*staż uczniowski*) - an additional form of work-based learning available for learners of first stage sectoral programmes and vocational upper secondary programmes as of 2019;
- Polish Qualifications Framework - a reference system for qualifications awarded in Poland.

CHAPTER 2.

Main challenges and policy responses

The main challenges for VET are:

- raising the attractiveness of VET in society;
- increasing employer engagement in practical training, in identifying labour market needs for skills and qualifications, and in reviewing VET curricula;
- improving VET teachers' qualifications and competences;
- encouraging lifelong learning among adult learners;
- encouraging sustainable cooperation between VET schools and higher education institutions to transfer good practices in teaching, training and developing teachers' competences;
- ensuring high quality guidance and counselling for all age groups; providing high quality infrastructure for VET schools to ensure teaching and training in line with labour market needs;
- further developing training programmes;
- ensuring high quality psychological and pedagogical support for learners in response to post-pandemic challenges and large influx of Ukrainian students migrating to Poland due to armed conflict in Ukraine;
- continually adapting the VET system to meet the needs of the modern economy.

Since 2018, measures have been introduced to strengthen vocational education and training (VET) by involving employers and aligning VET with labour market needs. These measures include improving practical training and teacher development in enterprises, expanding work-based learning, providing annual forecasts of labour demand in VET occupations, directing more resources to occupations in high demand, ensuring quality assurance, improving accreditation of VET providers, organising vocational courses for adult learners, introducing student apprenticeships, setting up a monitoring system for graduate careers and revising VET examinations.

Several other initiatives by the education ministry address VET challenges by including non-statutory CVET qualifications in the integrated qualifications register, strengthening school guidance and counselling, developing new IVET core curricula, establishing sector skills councils, launching the national Integrated Skills Strategy, identifying significant VET professions, and developing ICT infrastructure for VET schools.

CHAPTER 3.

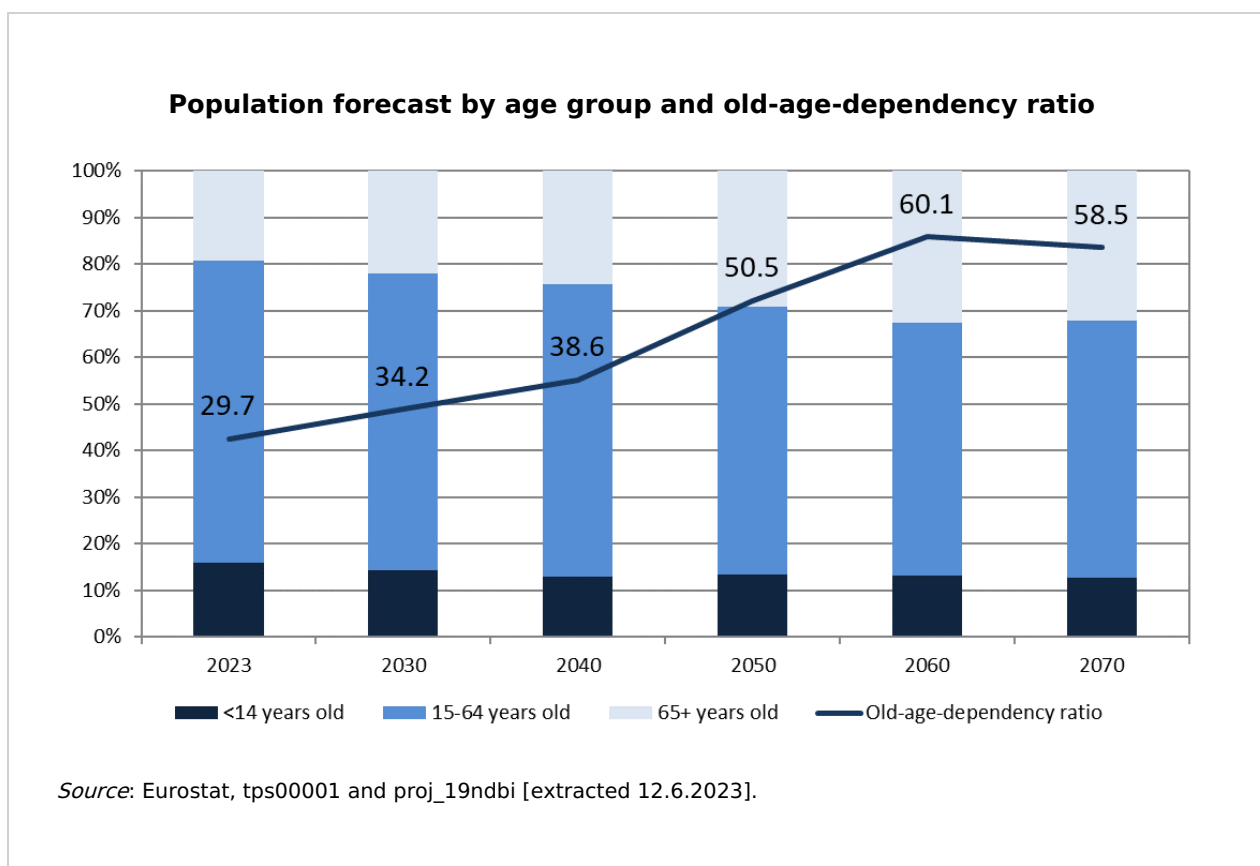
External factors influencing VET

3.1 Demographics

Population in 2022: 37 654 247 (1).

It decreased since 2017 by 0.8% due to negative natural growth (2).

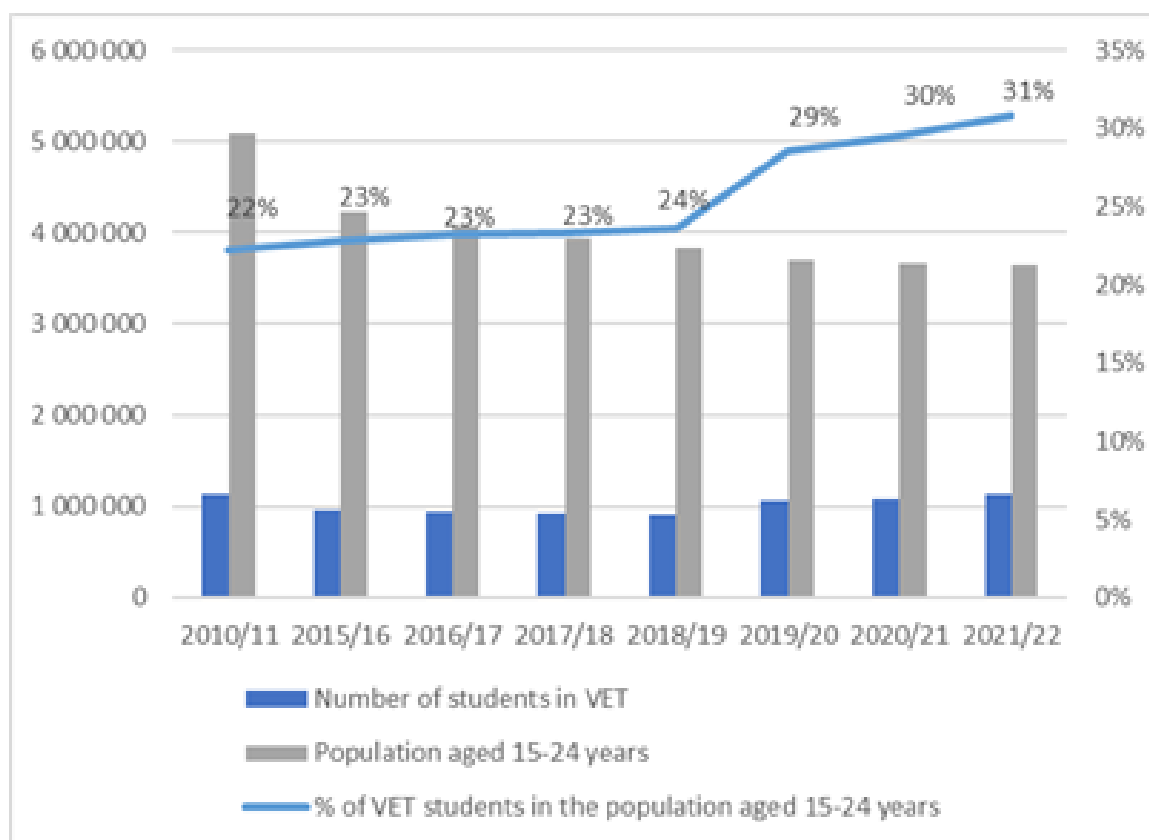
As in many other EU countries, the population is ageing. The old-age-dependency ratio is expected to increase from 29.7 in 2023 to 58.5 in 2070 (3).



Demographic trends have a direct impact on education enrolment. The population of 15-24-year-olds is declining year by year.

In 2021/22, the number of VET secondary and post-secondary learners was similar to that in 2010/2011, with a slight decrease of 1 691 students.

Number of vocational education learners in relation to population 15-24 year-olds (4)



Source: ReferNet Poland calculations based on data from the [Local Data Bank](#), Statistics Poland, and Statistics Poland - Education in the 2022/23, [extracted 5.2.2024].

The number of VET learners was 1 127 587, accounting for 22% of the 15-24-year-old population, and was at a similar level to 2010/11. And while we saw a year-on-year decline in the number of VET students between 2015 and 2018, there is an upward trend starting in 2019. In 2022, VET students accounted for 31% of the 15-24-year-old population, which has decreased by 28% since 2010. Decline in VET learners over the years was also related to the reduced interest in VET among young people.

Poland is a rather homogeneous country in terms of nationality and language. According to the [2021 National population and housing census](#), 98.84% of people declared their nationality as Polish and 99.56% declared that they use the Polish language at home. The subsequent declared nationalities are German (144 177), Ukrainian (82 440), Belarusian (56 607) and English (54 424).

The [Act on national and ethnic minorities](#) distinguishes nine official national minorities and four national ethnic minorities in the country. The constitution guarantees these groups the freedom to preserve their own language, customs and traditions, and develop their own culture. There are special forms of support provided to learners from national and ethnic minorities:

- inclusion of the national and ethnic minority language and the regional language in education activities, the additional course of one's own history and culture at the request of

- the learner's parent/legal representative (5);
- the learning of a minority language and a regional language can be conducted in schools in various ways; the number of teaching hours depends on the way it is taught;
- external examinations are adapted for learners of the language of the national minority, ethnic minority and the regional language.

According to the Education Data System (SIO), 787 learners in 27 VET schools (6) were learning national, ethnic minority or regional languages in the 2021/22 school year, with the highest number in vocational upper secondary schools (60% in 2022).

Number of learners in vocational schools learning national, ethnic minority or regional languages

	2019*		2020*		2021*		2022*	
	Number of schools	Number of learners	Number of schools	Number of learners	Number of schools	Number of learners	Number of schools	Number of learners
Vocational upper secondary schools	15	480	14	453	13	425	14	473
First stage sectoral schools	14	292	13	321	11	296	13	314
Second stage sectoral schools	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0	0	0
Total	29	772	27	774	24	721	27	787

* data as of 30 September

Source: data from the Education Data System (SIO, 2019-2022) [extracted 19.9.2023].

The following forms of support are available to non-nationals subject to compulsory education:

- education and care in all types of public schools and pre-schools provided up to the age of 18 or age of graduating from school at the secondary and post-secondary level on the same terms applicable to Polish citizens (7);
- admission to schools on the basis of diplomas which do not have to be formally recognised;
- free-of-charge Polish language classes, additional compensatory classes in a given subject, preparatory classes (*oddział przygotowawczy*) provided at schools;
- additional classes of the language and culture of the country of origin, organised at schools by the diplomatic/consular mission or a cultural/educational association;
- assistance to the learner provided by a person who speaks the language of the country of origin, employed as a teacher's assistant; different ways of facilitating external examinations taken by foreign learners.

Certain groups of foreign adults, such as EU nationals, persons with different types of permits granted in Poland, and selected scholarship holders can benefit from education in public schools for adults, public post-secondary schools, public art schools, public colleges of social work and

different forms of vocational courses, under the same conditions as Polish citizens.

Number of foreign learners in vocational schools

	Number of foreign learners				
	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Total *	43 911	60 679	84 372	135 306	351 157
VET schools:					
Vocational upper secondary schools	4 606	6 934	8 642	11 476	20 470
First stage sectoral schools	392	975	1 428	2 069	5 796
Second stage sectoral schools	n/a	n/a	16	39	105
Basic vocational schools	58	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total in VET schools	5 056	7 909	10 086	13 584	26 371

* all types of schools, including post-secondary schools and preschools

Source: data from the Education Data System (SIO, 2018-2023) [extracted 19.9.2023].

17 411 learners from Ukraine with legal residence have been studying in vocational schools in 2023, with the highest number in vocational upper secondary schools.

Number of learners from Ukraine (legal residence) in VET schools in 2023

Type of school	Number of learners from Ukraine (legal residence)
Total*	178 713
VET schools:	
Vocational upper secondary schools	7 427
First stage sectoral schools	2 745
Second stage vocational schools	11
Special job-training schools	58
Post-secondary schools	7 168
Colleges of social work	2
Total in VET schools	17 411

* all types of schools, including preschools

Source: data from the [Poland's Data Portal](#), [extracted 4.9.2023]

3.2 Economics

The enterprise sector in Poland is dominated by microenterprises; 95% of enterprises are microenterprises (2020) (8). They produce 29,5% of GDP and significantly affect the labour

market - they generate 34,8% of the jobs in the enterprise sector. The number of microenterprises has increased in recent years.

Small-sized companies account for 4.1% of the Polish enterprise sector, produce 9,1% of GDP and generate 16,7% of the jobs in the sector (2020).

Medium-sized companies account for 0.7% of the Polish enterprise sector, produce 5% of GDP and generate 15,2% of the jobs in the sector (2020).

Large-sized enterprises in Poland account for only 0.2% of the enterprise sector, produce 28% of GDP and generate 33,3% of the jobs in the sector (2020).

The main economic sectors in Poland are wholesale and retail trade, transport, accommodation and food service activities, industry (except construction) and manufacturing.

Share of economic sectors in gross value added and income in 2022 (%)

Sector	2022
Industry (except construction)	22.3
Wholesale and retail trade, transport, accommodation and food service activities	21.8
Manufacturing	17,5
Public administration, defence, education, human health and social work activities	13.1
Professional, scientific and technical activities; administrative and support service activities	7.8
Construction	5.8
Real estate activities	4.8
Financial and insurance activities	4.7
Information and communication	4.4
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2.8
Arts, entertainment and recreation; other service activities; activities of household and extra-territorial organisations and bodies	1.7

NB: NACE_R2/TIME.

Source: Eurostat [nama_10_a10] [extracted 5.2.2024].

The following sectors have the largest share of Polish exports (2022; current prices) (9):

- machinery and transport equipment (35.9%);
- manufactured goods (18.1%);
- miscellaneous manufactured articles (16,5%);
- chemicals and related products (9.8%) (10).

The employment structure in Poland has not undergone any significant changes over the past few years. The share of services in total employment increases slightly each year and in 2022 reached over 63%, which is still far below the EU-27 average of around 74%. The employment share in industry is stable in Poland at around 28% and the share in agriculture decreased from 13.1% in 2010 to 8.4% in 2022.

Employment share by economic sector and gender in Poland (%)

	Total	Female	Male
Agriculture	8.4	7.6	9.2
Industry	28.3	16.4	38.9
Services	63.3	76	51.9

Source: ReferNet Poland calculations based on [The Local Data Bank of Statistics Poland](#), [extracted 5.2.2024].

Most employed women are in services (76%), while the share of employment of men in services

is higher than in industry, 51.9% and 39% respectively.

