



Vocational education and training in Portugal

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 This decision was repealed in 2019 by Regulation (EU) 2019/128 establishing Cedefop as a Union Agency with a renewed mandate.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

The Portuguese presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) is the second of a trio of presidencies that have developed an 18-month programme which takes forward the EU strategic agenda 2019-24. During the first semester of 2021, Portugal will prioritise the implementation of the European pillar of social rights by fostering upward convergence and supporting social cohesion in the EU. As it takes place in the heart of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Presidency focuses on carrying out the action plan of the Roadmap for recovery: towards a more resilient, sustainable and fair Europe.

Work will focus on the new strategic framework for cooperation in education and training, promoting lifelong learning, mobility and transnational collaboration to support the setting-up of the European education area 2025. The aim is to develop further inclusive, responsive, attractive and innovative vocational education and training (VET) that promotes education success for all, employability and helps learners to adjust even to severe and unexpected societal and labour-market changes. Another objective is VET to support the transition towards a digital and greener economy.

VET in Portugal offers a wide range of programmes accessible to young people and adults, with flexibility in type and duration: promoting equal opportunities and supporting the integration of vulnerable groups are its main features. Approximately 40% of learners at secondary education attend a VET programme, according to Eurostat.

The national qualifications system is a key component of education and training and has reorganised VET into a single system. Its governance model actively involves different VET stakeholders, such as providers, sectoral councils for qualification, and social partners. VET programmes within the national qualifications system lead to a double certification: an education and professional certification comprising general, scientific, technological and work-based learning components, enabling permeability with general programmes.

Revitalising adult learning by fostering the up- and reskilling of adults is a priority area and, in this effort, *Qualifica* is a flagship programme mobilising a wide network of *Qualifica* centres. VET for adults is an integral part of the national qualification system, having education and training programmes for adults (*cursos educação e formação de adultos*, EFA) and recognition and validation of

prior learning as key features. Both lead to an education or a double certification (European qualifications framework (EQF) 1 to 4) or a partial certification.

Portugal has focused on addressing the challenges posed by the digital transformation. In April 2020, the action plan for the digital transition was launched in line with the national digital competences initiative e.2030. The programme *Capacitar i4.0* promotes the setup of in-company and intercompany training actions in this field.

This short description, drawn up in close cooperation with Cedefop's national ReferNet partner, aims to offer an overview of Portugal's VET, its distinctive features and challenges. Our main objective is to help a wider European public to understand the key elements of VET in its specific country context. We hope that this publication will promote cooperation among Member States in VET, inform discussions on the future of VET, foster learner and teacher mobility, and be useful for policy-makers, researchers, VET providers and other readers across and beyond Europe.

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Portugal



Area	92 225.61 km²
Capital	Lisbon
System of government	Semi-presidential republic
Population (2020) ⁽¹⁾	10 295 909
Per capita gross domestic product (GDP) (current prices, 2019) ⁽²⁾	EUR 20 740
Legislative power	Assembly of the Republic

⁽¹⁾ Eurostat, tps00001 and proj_19ndbi [extracted on 26.10.2020].

⁽²⁾ Eurostat, tec00001 [extracted on 11.11.2020].

CHAPTER 1.

