



# Vocational education and training in Spain

## 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.

Cedefop was originally established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75. This decision was repealed in 2019 by Regulation (EU) 2019/128 establishing Cedefop as a Union Agency with a renewed mandate.

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# Foreword

Spain holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second semester of 2023. While the COVID-19 pandemic seems a thing of the past, the war in Ukraine drags on and global uncertainty persists, making resilience more necessary than ever.

We are in the final stretch of the European institutional cycle, less than a year before the European Parliament elections scheduled for May 2024, and the subsequent appointment of a new Commission. We should intensify efforts to deliver on the objectives set out in the European strategic pillars to boost competitiveness and citizens' wellbeing, such as the digital and green transitions, and the social agenda.

In our journey towards a more resilient, sustainable and fairer Europe, vocational education and training (VET) is essential to address the challenges of technological, economic and environmental developments for the labour market, skills and jobs. The importance of an efficient and effective VET system cannot be overstated. The ability to bridge the gap between education and employment is crucial for individuals and societies alike, fostering economic growth, social mobility and the development of a skilled workforce. Spain is a good example of a country that has recognised the importance of a comprehensive system in meeting the evolving needs of its workforce, putting in place a wide range of measures to respond to these challenges.

While VET was not highly regarded in the past in Spain, it is now flourishing thanks to the reforms and investments of the authorities. A clear example is Organic Law No 3/2022 on VET, which will be implemented progressively from the 2023/24 academic year.

The new VET model designed by this Law facilitates the accumulation, capitalisation and recognition of learning acquired in different settings, opens the doors to micro-credentials linked to the national qualifications system, and boosts dual VET by defining two placement regimes in real work environments. In an era of increasing digitalisation and automation, the need for continuous learning and upskilling has never been more pressing. This VET model, with its focus on practical training and adaptability to the evolving labour market, provides a critical pathway for individuals to engage in lifelong learning and remain competitive in the job market.

The Spanish VET system comprises a well-structured and cohesive network of education institutions, industry partnerships, and quality assurance mechanisms. At its core are two main strands: vocational training in the education system and workforce training in the context of active labour market policies, known as training for employment. Both areas receive substantial public funding, with regional authorities playing an important role in their implementation. The social partners play an active role both in the design of qualifications and in the governance of the system, particularly in the context of active labour market policies.

The Spanish VET system features several key characteristics that contribute to its success. It offers a wide range of vocational programmes across diverse industries, ensuring that learners have access to a variety of career pathways. It also places great emphasis on practical training, enabling students to acquire hands-on experience and develop industry-specific skills. It promotes close collaboration between education institutions and employers, through work-based learning programmes, apprenticeships, and internships, seeking to facilitate a smooth transition from education to the labour market.

The VET system has established a strong foundation for equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary for successful careers. However, there is always room for improvement and innovation to meet the changing dynamics of the labour market. By continuously addressing challenges and leveraging its strengths, the Spanish VET system can continue to serve as an example for other countries seeking to enhance their VET systems.

This short description, drawn up in close cooperation with Cedefop's national ReferNet partner, aims to offer to a wider European public an insight into Spain's VET, its distinctive features and challenges. We hope that this publication will promote cooperation in VET among Member States, inform discussions on its future, foster learner and teacher mobility, and be useful for policy-makers, researchers, VET providers and other readers across and beyond Europe. This publication is part of a series of publications produced by Cedefop for the EU countries holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union <sup>(1)</sup>.

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*Executive Director*

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for VET and qualifications*

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<sup>(1)</sup> In addition to this short description, the flyer *Spotlight on VET* (Cedefop, 2023) and an animated video, presenting the national VET system, are published for each country holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.



## Acknowledgements

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# Spain



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|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Area                       | 505 983 km <sup>2</sup> (INE, 2023)  |
| Capital                    | Madrid   |
| System of government       | <b>Spain is a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. The Prime Minister is the head of Government which exercises the executive power; the monarch is the Head of State (2).</b> |
| Population (2022)          | 47 432 893 <sup>(3)</sup>  |
| Real GDP per capita (2022) | EUR 24 580 <sup>(4)</sup>  |
| Legislative power          | <b>Bicameral parliament <sup>(5)</sup></b>   |

<sup>(2)</sup> European Union ([country profile: Spain](#)).

<sup>(3)</sup> [Eurostat](#) (at 1st January 2022) [accessed 23.5.2023].

<sup>(4)</sup> [Eurostat](#) [accessed 12.6.2023].

<sup>(5)</sup> [La Moncloa](#).

## CHAPTER 1.

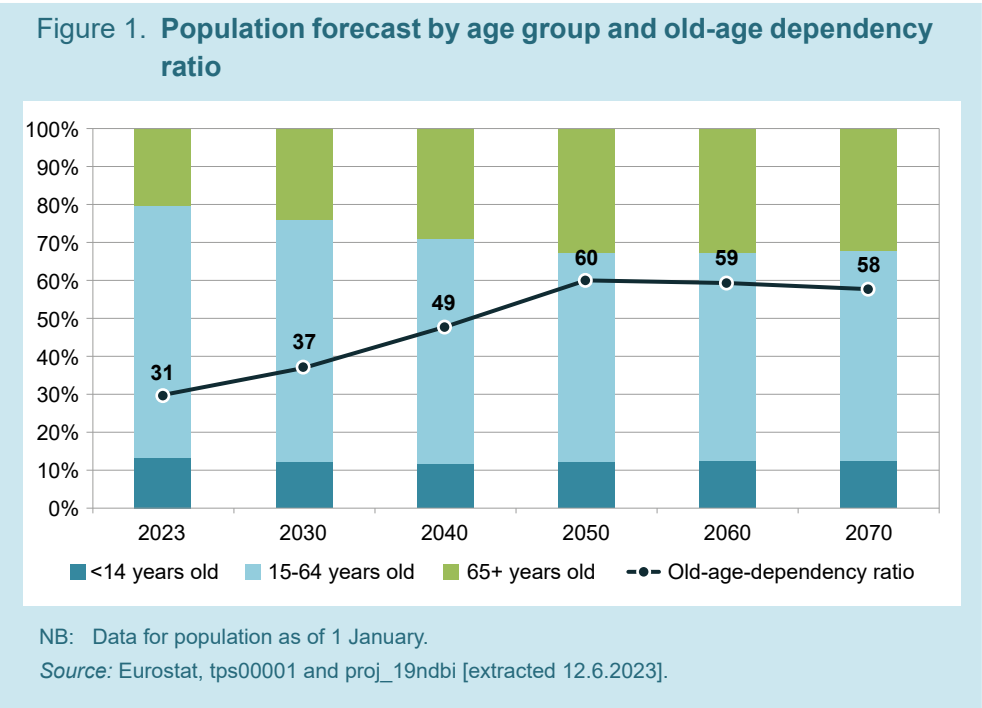
# External factors influencing VET



### 1.1. Demographics

On 1 July 2022, the population in Spain was 47 615 034 <sup>(6)</sup>, the highest-ever value for the historical series. The population growth in recent years results from a negative natural increase offset by a positive migratory balance. Almost 5.6 million foreigners live in Spain (11.71%). Nationals from EU-27 account for 3.62%, followed by South Americans (2.31%) and Africans (2.20%).

Spain has the lowest fertility rate after Malta and the highest life expectancy in the EU-27, implying a swiftly ageing population. The old-age dependency ratio is expected to increase from 31 in 2023 to 58 in 2070 <sup>(7)</sup> (Figure 1).



<sup>(6)</sup> Provisional population data at 1 July 2022 (INE, 2022).

<sup>(7)</sup> Old-age-dependency ratio is defined as the ratio between the number of persons aged 65 and more over the number of working-age persons (15- to 64-year-olds). The value is expressed per 100 persons of working age (15-64).



The Spanish State is organised territorially into towns, provinces, and 17 autonomous communities (plus two autonomous cities), with powers to manage their respective interests.

The Constitution recognises the right to autonomy of the nationalities and regions that make up Spain and solidarity among them. According to the Constitution, Spanish is the official language of the State. Other languages, such as Basque, Catalan, Galician, or Valencian are also jointly official in the respective autonomous communities. Regional authorities should ensure education in the official languages. Some vocational education and training (VET) providers also offer bilingual VET programmes in a foreign language.

Medium-term (2025) forecasts estimate that 50% of the active population must have an intermediate qualification (vocational training technicians and higher technicians) to cover labour market needs (MEFP, 2022a).

## 1.2. Economy and labour-market indicators

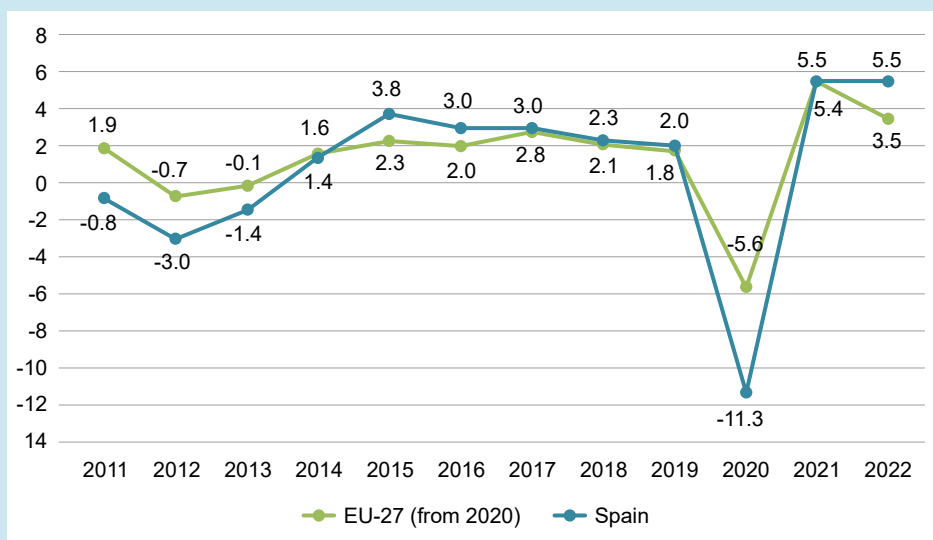
The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the strong economic growth and dynamic job creation of previous years. Between 2013 and 2019, Spain's GDP grew by 17% and 2.7 million jobs were created. This economic cycle came to a sudden end in 2020, when Spain experienced the largest GDP contraction (-11.3%) in the EU (Figure 2).

The economic impact of the lockdown measures was intensified by some features of the Spanish economy, such as its dependence on tourism and other contact-intensive services, a business fabric dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and a structurally weak labour market.

After the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the economic outlook started to recover from 2021 onwards, with varying intensity across sectors and population groups. Progress in vaccination, improved consumer confidence – releasing accumulated savings – and the success of the support measures deployed during the pandemic were the main drivers of the recovery; they were reinforced by the national recovery and resilience plan, supported by the European Next Generation EU fund. Economic growth rebounded strongly in the second quarter of 2022 thanks to the contribution of external demand, steered by the sharp recovery of international (and domestic) tourism. However, the problems of shortages of some products, the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis are having an impact on the recovery.

Activity is projected to grow by 1.3% and 1.7% in 2024, after increasing 4.7% in 2022 (OECD, 2022).

Figure 2. **Real GDP growth rate (percentage change on previous year)**



Source: Eurostat, tec00115 [extracted 16.6.2023].

### 1.2.1. Economic structure

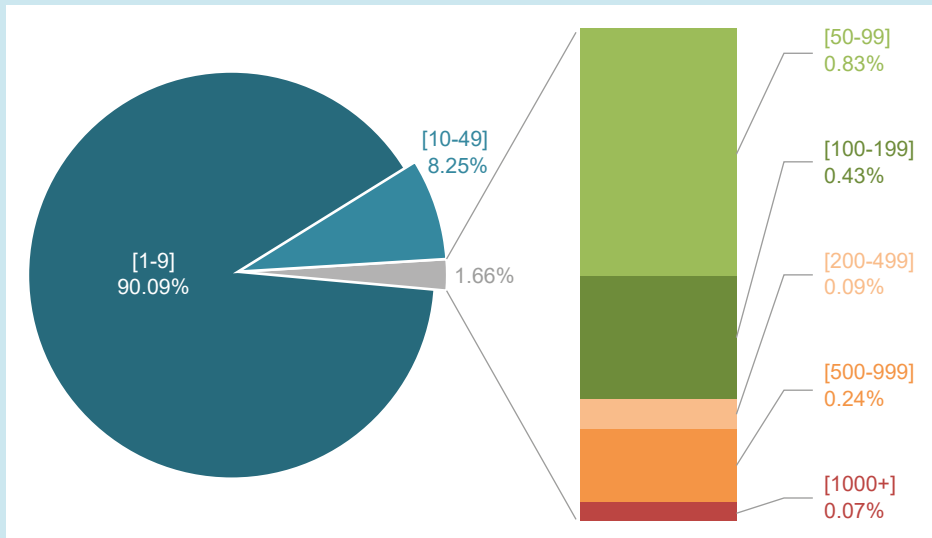
Small (including micro) and medium-sized companies are the main engine of the country's economy, dominating its business fabric.

Most companies in Spain are micro-enterprises, with the 1-to-49 employee size range representing 98% of the total number of companies with employees. Eight out of every 10 companies have two employees or fewer (Figure 3).

The Spanish economy is becoming increasingly services-based, accounting for around 69% in terms of GDP and 71% of employment <sup>(8)</sup>. Most small businesses are in the services sector, especially in trade. In contrast, most large companies operate in the industrial sector. Many are major international players in infrastructure development, renewable energy, tourism, banking, insurance, the textile industry, health technology, aeronautics, the agri-food branch, and the automotive industry.

<sup>(8)</sup> Data from INE. GDP mp supply (current prices, supply approach) IVQ, and distribution of the active persons by economic sector.

Figure 3. Companies by number of employees in 2022



Source: INE. Companies by autonomous community, main activity (CNAE 2009 groups) and wage earner stratum. Data as of 1 January, 2022 [extracted 13.6.23].

Spain ranks seventh of 27 EU Member States in the 2022 edition of the digital economy and society index (DESI). The country is making relative progress and performing better than in previous years, especially in the integration of digital technology (ranking 11th, five positions above 2021), but also on digital public services (fifth compared to seventh in 2021) and human capital (10th compared to 12th). Spain leads the EU in terms of connectivity, ranking third for the second year running (European Commission, 2022a).

### 1.2.2. Employment and unemployment

The Spanish labour market used to be marked by high unemployment rates and temporary employment compared to the neighbouring countries. After the strong impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, employment is recovering significantly, reaching 20.5 million people in work by the first quarter of 2023, 1.1 million more than at the start of the pandemic (February 2020). Employment stability particularly benefits women and young people, who suffered the most in previous crises. Behind these good results are the protective effect of the regulatory measures taken by the government to support the economy and employment throughout 2020 and 2021, and the transformation of the labour market.

Following an agreement among Spain's government, trade unions and employers' associations, the Labour Code was amended (Head of State, 2021), to limit the use of temporary contracts and establish new measures for Spain's temporary lay-off schemes (*expedientes de regulación temporal de empleo*, ERTE). Permanent contract is now the ordinary system used in the labour market and only two types of temporary contracts are currently available: structural (due to production circumstances and for the substitution of another worker with a job reservation) and for training (Section 2.3.5) <sup>(9)</sup>.

The total unemployment rate in 2022 was 11.7%; it has fallen by 12.1 percentage points over the last 10 years <sup>(10)</sup>. April 2023 data on employment offered by the labour and social security ministries recently are statistically unparalleled in the near past. For the first time in 15 years, the number of unemployed fell below the 2.8 million mark (MITES, 2023).

Young people, along with low-skilled workers (unemployment rates of 29.8% and 17.7%, respectively in 2022) <sup>(11)</sup>, are the most affected by the negative impact of the crisis. The employment of young VET graduates (between 20 and 34 years old) had been growing steadily until the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and had not recovered pre-crisis levels in 2022 (Figure 4).

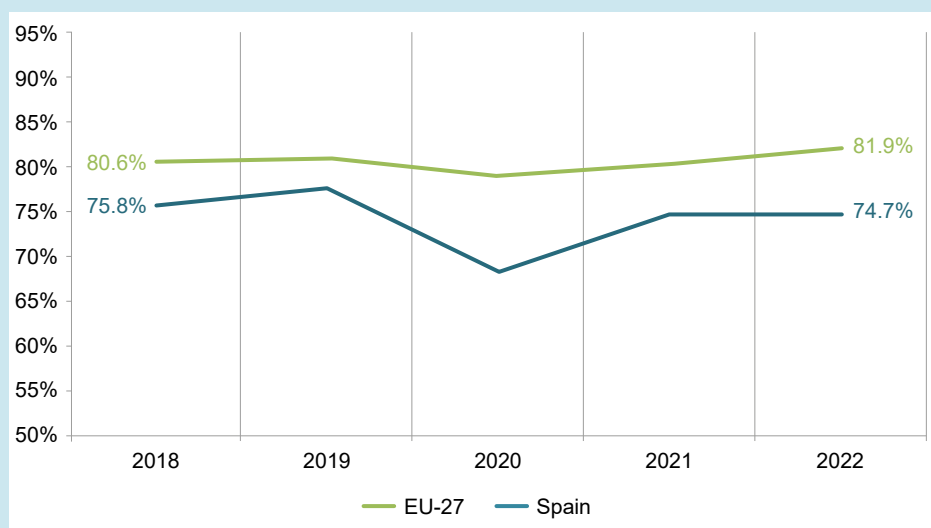
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<sup>(9)</sup> [More information about employment contracts \(\*Contratos de trabajo\*\)](#).

<sup>(10)</sup> Eurostat, table une\_rt\_a [extracted 12.6.23].

<sup>(11)</sup> Eurostat, tables ifsa\_urgaed and une\_rt\_a [extracted 12.6.23].

**Figure 4. Employment rate of VET graduates (20- to 34-year-olds, ISCED levels 3 and 4)**



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series.

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

Source: Eurostat, edat\_ifse\_24 [extracted 12.6.2023].

However, the increase in employment of VET graduates is above the average in the EU-27 after the COVID-19 pandemic (Table 1).

**Table 1. Evolution of total employment rate of VET graduates (aged 20-34 ISCED levels 3 and 4)**

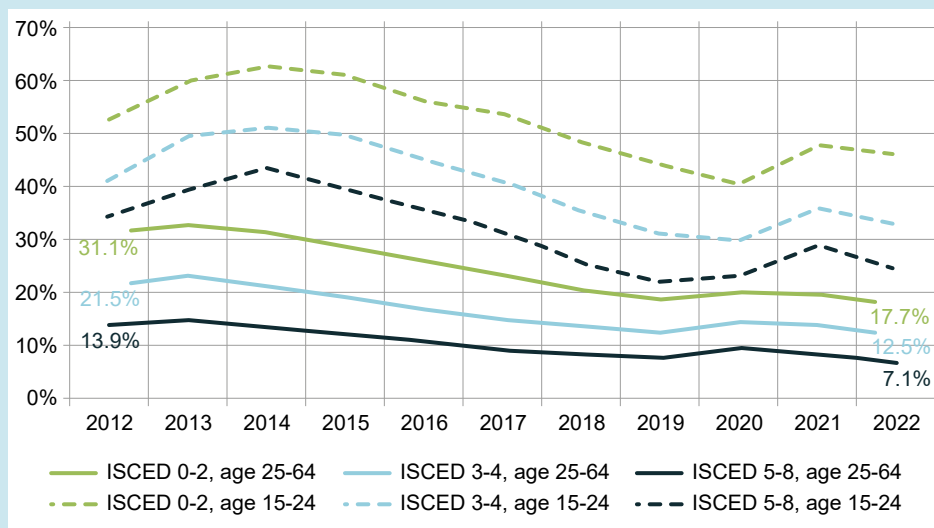
|       | 2018  | 2020  | 2022  | Variation<br>2022-18 | Variation<br>2022-20 |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------------------|----------------------|
| EU-27 | 80.6% | 79.1% | 81.9% | 1.3                  | 2.8                  |
| Spain | 75.8% | 68.4% | 74.7% | -1.1                 | 6.3                  |

Source: Eurostat, edat\_ifse\_24 [extracted 12.6.2023].

Education level is a decisive factor in the situation of the population in the labour market: the higher the level of education, the more advantageous the situation on the labour market, and vice versa. This characteristic is more marked among young people than among adults, so the level of education is more important for young people. Young people with low qualifications have

significantly higher unemployment rates, are more vulnerable to adverse situations, and are more likely to fall into long-term unemployment (Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Unemployment rate (aged 15-24 and 25-64) by education attainment level in 2012-22**



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series.

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

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

ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat [extracted 12.6.2023].

High rates of early school leaving in Spain put many young people and adults in a weak position in the labour market. Despite recent improvements, the rate of early leavers from education and training and of low-skilled adults remains very high: 13.9% of early leavers in 2022, compared to 9.6% in the EU-27 <sup>(12)</sup>. This hampers the transition from school to work, worsens youth unemployment and contributes to skills polarisation.

Over the last decade, early leaving from education and training dropped by 9.7 points, to 13.9% in 2022; this reflected an increase of 0.6 points compared to the previous year (13.3% in 2021). It remains 4.3 points above the European Union average (9.6% in 2022). It is lower among women (11.2%) and more than double in the foreign population (30.3%). There are also significant differences in

<sup>(12)</sup> Eurostat, edat\_lfse\_14 [extracted 12.6.23].

early school leaving by autonomous communities; three of them were below the EU-27 average of 2021 (9.7%), and two more were very close (MEFP, 2023a).