3.3 Labour market

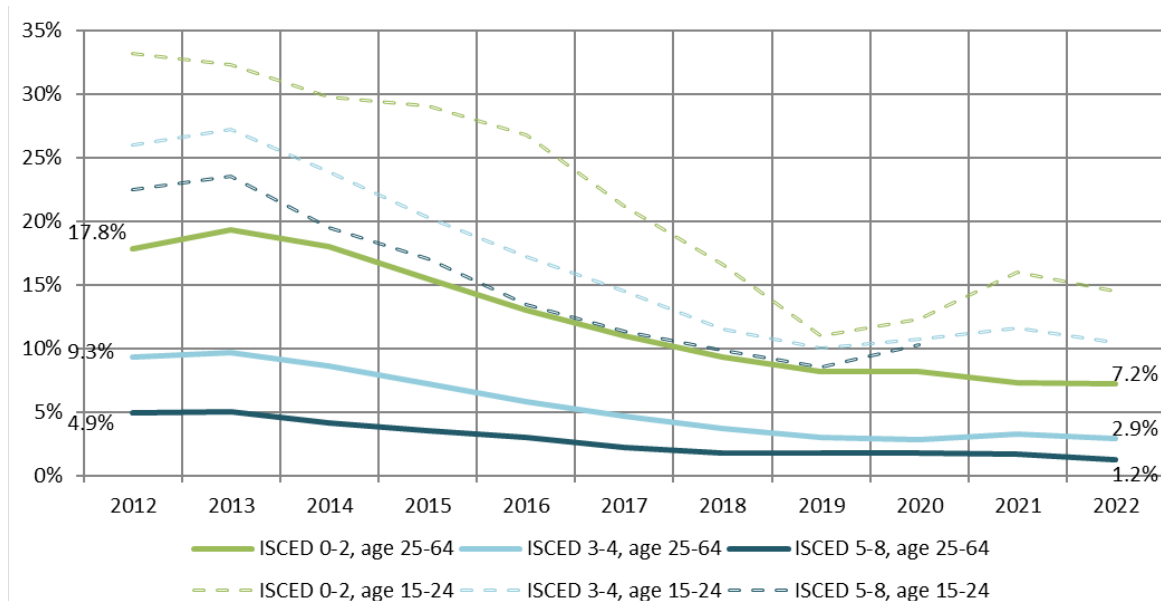
The labour market tends to be deregulated in Poland. However, in some cases, access to and the practice of some occupations/professions are confined to having a specific professional qualification. The [EC Regulated professions database](#) lists 361 regulated professions in Poland. The rules of access to professions are determined by the ministers responsible for specific fields.

The regulated occupations in Poland are divided into two groups:

- sectoral system occupations, which are automatically recognised in all EU member states, such as attorney, physician, pharmacist, nurse, architect;
- general system occupations - more numerous - in the case of which additional requirements for a given profession in a given country must be met, such as teacher, sworn translator, tourist guide, customs agent.

Total unemployment (11)(2022): 2.4% (5.4% in EU-27); it has decreased by 0.8 percentage points since 2018 (12).

Unemployment rate (aged 15-24 and 25-64) by education attainment level in 2012-22



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series; low reliability for ISCED 5-8, age 15-24 in 2021 and 2022.

ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education.

ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

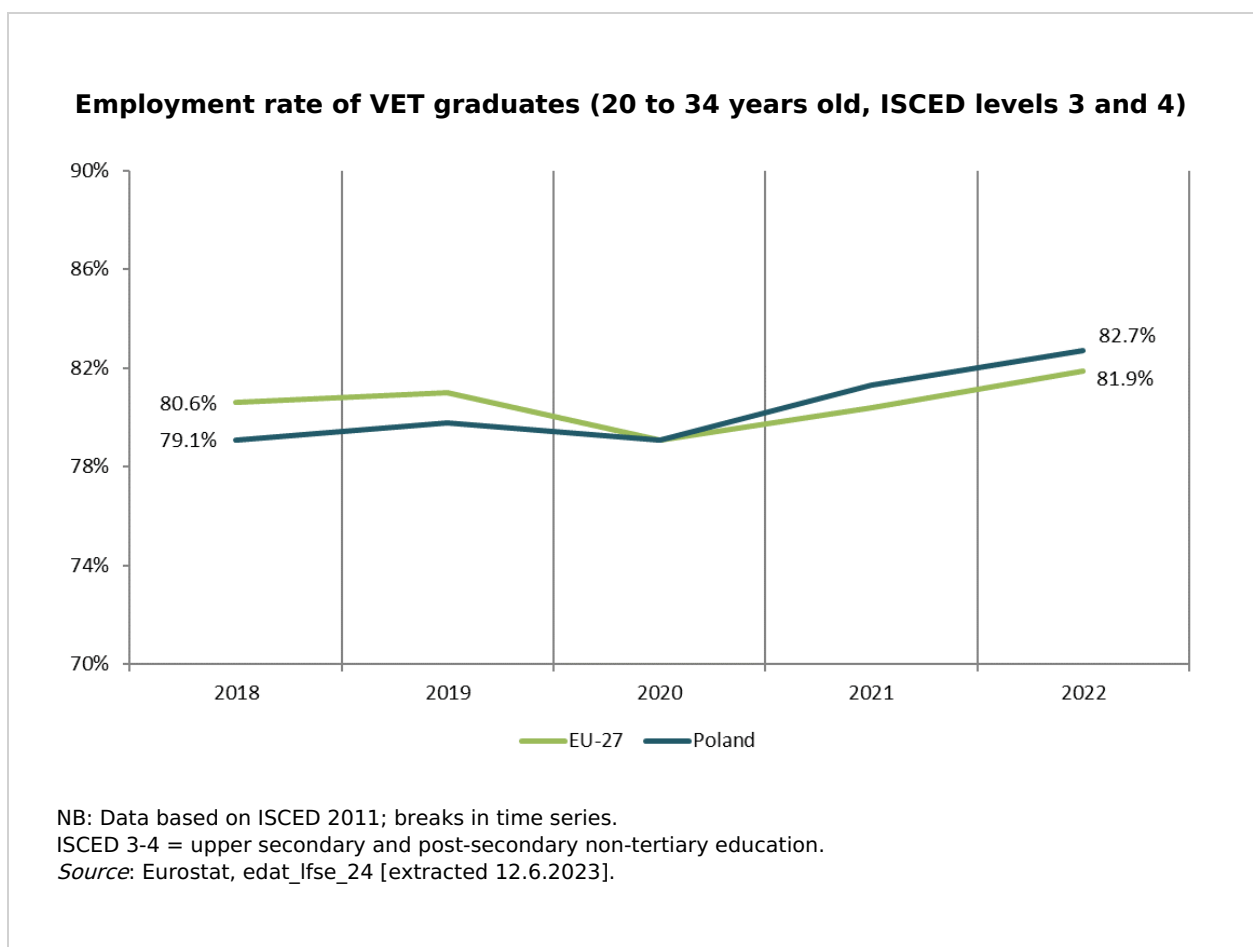
ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat, Ifsa_urgaed [extracted 12.10.2023].

Unemployment is distributed unevenly between individuals with low- and high-level qualifications. The gap has increased during the crisis as unskilled workers are more vulnerable

to unemployment. In 2018, the unemployment rate of those with medium-level qualifications, including most VET graduates (ISCED levels 3 and 4) was lower than in the pre-crisis years. In 2013-2019, there was an overall fall in unemployment in all age groups and by all types of education level. After 2019, unemployment of young people with lower education (ISCED 0-2, ISCED 3-4) began to rise and only started to fall gently around 2021, while unemployment of young people with higher education (ISCED 5-8) fell sharply around the 2020-2021 pandemic. In contrast, unemployment of 25-64-year-olds continued its slight downward trend after 2019.

The total employment rate of all ISCED level graduates aged 20 to 34 increased by 2.8 percentage points from 2018 (80.0%) to 2022 (82.8%). The employment rate of recent VET graduates aged 20 to 34 increased by 3.6 pp (from 79.1% in 2018 to 82.7% in 2022) and since 2021 remains above the EU-27 level (81.9% in 2022) (13).



For more information about the external drivers influencing VET developments in Poland, please see the case study from [Cedefop's changing nature and role of VET in Europe project](#).

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- [1] NB: Data for population as of 1 January. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 12.8.2023].
 - [2] NB: Data for population as of 1 January. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 30.8.2023].
 - [3] Old-age-dependency ratio is defined as the ratio between the number of persons aged 65 and more over the number of working-age persons (15-64). The value is expressed per 100 persons of working age (15-64).
 - [4] THEMATIC_3] Learners in vocational programmes at upper secondary and post-

secondary levels.

- [5] [Regulation of the Minister of Education of February 2, 2024 amending the regulation on the conditions and manner of performing tasks by kindergartens, schools and public institutions enabling maintaining the sense of national, ethnic and linguistic identity of students belonging to national and ethnic minorities and the community using a regional language.](#)
- [6] First stage sectoral schools and vocational upper secondary schools.
- [7] [Informacja o kształceniu w polskim systemie oświaty osób przybywających z zagranicy](#) [Ministry of National Education: Information on the education of foreigners in the Polish education system [extracted 5.2.2024].
- [9] SITC nomenclature: sections.
- [11] Eurostat table une_rt_a [extracted 12.6.2023]. Percentage of active population, 25 to 74-year-olds because une_rt_a does not offer to select 25-64..
- [12] Eurostat table une_rt_a [extracted 12.6.2023]. .
- [13] Eurostat, edat_ifse_24 [extracted 12.6.2023].

CHAPTER 4.

Education attainment

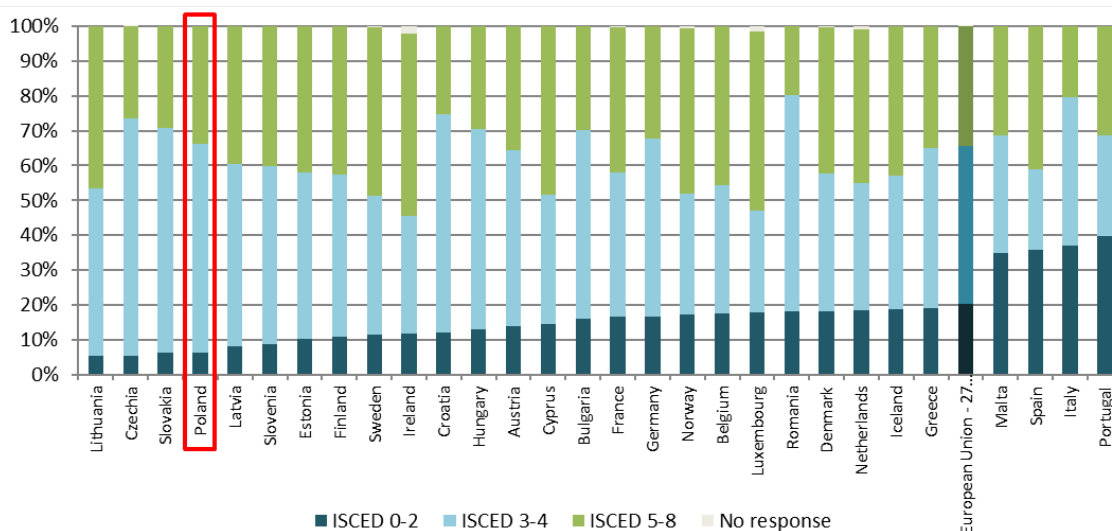
4.1 Share of high, medium and low level qualifications

Participation in tertiary education in Poland has significantly increased over the last three decades, connected to an increase in the perceived value of education and higher educational aspirations. From 2009 to 2022, the share of the population with tertiary education increased from 21.2% to 33.9% but remains slightly below the EU-27 average (34.2%).

For the past several years, the share of the population with an upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary level of education, for both men and women, has been slowly decreasing, from 66.8% in 2009 to 59.6% in 2022, but is still much higher than the EU-27 average (45.2%).

Poland has the fourth lowest share of people with no or low attained education level (6.5% in 2022). This indicator has been gradually decreasing in the past few years (12% in 2009).

Population (aged 25 to 64) by highest education level attained in 2022



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; low reliability for 'No response' in Czechia and Latvia.

ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education.

ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat, Ifsa_pgaed [extracted 12.6.2023].

4.3 VET learners by level

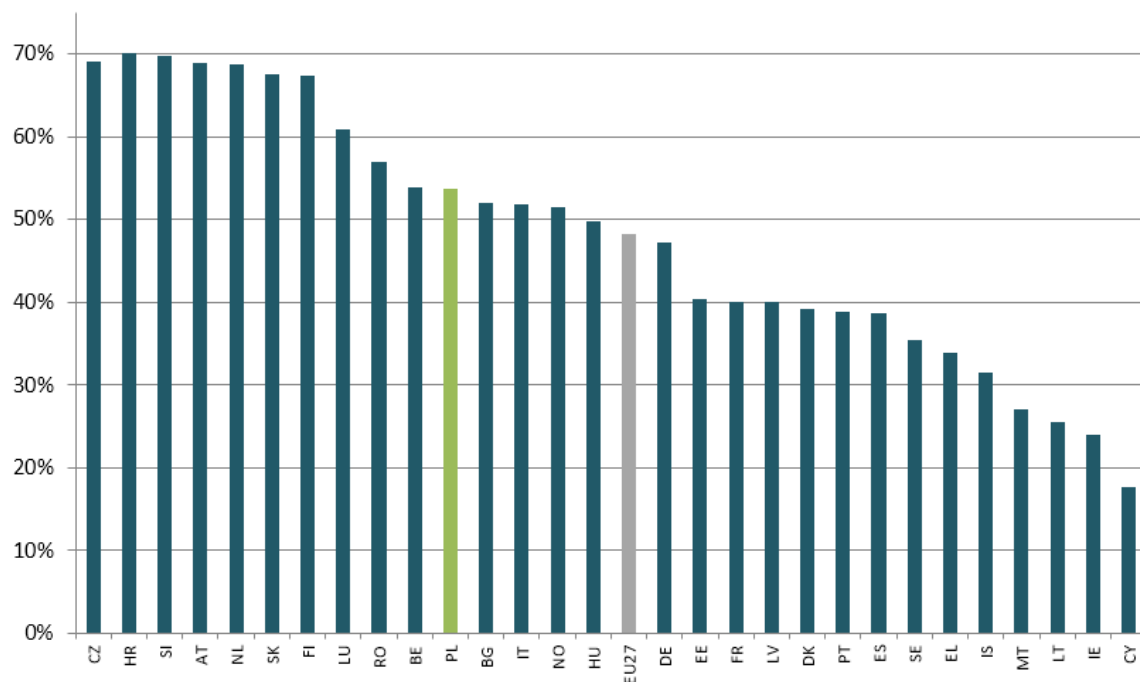
Share of learners in VET by level in 2021

lower secondary	upper secondary	post-secondary
<i>Not applicable</i>	53.8%	100%

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs01, educ_uoe_enrs04 and educ_uoe_enrs07 [extracted 12.6.2023].

Share of learners in VET at the upper secondary level increased by two percentage points from 51.7% in 2017 to 53.8% in 2021.

Share of initial VET learners from total learners at upper-secondary level (ISCED level 3), 2021



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs04 [extracted 13.6.2023].

4.4 Female share

In 2021/22, females constituted 44.6% of all learners in VET programmes (43.8 % in 2019/20). The share differs depending on the type of programme: in post-secondary programmes, females are the majority (70.4%); in programmes at the upper secondary level, there are more males than females, with the lowest share of females in second stage sectoral programmes (27.7%).

Share of female learners in VET programmes in 2021/22, (%)

Type of programme	Female learners
Vocational upper secondary programmes	39.8
First stage sectoral programmes	31.7
Second stage sectoral programmes	27.7
Post-secondary programmes	70.4
Special job-training programmes	39.2
Total	44.6

Source: ReferNet Poland calculation based on Statistics Poland - Education in the 2021/22 school year.

