Decline or expansion – where is European VET heading?

Key Results from Cedefop’s work on the Future of VET 2015-2022

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“Future of VET in Europe: Trends and lessons for a global debate”

25 January 2023, UNEVOC Webinar
The Future of VET in Europe (2020 - 2022)
EU-27 + IS, NO, UK
Decline or Expansion?
Where is European VET heading?

The negative story
VET is declining and losing out to general and academic education
Digitalization and job polarization renders VET skills less relevant

The positive story
VET is expanding to higher levels and forms the backbone of lifelong learning
The skills provided by VET are Essential for growth and welfare
Enrolment in VET
Diverse developments since 1995

Remarkable growth from a low base (e.g. Spain, Portugal)

Decline of practical / shorter VET programmes

Increase of theoretical / longer VET programmes with access to Higher Education

Significant decline from a high base (e.g. Germany, Poland)

Significant Growth of professional HE
Modest growth of VET at higher level
The three-perspective model of VET
Overlapping lenses

**Socioeconomic and labour market perspective**
- Relationship of VET to occupations and employment
- Approach to research and technology
- Type and use of skills and Knowledge
- Governance and funding
- Learner status and target groups
- Currency of VET qualifications in the labour market and education system

**Education system perspective**
- Role of VET in the overall Education and Training System
- Co-ordination of education and work at provider & system level

**Pedagogical and epistemological perspective**
- Knowledge approach and acquisition
- Pedagogical aims and objectives
- Learning formats and context
- Assessment approaches
- Role of general and civic content
- Curriculum design
- Teaching approaches and role of teachers

**Institutional characteristics of VET**
- Type of Providers and their autonomy
- Relationship between initial and continuing VET and characteristics of CVET providers

**VET teacher education**
- Institutional characteristics of VET

**Relation of VET and General Education at programme and institutional level**

**Co-ordination of education and work at provider & system level**
### Changing pedagogics and content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1995</th>
<th>2015</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Work-based learning under pressure</td>
<td>✓ Increased work-based learning in all IVET forms</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Narrow and task specific curricula and programmes</td>
<td>✓ Broadening of curricula and programmes</td>
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<td>✓ Input orientation</td>
<td>✓ Outcome and competence orientation - increased acceptance of prior learning</td>
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### Changing IVET systems and institutions

<table>
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<tr>
<th>1995</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Fragmented provision linked to industries, weaker links to overall education and training systems</td>
<td>✓ More coherent VET systems integrated within the overall education and training systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Dead-end programmes, restricted to medium levels</td>
<td>✓ Increased permeability and fewer dead-ends</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ VET addressing a narrowly defined target group (16-20 year olds)</td>
<td>✓ IVET opening up to adults</td>
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### Changing socio-economic context

<table>
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<tr>
<th>1995</th>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Limited goals; preparing for job entry and securing skilled labour</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Industry and sector based standard</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Jobs requiring medium-level skills dominate in the labour market</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Broader goals - social/economic excellence/integration</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Increasing role of skills intelligence systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Decline in medium level skills - increased demand for advanced VET-skills</td>
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A model to describe the changing role of VET

Strengthening vs. Diversifying VET, Academic vs. Vocational Drift
The ‘big picture’
Selected countries’ trajectories

- Both academic and vocational drift
- Still large variety between countries
- Some convergence towards balance of VET and GE
- Pluralisation as common trend
- No fundamental system change
Six Scenarios for the Future of VET in 2035

- **Learning à la carte**: No concept of VET; ‘vocational’ simply signifies more employability
- **Cottage gardens**: VET is understood as ‘vocationally oriented learning’ across sectors
- **Firefighter VET**: General education
  - VET is understood as specific skills training for specific target groups
- **Professional champions**: Distinctive VET
  - VET is understood as advanced ‘professional learning and education’
- **VET for all**: Vocational education
  - VET as apprenticeship for a majority of young people
- **Renaissance of VET**: VET is understood as comprehensive education and prerequisite for any job
VET in Europe 1995-2035
A vision of VET spanning 40 years, looking into the past and the future

Volume 1: Definitions and conceptions of VET
Volume 3: External factors influencing VET
Volume 4: Enrolment patterns in IVET
Volume 5: Education and labour market outcomes of VET
Volume 6: VET at higher education levels
Volume 7: VET from a lifelong learning perspective

The future of VET in Europe

Publications

Already published:
Volume 1: the changing content and profile of VET: epistemological challenges and opportunities
Volume 2: Delivering IVET: institutional diversification and/or expansion?
Volume 3: The influence of assessments on vocational learning

Forthcoming:
Volume 4: On IVET/CVET relationship
Volume 5: Synthesis Report
Analytical Framework

Overview on Empirical Data and Research Activities

- 21 Country & Thematic Case studies
- VET Provider Survey in 10 Countries
- ReferNet Survey in 30 Countries
- 2 National Scenario Workshops
Towards the ‘cottage garden’?
Institutional diversification, autonomy and expansion

- The number of VET schools and number of VET qualifications has decreased
- Hybrid pathways & hybrid schools are more common, but not a major new trend
- VET retains a strong distinct identity at upper-secondary level
- Increasing curriculum autonomy of IVET providers
A ‘double upgrade’?  
More general/transversal skills and work-based learning

- Increasing emphasis on general subjects and transversal skills
- Considerable variations in integrating general and transversal skills into VET
- Increase in work-based learning in IVET curricula has been universal
- Increasing use of final practical exams and increased assessment of modules
‘Interlocking gears’? The changing interaction between IVET, CVET and HE

- IVET in Europe is now less ‘youth-centered’ than it used to be
- IVET providers mostly provide formal VET programmes to adults
- Diverse, strengthened links between IVET and CVET
- Strengthened cooperation with higher education
The ‘pendulum effect’ in VET
Convergence or Divergence? Harmonisation or Diversity?

☑ Changes in curricula reinforce academic or vocational drift
☑ Growing number of mixed systems and diversification of pathways
☑ But no one-way developments, trends may reverse
☑ 'Pendulum effect' as regards VET’s aim, academic/vocational drift or assessment
Summary and Trends pointing to the future?

✓ Institutional diversification
  – mixed pathways
✓ Institutional diversification
  – higher level VET
✓ Institutional autonomy – tailoring VET
to local and individual needs
✓ More work based learning
✓ Increased importance of general and transversal KSC
✓ Increasing proportion of adults in IVET
✓ A changing interaction IVET and CVET –
  the basis for lifelong learning

Trends do not necessarily continue into the future. Their continuation depends on decisions at local, national and European level.
Final questions for reflection

- Are European experiences relevant to other regions?
- Are there developments in your region differing significantly from Europe?
- How can collaboration across regions be strengthened?
## The Future of VET Project Team

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>WA4 Leader</strong></td>
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<td>Ockham IPS</td>
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<td><strong>QA Expert</strong></td>
<td>Andrew McCoshan</td>
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<td>Christopher Winch</td>
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<td>Robert Andrew Wilson</td>
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<td>Leesa Wheelahan</td>
<td>(CAN)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Subcontractor</strong></td>
<td>BIBB / Philipp Grollmann</td>
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<td><strong>80 Country researchers</strong></td>
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<td>for EU28 + Norway and Iceland</td>
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Thank you for your attention!

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Project page