In 2022, 12.7% of young people aged 15 to 29 were neither studying nor working, 1.4 points lower than the previous year. Considering the level of education attained, the percentage is 9.9% for young people with upper secondary or higher education and 17% for those with less than upper secondary education (compulsory education or lower); this is a difference of 7.2 points between the two levels.

In contrast, the employment rate for recent initial VET (IVET) graduates (20- to 34-year-olds) was 74.7% in 2022, below EU-27 average (81.9%) <sup>(13)</sup>.

The inclusion of a work-based learning module in IVET programmes ensures that virtually all learners benefit from work experience to ease their entry into the labour market. In 2022, 98.4% of recent graduates were exposed to work-based learning during their studies, well above the EU-27 average (60.1%) <sup>(14)</sup>.

The economic recovery is revealing labour shortages in some economic activities, either due to the acceleration of certain changes linked to the digitalisation of the economy or due to other factors; these include the ageing population, lack of generational renewal, and reluctance on the part of young people to take up traditional occupations because of the working conditions.

### 1.2.3. Professional regulations

A limited number of occupations/professions is regulated.

For some jobs, it is necessary to hold a certificate of professional competence (*certificado de aptitud profesional*, CAP), as with electrical and gas technicians. Regional authorities are responsible for issuing certificates of professional competence, which can be obtained by accrediting a full vocational qualification (VET diploma or professional certificate) or partial qualification (units of competence, UC); in some, specific training is followed by a test.

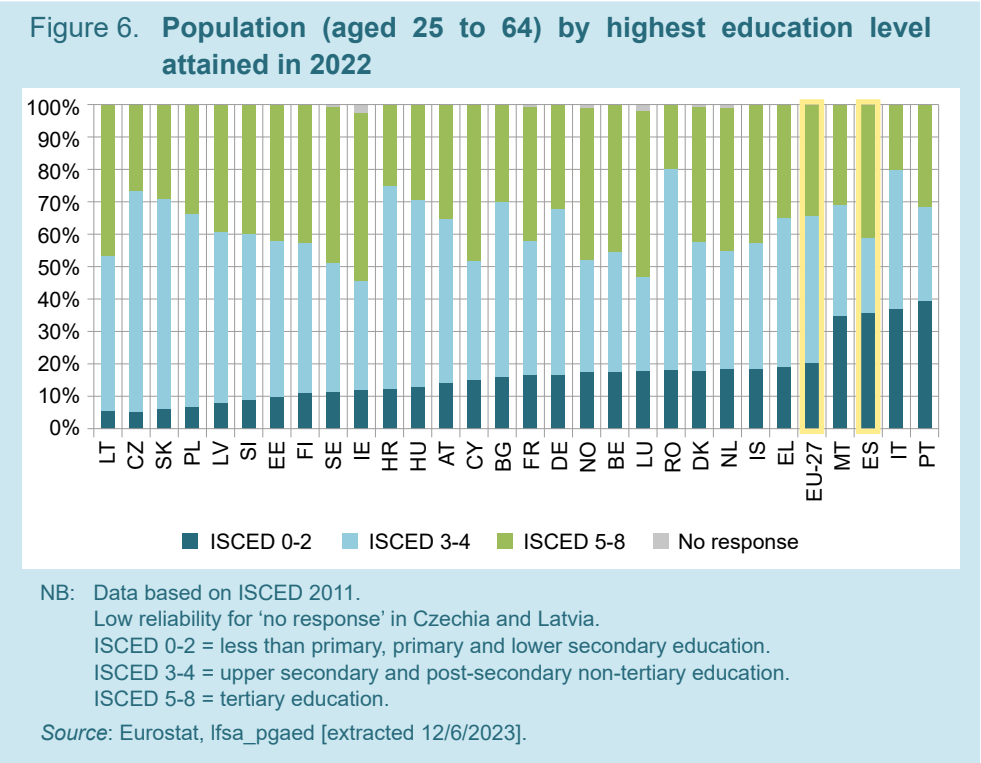
<sup>(13)</sup> Employment rate of 20- to 34-year-olds who have obtained a medium-level vocational qualification (ISCED 3 or 4) 1 to 3 years before the survey as their highest educational attainment and who are not in further (either formal or non-formal) education and training during the last 4 weeks prior to the survey (Eurostat, LFS). Eurostat, edat\_lfse\_24 [extracted 13.6.2023].

<sup>(14)</sup> Percentage of recent IVET graduates benefitting from exposure to work-based learning during their vocational education and training. Recent IVET graduates are considered those aged 20 to 34, who have graduated in the last 3 years before the survey and who have a medium-level vocational qualification (ISCED 3 or 4) as their highest educational attainment. Benefitting from exposure to work-based learning during IVET refers to having had work experience(s) undertaken as part of the curriculum of the formal programme leading to the highest education successfully completed. Work experiences are considered those with a duration of at least 1 month and occurred at a workplace in a market or non-market unit (i.e. in a company, government institution or non-profit organisation). Purely school-based work experiences are not considered (Eurostat, LFS).

Training providers in such cases must be recognised or certified by the authority in charge.

### 1.3. Education attainment

The share of the adult population aged 25 to 64 with high-level qualifications (ISCED 5-8) is higher in Spain (41.1%) than in the EU-27 (34.2%) in 2022. In contrast, the share of those with medium-level qualifications (ISCED 3-4) is the lowest in the EU-27 (23.1%) while the share of those with low or no qualifications is one of the highest in the EU (41.1%) (Figure 6).



So far in this century, there has been a major change in the educational level of the population aged 25-64. In this period, the share of people with less than upper secondary education has decreased by 25.5 percentage points (from 61.5% to 36.1%). Over the last 5 years, the percentage of the adult population with less than upper secondary education has fallen by -5.6 percentage points,



while that with tertiary education has increased by +5.0 percentage points (MEFP, 2023a).

Looking more closely at the share of students in upper secondary IVET (ISCED 3) as a percentage of all upper secondary students, it is still below the EU average. However, there has been a slight increase of 1.37 percentage points in Spain in recent years, while the EU average for the same indicator has fallen by 0.18 percentage points (Table 2).

**Table 2. IVET students as % of all upper secondary students**

|       | 2015      | 2016      | 2017  | 2018  | 2019  | 2020  |
|-------|-----------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| EU-27 | 48.92 (*) | 48.34 (*) | 48.08 | 48.37 | 48.43 | 48.74 |
| Spain | 35.19     | 34.83     | 35.35 | 35.8  | 36.42 | 36.56 |

NB: (\*) Definition differs.

Source: Cedefop. Key indicators on VET [online tool].

The share of adults (aged 25-64) participating in learning activities over the past 4 weeks has been increasing over recent years, reaching 15.3% in 2022 (compared to 11.9% in the EU). However, it still needs to improve among low-skilled people (5.2%) (MEFP, 2023a). Tackling education and adult learning challenges is vital to Spain contributing to achieving the 2030 EU headline targets on skills and employment. Spain's implementation of its modernised vocational education and training system and its digital skills plan (Government of Spain, 2021a) can help develop labour market relevant skills.

## 1.4. Employment policies influencing VET

The main regulatory framework for employment policy in Spain is currently Act No 3/2023 on employment, dating from 28 February (Head of State, 2023). This law defines active labour market policies (ALMPs) as the set of decisions, measures, services and programmes aimed at contributing to improving employability and reducing unemployment; the full development of the right to decent, stable and quality jobs; and the generation of decent work and the achievement of full employment.

It establishes as instruments of coordination and planning of employment policy:

- (a) the Spanish strategy for employment activation (*Estrategia Española de Apoyo Activo al Empleo 2021-24*);

- (b) the annual plan for promotion of decent employment (*Plan anual para el Fomento del Empleo Digno*);
- (c) the integrated information system for public employment services (*Sistema de información de los servicios públicos de empleo*).

Regional public employment services (PES) design and manage their own policies based on this common framework.

The Spanish active employment support strategy 2021-24 has been drawn up, with the participation of the social partners and the public employment services of the autonomous communities, under the direction of the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy (hereafter MITES).

The annual plan for promotion of decent employment includes the common objectives for all PES in accordance with the Spanish active employment support strategy for 2021-24.

The National recovery and resilience plan (Government of Spain, 2021b), in its component No 23 (New public policies for a dynamic, resilient and inclusive labour market), includes reforms and investments in active employment policies to improve workers' employability and social inclusion.

The public policy agenda, within the framework of social dialogue, is addressing challenges to nurture a labour market that responds to the needs of the digitalisation process, paying special attention to vulnerable groups and prioritising actions aimed at women and young people.

After a process of intense social dialogue, Royal Decree-Law No 32/2021 was approved in December 2021, including a package of reforms to modernise the labour market:

- (a) the RED mechanism <sup>(15)</sup> provides for training and retraining measures for workers;
- (b) the creation of new training contracts, which can be held in combination with studies or for professional practice according to the level of studies;
- (c) reinforcement of the training of permanent and discontinuous workers in a period of inactivity or in a situation of temporary lay-off.

The new regulation has led to a change in the hiring system in which stability, as in permanent contracts, are already the norm.

The Youth Guarantee Plus 2021-27 plan for decent work for young people (MITES, 2021a.), is part of a global investment, the strategic plan *Juventud*

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<sup>(15)</sup> This is a measure to make employment more flexible and stabilise employment, activated by the Council of Ministers for a given sector of the economy or a given temporary cycle. The measures are the temporary suspension of the employment contract or the reduction in working hours of the workers. During these measures, the workers receive social protection.

*Avanza*. This brings together all the actions for youth employment and will allocate EUR 4 950 million for these purposes, the largest amount allocated so far by a government for this area.

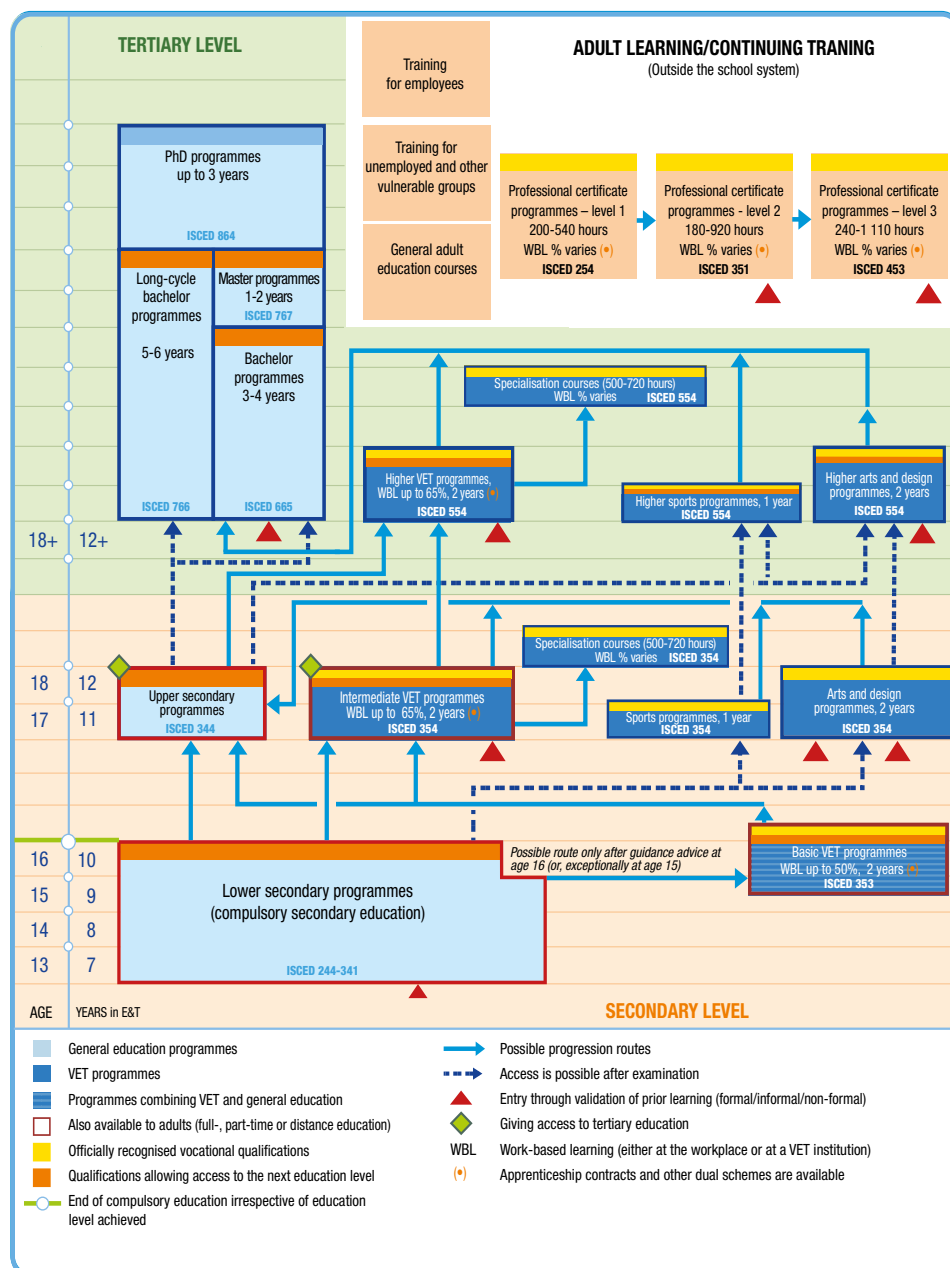
It contains 69 measures articulated around six axes, whose main objective is to improve youth employment through a reinforcement of the Youth Guarantee. The six axes include guidance, training, employment opportunities, equal opportunities in access to employment, entrepreneurship and improvement of the institutional framework.

## CHAPTER 2.

# VET provision



Figure 7. VET in the Spanish education and training system in 2021/22



NB: The Spanish education system is not referenced to EQF levels.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Spain, 2023.

## 2.1. Education and training system overview

Formal education, from preschool to tertiary vocational programmes, is governed by the [Organic Act No 3/2020 of 29 December on the amendment of the Act No 2/2006 of 3 May on education](#), known as LOMLOE (Head of State, 2020).

The Spanish education and training system comprises of the following levels (Figure 7):

- (a) basic education, which includes primary education, compulsory secondary education. Basic education is compulsory and free of charge;
- (b) secondary education, which is divided into compulsory secondary education and post-compulsory secondary education. Post-compulsory secondary education is made up of the baccalaureate, intermediate vocational training, professional artistic education (in music and dance), intermediate arts and design, and intermediate sports education;
- (c) higher education is made up of higher artistic education, higher vocational training, higher vocational education in arts and design and higher sports education, and university education, which is regulated by its specific regulations;
- (d) adult education includes an offer leading to official qualifications and facilitates incorporation into the different programmes, as well as the possibility of validating experience acquired in other ways.

There is also an extensive range of other training opportunities as part of active labour market policies, mainly aimed at the (un)employed (Section 2.4.2).

Programmes in arts and sports education and language are considered specialised education and have a different regulation from basic and secondary education.

All education programmes must be adapted to students with specific education support needs. This adaptation must guarantee their access, permanence and progression in the education system.

Provision is made for an appropriate offer of distance learning or specific education support and attention for students who cannot attend school regularly.

Participation in early childhood education is voluntary but nearly 100% of children aged 3 to 5 are in the schooling system. Compulsory education includes 6 years in primary (years 6-12) and 4 years in lower secondary (years 12-16). The age of 16 marks the end of compulsory education, irrespective of the level of education achieved. Lower secondary education learners can stay on till 18 in some cases, to gain the end of lower secondary certificate (ESO diploma).

The first stage of secondary education (ISCED 2) corresponds to the first 3 years of compulsory secondary education, from years 12 to 15. Access takes place after having completed primary education.

The second stage of secondary education (ISCED 3) corresponds to the fourth year of compulsory lower secondary education, baccalaureate (*Bachillerato*), and vocational upper secondary education (ISCED 3), comprising the training cycles of basic vocational training and intermediate vocational training.

At the end of lower secondary school, learners can continue the general education path (baccalaureate) or take the vocational route (*formación profesional*).

General education and vocational programmes are regulated by the [Ministry of Education and Vocational Training](#) (*Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional*, MEFP).

The IVET system aims to equip learners with the right skills to develop professional activity and adapt to changes in their working life. It also works to support their personal development, the exercise of democratic and peaceful citizenship, and enabling them to progress through the education system within a lifelong learning framework.

IVET programmes are offered at three levels, according to the criteria of knowledge, initiative, autonomy and complexity of tasks, set out in the programmes' learning outcomes (Section 3.2).

- (a) Basic VET programmes (ISCED 353), for learners at age 15, in parallel to general lower secondary programmes. These programmes address learners at risk of leaving education without qualifications to develop their basic skills, prepare for an occupation and obtain a basic VET qualification together with the end of lower secondary certificate (ESO diploma). Learners follow a 2-year programme to acquire a basic vocational qualification (VET diploma) and ESO diploma which ends compulsory education. Direct access to intermediate VET is possible.
- (b) Intermediate VET programmes at upper secondary intermediate level (ISCED 354), which can begin at age 16, after compulsory education. These lead to technician qualifications and give access to baccalaureate (general post-secondary education) and higher VET in the same field of study, via an admission procedure.
- (c) Higher VET programmes (ISCED 554) at tertiary level, which lead to an advanced technician qualification. Graduates can progress to bachelor programmes through an admission procedure.



Tertiary education is integrated by university education and some non-university education, such as higher vocational training, plus programmes in arts and design, and sports.

IVET programmes are modularised and include compulsory workplace learning at the end of or during studies. Learners need to pass all modules to obtain the relevant qualification (VET diploma), with academic and professional validity. Modularisation allows partial certification (units of competences) and re-engagement from a lifelong learning perspective.

Programmes operate in public and private VET institutions and integrated vocational training centres, for 2 or 3 academic years, following the basic curriculum established for each qualification and the intensity of work-based learning at a company.

Graduates from intermediate and higher IVET programmes can enrol in specialisation courses (*cursos de especialización*) in the same field of studies to acquire occupation-specific and digital skills in line with the emerging needs of the economy.

Artistic, sports and foreign language education have their own organisation and are considered specialised education. Specific training programmes in arts and design and sports are offered at ISCED levels 354 and 554 in schools specialised according to the field of studies and level of education concerned. Foreign language education is organised according to the [European framework for learning, teaching and assessment of languages](#) (CEFR).

Through the validation of prior learning, individuals can obtain official recognition of their vocational competences, expressed in units of competence that are part of a VET diploma or certificate, without having to follow a formal study programme (Section 3.3).

There are other opportunities to upskill and reskill the adult population besides initial vocational training programmes. This provision can take a variety of forms, from general adult education programmes to those specifically designed for, and targeted at, the unemployed or employed. There are also specific qualification programmes (professional certificates) which allow the accumulation of learning units from a lifelong learning approach (Section 2.4.1).



Table 3. **Student enrolment in non-university education in academic year 2021/22 by education level and percentage in public schools**

|          |   | Students         | % in public schools |
|----------|---|------------------|---------------------|
| <b>A</b> | <b>Total non-university education (B+C+D)</b>       | <b>9 162 349</b> | <b>69.4</b>         |
| <b>B</b> | <b>General education</b>                            | <b>8 252 826</b> | <b>67.0</b>         |
| B.1      | Preschool education                                 | 1 628 472        | 63.9                |
|          | First cycle preschool education (2)                 | 438 510          | 53.5                |
|          | Second cycle preschool education                    | 1 189 962        | 67.8                |
| B.2      | Primary education                                   | 2 798 301        | 67.6                |
| B.3      | Special education                                   | 39 885           | 61.5                |
| B.4      | Compulsory secondary education (ESO)                | 2 051 158        | 66.7                |
| B.5      | Baccalaureate                                       | 690 481          | 72.8                |
|          | Baccalaureate (face-to-face)                        | 661 625          | 71.7                |
|          | Baccalaureate (distance learning)                   | 28 856           | 96.3                |
| B.6      | VET   | 1 030 052        | 66.8                |
|          | Vocational education – secondary education          | 496 032          | 69.6                |
|          | Basic VET programmes                                | 75 276           | 75.8                |
|          | Intermediate VET programmes (face-to-face)          | 367 248          | 71.5                |
|          | Intermediate VET programmes (distance learning)     | 52 979           | 47.5                |
|          | Specialisation courses (intermediate VET graduates) | 529              | 100.0               |
|          | Vocational education – higher education             | 534 020          | 64.1                |
|          | Higher VET programmes (classroom based)             | 406 441          | 70.1                |
|          | Higher VET programmes (distance learning)           | 125 423          | 44.2                |
|          | Specialisation courses (higher VET graduates)       | 2 156            | 100.0               |
| B.7      | Other training programmes                           | 14 477           | 72.3                |
| <b>C</b> | <b>Specialised education</b>                        | <b>708 352</b>   | <b>90.2</b>         |
| C.1      | Arts and design education                           | 371 964          | 83.2                |
|          | Elementary arts and design (music and dance)        | 45 736           | 87.9                |
|          | Intermediate VET arts and design (music and dance)  | 55 187           | 89.9                |
|          | Higher VET arts and design (music and dance)        | 14 810           | 92.9                |
|          | Higher education arts and design                    | 25 591           | 77.3                |
|          | Master in artistic studies                          | 483              | 59.6                |
|          | Non-regulated music studies                         | 211 142          | 82.6                |
|          | Non-regulated dance studies                         | 19 015           | 60.7                |
| C.2      | Foreign language education                          | 325 328          | 100.0               |

|     |                                    | Students | % in public schools |
|-----|------------------------------------|----------|---------------------|
| C.3 | Sports education                   | 11 060   | 37.5                |
|     | Intermediate sports                | 10 221   | 37.6                |
|     | Higher level sports                | 839      | 35.3                |
| D   | Adult education – formal education | 201 171  | 97.2                |
|     | Initial education for adults       | 48 894   | 99.3                |
|     | Secondary education for adults     | 104 005  | 95.5                |
|     | Other formal adult education       | 48 272   | 99.0                |

Source: MEFP. Non-university education: enrolled students. Academic year 2021-22: detailed results [extracted 15.5.2023].

