

# Vocational education and training in Denmark

## Short description





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The **European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training** (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training, skills and qualifications. We provide information, research, analyses and evidence on vocational education and training, skills and qualifications for policy-making in the EU Member States.

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Jürgen Siebel, *Executive Director*  
Mario Patuzzi, *Chair of the Management Board*

# Foreword

Vocational education and training (VET) in Denmark is distinguished by its flexible, work-based and inclusive nature. The system consists of a mainstream system for young people (under the age of 25) and an adult (25+) education and training system offering equivalent qualifications to the mainstream system. The Danish VET system is deeply rooted in a strong tradition of social dialogue and cooperation between schools, industry and public authorities. The apprenticeship programme (erhvervsuddannelse) serves as the main pathway within VET. Denmark's VET system is primarily publicly financed, with funding partly supported by contributions from all employers, public and private, into a national Employers' Reimbursement Fund (Arbejdsgivernes Uddannelsesbidrag). Beyond technical skills, Danish VET programmes also emphasise fostering civic competences and democratic values, encouraging learners to develop critical thinking, collaboration and social responsibility through courses like social studies and engagement in school governance, where learners are members of governing boards with voting rights.

As Denmark assumes the Council Presidency, it is prioritising VET by aiming to make it more attractive to both young people and adults, increase learner mobility and strengthen learning and well-being in the digital age. This involves continuously updating curricula to reflect technological and societal developments, promoting international mobility and highlighting the strong employment outcomes and further education opportunities associated with VET pathways. Career guidance services and outreach activities play an important role in showcasing the diverse possibilities VET offers for personal and professional growth. Further, Denmark is committed to preparing VET for the digital age and the green transition, making these areas central to curriculum reform, skills anticipation and teacher training.

The Danish VET system offers valuable insights for other European countries aiming to enhance their vocational education systems. Its strong reliance on social dialogue and cooperation and the integration of work-based learning in VET programmes provides a robust model for ensuring training remains aligned with labour market needs. The collaborative approach to qualification design involving labour market representatives and trade committees ensures relevance and quality. Denmark's use of comprehensive skills intelligence tools and methods for anticipating future skill needs is also noteworthy. Moreover, the emphasis on fostering civic competences and democratic engagement within the vocational curriculum presents a holistic approach to learner development that goes beyond technical skills. In this regard, developments and priorities in Danish VET demonstrate a strong relationship with the [European skills agenda](#) and the [Union of skills](#). By continuing to invest in high-quality, attractive and socially relevant VET, Denmark contributes to strengthening the skills base of Europe and to shaping a more democratic, resilient and prosperous future for all.

This publication <sup>(1)</sup>, prepared in close collaboration with the University College Copenhagen (Denmark's ReferNet partner), aims to give European readers a clear and concise overview of Denmark's VET system, its distinctive features and its strategic developments. We hope it fosters mutual learning, cross-border cooperation and policy innovation in vocational education and training throughout the EU.

Jürgen Siebel

*Executive Director*

*and Acting Head of Department for VET and qualifications*

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<sup>(1)</sup> As well as this short description, a flyer titled Spotlight on VET and an animated video presenting the national VET system are also published for each country holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

## Acknowledgements

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# Contents

|                                                                        |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Foreword .....                                                         | 4  |
| Acknowledgements .....                                                 | 5  |
| Denmark .....                                                          | 8  |
| Chapter 1. VET provision.....                                          | 11 |
| 1.1. Education and training system overview .....                      | 13 |
| 1.2. Government-regulated VET provision .....                          | 15 |
| 1.2.1. VET programme structure .....                                   | 15 |
| 1.2.2. Upper secondary VET for young people (under 25 years old) ..... | 18 |
| 1.2.3. Upper secondary VET for adults (over 25 years old) .....        | 18 |
| 1.2.4. VET in higher education for young people .....                  | 18 |
| 1.2.5. VET in higher education for adults .....                        | 19 |
| 1.2.6. Other programmes .....                                          | 20 |
| 1.2.7. Apprenticeship.....                                             | 20 |
| 1.2.8. Admission requirements .....                                    | 21 |
| 1.3. VET governance .....                                              | 22 |
| 1.3.1. VET providers.....                                              | 22 |
| 1.3.2. Regulatory framework for VET .....                              | 22 |
| 1.4. Financing VET .....                                               | 23 |
| 1.5. VET teachers and trainers .....                                   | 24 |
| 1.5.1. VET teacher types .....                                         | 24 |
| 1.5.2. Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers .....  | 25 |
| Chapter 2. Shaping VET qualifications .....                            | 26 |
| 2.1. Anticipating skills needs.....                                    | 27 |
| 2.1.1. Stakeholders' involvement.....                                  | 27 |
| 2.1.2. Methods and tools .....                                         | 27 |
| 2.2. Designing qualifications .....                                    | 28 |
| 2.3. Recognition of prior learning .....                               | 28 |
| 2.3.1. Competence assessment of young people .....                     | 28 |
| 2.3.2. Competence assessment for adults .....                          | 29 |
| 2.4. Quality assurance .....                                           | 29 |
| Chapter 3. Promoting VET participation .....                           | 31 |
| 3.1. Incentives for learners .....                                     | 32 |
| 3.1.1. Salaries for apprentices.....                                   | 32 |
| 3.1.2. Loans and grants.....                                           | 32 |
| 3.2. Incentives for training companies .....                           | 32 |
| 3.2.1. Employer's Reimbursement Fund (AUB) .....                       | 32 |
| 3.2.2. Fines and incentives for companies .....                        | 33 |
| 3.2.3. Wage compensation scheme .....                                  | 33 |
| 3.3. Guidance and counselling .....                                    | 33 |
| 3.4. Challenges and development opportunities.....                     | 34 |
| Abbreviations.....                                                     | 36 |
| References .....                                                       | 38 |

|                                     |    |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Further sources of information..... | 39 |
| Websites and databases .....        | 39 |

## Figures

|                                                                    |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1. VET in the Danish education and training system.....            | 12 |
| 2. Mainstream education and adult education and training.....      | 13 |
| 3. Structure of VET programmes in Denmark .....                    | 17 |
| 4. Grading scale in the Danish education and training system ..... | 21 |
| 5. Characteristics of the taximeter system .....                   | 24 |

# Denmark



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## General Information

|                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Area                                    | 42 925 km <sup>2</sup>                                                                                                                                                         |
| Capital                                 | Copenhagen                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Government                              | Constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system; the prime minister is the head of government, and the monarch is the Head of State (representative and ceremonial duties) |
| Legislature                             | Folketing (unicameral parliament)                                                                                                                                              |
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita | EUR 493 970 (2022)                                                                                                                                                             |

## External factors influencing VET

### Demographics and immigration

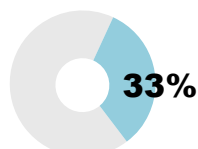
(untouched statistics were accessed on 31/03/2025)



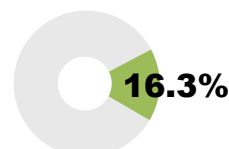
**Population**  
**5 992 734**

in 2025  
(+ 2.7% since 2019)

**Immigration increase:**  
1.9% of the population since 2022



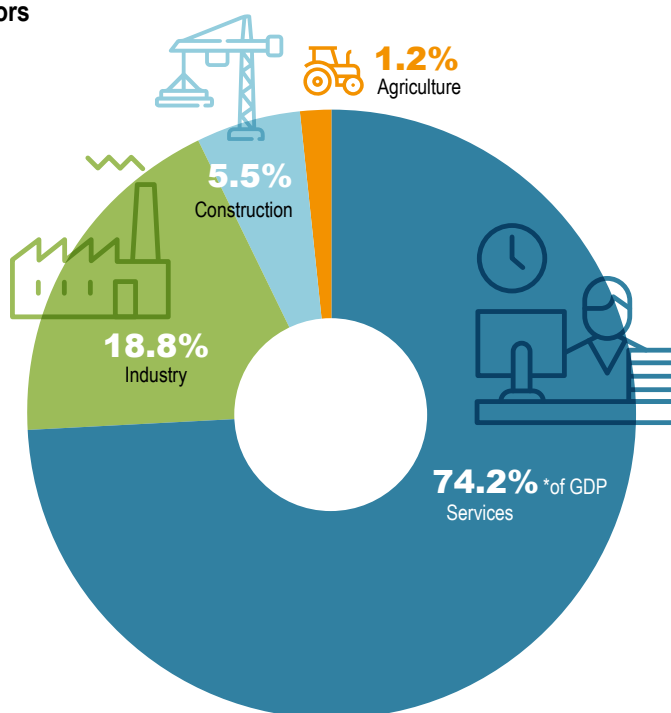
**Old-age  
dependency ratio**  
(expected 51.3% by 2070) <sup>(2)</sup>



**Foreign immigrants  
and descendants**  
(2025)

### Economy and employment

#### Main economic sectors



### Labour market

Highly regulated (only low-skilled jobs are available without a diploma). Detailed regulations on employment services, including job search counselling, training programmes and financial support for jobseekers



<sup>(2)</sup> The old-age dependency ratio shows how many people aged 65+ there are for every 100 people of working age. If the ratio is 34%, there are about 34 older people per 100 working-age people.

