



spotlight on VET MALTA

VET in Malta

Overall responsibility for vocational education and training (VET) in Malta lies with the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE). The Ministry of Tourism is in charge of VET for the tourism sector. The two main state providers – the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS) – are self-accrediting institutions offering VET free of charge. The number of private VET providers has been increasing.

To implement the 2014-24 education strategy, which highlights the role of VET in increasing effectiveness and quality and in fostering inclusion and progression, reform of the legal framework is underway. It will lead to a new education act covering main principles, a dedicated regulatory act, and standalone acts governing MCAST and ITS.

VET is available from the compulsory, lower secondary level (locally called secondary education) onwards. Following successful pilots, from 2015 all compulsory education students aged 14 to 16 have the option to select two VET subjects among agribusiness, hospitality, IT, health/social care and engineering. They stimulate learner awareness and interest in VET at an early stage and aid progression. After leaving compulsory education, one in three 17-year-olds is in VET.

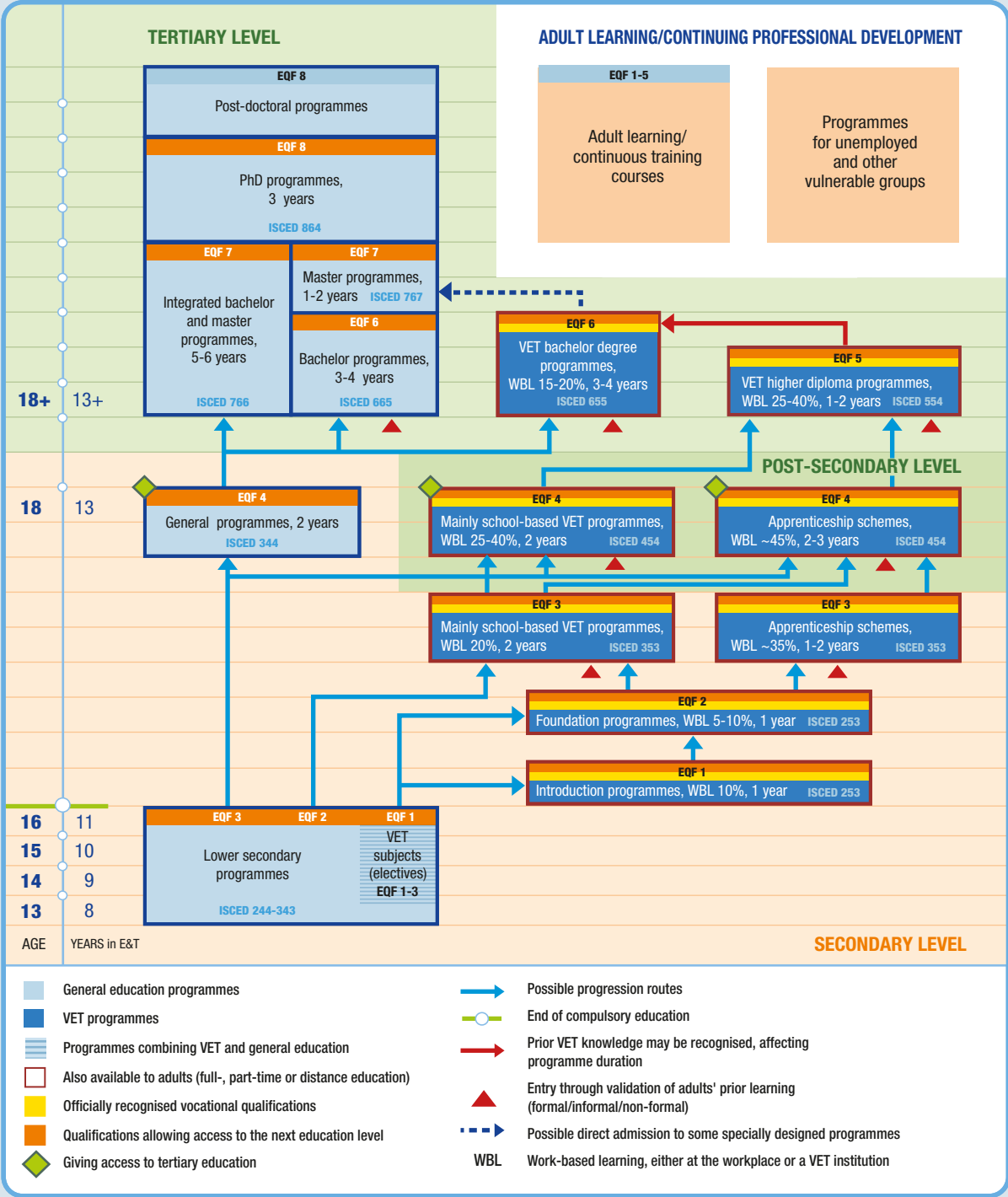
The Maltese qualifications framework (MQF) sets the overall parameters for VET programmes at EQF level 1 to 5 in terms of distribution of key competences (decreasing with level), sector skills and theory (both increasing with level). At these levels, the following VET programmes are available:

- for those without a qualification: introduction and foundation certificate programmes including work experience (ISCED-P 253; leading to EQF level 1,2) giving access to programmes at the next EQF level in same field. The most popular fields of study are manufacturing and construction, and arts and humanities;
- two-year college-based programmes (ISCED-P 353; leading to EQF level 3) for foundation certificate holders and those with an EQF level 2 compulsory education qualification. They include some work-based learning and give access to programmes at the next level. Most graduates finish with a qualification in ICT, health and welfare or business, administration and law;

- one- to two-year apprenticeship schemes (ISCED-P 353; leading to EQF level 3) following foundation programmes. Contracts between learners, employers and MCAST govern the schemes. The amount of workplace learning is not regulated, varies by field of study and is set by the college. Apprentices receive remuneration for the on-the-job training from employers and a stipend from the government;
- EQF level 4 (ISCED-P 454) programmes (college-based, two years; apprenticeship schemes, two to three years) for learners with a general or VET EQF level 3 qualification. Some programmes can be followed either college-based or on apprenticeship;
- two-year college-based programmes leading to a VET higher diploma (ISCED-P 554, EQF level 5). Higher VET also includes three- to four-year bachelor programmes (ISCED 655, leading to EQF level 6) which open up progression opportunities to selected academic master programmes. Among 2014/15 VET bachelor degree graduates more than 60% completed an arts and humanities or ICT programme and 13% worked their way up from foundation programmes. Holders of a VET higher diploma (equivalent to a degree after the first two years of a university programme) meeting entry requirements can enter the third year of VET bachelor programmes. ITS students with an EQF level 5 qualification can pursue a bachelor degree in tourism at the University of Malta. VET degree programmes are also provided by the university's department of nursing.

Continuing VET is mainly provided by MEDE's Directorate for Life Long Learning, MCAST and ITS. Most courses are part-time and take place in the evening. Although the awards they lead to are not full qualifications, the MQF allows them to be rated at EQF levels 1 to 5, with the aim of valuing all learning. Jobsplus, the public employment service, mainly targets adult learning at the unemployed. Maturity clauses allow adult learners to enter MCAST and University of Malta programmes. Interviews (and in some cases a written test) are used to assess prior knowledge and experience.

VET in Malta's education and training system



Distinctive features of VET

Stakeholders strongly support VET. The Chamber for Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, the Malta Employers' Association and the unions are involved and sit on the boards of state VET providers. Many employers promote apprenticeships, with dialogue between VET providers and industry as a key feature in qualification design.

Developing excellence in VET and higher education through research, effective licensing, programme accreditation, quality assurance and recognition of qualifications has been entrusted to a single institution established in 2013: the National Commission for Further and Higher Education. The commission acts as a broker between the government and VET and higher education institutions, encourages stakeholder dialogue, and oversees the implementation of the MQF.

Malta was the first EU country to reference its qualifications framework to the EQF and the QF-EHEA in 2009. The MQF has been a catalyst for moving from previously used British qualifications to national qualifications and has become widely used in education and training and the labour market. Its development has gone hand-in-hand with strengthening the quality culture in VET, evidencing its value as a systemic tool and a sound basis for skill validation. The recent establishment of several sector skills units is another step towards fostering quality, enabling designing occupational standards, acknowledging non-formal and informal learning in more sectors, and setting standards for VET providers.