## 2.2. VET governance

Vocational education and training in Spain is a shared responsibility among the State, the autonomous communities and municipalities, the VET centres and the social partners, at different levels and responsibilities.

In 2020, the newly created Ministry of Education and Vocational Training took over the organisation of the entire VET system, in charge of proposing and executing government policies on education and VET. MEFP is responsible for the general organisation of the Spanish VET system, encompassing the establishment of the basic elements of the curriculum for IVET diploma programmes and also for those leading to professional certificates; previously they had been under the ministries responsible for labour and employment policies.

MEFP's competences guarantee the homogeneity and basic unity of the education system and assure equality for all Spaniards regarding education and lifelong learning.

The [Ministry of Labour and Social Economy](#) is responsible for proposing and implementing government policy on employment, the social economy and corporate social responsibility. Among other issues, this includes on-the-job training (*formación en el trabajo*) not linked to the national catalogue of occupational standards (Section 3.2) and the development of this policy. It sets the policies for vocational training under its remit in the framework of active labour market policies, to (up/re)skill the unemployed and employed population, and to support employability matching skills with the needs of the local economy.

The autonomous communities are responsible for the design, implementation and management of education and active employment policies in their territorial

areas, according to State regulations. They are in charge of implementing State rules and regulating non-basic elements of the VET system. They have executive and administrative powers within their territory and define the curriculum for their territorial area based on the curricula's basic elements established for the whole country.

Local authorities are responsible for education building conservation, maintenance, and monitoring. By delegation from the regional departments, some may manage certain education services to promote greater efficiency, coordination, and social control in the use of resources.

Training institutions, within the framework established by State and autonomous community regulations, have the autonomy to draw up, approve and implement their education project, their management plan, and their organisational and operational rules.

### 2.2.1. Governance of VET in the education system

The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training is responsible for establishing the learning outcomes of the core IVET curriculum. This core curriculum represents 45% of the IVET programmes in autonomous communities with a joint official language and 55% for those without.

Regions are responsible for defining their own VET policies according to their territorial needs and priorities, in consultation with the State and social partners.

Coordination is guaranteed through:

- (a) at national level, the General Council for Vocational Training (*Consejo General de la Formación Profesional*, CGFP), the Government advisory body on VET policy. It comprises representatives of education and employment authorities (at national and regional levels) as well as social partners (enterprises and trade unions);
- (b) the national education council (*Consejo Escolar del Estado*), the body for the participation of all the parties most directly related to the education sector <sup>(16)</sup>. It carries out consultative, advisory and proposal work for the Government in relation to the different aspects of the education system;
- (c) the sectoral education conference (*Conferencia Sectorial de Educación*), made up of the Minister for Education and Vocational Training and the

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<sup>(16)</sup> It is made up of 107 members representing education public authorities, faculty, parents, student body, administration and services, owners of private schools, trade union organisations, employers' organisations, education administration, universities, local authorities, personalities of recognised prestige, women's representation, autonomous education councils. [More information](#).

relevant councillors of each autonomous community <sup>(17)</sup>, to coordinate education at national and regional levels;

- (d) the sectoral conference of the system of qualifications and vocational training for employment (*Conferencia Sectorial del Sistema de Cualificaciones y Formación Profesional para el Empleo*), established in November 2020. It is the cooperation body between the State and regional authorities to coordinate policies on accreditable vocational training for employment based on the national catalogue of occupational standards. It responds to the new distribution of powers between the education and labour ministries.

### 2.2.2. Governance of training in the context of active labour market policies

Within the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, active labour market policies are agreed in the framework of the sectoral conference on employment and labour affairs <sup>(18)</sup>.

The framework, coordination and implementation of these policies are based on three instruments:

- (a) the Spanish strategy for active support for employment (*Estrategia Española de Apoyo Activo al Empleo*);
- (b) the annual plan for the promotion of decent employment (*Plan Annual para el Fomento del Empleo Digno*);
- (c) the integrated information system for public employment services (*Sistema de Información de los Servicios Públicos de Empleo*, SISPE).

Regional public employment services design and manage their own policies based on this common framework. The main bodies involved are:

- (a) the General Council for the National Employment System (*Consejo General del Sistema Nacional de Empleo*); this is the main consultative and participatory body for public authorities and social partners. For VET issues in particular, it carries out its functions through the training for employment State commission (*Comisión Estatal de Formación para el Empleo*);
- (b) the sectoral conference on labour affairs (*Conferencia Sectorial de Empleo y Asuntos Laborales*); this is the general instrument for coordination and cooperation between the central Government and the regions in employment policy. One of its functions is to distribute available funds between the regions;

<sup>(17)</sup> Counsellors (*consejeros*) are the heads of the autonomous administration in education.

<sup>(18)</sup> *Conferencia sectorial de Empleo y Asuntos Laborales* is the body for collaboration, coordination and cooperation between the State and the autonomous communities in employment and especially in the preparation of plans for the implementation of the European employment strategy.

- (c) the [State Foundation for Training in Employment](#) (*Fundación Estatal para la Formación en el Empleo*, Fundae); this is a public body comprising the State general administration, the regions and the most representative business and trade union organisations. It provides technical support to the State public employment service (SEPE), and to MITES in the strategic development of the continuing vocational training for employment system (*El sistema de formación profesional para el empleo en el ámbito laboral*);
- (d) joint sectoral structures (Fundae, [Estructuras paritarias sectoriales](#)) made up of the representative business and union organisations in each relevant sector<sup>(19)</sup>. Their main task is to anticipate training needs and propose sectoral training based on their knowledge of the real productive environment.

### 2.3. Government-regulated IVET provision

The VET system is governed by Organic Law No 3/2022 on the organisation and integration of vocational training (Organic Law on VET hereafter) (Head of State, 2022), which replaced Organic Law 5/2002 on qualifications and vocational education and training (Head of State, 2002). This regulation establishes a single, modular and flexible offer of formal vocational training from a lifelong learning perspective, aimed at students and workers (both employed and unemployed). The first programmes adapted to Organic Law on VET will start in the academic year 2023/24. Its complete rollout will last 4 years (Box 1).

#### Box 1. **Organic Law No 3/2022 on the organisation and integration of vocational training**

Organic Law No 3/2022 on VET establishes a model for vocational training, the recognition and accreditation of competences, and vocational guidance. It lays out a single, modular, and flexible offer of formal vocational training structured in training itineraries. It allows accumulation of learning through five ascending grades (A, B, C, D and E), ranging from smaller units or micro-training (grade A) (*acreditación parcial de competencia*) to VET programmes and specialisation courses (grades D and E) and three levels (1, 2, 3) of knowledge, initiative, autonomy, responsibility and complexity (Table 4). In-company training is foreseen for the programmes leading to professional certificates (grade C) and VET diplomas (grade D). Workplace learning at the end of, or during, studies is compulsory in grades C and D and, in some cases, grade E. Learners will need to pass all modules to obtain the relevant qualification.

<sup>(19)</sup> They were redefined by the Act No 30/2015 in replacing the joint sectoral commissions in place since 1993.

Grade A will be the shortest offer of the new national vocational training system and lead to a partial competence accreditation on the achieved learning outcomes. Passing all the partial accreditations of competence of a module leads to obtaining the corresponding certificate of competence or grade B of training, referring to a professional module included in the national catalogue of occupational standards. Grade C brings together several modules and will lead to the award of a professional certificate. Grade D will correspond to the vocational training diploma programmes (basic, intermediate, and higher levels) and grade E will consist of medium and higher-level specialisation courses.

Grades will be available to learners over 18 years old, except grades C and D (at level 1), which are available for learners over 16.

Royal Decree No 278/2023 of 11 April (MEFP, 2023), sets the timetable for implementing the VET system laid down in Organic Law No 3/2022. The implementation of grades A, B and C start before 1 September 2023 and will be completed by 1 January 2024. Grade D will begin in the 2023/24 academic year and be completed in the following 2 years, with the curricula of the current cycles being phased out in parallel. Finally, from the next academic year onwards, each administration will introduce the E grades it deems appropriate; they will be introduced as a general rule in the academic year 2024/25. Other elements of the new VET system, such as the national catalogue of standards of professional competence (*Catálogo Nacional de Estándares de Competencias Profesionales*) (replacing the national catalogue of occupational standards), training provision and modular VET are awaiting further regulation.

The academic organisation of the IVET and professional certificate programmes will remain in force until the regulatory framework set in Organic Law on VET is developed.

Source: Cedefop.

**Table 4. Types of programmes and grades foreseen in Organic Law No 3/2022 on VET**

| Level of competence | Grade A                          | Grade B                                | Grade C                          | Grade D                                  | Grade E                                   |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|---|
| 1                   | Partial competence accreditation | Certificate of professional competence | Professional certificate level 1 | Basic VET/<br>Basic technician diploma   |   |
| 2                   | Partial competence accreditation | Certificate of professional competence | Professional certificate level 2 | Intermediate VET/<br>Technician diploma  | Technician/<br>Specialist                 |
| 3                   | Partial competence accreditation | Certificate of professional competence | Professional certificate level 3 | Higher VET/<br>Higher technician diploma | Higher technician/<br>Professional master |

Source: Cedefop.

The national catalogue of occupational standards (*Catálogo Nacional de Cualificaciones Profesionales*, CNCP) <sup>(20)</sup> is the backbone of the national initial and continuing training system. It comprises units of competences, identified in the productive system in terms of the relevant competences for professional practice, organised in occupational standards and 26 sectoral branches (*familias profesionales*), suitable for recognition and validation. Units of competence are classified in three levels (1 to 3), according to criteria of knowledge, initiative, autonomy, responsibility and complexity, defining VET programme levels.

The MEFP is responsible for setting national VET policies while policy implementation is managed by the regions, which may shape IVET curricula based on local/territorial needs (between 45 and 55%, depending on whether or not they have a joint official language).

As part of the education system, VET is also regulated by the 2020 Education Act (known as LOMLOE) that modifies the 2006 Education Act. Although the LOMLOE came into force in January 2021, it is being implemented in stages concluding in the 2023/24 academic year.

IVET programmes are offered at public and private institutions approved by the MEFP or the regional education authority. IVET programmes can be delivered face-to-face or by distance learning.

### 2.3.1. Lower secondary VET

Basic VET programmes (ISCED 353) are available in the last year of compulsory education, to learners aged 15 or 16. They allow students at risk of leaving education without a qualification to develop their basic skills, prepare for an occupation and obtain a basic VET qualification.

Access to basic training cycles requires the following simultaneously:

- (a) be at least 15 years of age or reach that age during the current calendar year;
- (b) have completed the third year of compulsory secondary education or, exceptionally, have completed the second year;
- (c) be proposed by the teaching team to follow a basic grade training cycle.

There are 34 different basic VET programmes to choose from. These comprise vocational modules linked to competence units of the national catalogue

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<sup>(20)</sup> Organic Law No 3/2022 modifies the current CNCP and creates the national catalogue of standards of professional competence (*Catálogo Nacional de Estándares de Competencias Profesionales*), adapting its denomination to the meaning it has in the European Union and allowing for smaller references, such as standards of competence (equivalent to the units of competence contained in the existing occupational standards). The CNCP remains in force until the national catalogue of standards of professional competence is developed.

of occupational standards at level 1, and modules linked to the acquisition of lifelong learning skills: communication and society and applied sciences modules, which include Spanish language, foreign language, social sciences, mathematics and science both applied to the personal and learning context in a professional field. There is also a specific module in a work place environment. Basic VET programmes usually run in a 2-year programme of 2 000 hours, of which a minimum of 240 hours must be completed in workplaces (*módulo de formación en centros de trabajo*).

Successful learners gain the basic technician and compulsory secondary qualification (ESO) diplomas. The basic VET diploma allows them to move on to upper secondary VET (intermediate VET programmes), while with the ESO diploma they can return to the general education path.

Schools providing basic VET can be fully or partially supported by public funds, or private schools, with exclusively private sources of funding. These institutions may also offer other types of education, such as primary education, baccalaureate or upper secondary VET.

In the 2020/21 academic year, the net entry rate <sup>(21)</sup> to basic vocational training cycles was 6.9% (MEFP, 2022b). As it is part of basic compulsory education, it must be provided and free of cost. Around 76% of learners at this level attend publicly funded schools.

### 2.3.2. Upper secondary VET

Upper secondary intermediate VET (ISCED 354) programmes are intended for learners aged 16 and over with compulsory secondary education (ESO). These VET programmes are organised in different training cycles, consisting of vocational modules included in the national catalogue of occupational standards (units of competence at level 2).

Intermediate VET programmes usually last 2 000 hours, the equivalent of 2 full-time academic years, and in some cases up to 3 years if taken as a dual programme. All programmes include a compulsory on-the-job training module (*formación en centros de trabajo*, FCT) of 400 hours. The Organic Law on VET foresees that these cycles will vary in length to meet better the corresponding professional fields.

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<sup>(21)</sup> The net entry rates to vocational training cycles provide indicators of the percentage of people expected to access each of the programmes throughout their lives, based on the age distribution of new entrants to education (basic, intermediate or higher level VET), and their relationship with the total population in each age group.



Access to this stage is possible for learners aged 16 and over with the ESO diploma, for graduates from basic VET in the same field, and for adults through validation of prior learning.

There are currently 62 programmes at this level (plus two from the previous system which are still in force). Successful learners acquire the technician diploma in the corresponding field, gaining direct access to higher VET programmes or specialisation courses for intermediate VET graduates. They can also return to upper secondary education (*Bachillerato*) or enter the labour market.

The Organic Law on VET opens up access to an intermediate and higher VET programme to learners holding a professional certificate, the programme of which is included in the one pursued.

At this level, in the academic year 2020/21, the net entry rate is 31.3% and the most common ages are 16 and 17 (18.2% and 24.5% respectively), although the percentage of students entering at over 30 years of age is 14.2% (MEFP, 2022b).

Intermediate VET programmes are usually provided by secondary schools (*institutos de educación secundaria*, IES), VET centres (*centros integrados de formación profesional*, CIFP) and any institution authorised by its autonomous community (associated centres).

In addition to general IVET provision at this level, there are other programmes that are not integrated into the levels, stages or cycles that make up the general system (from preschool to post-secondary education); these are academically valid State-wide and are referred to as specialised education (*enseñanzas del régimen especial*). They can be taken at the same time as the general system courses (Table 3).

Vocational arts education, both in music and dance and in visual arts and design (ISCED levels 354 and 554) aim to provide quality artistic training and to ensure the qualification of future professionals in music, dance and visual arts, design, and heritage conservation. Intermediate programmes are offered at schools specialised according to the field of studies and level of study. Successful learners in the intermediate programme are awarded the technician diploma in the corresponding specialty.

Sports education aims to prepare students for professional activity in the sports system in relation to a sport modality or speciality at the different levels (initiation, technification and high performance). It also looks to facilitate the adaptation of trained technicians to the evolution of the world of work and sports and active citizenship.

These sports programmes are organised in training cycles of intermediate and higher levels, with different access requirements in each case. Students who successfully complete the intermediate level programme receive the sports technician diploma in the corresponding sport.

### 2.3.3. Higher VET

Higher vocational training is also organised in cycles with a modular structure, linked to the national catalogue of occupational standards (units of competence at level 3). These VET programmes usually last 2 000 hours, the equivalent of 2 full-time academic years, in some cases up to 3 if they are taken as a dual programme, although the Organic Law on VET foresees variation in their length to adapt them better to the requirements of the specific professional fields.

All programmes comprise a vocational project module during the last stage of the training cycle, and an on-the-job training module (FCT) of 400 hours, both modules compulsory.

There are currently 89 higher level qualifications at this stage, plus three more from a previous education law (Organic Law No 1/1990 on the general organisation of the education system) which are still running.

In the academic year 2020/21, the net entry rate <sup>(22)</sup> to higher VET is 33.2%, with the most frequent age of access being between 18 and 21 years old (59% overall, although 17.5% entered at over 30 years of age) (MEFP, 2022b).

Higher VET programmes can be provided by secondary schools (*institutos de educación secundaria*), VET centres (*centros integrados de formación profesional*) and other institutions authorised by the autonomous community (associated centres).

Higher VET diploma programmes are considered tertiary education and included in the Spanish qualifications framework for higher education (*Marco Español de Cualificaciones para la Educación Superior*, MECES) (ME, 2011a). These qualifications allow access to university studies (for example transfer and recognising the European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS) obtained in these programmes into the higher education programmes). Conditions for recognition depend on the VET diploma programme: each diploma gives access to different university degrees regulated by the education authorities. This enables people to continue studying and have their efforts recognised (ME, 2011b).

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<sup>(22)</sup> The net entry rates to vocational training cycles provide indicators of the percentage of people expected to access each of the programmes throughout their lives, based on the age distribution of new entrants to education (basic, intermediate or higher level VET), and their relationship with the total population in each age group.

In addition to the general system at this level, there are other programmes that are not integrated into the levels, stages or cycles that make up the general system (from preschool to post-secondary education). These are also academically valid State-wide and are referred to as specialised education (*enseñanzas del régimen especial*). They can be taken at the same time as the general system courses (Table 3).

Vocational arts education, both in music and dance and in visual arts and design (ISCED levels 354 and 554) aim to provide quality artistic training and to ensure the qualification of future professionals in music, dance and visual arts, design, and heritage conservation. The higher programmes are offered at schools specialised according to the field of studies and level of education concerned. Learners who successfully complete the higher programme receive the higher technician diploma of the corresponding speciality.

Sports education aims to prepare students for professional activity in the sports system in relation to a sport modality or speciality at the different levels (initiation, technification and high performance), and to facilitate the adaptation of trained technicians to the evolution of the world of work and sports and active citizenship.

These sports programmes are organised in training cycles of intermediate and higher levels, with different access requirements in each case. Students who successfully complete the high-level programmes receive the higher sports technician diploma.

#### 2.3.4. Specialisation courses

The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training started in 2019 to publish the basic curricula for specialisation courses (*cursos de especialización*). These programmes are aimed at intermediate and higher VET graduates, to upskill them in the same field of study, broaden their occupation-specific competences and enable the acquisition of digital skills in line with the emerging needs of the economy.

New specialisation courses are being developed in relation to the integration of digital technologies into all economic activities, taking into account the industry 4.0 revolution, and the green transition. Currently, there are **21 specialisation courses** available, with variable length (300-900 hours) and some include an on-the-job training module.

### 2.3.5. WBL and dual VET

Work-based learning (WBL) is a key component of all VET programmes, so learners must spend time in a real work environment.

VET diplomas integrate WBL into school-based programmes through on-site labs, workshops, business simulations or real business/industry projects. The aim is to create real-life work environments and, in some cases, establish contacts and/or cooperation with real companies or clients and develop entrepreneurship skills.

Every formal VET programme has a specific on-the-job training module, compulsory for achieving the qualification. The length varies, from 240 hours in basic VET programmes to 400 hours in intermediate and higher VET ones. This on-the-job training can be validated and exempted fully or partially, with at least 1 year labour experience in the professional field of the programme. In the case of professional certificate programmes, their specific workplace module can vary in length.

With the aim of strengthening work-based learning elements and allowing for more apprenticeship-like models to evolve, in 2012 the Government regulated a dual training model through the Royal Decree No 1529/2012 (Ministry of Presidency, 2012) which set the basis for apprenticeship or dual VET as it is known in Spain (*formación profesional dual*).

It defined dual VET as the set of training actions and initiatives addressing the professional qualification of people, combining teaching and learning processes in the company and in the training centre. It established the bases for the progressive implementation of dual vocational training in Spain, regulating:

- (a) the training and apprenticeship contracts;
- (b) the dual vocational training in the education system.

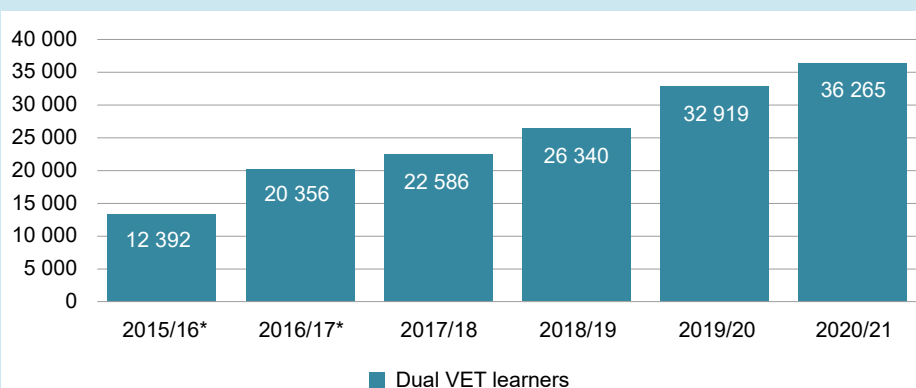
Training and apprenticeship contracts had been in place before, but students were not guaranteed to gain a formal qualification.