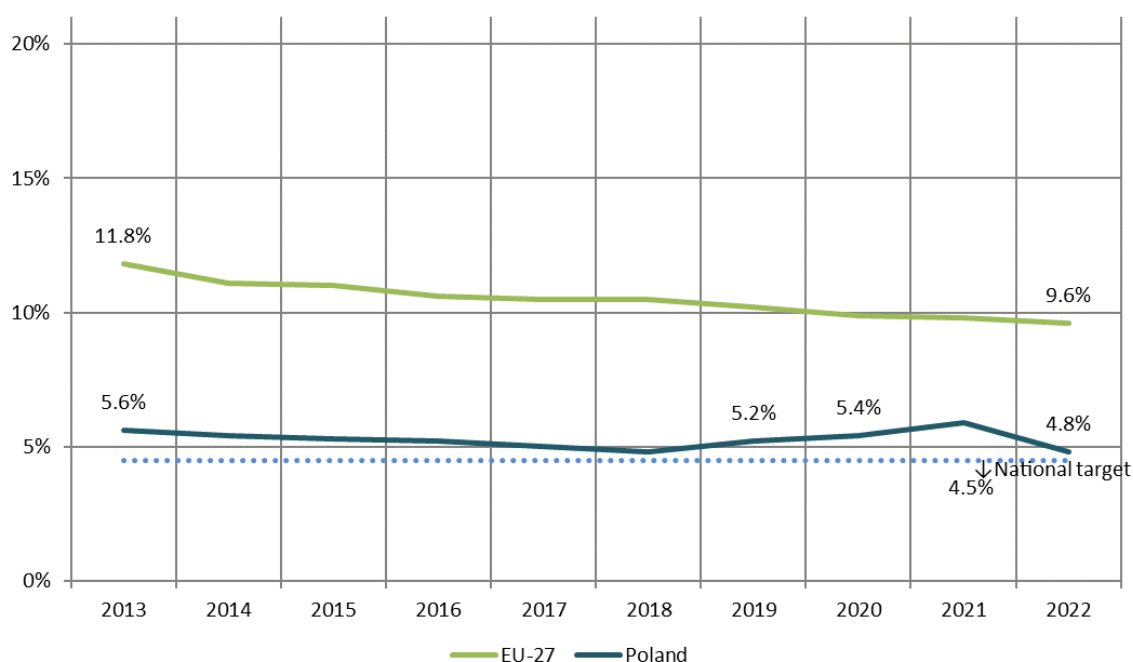
Female learners prefer the following fields of study:

- in post-secondary programmes: hygiene and work safety, personal services, business and administration, medical study;
- in first stage sectoral programmes: personal services, business and administration and manufacturing and processing;
- in vocational upper secondary programmes: personal services, business and administration, social and behavioural science.

4.5 Early leavers from education and training

The share of early leavers from education and training in 2022 was 4.8%, which is much lower than the EU-27 average of 9.6%. The share is slightly lower than in 2013 (5.6%). Despite high attainment rates, it is still slightly above the national target for 2022 of not more than 4.5%.

Early leavers from education and training in 2013-22



NB: Share of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training.
 Source: Eurostat, edat_lfse_14 [extracted 12.6.2023] and [European Commission](#) [extracted 12.6.2023].

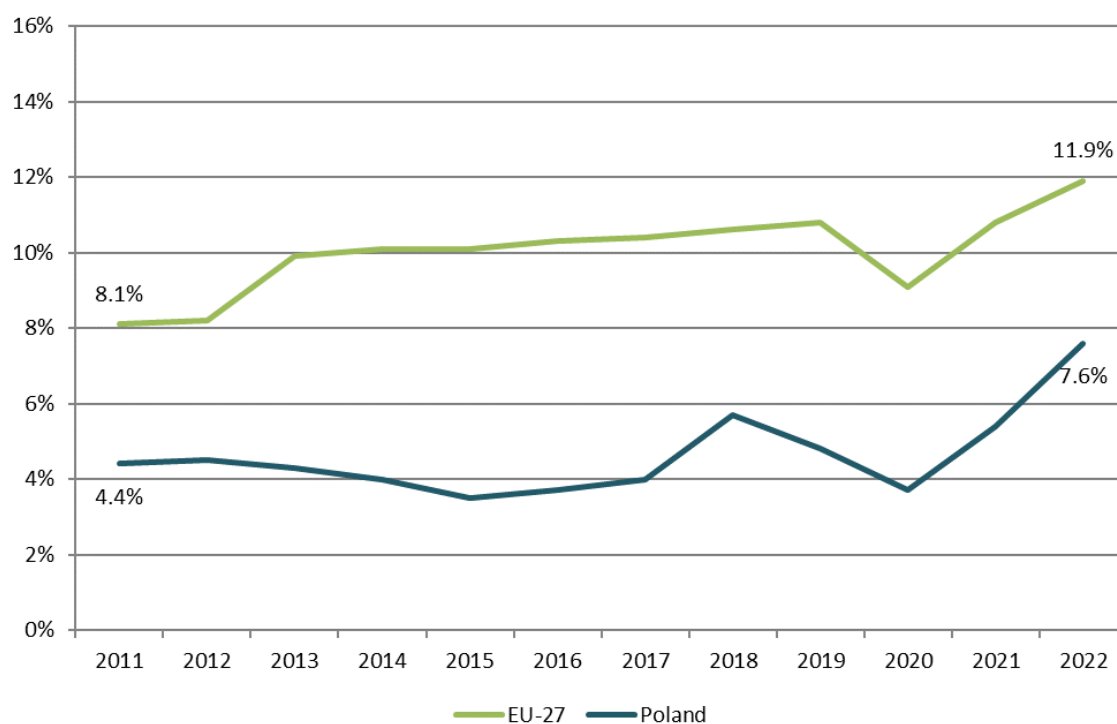
For more information visit [Cedefop project page on tackling early leaving](#) and our interactive toolkits: [Cedefop VET toolkit for tackling early leaving](#) and [Cedefop VET toolkit for empowering NEETs](#).

4.6 Participation in lifelong learning

Participation in lifelong learning in Poland remained at a very low level (4.0%) until 2017; in 2018 it reached 5.7% and then increased to 7.6% in 2022. It remains 4.3 percentage points below the EU-27 average.

Education level, age and labour market activity are the factors differentiating the rate of participation in training; individuals who are unemployed and have a low level of education often do not participate in educational activities. Age is also a strong determinant of participation in education; people in older age groups not only participate in training less often, but also study less on their own (informal learning).

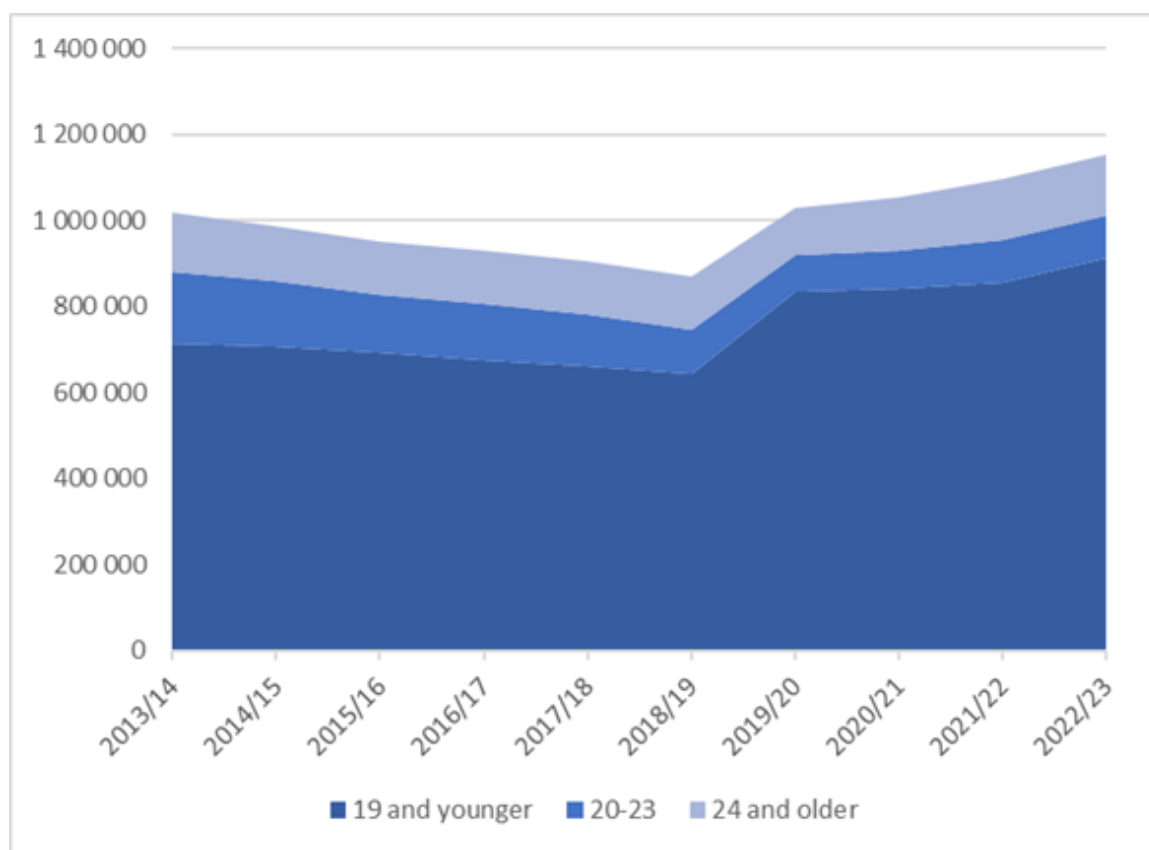
Participation in lifelong learning in 2011-22



NB: Share of adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training, break in series.
Source: Eurostat, trng_lfse_01 [extracted 12.6.2023].

4.7 VET learners by age

Learners in VET schools by age group



NB: Participants of vocational qualification courses not included.

Includes basic vocational/first stage sectoral programmes, vocational upper secondary programmes, special job-training and post-secondary programmes.

Source: ReferNet Poland calculations based on data from the Education Data System (SIO, 2013-2018) and [Statistics Poland - Education in the 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/2022, 22/23 school year](#).

Most VET learners are young people (79% at age 19 and younger in 2022/23), with only post-secondary schools intended for adult learners. This is caused by the establishment of vocational qualification courses for adult learners that replaced adults VET schools at upper secondary level. Vocational qualification courses were introduced in 2012 as a quicker way of obtaining vocational qualifications.

CHAPTER 5.

VET within education and training system

The education and training system comprises:

- preschool education (ISCED 0);
- 8-year primary education (*szkoła podstawowa*); a programme divided into two 4-year parts (basic and lower secondary level) (ISCED 1 and 2);
- upper secondary education (ISCED 3);
- post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4);
- tertiary education including colleges of social work (ISCED 5 to 8).

The education system in Poland has undergone significant changes in recent years. In December 2016, the education ministry introduced reforms to extend the time children spend within one educational programme and develop a vocational education system responsive to the needs of a modern economy. Key elements of the reform included:

- phasing out lower secondary school (*gimnazjum*);
- restructuring 6-year primary education (*szkoła podstawowa*) into an 8-year programme divided into two 4-year parts (basic and lower secondary level);
- extending the general upper secondary programme (*liceum ogólnokształcące*) to 4 years instead of 3, and the vocational upper secondary programme (*technika*) to 5 years instead of 4;
- introducing two-stage sectoral programmes (*dwustopniowa szkoła branżowa*); the first stage sectoral school (*branżowa szkoła I stopnia*) replaced the basic vocational school (*zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa*) as of 2017/18, while the second stage sectoral schools (*branżowa szkoła II stopnia*) began to operate in 2020/21.

Changes in the schooling structure were accompanied by the gradual development of new core curricula. The school system was transitioning until 2022/23. During this period, some previous programmes were functioning alongside the new ones until they are completely phased out.

Education is compulsory up to 18 years of age, while full-time school education is compulsory until student completes primary school, but no longer than up to 18 years of age. Full-time compulsory education lasts 9 years (the last year of pre-school education and 8 years of primary school education). Compulsory education for 15-18 year-olds can take place as full-time school education or part-time education, both in and out of school, e.g. in the form of vocational qualifications courses or vocational training for juvenile workers.

Pre-school education is provided in pre-schools (*przedszkole*) for 2.5- to 6-year-old learners.

Primary and lower secondary education lasts typically 8 years from age 7 to 15 and is provided in primary schools (*szkoła podstawowa*). Work preparation classes for special education needs (SEN) learners are available in the last 2 years of primary school. A 3-year special job-training programme for SEN learners is available for primary school graduates.

Upper secondary education is typically available to primary school graduates (usually 15-year-olds), apart from the second stage sectoral programme, which is available to graduates of the first stage sectoral programmes (18-year-olds). Upper secondary education can be provided by different types of schools in the form of a general upper secondary 4-year programme (*licea*

ogólnokształcące), a vocational upper secondary 5-year programme (*technika*) or a 3-year first stage sectoral programme (*branżowa szkoła I stopnia*), which can be followed by a 2-year second stage sectoral programme.

Post-secondary non-tertiary programmes last 1 to 2.5 years and are provided by post-secondary schools (*szkoła policealna*). They are available to graduates of general and vocational upper secondary programmes and those from second stage sectoral programmes (usually 19-20-year-olds).

A special form of education is provided by colleges of social work (*kolegium pracowników służb społecznych*), offering programmes at ISCED level 5. These colleges provide 3-year programme for the occupation of social worker.

The VET system comprises initial and continuing education. It can be offered as:

- school-based programmes with obligatory work-based learning (WBL differing in scope and form, also including dual training/alternate training);
- juvenile employment (apprenticeship scheme, with practical training with an employer and theoretical training in school or in out-of-school forms, based on a contract between the learner and the employer) (14);
- out-of-school forms: different types of courses based on the core curricula.

Formal VET leads to three qualification levels (3 to 5) that are the same as in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

Completing any type of VET programme and obtaining a school leaving certificate is not the same as attaining a vocational qualification. Learners in the formal VET system can be awarded two types of documents confirming attained learning outcomes:

- vocational certificates (certificate of a vocational qualification in an occupation);
- vocational diplomas (vocational qualification diploma).

Learners can obtain a vocational diploma only by obtaining all the qualifications distinguished in an occupation (vocational certificate/s) and a school leaving certificate. A vocational qualification can only be attained by passing an external State vocational examination.

Each qualification includes specific sets of learning outcomes defined in the core curricula for vocational education. Learning outcomes are grouped in units, which typically contain from several to over a dozen learning outcomes and reflect specific professional tasks. The core curriculum for general education determines the learning outcomes for the general education component and key competences provided by VET programmes (15).

Adults aged 18 and older can be awarded a vocational certificate after passing the State vocational examination extramurally. By taking extramural exams, adults may also acquire certificates of completion of general education programmes.

[14] An additional new form - the student apprenticeship - is available for learners of vocational upper secondary programmes and first stage sectoral programmes as of September 2019.

[15] For vocational upper secondary programmes, it also defines the learning outcomes that must be achieved by a person in the process of attaining the qualification of the *matura* certificate.

CHAPTER 6.

Apprenticeship

There are several apprenticeship schemes at the secondary and post-secondary levels:

Juvenile employment for the purpose of vocational training (*przygotowanie zawodowe młodocianych pracowników*)

This type of apprenticeship is designed for young people (15-18 year-olds) who have completed lower secondary or 8 years of primary education. It is based on a work contract between the learner and employer, where theoretical education takes place in school; arrangements between the school and employer regarding scope and organisation of training provided by both parties form an annex to the contract. The juvenile worker has the status of an employee and, when theoretical training takes place in school, also of a learner. During the training period, a juvenile worker is entitled to a salary (7-10% of the national average salary, depending on the subsequent year of training), social security benefits and holiday leave. Juvenile workers usually undertake apprenticeship in SMEs, mainly in the craft sector. Juvenile employment can take the following forms:

- **training for a profession** (*nauka zawodu*): apprenticeship with the theoretical education taking place at school (first stage sectoral programme) or in an out-of-school form (e.g. courses) and the practical training organised by the employer. Training for a profession lasts up to 36 months and ends with a State vocational examination or Journeyman's examination (*egzamin czeladniczy*). In the 2023/24 school year, juvenile workers represented over 56% of all the learners in the first stage sectoral schools;
- **training for a specific job** (*przyuczenie do wykonywania określonej pracy*): a rare form limited to a small group of young people; this prepares a learner to perform specific tasks in a profession. It lasts 3 to 6 months and ends with a verifying examination. For juvenile participants of the [Voluntary Labour Corps](#), training lasts until they complete primary school but no longer than 22 months.

