



spotlight on VET

MALTA

VET in Malta

Over the past years, Malta has been investing in vocational education and training (VET) and has encouraged students to continue their education beyond school-leaving age. The national reform programme reflects the commitment to extend VET provision through consolidation of the main State VET provider, the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST). This led to a considerable investment in infrastructure and introduction of new and updated programmes, which helps open up access to VET for students without a compulsory education qualification and eases progression from VET to tertiary education. Similar initiatives were taken at the vocational training Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS).

The State VET institutions, MCAST and ITS, are regulated by the Education Act. The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), Malta's public employment service, is regulated by the Employment and Training Services Act. Since 2008, Malta has moved towards industry-led qualifications mostly referenced to the NQF (Malta qualifications framework, MQF): VET providers work closely with employers in designing courses meeting labour market needs in a rapidly changing economic landscape.

At lower secondary level (locally called secondary education), VET subjects in hospitality, IT, care and engineering were piloted in 2011 to students aged 14 onwards to raise awareness and interest in VET and to increase mobility between VET and general education. The following VET options are available:

- school-based IVET in college programmes after compulsory education. EQF level 3 and 4 programmes (mainly provided by MCAST and ITS for 16 to 18+) have a duration of one or two years. For students who finish compulsory education without a certification, there are introductory courses to specific vocational sectors (programmes leading to an introductory and/or foundation certificate) at EQF levels 1 and 2. Successful completion leads to access to further study in the same field. At post-secondary (non-tertiary) level, two-year college-based programmes lead to a qualification at EQF level 5

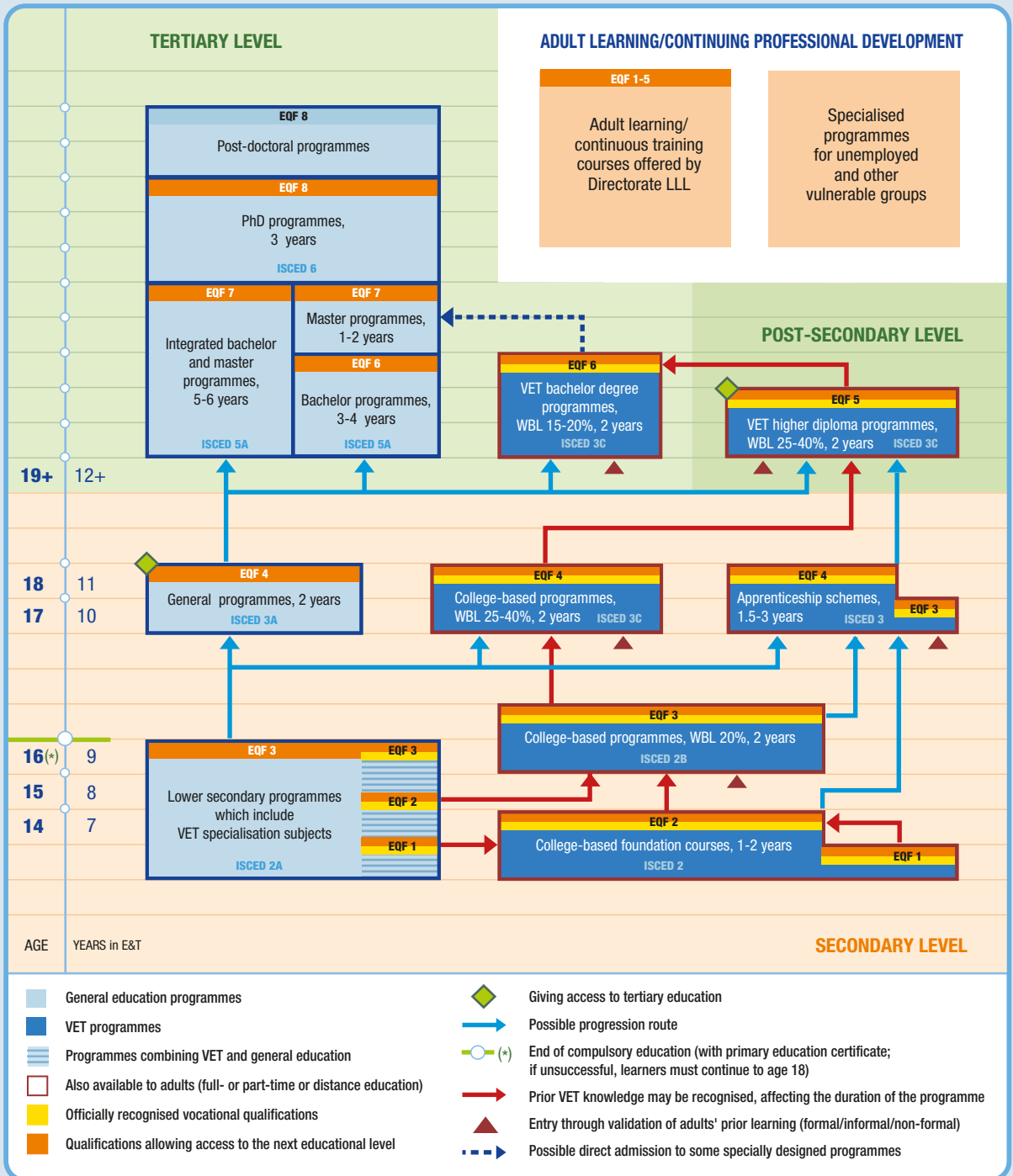
(higher national VET diploma) and at tertiary level, two-year programmes lead to a VET bachelor degree (EQF level 6). Students who successfully complete a higher national diploma programme (equivalent to the first two years of a university first degree programme) and who meet all entry requirements can opt for a further year of study to qualify for a university degree. ITS students can further their studies after an EQF level 5 qualification by enrolling in a bachelor degree in tourism at the University of Malta.