In the education system, dual programmes were carried out according to the approved dual training projects presented by the education centres to their regional education authorities. These projects included collaboration agreements between companies and the education centres specifying, among other issues, their commitments to carry out the dual VET project. Apprentices could receive some remuneration in the form of grant (the most common option), a salary if training and apprenticeship contracts are concluded, or no remuneration at all, depending on the region's regulation.

Different measures have been introduced to develop alternance training models, promote youth employment and the acquisition of a vocational qualification, strengthen the links between companies and VET providers, and encourage the greater involvement of students in the labour market during their training period.

Nevertheless, the number of students taking dual VET programmes is still very low. In the academic year 2020/21, learners enrolled in dual IVET programmes only represent around 4% of the total IVET learners (Figure 8).

**Figure 8. Evolution of the number of dual VET learners 2015-21**



NB: (\*) Missing data from one region.

Source: MEFP. Statistics.

To respond to the challenge of transforming VET into a model of excellence, the Organic Law on VET expands the dual principle, considering not only the time spent in the company, but also the quality of the time spent in the workplace and the learning outcomes addressed during that time. It also promotes shared responsibility between VET centres and the surrounding enterprises, to work together to deliver the curriculum.

Two dual regimes are foreseen in this Organic Law, depending on the time spent in a company, the percentage of the curriculum learned and performed at work, and the status of the person in training:

- (a) general regime: with in-company time of 25-35% of the training's programme total duration, the company's commitment to participate in up to 20% of the curriculum content and learning outcomes, and no labour relationship required;

- (b) intensive regime: with in-company training from 35% of the total duration and the company's collaboration with the training centre in developing more than 30% of the curriculum. The learner must be hired by a company (or several if needed to cover the whole qualification) under the terms determined by labour legislation.

The Organic Law on VET provides for a transitional period for the adaptation of the in-company training period until 31 December 2024, and until 31 December 2028 for the transition from the dual vocational training grant system to a training contract.

Apprentices are entitled to social security contributions, regardless of the dual regime applied, and those in the intensive dual regime sign a training contract.

Royal Decree No 1529/2012 contributed to the expansion of training and apprenticeship contracts from 2011 onwards, reaching a peak in 2015. However, in 2016, this type of contracting registered a notable decline due to the requirement that the training had to be certifiable and also to the availability of other types of contracting that could be used for the same purpose. The number of training and apprenticeship contracts has fallen significantly since then, one of the factors for reforming training contracts in 2021.

The training and apprenticeship contract was modified by Royal Decree Law No 32/2021 (Head of State, 2021), which now has two modalities:

- (a) contract for alternance training (*contrato de formación en alternancia*): this can last between 3 months and 2 years and be used for training processes in VET programmes, university studies or the catalogue of training specialities of the national employment system <sup>(23)</sup> (Section 2.4.2). It must include the collaboration agreement between the training centre and the company. The effective working day must not exceed 65% in the first year or 85% in the second year; remuneration may not be less than 60% in the first year or 75% in the second year or less than the minimum wage proportional to the working day. It allows several companies to participate in a contract for the same training programme <sup>(24)</sup>;
- (b) contract for professional practice (*contrato formativo para la obtención de la práctica profesional adecuada al nivel de estudios*): this may be signed up to 3 years after obtaining the qualification (5 years in the case of people with

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<sup>(23)</sup> The national employment system comprises the set of structures, measures and actions necessary to promote and develop employment policy. It comprises the State Public employment service and the public employment services of the autonomous communities.

<sup>(24)</sup> [More information about alternance training \(Contratación para la Formación en Alternancia\).](#)

disabilities), for a duration of between 6 months and 1 year. The remuneration will be according to the collective agreement for that job, and there must be a practical training plan and tutorial follow-up. At the end of the contract, the employee is entitled to work experience content certification.

### **2.3.6. Other training programmes**

These programmes include training aimed at early school leavers over 17 years of age without any vocational qualification to enable them to obtain a VET accreditation, certificate, or diploma to facilitate their employability.

They are organised in collaboration with local and provincial authorities, as well as with other entities catering for different profiles, such as those who failed at school, with disabilities, ethnic minorities, the long-term unemployed and, in general, those at risk of social and labour exclusion or in a situation of vulnerability. Programmes offered are adapted to their specific needs.

They may also include agreements with organisations and entities to promote the attainment of post-compulsory secondary education.

Vocational training centres, companies, associations, or other entities authorised for this purpose, can provide these programmes. Their duration is variable, depending on the needs of the target groups and the learning outcomes or professional modules included. Successful completion of the specific training programmes leads to the award of a certificate or diploma issued by the competent administration.

### **2.3.7. Special training needs**

Students with special education needs are those who require and receive educational attention that is different from the mainstream.

They are identified by the educational guidance teams or services as requiring, for a period of their schooling or throughout their schooling, certain support and specific educational attention related to disabilities, serious disorders or special circumstances. These may include, for example, hearing, motor, intellectual or visual disabilities, generalised developmental disorders and serious behavioural/personality disorders; or they may be students with specific education needs, such as those with high intellectual ability, late integration into the Spanish education system, maturation delay, language and communication development disorders, learning disorders, severe lack of knowledge of the language of instruction, or in a situation of socio-educational disadvantage. Learners attending ordinary schools or special education centres can remain in school until they are at least 21 years of age (Table 5).

**Table 5. Learners with specific education support needs enrolled in VET in 2020-21 and share of total learners**

| IVET levels  | Total | Share (%) |
|--------------|-------|-----------|
| Basic        | 5 199 | 6.8       |
| Intermediate | 7 940 | 2.2       |
| Higher       | 2 888 | 0.7       |

Source: MEFP. Consejo Escolar del Estado.

Both the Organic Law No 3/2020 on Education and the Organic Law No 3/2022 on VET provide for specific measures for people with special education needs when they are unable to follow mainstream education; they aim to guarantee equal opportunities and non-discrimination. The education authorities may organise specific provisions of basic training cycles for them.

They may also authorise and organise specific training programmes (Section 2.3.6) for the following target groups:

- (a) unqualified persons over the age of 16 who are working, in order to enable them to obtain a vocational certificate or a vocational training diploma;
- (b) those over 16 years of age who have not completed their schooling in the Spanish education system and who have difficulties in entering it;
- (c) individuals or groups at a disadvantage in the labour market or at risk of social exclusion.

The implementation of these programmes requires the collaboration and participation of the local administration, non-profit organisations working in labour market integration and second-chance centres.

### **2.3.8. Training for sector-regulated qualifications**

Training programmes and qualifications in specific sectors, such as the maritime, aviation and other industries, as well as in the military and security, are regulated by other State administration bodies and not the education or employment authorities. Some of these regulatory organisms recognise specific VET diplomas and professional certificates (Section 2.4.1) to qualify their holders to carry out the profession, although they have independent certification in several cases.



## 2.4. Government-regulated continuing vocational training

Continuing vocational training (CVT) includes different types of programmes, which are organised by the education, employment and local authorities:

- (a) the education authorities provide training to improve basic skills or to obtain a formal adult qualification;
- (b) the employment authorities organise vocational training linked to active labour market policies and on-the-job training. These training measures are aimed at both employed and unemployed people. The aim is to improve the employability of the active population;
- (c) local administrations are responsible for the provision of non-formal education and, in some cases, formal education when agreements are signed with the education administrations.

Within the provision made by education authorities are programmes to obtain a vocational diploma, from basic to higher levels (in a face-to-face or distance modality), offered either on a full-time or modular vocational basis. This also includes preparation for the entrance examination to one of these vocational programmes or for the final examination to obtain the technician or higher technician diploma. There is also a specific provision for adults, the professional certificates.

### 2.4.1. Professional certificates

Professional certificates are formal qualifications issued until 2020 by the employment authorities. With the redistribution of ministerial powers in 2020 (Ministry of Territorial Policy and Public Function, 2020), the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training took over all programmes leading to the acquisition of professional certificates.

Professional certificate programmes are based on the occupational standards that make up the CNCP and are organised in the same 26 professional branches. As the competence unit is the minimum unit to be certified, it is possible to gain partial credits for a professional certificate.

They are valid nationally; a common curriculum is set for each programme regardless of the region and irrespective of the teaching mode (full-time, e-learning). Holding a professional certificate indicates the ability to work in a particular field, in line with the classification of occupations, and guarantees

the necessary vocational training, although it does not regulate professional activities (this is done by the relevant body in that profession).

Professional certificate programmes are organised on three levels, level 1 being the most basic and level 3 the most complex. They have a modular structure with learning outcomes, assessment criteria and contents and guidelines for providers which are fully employment-oriented. Each professional certificate also includes a compulsory on-the-job training module (*módulo de formación práctica en centros de trabajo*) whose learning outcomes must be assessed in the workplace.

The total duration of the professional certificate programmes <sup>(25)</sup> varies, according to the structure of competences and learning outcomes to be acquired without reference to a specific academic year or limits of hours (maximum or minimum). Current certificates have a margin between 180 and 1 110 hours. The duration of the on-the-job training module depends on the profile and occupations included in the curriculum of each certificate, ranging from 5% to 52% of the total workload of the training programme (Table 6).

**Table 6. Features of the 585 professional certificates programmes listed in the national catalogue of occupational standards**

| Professional certificate programmes by level | Number of programmes | Total duration (range of hours) | Range of hours for on-the-job training module |
|--|----------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Level 1                                      | 77                   | 290-510                         | 30-240  |
| Level 2                                      | 254                  | 180-920                         | 30-430  |
| Level 3                                      | 254                  | 350-1110                        | 30-360  |

Source: MEFP.

#### 2.4.1.1. Non-formal adult training provision in the education remit

Adult training offers people over 18 the possibility to acquire, update, complete, or expand their knowledge and skills for their personal and professional development.

Provision is large and diverse, encompassing literacy processes and basic education, targeting integration into the labour market, and leisure activities. Distance learning provision for adults is widely available at present to ease access.

<sup>(25)</sup> [More information about the professional certificate programmes \(Certificados Profesionales\).](#)

For example, the *Aula mentor* programme is an open and flexible training offer via the Internet, promoted by the MEFP. It is aimed at the adult population that is unable to attend face-to-face training and whose learning pace and/or commitment requires a high degree of flexibility that is not subject to schedules or timetables. Consisting of more than 200 constantly updated online courses, covering a wide range of skills (basic skills enabling access to other vocational programmes or facilitating access to the labour market), the *Aula mentor* programme provides a non-formal training pathway with distance tutorial support through a learning platform, together with a large network of physical classrooms (*Aulas mentor*) managed by a classroom manager.

With a total of 1 126 physical classrooms in operation and 14 272 people enrolled during the 2022/23 academic year, the *Aula mentor* scheme is consolidated an online learning alternative for the improvement of digital and VET-related competences of inhabitants in villages with less than 5 000 population, specifically rural women.

For quality assurance purposes, learners must carry out all activities and pass the tests at the classrooms in *Aula mentor* set up. Upon completion, they obtain an achievement certificate issued by the MEFP which has no academic value but may be considered in the labour market. It is also possible to follow a training pathway associated with the VET offer.

Each training pathway is composed of several courses, which can be taken flexibly and independently in any order. On completing a pathway, it is possible to take part in a procedure for the assessment and accreditation of professional competences (Section 3.3). If successful, at least one competence unit can be accredited, the minimum set of accreditable professional competences. From there, it is possible to continue studying for a professional certificate or a training cycle.

#### **2.4.2. Vocational training in active labour market policies and on-the-job training**

In the early 1990s, agreements between major social partners and the government laid the foundations for developing continuing vocational training for the active population.

The Organic Law No 5/2002 on qualifications and vocational training led to the consolidation of two provisions under the VET system: one managed by education authorities leading to IVET qualifications, and the other driven by the employment authorities, with the professional certificates. Both kinds of

qualifications were referred to the catalogue of occupational standards, valid throughout the national territory and issued by the competent authorities.

Subsequent reforms culminated in 2007 (MTAS, 2007) in the vocational training for employment subsystem, lately reformed in 2015 (Head of State, 2015). This involved the integration of different initiatives targeting the working population, both employed and unemployed, to promote training to meet the needs of a knowledge-based economy.

The organisation of VET into two subsystems, initial VET and vocational training for employment, addressing different groups, unrelated to each other, was a source of major limitations in professional qualification and requalification in Spain, which the Organic Law No 3/2022 on VET seeks to overcome.

The redistribution of powers between education and employment authorities in 2020 resulted in the MEFP becoming responsible for formal VET, i.e. IVET diplomas and professional certificate programmes, to create a single system, as laid down in the Organic Law on VET.

Employment authorities continue to have responsibility over vocational training in the framework of active labour market policies, referred to as training for employment in the labour scope (*formación para el empleo en el ámbito laboral*), until a new regulatory framework is developed.

This provision, addressing (un)employed workers, offers training courses included in the [catalogue of training specialities](#) of the State public employment service. It is designed for different needs and skill profiles, allowing upskilling or reskilling. It is financed through different schemes at State and regional levels with public funds, mainly from vocational training contributions made by private companies and workers to the social security system (Section 4.1.3.2).

A training speciality consists of 'the grouping of professional competences, contents, and technical specifications that respond to a set of work activities framed in a phase of the production process and related functions, or to the acquisition of transversal competences necessary in a professional environment and context' (MITRAMISS, 2019a, Article 3.1).

Each speciality details the competences to be achieved, requirements, and associated costs of the training programmes, which serves as the base for public funding. The catalogue of training specialities (MITRAMISS, 2019a) is organised around the same 26 sector branches and qualification levels set in the national catalogue of occupational standards.

The catalogue of training specialities serves as the common reference for the programming of training actions in all training for employment initiatives aimed at employed and unemployed workers, except those scheduled by companies for

their workers. It is also a support instrument for career guidance carried out by the public employment services.

Providers wishing to receive public funds to deliver these specialities must be registered in the [registry of training entities](#) (MITRAMISS, 2019b) <sup>(26)</sup>, which, together with the catalogue of training specialities, derives from Law No 30/2015 regulating vocational training for employment system in the labour scope.

The State public employment service, along with the autonomous community employment authorities, are responsible for maintaining and updating the catalogue of training specialities and the registry of training entities.

Law No 30/2015 aimed to increase CVT quality and improve management of public funds. Discussions are under way to meet new challenges and adapt this provision to the new scenario set by more recent regulations. Law No 3/2023 on employment already states that the principles, objectives and regulation of training for employment will be subject to specific regulation in the coming future.

Currently, Law No 30/2015 provides for the funding of the following types of training schemes:

- (a) training organised by companies for their employees (*formación programada por la empresa*), through bonuses or discounts on social security contributions (Section 4.2);
- (b) subsidised training schemes through open calls for proposals, such as sectoral and cross-sectoral training programmes for the (self-)employed, including those working in the social economy (cooperatives) (*planes de formación intersectoriales, sectoriales, autónomos, y economía social*);
- (c) subsidised training schemes for the unemployed, including 'training plans' (*planes de formación*) aimed at meeting needs identified by the public employment services and specific training programmes. These are funded through open calls for proposals;
- (d) other training initiatives, such as individual training leave (*permisos individuales de formación*, PIF), alternance training (*formación en alternancia*), civil servant training, and training in prisons. The way in which these initiatives are funded varies.

There are other, smaller training-employment schemes <sup>(27)</sup>, as well as other ad hoc training activities developed by public authorities within their line of work.

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<sup>(26)</sup> The State register of training entities of vocational training for employment in the workplace lists all training providers offering vocational programmes outside the education system which are entitled to receive public funding under this framework.

<sup>(27)</sup> [More information about smaller training-employment schemes.](#)

According to the last Organic Law No 3/2023 on employment, the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy is responsible for drawing up and developing regulations on job training (*formación en el trabajo*). This new regulation also foresees the transformation of the State public employment service into the Spanish employment agency (*Agencia Española de Empleo*).

## 2.5. Financing VET

The Spanish education system has decentralised management and administration. Education powers are shared between State authorities in the education and labour remits, and the autonomous communities (departments for education) at the regional level.

Through the sectoral conferences, in the educational and labour remits, the State and regions agree on annual fund distribution criteria to each region to implement their upskilling and reskilling schemes.

The general system for the transfer of funding to each autonomous community is settled by means of a multilateral agreement between regional governments and the State. This guarantees, through a series of mechanisms, solidarity between territories and a certain level of expenditure for the provision of the basic public services throughout the country.

The autonomous communities enjoy a high degree of management autonomy, and are entitled to approve their own annual budget and to decide on the distribution of their resources.

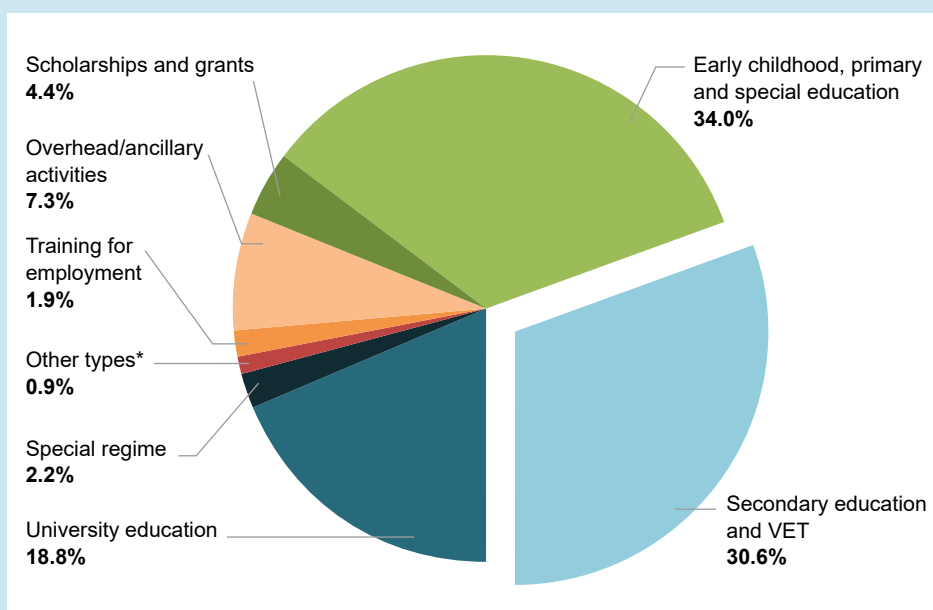
### 2.5.1. Funding of VET in the education system

Formal IVET is mostly State financed. The largest share of funding on IVET comes from public sources, mainly from education and employment authorities at State, regional and local levels.

The share of public expenditure on education in terms of GDP share stands at 4.94% in 2021, the same as in 2020 (MEFP, 2023b). In terms of the distribution of public expenditure on different educational activities, secondary education and vocational training account for 30.6% of total public spending on education (Figure 9).

Private funding in IVET supplements public expenditure and covers expenses, such as books and school materials, meals, transport, and extracurricular activities. In private, non-grant-aided schools, families must pay for registration and tuition fees.

Figure 9. **Distribution of public expenditure on education (\*) by activity (2021)**



NB: (\*) For the calculation of this distribution, adjustment and undistributed by activity items have been excluded.

Source: MEFP, 2023b.

The Government announced in July 2020 a plan for the modernisation of vocational training (*plan de modernización de la formación profesional*) which aimed at boosting VET in Spain, guaranteeing quality training and skills for all.

This modernisation plan is based on the concept of a single vocational training system, laid down later in Organic Law No 3/2022 on VET, and encompasses 11 strategic areas with the aim of creating an ecosystem for economic revival, based on a commitment to human capital and talent.

It has a budget of EUR 1 500 million, the largest VET plan Spain has ever had, which will increase with funds from the European Union's recovery plan.

The national recovery and resilience plan (Government of Spain, 2021b) component No 20 (Strategic plan for the promotion of VET) echoes the goals set in the plan for the modernisation of vocational training, allocating an estimated total investment of EUR 2 076 million.

Among the measures foreseen are:

- (a) creation of new training places in IVET schools until 2024, enabling validation processes;
- (b) development and mobility of VET teachers;
- (c) conversion of classrooms into applied technology spaces;
- (d) creation of entrepreneurship classrooms;
- (e) implementing professional certificate training programmes for the employed and unemployed workforce;
- (f) upskilling and reskilling activities of the labour force, with a particular focus on those sectors with the highest number of workers in temporary lay-off plans (*expedientes de regulación temporal de empleo*);
- (g) care sector and areas at risk of depopulation;
- (h) promoting dual vocational training;
- (i) funding innovation projects for students;
- (j) developing computer applications and databases applicable to quality actions;
- (k) improving the skills of intermediate-level students.

### **2.5.2. Vocational training funding and active labour market policies**

The main funding source for vocational training as part of ALMPs comes from the State budget, through the training levy that all private companies and workers must pay as part of the social security contribution. This is calculated by multiplying by 0.70% company contributions for common contingencies; 0.60% is provided by the company and the remaining 0.10% by the worker. Other contributions come from SEPE and the regions.

Since 2020, with the redistribution of ministerial powers between the education and labour ministries, the education authorities receive a share of this funding to provide training linked to the catalogue of occupational standards, targeting (un)employed workers.

