

# Four years on – stay focused

From Copenhagen to Helsinki

**Progress in modernising  
vocational education  
and training**

# Four years on

Lisbon  
Copenhagen  
Maastricht  
Helsinki

The Lisbon European Council in 2000 called on Member States to modernise their education and training systems, to make Europe more competitive and help create more and better jobs. The joint effort of Member States, EEA/EFTA and candidate countries, European social partners and the European Commission to develop their vocational education and training (VET) policies started in Copenhagen in 2002. The Maastricht communiqué (2004) defined priorities for VET at national and European level.

Despite substantial progress, the vision of a Europe with highly skilled people, flexible and adaptable workforce, with a high degree of social inclusion, is far from being realised. However, all are working closer than ever to a shared European VET policy agenda, which is inspiring policies, reforms, strategic approaches and common European tools for VET.

## Progress is being made together on:

EQF/NQF and  
quality go  
hand in hand

Emphasising  
learning outcomes

Tools for European  
citizens

- a European qualifications framework (EQF), based on learning outcomes, to make it easier to compare and transfer qualifications in different sectors across Europe. The EQF is setting the trend for developing national qualifications frameworks (NQF) to improve transparency, permeability, access and progression and promote parity of esteem between VET and general/academic education. EQF and NQF require quality assurance to promote trust in the value of learning outcomes;
- a common understanding on quality assurance in VET. Several countries recommend applying the Common quality assurance framework (CQAF);
- moving to learning outcomes and competences (rather than duration and location of learning) to set objectives and standards for VET and design curricula, thus shifting the focus to the needs of the learners;
- making systems more flexible by validating non-formal and informal learning (combining skills and competences acquired in schools, at work and other life situations);
- a European credit system for VET (ECVET) to make it easier for people to transfer and accumulate learning outcomes;
- Europass to make an individual's qualifications visible and help recognise skills and experience acquired outside formal learning;
- improving guidance and counselling, in particular to provide personalised services for adults marginalised from learning;
- improving efficiency of training investment and encouraging companies and individuals to invest in learning through incentives, e.g. training funds, tax relief, vouchers;
- promoting equity by encouraging those at risk of social and labour market exclusion to stay in or return to learning;
- combining working and learning, e.g. by apprenticeships or alternate schemes at secondary and tertiary level to achieve both excellence and inclusion.



Source: European Commission,  
DG Education and Culture, 2005

# Challenges

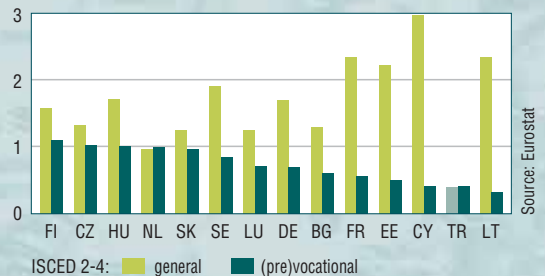
## VET teachers and trainers

Attracting or retaining VET teachers and trainers – the major drivers of change – is difficult in some countries. People in the profession are getting older, but receive little support to cope with more varied responsibilities. There appear few rights, obligations or other incentives to promote their continuing development. For trainers in enterprises, few countries require specific entry qualifications or pedagogical competence.

## Investment in VET

Data available for the first time show public expenditure on (pre) vocational programmes ranges from 0.3 to 1.1 % of GDP. Countries tap EU funds to complement their funding to achieve many VET objectives. Budgetary constraints make them strive for more efficient investment and ways to share costs with individuals and enterprises.

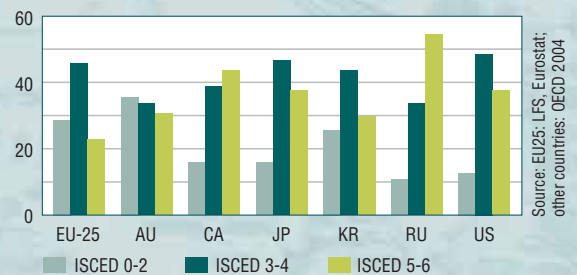
**Total public expenditure on education and training as % of GDP at secondary level, by programme orientation, 2003**