## 75.8% (2023) Women in employment



## Foreign-born workforce

16% (2023)  
(5.7% in 2008)

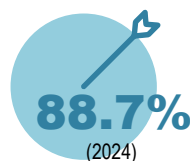


## Temporary contracts <sup>(4)</sup> (2024) Third quarter

13.2% age 15–64  
31.4% age 15–29



## 5.9% (EU: 4.8%) ICT specialists (of all employees)



## National Target

Employment rate for recent IVET graduates  
(National target for 2030: 80%)

## Labour shortages - employees will be needed by 2035

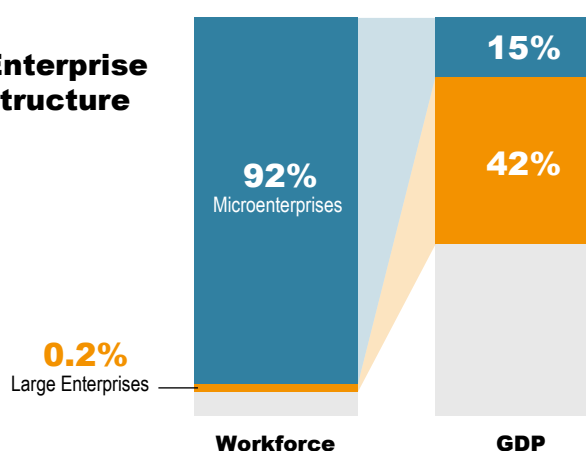


Healthcare  
& Welfare



Twin transition  
sectors <sup>(3)</sup>

## Enterprise structure

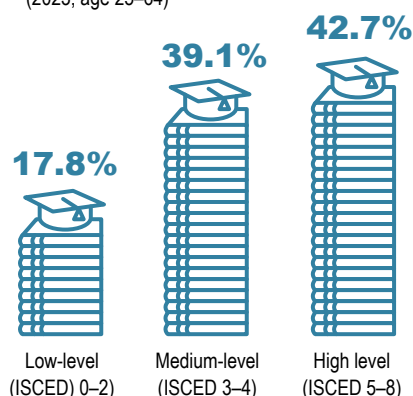


## Education and skills



Public education cost  
**Free for learners**

## Education attainment <sup>(5)</sup> (2023, age 25–64)



IVET students  
+ 2.5 pp increase since 2018  
(EU: + 0.6 pp)



Basic  
digital skills  
(EU: 55.6%)



Lifelong learning  
participation <sup>(6)</sup>  
(four weeks)



Early leavers from education  
and training (2023)

♂ 11.8% males ♀ 9% females 📍 3.3% foreign-born

<sup>(3)</sup> Twin transition sectors= Sectors where digitalisation (data, AI, automation) and the green transition (decarbonisation, circularity) reinforce each other e.g. Energy and utilities, buildings and construction, manufacturing & process industries, etc.

<sup>(4)</sup> In the third quarter of 2024 13.2 out of 100 contracts for the age group 15–64 and 31.4 contracts out of 100 for the age group 15–29 were temporary.

<sup>(5)</sup> Source: 'Eurostat, 'Population by sex, age and educational attainment level (1 000)', 12 June 2025, [accessed 4 March 2025].

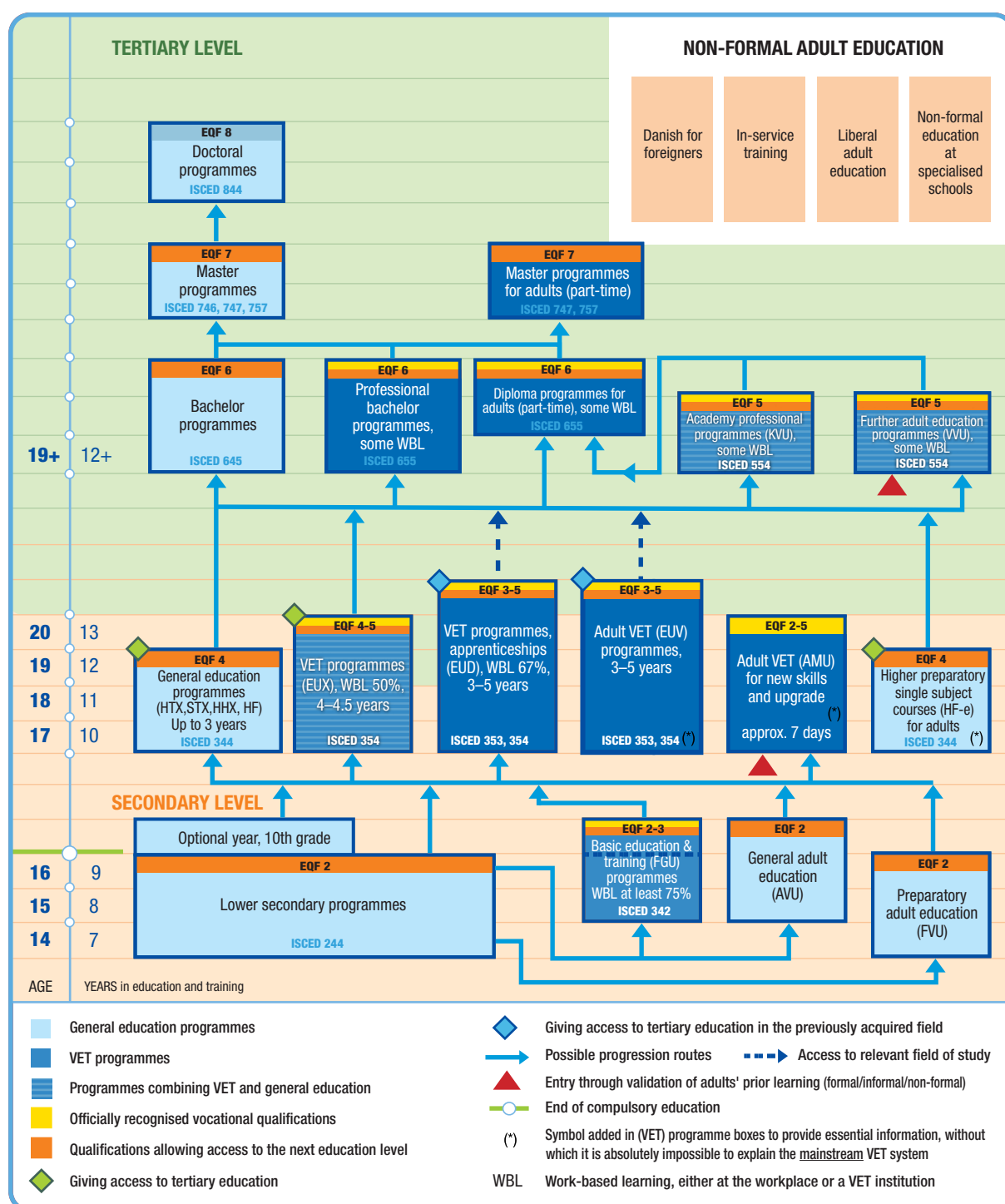
<sup>(6)</sup> Adults (25–64-year olds) with a learning experience in the last 4 weeks prior to the survey.

## CHAPTER 1.

# VET provision



Figure 1. VET in the Danish education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Sources: Cedefop, &amp; University College Copenhagen (UCC). (2023). Vocational education and training in Europe – Denmark: system description.