Vocational-oriented degree programmes are also provided by the university's department of nursing;

- apprenticeship schemes (work-based learning at an employer's establishment combined with school-based instruction at a college) with a duration of 18 to 36 months are run by the ETC in collaboration with MCAST and ITS. Two types of schemes exist: the extended skills training scheme (ESTS) awarding a journeyman's certificate at craftsman level (EQF level 3) and the technician apprenticeship scheme (TAS) awarding a journeyman's certificate at technician level (EQF level 4);
- continuing VET is offered by MCAST and ITS in evening courses. The ETC also provides adult learning but mainly targeted at the unemployed. The Directorate for Lifelong Learning in the Ministry of Education and Employment organises courses at EQF levels 1 and 2 to develop key competences among adults (lifelong learning in the community), hosted by local councils and financed by the Department for Local Government;
- maturity clauses allow adult learners aged 23 or older to enter programmes at the University of Malta and MCAST. They do not have to comply with entry requirements but are interviewed (and in some cases take a written test) to assess prior qualifications and experience.

While progression opportunities in VET are widely available, there are limited possibilities for mobility between VET and general education. Proposed amendments to the Education Act in 2014 will improve permeability between VET and higher education.

VET in Malta's education and training system



NB: ISCED 1997 was used on the chart. Conversion to ISCED 2011 is ongoing.
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Malta.

Distinctive features of VET

Stakeholders strongly support VET: the Chamber for Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, the Malta Employers Association as well as unions are involved. Many employers promote apprenticeships and dialogue between VET provision and industry is a key feature in qualification design. Several firms are establishing themselves as 'learning institutions'.

Regulating VET providers: VET is regulated by the Education Act. A 2012 legal notice defined the Malta qualifications framework for lifelong learning, which has a regulatory function. In parallel, 2012 legislation maps out tasks of the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE), assigning it responsibility for regulating training institutions and programmes. All Maltese and foreign further or higher education providers need a licence, which can be renewed or changed. Legislation also designated the NCFHE as the single quality assurance and accreditation agency. The NCFHE coordinates work on EQAVET and aims to support VET providers in implementing quality assurance systems.

Investing in lifelong learning: MCAST and ITS play a key role in creating a highly skilled and dynamic workforce. Blended learning has been introduced to make lifelong learning more widely available and flexible for adults who need to combine it with professional and family commitments. The Directorate for Lifelong Learning plays an important role in awarding scholarships for VET at higher level and for the visual and performing arts.

Validation of informal and non-formal learning: legislation (2012) on validation of informal and non-formal learning in line with the NQF establishes NCFHE's right to set up sector skills committees. Members are appointed with approval of the minister. Several occupational standards within different sectors have already been developed.

Challenges

Reducing early school-leavers: to measure better actual rates of early school-leaving (ESL), the Ministry of Education and Employment, the National Statistics Office and Eurostat have agreed on a new methodology. Following this revision, Malta has set an ambitious target to reduce ESL drastically to 10% by 2020. The ESL strategy (launched in 2013 and to be revised) aims to understand ESL better and develop policies to motivate young people to continue learning. Steps have been taken to improve monitoring, but a comprehensive system is still underway. A new office in the Ministry of Education and Employment coordinates implementation of ESL policies.

Implementing apprenticeship reform: discussions between the government and social partners on a single apprenticeship scheme aim to make VET more labour-market relevant and create more opportunities for dual learning. The reform will include financial incentives for apprentices and employers. Encouraging employers to take on more apprentices, catering for needs of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and embedding work-based learning in SMEs through government incentives are the main challenges.

Low basic skills achievement: the national curriculum framework (launched end-2012) envisages a shift towards learning outcomes and emphasises broad learning areas. To implement it, a 'national literacy strategy for all' focusing on Maltese and English language skills is expected to be adopted in 2014. The youth employment strategy (2013) also aims at reducing literacy problems. With effective implementation and sufficient funding, these initiatives can tackle basic skill deficiencies, which are a major stumbling block for young job-seekers.