Funding for State-wide training schemes for the employed, not linked to the CNCP, is managed by Fundae together with SEPE. At regional level, training schemes are managed by the regional employment authorities. The National Institute of Public Administration (INAP) manages training for civil servants (Table 7).



Table 7. Governance and target groups: CVET in ALMPs

| Vocational training for employment: core indicators 2021       |   |   |                    |                     |
|--|---|---|--------------------|---------------------|
| Training schemes   | Type  | Governance/<br>target audience                                | 2021 budget<br>(€) | Participants<br>(*) |
| Training provision for employed workers                        | Subsidised training schemes                               | Regions, SEPE and Fundae/employed and unemployed workers      | 377 829 253        | 577 655             |
|  |   | INAP/<br>civil servants                                       | 6 488 530          | N/A                 |
| Training provision for unemployed workers                      | Subsidised training schemes                               | Regions and SEPE/<br>unemployed (and employed) workers        | 154 653 484        | (**) 87 851         |
| Training programmed by companies/<br>individual training leave | Training schemes within companies                         | SEPE-Fundae (training managed by companies)/company employees | 488 800 000        | 4 835 822           |
|  |   |   |                    | (***) (4 328)       |
| Alternance training  | Training as part of apprenticeship contracts (IVET/ CVET) | Regions and SEPE/<br>unemployed workers                       | 17 984 131         | 19 483              |
|  | Employment and training schemes (****)                    | Regions and SEPE/<br>unemployed workers                       | 629 114 930        | 13 232              |
| Total budget 2021  |   |   | 1 674 870 328      | 5 538 371           |

NB: N/A: Data not available.

(\*) Data available at the time of reporting.

(\*\*) Includes information from all the autonomous communities.

(\*\*\*) Number of workers with training leave.

(\*\*\*\*) Workshop- and craft-laboratories (*Escuelas taller, Talleres de empleo and Casas de oficios*) <sup>(28)</sup>.

Source: SEPE, 2021.

These funds are allocated to various funding schemes, providing training free of charge for the unemployed and employed. With the national recovery and resilience plan, additional funding is now available to meet workforce challenges. The plan component No 23 (New public policies for a dynamic, resilient and inclusive labour market), sets the challenge and objective of promoting, within the framework of social dialogue, the reform of the Spanish labour market, giving

<sup>(28)</sup> More information about Training opportunities for jobs in the local economy.

a boost to ALMPs focused on training workers in the areas of greatest need for the country's economy.

This makes it possible to launch a large number of investments to develop various projects, programmes and actions in the following areas: youth employment; women's employment and gender mainstreaming in public policies to support activation for employment; acquisition of new skills for digital, green and productive transformation; new territorial projects for rebalancing and equity; digital skills for employment; governance and strengthening ALMPs <sup>(29)</sup>. With an implementation period from 2021 to 2025, the following can be highlighted:

- (a) the *TandEM* youth employment scheme. This combines alternating training and employment, applied to projects of public and social interest carried out by bodies and agencies of the General State Administration and involving the training of young people between 16 and 29 years of age. Investment: EUR 120 million;
- (b) first programme for professional experience in public administration (ReferNet Spain and Cedefop, 2023). This is aimed at unemployed young people who have completed their education and training. Investment: EUR 330 million;
- (c) *Investigo* scheme. This is an employment plan for young people who are researchers in universities, research centres and companies. Investment: EUR 315 million;
- (d) vocational retraining scheme for workers in the tourism sector. Investment: EUR 119 million;
- (e) training scheme to promote recruitment in strategic sectors of public interest. Investment: EUR 120 million;
- (f) training for workers in temporary redundancy (ERTE in Spanish). Investment: EUR 119 million;
- (g) employment projects for the most vulnerable groups to redress territorial and equity imbalances. This includes:
  - (i) integrated projects for access to the labour market through personalised and individualised pathways, including various activities, such as counselling, training, job search, targeted at the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups (only from 2021 to 2023);

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<sup>(29)</sup> More information about the Recovery, transformation and resilience plan (*Plan de Recuperación, Transformación y Resiliencia*).

- (ii) the Digital skills for employment scheme, which aims to improve the digital skills of the unemployed to promote entrepreneurship and rural development and to reduce the gender gap.

## 2.6. VET providers

Different types of institutions and bodies may offer vocational training leading to State-recognised vocational qualifications associated with the national catalogue of occupational standards.

The network of schools providing secondary education consists of:

- (a) institutions fully or partially supported by public funds, i.e. public schools and publicly funded private schools;
- (b) private schools, with exclusively private sources of funding.

All schools in the State, regardless of ownership and source of funding, must meet a series of minimum requirements regarding the academic qualifications of teachers, learner-teacher ratios, teaching and sports facilities, and the number of school places.

The institutions and bodies that may provide vocational training must be included in the regional administrative registry and in the [State registry of centres](#). They can be:

- (a) public and private institutions authorised and accredited for this purpose by the competent administration. Public centres are designated as follows:
  - (i) secondary education institutions (*institutos de educación secundaria*, IES), when they provide compulsory secondary education (*educación secundaria obligatoria*, ESO), baccalaureate and vocational training;
  - (ii) vocational training institutions (*centro de formación profesional*) when they only provide vocational training programmes;
- (b) integrated vocational training centres (*centros integrados de formación profesional*, CIFP). These are centres specialising in vocational training leading to the award of VET qualifications (VET diplomas or professional certificates). Their training offer is entirely vocational training;
- (c) national reference centres (*centros de referencia nacional*). These are public centres that carry out innovation and experimentation actions regarding VET, specialising in the different productive sectors;
- (d) public or private bodies with which the competent administrations sign agreements or establish any other form of collaboration, including institutions considered as second-chance centres;

- (e) public or private companies which, with their own or outsourced resources, carry out training actions for their own workers;
- (f) business organisations and trade unions, as well as other bodies fulfilling the requirements set in VET subsidising schemes (Section 2.4.2);
- (g) any institution that is authorised by its autonomous community (associated centres).

## 2.7. VET teachers and trainers

### 2.7.1. VET teachers and trainers

Teaching professionals in VET schools, whether in VET-only institutions or in secondary education schools, can be distinguished as follows:

- (a) secondary education teachers: they usually deliver the common modules and the more theoretical occupation-specific training modules;
- (b) technical vocational teachers: they are in charge of delivering the more practical occupation-specific training modules.

In addition, experts may be hired by VET schools in different professional sectors.

With the publication of the Organic Law on VET, all technical vocational teachers with a university degree (or equivalent) will become part of the body of secondary education teachers, according to Royal Decree No 800/2022 of 4 October. For those VET programmes with no university degree of reference, a new teaching body called Teachers specialising in specific sectors of VET is to be set <sup>(30)</sup>.

VET teachers must fulfil the following requirements:

- (a) university degree or other equivalent qualifications for teaching;
- (b) pedagogical and teaching training at postgraduate level (university master degree in teacher training for secondary education, baccalaureate, vocational training and language teaching) university degree or other equivalent qualifications for teaching.

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<sup>(30)</sup> These teachings are related to aesthetics; catering services; graphic production; hairdressing; machining and machine maintenance; manufacture and installation of carpentry and furniture; pattern and dressmaking; motor vehicle maintenance; welding.

Entry into the profession in public education institutions requires the candidates pass a merit-based selection and a competitive examination (Sancha Gonzalo, 2022).

VET teacher supply and demand varies according to each speciality; public authorities may, on specific occasions, resort to hiring expert professionals, who may not meet the academic requirements but have several years of professional experience both in the field and in delivering training outside the education system. Holding the 380-hour professional certificate Teaching of vocational training for employment (*Docencia de la formación profesional para el empleo*), which qualifies an individual to be a trainer in non-formal education <sup>(31)</sup>, may be an additional asset.

The Organic Law on VET broadens the role of VET teachers to encompass other functions, apart from teaching. The dual VET prospector is dedicated to connecting VET centres and companies to promote new collaboration agreements for dual VET programmes (and FCT modules), and is already in place in some autonomous communities. This role can also be carried out by people outside the school system (for example employers' associations and trade unions) or other specialised support staff in the training of people with disabilities.

In contrast, trainers delivering training specialities must fulfil the requirements set in the catalogue of training specialities, so the activity can receive public funding. These requirements refer to their qualification, experience and teaching expertise.

### 2.7.2. Trainers in companies and other workplaces

In-company trainers or tutors, involved in the on-the-job training modules at workplaces and in dual VET, can participate in training delivery when needed.

There are no official regulations setting requirements in terms of teaching qualifications for such tutors. Their role is to guide the learner/apprentice learning process and to monitor and assess them while in the company.

The in-company tutor in charge of apprenticeships with contract for alternance training must have the appropriate training or experience for such tasks and is responsible for monitoring the individual training plan in the company, as provided for in the cooperation agreement with the training centre (Head of State, 2021).

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<sup>(31)</sup> More information about the Professional certificate level 3 in SSCE0110 teaching vocational training for employment.

### 2.7.3. Continuing professional development of teachers and trainers

Continuing professional development (CPD) activities address the improvement and updating of teachers' technical, pedagogical/didactic, and transversal competences. Their participation is voluntary and encouraged with different economic and career incentives <sup>(32)</sup>; these training activities must be previously endorsed by the authorities, as validation and recognition of competences outside approved training activities is not possible.

Regional education authorities devise their own territorial CPD plans. These are developed with due regard for the demands expressed by schools, gathered by the training and resource centres, as well as national and European policies. The needs of teachers are also considered, either on their own initiative, as in the case of specific training needs, or through the action of school CPD coordinators, who usually inform the training and resource centres.

Teacher training activities can take multiple forms, from in-person or online courses and seminars to working groups or training projects in education institutions. They can take part in these activities outside their teaching hours, during the compulsory time of permanence at school or during working hours if they take place outside the education institution. CPD of teachers at privately owned VET institutions might also lead to additional payments to stimulate their initiative in improving their training and quality in the provision of services. The national reference centres, with the participation of the education authorities, have also been drawing up plans to upskill the VET teaching staff. The aim of these plans is to schedule, deliver and evaluate training for the updating and technical improvement of VET teachers. Drafting the plans reflects the proposals of the education administrations, the identification of new trends in vocational training, or those involving new technologies, tools, industrial processes, didactic resources, contents, and methodologies, as well as EU guidelines.

There are no specific CPD provisions for trainers/tutors at workplaces. Such professionals may receive, free of charge, specific training funded within the vocational training for employment system. Under this umbrella, VET teachers can also participate in training activities organised by their own VET school; or they can participate in the subsidised training offer, addressing national and regional priorities as well as sectoral ones set by the main social partners (sectoral joint structures) in the education sector.

The plan for the modernisation of VET comprises different lines of action addressing the digital competences of teachers. It sets the objective of upskilling

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<sup>(32)</sup> A minimum of 100 hours of training must be completed within 6 years in order to be eligible for a salary supplement. Recognition of this training is given for every 10 hours in activities approved by education authorities.

all VET teachers with a 30-hour training module. Spain is committed to certifying the digital competences of at least 80% of 700 000 non-university teachers by 2024 <sup>(33)</sup>.

The National Institute of Educational Technologies and Teacher Training (INTEF) provides continuing pedagogical development on digital education through tutored courses, and massive, nano, and self-paced open online courses (MOOCs, NOOCs, and SPOOCs respectively) <sup>(34)</sup>. It is also in charge of fostering:

- (a) exchange of experiences and resources among teachers through professional networks;
- (b) development and dissemination of curricular materials and other support documents for teachers;
- (c) design of teacher training models;
- (d) design and implementation of specific programmes, in collaboration with the autonomous communities.

The reference framework for digital competence in teaching (MEFP, 2020a) guides initial and in-service teacher training and supports the development of a digital culture in schools and classrooms.

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<sup>(33)</sup> Component No 19 of Spain's recovery and resilience plan.

<sup>(34)</sup> [More information about open and social learning.](#)

## CHAPTER 3.

# Shaping VET qualifications





### 3.1. Anticipating skill needs

Skills anticipation in Spain takes place at different levels and in different bodies, involving substantial stakeholder/social partner engagement. Labour market and skills analysis is primarily based on data from:

- (a) labour force survey (LFS) statistics;
- (b) administrative data on employment;
- (c) registered unemployment data collected by employment authorities;
- (d) ad hoc surveys carried out by public or other institutions; these may take a sectoral or more general approach;
- (e) the alert network of the professional observatory of the National Qualifications Institute, which oversees monitoring the needs for new occupational standards in all 26 professional branches and updates the national catalogue of occupational standards, in cooperation with sectoral and territorial observatories.

These sources are used to monitor the labour market and quantify past trends to provide insight on how employment is changing.

According to the [Cedefop European skills index](#) (ESI), Spain ranks 30th in 2022 (Cedefop, 2022), as it did in 2020, still scoring low in all three pillars<sup>(35)</sup>.

Spain achieves its best position in the skills development pillar, scoring 41 out of 100, ahead of eight other countries (Italy, France, Malta, Portugal, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, and Cyprus). The country scores last in the skills matching pillar, and is ahead of Bulgaria and Italy in the skills activation pillar.

Several variables in the skills development pillar are related to vocational training and influence these results. One is the relatively low proportion of the population with medium-level qualifications compared to its European counterparts; the recent increase in VET enrolments will help to improve Spain's position. Spain's relatively positive situation concerning the population's digital skills, which places it in position 13th, also contributes to its better performance in this pillar.

With a score of 19 out of 100, Spain needs to improve the transition of young people to the labour market and further reduce early school-leaving rates to make progress in the skills activation pillar.

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<sup>(35)</sup> Cedefop's European skills index measures the performance of EU skill systems in three skills areas: development, activation and matching. A score of 100 corresponds to the highest score showing a perfect performance, while a score of 0 equals to the lowest score, the worst performance.

More and better career guidance at all levels, realising the integrated career guidance system, will contribute also to improving Spain's position. The VET system laid down by the Organic Act No 3/2022 aims to boost dual VET provision. Other impact measures in relation to science and innovation, linked with industrial and regional development policies, and further progress in digitisation, will offer great support to stimulate job creation.

It is the skills matching area where action is most needed, as Spain ranked last in all ESI editions. Increased and better employment prospects and better matching between people skills, qualifications and jobs, in a production environment capable of using and developing added value to the production chain, will help to improve Spain's position (Cedefop, 2022).

Education and employment authorities, at national and regional levels, have their own services for monitoring evolution of labour market trends and qualifications. Regular graduate tracking measures are established at regional level, without a national structural approach.

The 2015 reform of vocational training for employment (Head of State, 2015), put the labour ministry, through the [observatory](#) of the State public employment service, in charge of research and identification of training needs <sup>(36)</sup>.

The observatory works in coordination and cooperation with the autonomous communities (via the sectoral conference on employment and labour affairs), and the social partners (via the General Council for the National Employment System) (Section 2.2.2). It publishes reports on existing and future training needs, job offer profiles and labour market evolution and trends. It also publishes sectoral studies, using quantitative and qualitative techniques and constantly updated social and occupational indicators.

The national reference centres (Section 2.6) monitor changes in qualification demand in their sector and feed information into the anticipation system. They liaise with business and union organisations and universities and establish benchmarks for common use among them.

Since 2018, a new approach is being developed in the labour remit, which seeks all major stakeholders to work together (Cedefop and ReferNet, 2022), and turn the skill needs identified into training specialities.

This training needs anticipation approach, financed currently under the framework of the national recovery and resilience plan, is being implemented so far in 23 sectors in which the productive world is structured to provide effective responses to the training and reskilling needs of the labour market; this includes

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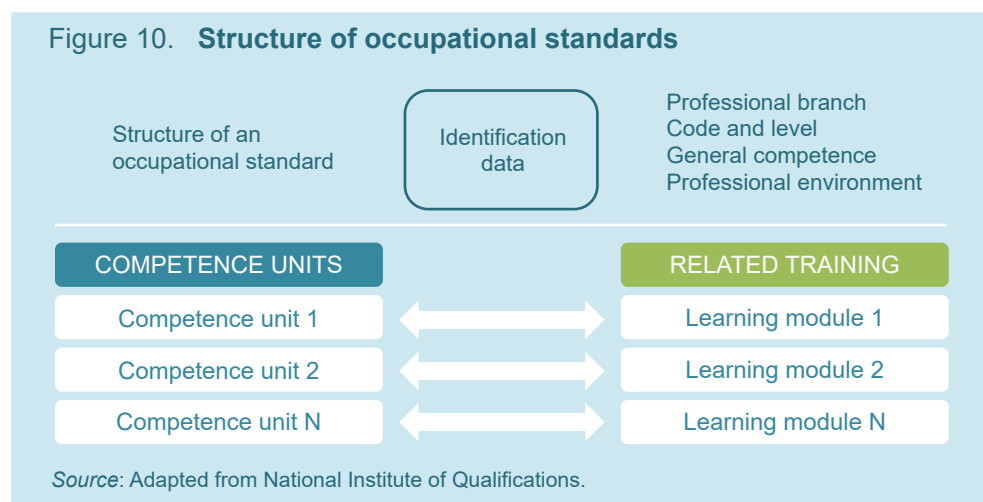
<sup>(36)</sup> [More information about the Observatory of Occupations \(Observatorio de las Ocupaciones del SEPE\).](#)

skills relevant to the digital and green transitions. It aims to anticipate changes and respond to the demand for skilled labour, contributing to the professional and personal development of workers and the competitiveness of companies.

## 3.2. Designing qualifications

The backbone of Spain's VET is the [national catalogue of occupational standards](#) (*catálogo nacional de cualificaciones profesionales*, CNCP), which comprises the most important occupations classified in 26 sector branches (*familias profesionales*). It currently has 756 occupational standards organised in three levels, according to the degree of complexity, autonomy, and responsibility necessary to carry out a work activity <sup>(37)</sup>.

Figure 10. Structure of occupational standards



Occupational standards <sup>(38)</sup>, consist of a set of competence units (*unidades de competencia*) reflecting the expected performance of a job holder in the respective occupation. A competence unit is defined as 'the minimum set of professional skills that can be partially recognised and certified' (Ministry of Presidency, 2003, Article 5.1b). Each competence unit is associated to a learning module, which describes the necessary learning (knowledge, skills and competences) required to achieve that unit. The learning specifications

<sup>(37)</sup> More information about the national catalogue of occupational standards (*El Catálogo Nacional de Cualificaciones Profesionales*).

<sup>(38)</sup> *Cualificación profesional* in the national context until Organic Law on VET. With the new regulation, it becomes the national catalogue of standards of vocational competence, still to be rolled out.

are expressed as capacities (learning outcomes) and their related assessment criteria, as well as the contents leading to the achievement of those capacities. The capacities to be completed in a real working environment are also identified (Figure 10).

Occupational standards are used by authorities to design VET qualifications (IVET diplomas and CVET professional certificates):

- (a) VET diplomas are composed of a set of these occupational standards <sup>(39)</sup>;
- (b) a single occupational standard is used for each professional certificate <sup>(40)</sup>.

The Government establishes the equivalences and recognition between VET diplomas and professional certificates through competence units. The Organic Law on VET regulates the correspondence between the units of competence and the professional learning modules that can be validated, a key element for recognition between a professional certificate and a VET qualification.

The national institute for qualifications is the body responsible for defining, drawing up and updating the national catalogue of occupational standards and the corresponding competence units and learning modules, in cooperation with the member organisations of the General Council for Vocational Training. Regions have an active role in the development of some sector branches according to their productive context; such is the case for Galicia in the maritime and fishing industry and for País Vasco in metalworking.

Experts from the 26 sector branches, covering both the productive and training sectors, work together to define occupational standards expressed in units of assessable competences corresponding to the reference occupational profiles in the production system. A competence unit is then described in terms of the professional tasks that skilled workers do. Each unit is associated with a competence level (1 to 3) according to the criteria of knowledge, initiative, autonomy and complexity of tasks.

VET diploma programmes consist of different modules: some are linked to occupational standards (the occupations covered by the diploma) while others ease access to employment, such as business and entrepreneurship (*empresa e iniciativa emprendedora*) or career information and guidance modules (*formación y orientación laboral*, FOL). Personal and social skills are also covered transversely in all modules making up the curriculum of VET programmes in the education system.

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<sup>(39)</sup> This set consists of several occupational standards, encompassing all or some of their competence units.

<sup>(40)</sup> In some exceptional cases, an occupational standard has given rise to two professional certificate programmes.

IVET programmes, defined according to learning outcomes, are approved by royal decrees for 55-65% of national curricula, ensuring the validity and the consistency of the qualifications nationally. Between 45 and 35% of the curricula contents are settled at regional level, according to the socioeconomic characteristics of the immediate environment. These royal decrees also establish the facilities, equipment requirements for VET providers, assessment criteria and teacher requirements for each VET diploma programme.

Professional certificates are State-recognised vocational qualifications issued by the employment authorities until 2020, and by the education authorities thereafter. They are based on the occupational standards in the CNCP and were developed and updated by SEPE with the cooperation of the national reference centres.

A common curriculum is set for each certificate programme, regardless of the region and irrespective of the type of training programme (full-time, e-learning).