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

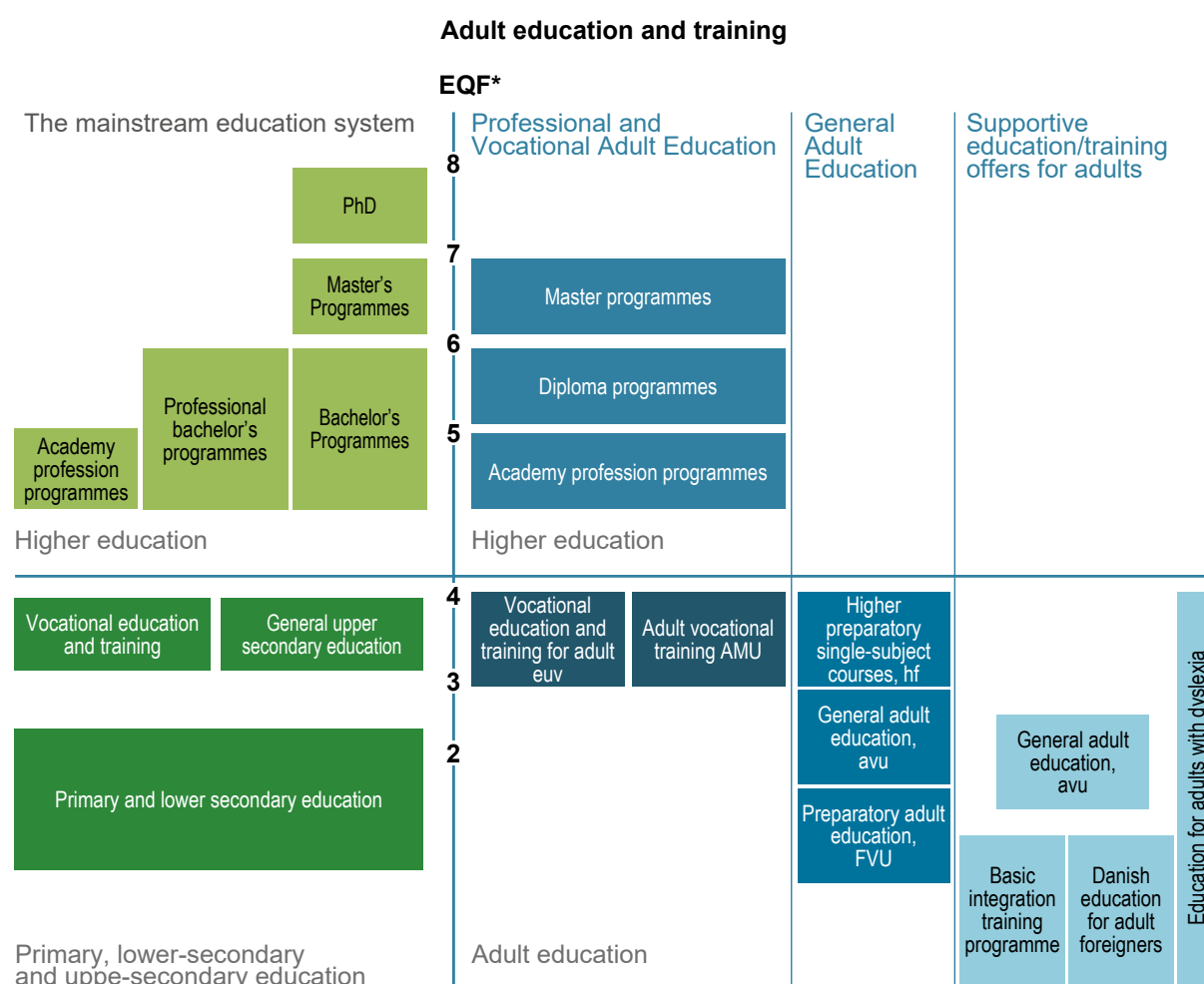
[www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/denmark-u3](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/denmark-u3)

## 1.1. Education and training system overview

Danish education and training feature mainstream and adult (age 25+) education and training systems. The mainstream system offers qualifications at all levels. Adult education and training mirrors the qualifications provided within the mainstream system but is designed specifically for adults. It also provides opportunities to acquire supplementary qualifications. A supplementary qualification can be an addition to or a part (module) of a qualification.

The two systems include VET and offer equivalent qualifications across levels, allowing learners to transition between them. The two parallel systems combined provide a framework for lifelong learning.

Figure 2. Mainstream education and adult education and training



\* European Qualifications Framework (EU)

■ Supportive education and training offers and other supportive measures for adults (not linked to EQF)

Source: Danish Ministry of Children and Education.

The main elements of the education and training (both mainstream and adult) system are:

- (a) primary and lower secondary education (European qualifications framework (EQF) levels 1–2);
- (b) upper secondary (called youth education in Denmark) (EQF 3–4);
- (c) higher education (EQF 5–8).

**Primary and lower secondary programmes** are compulsory from the age of 6 until 16, that is, from pre-school year to ninth grade (end of lower secondary education). There's an optional tenth grade, which is part of basic education (primary and lower secondary) which normally functions as preparation for higher education.

Most adult education and training programmes at EQF level 2 are VET, except for preparatory adult education (FVU) and general adult education (AVU). FVU offers courses in basic literacy and mathematics, and courses for those with learning difficulties or with Danish as their second language. AVU is general education at lower secondary level, offered to adults aged 25 years and older to strengthen their opportunities to progress in education and to promote their interest in education. It is provided to adults who, for whatever reason, did not complete lower secondary education or need supplementary education in particular subjects.

**Upper secondary education** (called youth education in Denmark) comprises general education programmes and VET (*erhvervsuddannelse* (EUD)) programmes. The duration of VET programmes is 2–5 years (normally between 3.5 and 4 years). There are five VET programme types, each offering a qualification:

- (a) higher general examination programme (*studentereksamen*, three years EQF 4);
- (b) higher preparatory examination programme (*højere forberedelseksamen* (HF), two years, EQF 4);
- (c) higher commercial examination programme (*højere handelseksamen*, three years, EQF 4);
- (d) higher technical examination programme (three years) (*højere teknisk eksamen*, HTX, EQF 4);
- (e) combined vocational and general upper secondary education programme (*erhvervsuddannelse med gymnasial eksamen* (EUX)) qualifying for access to higher education (EQF 4–5, 4 to 4.5 years).

The **adult education and training system** (age 25+) includes three programme types at the upper secondary level.

- (a) Higher preparatory single subject course (*HF-enkeltfag*, HF-e). The duration of the programme depends on the number of subjects the learner chooses and how many they study at a time. Some subjects take half a year, while others are full-year subjects. If the student wants to take a full HF-e degree, it takes a minimum of two years. If they choose several high-level subjects, they may need to take an extra half or full year (EQF 4).
- (b) VET for adults (*erhvervsuddannelse for voksne* (EUV), mainstream EUD equivalent, three to five years, EQF 3–5);
- (c) adult vocational training programmes (*arbejdsmarkedsuddannelser* (AMU), on average their duration is one week, EQF 2–5) <sup>(7)</sup>.

An alternative route to acquire a general and vocational upper secondary qualification is the preparatory basic education and training programme (*forberedende grunduddannelse* (FGU),

<sup>(7)</sup> AMU programmes are offered at a wide array of different levels (not only upper secondary) and they don't have an age requirement, meaning that young people under the age of 25 may also participate in these programmes. In the Danish context these are considered short adult programmes offered at upper secondary level.

duration of two years or, in exceptional cases, e.g. for learners with special needs, three years) for young people (under the age of 25).

**Higher education** comprises:

- (a) professionally oriented short-cycle programmes (*erhvervsakademiuddannelser* (KVU)) lead to a professional academic degree and are offered at eight business academies (*erhvervsakademier*) of professional higher education;
- (b) professionally oriented medium-cycle programmes lead to a professional bachelor's degree and are offered by university colleges;
- (c) research-based long-cycle programmes are offered at universities where most learners continue to a master's degree programme after completing a bachelor's degree. The completion of a master's degree can then provide access to doctoral programmes.

The corresponding higher education programmes within the adult education and training system are part-time programmes allowing combining education with a job:

- (a) short-cycle further (vocational) adult education (*videregående voksenuddannelse* (VVU)),
- (b) medium-cycle diploma programmes,
- (c) long-cycle master programmes.

Finally, a wide range of different institutions operate within the framework of **non-formal adult education** (*folkeoplysning*). The most well-known are the folk high schools, i.e. residential schools providing general and non-formal education. The courses vary in length – from one week to almost one year – and are attended by adults of all ages. These non-formal courses are intended to broaden general, social and democratic competences. Other programmes of informal adult education are provided by adult education associations and non-residential folk high schools or as university extension courses.

**Specially planned youth education** (*særligt tilrettelagt ungdomsuddannelse* (STU)) is a three-year youth education programme for young people up to the age of 25 with special needs who are unable to complete ordinary types of youth education due to different physical, mental or developmental disabilities or disorders. The aim of an STU programme is for the learner to gain skills for greater independence and active participation in adult life and possibly for further education and employment. STU is provided and planned by the municipalities. The programme is adapted to the specific circumstances and needs of the individual learner.

## 1.2. Government-regulated VET provision

### 1.2.1. VET programme structure

Every VET programme, regardless of the type of programme (i.e. whether the programme is aimed at young people or adults) and except for FGU which is considered special youth education in Denmark and follows a different logic (see Section 2.2.6.1.) and AMU which has a short duration, consists of a basic course divided into basic and main course, wherein the basic course has two parts. Young VET learners (under 25) enrolled directly after compulsory school will start on the first part of the basic course, while adult learners (over 25) enrol directly in the second part of the basic course. The course will give the learner a broad vocational knowledge and set of competences. The second part of the basic course (VET specialisation course) is specific to the thematic area of

the VET programme that the learner has chosen. The second part of the basic course finishes with an examination and then follows the main programme. The length of each of the two basic courses is 20 weeks. The basic courses are school-based while the main programme is built upon the dual principle, where the learners alternate between school and a company.

The four main subject areas under which all VET programmes are listed are:

- (a) care, health and pedagogy;
- (b) administration, commerce and business service;
- (c) food, agriculture and hospitality;
- (d) technology, construction and transportation.

The main programme is typically organised as 4–5 learning periods of school-based education and training at a workplace. The learners must therefore have a training agreement with an approved company which offers training (although for some programmes workshop training in schools is also an option for learners without a training agreement, this is called the school training and education guarantee and is based on the Executive Order on Vocational Education and Training (BEK/953 of 22 June 2023) <sup>(8)</sup>). In 2020, the [Tripartite agreement to ensure more apprenticeships in Danish VET](#) made it compulsory for VET institutions to assist learners in signing a training agreement. VET programmes are normally completed with a journeyman's test or a similar examination testing vocational knowledge, skills and competence.