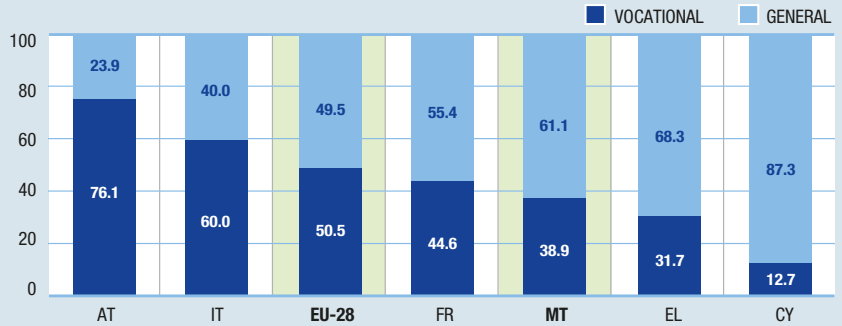
National implementation of ECVET: there is a commitment to develop a credit system compatible with ECVET and several laws refer to it. The 2011 referencing document already indicates ECVET credit points on each of the NQF levels and the NCFHE has developed a manual to support VET providers. Ensuring national implementation of ECVET to promote alternative pathways between general and vocational education is a challenge.



Education and training in figures

Learners in upper secondary education enrolled in vocational and general programmes

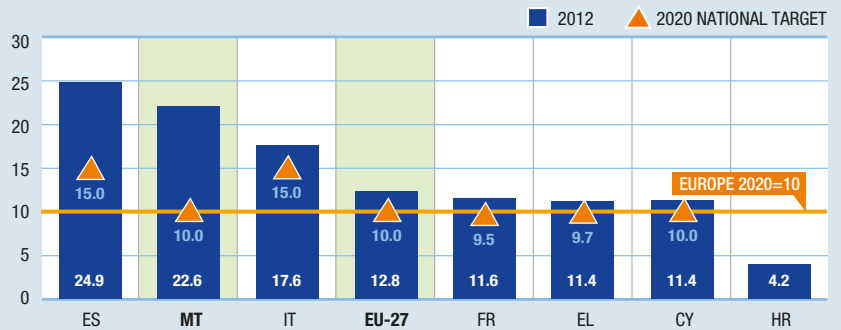
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2011



Source: Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 28.6.2013.

Early leavers from education and training

% of early leavers from education and training, 2012

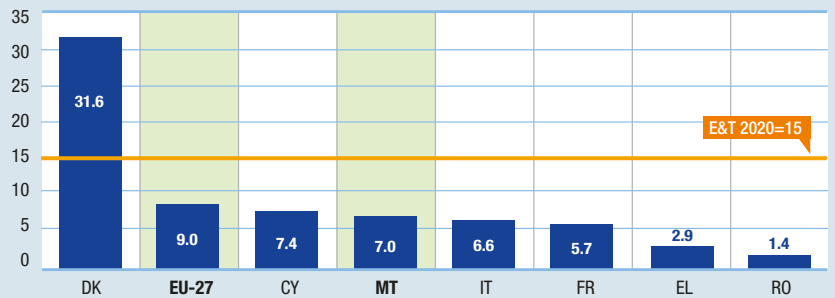


NB: Data for EU-27 are provisional.

Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 8.7.2013.

Lifelong learning

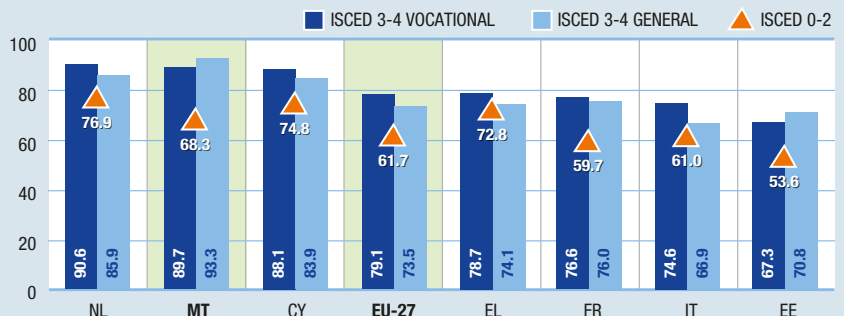
% of population aged 25-64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2012



Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 3.7.2013.

Employment rates by highest level of educational attainment

20-34 year-olds no longer in education by highest level of educational attainment, 2009



Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, 2009 ad hoc module of the EU labour force survey, date of extraction 19.9.2012.



Further information

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www.its.edu.mt	Institute of Tourism Studies
www.mcast.edu.mt	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)
www.education.gov.mt	Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta
www.nso.gov.mt	National Statistics Office, Malta