Updating and reviewing all vocational standards, and therefore qualifications, is a continuous process, which involves all parties, including experts from companies and VET institutions. Several consultation rounds take place before a VET qualification is approved by the Government and all interested groups and institutions can express their considerations, being involved in all main advisory bodies. Proposed occupational standards and qualifications are externally validated. The general and regional administrations participate in this process, as well as business and trade union organisations, represented in the General Council for Vocational Training, national reference centres and other organisations – collectives, professional associations or companies – linked to the sector or area of activity of the qualification developed or updated.

Revision of occupational standards is based on current labour market needs analysis in terms of skill supply and demand in all sectors and professional branches. INCUAL collects information through various channels (observatory and alert network), using qualitative and quantitative approaches, and VET qualifications are updated accordingly. New occupational standards are created based on identified emerging professional profiles.

Since 2020, specialisation courses for intermediate or higher VET graduates to complement VET diplomas have also been developed. These are training programmes of between 300 and 900 hours <sup>(41)</sup>, which add to the skills of those who already have a VET qualification and want to specialise in emerging sectors with a high level of employability. The MEFP is developing these courses in collaboration with the most relevant companies in the sectors.

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<sup>(41)</sup> As defined in Article 27.3f of Royal Decree No 1147/2011, the maximum duration may exceptionally be exceeded if necessary.

The revision of the CNCP is mainly linked to the 11 strategic sectors identified in the national plan for the modernisation of vocational training <sup>(42)</sup> to guarantee that the training provision and vocational qualifications remain relevant to industry needs and help individuals to enter the labour market and remain employable.

The review process places a special focus on emerging sectors, such as industry 4.0, 5G communication networks, the circular economy, or green skills. The units of competences related to (foreign) language (as well as their respective training modules) have been modified/adjusted to the common levels established in the common European framework of reference for languages.

Currently, the Spanish VET systems comprises 585 professional certificates, 174 VET diplomas, and 21 specialisation courses. All VET diplomas include the Europass supplement.

Spain published its qualifications framework for lifelong learning (known as MECU) in April 2022 (Ministry of the Presidency, Relations with Parliament and Democratic Memory, 2022), which details the description of the levels not included, except for level 5A, in the Spanish framework of qualifications for higher education (MECES), regulated in 2011 (ME, 2011). MECU must still pass the compatibility certification process with the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning, which entails the evaluation of this regulation by international experts.

### 3.3. Recognition of prior learning

The validation of non-formal and informal learning allows workers to make their skills visible and assess their working experience, easing their reintegration into education and training. There are also other possibilities for the recognition of prior learning by means of different exams.

The process for validation of prior learning was regulated in 2009 (Ministry of the Presidency, 2009). It was amended in 2021 (MEFP, 2021), to streamline it and boost the number of people undergoing this procedure, as well as to meet validation needs of the different productive and service sectors. It is known as the procedure for the assessment and accreditation of professional

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<sup>(42)</sup> These 11 strategic sectors are: new advanced information technology; automated machine tools and robotics; aeronautical equipment; modern railway transport equipment; energy-based vehicles and new equipment; agricultural machinery; new materials; biopharmaceuticals and advanced medical products; consumer chain: manufacturers and distributors; hospitality and tourism; personal care services.

competences (*procedimiento para la evaluación y acreditación de competencias profesionales*).

With an initial budget of almost EUR 852.5 million, approved in 2021, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training set the goal of validating the skills of more than three million people in 4 years. Under the previous system, only 300 000 workers had had their skills recognised in 10 years.

Validation of prior learning aims to support skills creation to (re)enter the labour market, especially for early leavers and adults without or with low qualifications.

It is one of the major policies implemented in recent years and one of the main measures included in the plan for the modernisation of vocational training and in the Organic Law on VET. It is aimed at the nearly 10.5 million people in Spain who still do not have a vocational qualification or who do not have their vocational competences formally recognised.

Validation of prior learning allows workers to have their skills recognised either to find a job, move between workplaces or advance in their careers. The framework covers the whole spectrum of professional skills included in the national catalogue of occupational standards.

With the amendment published in 2021, individuals can apply, at any time, to have their skills validated. Regions are responsible for guidance services and quality assurance of the validation process, as well as for the registration of competence units validated. UCs are individually assessed and certified and may be accumulated towards a full IVET or CVET qualification. These procedures empower citizens to engage in further learning and acquire full qualifications.

The process begins with an initial counselling stage led by an advisor who draws up a guidance report on the applicant. The assessment phase involves analysis of the indicated report, the documentation provided by the candidate and different methods to verify the skills acquired in the workplace. The results of the assessment are transferred to a State registry.

The candidate's requirements vary according to the competence level of the unit they apply for:

- (a) for level 1 UCs, candidates must be at least 18 years old and have 2 years of experience (1 200 minimum hours worked) or 200 hours of training;
- (b) for levels 2 and 3 UCs, candidates must be at least 20 years old and have 3 years of experience (2 000 minimum hours worked) or 300 hours of training.

All participants receive a training plan drawn up by the assessment committee with guidelines on the further training they should take to obtain a full IVET diploma or a professional certificate.

Advisors and assessors are experts in the vocational sector, as are VET teachers or trainers who have been qualified for this task.

VET education centres, integrated VET centres and national reference centres can carry out these activities. Other venues may be authorised by the competent authorities.

The Organic Law on VET envisages a model of vocational training and validation of prior learning and vocational guidance based on training itineraries, facilitating progression from a lifelong perspective and structured on a double scale (Table 4):

- (a) five ascending grades (A, B, C, D and E) describing the training provision organised according to the CNCP;
- (b) three levels of professional competence (1 to 3), following the criteria of knowledge, initiative, autonomy and complexity of the tasks, set in the CNCP.

In the procedure for the recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning, applicants are required to present a Europass CV. Youthpass<sup>(43)</sup> is also accepted as part of the application. The Europass tools are much used by Spanish students, especially in university and higher VET.

Alongside the procedure for the validation of prior learning (*reconocimiento de las competencias profesionales adquiridas por experiencia laboral*), adults can take examinations to obtain an official qualification without having to complete the corresponding studies. These exams are periodically organised by the education authorities, and correspond to compulsory lower secondary education, upper secondary (*Bachillerato*) and vocational training offered in intermediate and higher VET programmes.

A national network of organisations promotes an online accreditation system to value and accredit the skills acquired by volunteers during their volunteering experience<sup>(44)</sup>.

Universities have developed their procedures for the recognition of professional and work experience for two different purposes: access to

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<sup>(43)</sup> Youthpass is a European recognition instrument for identifying and documenting learning outcomes acquired in projects under the Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps programmes.

<sup>(44)</sup> [More information about the Reconoce project: recognise the skills of volunteering.](#)



programmes (for people aged 40 and over) and as credits towards a university degree <sup>(45)</sup>.

### 3.3.1. Recognition of foreign vocational qualifications

There are two main possibilities for recognising a foreign non-university qualification:

- (a) approving foreign diplomas with their non-university Spanish equivalents and recognising their official validity in Spain (*homologación*);
- (b) validating foreign studies for non-university Spanish equivalents, which allows continuing studies in a Spanish education centre (*convalidación*).

To speed up the process, MEFP offers an electronic office where these procedures can be requested and managed online.

## 3.4. Quality assurance

Education authorities establish, with prior consent from the General Council for Vocational Training, the core quality indicators and requirements for education and training based on the national catalogue of occupational standards. The general organisation of vocational training in the education system and the requirements for VET centres are set per legislation <sup>(46)</sup>. The [State register of non-university teaching centres](#) lists all VET centres operating in the education sector.

The education system subscribes to a process of quality assurance (Eurydice España, 2019) covering all aspects of education activities. Two differentiated means are used:

- (a) inspection of the education system (including VET) organised between the State and regional education authorities; this is carried out on all elements and aspects of the education system, to ensure compliance with the law, guaranteeing of rights and observance of the duties of all those involved in the teaching and learning processes, the improvement of the education system and the quality and equity of education;

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<sup>(45)</sup> [Royal Decree No 861/2010](#) (ME, 2010) is the legal basis for the recognition of work experience in the form of credits towards an official university degree.

[Royal Decree No 412/2014](#) (MECD, 2014) is the legal basis for university admission procedures for adults: recognition of work experience to access university programmes for people over 40, and access examinations for people over 25 and people over 45.

<sup>(46)</sup> Article 46 of [Royal Decree 1147/2011](#), of July 29, which establishes the general organisation of vocational training in the education system.

- (b) evaluation of the education system, including assessment of school performance and teaching staff performance. The body responsible for the evaluation of the education system is the National Institute for Educational Evaluation and the corresponding bodies of the regional education authorities, within the scope of their competences.

In March 2022, Spain hosted the first European quality assurance in vocational education and training reference framework (EQAVET) pilot peer review in a virtual format. Spain presented to six other members of the EQAVET network its plans for a national quality model for VET based on EQAVET to implement VET reforms in the country. The evaluators had the opportunity to analyse the EQAVET quality model for Spain (QEMS) and reflect on possible improvements and ways to ensure its effectiveness. The discussions focused on the quality model, the quality assessment system and indicators for monitoring and self-evaluation (European Commission, 2022b).

Quality assurance in VET is threefold:

- (a) State-level;
- (b) regional level, by the autonomous communities;
- (c) local level, by education institutions.

Since 2000, [INEE](#), in collaboration with the autonomous communities, uses statistical indicators to carry out annual assessments; the results are used for policy decision-making. The process is in line with the European quality assurance reference framework.

The quality of the education system is guaranteed through: required conditions for schools and teachers; curriculum design and development; compulsory evaluation procedures; the supervision of centres and services by education inspections; and the use of State-wide education indicators.

Organic Law on VET includes the obligation to have a mechanism for the evaluation and quality of the system and, for the first time, the commitment to a periodic report on the state of vocational training. This report is to be drawn up by the State, in collaboration with the autonomous communities, and submitted to the General Council for Vocational Training and the State Education Council. A biennial report will be published on the state of the VET system. Every 4 years the report must include a study on the supply of training cycles and whether they meet student demand, the employability rate of VET learners and the present and future human capital needs of the public and private sectors.

The purpose of the evaluation of the VET system shall be:

- (a) the identification, description and analysis of the relevant elements for the quality of the offer and execution of vocational training programmes and actions, the accreditation of competences and career guidance;
- (b) the provision of evidence to enable informed decisions to be taken in order to improve the functioning of the system and the results it achieves.

Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship are among the principles and objectives of the Spanish VET education system. Education authorities, at different levels, may encourage quality, research, and innovation in VET through grants and prizes to training providers, with projects promoting improvement of technological, methodological and training processes, and encouraging cooperation with the business world.

At the end of each year, schools evaluate the results obtained to see if they are satisfactory and if the training offered is aligned with local socioeconomic needs.

For vocational training in ALMPs, the State public employment service, as coordinator of the national employment system, conducts annual assessments of training schemes as part of the annual monitoring plan of the employment training subsystem (National Employment System, 2011). This monitoring is carried out with the cooperation of the regions' employment services and Fundae. It is based on a system of indicators and focuses on quality, impact, effectiveness, and efficiency. Some of the evaluation indicators are referenced to the European quality assurance in vocational education and training reference framework guidelines.

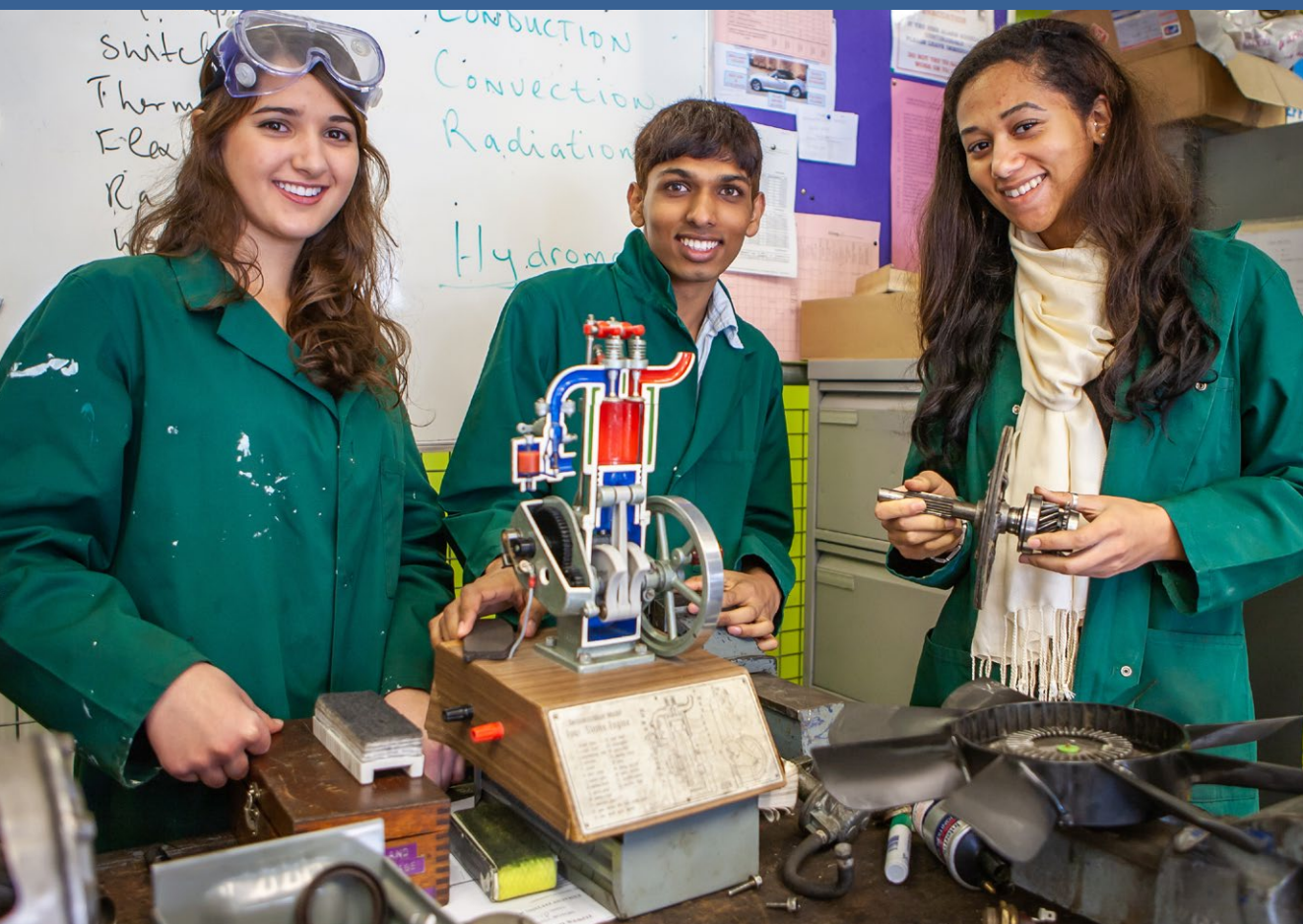
Law No 30/2015, reforming vocational training for employment, provides for a multiyear scenario to serve as a framework for strategic planning and as a reference for planning and evaluating employment authority VET programmes. With the participation of all major stakeholders, it is committed to continuous assessment. Quality and the real impact of the training are the drivers; its outcomes are to support decision-making to meet training for market needs and the efficiency of resources.

SEPE conducted an ex-ante evaluation to analyse the existing opportunities and capacities in vocational training in the context of ALMPs to integrate the European approach to micro-credentials. This evaluation was positive about the integration of the micro-credentials approach within the SEPE-led provision. Micro-credentials could contribute positively to meeting existing needs in the Spanish labour market, particularly by increasing worker participation (employed and unemployed) in training activities. Their use in vocational training linked

to ALMPs should fit in with the existing training offer. Recognition of micro-credentials by all labour market actors would also be a key aspect, guaranteeing the added value of accreditation and training value for workers.

## CHAPTER 4.

# Promoting VET participation



## 4.1. Incentives for learners

Increasing the number of VET learners and graduates is a major policy in Spain. It is being deployed by different means: establishing a new VET system, improving work-based features, enabling more learner places, aligning VET to the world of work, diversifying VET provision in terms of qualifications, contents, modes of learning, access, and bringing innovation to its core.

The plan for the modernisation of vocational training (MEFP, 2020), launched in mid-2020, projects the creation of 200 000 new VET student places in 4 years. These new places will help to cover the increasing demand that these studies are experiencing.

Upskilling and reskilling the labour force, reflecting unequal distribution of levels of qualifications and skills, is another major policy aiming to place the country in right position to face future challenges.

### 4.1.1. Incentive for learners in the education system

There are three types of financial incentive to begin or pursue a programme of studies which are valid throughout the country:

- (a) financial support based on the applicant's socioeconomic circumstances;
- (b) grants based on the applicant's socioeconomic circumstances and academic achievement;
- (c) awards aimed at students with high academic achievement.

Eligibility requirements, as well as household income and capital thresholds, are updated annually.

IVET learners can apply for scholarships and grants distributed through annual calls published by the MEFP and the regions. Since 2018, the budget allocation for learner financial support has been increasing. Some changes were introduced to reinforce its role as an essential instrument to achieve equity in education, reduce dropouts for economic reasons and, most recently, alleviate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the academic year 2023/24, the central government has approved a budget of more than EUR 2 500 million to be distributed among more than one million beneficiary students.

Learners, according to the different national/regional calls (MEFP, 2019b), can apply for financial support for school canteen, compensatory allowances, mobility, complementary Erasmus grants, textbooks, work placements abroad,

residence, transport, or exemption from fees. There are also grants for special education needs.

Grants and financial support budgets have increased by more than EUR 1 000 million since 2018: the income thresholds were modified, several amounts raised, and academic requirements modified. Changes were made to guarantee that obtaining these grants depends, fundamentally, on the economic situation of the students (Table 8).

All this has made it possible to increase, on the one hand, the number of grant beneficiaries and, on the other, the grant amount they receive, especially for those on the lowest income levels.

The policy of grants and study support is a very important element in balancing inequalities and guaranteeing the fulfilment of the universal right to education.

There are grants to undertake studies in basic, intermediate, and higher VET programmes, including artistic education and sports. The MEFP is the main funder, with autonomous communities – and other entities – also contributing.

Coordination between MEFP and the autonomous communities ensures that the general system of grants and financial support guarantees access to the different levels of vocational training according to the talents and preferences of the learners, regardless of their economic situation, social status or place of residence.

**Table 8. Evolution of the number of grant holders in non-university post-compulsory education 2016/17 to 2020/21 academic years**

|                  | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | % 2016-21 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Baccalaureate    | 164 881 | 160 924 | 161 635 | 162 855 | 190 383 | 15.47     |
| Basic VET        | 14 153  | 14 047  | 13 971  | 14 037  | 13 932  | -1.56     |
| Intermediate VET | 65 445  | 64 876  | 68 604  | 72 507  | 82 801  | 26.52     |
| Higher VET       | 89 291  | 98 010  | 99 597  | 102 779 | 119 188 | 33.48     |
| Other studies    | 23 892  | 22 888  | 22 276  | 21 585  | 21 506  | -9.99     |
| Total            | 357 662 | 360 745 | 366 083 | 373 763 | 427 810 | 19.61     |

Source: MEFP, 2022c.

The VET system, organised in five levels (A to E), as defined by the Organic Law on VET, can be considered as a non-financial incentive for adults. It provides different types of training to upskill and reskill, in flexible and



progressive pathways, and aids the acquisition of an official accreditation and a VET qualification.

Distance VET is an option valued by many adults who wish to improve their professional qualification or prepare themselves for the exercise of other professions but whose social, work or family circumstances prevent or make it difficult for them to take such courses in a classroom-based setting.

The modular organisation of the training cycles in this distance modality allows each student to choose which modules they wish to enrol in according to their personal circumstances and their availability. The final assessment for each of the professional modules requires the passing of on-site tests and is harmonised with continuous assessment processes.

Each education administration, within the scope of its competences, adopts the necessary measures and issues the necessary instructions to the centres for the implementation and operation of distance education in VET courses.

*Aula mentor* provision (Section 2.3.1.1), organised in areas referenced to the national catalogue of occupational standards, is another option for adults who wish to improve their personal and professional competences. It offers an alternative non-regulated learning pathway, without prior academic or professional requirements, adaptable and adjusted to the needs of lifelong learning.

#### **4.1.2. International internships**

VET mobility projects aim to increase the employability of young VET graduates, as well as language proficiency, soft skills, and professional competences.

Erasmus+ is the major umbrella programme enabling VET students and teaching staff to benefit from a learning experience abroad. With the support of this European funding instrument, apprentices and vocational training students can acquire international experience, including new skills or languages, over a period of 2 weeks to a year. It also helps VET institutions to create strategic partnerships with other organisations and enterprises, establishing strong relationships with the world of work.

Other mobility experiences are also being carried out through the Youth Guarantee initiative and other European funds (Sancha Gonzalo, 2020).

Data from recent mobility calls show mobility opportunities back to full operation, after the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which also led to project deadlines being extended. There was a fall in participation due to the change of programme framework in 2021.

Mobility in VET at secondary level – basic VET, intermediate VET and specialised training in dance, music, arts, sports at intermediate level and



vocational certificates – shows an increase of 63% in the case of student mobilities and more than double in the case of staff mobilities. Overall, the mobilities approved represent an increase of 21% compared to those of the 2019 call (Table 9). The average duration of mobilities for students it is almost 2 months for short-term mobilities and almost 3 months for long-term mobilities (Erasmus Pro). For staff, the duration of mobility, both for teaching and for training, is approximately between 4 and 6 days.