All VET programmes except for FGU and AMU provide full or conditional access to higher education programmes (for both young learners and adults). Figure 3 presents the structure of VET programmes at upper secondary level.

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<sup>(8)</sup> For more information on the topic see Ministry of Children and Education. (n.d.). [School training and education guarantee](#).

Figure 3. Structure of VET programmes in Denmark



Source: Ministry of Children and Education.

## 1.2.2. Upper secondary VET for young people (under 25 years old)

### 1.2.2.1. Vocational education and training programme (EUD) (EQF 3–5) (ISCED 353 and 354)

EUD programmes last three to (rarely) five years targeting mainly young people (aged 16–20). The main part of the programmes is based on the dual principle, with more than 60% of work-based learning <sup>(9)</sup>. EUD programme make up for the bulk of VET learners at upper secondary level. Graduating from EUD main programmes gives access to higher education in the previously acquired field.

### 1.2.2.2. Combined vocational and general upper secondary education programme qualifying for access to higher education (EUX) (EQF 4–5)

The EUX programme was introduced in 2012 with the aim of bridging the gap between general upper secondary education and vocational upper secondary education and training. Its main target group is learners completing lower secondary education and it lasts four to four and a half years. The share of work-based learning is equal to or higher than 50%. EUX qualifies learners for a job and gives them direct access to higher education in a wide range of programmes, i.e. leading to a journeyman's certificate along with the general upper secondary diploma.

## 1.2.3. Upper secondary VET for adults (over 25 years old)

### 1.2.3.1. Vocational education and training for adults (EUV) (ISCED 353 and 354), EQF 3–5)

EUV programmes are aimed at adults over the age of 25 and allow the acquisition of qualifications equivalent to EUD, which incorporate the validation of prior learning. EUV programmes last three to five years with the share of work-based learning being equal to 60%. EUV graduates can enter the labour market or continue their studies at higher education. EUV programmes have three strands, based on the learner's prior experience and competence assessment (EUV 1, EUV 2, EUV 3 (Section 3.3.2)).

### 1.2.3.2. Adult vocational training programme (AMU) (EQF 2–5)

AMU programmes are programmes targeting both low-skilled and skilled workers, but they are open to all citizens who are either residing or employed in Denmark, irrespective of educational background. Some AMU programmes are also targeted at the unemployed. Although the duration of AMU programmes can span from a half day to 50 days, on average the duration is one week. AMU certificates do not provide direct access to further education and training, although they can be included in an assessment of prior learning resulting in credit transfer, for example, if entering a mainstream VET programme in the same field.

## 1.2.4. VET in higher education for young people

### 1.2.4.1. Academy professional programmes (KVU) (EQF level 5, ISCED 554)

Academy professional programmes are short-cycle degree programmes, usually corresponding to 120 European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS) credits, in fields such as business, technology and IT. The programmes prepare students for performing practical, vocational tasks on an analytical basis and can qualify students for employment in middle-management positions. The programmes combine theoretical studies with a practice-oriented approach in the form of work placements. Academy profession graduates can in some cases obtain a professional bachelor's

<sup>(9)</sup> For more information see Cedefop. (2019). [Cedefop European database on apprenticeship schemes: Denmark country fiche](#).

degree within the same field of study through a top-up programme corresponding to 90 ECTS credits. These programmes are offered at the business academies. Maritime training institutions offer programmes at academy profession level, corresponding to 120 ECTS credits, as a top-up programme for vocational maritime training. Academy professional programmes combine theoretical knowledge with practical knowledge. To be admitted into these programmes, a general upper secondary qualification or a vocational qualification of at least three years is required. Graduates receive an award of a professional academic degree (*erhvervsakademigrad*).

#### 1.2.4.2. *Professional bachelor programmes leading to EQF level 6, ISCED 655 (professionsbachelor)*

The professional bachelor's programmes consist of a combination of theory and practice and normally take 3.5 years to complete (210 ECTS credits). The practical education is in the form of work experience at a workplace and its duration varies depending on job-related specificities (e.g. workplace training for nurses is longer than that for teachers). Professional bachelor graduates can take up employment or, in many cases, enter a master's degree programme.

### 1.2.5. VET in higher education for adults

#### 1.2.5.1. *Further vocational adult education programmes leading to EQF level 5, ISCED 554 (VVU)*

Further vocational adult education (VVU) programmes have an average duration of two to three years (part time), with the required completion period being six years. VVU programmes target mainly employed adults, although unemployed people may also participate. In addition to an appropriate VET qualification or a general upper secondary qualification, two to three years of relevant work experience is required. Adult VVU qualifications, like the mainstream KVVU, can provide access to a supplementary diploma degree programme, allowing graduates to build on an academy profession degree to bachelor-equivalent level within the same field. Graduates may also access professional bachelor programmes.

#### 1.2.5.2. *Professional bachelor programmes leading to EQF level 6, ISCED 655 (professionsbachelor)* (same as the professional bachelor programme offered for young people)

The professional bachelor's programmes consist of a combination of theory and practice and normally take 3.5 years to complete (210 ECTS credits). The practical education is in the form of work-experience at a workplace and its duration varies depending on job-related specificities (e.g. workplace training for nurses is longer than that for teachers) Professional bachelor graduates can take up employment or, in many cases, enter a master's degree programme.

#### 1.2.5.3. *Diploma programmes for adults (EQF level 6, ISCED 655)*

These programmes are typically aimed at experienced working adults who study with support from their employer or labour market funds. The programmes are development-based and combine theoretical studies with a practical approach. The programmes prepare students for assuming highly qualified occupational functions and give access to relevant master programmes (adult/continuing higher education). A diploma degree (*diplomuddannelse*) is awarded after two years of part-time study (60 ECTS credits). To get admitted into a part-time diploma programme, students need an academy profession qualification or higher and two years of prior work experience. They are usually provided by business academies and university colleges.

#### 1.2.5.4. *Master programmes for adults (ISCED 747 and 757, EQF level 7)*

The master's degree (*mastergrad*) programmes for employed adults are research-based, part-time programmes, awarded after two years of part-time studies corresponding to a full academic year

of 60 ECTS credits. In certain cases, they correspond to 90 ECTS credits and are thus awarded after three years of part time studies. They are offered by the eight Danish research universities and a few additional university level institutions. They are arranged so that it is possible to maintain employment while studying. Tuition fees are usually paid by the student's employer or a (labour market) fund. In order to be admitted into these programmes, students need a relevant educational qualification at bachelor's level (or a diploma programme for adults) and at least two years of relevant work experience.

### 1.2.6. Other programmes

#### 1.2.6.1. Basic education and training programme (FGU)

FGU has been available for learners since 2019. The programmes typically last up to two years, predominantly targeting young people below the age of 25 who have not completed upper secondary education, who are unemployed or are not enrolled in any education or training programme and may lack the qualifications for admission to VET. FGU comprises three tracks:

- (a) basic production education (*produktionsgrunduddannelse (PGU)*): a workshop-based education with a high level of practical learning for learners who wish to proceed to vocational training or become better qualified to enter the labour market;
- (b) general basic education (*almen grunduddannelse (AGU)*): an education in basic subjects such as Danish, mathematics, English and the natural sciences with a view to practical applications of the curriculum for learners who wish to proceed to general education or VET;
- (c) basic vocational education (*erhvervsgrunduddannelse (EGU)*): mainly traineeship-based (75% work-based learning), for learners who will benefit in their progression from a workplace environment and who wish to continue their education and training or become better qualified to enter the labour market.

All learners receive a certificate of competences after completing at least 12 weeks of training.

- (a) In PGU, a certificate is issued when level 3 (highest level) is completed.
- (b) In AGU, a certificate is issued when certain levels have been met. If met, this guarantees access to higher preparatory single subject courses (HF-e).
- (c) In EGU, a certificate is issued containing a description of the completed work-based training, general subjects, etc. The minimum of work-based learning is 75%.

### 1.2.7. Apprenticeship

Apprenticeships are based on a contract or training agreement between an apprentice and a company. All training companies are approved by the social partners through the relevant trade committee and thus must meet certain requirements, for example, a certain level of available technology and the ability to offer various tasks in an occupation. Many companies can offer apprenticeships upon approval in more than one field. Once a company has been approved to provide training placements, it does not need to renew this accreditation unless it has not been active for five years or more. Apprentices receive an apprentice's salary while in the company, as laid down in the collective agreements.

Colleges and companies work closely together to make sure that training takes place in accordance with the law when compiling an individual education plan for the learner in question. These plans are compiled for every learner to ensure coherence between the learner's wishes and the actual training programme. Learners also have a personal educational portfolio that is intended to increase their awareness of the learning process. While the educational plan indicates learning

pathways and shows how the various elements of the training programme, both college-based and workplace-based, combine to provide the learner with the necessary competences, the portfolio documents indicate the actual learning and skills that the student has acquired. Improving the availability of training placements is a political priority.