Student apprenticeship (*staż uczniowski*)

New form of apprenticeship available since September 2019. It is open to learners in vocational upper secondary programmes and first-stage sectoral programmes, who are not juvenile workers. Student apprenticeship is based on the work contract between the learner and employer, with arrangements between the school and employer in the annex to this contract. Student apprenticeship covers all elements of the teaching programme and chosen elements or elements connected with a given occupation but not included in the programme. Students are entitled to a salary unless the contract says otherwise.

Dual training as a form of practical training

Apart from above-mentioned schemes, apprenticeships might be arranged by schools in cooperation with employers as one of the ways of organisation of practical training. In general, practical training (obligatory for all VET programmes) can be organised in different forms and venues - including apprenticeship - alternate training/dual training with structured alternation of learning in an education and training setting with learning and working at a workplace. This form of organisation of practical training could be considered an apprenticeship; however, it is based on the contract between the school and employer, not between employer and learner.

Apprenticeships for adult learners are also available. This is a form of support provided by Labour Offices and financed by the [Labour Fund](#) dedicated to the unemployed and job seekers. Apprenticeships for adults are conducted based on a contract between a Labour Office, an

employer and an institution responsible for conducting exams. Apprenticeships are provided as occupational training and training aimed at preparing a person to perform a specific job. In 2016-19 (first half), apprenticeships for adult learners attracted over 525 500 participants (16).

Learn more about apprenticeships in the national context from the [European database on apprenticeship schemes](#) by Cedefop.

CHAPTER 7.

VET governance

VET has three governance levels: national (ministries), regional (school superintendents, mainly in pedagogical supervision) and county (*powiat* - managing schools). The Ministry of Education and Science consolidates tasks relating to education, higher education, and science within one institution. It is also in charge of VET policies at all levels, supported by other ministries responsible for particular occupations. Social partners advise policy makers on necessary changes in VET.

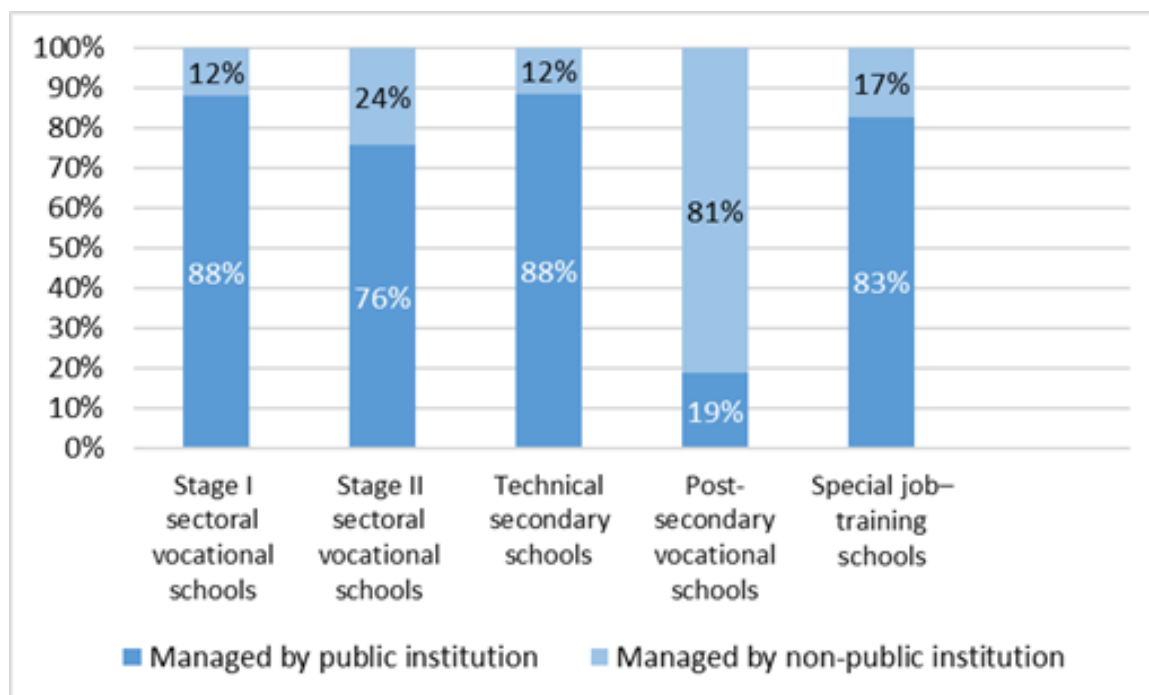
The ministry is supported by the [Vocational School Directors Council](#) (*Rada Dyrektorów Szkół Zawodowych*) set as a consultative body in 2018. It consists of school directors from vocational schools representing all regions of the country and different sectors.

In each region, education authorities appointed coordinators for vocational education and training, responsible for supporting cooperation between schools and employers, as well as promoting activities to develop vocational guidance and counselling in the education system.

Most public education institutions in Poland are managed by local government units. Counties (*powiaty*) are responsible for upper secondary schools, including vocational schools, and schools for children with special needs; the regions (*województwa*) are responsible for schools of regional and trans-regional significance, such as groups of schools or vocational schools important for the regional economy.

Central government units (usually ministries) often manage vocational schools. All types of schools can be established and managed by non-public institutions, such as religious and social associations. The share of non-public institutions is increasing as the level of education is higher. The chart below presents the structure of vocational schools by type and management institution in the 2021/22 school year.

The structure of VET schools by type and managing institution in 2021/22



Source: ReferNet Poland calculation based on data from Statistics Poland - Education in the 2021/22 school year

There were 5 578 VET schools in Poland in 2021/22. The majority were technical secondary schools (33%), followed by the first stage sectoral schools (30%), post-secondary vocational schools (24%), 10% special job-training schools and the second stage sectoral schools (2%) (17). The decision to provide education for a particular occupation listed in the classification of occupations for vocational education is made at local level by the school principal in agreement with local authorities (county level) and after asking the regional labour market councils (advisory bodies) for their opinion concerning compliance with labour market needs. Teaching programmes can be developed individually by schools. The school principal is responsible for incorporating the learning outcomes in the teaching programme and providing the organisational requirements as defined in the core curricula.

- [18] Number of adjustment weights are ascribed to different groups of learners (e.g., learners with special education needs, ethnic minorities, students in small schools, in rural regions, in sport classes); teacher qualifications are also included in the algorithm.

CHAPTER 8.

VET financing mechanisms

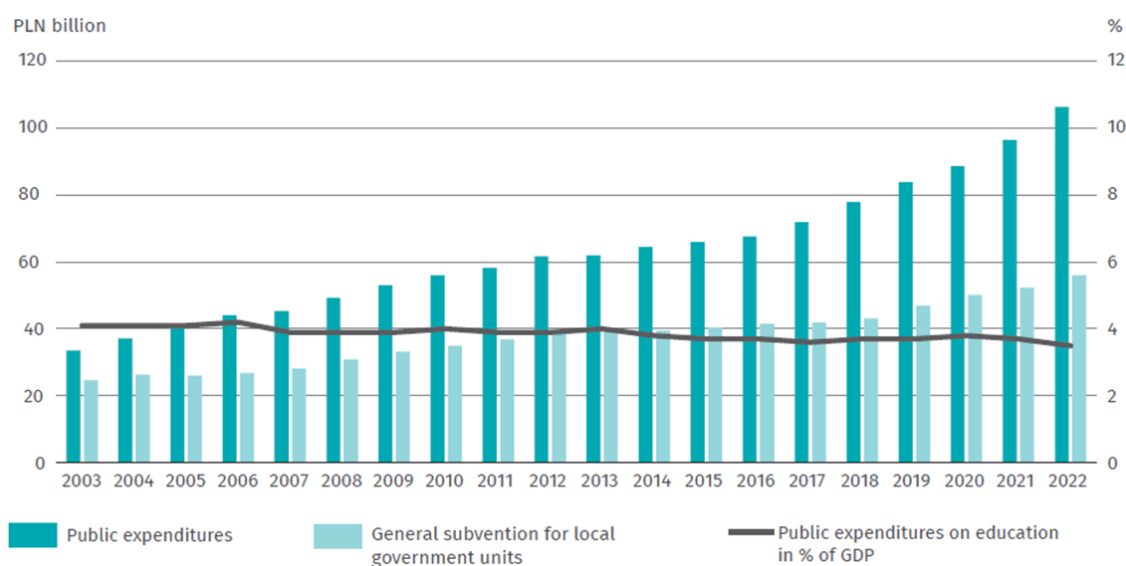
The main resources for educational expenditures are:

- the education part of the State budget general subsidy for local government units;
- central government targeted grants;
- the local government unit's own income;
- foreign funds (mainly EU funds).

The general subsidy from the State budget is the major source of funding for the education system in Poland. The amount of the education part of the general subsidy for local government is defined annually in the Budget Act, and then the education ministry prepares an algorithm to distribute the education funds among the local government units, based on the responsibilities ascribed to the different levels of local government (basically the number of learners in each type of school) (18). Since January 2018, the coefficients for vocational secondary schools have differed for four sets of categories of occupations; the distinction is based on the cost of the vocational part of the education. Additional coefficients were added for learners of post-secondary programmes who obtained a vocational qualification diploma and for participants of vocational qualification courses who passed the State vocational examination (19).

The increased State subsidies for learners of special demand occupations in VET schools, indicated by the forecast of the demand for employees in vocational education occupations, and increased subsidies for employers involved in training juvenile employees in those occupations, were introduced in 2020.

Public expenditures on education and the subsidy for local government in 2003-22 (20)

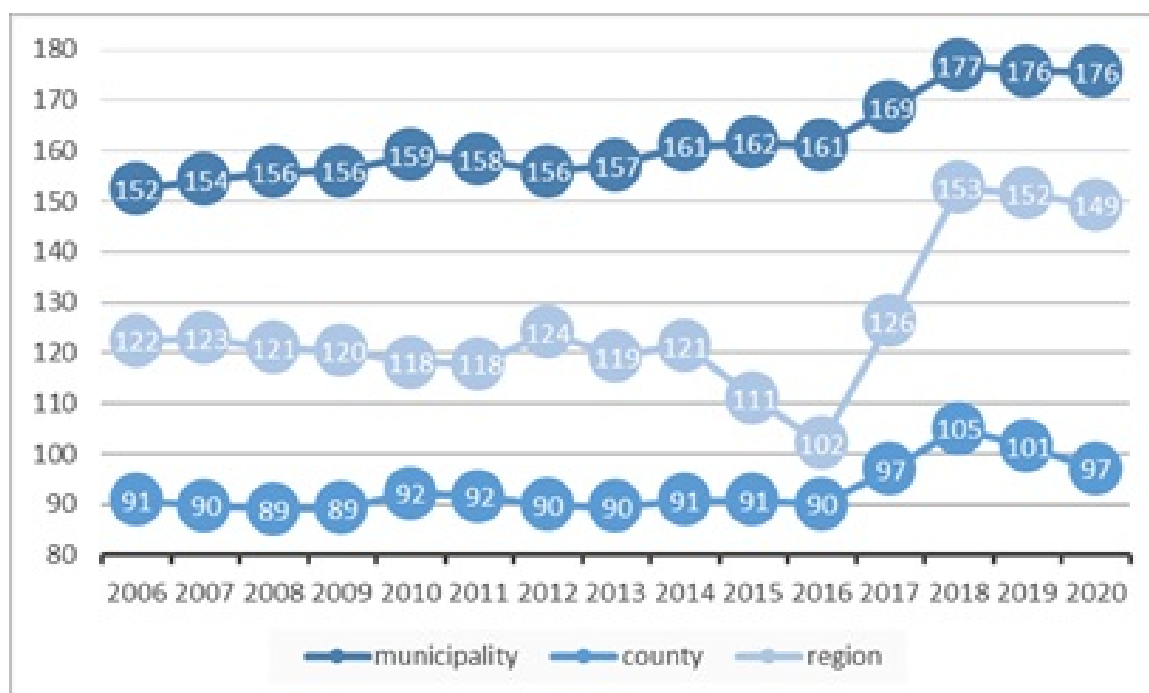


Source: Statistics Poland - Education in the 2022/23 school year.

Local governments have the power to decide on how to allocate the funds to respective schools and how to use them for other than education purposes. As the chart below illustrates, municipalities and regions spend more on education than they receive as subsidy, but counties, which are mainly responsible for vocational schools, do not use the entire amount on education expenditures.

In 2003-22, there was a systematic increase in public expenditure and general subsidies for education with a relatively stable share of these expenses in GDP.

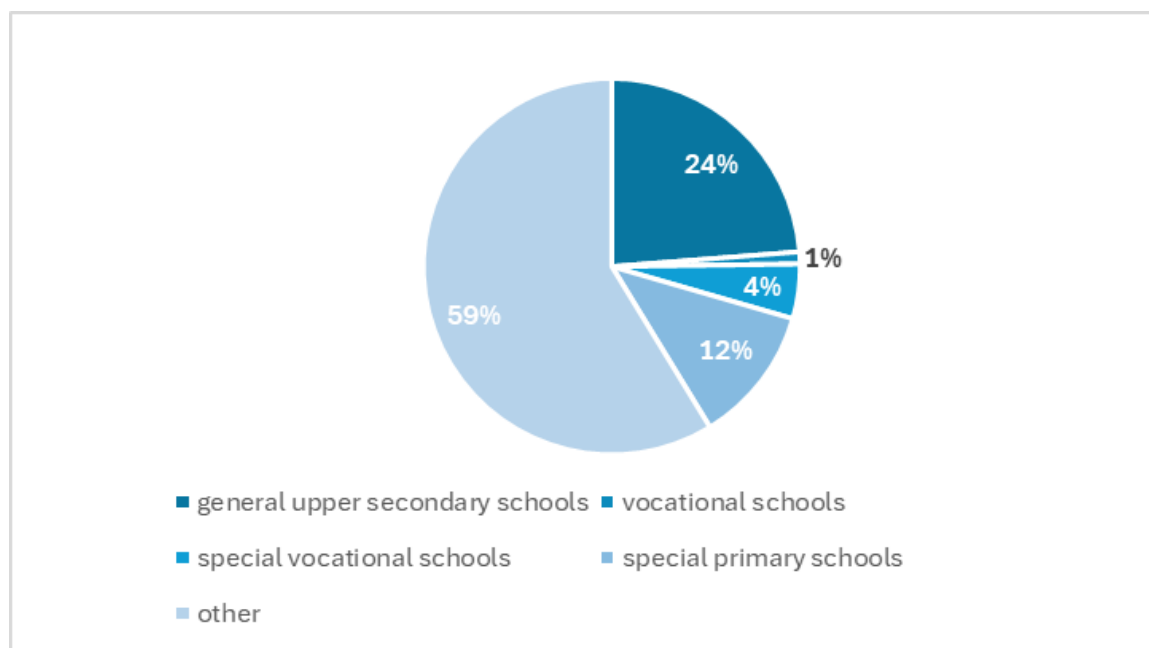
The ratio between educational expenditures and the State general subsidy for education by type of local government in 2006-20



The higher the ratio, the greater the share of local spending. Value over 100 means that the local government spends more than it receives from the central government.

Source: ReferNet Poland calculation based on Local Data Bank, Statistics Poland (21) [extracted 5.2.2024].

The structure of education expenditures of counties in 2022 by school type



Source: ReferNet Poland calculation based on [Local Data Bank](#), Statistics Poland [extracted 5.2.2024].

In addition to the subsidy, local government units can apply for targeted grants to implement specific public tasks, which usually require joint funding by the unit.

Non-public schools with a status of public school are entitled to public funding equal to public schools.