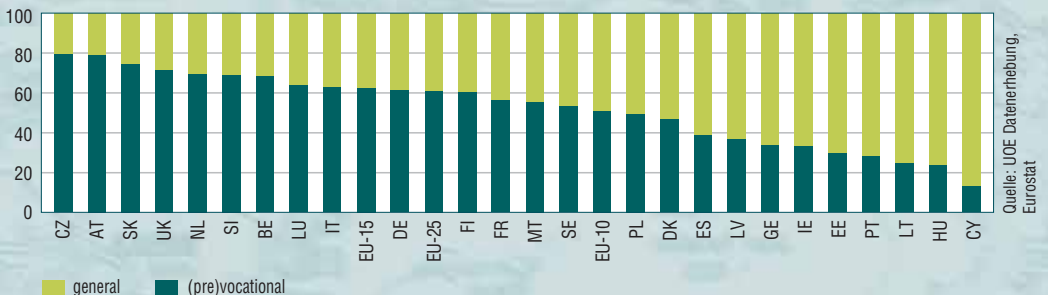
## VET – present and future

The proportion of low skilled people in the EU – 72 million, 30 % of the working age population in 2005 – is considerably higher than in countries like Canada, Japan, Russia and the USA. Considerable challenges remain for the EU to raise the skill level of the population and strengthen work-related skills acquired in VET not least through validating non-formal learning.

**Educational attainment of the adult population (25-64 year-olds) by highest level of education attained, 2005**



**Students in general and (pre)vocational programmes as a percentage of all students at ISCED 3, 2004**



■ general ■ (pre)vocational

**The forgotten change agents**

**Financing**

**Staying competitive**

**The majority opts for VET**

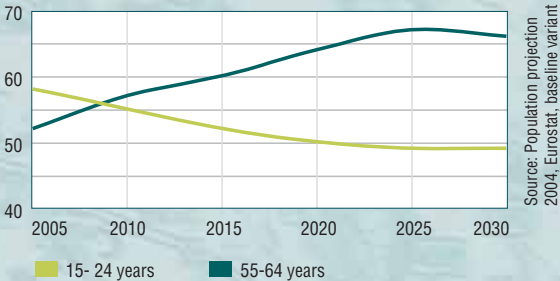
# Challenges

## Demographic time bomb

If participation rates remain unchanged, the number of students in VET (ISCED 3-5) will fall by 2 million by 2030. This has serious implications for training institutions, teacher and trainer requirements and the number of young talents with intermediate skills entering the labour market.

Around 2009, the number of young people aged 15-24 will fall below those aged 55-64. The future labour market will rely increasingly on older workers and immigrants.

Population in EU-25 aged 15-24 and 55-64, 2005-2030 (in million)



But participation in learning drops substantially with age. Learning deficits are piling up.

Participation in LLL in % by age groups, 2005, EU-25

| Age group          | 25-29 | 30-34 | 35-39 | 40-44 | 45-49 | 50-54 | 55-59 | 60-64 | Total (25-64) | Benchmark for 2010 |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------------|--------------------|
| Participation rate | 21.4  | 13.3  | 11.5  | 10.5  | 9.0   | 7.5   | 6.0   | 3.6   | 10.7          | 12.5               |

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

# Conclusions

**The priorities to modernise VET remain valid - we must stay focused and reinforce efforts to consolidate and build on achievements so far.**

## Stay focused

### **Continue to:**

- establish the EQF and NQFs related to learning outcomes;
- develop Europass certificate supplements which inform on learning outcomes in VET;
- develop validation of non-formal and informal learning as a centrepiece of lifelong learning using the 10 common European principles agreed on in 2004;
- improve quality assurance and encourage implementing the CQAF;

### **... adequately invest in VET**

- assess costs and benefits of different types of education and training to design better targeted and more effective policy and increase efficiency and equity;
- make the benefits of VET visible. Better understanding of them can improve policy efficiency and foster investment in learning;
- evaluate effectiveness of funding mechanisms and design measures to encourage cost-sharing between stakeholders;

### **... improve older workers' lifelong learning**

- increase awareness of the value of older workers' skills. Encourage them to share knowledge and experience with younger people;
- develop age sensitive guidance and targeted continuing training opportunities at the workplace;

### **... support teacher and trainer development**

- recognise their value as change agents in VET to attract and retain highly qualified and committed teachers and trainers;
- validate and reward different professional experiences and improve opportunities and incentives for continuing development;

### **... coordinate with other policy areas**

- develop shared policies with other ministries, social partners, sectoral bodies and others, as VET links education with employment, economic and social policies.