Although a variety of VET programmes are offered in Denmark, building on different legal frameworks (Section 2.3.2), there is no doubt that the main pathway through VET is the dual-based apprenticeship programme (EUD, see Section 2.2.2.1) founded and developed from the beginning of VET in Denmark.

An alternative VET pathway, with a small percentage of learners compared to the total population of learners, is the 'new apprenticeship programme' (*ny mesterlære*) <sup>(10)</sup>, introduced in 2006, as an alternative pathway for reducing the dropout rate in upper secondary VET. Learners undertaking the new apprenticeship pathway spend the first year of their education receiving practical training within an enterprise (whereas the traditional EUD programme starts with a college-based basic introductory stage). The initiative is aimed at learners who may struggle or lack the motivation to complete the more theoretical school-based EUD programmes without first gaining a practical insight into the field (Section 2.4.)

### 1.2.8. Admission requirements

Admission to VET usually requires the completion of compulsory education and a school leaving certificate scoring at least 2.0 in Danish and mathematics <sup>(11)</sup>. To enrol to a VET programme with a foreign diploma, its level must be comparable to the lower secondary (*folkeskole*) leaving certificate. The grading system/scale is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Grading scale in the Danish education and training system

| Grade | Description                                                                                                                                     |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12    | For an excellent performance displaying a high level of command of all aspects of the relevant material, with no or only a few minor weaknesses |
| 10    | For a very good performance displaying a high level of command of most aspects of the relevant material, with only minor weaknesses             |
| 7     | For a good performance displaying good command of the relevant material but also some weaknesses                                                |
| 4     | For a fair performance displaying some command of the relevant material but also some major weaknesses                                          |
| 2     | For a performance meeting only the minimum requirements for acceptance. Two is the minimum grade for passing an exam.                           |
| 0     | For a performance which does not meet the minimum requirements for acceptance.                                                                  |
| -3    | For a performance which is unacceptable in all respects                                                                                         |

Source: [Ministry of Higher Education and Science](#).

It is up to the vocational college to decide whether the applicant fulfils the entry requirements. Vocational colleges make the final decision based on the applicant's assessment. Following a competency assessment which varies depending on the learner's age (Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2), all VET learners are issued an individual learning plan.

<sup>(10)</sup> This is a minor pathway and therefore not included in the education chart.

<sup>(11)</sup> The grading range in Denmark is the seven-point grading scale, with the lowest grade being minus 3 and the highest 12. Grade two (2.0) corresponds to 'a performance meeting only the minimum requirements for acceptance'.

### 1.3. VET governance

Parliament sets out the overall framework for VET, which is administered by the Ministry of Children and Education. The ministry has overall legislative <sup>(12)</sup> and financial responsibility for VET, laying down the objectives for programmes and providing the legislative framework within which social partners, colleges enterprises and other stakeholders are able to adapt curricula and methodologies to the needs of the labour market. VET at tertiary level (EQF 5–7) is under the auspice of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science.

Social partners (generally trade unions and employer organisations) play an institutionalised key role at all levels of VET (see Section 3.1).

The [Danish Agency for Education and Quality](#) supervises the academic quality of vocational education and training. Procedures and criteria for including VET qualifications in the Danish qualifications framework are the subject of an evaluation report compiled by the [Danish Evaluation Institute](#). The Danish Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (NCE) was established in 1969 and has for almost 40 years delivered training services to Danish vocational schools. During the last approximately 20 years, NCE has been involved in a wide range of international activities. Its core activity is continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers through training, implementation of VET reforms and policy studies.

#### 1.3.1. VET providers

In Denmark, all VET is government-regulated. Upper secondary VET is primarily delivered by vocational colleges (*erhvervsskoler*), which include technical colleges, health and social care colleges (*SOSU skoler*), and business colleges. These institutions are State-funded, non-profit and self-governing, operating under a regulatory framework set by the Ministry for Children and Education. Vocational colleges are responsible for both the teaching and examination aspects of VET and work closely with local training committees and social partners to adapt programmes to local labour market needs, reflecting Denmark's strong dual system approach. Some colleges offer their programmes through local branches at locations other than the main college.

At the higher education level, VET programmes are offered by eight business academies (*erhvervsakademier*) and university colleges (*professionshøjskoler*). Business academies focus on practice-oriented programmes in technical and commercial fields, while university colleges offer professional bachelor and diploma programmes, often involving applied research and regional collaboration. Both types of institutions can be public or private and are independent, governed by boards and managed by rectors.

Adult VET is provided not only by these institutions but also by AMU centres, which specialise in short-term education and training for adults. AMU centres do not offer basic upper secondary VET qualifications for adults (EUV) or higher-level programmes. AMU centres were created with the distinctive mission of providing easily accessible short qualifications and training courses for adult workers (or adults seeking employment). There are currently around 3 000 AMU courses. A total of [241](#) educational institutions in Denmark offer VET programmes.

#### 1.3.2. Regulatory framework for VET

The regulatory framework for VET in Denmark is based on four major laws. They all have national coverage and stipulate the legal structure within which the VET system functions, including programmes, funding and the institutional framework.

The main regulatory framework for VET in Denmark consists of the following four laws.

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<sup>(12)</sup> The term used in the Danish context is 'parliamentary'.

- (a) The vocational training Act (*lov om erhvervsuddannelser*) sets out the VET framework, including the overall goals, admission rules and structure. It also stipulates the roles of the advisory boards, companies, etc. In addition, the Act states that the minimum wage for apprentices is determined by a collective agreement within the trade (paragraph 55).
- (b) The Act on general upper secondary exams in connection with vocational education and training (EUX) focuses on the pathways leading to a dual qualification as a skilled worker and a general upper secondary certificate providing access to tertiary education (*lov om studiekompetencegivende eksamen i forbindelse med erhvervsuddannelse (EUX) m.v.*). The law sets out the common provisions of teaching at the general upper secondary level at VET colleges, thus providing the framework for EUX.
- (c) The Employers' Reimbursement Fund Act (*lov om Arbejdsgivernes Uddannelsesbidrag*) secures the apprentices' wages in the school-based periods of the VET programme;
- (d) the Act on VET institutions (*lov om institutioner for erhvervsrettet uddannelse*) stipulates the framework for the VET colleges as self-governing institutions and for the school boards.

## 1.4. Financing VET

A publicly financed system that recognises relevant non-formal and informal competences and practical work experience is a fundamental characteristic of the VET system <sup>(13)</sup>.

Mainstream ('youth') VET is based on alternating models where training takes place at college (the main VET providers at upper secondary level) and in an enterprise. The State finances training at colleges, while enterprises finance on-the-job training. When it comes to financing training in companies, all employers, both public and private, pay a sum into the national Employers' Reimbursement Fund (*Arbejdsgivernes Uddannelsesbidrag (AUB)*), regardless of whether they provide apprenticeship placements.

In 2024, the State spent a total of DKK 3.2 billion (EUR 437 million) on VET basic courses and main programmes. A considerable proportion of these funds was distributed to colleges and AMU centres in accordance with the 'taximeter' system.

The taximeter system is a performance-based funding model used in Denmark's VET sector, where financial support is primarily tied to student activity and progression. Vocational schools receive per-student funding calculated on a weekly teaching basis, with additional output-based components that reward institutions for student completion and exam success. Beyond this, a basic grant helps cover fixed institutional costs, and supplements are available for special needs students or schools in rural areas. This model supports both school-based and parts of work-based learning, although companies hosting apprentices are funded through separate subsidies.

The system is designed to encourage efficiency, student retention, and completion, aligning funding with education outcomes. It incentivises schools to reduce dropout rates and maintain teaching quality. However, the model is not without criticism; some argue it puts pressure on institutions to prioritise enrolment over educational depth, and funding can be unstable in cases of fluctuating student numbers or high dropout rates. Despite these challenges, the taximeter system remains a core feature of Danish VET, with ongoing adjustments to balance financial sustainability and educational quality <sup>(14)</sup>. Figure 4 presents the characteristics of the taximeter system.

Besides the taximeter rate, VET providers also receive an annual fixed grant for the maintenance of buildings, salaries, etc. The total State grant is provided as a block grant which institutions use

<sup>(13)</sup> VET in Denmark is mainly publicly financed. Only a few private programmes exist.

<sup>(14)</sup> For more detailed information see Ministry of Children and Education. (n.d.). [The taximeter system](#).

at their own discretion within the boundaries laid down by the legislative framework and specific institutional objectives.

Adult vocational training (AMU) is largely publicly financed. Public providers receive taximeter funding and must negotiate budgets and targets with the education ministry annually.

Figure 5. **Characteristics of the taximeter system**

#### **Demand management**

The money follows the user and creates incentives for user friendly behaviour. Financing of increased educational activity levels is hereby ensured.

Flexibility in terms of institutional structure (mergers and split ups).

#### **Productivity management**

No inadvertent improvements or worsening of standards as a result of demography and changes in application patterns.

#### **Politically determined taximeter rates through the Appropriations Act**

The determination of taximeter rates is independent of the individual institution's expenses. Limited opportunity for pressure from interested parties (institutions, organisations, local/regional forces).

No negotiations or administrative redistribution.

Transparency across educational programmes and educational fields.