In 2022, public (local and central government) expenditures for education reached around PLN 106.3 billion (22), which was higher than in previous year (PLN 96.3 billion). Public spending on education as a share of GDP was 3.5%, which is slightly lower than in 2021. The education part of the general subsidy transferred to schools through local government units amounted to PLN 56 billion (23).

[20] Poland zlotys (PLN); 1 PLN = 0.22926 EUR, InforEuro [extracted 5.2.2024].

[21] <https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/BDL/start> [extracted 29.11.2021].

[22] 1 PLN=0.22926 EUR , InforEuro [extracted 5.2.2024].

CHAPTER 9.

Teachers and trainers

9.1 VET teacher types

In VET, there are:

- general subject teachers;
- theoretical vocational subject teachers;
- practical vocational training teachers;
- teachers/pedagogues providing educational support to learners;
- teachers/psychologists providing psychological support to learners, teachers and parents;
- teachers/methodological advisers providing support to teachers;
- teachers/consultants who develop teaching materials, design and deliver in-service training courses for teachers and education managers, etc.;
- in-company trainers (nationally referred to as practical vocational training instructors);
- specialist in-company trainers (various groups of practitioners providing training as their primary or additional activity).

Teachers in public schools and pre-schools comprise 88% (24) of all teachers. They are employed on the terms of the [Teacher's Charter](#), which specifies working conditions, duties, rights, professional development requirements, and teachers' salaries. In non-public schools, teachers are employed only on the provisions of labour and civil law.

General subject teachers should have at least a master's degree.

Theoretical vocational subject teachers are required to have at least a master's or bachelor's degree, including pedagogical training.

Practical vocational training teachers are required to:

- have the same qualifications as required for teachers of vocational theoretical subjects or the title of master in a craft or a pedagogical technical college (currently non-existing) diploma or a *matura* examination together with a vocational qualifications certificate and 2 years of work experience;
- have a pedagogical qualification.

In-company trainers - practical vocational training instructors - can be employers or employees who are not teachers; they are required to have both the regulation-defined combination of formal qualifications and years of work experience in a given occupation as well as an appropriate pedagogical qualification (25).

9.2 Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers

As regulated by the Teacher's Charter, teachers have the right to participate in all forms of continuing professional development (CPD) and must follow CPD in line with the school's needs. CPD is required from teachers on the path to higher advancement levels.

From 2019, VET teachers are obliged to participate in professional training at a company active in the field of the taught occupation. This new form of continuing professional development comprises 40-hour training cycles (over 3 years). This is required of both staff teaching

theoretical vocational education subjects and practical vocational training. Teachers who are employed or operate companies in the field taught are exempt from this requirement.

Teacher CPD is funded by local/regional budgets. School heads are responsible for assessing teacher CPD needs and preparing school professional development plans.

There are different public teacher training institutions at the national, regional and local levels, as well as numerous non-public teacher training institutions. The Centre for Education Development teacher training institution operates at the national level and covers both general and VET teacher CPD. In general, the main tasks of these institutions consist of developing teacher CPD programmes and educational materials, indicating CPD priorities, and implementing CPD programmes. Teacher training is also provided by higher education institutions.

Another form of CPD is offered by teachers/methodological advisers, who provide direct subject-oriented and methods assistance; support teachers in their professional development; organise conferences, seminars and workshops; and identify teachers' needs for counselling and vocational training. CPD is also provided at the school level via internal systems of professional development, including, self-development teachers' council meetings, lessons, observations, study visits and others. Other forms of CPD include internships in enterprises for VET teachers. As of September 2019, all VET teachers must participate in professional training in companies relating to the occupation they teach. Numerous educational resources (open bases) and CPD opportunities are available through ESF joint-funded initiatives.

As of September 2022, the Teacher's Charter specifies two categories of job positions in the teaching profession:

- appointed teacher - awarded after 3 years and 9 months preparation for the profession (as a beginner teacher) and after passing an examination given by an examination commission;
- chartered teacher - awarded after 5 years and 9 months of practice and after having their professional achievement accepted by a qualification commission, and an interview.

These categories have a direct impact on a teacher's basic salary level. Teachers with outstanding performance may also be awarded the title of honorary school education professor.

In 2021/2022, nearly 56% of teachers were chartered teachers. For first stage sectoral schools and vocational upper secondary schools, the share of chartered teachers was 64%; however, in post-secondary schools, it was only 24% (26).

Practical training institutions are involved in improving the competence of in-company trainers by offering a broad range of thematic training. The most common training refers to the methodology of vocational education and the use of standards for examination requirements. To standardise the requirement of pedagogical training of the instructors, as of 2019, the framework curricula for the pedagogical training for instructors was introduced in the regulation on practical vocational training. The framework specifies the learning content and the number of hours and the learning outcomes for each specific subject.

For more information visit Cedefop project page on [Teachers' and Trainers' professional development](#) and our interactive toolkits for VET practitioners: [Cedefop VET toolkit for tackling early leaving](#) and [Cedefop VET toolkit for empowering NEETs](#). You may also read [Cedefop/ReferNet country reports on Teachers and Trainers in a Changing World](#) and [Cedefop comparative analysis](#).

CHAPTER 10.

Shaping VET qualifications

10.1 Anticipating skill needs

In recent years, Poland has introduced several initiatives to better anticipate skills needs and adjust the VET qualifications to the labour market needs, such as the system of Sectoral Skills Councils, the Integrated Skills Strategy or the Forecast of the demand for employees.

System of Sectoral Skills Councils

The [system of sectoral skills councils](#), launched in 2016, consists of three components:

- the programme Council on Skills (*Rada Programowa ds. Kompetencji*, RPK) consists of representatives of ministries, training institutions, social partners, universities, non-governmental agencies, as well as labour market stakeholders. The RPK mainly focuses on building cooperation between the education community and entrepreneurs; it also encourages the development of sectoral councils and implements recommendations in the areas of science and education;
- the [Sectoral Councils](#) are the central part of the system. Currently, there are 17 active councils in the following sectors: health and social care; construction; finances; tourism; motorisation and electromobility; fashion and innovative textiles; ICT; secondary raw materials recovery; high quality foods; modern business services; marketing communication; remediation and water and sewage management; chemistry; aviation and space industries; trade; development services; telecommunications and cyber-safety. Their main aims are:
 - to collect information from various labour market stakeholders and recommend systemic solutions and changes in the area of education;
 - to stimulate cooperation between education providers and employers;
 - to provide support in identifying and anticipating competence needs in a given sector.
 - the [human capital study](#) (also sectoral human capital study) aims to increase knowledge about current needs in various sectors and enable the demand for competences and qualifications to be anticipated. The information collected in the study provides, among others, deeper insight about the skills gaps in the economy.

Integrated Skills Strategy

The Ministry of Education developed the [Integrated Skills Strategy 2030](#) (*Zintegrowana Strategia Umiejętności 2030, ZSU 2030*) which has the status of public policy for skills development in line with the concept of life-long learning. The work of the education ministry on the development of the national skills strategy was initiated in 2017 and the Educational Research Institute (IBE) supported the ministry with its expertise. The strategy covers the whole area of education and training: general education, vocational education, higher education and adult learning. It considers both the demand side (demand for specific competences and qualifications) and supply (availability of qualifications and competences in society). The general part of the strategy was adopted by the government in January 2019.

The [detailed part of the strategy](#), adopted by the government in December 2020, indicates areas of impact and also themes and directions of actions together with a list of responsible institutions. The document was widely consulted and encompasses the recommendations of the OECD report [Skills Strategy Poland. Assessment and Recommendations](#) and the [European Skills Agenda](#). The implementation of ZSU 2030 is one of the detailed aims of the Polish Vocational

Education and Training Action Plan for 2022-2025 with focus on the green and digital skills in formal and non-formal education. The detailed tasks in that area include, among others, reviewing and updating the VET offer and curricula, expanding the offer of market qualifications and additional vocational skills in selected professions, expanding the offer of e-resources for VET, and digitalisation of vocational examinations.

Deficit and surplus occupation monitoring: ‘Occupational barometer’

Since 2005, the deficit and surplus occupation monitoring survey (*Monitoring zawodów deficytowych i nadwyżkowych, MZDiN*) has been conducted by county and regional labour offices as well as the labour ministry. In 2015, a new methodology was applied that relied mainly on the data from IT systems of employment offices, studies of online job offers, information obtained from employers in a questionnaire study, data from the Statistics Poland and the Education data system.

Starting from 2015, the ‘Occupational barometer’, previously implemented in the Małopolska region, was extended to the whole country, conducted by the regional labour offices. It is a qualitative short-term (annual) forecast providing information on deficit and surplus occupations. Due to their complementarity, the two surveys were merged and since 2020 are carried out under the name [Occupational barometer](#).

Forecast of the demand of employees

The [forecast of the demand for employees](#) in vocational education occupations was introduced in 2018 as a new tool to help shape the vocational education and training offer. Starting with 2019, this forecast is developed annually and published in the form of an announcement by the Ministry of National Education. The announcement presents the forecast’s results in the form of two lists of occupations from the classification of occupation for VET, one on the country level and the other regional (27).

The forecast is based on analyses conducted by the Educational Research Institute (IBE) using various data sources. The forecast impacts VET financing.

The list of occupations of special meaning for culture and national heritage

As of 2020, the schools providing training in the occupations listed as having special meaning for culture and national heritage receive increased financial support. The list of such occupations was established by the Minister for Education in consultation with the Minister for Culture and National Heritage and includes 21 occupations such as blacksmith, beekeeper, watchmaker or yacht and boat assembler (28).

See also [Cedefop’s skills forecast](#).

10.2 Designing qualifications

. The VET programmes available at the national level are developed based on three regulations of the education ministry:

- the [classification of vocational education occupations](#);
- the [core curricula for vocational education](#);
- the [core curriculum for general education](#).

The classification includes the list of occupations for which VET programmes can be provided. Each occupation can have one or two qualifications (29) associated with it. There are over 230 vocational education occupations, including auxiliary occupations for people with minor intellectual disabilities.

Developing occupations within the classification of occupations

The introduction of new occupations to the classification is regulated by the Education Law. The classification of occupations is determined by the education minister in cooperation with the relevant ministers responsible for a given sector of the economy, who can submit their requests to include particular occupations in the classification. To anticipate labour market needs, representatives of employers and employees are consulted during the development stage of the classification.

Professional associations, organisations of employers, sectoral skills councils, social partners and other stakeholder organisations can submit their proposals to the relevant minister to introduce a new occupation; in this way, they shape the educational offer of the formal VET system. After the proposal has been approved, the education minister includes the occupation in the classification and appoints a working group to design the core curriculum for vocational education for that occupation.

Designing the core curriculum for vocational education

The working group contacts the institution which submitted the proposal for the new occupation to determine the learning outcomes; it then undertakes consultations with other experts in the field. At this stage, occupational standards, which are developed by the labour ministry, are considered.

The decision on the VET programmes offered by a given VET school is made by the school principal in agreement with local authorities (at the county level of government) and after asking the regional labour market councils (advisory bodies) for their opinion concerning compliance with labour market needs. Regional labour market councils take into account the forecast of the demand for employees in vocational education occupations. In December 2018, a new regulation obliged initial VET schools to have formalised cooperation with employers when including a new VET programme in the school's offer.

Modernising VET curricula

In order to improve the labour market relevance of VET education, the education ministry, together with the Education Development Centre (ORE), has implemented an ESF-funded project 'Partnership for VET', focusing on developing partnerships in vocational education and training in cooperation with employers and other social partners. As part of the tasks carried out under the project, 25 industry teams of social partners were established, including representatives of professional associations, employers' organisations, and trade unions. The teams' work resulted in, among others, preparation of recommendations regarding changes in the core curriculum for vocational education and recommendations regarding teaching plans and programmes. The draft core curricula developed within this project were used in the development of the draft regulation of the minister responsible for education specifying the core curriculum for vocational education.

ORE has also implemented a project aimed at increasing the non-formal education offer for adults that includes the development of over 200 model teaching programmes of vocational qualification courses (KKZ) and e-resources for vocational guidance (30).

More information on national qualifications frameworks and the qualification types can be found in the [NQF online tool](#).

[29] The term 'qualification' is defined in the School Education Act, as in the European qualifications framework Recommendation 2008.

CHAPTER 11.

Quality assurance

All VET schools are included in external and internal quality assurance systems. External quality assurance is provided through pedagogical supervision; it is conducted by Regional Education Authorities (*kuratorium oświaty*) overseen by the education ministry. Pedagogical supervision consists of control and support.

The head of the Regional Education Authority (*kurator oświaty*) prepares an annual report on the results of the educational supervision conducted and presents it to the minister for education.

School directors are obliged by law to design and implement an internal quality assurance system. They should do this in cooperation with their teachers. School directors are relatively free in how they design and implement these systems, but must include the specified two aspects of pedagogical supervision.

In the case of market qualifications included in the [Integrated qualifications register \(IQR\)](#), quality assurance is provided by external quality assurance entities (*Podmioty Zewnętrznego Zapewniania Jakości, PZZJ*). The external quality assurance entity for a qualification is assigned by the relevant minister from the list of institutions selected for a given area of qualifications. There are also internal quality assurance mechanisms for institutions awarding qualifications; they are required to perform internal evaluations.

The system of external examinations

The system of external examinations is a key element for ensuring and improving the quality of education and qualifications attained in schools. The [central examination board](#) and eight regional examination boards are responsible for organising external examinations. The external examination system is supervised by the education ministry. In the external examination system, all examinees solve the same tasks and assignments to verify whether they have achieved the learning outcomes defined in the core curriculum. Trained examiners registered at the regional examination boards assess examination results. The central examination board analyses aggregate test and examination results and initiates research in assessment. The results of external examinations are taken into consideration in both external and internal quality assurance as part of pedagogical supervision.

To strengthen the role of the external examination as a quality assurance mechanism, all learners are required to take a State vocational examination or a journeyman's examination as a condition for school graduation.

Education data system

The collection and dissemination of information on the formal general and vocational education system by the Education data system (*System Informacji Oświatowej, SIO*) is an important element in ensuring the quality of qualifications. The system is maintained in electronic form and uses the internet to provide the collected information. Every school and education institution has to submit data on topics such as learners, teachers, facilities and expenditure. Schools submit data through a web application. Information is collected regionally and then exported by regional education authorities to the education ministry. Some of this information is available to the public. The system was set up in 2004 but has been continuously modernised.

CHAPTER 12.

Validation of prior learning

The VET system allows learners to attain qualifications (vocational certificates) through the validation of non-formal education and informal learning (31). Individuals can take extramural State vocational examinations conducted by regional examination boards if they are over 18 years old, have completed a lower secondary programme or an 8-year primary programme and have at least two years of learning or working in an occupation relating to the targeted qualification (32). Completing of a vocational qualification course also entitles learners to take the State vocational examination.

After passing the State vocational examination, learners obtain the same vocational certificate as regular VET learners. The fee paid by the applicant for the extramural examination is low: in 2023 the fee was approximately EUR 55.

For more information about validation arrangements, please visit Cedefop's [European database on validation of non-formal and informal learning](#).

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- [31] By taking extramural exams adults might also acquire certificate of completion of the general education programme (primary and secondary).
- [32] Documents confirming the fulfilment of these requirements are, in particular, school certificates, transcripts, education certificates or employment certificates related to work in a specific occupation, including those obtained abroad.

CHAPTER 13.

Incentives for learners

In initial VET (IVET), incentives include:

- **Social support for IVET learners**

All learners, including VET learners, can receive social support when their family income is below the threshold for receiving social support benefits combined with social problems that the family is facing; this also applies to temporary material difficulties caused by a sudden event, e.g. a parent's death.

- **Scholarships for IVET learners**

Scholarships for good grades can be granted to VET learners by schools. The Prime Minister's office, the ministry responsible for culture and national heritage and the ministry for education also fund scholarships for school learners, including IVET learners. Less than 1% of all VET learners receive scholarships for good academic performance each year. Apart from the country level, regional initiatives also aim to promote participation in VET. Some regional scholarships have been financed as part of EU-funded projects.