**Table 9. Evolution of student and staff mobilities at secondary level**

| Type of activity   | 2019         | 2020 (*)     | 2021 (*)     | 2022 (*)      |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Short-term student mobility (2 weeks to 3 months)          | 4 537        | 5 361        | 4 709        | 6 767         |
| Long-term student mobility or Erasmus Pro (3 to 12 months) | 1 345        | 1 976        | 2 195        | 2 787         |
| Student participation in skills competitions (from 2021)   | 0            | 0            | 90           | 57            |
| <b>Students – Total</b>                                    | <b>5 882</b> | <b>7 337</b> | <b>6 994</b> | <b>9 611</b>  |
| Staff mobility for teaching (**)                           | 982          | 1 267        | 209          | 122           |
| Staff mobility for training (**)                           | 45           | 94           |              |               |
| Courses and training (from 2021)                           | 0            | 0            | 328          | 505           |
| Observational learning (from 2021)                         | 0            | 0            | 1 527        | 2 241         |
| <b>Staff – Total</b>                                       | <b>1 027</b> | <b>1 361</b> | <b>2 064</b> | <b>2 868</b>  |
| <b>Total students + staff</b>                              | <b>6 909</b> | <b>8 698</b> | <b>9 058</b> | <b>12 479</b> |

NB: (\*) Mobilities approved in the corresponding call for the year.

(\*\*) Combined since 2021 as teaching or training stays.

Source: Data provided by *Servicio Español para la Internacionalización de la Educación* (SEPIE).

Mobility in higher VET is considered as part of the higher education sector. The total number of mobilities has increased by 28% between 2019 and 2022. The increase is higher for staff, where 65% more mobilities are expected in 2022 than in 2019. For students, the increase is 16% (Table 10). The average duration of these mobilities is just under 3 months.

Table 10. **Evolution of student and staff mobilities at tertiary level**

| Type of activity                  | 2019         | 2020<br>(*)  | 2021<br>(*)  | 2022<br>(*)  |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Student mobility for studies      | 69           | 112          | 128          | 146          |
| Student mobility for traineeships | 4 742        | 6 171        | 3 208        | 5 451        |
| <b>Students – Total</b>           | <b>4 811</b> | <b>6 283</b> | <b>3 336</b> | <b>5 597</b> |
| Staff mobility for teaching       | 57           | 152          | 142          | 189          |
| Staff mobility for training       | 1 483        | 2 067        | 1 541        | 2 359        |
| <b>Staff – Total</b>              | <b>1 540</b> | <b>2 219</b> | <b>1 683</b> | <b>2 548</b> |
| <b>Total students + staff</b>     | <b>6 351</b> | <b>8 502</b> | <b>5 019</b> | <b>8 145</b> |

NB: (\*) Mobilities approved in the corresponding call for the year.

Source: Data provided by SEPIE [accessed 10.5.2023].

#### 4.1.3. Incentives for CVET learners

Participation in continuing VET is promoted by public authorities (at different levels) with various supporting and funding schemes addressing different target groups. Private agents (like companies, social partners, non-governmental organisations, and other actors) may also carry out other initiatives to encourage worker upskilling and reskilling.

Under the new CVET ministerial powers distribution, the MEFP has begun a line of work addressing the upskilling and reskilling of the active population. The objective is to increase training provision to encourage the training of workers and the accreditation of their skills to improve their employability. It is implemented via public calls for proposals to fund training, primarily linked to professional qualifications in strategic sectors and enhancing skills for the green transition. Although the funding applicants are companies, business associations and non-profit organisations, the end beneficiaries are workers who can receive training free of cost.

The employment authorities, at different levels, issue public calls for proposals for funding addressing identified training needs, at no cost for workers.

The 2012 Labour reform (Head of State, 2012) and the 2015 employment authority VET reform (Act No 30/2015) laid down different incentives for workers, such as the training account, linked to the worker social security number, and the training voucher for workers to choose their training and provider; neither of these incentives has yet been implemented at State level, though some regions are piloting some initiatives.

Workers have the right to 20 hours of annual training related to the company's activity; these hours can be accumulated over a period of 5 years. Nevertheless, this right, in place since 2012, has not yet been fully developed through other legal provisions. Other regulations laid down in Act No 30/2015 are currently in place within the vocational training in the context of ALMPs, such as individual training leave or subsidised training schemes.

Recently, under the national recovery and resilience plan, in the framework of new public policies for a dynamic, resilient and inclusive labour market, SEPE has been testing a new way of financing, through microcredits, the digital training that is in high demand by companies and productive sectors (MITES, 2022b).

Using a counterfactual methodology, this experimental microcredit project is being carried out in the autonomous communities of Catalonia and Madrid, focusing on training areas identified as priorities by the authorities and with recruitment needs. The aim is to give learners autonomy and flexibility in choosing a training programme, to test the usefulness and agility of offering these microcredits to people who need training without having to wait for specific calls for applications, and to identify the level of demand and the effectiveness of certain training or accreditations.

#### 4.1.3.1. *Individual training leave for the employed*

Employees can apply for individual training leave (*permiso individual de formación*) from their companies, to improve their skills at no cost to the company. Employees have the right to 200 working hours for education purposes, with company agreement. The company is reimbursed for the salary of that worker by Fundae and the worker receives his/her salary during the training leave.

Individual training leave is intended to provide workers, wishing to improve their personal and professional skills, with the opportunity to attend training courses leading to officially recognised vocational or academic qualifications. Workers can also take this type of leave to undergo the procedure for recognition of prior learning acquired through work experience or non-formal education.

In 2022, 5 036 individual training leave schemes were funded, 16.3% more than in 2021. Of these, 53% were women and 47% men and the 36-to-45 age group was the most numerous. Around 77% of PIFs were for the purpose of obtaining a university degree, 11% for IVET programmes and 2.5% for professional certificate programmes. Individual training leave options completed in the year have involved close to 360 000 hours, of average duration 71.7 hours.

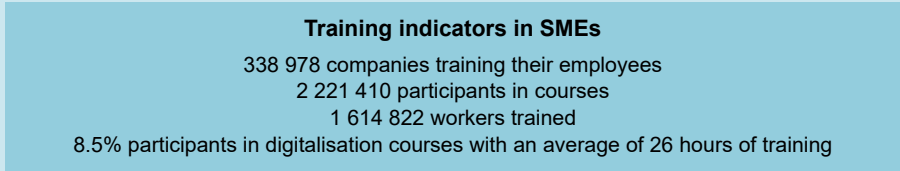
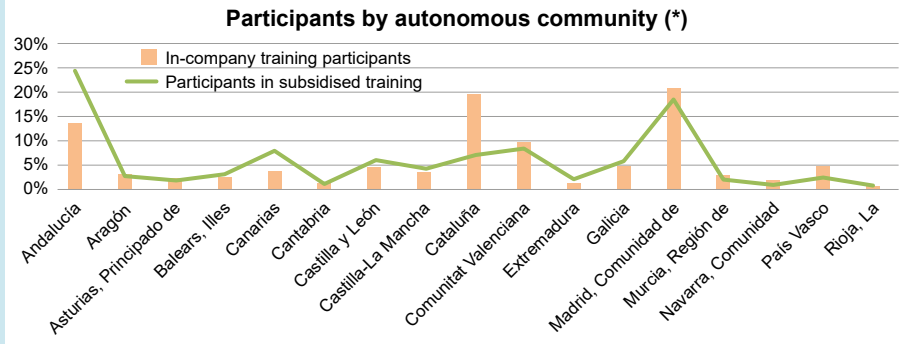
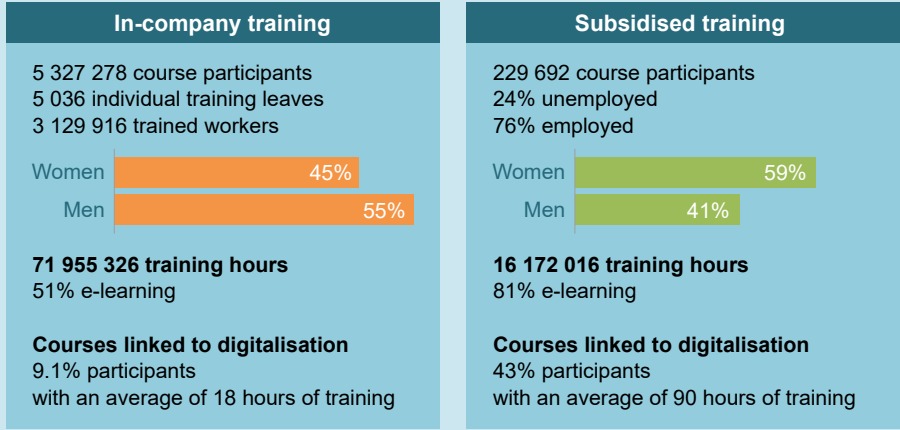
#### 4.1.3.2. *Subsidised training schemes in the context of ALMPs*

The relevant authorities at the State or regional level publish calls for proposals for training programmes, for employed workers, with a sectoral or cross-sectoral approach; this includes workers in the social economy (cooperatives) (*planes de formación intersectoriales, sectoriales, autónomos, y economía social*). These open calls are launched according to the specific needs of the authorities and sometimes cover more than 1 year of implementation. This training offer aims to respond to the skill needs not covered by the training provided by private companies for their workers and publicly funded through discounts in social security contributions.

At national level, these funding schemes, together with funding training within companies (Section 4.2), are managed by Fundae (Figure 11).

Figure 11. **Summary of the main results of the initiatives managed by Fundae**

**Training for employment in 2022 – Summary (national total)**

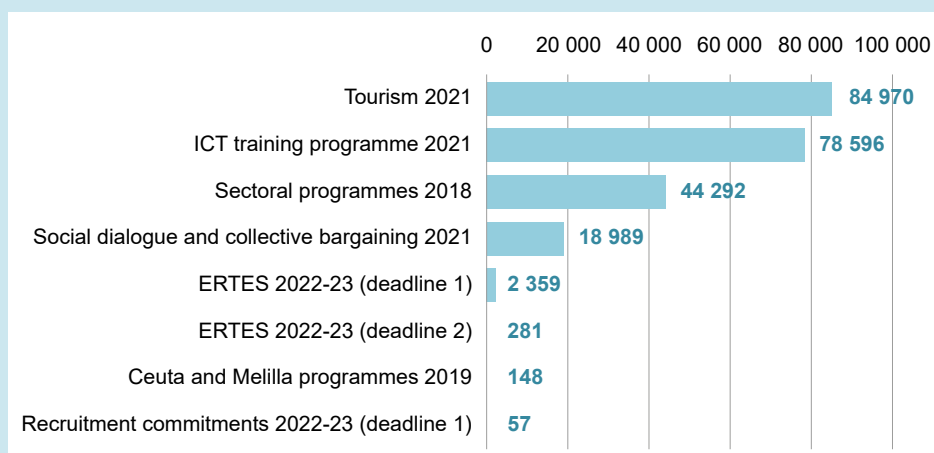


NB: (\*) Participants are statistically assigned to the autonomous community where their workplace is located or their residence in the case of unemployed people.

Source: Fundae [extracted 31.3.2023].

- During 2022, several of these funding schemes were running (Figure 12):
- (a) call for proposals to train workers in professional skills related to technological changes and digital transformation, issued in 2018 (MESS, 2018), with a new call published in 2021;
  - (b) call for proposals for the training of workers according to their sectoral needs, issued in 2019 (MITRAMISS, 2019c);
  - (c) call for proposals for the training of workers involved in activities related to social dialogue and collective bargaining.

**Figure 12. Planned participants in subsidised training schemes in 2022**



Source: Adapted from Fundae, 2023.

The State public employment service is also in charge of the implementation of training schemes for the exclusive territorial scope of Ceuta and Melilla, aimed primarily at people in employment. Within the framework of the recovery and resilience plan, component No 23 (New public policies for a dynamic, resilient and inclusive labour market), additional funding schemes have been put in place to upskill and reskill the labour force and support companies in their digital and green transitions. SEPE, with Fundae's support, released the following calls for subsidies:

- (a) aimed primarily at people employed in the tourism sector (in 2021 and 2023);
- (b) for the execution of State-level training schemes, aimed at the requalification of workers who have been or are included in temporary layoff plans (ERTE in Spanish), for the 2022 and 2023 budget years;

- (c) to support the coverage of vacancies in strategic sectors of national interest through the financing of training, including commitments to hire unemployed workers for the 2022 and 2023 budget years.

SEPE, together with Fundae, and with companies <sup>(47)</sup> and other entities belonging to the State public sector, offers workers an important pool of free training resources (*Digitalizate*). This is seen as a way to improve their employability and guarantee the right to lifelong learning, while contributing to the digital transformation, the modernisation of the productive fabric, reducing the digital divide and promoting of access to employment (ReferNet Spain and Cedefop, 2020a).

#### 4.1.3.3. *Incentives for the unemployed*

Unemployed workers may also take part in some of the different subsidised training schemes within the training for employment system (*planes de formación*), aimed at meeting needs identified by the public employment services and specific training programmes. Participants can request, if necessary, reimbursement for travel, accommodation and meal expenses during the training period. In some cases, they can also apply for financial aid for other issues, particularly if they have family responsibilities. These training schemes are funded through open calls for proposals.

The main objective of these initiatives is the integration or reintegration into the labour market of unemployed workers, who can receive grants and allowances for their participation in the training actions.

Authorities schedule these schemes considering qualification needs and the job offers identified. At the same time, the competent authorities try to promote agreements with public or private companies, with the aim of favouring professional internships.

#### 4.1.3.4. *Incentives for dual VET learners and apprentices*

The introduction of a dual system in VET offers young people an insight into the labour market. Based on first preliminary data – available from training centres and regional authorities – the employment rate of dual VET learners is usually higher than in traditional school-based VET.

Training and apprenticeship contracts <sup>(48)</sup> are offered in formal IVET and CVET. This type of contract was updated in 2021 (Head of State, 2021). Hired apprentices benefit from a 100% reduction in social security contributions, full

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<sup>(47)</sup> [More information about Promotion of training in digital skills for workers.](#)

<sup>(48)</sup> [More information about employment contracts \(\*Contratos de trabajo\*\).](#)

social protection, unemployment benefits and training (effective working time may not exceed 65% of the maximum working day in the first year or 85% in the second). The training programme may lead to a full qualification (professional certificate) or partial certification of a set of competence units towards a professional certificate, or a VET diploma, or it may also be a training programme from the catalogue of training specialities of the national employment system <sup>(49)</sup>.

Employment authorities run different public schemes <sup>(50)</sup> that combine employment and training in a real productive setting to improve the employability of the unemployed. These schemes carry out projects of general and social interest in any field of activity. Workers in training can alternate work with participation in a training activity directly related to that job and acquire professional experience, ensuring a professional qualification and favouring their integration in the labour market. Some of these schemes are aimed at unemployed young people under 25 (*Escuelas taller* and *Casas de oficios*), while others are for the unemployed aged 25 and over (*Talleres de empleo*) (ReferNet Spain and Cedefop, 2021). A total of 14 064 people participated in these schemes in 2021 (SEPE, 2022). Many of the participants come from low education levels.

#### 4.1.4. Supporting VET provider capacity

IVET programmes are offered by both State-funded centres and private centres, with one in four learners attending a private centre. To ensure equity and equality of opportunities, private education centres may receive funds to offer teaching free of charge (these are called publicly funded private centres). Increased funding <sup>(51)</sup> supports the creation of more free VET places in these centres.

The first strategic plan for vocational training (MEFP, 2019a), and the plan for the modernisation of vocational training (MEFP, 2020) of the education authorities, place boosting VET at the core of their agenda. With a total budget of EUR 1 500 million over 4 years, different measures are in place to achieve this goal. Some encourage research and innovation projects between VET centres and companies and institutions, setting up networks of centres of excellence, or increasing the participation of VET teachers and students in European mobility projects. Through various territorial cooperation programmes with the autonomous regions, the MEFP allocates different budgetary items for implementing VET policies in the autonomous communities.

Since the 2013 education reform (LOMCE Act), non-university education establishments have greater autonomy in using the funds allocated from the

<sup>(49)</sup> [More information about Alternance training \(Contratación para la Formación en Alternancia\)](#).

<sup>(50)</sup> *Escuelas taller, Casas de oficios, Talleres de empleo*.

<sup>(51)</sup> On average, EUR 64 000 per group [data extracted from VET in Europe database].



State budget to improve their training offer. They may run actions to test how to tailor their training offer to local needs/skills: pilot projects, new work plans or forms of organisation, and increased hours devoted to certain subjects <sup>(52)</sup>.

Providers of training in the context of ALMPs can apply for funding in the regional or State calls for proposals published annually (Section 2.4.2) to carry out training actions. Funding is based on cost per participant/hour and differs depending on the delivery mode (e-learning or face-to-face).

Providers applying for these subsidies need to be in the register of training entities and deliver specialities included in the catalogue of training specialities. The training specialities catalogue steers VET provision by providers and trainers and acts as a reference for PES counsellors and private companies to shape their training offer.

National reference centres, running innovative and experimental training activities, schedule training courses which, due to the need for special equipment and facility requirements, are not offered by the usual network of vocational training centres.

## 4.2. Incentives for training companies

Companies providing training to their employees can receive discounts on their social security contributions (Section 2.4.2).

The yearly training credit (the amount for which they can receive a discount) available to each company is calculated by applying a fixed percentage to the training quota <sup>(53)</sup> in the previous year. This percentage ranges from 100% (businesses with six to nine employees) to 50% (companies with more than 250 employees). Companies with fewer than six employees receive a minimum credit (EUR 420). Businesses with more than 10 employees must finance part of the training cost, which again varies depending on the size of the company: 10% for companies with 10 to 49 employees, up to 40% for large companies.

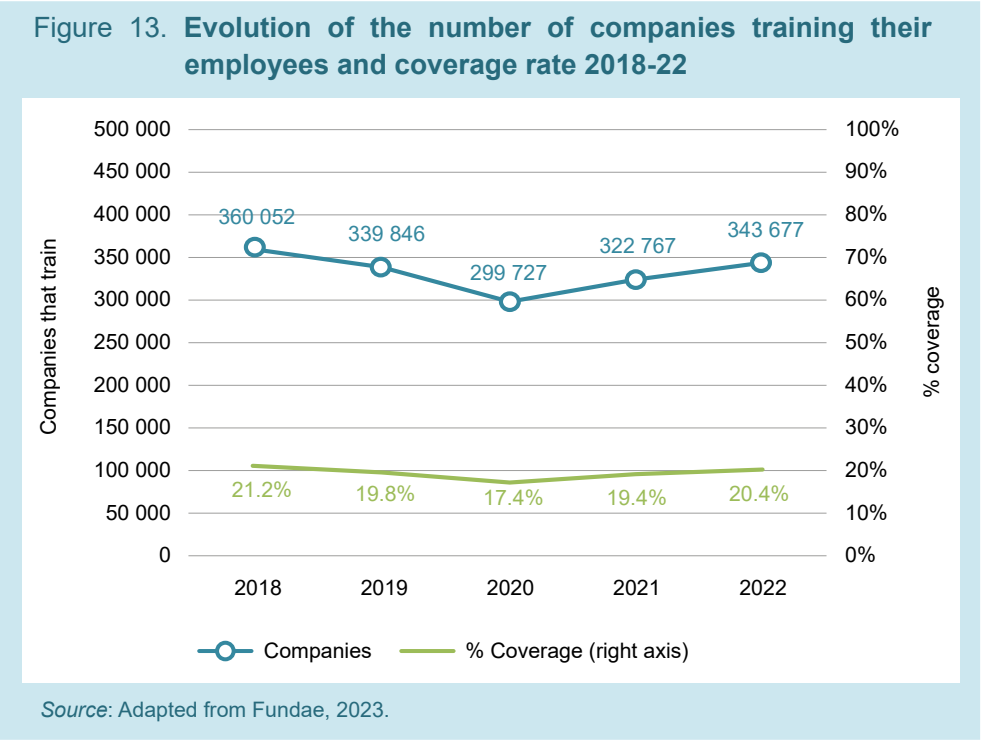
During the COVID-19 pandemic, special measures were deployed (ReferNet Spain and Cedefop, 2020b) to maintain company and learner participation (a fall of 12% and 16.6% respectively were observed in 2020) in upskilling and reskilling programmes (Figure 13) (MITES, 2020).

<sup>(52)</sup> Results are assessed by the centres themselves, the inspection services, the regional education authorities and by the National Institute of Educational Evaluation; they must be publicly available.