Activity-level dependency and numbers principles. Budget security when the level of activity is stable, both centralised and decentralised.

Staggering the timing of the grant foundation increases budget security

Numbers principles are result oriented.

The activity-level dependency can be reduced, for example, through basic grants, research and development funds, etc.

Source: [Ministry of Children and Education](#).

## 1.5. VET teachers and trainers

### 1.5.1. VET teacher types

In VET, there are:

- (a) general subject teachers;
- (b) vocational subject teachers;
- (c) in-company trainers;
- (d) mentors <sup>(15)</sup> (i.e. retired professionals, or personnel hired specifically to support learners, or regular teachers).

General subject teachers are university graduates with either a professional bachelor's degree in teaching or a university bachelor's degree or master's in the specific subject(s) that they teach.

Vocational subject teachers usually have a vocational qualification background in VET education and substantial experience in the field; normally, at least five years of experience is required.

The job of a VET teacher is considered demanding by the public. It's also difficult to find qualified teachers when the salaries offered in the private sector for qualified staff are much higher than that of a VET teacher.

Colleges and training centres have autonomy in staff recruitment. The education ministry is not involved in teacher recruitment procedures and teachers are not civil servants who enter public administration through tests.

<sup>(15)</sup> Mentoring is not offered by all vocational institutions.

There are no requirements for any VET teacher to have a pedagogical qualification prior to their employment.

Pedagogical training (*diplomuddannelsen i erhvervspædagogik*) is part-time, in-service training based on interaction between theory and practice. This diploma-level programme (vocational pedagogy diploma) was introduced for all teachers employed in VET and adult education (AMU) recruited after 15 January 2010 and replaced the previous teacher training course (*Pædagogikum*). The objective has been to improve teaching skills to a level equivalent to teachers in compulsory education with a professional bachelor's degree. The programme is the equivalent of one year of full-time study (60 ECTS credits), and the acquired qualification is placed at EQF level 6. However, it is generally conducted as a part-time study to root training in practical teaching experience. New teachers must enrol in the programme within one year of gaining employment at a VET college or AMU centre. The programme must be completed within a period of six years. There are three compulsory and two optional modules, as well as a final examination project. NCE (Section 2.3) and other providers at different university colleges offer the programme, which is paid for by VET schools who receive financial support for this by the education ministry.

In-company trainers play an important role in VET, given the dual training principle that is characteristic of all VET. There are different types of trainers with different responsibilities: planners, training managers and daily trainers. However, there are very few legal requirements to become a trainer; one must have professional experience and the company that provides the training must have a license to do so. In-company trainers that are responsible for apprentices must be craftsmen. They must have completed a VET programme, for which they have received a 'journeyman's certificate', and must have work experience.

### 1.5.2. Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers

Once qualified to teach in VET, there is no general legislation on in-service training. Individual teachers are obliged by their agreement with the college to keep their subject-specific and pedagogical knowledge up to date. The college is required to draw up a plan to develop the competences of its teachers. On this basis, and in cooperation with each teacher, the college determines the individual's professional in-service training plan. Courses are offered locally by many providers, in accordance with market conditions. A certificate is normally awarded to participants, but a recognised qualification is not generally awarded.

There are also no in-service training requirements or control mechanisms for in-company trainers. Quality assurance, beyond that undertaken voluntarily by the enterprise, is restricted to informal contact between the VET college and the enterprise. The adult education (AMU) system provides several courses of one to two weeks duration to support the training of trainers. The courses are not mandatory and are mostly undertaken by the social-care and healthcare professions <sup>(16)</sup>.

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<sup>(16)</sup> For more information visit Cedefop project page on [Teachers' and trainers' professional development](#) and Cedefop's interactive toolkits for VET practitioners: [VET toolkit for tackling early leaving](#) and [VET toolkit for empowering NEETs](#). See also [Cedefop/ReferNet country reports on teachers and trainers in a changing world](#) and the related [comparative analysis](#).

## CHAPTER 2.

# Shaping VET qualifications



## 2.1. Anticipating skills needs

The Ministry of Employment oversees skills anticipation efforts, with the Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment being responsible for implementing and monitoring various skills forecasting measures.

### 2.1.1. Stakeholders' involvement

In Denmark, skills anticipation activities are strategically aligned with labour market needs and are underpinned by strong collaboration with social partners. Social partners play an institutionalised role at all levels of VET, from the national advisory council on initial vocational education and training (*Rådet for de Grundlæggende Erhvervsrettede Uddannelser*), which advises the education ministry on principal matters concerning VET, to playing an advisory role locally through local training committees comprising representatives of the social partners who advise colleges on local adaptations of VET. The national advisory council consists of 31 representatives from the social partners.

National trade committees are responsible for the development and continual renewal of VET programmes by closely monitoring developments within specific trades. Approximately 50 trade committees exist. The committees normally have between 10 and 14 members and are formed by labour-market organisations (with parity of membership between employer and employee organisations). They are financed by participating organisations. They define learning objectives and final examination standards in alignment with labour market needs and determine key regulatory aspects such as training duration, structure, and the balance between theoretical and practical components. These committees also approve enterprises as qualified training providers, mediate conflicts between apprentices and companies, and oversee certification processes, ensuring high standards in qualifications.

Local training committees affiliated with vocational colleges ensure that VET provision remains responsive to regional and local labour market demands. Comprising representatives of employers, employees, college staff, management and students, they contribute to curriculum development, the selection of optional subjects and the availability of local training placements. These committees also support the approval of local enterprises as training providers and assist in conflict resolution, thereby complementing the work of national trade committees. Local training committees are responsible for overseeing the delivery of vocational education and training at the local level. These committees typically include representatives from employers, trade unions, training institutions and sometimes local authorities. They work to ensure that training programmes align with regional labour market needs by advising on the development and adjustment of course offerings, capacities and quality standards. Additionally, they help coordinate collaboration between schools and workplaces, support apprenticeship placements and provide input on how to improve the relevance and effectiveness of vocational training in their area.

### 2.1.2. Methods and tools

Denmark uses a range of tools and methodologies for skills anticipation, including skills assessments, forecasts and foresight analyses. Skills assessments are conducted by the Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment and regional labour market offices, with updates provided twice a year through the Labour Market Balance <sup>(17)</sup>. These assessments inform jobseekers and career

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<sup>(17)</sup> The Danish Labour Market Balance, launched in 2006 as part of a national strategy to monitor labour market trends, provides region-specific data on approximately 850 occupations. It is a key tool for public employment service professionals, enabling them to prioritise interventions and support jobseekers through informed career guidance. Widely used across Denmark, it is the primary source of labour market intelligence stemming from skills anticipation activities.

counsellors about regional, sectoral and occupational needs. Additionally, various forecasting models such as the DREAM model, which provides long-term national skill forecasts, and the Profile model, which estimates future educational attainment, help policymakers align education and training with labour market demands.

Supplementary data sources, such as the national employer survey, offer valuable insights into recruitment challenges and emerging skill shortages. Conducted twice a year, the survey covers around 20 000 companies and informs the Labour Market Balance. The Economic Council of the Labour Movement provides in-depth, long-term foresight analyses using administrative data and advanced modelling techniques. Further, the public employment service utilises big data, machine learning and web scraping to monitor skill trends in real time, ensuring that Denmark's skills anticipation activities remain responsive to dynamic labour market changes <sup>(18)</sup>.

## 2.2. Designing qualifications

In Denmark, VET qualifications are designed through a collaborative process involving the labour market, educational institutions and government authorities. The system ensures that VET qualifications align closely with labour market needs and offer flexible pathways for students.

The process of designing qualifications (e.g. industrial technician (*industritekniker*)) comprises four steps.

- (a) Step 1: identification of needs. Labour market representatives, trade committees or social partners identify a need for a new qualification or to update an existing one. An analysis of labour market trends and skill demands takes place.
- (b) Step 2: proposal development. The relevant trade committee (*Fagligt Udvalg*), consisting of employer and employee representatives, establishes the link with the Danish qualifications framework. Learning outcomes, skills and competencies are defined.
- (c) Step 3: consultation and feedback. The proposal drafted by the trade committee is shared with stakeholders (educational institutions, industry bodies and government agencies) for feedback. Adjustments are made based on input to ensure relevance and feasibility.
- (d) Step 4: approval process: The proposal is submitted to the Ministry of Children and Education for approval. Upon approval, the qualification is added to the national catalogue of VET programmes.

Another qualification component which is important in Danish VET is the optional subjects, which are part of the basic course (the basic course is divided into compulsory and optional subjects) and designed by local training committees in collaboration with VET institutions, ensuring that optional subjects align with local labour market needs and learners' interests.

## 2.3. Recognition of prior learning

### 2.3.1. Competence assessment of young people

A young VET learner will have their competences assessed within the first two weeks of starting a programme. The competence assessment, carried out by the college, should clarify what is required by the learner in relation to the education the learner wants and is based on previous education or employment. The goal is to ensure that the education programme that the college offers the learner allows them to start at the right level and to avoid duplicating education. The

<sup>(18)</sup> For more detailed information see Cedefop. (2023). [Skills anticipation in Denmark. Skills intelligence: data insights](#).

college should allow the competence assessment to be included in the preparation of the learner's individual education plan, so that the learner is credited with the relevant parts of the programme and thereby learning may be shortened.