Forecasting skill needs is essential for evidence-based policy but also challenging, as one sectoral investment may cause substantial economic shifts. Skills intelligence is gradually developing, with recent initiatives expanding the evidence base and helping VET providers better meet labour market needs. The 2015 employability index and graduate tracer study led to more insights on the transition of VET learners to the labour market and informs education and career choices. In 2016, Jobsplus, NCFHE and Malta Enterprise launched a skills survey among employers to map their current and future skill needs.

Challenges and policy responses

Skills shortages are experienced because of population ageing, low unemployment and strong economic growth driven by tourism and trade and emerging sectors such as i-gaming, financial services, legal and accounting services and aircraft maintenance. Employers already face difficulties recruiting skilled workers in the healthcare, financial and ICT sectors and frequently rely on foreign workers to meet their needs. The focus of VET and employment policies is to increase skilled workforce supply by helping more young people complete education or training – and make a successful transition to a job – and to increase employment among inactive ageing people. New legislation strengthening the regulation of apprenticeship and work-based learning – spearheaded by Cedefop's apprenticeship review – is part of the measures.

Early school leaving from education and training (ESL) has decreased faster than in many other countries, but at 19.8% in 2015 it is still the second highest in the EU. Measures to reduce it include a national 10% ESL target, to be achieved by 2020, a strategic prevention plan, launched in 2014, and strengthened coordination and progress monitoring in the education and employment ministry. New second chance options, including work-based learning, have been established and support for teachers has increased.

Introducing vocational subjects in lower secondary education has also been an important step in preventing ESL by providing alternative learning pathways, but the current system is still mainly one-size-fits-all and lacks parity of esteem between traditional/academic and vocational/applied learning tracks. The reform planned for 2019/20 intends to make learning more inclusive, flexible and without dead-ends, to give more young people opportunities to develop employability and skills for personal and social development.

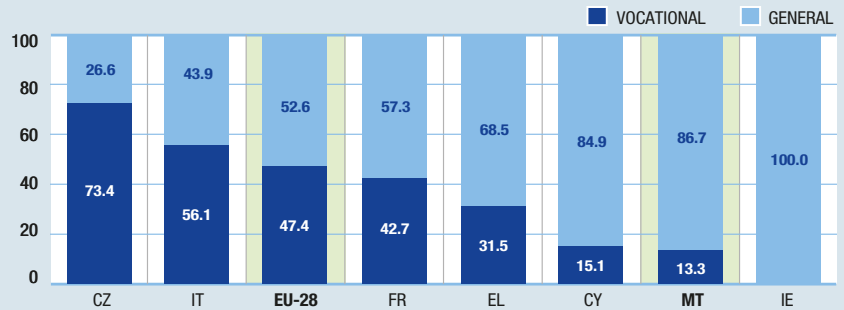
Stepping up participation in lifelong learning, which is far below the EU 2020 target, is a government priority. The national LLL strategy 2020, adopted in 2014, paves the way for empowering people through more personalised and innovative learning approaches. Recently introduced, free of charge online modules at MCAST expand the learning offer. A national skills council has been set up to develop and coordinate new initiatives aimed at creating better conditions and incentives for lifelong learning.



Education and training in figures

Upper secondary students (ISCED 2011 level 3) enrolled in vocational and general programmes

% of all students in upper secondary education, 2014



NB: 47.4% is the provisional weighted EU average for 2014 based on available country data (27 countries).

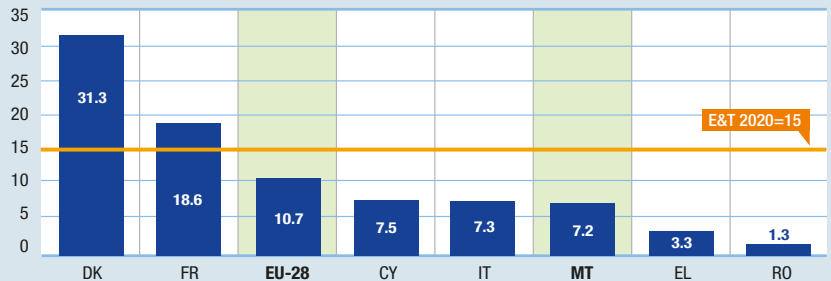
A significant volume of VET learners in Malta are not considered here as they take part in ISCED level 4 programmes.

While there are programmes with a vocational dimension in Ireland at ISCED level 3, these are considered general programmes.

Source: Cedefop calculations, based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 30.9.2016.