- **The [Good start](#) programme**

A benefit granted once a year per child in learning at a school until 20 years of age. Disabled children in learning at a school receive the benefit until 24 years of age. This is a single support payment of EUR 66 for all learners starting the school year. Families receive the benefit irrespective of income. Each year around 4.8 million learners benefit from this scheme.

- **The [Family 800+](#) programme**

A benefit of around EUR 180 per month for every child up to 18 years of age, irrespective of the income generated by the family. A total of around 6.8 million children receives this financial support each year.

- **Salary for juvenile workers**

Juvenile workers are entitled to a salary. The amount of their salary ranges from EUR 124 to EUR 140 per month and cannot be less than 8% (in the first year of training) 9% (in the 2nd year of training) and 10% (in the third year of training) of the average monthly salary in the previous quarter (33). Employers also pay mandatory social insurance on the basis of the salary paid to the juvenile worker.

- **Vocational training and support by the Voluntary Labour Corps**

The [Voluntary Labour Corps](#) (*Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy* - OHP) is an organisation specialised in supporting young people at risk of social exclusion and the unemployed under age 25, overseen by the labour ministry. The organisation offers young people aged over 15 without lower secondary education, the possibility to attain vocational qualifications and/or to supplement their education. It has over 500 units, providing young people with the opportunity to complete their education and acquire professional qualifications before entering adult life. The Voluntary Labour Corps provide training in 60 professions, both in their own workshops or as on-the-job training with an employer. All learners with low/no income receive free meals and accommodation during the education period. Learners also receive guidance and pedagogical support. Each year, young people receive various forms of help from Corps agencies, including individual psychological

support, group workshops for active job-seeking, vocational courses, vocational courses offering certified qualifications, language courses, entrepreneurship courses, assistance in finding jobs and organising traineeships, as well as traineeships offered by employers.

- **The Labour Fund (*Fundusz Pracy*)**

Support for continuing vocational training (CVET) for the unemployed or jobseekers is organised by the employment services and financed by the [Labour Fund](#) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The contribution to the Labour Fund is mandatory for all employers and its amount is determined by the Budget Act. In the area of CVET this fund supports:

- vocational training;
- apprenticeships;
- loans for financing the cost of training;
- training vouchers;
- vocational practice vouchers;
- scholarships for the continuation of education;
- financial support for examination fees and vocational licence fees;
- financing postgraduate studies;
- statutory training leave for employees
- Polish language training for foreigners
- financing nostrification (34) proceedings.

The Labour Fund plays an important role in delivering State support for VET for unemployed or job seekers. It promotes participation by granting resources for vocational training initiatives. The training is mainly offered to unemployed people, but it can also be provided to other job seekers, such as, for example, people with disabilities. The training participants have the right to receive a monthly training grant of 120% of the unemployment benefit if the number of training hours per month is at least 150. The cost of individual training cannot exceed 100% of the national average monthly salary. In 2022, almost 44 000 unemployed and other eligible individuals participated in various forms of training. The most popular form of training was driving licence courses.

Labour Offices also fund apprenticeships organised in companies. Apprenticeships are available to all unemployed. In 2022, over 106 000 people participated in an apprenticeship scheme. The most popular field of apprenticeships was office and secretarial work.

Participants in selected forms of training support offered by employment services in 2019 and 2022 (number of participants)

Year	Vocational training	Apprenticeships	Employment for the purpose of training	Loans for financing the cost of training	Scholarships for the continuation of education	Financial support for examination fees and vocational licence fees	Financing postgraduate studies
2019	34300	102314	56	0	27	331	887
2022	43943	106385	44	1	28	259	1891

Source: Own elaboration based on data on [registered unemployment](#), Ministry of Family and Social Policy [extracted 6.9.2023] AND Ministry of Economic Development, Labour and Technology (2021). [Employment services support to the human resources development with the Labour Fund resources](#) [Wspieranie przez urzędy pracy rozwoju zasobów ludzkich środkami funduszu pracy].

The Labour Code gives employees the right to a training leave of 6 to 21 days with full remuneration. This leave can be used to prepare for and take an examination or defend a thesis. Training leave can be paid (to cover lost income) to an employee, if an employer requires or agrees to the need for the training before it starts.

CHAPTER 14.

Incentives for enterprises to boost their participation in VET provision

The several schemes funded by the Labour Fund can support employers in CVET activities e.g.:

- employment for the purpose of training addressed to unemployed people wanting to obtain qualifications or skills while working. The employer can receive a refund of training costs and a bonus if the trainee passes vocational examination;
- subsidy for the salary and social security contribution for the juvenile worker for the period of vocational training. The financial limits on the refund are set each year. As of 2020, employers training juvenile employees in the professions indicated by the forecast of the demand for employees in vocational education occupations will receive increased subsidies.

Since 2014, employers have been able to use the [National Training Fund](#) (*Krajowy Fundusz Szkoleniowy*), part of the Labour Fund (*Fundusz Pracy*), to finance their employees' training. It mainly finances: courses and post-graduate studies attended by employees at the request of the employer; examinations enabling the attainment of vocational qualifications; medical and psychological examinations required for a job position; and personal accident insurance. In the case of microenterprises, the funding can cover 100% of the costs of continuing education, whereas in other types of enterprises, the employer covers 20% of the training cost. The training cost per employee cannot exceed 300% of the average salary in a given year. In 2022, almost 24 000 employers received support from the National Training Fund, resulting in training or other forms of assistance for over 97 000 employees. The majority (56%) of applications for support from the fund come from microenterprises (35).

CHAPTER 15.

Guidance and counselling

As of September 2018, a regulation establishing a [systematic approach to vocational/career guidance](#) in schools has been implemented. The Ministry of Education has defined the objectives, conditions and methods for implementing and organising guidance/counselling, including possible forms and detailed programme content, which may vary depending on the school level.

The basic goal of guidance is to support learners in the process of making independent and responsible decisions concerning their educational and professional life, based on learning about their own resources, the education system and the labour market.

Vocational guidance is available at all school levels, including:

- pre-schools (ISCED 0): vocational pre-orientation;
- primary school classes 1-6 grade (ISCED 1): vocational orientation;
- seventh and eighth grades of primary school (ISCED 2) and secondary schools (ISCED 3): career guidance classes.

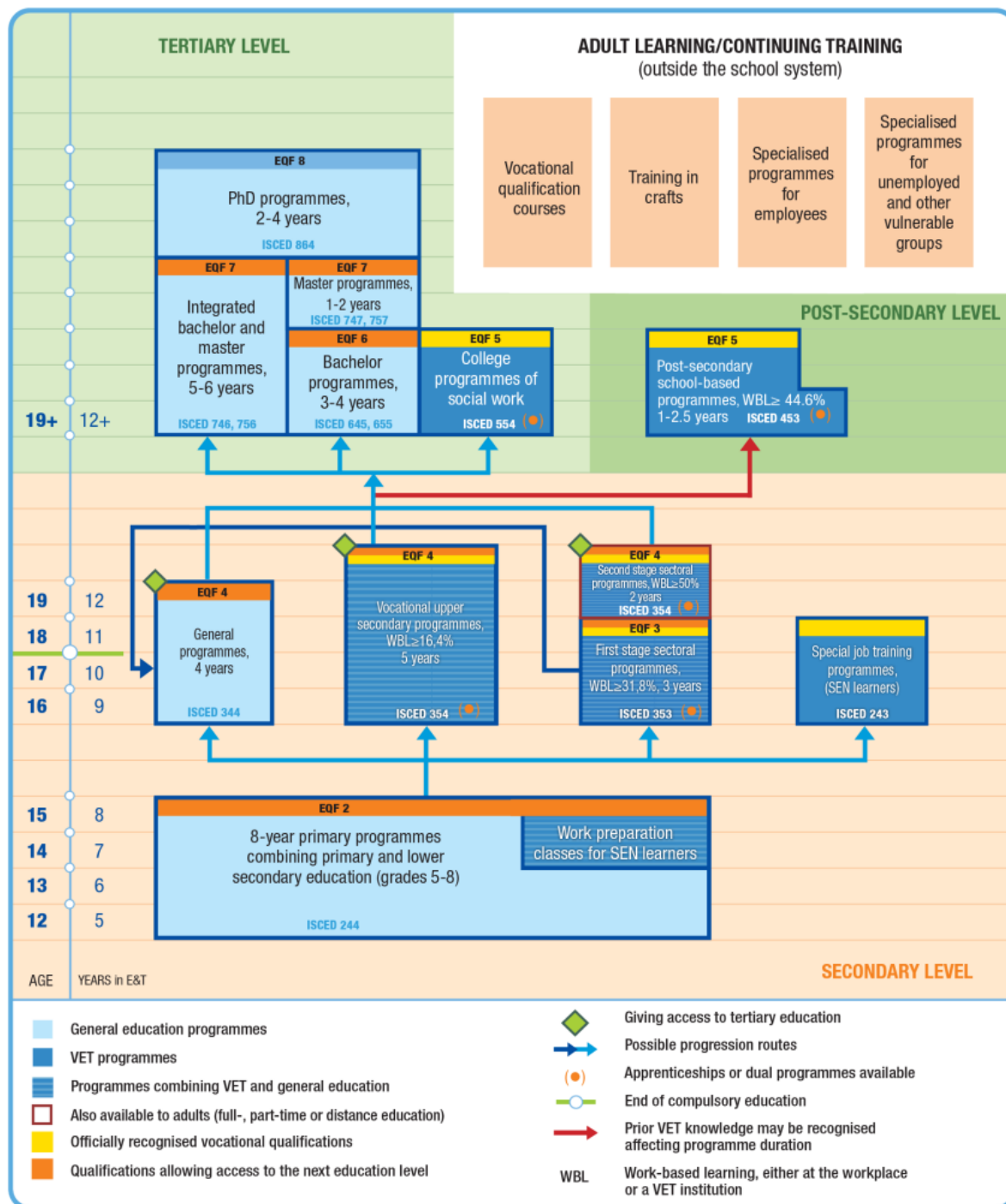
Schools are required to develop their own programme to implement the intra-school guidance system for each new school year. This programme should include:

- activities to implement occupational guidance (including the content of the activities, methods and forms of implementation, timeframe of implementation, persons responsible for implementation);
- entities with which the school cooperates in this field (e.g. parents, local institutions, employers, employers' organisations, economic self-governments or other economic organisations, associations or professional self-governments).

Please, see also:

- [guidance and outreach Poland national report](#);
- [inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Poland](#);
- [Cedefop's labour market intelligence toolkit](#).

Vocational education and training system chart



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop, & Educational Research Institute (IBE). (2023). Vocational education and training in Europe – Poland: system description.

In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2024). Vocational education and training in Europe: VET in Europe database – detailed VET system descriptions [Database].

www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/poland-u3

VET Programme Types

EQF 2			
Work preparation classes for SEN learners			
Work preparation classes for special education needs (SEN) learners leading to EQF level 2 (oddziały przysposabiające do pracy)			
EQF level	2	ISCED-P 2011 level	244
Usual entry grade	7	Usual completion grade	8
Usual entry age	15 (a special programme for learners at risk of early school leaving; in current legislation it is for 15-year-olds)		Usual completion age 17
Length of a programme (years)	2		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	 Education in Poland is compulsory up to 18 years of age, with full-time school education compulsory up to age 15.	Is it part of formal education and training system?	
Is it initial VET?		Is it continuing VET?	
Is it offered free of charge?		Is it available for adults?	
ECVET or other credits	Not applicable		
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	Classes combine general education and work preparation - both adapted to the individual learner's needs and capabilities.		
Main providers	Primary schools		
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	Not specified by the regulations. The programme is developed and adjusted to the specific needs of a learner by the lead teacher.		

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	Different forms of practical training available: • practical training in school; • practical training in VET schools (school workshops), continuing education centres (36) and vocational training centres (37) ; • in-company training.
Main target groups	For learners over 15 years old with special education needs (SEN), at risk of early school leaving.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	For learners over 15 years old at risk of not completing primary school in the usual mode, who: • received promotion to grade VII; • or did not receive promotion to grade VIII. Enrolment requires confirmation from a psycho-social support institution on the need for this form of education.
Assessment of learning outcomes	Primary school leaving certificate is issued to those who completed the programme (with a special note with information on the completion of work preparation classes).
Diplomas/certificates provided	School leaving certificate
Examples of qualifications	Not applicable
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Those who complete work preparation classes for SEN learners can enter the labour market or continue their education at the next EQF level.
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	✗
General education subjects	✓
Key competences	✓
Application of learning outcomes approach	✓
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	1% (38)

- [36] Continuing education centres (*centrum kształcenia ustawicznego*, CKU): public institutions (usually a school complex) in Polish education, usually with a long tradition, whose task is to provide continuous, free-of charge education for adults and enable them to get a profession. They may cooperate with in-service teachers training centres in the area of improving the professional skills of VET teachers.
- [37] Vocational training centres (*centrum kształcenia zawodowego*, CKZ): public institutions created from the transformation of existing centres for practical training (*placówka*

kształcenia praktycznego) or vocational training and development centres (*ośrodki kształcenia i doskonalenia zawodowego*) responsible for supporting vocational education of VET learners in schools providing practical or theoretical training of juvenile workers. They will be also providing vocational training in the form of courses (professional skills, qualifying vocational courses or other courses ,enabling to obtain and supplement knowledge, skills and professional qualifications).

- [38] ReferNet Poland calculation based on Education Data System (System Informacji Oświatowej - SIO) 1 432 learners in the 2019/20 school year.

EQF 4
Vocational upper secondary programmes, WBL ≥16.4%, 5 years ISCED 354

Vocational upper secondary programme (technikum) leading to EQF level 4, ISCED 354.

EQF level	4	ISCED-P 2011 level	354
Usual entry grade	9	Usual completion grade	13
Usual entry age	16 (usually, the starting age of learners is 15, while the age of graduating first grade is 16)	Usual completion age	20
Length of a programme (years)	5		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	 Education in Poland is compulsory up to 18 years of age, with full-time school education compulsory up to age 15.	Is it part of formal education and training system?	
Is it initial VET?		Is it continuing VET?	
Is it offered free of charge?		Is it available for adults?	

ECVET or other credits Not applicable

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance) The curriculum for upper secondary vocational programmes combines general and vocational education. The vocational parts consist of theoretical and practical aspects. Vocational schools have a relatively high level of independence regarding the organisation of practical training. The school director decides on the share of work-based learning, but it cannot be less than 50% of the hours foreseen for vocational education (which combines both practical and theoretical training).

Main providers	Upper secondary vocational schools: • public schools (vast majority of schools) operated by local (county) and regional authorities; • non-public schools with public school accreditation operated by different providers (associations, companies - commercial law companies, natural persons).
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	≥16.4% (39)
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	The practical part of vocational education can be offered in: • school workshops; • continuing education centres (40) and vocational training centres (41) ; • with an employer (can be organised in different ways, partially or fully at an employers' premises, including also dual training/alternate training). A distinctive form of practical training - on-the-job training - is mandatory for learners of vocational upper secondary programmes and lasts from 4 to 12 weeks, depending on the type of occupation. The student apprenticeship (<i>staż uczniowski</i>) - form of apprenticeship available from September 2019. It is open to learners in vocational upper secondary programmes and first-stage sectoral programmes, who are not juvenile workers. Student apprenticeship is based on the work contract between the learner and employer, with arrangements between the school and employer in the annex to this contract. Student apprenticeship covers all elements of the teaching programme and chosen elements or elements connected with a given occupation but not included in the programme. Students are entitled to a salary unless the contract says otherwise.
Main target groups	This programme is available to primary school graduates.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Learners should hold a primary school leaving certificate. Primary school graduates are usually 15 years old.