### 2.3.2. Competence assessment for adults

Adults (25+) can have their competences assessed in relation to adult vocational programmes. In respect of short courses, this is an option known as individual competence assessment (*individuel kompetencevurdering*). Individual citizens have a right to this assessment and can even obtain financial compensation from the job centre for the time spent in this process, which takes between a half day and five days, provided by the relevant educational institution.

Recognition of prior learning results in an individual plan for education and a competence document listing formal qualifications, the individual's prior experiences and learning equivalents, or a course certificate, depending on the relevance and validity of their former experiences. When applying for adult vocational education, it is compulsory to have one's prior learning and experiences assessed before enrolment, which means that every adult above 25 years of age who intends to begin VET should participate in the recognition of prior learning process (*realkompetencevurdering*).

This process leads the participant to one of the three following learning options.

- (a) Adult vocational education 1 (EUV 1): the learner has at least two years of relevant workplace experience. This means that the practice-based periods of the course and its initial part / introductory basic programmes are left out (basic course (*grundforløb*) 1 (GF1)). In the case of mercantile vocational education, the primary part is included in the adult version;
- (b) Adult vocational education 2 (EUV 2): the learner has less than two years of relevant workplace experience. An education plan should be drawn up reflecting the participant's experiences, which will usually exclude the initial part and shorten the other parts;
- (c) Adult vocational education 3 (EUV 3): the learner has no relevant workplace experience. Adults should follow the same education plan as young people but without the initial part (GF1).

## 2.4. Quality assurance

Self-assessment remains the primary mechanism, but external monitoring is increasing in importance. Since the 1980s, a shift has taken place from detailed regulation of input to framework regulation of output. [The aim of output regulation is to increase the focus on results and quality so that institutional practices meet political objectives, including adaptation to the needs of regional and local business sectors for education and competence development](#) <sup>(19)</sup>:

Monitoring is conducted at the following two levels.

- (a) System level: the assessment addresses the effectiveness of the more than 100 different main programmes in terms of employment frequency among graduates. The education ministry then enters a dialogue with national trade committees about any programmes that are failing to reach their targets in order to assess their relevance in terms of labour market needs and possible steps for improvement.
- (b) Institutional level: at this level, monitoring can be divided into content monitoring and financial monitoring. The first concerns the degree to which a vocational college is providing its programmes in accordance with the legislative framework. The second monitors the college's compliance with budgetary constraints as laid down by the education ministry.

<sup>(19)</sup> The [Danish Agency for Education and Quality](#) supervises the academic quality of vocational education and training.

Completion, dropout and examination pass rates also form part of the quality appraisal of a vocational college. Within companies, the social partners supplement ministerial monitoring through national trade committees and local training committees, appraising the quality of graduates, curricula, apprenticeships within enterprises, etc.

Quality assurance mechanisms are also part of the validation process when it comes to including new qualifications in the Danish qualifications framework. Only officially recognised, validated and quality-assured programmes are included in the qualifications framework. Informal and non-formal learning are only recognised to the extent that they are formalised through the validation of prior learning corresponding to one of the included qualifications.

In terms of VET, trade committees (at the upper secondary level) and further education and training committees (adult VET) assess programmes and make recommendations for their placement in the framework, to be approved by the education ministry. For each educational field, guidelines have been produced to aid committees in making their assessments and these are quality-assured through consultations with independent experts. Procedures and criteria for including VET qualifications in the framework are the subject of an evaluation report compiled by the [Danish Evaluation Institute](#).

## CHAPTER 3.

# Promoting VET participation



## 3.1. Incentives for learners

### 3.1.1. Salaries for apprentices

Danish VET learners are entitled to receive financial support during their education and training. If the VET learner signs a contract with a company, he or she will receive a salary during the education and training period. The salary is from DKK 9 500 to 12 500 per month (EUR 1 275 to 1 675) and increases each year (Section 2.2.7).

If the VET learner does not have a contract with a company, he or she is entitled to receive financial support from the Danish learners' grants and loans scheme (*Statens Uddannelsesstøtte (SU)*) when the learner is enrolled in the basic course (GF1 and GF2).

If the learner is living with their parents, the monthly amount consists of a basic rate plus a possible supplement, depending on the income of the student's parents. The amount ranges from DKK 982 to 3 181 (EUR 132 to 427). If the learner is 20 years of age and is living away from their parents, the monthly amount is DKK 7 086 (EUR 950).

### 3.1.2. Loans and grants

A learner receiving financial support from the SU is also entitled to take out a loan with the SU. The monthly amount of the loan is normally DKK 3 625 (EUR 486). Loans must be repaid at 4% interest during the period of education and at the national discount rate of + 1% after finishing that period.

Participants of VET for adults (AMU) are entitled to a fixed allowance under the State grant system for adult training (*VEU-godtgørelse*). In 2025, the amount available is DKK 4 867 (EUR 653) per week, corresponding to the maximum unemployment insurance benefit rate. As most participants are employed and receive a full salary during the training period, this allowance is mainly paid to employers as partial reimbursement of wages. As with apprenticeship training (EUD), expenditure for the allowances is covered by the Employer's Reimbursement Fund (AUB), to which all enterprises contribute a fixed amount regardless of their level of participation in adult education and continuing training activities.

Participants may also receive a transport allowance and financial support for board and lodging covered by the national Employer's Reimbursement Fund (AUB) if programmes are offered at a considerable distance from the participant's home.

## 3.2. Incentives for training companies

### 3.2.1. Employer's Reimbursement Fund (AUB)

All employers, both public and private, pay a sum into the national Employers' Reimbursement Fund (or Employers' Reimbursement System) (AUB), regardless of whether they provide apprenticeship placements. This fund finances VET for both young people and adults (AMU).

From 2025, all employers are obliged to pay an annual contribution of DKK 3 590 (EUR 481) per full-time employee. These funds are then allocated to workplaces that take in apprentices so that they do not bear the cost of training alone. These employers receive reimbursement for wages paid during apprentices' periods of college-based training. A tripartite agreement of August 2016 has launched new incentives for Danish companies wishing to enter more contracts with apprentices. The overall goal is to establish 10 000 new contracts by 2025. [The agreement was renewed in 2020.](#)

### 3.2.2. Fines and incentives for companies

Companies that fail to sign the necessary number of contracts must pay a fine of DKK 27 000 (EUR 3 620) for each missing contract relative to the size of the company <sup>(20)</sup>. On the other hand, companies that meet the standard number of contracts will receive a 7.4% higher refund from the Employer's Reimbursement Fund (AUB) to motivate them to sign the expected number of contracts. However, the consequences of the law in this area have also been affected by the special circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many companies have had difficulties in complying with the law.

In 2020 the [Tripartite agreement to ensure more apprenticeships in Danish VET](#) reserved DKK 5.4 million (EUR 726 000) for initiatives to establish more apprenticeships. In 2021, the government earmarked DKK 220 million (EUR 29 million) and DKK 80 million (EUR 10 million) yearly to increase the reimbursement of companies when apprentices are in school. The agreement is financed through the AUB.

In some Danish regions, public employers have laid down rules concerning the involvement of private companies in projects, stressing that the company cannot be engaged if the number of apprentices is below the standard.

### 3.2.3. Wage compensation scheme

Among the incentives promoting companies' interest in having their low-skilled workers participate in adult vocational education is the wage compensation scheme. Companies are partly compensated for the wages they pay to their employees who are participating in education at a rate, in 2025, of DKK 4 867 (EUR 652) a week, equivalent to the highest level of unemployment benefit.

## 3.3. Guidance and counselling

The Danish education system emphasises supplying high-quality guidance services at all levels to help students make informed educational and vocational choices. Career education begins in grade 1, with formal guidance starting in grade 7. Responsibility for guidance is shared between schools and municipal youth guidance units, while Study and Career Guidance Denmark supports students transitioning from upper secondary to higher education or vocational training. Three main types of guidance units operate independently of institutional interests: around 60 municipal youth guidance centres (*Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning*) assist students transitioning from compulsory to upper secondary education or the labour market, Study and Career Guidance Denmark supports transitions to higher education, and eGuidance (*eVejledning*) provides virtual guidance for all education levels.

Additionally, Denmark has two national guidance portals. The [Education Guide](#) ([ug.dk](#)) offers comprehensive information on education, training, professions and labour market opportunities, while the [Adult Education portal](#) ([voksenuddannelse.dk](#)) provides details on vocational training, continuing education and financial support. These resources ensure that learners and adults receive the necessary information to make well-informed educational and career decisions <sup>(21)</sup>.

<sup>(20)</sup> The necessary number of apprenticeship contracts per company is determined by the Employers' Reimbursement Fund (AUB). It is a ratio which depends on the economic sector of the company and on the total wage expense of the company (however norms by AUB may change from year to year). For example, based on 2024 data and norms, the expected number of apprentices per EUR 1 340 780 (DKK 10 000 000) are as follows: construction = 2.5–3.0 apprentices; industry (production, smiths, etc.) = 1.8–2.5 apprentices; retail = 1.0–1.5 apprentices; information technology and office = 0.5–1.0 apprentices; accounting and law = 0.5–0.1 apprentices.