Lifelong learning

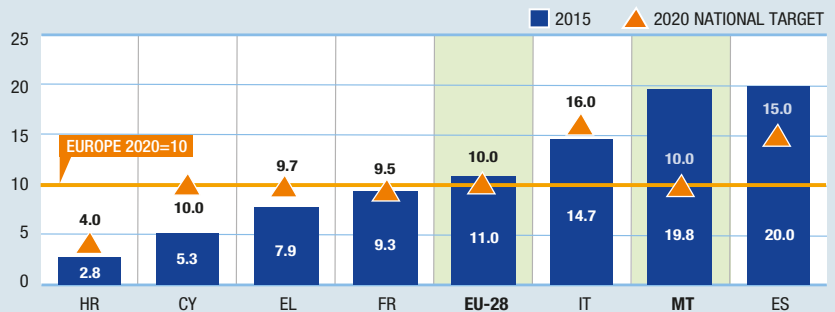
% of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2015



Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 30.9.16.

Early leavers from education and training

% of early leavers from education and training, 2015

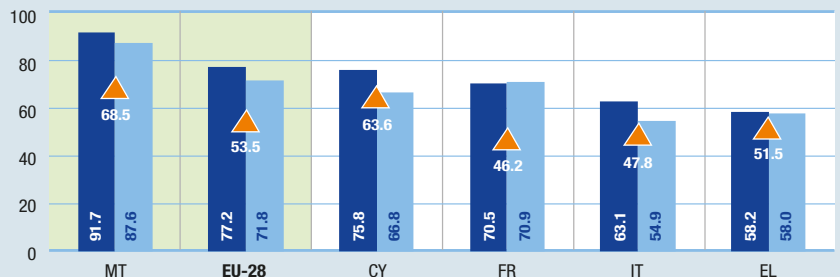


NB: Low reliability in HR; definition for national target differs in ES.

Source: Eurostat labour force survey, date of extraction 30.9.2016.

Employment rates of young graduates

% of 20 to 34 year olds no longer in education and training, 2015



■ Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4) – vocational

■ Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4) – general

▲ Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2)

Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 14.10.16.



Further information

- Cedefop (2017). *Vocational education and training in Malta: short description*. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4151>
- Cedefop (2015). *Apprenticeship review: Malta. In pursuit of quality and relevance: revitalising apprenticeship*. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4139>
- Eurydice (2016). Malta: overview. In European Commission (ed.). *Eurypedia*. <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Malta:Overview>
- Ministry for Education and Employment (2015). *Employability index 2015*. <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/resources/publication-statistics-mt-mt-en-gb/publications/research-publications/employability-index-report>
- Ministry for Finance (2016). *National reform programme*. <https://mfin.gov.mt/en/Library/Documents/NRP/NRP2016.pdf>
- National Commission for Further and Higher Education (2016). *Referencing report: referencing the Malta qualifications framework (MQF) to the European qualifications framework (EQF) and the qualifications framework of the European higher education area (QF/EHEA)*. Fourth revised edition. <https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Referencing%20Report/Referencing%20Report%202016.pdf>
- National Commission for Further and Higher Education, Malta Enterprise, Erasmus+, and Jobsplus (2016). *National employee skills survey*. <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/content/national-employee-skills-survey-malta>
- National Commission for Further and Higher Education (2016). *Graduate tracer study: final report*. <https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/research/Documents/Graduate%20Tracer%20Study/Graduate%20Tracer%20Study.pdf>
- National Commission for Further and Higher Education (2016). *Further and higher education statistics 2014-15*. <http://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/research/Documents/Further%20and%20Higher%20Education%20Statistics/Further%20and%20Higher%20Education%20Statistics%20Report%202014-2015.pdf>

www.education.gov.mt	Ministry for Education for Education and Employment
www.lifelonglearning.gov.mt	Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Early School Leavers
www.ncfhe.org.mt	National Commission for Further and Higher Education
www.jobsplus.gov.mt	JobsPlus (Public employment service)
www.nso.gov.mt	National Statistics Office
www.um.edu.mt/matsec	Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate Examinations Board
www.mcast.edu.mt	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
www.its.edu.mt	Institute of Tourism Studies
www.eupa.org.mt	European Union Programmes Agency
www.refernet.org.mt	ReferNet Malta

This Spotlight is based on input from ReferNet Malta.