### **We need to know more**

To make the right decisions, VET policy-makers need to know what works. We need:

- more, more accurate and more reliable statistical data and evidence from research on VET (e.g. on outcomes, investment, teachers and trainers);
- comprehensive initiatives to identify and anticipate skill needs;
- research to evaluate policy impact and prepare VET for future challenges.

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## Progress in modernising vocational education and training

– 8020 EN –

### Sources:

- Directors-general for vocational education and training, 2006
- Descy, P; Tessaring, M. *Fourth report on vocational education and training research: background report*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities (forthcoming)

### Further information:

[www.trainingvillage.gr/policyanalysis](http://www.trainingvillage.gr/policyanalysis)

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/vocational\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/vocational_en.html)



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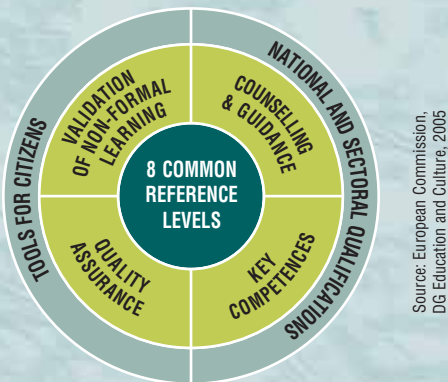
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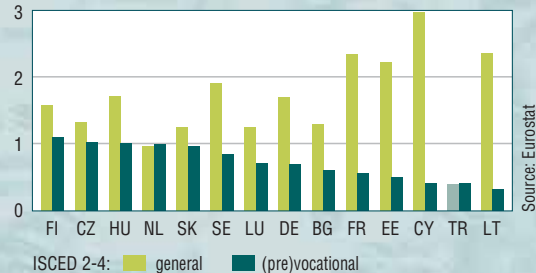
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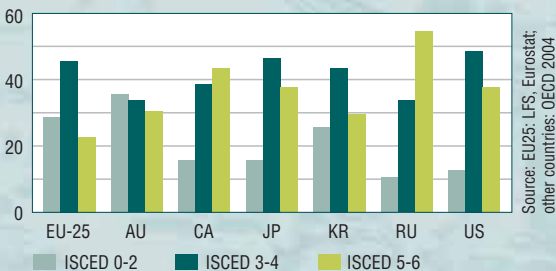
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Over the past few years, participation rates in VET have remained relatively stable, at 60 % of learners at upper secondary level (ISCED 3) and 90 % of those at post-secondary level (ISCED 4). However, participation varies significantly between countries, from nearly 80 % to below 15 % at ISCED 3.

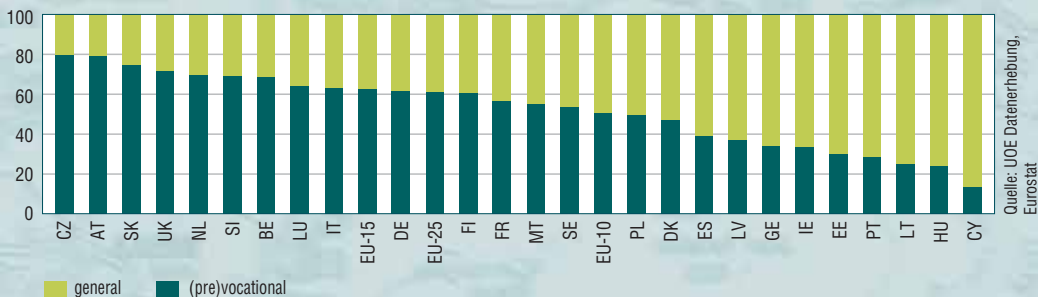
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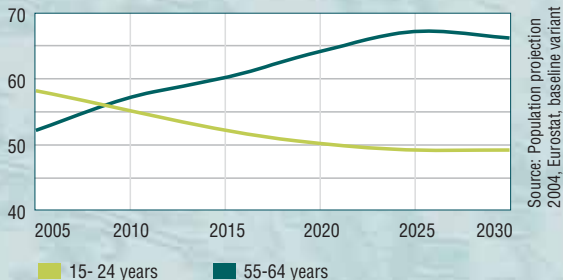
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