Assessment of learning outcomes	The following forms of assessment of learning outcomes are foreseen for learners: • school leaving certificate: confirms that a learner completed the programme. It contains a list of subjects covered and the final grades achieved. No external exam is required to obtain a school leaving certificate. Final grades are based on internal continuous assessments of learners; the certificate comprises annual classification grades determined in the highest-level class and annual classification grades achieved in the completed lower classes; • State vocational examination (taking exam is obligatory for school graduation as of September 2019), confirms obtaining vocational qualification. The examination has two parts: written and practical. The candidate has to pass both in order to receive a vocational certificate/diploma. The exam is centrally organised and based on uniform requirements, the same examination tasks, assessed according to the same criteria and organised in the same way regardless of where the examination is held; • school leaving examination (<i>matura</i>), a state, uniform secondary school leaving examination based on the core curriculum for general education and providing access to tertiary education. As of September 2019, the vocational diploma in an occupation on the level of 'technician' allows learners to skip one additional subject in the <i>matura</i> exam (only for learners who study in accordance with the 2019 sectoral core curriculum). The <i>matura</i> exam consists of two parts: the oral part (internal and assessed at school) and the written part, external, set by the Central Examination Board (<i>Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna</i>) and assessed by examiners included in the registers of the regional examination boards (<i>Okręgowa Komisja Egzaminacyjna</i>).
Diplomas/certificates provided	This programme leads to: • a school leaving certificate giving learners a secondary education; • vocational qualifications (vocational certificates) after passing the State vocational examination; • a vocational qualifications diploma for occupations consisting of two qualifications (issued when a learner obtained both qualifications distinguished in an occupation and a school leaving certificate).
Examples of qualifications	The programme provides two-qualification occupations, for example: electrical technician (<i>technik elektryk</i>), automation technician (<i>technik automatyk</i>), multimedia and photography technician (<i>technik fotografii i multimedialistów</i>), construction technician (<i>technik budownictwa</i>), accountancy technician (<i>technik rachunkowości</i>), salesman technician (<i>technik handlowiec</i>).
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Graduates of these programmes, after passing the secondary school leaving examination (<i>matura</i>), are eligible to continue to tertiary education.

Destination of graduates	According to the Labour force survey (LFS), in the fourth quarter of 2022, the employment rate of recent vocational upper secondary programme and post-secondary school-based programme graduates (1 year after completing education) was 49% (42) .
Awards through validation of prior learning	 A vocational certificate can be awarded after passing the State vocational examination extramurally. Individuals can take extramural State vocational examinations, conducted by the regional examination boards, if they are over 18 years old, have completed a lower secondary programme or an 8-year primary programme and have at least two years of learning or work in an occupation relating to the targeted qualification (43) . If they do not have two years of learning or work experience, they can enrol in a vocational qualifications course (KKZ). By taking extramural exams, adults can also acquire a certificate of completion of the general education programme.
General education subjects	 The vocational upper secondary programme combines general and vocational education.
Key competences	 The core curriculum for general education determines the learning outcomes relating to the general education component and key competences provided by VET programmes.
Application of learning outcomes approach	 Each qualification includes specific sets of learning outcomes defined in the core curriculum for vocational education. Learning outcomes are grouped in units, which typically contain from several to over a dozen learning outcomes and reflect specific professional tasks. The core curriculum for general education determines the learning outcomes relating to the general education component and key competences provided by VET programmes.
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	58,95% (44) .

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- [39] ReferNet Poland calculations of %WBL based on the assumptions provided in the *Teaching Plans [Ramowe plany nauczania]*, <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20230000277>.
- [40] Continuing education centres (*centrum kształcenia ustawicznego*, CKU): public institutions (usually a school complex) in Polish education, usually with a long tradition, whose task is to provide continuous, free-of charge education for adults and enable them to get a profession. They may cooperate with in-service teachers training centres in the area of improving the professional skills of VET teachers.
- [41] Vocational training centres (*centrum kształcenia zawodowego*, CKZ): public institutions

created from the transformation of existing centres for practical training (*placówka kształcenia praktycznego*) or vocational training and development centres (*ośrodek doszkąłcania i doskonalenia zawodowego*) responsible for supporting vocational education of VET learners in schools providing practical or theoretical training of juvenile workers. They will be also providing vocational training in the form of courses (professional skills, qualifying vocational courses or other courses, enabling to obtain and supplement knowledge, skills and professional qualifications).

- [42] Statistics Poland does not distinguish between graduates from vocational upper secondary programmes, secondary stage sectoral programmes and post-secondary school-based programmes in the [Labour Force Survey](#) (Table 1.9 'Economic activity of school-leavers¹ (aged 15-30) by level of education, sex and place of residence')
- [43] Documents confirming the fulfilment of these requirements: school certificates, transcripts, education certificates or employment certificates related to work in a specific occupation, including those obtained abroad.
- [44] ReferNet Poland calculations based on Statistics Poland (2022). *Oświata i wychowanie w roku szkolnym 2021/2022* [*Education in the 2021/22 school year*]: 656 513 learners.

EQF 3
First stage
sectoral programmes,
WBL ≥ 31.8%,
3 years
ISCED 353

First stage sectoral programme leading to EQF level 3, ISCED 353 (branżowa szkoła I stopnia)

EQF level	3	ISCED-P 2011 level	353
Usual entry grade	9	Usual completion grade	11
Usual entry age	16 (usually, the starting age of learners is 15, while the age of graduating first grade is 16)	Usual completion age	18
Length of a programme (years)	3		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	 Education in Poland is compulsory up to 18 years of age; full-time school education is compulsory up to age 15.	Is it part of formal education and training system?	
Is it initial VET?		Is it continuing VET?	
Is it offered free of charge?		Is it available for adults?	
ECVET or other credits	Not applicable		
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	The curriculum for the first stage sectoral programme combines general and vocational education. The vocational parts consist of theoretical and practical aspects. Schools have a relatively high level of independence regarding the organisation of practical training. The school director decides on the share of work-based learning, but it cannot be less than 60% of the hours foreseen for vocational education (which combines both theoretical and practical training).		

Main providers	First stage sectoral schools: • public schools (vast majority of schools) operated by local (county) authorities and associations; • non-public schools with public school accreditation operated by different providers (associations, companies - commercial law companies, natural persons).
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	≥ 31.8% of the programme for graduates of the 8-year primary school (45)
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	The practical part of vocational education can be offered in: • school workshops; • continuing education centres (46) and vocational training centres (47) ; • with an employer (can be organised in different ways, partially or fully at an employers' premises, including also dual training/alternate training); • juvenile employment. A special type of work-based learning is provided through juvenile employment for the purpose of vocational training (<i>przygotowanie zawodowe młodocianych pracowników</i>) for young people (15-18 year-olds) with a lower secondary education or primary education. In the 2017/18 school year, juvenile workers constituted about half of all learners in the first stage sectoral schools. Juvenile employment is based on a contract between the learner and employer. Juvenile employment for the purpose of vocational training most often takes the form of training for a profession (<i>nauka zawodu</i>): this is an apprenticeship with the theoretical education taking place at a first stage sectoral school (or in out-of-school forms) and the practical training organised by the employer on the basis of a work contract. It lasts a maximum of 36 months and is finalised with a State vocational examination. Practical training can also be organised by an employer in the craft trades on the basis of a work contract. It also lasts a maximum of 36 months and is finalised with a journeyman's examination (<i>egzamin czeladniczy</i>). An additional new form of WBL - the student apprenticeship - is available for learners as of September 2019. It is open to learners in vocational upper secondary programmes and first- stage sectoral programmes, who are not juvenile workers. Student apprenticeship is based on the work contract between the learner and employer, with arrangements between the school and employer in the annex to this contract. Student apprenticeship covers all elements of the teaching programme and chosen elements or elements connected with a given occupation but not included in the programme. Students are entitled to a salary unless the contract says otherwise.
Main target groups	Primary school graduates.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Learners should hold a primary school leaving certificate; primary school graduates are usually 15 years old.

Assessment of learning outcomes	The following forms of assessment of learning outcomes are foreseen for learners: • School leaving certificate, confirms that a learner completed the programme. It contains a list of subjects covered and the final grades achieved. It gives a learner a basic sectoral education. No external exam is required to obtain a school leaving certificate. Final grades are based on internal continuous assessments of learners; the certificate comprises an annual classification of grades determined in the highest-level class and an annual classification of grades achieved in the completed lower classes. • State vocational examination, confirms obtaining vocational qualification. The examination has two parts: written and practical. The candidate has to pass both in order to receive a vocational certificate/diploma. The exam is centrally organised and based on uniform requirements: the same examination tasks, assessed according to the same criteria and organised in the same way regardless of where the examination is held. • Journeyman's examination (<i>egzamin czeladniczy</i>), exam for learners participating in juvenile employment organised by an employer in the craft trades. It has two parts: practical and theoretical. The practical part consists of tasks individually performed by a candidate. The theoretical part is both written and oral. Tasks are based on common examination requirements and the curriculum of the occupation. As of September 2019, taking the State vocational examination or journeyman's examination is required for all learners as a condition for school graduation.
Diplomas/certificates provided	This programme leads to: • a school leaving certificate giving learners a basic sectoral education; • a vocational qualification (vocational certificate) after passing the State vocational examination; • a vocational qualifications diploma for a single-qualification occupation (after passing the State vocational examination and obtaining a school leaving certificate). Learners participating in juvenile employment organised by an employer in the craft trades obtain a Journeyman's certificate.
Examples of qualifications	The programme provides single-qualification occupations, for example: electromechanical worker (<i>elektromechanik</i>), locksmith (<i>ślusarz</i>), car tinsmith (<i>blacharz samochodowy</i>), gardener (<i>ogrodnik</i>), tailor (<i>krawiec</i>).
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Completion of this programme provides access to further education: at the second year of general upper secondary programmes for adults or in the 2-year second stage sectoral programme.
Destination of graduates	According to the Labour force survey (LFS), in the fourth quarter of 2022, the employment rate (1 year after completing education) was 44.4% (48) .

Awards through validation of prior learning	✓ A vocational certificate can be awarded after passing the State vocational examination extramurally. Persons can take extramural State vocational examinations conducted by regional examination boards if they are over 18 years old, have completed a lower secondary programme or an 8-year primary programme and have at least 2 years of learning or work in an occupation relating to the targeted qualification (49) . If they do not have 2 years of learning or work experience, they can enrol in a vocational qualifications course (KKZ). By taking extramural exams, adults can also acquire a certificate of completion of the general education programme.
General education subjects	✓ The first stage sectoral programme combines general and vocational education.
Key competences	✓ The core curriculum for general education determines the learning outcomes relating to the general education component and key competences provided by VET programmes.
Application of learning outcomes approach	✓ Each qualification includes specific sets of learning outcomes defined in the core curriculum for vocational education. Learning outcomes are grouped in units, which typically contain from several to over a dozen learning outcomes and reflect specific professional tasks. The core curriculum for general education determines the learning outcomes relating to the general education component and key competences provided by VET programmes.
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	18,60% (50)

- [45] ReferNet Poland calculations of WBL percentage based on the assumptions provided in the [Teaching Plans](#) [*Ramowe plany nauczania*].
- [46] Continuing education centres (*centrum kształcenia ustawicznego*, CKU): public institutions (usually a school complex) in Polish education, usually with a long tradition, whose task is to provide continuous, free-of charge education for adults and enable them to get a profession. They may cooperate with in-service teacher training centres in the area of improving the professional skills of VET teachers.
- [47] Vocational training centres (*centrum kształcenia zawodowego*, CKZ): public institutions created from the transformation of existing centres for practical training (*placówka kształcenia praktycznego*) or vocational training and development centres (*ośrodek dokształcania i doskonalenia zawodowego*) responsible for supporting vocational education of VET learners in schools providing practical or theoretical training of juvenile workers. They will also provide vocational training in the form of courses (professional skills, qualifying vocational courses or other courses, enabling learners to obtain and supplement knowledge, skills and professional qualifications).

- [48] Statistics Poland does not distinguish between graduates from the first stage sectoral and former basic vocational programmes in the Labour Force Survey ([Table 1.9 'Economic activity of school-leavers'](#)¹ (aged 15-30) by level of education, sex and place of residence').
- [49] Documents confirming the fulfilment of these requirements - certificates, transcripts, education certificates or employment certificates related to work in a specific occupation, including those obtained abroad.
- [50] ReferNet Poland calculation based on Statistics Poland (2022). *Oświata i wychowanie w roku szkolnym 2021/22* [*Education in the 2021/22 school year*]: 207 097 learners.

EQF 4
Second stage
sectoral programmes,
WBL ≥50%
2 years
ISCED 354

Second stage sectoral programme leading to EQF level 4, ISCED 354 (branżowa szkoła II stopnia)

EQF level	4	ISCED-P 2011 level	354
Usual entry grade	12	Usual completion grade	13
Usual entry age	19 (usually, the starting age of learners is 18, while the age of graduating first grade is 19)	Usual completion age	20
Length of a programme (years)	2		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✗	Is it continuing VET?	✓
Is it offered free of charge?	✓	Is it available for adults?	✓

ECVET or other credits Not applicable

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)

This programme began operating as of the 2020/21 school year. The curriculum of the second stage sectoral programme combines general and vocational education. The vocational parts consist of theoretical and practical aspects.

General education in this programme is planned to be limited, with the main focus placed on vocational training to be conducted in the form of vocational qualification courses. Schools have a relatively high level of independence regarding the organisation of practical training. The school director decides on the share of work-based learning, but it cannot be less than 50% of the hours foreseen for vocational education (which combines both theoretical and practical training).

Main providers	Second stage sectoral schools: • public schools (vast majority of schools) operated by local (county) authorities and associations; • non-public schools with public school accreditation operated by different providers (associations, companies - commercial law companies, natural persons).
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	>=50% (51) The per centages of WBL for the second stage sectoral programme vary depending on the following criteria: form of teaching; type of profession; type of learner, i.e. phased out lower secondary school (<i>gimnazjum</i>) graduate or primary school graduate. Number of hours for vocational education (both theoretical and practical) is provided in the <i>Core curriculum for education in a profession of sectoral education</i> (<i>Podstawa programowa kształcenia w zawodzie szkolnictwa branżowego</i>;) and according to the <i>Teaching programme</i> totals not less than 50% of the total number of hours for a given form of teaching.
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	The practical part of vocational education can be offered in: • school workshops; • continuing education centres (52) , vocational training centres (53) and with an employer (can be organised in different ways, partially or fully at an employers' premises, including also dual training/alternate training). A distinctive form of practical training is on-the-job training, which will be mandatory for learners of second stage sectoral programmes and lasts from 4 to 12 weeks, depending on the type of occupation.
Main target groups	This second stage sectoral programme aims to develop further the vocational qualifications attained in the first stage sectoral programme. The programme is available to graduates of the first stage sectoral programmes who obtained a qualification that constitutes part of an occupation taught in the second stage sectoral school. This programme is open to adult learners who want to expand their qualifications.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Learners should have a first stage sectoral school leaving certificate and a vocational certificate of a qualification constituting part of an occupation taught in the second stage sectoral programme. First stage sectoral programme graduates are usually 18 years old.

Assessment of learning outcomes	The following forms of assessment of learning outcomes are foreseen for learners. • School leaving certificate: confirms that a learner completed the programme. It contains a list of subjects covered and the final grades achieved. It gives a learner a secondary sectoral education, though this is not the same as attaining a vocational qualification. No external exam is required to obtain a school leaving certificate. Final grades are based on internal continuous assessments of learners; the certificates comprise an annual classification of grades determined in the highest-level class and an annual classification of grades achieved in the completed lower classes. • State vocational examination (taking this is obligatory for school graduation as of September 2019): confirms obtaining vocational qualification. The examination has two parts: written and practical. The candidate has to pass both in order to receive a vocational certificate/diploma. The exam is centrally organised and based on uniform requirements: the same examination tasks, assessed according to the same criteria and organised in the same way regardless of where the examination is held. • School leaving examination (<i>matura</i>): a state, uniform secondary school leaving examination based on the core curriculum for general education and providing access to tertiary education. As of September 2019, the vocational diploma in an occupation taught on the level of 'technician' allows learners to skip one additional subject in the <i>matura</i> exam (only for learners who study according to the 2019 VET core curriculum). The <i>matura</i> exam consists of two parts: an oral part (internal and assessed at school) and a written part, external, set by the Central Examination Board (<i>Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna</i>) and assessed by examiners included in the registers of the regional examination boards (<i>Okręgowa Komisja Egzaminacyjna</i>).
Diplomas/certificates provided	This programme leads to: • a school leaving certificate giving learners a secondary sectoral education; • a vocational qualification (vocational certificate) after passing the State vocational examination; • a vocational qualifications diploma for occupations consisting of two qualifications (issued when a learner obtained both qualifications distinguished in an occupation and a school leaving certificate).
Examples of qualifications	Chemical technology technician (<i>technik technologii chemicznej</i>), hospitality technician (<i>technik hotelarstwa</i>), telecommunications technician (<i>technik telekomunikacji</i>).
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Second stage sectoral programme graduates will be eligible to continue to tertiary education after passing the secondary school leaving examination (<i>matura</i>).