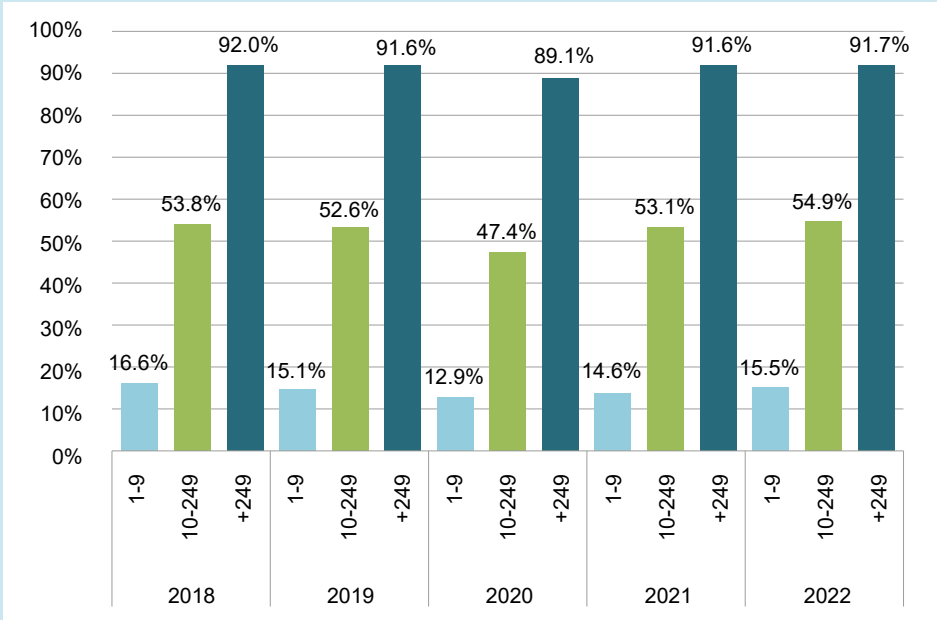
<sup>(53)</sup> Quota refers to the annual contribution of companies in the social security scheme calculated by applying a percentage to the employee's contribution base according to different types of contributions, for example for health and safety at work, unemployment, training, etc. For most, the contribution rate is shared between the employer and the employee.

In 2022, the number of companies providing training to their employees increased by 6.5%, around 21 000 more companies than in 2021. The segment of companies with 10 to 49 employees saw the largest relative increase, adding 6 095 new training companies.

The coverage rate, i.e. the percentage of companies providing training with respect to the total number of companies paying the vocational training levy, rose one point compared to the previous year and stood at 20.4%. Although the figures are close to pre-pandemic results, they have not yet been totally exceeded (Figures 13, 14).



**Figure 14. Evolution of coverage rate of training companies according to size of companies 2018-22**



Source: Adapted from Fundae, 2023.

More than 5 327 million participants (over 3 158 million workers, as they can participate more than once) received in-company training financed through this scheme, 10% more than in 2021. The training coverage rate <sup>(54)</sup> stands at 38.7%, the highest since the start of this system.

Training and apprenticeship contract regulations set different incentives for companies to hire trainees, in the form of reduced employer social security contributions, or additional bonuses to fund the costs of in-company tutors, as well as other incentives when apprentices become permanent staff <sup>(55)</sup>.

<sup>(54)</sup> The percentage of participants with respect to the employed population, not including the public sector and also with respect to the unemployed according to the 2021 LFS (annual average).

<sup>(55)</sup> Both concepts represent deductions in the quota that are intended to reduce companies' social security costs and to promote the access of certain groups to the labour market. In practice, i.e. when it comes to applying a reduction or bonus to contributions by the beneficiary, there is no difference between the two concepts. The difference lies only in the body to which the subsidised payment is to be made.

#### 4.2.1. Support for apprenticeships

There are different incentives for companies to take on apprentices. Companies can enjoy a reduction of corporate contributions of 100% for businesses of less than 250 workers and 75% for those with more than 250 workers. In the case of workers enrolled through the national Youth Guarantee, this reduction, in the same percentages, is covered by SEPE (Head of State, 2016).

To finance the training, companies are entitled to a rebate on company contributions for a number of hours equivalent to 35% in the first year and 15% in the second year of the apprenticeship.

There is an additional bonus to finance the company's tutoring costs, with a maximum amount of EUR 1.5 per student and tutoring hour, with a maximum of 40 hours per month and learner. In companies with less than five employees, the maximum amount may be EUR 2 per learner and tutoring hour.

If the apprentice contract is transformed into a permanent contract for 3 years, there is a deduction on company contributions of 1 500 EUR, up to 1 800 for women. If the workers are registered in the national Youth Guarantee system, this deduction, in the same percentages, is covered by SEPE (Table 11).

Table 11. Incentives for companies, by size, taking in apprentices

| Company size       | Maximum hours eligible for funding per learners/month | Funding per hour | Total |
|--------------------|---|------------------|-------|
| Over five workers  | 40 hours  | 1.5 €            | 60 €  |
| Up to five workers | 40 hours  | 2 €              | 80 €  |

Source: SEPE.

### 4.3. Guidance and counselling

Career guidance and counselling are provided at different stages and by a variety of services and actors. However, there is no integrated approach, which the latest regulations (2020 Education Law, and Organic Law No 3/2022 on the organisation and integration of VET) aim to address. The Government is committed to publishing the general strategy for career guidance by 31 January 2024.

Career guidance aims to provide information to help individuals to enter the labour market, have their competences accredited and progress in their lifelong learning pathway.

Education and employment authorities, the local administration and social partners participate in organising the services, with the State administration responsible for the cooperation and coordination between all the entities involved.

#### 4.3.1. Guidance in the education system

The LOMLOE Act supports the development of a comprehensive guidance system. It specifies that the education authorities, in collaboration with employment authorities, shall promote vocational career guidance in adult learning as well as guarantee sufficient training offer with an inclusive and non-sexist perspective in both IVET and CVET.

The Organic Law on VET, not yet completely rolled out, lays down a vocational career guidance system, defining its mission, objectives, aims and provisions:

- (a) customised support and advice for learners (young people and adults, employed or unemployed), companies, VET organisations and institutions;
- (b) encompassing the whole spectrum of vocational training provision and processes for validation of competences for all types of qualification offered in the new VET system;
- (c) supporting the adjustment between existing skills and those in demand in the labour market; it establishes training itineraries so individuals can acquire the desired professional competences.

Education legislation assigns immediate responsibility for guidance to teachers, as part of students' general education and training. Public education centres offer professional guidance services for students and parents. The focus is placed on preventing early school leaving, addressing diversity and promoting career management skills, while maintaining the perspective of lifelong learning.

To support the VET modernisation plan, the Government, in cooperation with the regions, has been developing and broadening a series of actions: a new State-wide organisation of information and career guidance services; career guidance digital platforms and projects for dissemination of vocational training and guidance; and a new web portal on guidance for VET practitioners <sup>(56)</sup>. The *TodoFP* web portal offers advice on learning skills and career pathways.

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<sup>(56)</sup> [More information at Euroguidance Spain.](#)

The territorial cooperation programme of personal and family support and guidance units for educationally vulnerable students (*Programa de cooperación territorial de unidades de acompañamiento y orientación personal y familiar del alumnado educativamente vulnerable*) was set up in 2021. It intends to prevent school failure and to promote learning and student success at school through cooperation with other professionals and complementing education and vocational guidance ordinary measures. It is aimed at learners in primary education, compulsory secondary education (including basic vocational training) and post-compulsory baccalaureate and intermediate VET programmes. It is funded by the MEFP and the national recovery and resilience plan (component No 21, Modernisation and digitalisation of the education system and the European Union under the recovery and resilience facility).

Complementary to the creation of *Aulas mentor* (Section 2.4.1.1) in the different regions, vocational guidance units (*unidades de orientación profesional*) are being set up to support actions, within the *Aula mentor* scheme, promoting open, flexible, and internet-based adult training and vocational guidance. These units provide information and advice on training offers and itineraries to improve qualifications, facilitate access to those resources that best meet individual training needs, as well as informing and guiding on the procedures for accreditation of competences acquired through work experience or non-formal training.

Tutoring and educational and vocational guidance have a special consideration in basic VET, as this type of VET is aimed preferably at those who have greater possibilities of learning and achieving the competences of compulsory secondary education in a setting linked to the professional world. There are guidance departments in VET centres in all the autonomous communities and autonomous cities.

These teams are generally made up of a variety of professional profiles: counsellors, teachers, tutors, training module teachers, teachers in the department of vocational training and guidance (FOL), specialist teachers (therapeutic pedagogy, hearing and language, etc.) and community services technical teacher or social worker. Some regions also have other types of specialists linked to special education needs.

#### **4.3.2. Guidance in active labour market policies**

The successive Spanish employment activation strategies (MITES, 2021c; MESS, 2017), which reflect the active employment and labour intermediation

policies developed across Spain, place career guidance as one of their six axes, in accordance with the Employment Law.

Career guidance is one of the services included in the common employment services portfolio (MEYSS, 2015a). This portfolio comprises the services to be provided by public employment services in Spain, guaranteeing access, on equal terms throughout the State, to a public and free employment service. All public employment services must comply with the protocols and quality criteria set for the provision of services included <sup>(57)</sup>.

The common employment services portfolio offers career guidance services to unemployed and employed workers on training and employment opportunities, as well as on the recognition and validation of their skills <sup>(58)</sup>.

In line with the European Union's recommendations on active employment policies in the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy, and the OECD and World Bank reports on good practice in guidance <sup>(59)</sup>, SEPE developed a digital guidance support tool for the profiling of jobseekers, SEND@. This provides guidance counsellors with information, based on individual data and using SEPE's statistical information, on how demand and the services received by the applicant improve employability.

The national recovery and resilience plan, in its component No 23 (Reform 5 modernisation of active labour market policies), enables the implementation of a network of public centres for guidance, entrepreneurship, accompaniment and innovation for employment (*centros públicos de orientación, emprendimiento, acompañamiento e innovación para el empleo*), to strengthen collaboration between the State and the autonomous communities in a closer link between active labour market policies and employment protection policies.

There are several aims: reinforce mechanisms to prevent unemployment; foster employability and support the transition to employment; promote an entrepreneurial culture and spirit; and improve the support and assistance given to entrepreneurs in the start-up of their business initiative.

Career guidance was strengthened in the Spanish PES through actions foreseen in the action plan for youth employment (MTMSS, 2018) and the 3-year plan to prevent and reduce long-term unemployment 2019-21 (*Reincorpora-T*) (MITRAMISS, 2019d) with the recruitment of around 3 000 career guidance

<sup>(57)</sup> Reference guides for the development of such protocols were published by *Orden ESS/381/2018* (MEYSS, 2015b).

<sup>(58)</sup> Employment authorities also have a web portal on validation of the skills acquired through work experience (RECEX). [More information](#).

<sup>(59)</sup> [More information: Impact evaluation of Send@: a digital tool for PES counsellors in Spain.](#)

practitioners to support the implementation of both plans, through the *Orienta* scheme.

The EURES network in Spain provides information and guidance to jobseekers and employers through personalised contact and counselling, as well as job brokerage in the framework of European mobility.

#### 4.4. Challenges and development opportunities

Vocational training in Spain is at the core of policy measures in the education, labour and economic spheres and has become a policy lever in addressing many of the challenges Spain faces, moving the country towards a more digital and sustainable production system, with a greater capacity to create quality jobs for all. By adding vocational education to the name of the education ministry, the Government made visible its commitment to develop a strong and resilient VET system catering not only for young students, but also for adults and the working population.

Spain shares common risks with other economies, such as an ageing population, at a time when many baby boomers are retiring and their jobs need to be filled by a new generation of graduates who are familiar with digital technologies. However, unlike other more developed economies in Europe, Spain's human capital structure is skewed at the extremes: it has a significant number of early school-leavers (13.3%) and, at the same time, a high percentage of the population with university education (as seen in Figure 2), leading to high degree of qualification mismatch, reflected in the European skills index (Section 3.1).

Technological developments and global changes place new demands on business and people skills, requiring the upskilling and reskilling of a workforce that still includes many low-skilled adults, particularly older workers, compromising their employability.

The plan for the modernisation of vocational training puts forward a series of initiatives and resources to revamp the VET system, seeking not only to modernise infrastructures but also to update and develop new occupational standards and VET programmes. It aims to meet the needs of an ever-evolving world working with the digital and green transitions, to increase the number of places at VET schools to satisfy the growing demand for this educational pathway, and to facilitate the process of validation of prior learning.



The roadmap set out by this modernisation plan reached its legal milestone with the approval of the Organic Law on VET, whose implementation is about to start from the academic year 2023/24.

The integration of all qualification programmes under the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training is seen as an advantage in designing VET provision better adapted to market demands, facilitating transitions between different types of programmes and life stages, and bringing lifelong learning opportunities closer to society, involving everyone.

One of the main ambitions of this law is to allow all VET students to experience a working environment. While all VET students had to complete a compulsory on-the-job training module – the reason why Spain ranks first (98.4%) in the indicator of recent VET graduates benefiting from work-based learning, followed by Germany (94.9%) – the two intensity regimes established by Organic Law No 3/2022, taking as a reference the framework for quality apprenticeships, extend the dual principle to contribute to improving this experience. Labour market reforms, particularly the new types of contracts adapted to this purpose, are measures to contribute to its expansion and quality.

It remains to be seen whether these changes will increase the number of students in dual vocational training, which is still very low (only around 4%). The success of all these efforts will depend on their implementation by the respective authorities and on the necessary cooperation of employers, who play a fundamental role in facilitating young people's access to work experience as a key element of their vocational training and career development.

To close gender gaps, ensure a pool of talent and achieve a more balanced occupational structure, it will be necessary to attract more women into industrial fields, especially those requiring STEM training. Women represent 29.5% of students at basic VET level, 45.1% at intermediate level and 48.9% at higher level. The greatest differences can be observed in the distribution by sex by sectoral branch: women are in the clear majority, for example, in personal image, sociocultural and community services, textile, clothing and leather, administration and management and health; while men are the majority in installation and maintenance, extractive industries, vehicle transport and maintenance, electricity and electronics, energy and water and mechanical manufacture. In distance education, the percentage of women exceeds that of men at both levels (65.7% at intermediate level and 61.7% at higher level).

Two initiatives are geared towards a more balanced distribution:

- (a) the STEAM alliance, led by the MEFP, bringing together more than 140 entities, universities, trade unions, media and other organisations to

- nurture STEAM vocations in girls and young women;
- (b) the alliance for vocational education and training, a joint responsibility network involving public authorities, companies, third-sector entities and social partners.

The National digital skills plan foresees tackling the gender digital divide through programmes to promote science and technology careers in the education system along with digital training for women and their participation in technology training itineraries. The digital literacy programme for women workers in rural areas, launched with the support of SEPE, is another example.

These initiatives are closely linked to measures foreseen in the National recovery and resilience plan, such as the National digital skills plan. According to the 2022 digital economy and society index, Spain performs relatively well in terms of basic digital skills but is below the EU average in terms of ICT professionals and ICT graduates (European Commission, 2022a). The development of digital literacy in education includes the provision of digital resources for education centres and the inclusion of digital literacy and programming in the curriculum. A specific plan within vocational education and training, the VET digital plan, aims to promote a greater number of degrees and renew existing programmes. A specific module on applied digitalisation will be included in all vocational training programmes.

To be successful, vocational teachers also need to be considered. The long-awaited reform of initial teacher education, access to the teaching profession and professional development must lay the foundations for consolidating and making this new vocational education system a reality.

The ageing of the teaching staff and the shortage of specialists in some areas are other challenges that Law No 3/2022 seeks to address by supporting the opportunity for experts to teach without having to be teachers. Two other important measures have been taken on training and retraining of teachers: approval of the framework of digital competences for teachers and investment in the training of VET teachers in applied digitalisation and in specialisation programmes with greater demand for the industrial sector, as part of the Digital VET plan.

Further action is needed on internationalisation of VET. First steps have been taken with the establishment of bilingual VET programmes: several VET institutions are leading or involved in the European centres of excellence initiative (CoVE), but the engagement of students, staff and institutions in international learning activities is still low (Section 4.1.2).

The organisation of the VET system approved in 2022 sets a new model of vocational training, aspiring to facilitate progression and lifelong learning, recognition and accreditation of competences, and career guidance. Of the three areas, the one with the greatest uncertainty is career guidance, which still needs to be developed through further design. Reaching those most at risk of social exclusion, reducing young and long-term unemployment, and improving job prospects and quality of employment for the whole population will contribute to achieving the 2030 EU headline targets on skills and employment.

The principles, objectives and regulation of vocational training in the context of ALMPs, which are the subject of debate among its main actors, must be adapted to the new scenario created by the education reforms. Many opportunities for the upskilling and reskilling of the labour force and the development of human capital will largely depend on the capacity of this training provision to adapt to this new reality and meet the needs of the labour market.

The reform of the VET system in the context of ALMPs will have to consolidate workers' right to training at any time in their working life and the right to professional development (Section 4.1.3).

The support and the resources made available by the Spanish government, reinforced by the European recovery and resilience facility, are helping to achieve many of the objectives set and to create a unified, modular and flexible vocational training offer for students and workers and the unemployed. This will make it possible to consolidate a vocational training system that will guarantee fair and equitable access for all citizens to quality vocational training and lifelong learning in different modalities, allowing for diversified pathways and progression that respond to emerging training needs and different personal, social and employment circumstances. In this pathway, better coordination among different levels of government and actors is a must.

# Acronyms

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| ALMPs  | active labour market policies   |
| CAP    | <i>certificado de aptitud profesional</i><br>[certificate of professional competence]                       |
| CEFR   | common European framework of reference  |
| CES    | <i>Consejo Económico y Social</i><br>[Economic and Social Council]  |
| CGFP   | <i>Consejo General de la Formación Profesional</i><br>[General Council for Vocational Training]             |
| CIFP   | <i>centro integrado de formación profesional</i><br>[integrated VET centre]                                 |
| CNCP   | <i>catálogo nacional de cualificaciones profesionales</i><br>[national catalogue of occupational standards] |
| CoVE   | European centres of excellence initiative   |
| CPD    | continuing professional development   |
| CVET   | continuing vocational education and training  |
| CVT    | continuing vocational training  |
| DESI   | digital economy and society index   |
| ECTS   | European credit transfer and accumulation system  |
| EQAVET | European quality assurance in vocational education and training reference framework                         |
| ERTE   | <i>expediente de regulación de empleo temporal</i><br>[temporary lay-off scheme]                            |
| ESI    | European skills index   |
| ESO    | <i>educación secundaria obligatoria</i><br>[lower secondary compulsory education]                           |
| FCT    | <i>formación en centros de trabajo</i><br>[on-the-job training module]                                      |
| FOL    | <i>formación y orientación laboral</i><br>[career information and guidance]                                 |

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| Fundae | <i>Fundación Estatal para la Formación en el Empleo</i><br>[State Foundation for Training in Employment]  |
| GDP    | gross domestic product  |
| ICT    | information and communications technology   |
| IES    | <i>instituto de educación secundaria</i><br>[secondary school]  |
| INAP   | <i>Instituto Nacional de Administración Pública</i><br>[National Institute of Public Administration]  |
| INCUAL | <i>Instituto Nacional de Cualificaciones</i><br>[National institute for Qualifications]   |
| INE    | <i>Instituto Nacional de Estadística</i><br>[National Statistics Institute]   |
| INEE   | <i>Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa</i><br>[National Institute for Educational Evaluation]  |
| INTEF  | <i>Instituto Nacional de Tecnologías Educativas y Formación del Profesorado</i><br>[Institute of Educational Technologies and Teacher Training] |
| ISCED  | International standard classification of education  |
| IVET   | initial vocation and education training   |
| LFS    | Labour force survey   |
| ME     | <i>Ministerio de Educación</i><br>[Ministry of Education, from 2009 to 2011]  |
| MECD   | <i>Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte</i><br>[Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, from 2000 to 2004 and from 2011 to 2018]        |
| MECES  | <i>Marco Español de Cualificaciones para la Educación Superior</i><br>[Spanish qualifications framework for higher education]                   |
| MEFP   | <i>Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional</i><br>[Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, since 2018]                           |
| MEYSS  | <i>Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social</i><br>[Ministry of Employment and Social Security, from 2011 to 2018]                               |
| MITES  | <i>Ministerio de Trabajo y Economía Social</i><br>[Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, since 2020]   |
| MOOC   | massive open online course  |

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| MTAS  | <i>Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales</i><br>[Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, from 2004 to 2008]                           |
| MTMSS | <i>Ministerio de Trabajo, Migraciones y Seguridad Social</i><br>[Ministry of Labour, Migrations and Social Security, from 2018 to 2020] |
| NGOs  | non-governmental organisations  |
| NOOC  | nano open online course   |
| PEAC  | <i>procedimiento de evaluación y acreditación de competencias</i><br>[competence assessment and accreditation procedure]                |
| PES   | public employment service   |
| PIF   | <i>permiso individual de formación</i><br>[individual training leave]   |
| RD    | <i>Real Decreto</i><br>[Royal Decree]   |
| SEPE  | <i>Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal</i><br>[State public employment service]  |
| SEPIE | <i>Servicio Español para la Internacionalización de la Educación</i><br>[Spanish service for the internationalisation of education]     |
| SME   | small and medium-sized enterprise   |
| SPOOC | self-paced open online course   |
| STEM  | science, technology, engineering and maths  |
| UC    | <i>unidad de competencia</i><br>[competence unit]   |
| VET   | vocational education and training   |
| WBL   | work-based learning   |

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# Vocational education and training in Spain

## Short description

This short description contributes to better understanding vocational education and training (VET) in Spain, by providing insight into its distinctive features and highlighting system developments and current challenges. VET in Spain offers a wide range of programmes, flexible in type and duration, face-to-face or via e-learning, allowing for accumulation of learning units and progression. Initial VET (IVET) programmes are modularised and include compulsory workplace learning at the end of or during studies. A new regulation on VET has strengthened the work-based component and reorganised VET into five ascending grades. VET for adults is an integral part of the national qualification system, with recognition and validation of prior learning as key elements. In response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Spain has increased its focus on meeting industry needs, supporting adult upskilling and reskilling, and the transition to a digital and green economy.

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