<sup>(21)</sup> Please see [Guidance and outreach for inactive and unemployed – Denmark national report](#); Cedefop's [Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices – Denmark](#); Cedefop's [Labour market information toolkit](#).

### 3.4. Challenges and development opportunities

Low participation in VET contributes to persisting labour market shortages. As in many countries, VET has an image problem in Denmark, and this translates partly to a low participation rate in relation to the EU average. Denmark identifies in its national implementation plan as a challenge the attractiveness of VET and particularly the need to have more students choosing VET immediately after completing lower secondary education. However, the large age gap in EUD programmes is considered a major deterring factor for students to choose it directly after completing compulsory education (Reform Commission, 2023) <sup>(22)</sup>. An additional factor that can be related to the low participation issue is the high dropout of learners from VET which results in a completion rate below the national target by 2025 (67%). Raising the attractiveness of AMU programmes, especially in energy-intensive sectors, remains a challenge (European Commission, 2023a). To raise the attractiveness of VET the government is allocating substantial funds to VET (ReferNet Denmark & Cedefop, 2023; European Commission, 2024b), expanding policies like the option for more learners to [take up electives in VET](#) in lower secondary education and setting up permanent initiatives like the [role models in VET](#) initiative (Cedefop, & ReferNet, 2025).

Preparing training and education for the green and digital transitions. In 2020, the Danish Climate Act was adopted, putting in place ambitious greenhouse gas emission targets. However, the labour shortages across the country persist and projections estimate a shortfall of 70 000 workers in 2035 compared to 2022 in sectors related to the twin green and digital transition. In this respect, the established [knowledge centres](#) and the newly established [climate VET centres](#) could improve VET education. Moreover, schemes like the one under which unemployed people can receive [110% of the unemployment support](#) if they participate in a training session for a profession that is included in the 'positive list' of professions with the most acute labour and skills shortages can address skills shortages. Finally, in 2024 the [agreement](#) between the government and all the parliament parties earmarked around EUR 67 million (DK 500 million) to training, upskilling and equipment <sup>(23)</sup>.

Retaining students in education and training, especially NEETs and adults without an upper secondary education qualification, and raising the level of basic skills remains a challenge. There's a relatively high proportion of young adults with low educational attainment in Denmark and this negatively affects their ability to undertake VET (OECD, 2024a). Although the level of NEETs aged 15–29 has been rather stable since 2018 (at 8.6% in 2023, below the EU-27 average of 11.2%), there are still around 43 000 young Danes not in employment or education (European Commission, 2024b) <sup>(24)</sup>. Education underperformance is also a challenge as low-skilled people find it harder to adapt to an ever-changing skills landscape and it is more likely that they don't even finish lower secondary education or upper secondary education <sup>(25)</sup>.

<sup>(22)</sup> The average VET student starts the basic course of a VET programme at an age of 24 years and only 2 out of 10 students start VET directly after lower secondary education (Reform Commission, 2023; OECD, 2024).

<sup>(23)</sup> This agreement has various aspects. Although it also covers matters such as mobility and is expected to enhance VET attractiveness the aspects that specifically target green transition are relevant to investments in green equipment for vocational schools in specific areas, the continuing education of VET teachers and the allocation of funds for continuing education and upskilling (Ministry of Children and Education, 2024).

<sup>(24)</sup> In the Danish context, what is of interest is the rate of NEETs of the 15–24 age group. This percentage reached 15% in 2022 (OECD, 2024).

<sup>(25)</sup> 20% of pupils do not reach minimum standards in mathematics and reading skills. These underperformance gaps are linked to socioeconomic and migrant backgrounds, and gender. (European Commission, 2024a, European Commission 2024b)

The [basic preparatory education \(FGU\) programmes](#), introduced in 2019, provide an opportunity to prepare those under 25 to carry out either VET or other youth education or enter employment (OECD, 2024) <sup>(26)</sup>. Moreover, the Danish government has allocated DKK 55 million (EUR 7.3 million) yearly from 2026 onwards to improve incentives for the employment of vulnerable young people (European Commission, 2024b) and the 2024 political agreement on a strengthened primary and lower secondary education includes measures aiming to address the underperformance in basic skills (Ministry of Children and Education, 2024b) <sup>(27)</sup>.

**The shortage of VET teachers remains a challenge.** There are shortages of qualified teachers at all levels of education (European Commission, 2024b; European Commission 2024c, European Commission. DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2024). It remains a major challenge to train enough teachers and improve continuous professional development and working conditions for them. The 2024 political agreement on a strengthened primary and lower secondary includes some initiatives aiming to support the skills of teaching staff combined with other initiatives that support VET teachers' upskilling and reskilling, i.e. the [2024 agreement on more skilled workers for the green transition](#), which allocates around EUR 12 million over a four year period for the continuing training of VET teachers in relation to skills needed for the green transition (Ministry of Children and Education, 2024a).

More information about VET policies is available on Cedefop's [timeline of VET policies in Europe](#).

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<sup>(26)</sup> The national target is to have 90% of young people under the age of 25 with an upper secondary education (either general or vocational) qualification. See especially page 13 of the national implementation plan (European Commission. (n.d.). [National Implementation plans for the 2020 Council Recommendation on VET and Osnabrück Declaration](#)). The European target for the participation of adults in lifelong learning by 2030 is 60%.

<sup>(27)</sup> With the agreement, which consists of a total of 33 initiatives, approximately EUR 99 million (DKK 740 million) will be allocated annually to strengthen primary and lower secondary schools. One of the initiatives contains as a provision the intensive teaching of Danish and mathematics.

# Abbreviations

|       |                                                                                                                    |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AGU   | <i>almen grunduddannelse</i><br>[general basic education]                                                          |
| AMU   | <i>arbejdsmarkedsuddannelser</i><br>[adult vocational training programmes]                                         |
| AUB   | <i>Arbejdsgivernes Uddannelsesbidrag</i><br>[Employers' Reimbursement Fund / Employers' Reimbursement System]      |
| AVU   | <i>almen voksenuddannelse</i><br>[general adult education]                                                         |
| CVET  | continuing vocational education and training                                                                       |
| ECTS  | European credit transfer and accumulation system                                                                   |
| EGU   | <i>erhvervsgrunduddannelse</i><br>[basic vocational education]                                                     |
| EU    | European Union                                                                                                     |
| EUD   | <i>erhvervsuddannelse</i><br>[vocational upper secondary education and training]                                   |
| EQF   | European qualifications framework                                                                                  |
| EUV   | <i>erhvervsuddannelse for voksne</i><br>[vocational upper secondary education and training for adults]             |
| EUX   | <i>erhvervsuddannelse med gymnasial eksamen</i><br>[combined vocational and general upper secondary education]     |
| FGU   | <i>forberedende grunduddannelse</i><br>[basic education and training programme]                                    |
| FVU   | <i>forberedende voksenundervisning</i><br>[preparatory adult education]                                            |
| GDP   | gross domestic product                                                                                             |
| GF    | <i>grundforløb</i><br>[basic course]                                                                               |
| HF    | <i>højere forberedelseksamen</i><br>[higher preparatory examination]                                               |
| HF-e  | <i>højere forberedelseksamen enkeltfag</i><br>[higher preparatory examination single subject programme for adults] |
| ICT   | information and communications technology                                                                          |
| ISCED | international standard classification of education                                                                 |
| KVU   | <i>erhvervsakademiuddannelser</i><br>[short-cycle higher education programmes]                                     |
| NCE   | Danish Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training                                             |
| OECD  | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development                                                             |
| PGU   | <i>produktionsgrunduddannelse</i><br>[basic production education]                                                  |

|     |                                                                                                        |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| STU | <i>særligt tilrettelagt ungdomsuddannelse</i><br>[youth education for young people with special needs] |
| SU  | <i>Statens Uddannelsesstøtte</i><br>[Danish State educational grant and loan scheme]                   |
| VET | vocational education and training                                                                      |
| VVU | <i>videregående voksenuddannelse</i><br>[further vocational adult education]                           |
| WBL | work-based learning                                                                                    |

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# Vocational education and training in Denmark

## Short description

This short description provides an overview of vocational education and training (VET) in Denmark, highlighting its structure, distinctive features, key developments and challenges. Denmark's VET system is characterised by a strong dual approach, combining school-based education with work-based learning, and benefits from close cooperation between VET providers and social partners.

VET is offered at upper secondary and higher education levels, for young people and adults, supporting the principle of lifelong learning. Efforts to make VET attractive include well-structured apprenticeship models, flexible learning options and pathways to higher education. Denmark also integrates green and digital skills into VET curricula to align with the country's twin transition goals and labour market needs.

The system is governed by the Ministry of Children and Education, with shared responsibility among national and local stakeholders. A robust quality assurance framework, strong emphasis on guidance and counselling, and comprehensive skills intelligence mechanisms support effective policymaking and learner progression.

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