Destination of graduates	According to the Labour force survey (LFS), in the fourth quarter of 2022, the employment rate of recent vocational upper secondary programme and post-secondary school-based programme graduates (1 year after completing education) was 49% (54)
Awards through validation of prior learning	 A vocational certificate can be awarded after passing the State vocational examination extramurally. Persons can take extramural State vocational examinations conducted by regional examination boards if they are over 18 years old, have completed a lower secondary programme or an 8-year primary programme and have at least 2 years of learning or work in an occupation relating to the targeted qualification (55) . If they do not have 2 years of learning or work experience, they can enrol in a vocational qualifications course (KKZ). By taking extramural exams, adults can also acquire a certificate of completion of the general education programme.
General education subjects	 The second stage sectoral programme combines general and vocational education.
Key competences	 The core curriculum for general education determines the learning outcomes relating to the general education component and key competences provided by VET programmes.
Application of learning outcomes approach	 Each qualification includes specific sets of learning outcomes defined in the core curriculum for vocational education. Learning outcomes are grouped in units, which typically contain from several to over a dozen learning outcomes and reflect specific professional tasks. The core curriculum for general education determines the learning outcomes relating to the general education component and key competences provided by VET programmes.
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	<1% (56)

[51] Percentage of the hours foreseen for vocational education.

[52] Continuing education centres (*centrum kształcenia ustawicznego*, CKU): public institutions (usually a school complex) in Polish education, usually with a long tradition, whose task is to provide continuous, free-of charge education for adults and enable them to get a profession. They may cooperate with in-service teacher training centres in the area of improving the professional skills of VET teachers.

[53] Vocational training centres (*centrum kształcenia zawodowego*, CKZ): newly set up public institutions created from the transformation of existing centres for practical training (*placówka kształcenia praktycznego*) or vocational training and development centres

(*ośrodek kształcenia i doskonalenia zawodowego*) responsible for supporting vocational education of VET learners in schools providing practical or theoretical training of juvenile workers. They will also provide vocational training in the form of courses (professional skills, qualifying vocational courses or other courses, enabling to obtain and supplement knowledge, skills and professional qualifications).

- [54] Statistics Poland does not distinguish between graduates from vocational upper secondary programmes, secondary stage sectoral programmes and post-secondary school-based programmes in the [Labour Force Survey](#) (Table 1.9 'Economic activity').
- [55] Documents confirming the fulfilment of these requirements: school certificates, transcripts, education certificates or employment certificates related to work in a specific occupation, including those obtained abroad.
- [56] Second stage sectoral programmes started operating from 1 September 2020 (ReferNet Poland calculation based on Education Data System (System Informacji Oświatowej - SIO) - 5 431 learners in the 2020/21 school year

Special job-training
programmes,
(SEN learners)
ISCED 243

Special job-training programme leading to ISCED 243 (szkoła specjalna przysposabiająca do pracy)

EQF level	Not applicable	ISCED-P 2011 level	243
Usual entry grade	9	Usual completion grade	11
Usual entry age	16 (usually, the starting age of learners is 15, while the age of graduating first grade is 16)	Usual completion age	18 Learners up to the age of 24 can participate in this programme.
Length of a programme (years)	3 (with the possibility of extending to 4 years)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✓ Education in Poland is compulsory up to 18 years of age, with full-time school education compulsory up to age 15.	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✗
Is it offered free of charge?	✓	Is it available for adults?	✗ This is not intended for adults, but learners up to the age of 24 can participate in this programme.
ECVET or other credits	Not applicable		
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	It provides educational activities (personal and social functioning classes, communication skills development classes, creativity development classes, physical education and job training classes), revalidation activities, and job training classes.		

Main providers	Special job-training schools: • public schools (vast majority of schools) operated by local (county) authorities; • non-public schools with public school accreditation operated by different providers (associations, foundations).
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	Share of work-based learning is not specified by the regulations. Job training classes constitute over half of the hours foreseen for the educational activities. The programme is developed and adjusted to the specific needs of the learner by a lead teacher.
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	Mainly practical training at school, including school workshops.
Main target groups	This programme is intended for young learners with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities or multiple disabilities.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Learners should have a primary school leaving certificate; primary school graduates are usually 15 years old. Additional enrolment requires confirmation from a psychological and social support institution on the need for this form of education (certificate recommending special education or rehabilitation-and-education classes).
Assessment of learning outcomes	Learners do not take any external exams. Descriptive assessment is used on the school-leaving certificate. This programme leads to a job-readiness certificate (based on the teacher's assessment) to perform specific tasks and not to a vocational qualification.
Diplomas/certificates provided	Learners receive a school leaving certificate and a job-readiness certificate.
Examples of qualifications	Not applicable
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Those who complete this programme can perform some tasks in certain labour market occupations.
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	
General education subjects	 It combines vocational and general education.

Key competences	✓	It provides educational activities (personal and social functioning classes, communication skills development classes, creativity development classes and physical education).
Application of learning outcomes approach	✗	The core curriculum for this programme presents the aims of training, school assignments, forms of classes and detailed teaching content.
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	1,15% (57)	

[57] ReferNet Poland calculations based on data from Statistics Poland (2022). *Oświata i wychowanie w roku szkolnym 2021/22* [Education in the 2021/22 school year] - 12 832 learners.

EQF 5

Post-secondary

school-based programmes,

WBL≥44.6%,1-2.5 years

ISCED 453

Post-secondary school-based programmes leading to ISCED 453 (szkoła policealna).

EQF level	5	ISCED-P 2011 level	453
Usual entry grade	13 or 14	Usual completion grade	13+
Usual entry age	19 or 20	Usual completion age	20+
Length of a programme (years)	From 1 to 2.5		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✓
Is it offered free of charge?	✓	Is it available for adults?	✓
	There are public schools offering education free of charge but also numerous non-public schools charging fees for education.		
ECVET or other credits	Not applicable		
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	These programmes are strictly vocational and do not include general education. The vocational parts consist of theoretical and practical aspects. They are mostly school-based. Schools have a relatively high level of independence regarding the organisation of practical training. The school director decides on the share of work-based learning, but it cannot be less than 50% of the hours foreseen for vocational education.		

Main providers	Post-secondary schools: • public schools operated by local and regional authorities, associations, national companies; • non-public schools with public school accreditation operated by different providers (associations, foundations, companies, HEIs); • non-public schools without public school accreditation operated by different providers (companies - natural persons, commercial-law companies).
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	≥ 44.6% for programme in the day form ≥ 48.5% for programme in the stationary or extramural form (58)
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	The practical part of vocational education can be offered in: • school workshops; • continuing education centres (59) and vocational training centres (60) ; • with an employer (can be organised in different ways, partially or fully at an employers' premises, including also dual training/alternate training). On-the-job training, a distinctive form of practical training, is mandatory for learners of post-secondary programmes and lasts from 4 to 12 weeks, depending on the type of occupation.
Main target groups	They are available to graduates of any kind of secondary programme.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Learners should have a completed a general or vocational upper secondary programme (graduates of general and vocational upper secondary programmes and second stage sectoral programmes).
Assessment of learning outcomes	The following forms of assessment of learning outcomes are foreseen: • school leaving certificate: confirms that a learner completed the programme. It contains a list of subjects covered and the final grades achieved. No external exam is required to obtain a school leaving certificate. Final grades are based on internal continuous assessments of learners; the certificate comprises the annual classification of grades determined in the highest-level class and the annual classification of grades achieved in the completed lower classes. • State vocational examination (taking the exam is obligatory for school graduation as of September 2019): confirms the attainment of a vocational qualification. The examination has two parts: written and practical. The candidate has to pass both in order to receive a vocational certificate/diploma. The exam is centrally organised and based on uniform requirements: the same examination tasks, assessed according to the same criteria and organised in the same way regardless of where the examination is held.

Diplomas/certificates provided	This programme leads to: • a school leaving certificate; • a vocational qualification (vocational certificate) after passing the State vocational examination; • a vocational qualifications diploma (issued when a learner has obtained all qualifications distinguished in an occupation and a school leaving certificate).
Examples of qualifications	Administration technician (<i>technik administracji</i>), cosmetics services technician (<i>technik usług kosmetycznych</i>), optician technician (<i>technik optyk</i>), numerous medical qualifications including dental hygienist (<i>higienistka stomatologiczna</i>), pharmaceutical technician (<i>technik farmaceutyczny</i>), electrocardiograph technician (<i>technik elektroradiolog</i>).
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Post-secondary programme graduates can enter the labour market. Those who have passed the <i>matura</i> exam are eligible to continue on to tertiary education, however, the programme does not provide such direct access.
Destination of graduates	According to the Labour Force Survey (LFS), in the fourth quarter of 2020, the employment rate of recent vocational upper secondary programme and post-secondary school-based programmes graduates (1 year after completing education) was 58.7% (61) .
Awards through validation of prior learning	✓ A vocational certificate can be awarded after passing the State vocational examination extramurally. Persons can take extramural State vocational examinations conducted by regional examination boards if they are over 18 years old, have completed a lower secondary programme or an 8-year primary programme and have at least 2 years of learning or work in an occupation relating to the targeted qualification (62) . If they do not have 2 years of learning or work experience, they can enrol in a vocational qualifications course (KKZ). By taking extramural exams adults can also acquire a certificate of completion of the general education programme.
General education subjects	✗ These programmes are strictly vocational and do not include general education.
Key competences	✓
Application of learning outcomes approach	✓
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	20,89% (63)

- [58] ReferNet Poland calculations of WBL percentage based on the assumptions provided in the *Teaching Plans [Ramowe plany nauczania]*, <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20190000639/O/D20190639.pdf>.
- [59] Continuing education centres (*centrum kształcenia ustawicznego*, CKU): public institutions (usually a school complex) in Polish education, usually with a long tradition, whose task is to provide continuous, free-of-charge education for adults and enable them to obtain a profession. They may cooperate with in-service teacher training centres in the area of improving the professional skills of VET teachers.
- [60] Vocational training centres (*centrum kształcenia zawodowego*, CKZ): public institutions created from the transformation of existing centres for practical training (*placówka kształcenia praktycznego*) or vocational training and development centres (*ośrodek kształcenia i doskonalenia zawodowego*) responsible for supporting vocational education of VET learners in schools providing practical or theoretical training of juvenile workers. They will be also providing vocational training in the form of courses (professional skills, qualifying vocational courses or other courses: enabling to obtain and supplement knowledge, skills and professional qualifications).
- [61] Statistics Poland does not distinguish between graduates from vocational upper secondary programmes and post-secondary school-based programmes in the Labour Force Survey (Table 1.9 'Economic activity of school leavers (aged 15-30) by level of education, sex and place of residence') <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/rynek-pracy/pracujacy-bezrobotni-bierni-zawodowo-wg-bael/aktywnosc-ekonomiczna-ludnosci-polski-iv-kwartal-2020-roku,4,40.html>
- [62] Documents confirming the fulfilment of these requirements: school certificates, transcripts, education certificates or employment certificates related to work in a specific occupation, including those obtained abroad.
- [63] ReferNet Poland calculations based on Statistics Poland (2022). *Oświata i wychowanie w roku szkolnym 2021/22 [Education in the 2021/22 school year]*: 232 696 learners.

EQF 5

College programmes

of social work

ISCED 554

Colleges of social work leading to EQF level 5, ISCED 554 (kolegia pracowników służb społecznych)

EQF level	5	ISCED-P 2011 level	554
Usual entry grade	13 or 14	Usual completion grade	15 or 16
Usual entry age	19 or 20	Usual completion age	21 or 22
Length of a programme (years)	3		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✓
Is it offered free of charge?	✓	Is it available for adults?	✓

ECVET or other credits Not applicable

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance) Colleges conduct a day, evening or extramural form of education.
Learning forms:

- school-based learning;
- work-based learning: in-company training;
- self-learning (allocation of hours is not specified).

The form, place and timetable of in-company training is determined by the director of the college in cooperation with the governing body, after consulting the Programme Council and the learners' council.

Every college operates under academic and didactic supervision of selected HEIs.

Main providers Colleges:

- public colleges operated by regional authorities;
- non-public colleges, operated by legal persons (64) .

Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies around 24%

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	• general in-practice training in a social welfare centre; • general in-practice training in a 24-hour service; • specialist and graduate professional in-practice training.
Main target groups	Programmes intended for adults interested in obtaining the qualification of social worker.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	A <i>matura</i> certificate is required to enrol. A medical certificate stating that the learner is able to practice as a social worker is also needed.
Assessment of learning outcomes	To complete a college programme, learners must pass a final internal exam conducted by an examination board appointed by the head of the college. The diploma confirms that the learner has attained the qualification of social worker. In selected colleges, operating under the didactic oversight of a given HEI, participation in the programme also leads to a bachelor exam and bachelor degree. However, this option is not compulsory.
Diplomas/certificates provided	The learner receives a diploma confirming the completion of a college of social work, certifying the qualification of social worker. The graduation diploma is issued on the basis of documentation of the course of study conducted by the college. The bachelor's diploma is also offered to programme graduates of selected colleges.
Examples of qualifications	Social worker. Colleges can also provide specialised training in the field of social welfare, in a field of specialisation in the profession of social worker and social work supervisor.
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	College learners can enter the labour market or continue their studies in EQF 6 bachelor programmes. In some colleges graduates who are interested in continuing their studies in EQF 6 bachelor programmes are offered recognition of the college curriculum.
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	In some colleges it is possible have prior learning obtained in programmes provided by HEIs validated.
General education subjects	✗
Key competences	✓
Application of learning outcomes approach	✓

Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners <1% (65)

- [64] Regulation of the Minister for Family, Labour and Social Policy of 15 September 2016 on colleges of social work. *Journal of Laws* 2016, item 1 543.
- [65] ReferNet Poland calculation based on the Education Data System (System Informacji Oświatowej, SIO) Four colleges with 231 learners in the 2019/20 school year.
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- [17] Statistics Poland (2022). [Education in the 2021/2022 school year](#).
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- [27] [Announcement of the Minister for National Education of 24 January 2024 on the forecast of the demand for employees in vocational education occupations on the country and regional labour market](#), Official Journal of the Republic of Poland "Monitor Polski" 2024, item 85. (accessed 06.2.2024)
- [28] [Announcement of the Minister for National Education](#) of 15 February 2019 on the list of occupations of special meaning for culture and national heritage, Official Journal of the Republic of Poland "Monitor Polski" 2019, item 857.(accessed 06.2.2024).
- [30] The project [Verification and approval of contest products for Action 2.14](#) [Weryfikacja i odbiór produktów projektów konkursowych z Działania 2.14] was conducted by ORE from December 2019 to December 2021.
- [33] [Regulation of the Council of Ministers of 6 July 2023 amending the regulation on the vocational preparation of juveniles and their salary](#) (Journal of Laws 2023, item 1348 accessed 6.2.2024).

- [34] official procedure conducted to determine the Polish equivalent of a foreign diploma
- [35] Own elaboration based on [data on registered unemployment](#), Ministry of Family and Social Policy,