External factors influencing VET

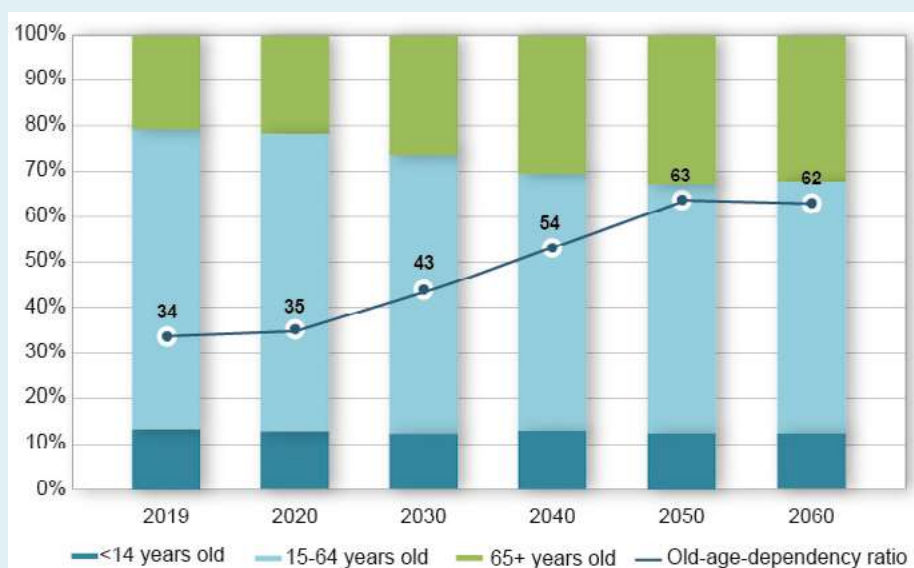


1.1. Demographics

In 2020, the population of Portugal was 10 295 909: 4 859 977 males and 5 435 932 females. Since 2015, it has slightly decreased by 0.8% due to negative natural growth ⁽³⁾. Mainland Portugal is in southwest Europe. The country's area is approximately 92 100 sq. km together with the Azores and Madeira archipelagos in the Atlantic Ocean (INE, 2017).

As population is ageing, the old-age-dependency ratio is expected to increase from 34 in 2019 to 62 in 2060 (Figure 1) ⁽⁴⁾. Portugal has the fourth highest old-age-dependency ratio in the EU ⁽⁵⁾. In 2019, the proportion of population aged 0 to 14 years was 13.7 (15.2 EU-27), while the share of population in the age group 65 to 79 was 15.4 (14.3 in EU-27) ⁽⁶⁾.

Figure 1. Population forecast by age group and old-age-dependency ratio



Source: Eurostat, proj_18ndbi [extracted on 26.10.2020].

⁽³⁾ Eurostat, tps00001 and proj_19ndbi [extracted on 26.10.2020].

⁽⁴⁾ 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 (15-64 years). The value is expressed per 100 persons of working age (15-64).

⁽⁵⁾ Eurostat, tsp00198 [extracted on 4.6.2020].

⁽⁶⁾ Eurostat, tps00010 [extracted on 4.6.2020].

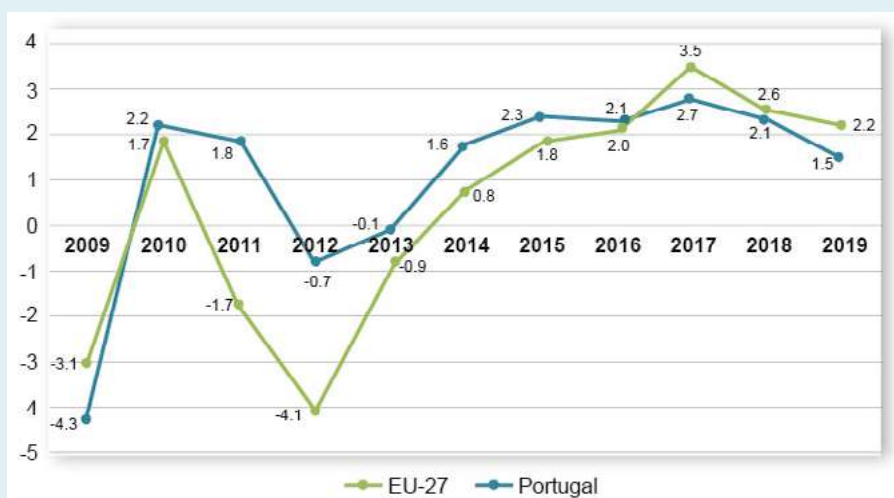
In 2019, there was positive population growth (0.19%), for the first time since 2009. It resulted from an increase in net migration (from 11 570 in 2018 to 44 506 in 2019); the natural change (live births minus deaths) remained negative (-25 214 in 2019). Half of the population is over 45.5 years old, which represents an increase of 4.3 years compared to 2009 ⁽⁷⁾.

Demographic challenges may have a negative effect on the number of learners attending vocational education and training (VET) programmes, the size of the labour force and, consequently, provision of welfare services.

1.2. Economy and labour market indicators

In 2019, Portugal's gross domestic product growth was estimated at 2.2% (EU-27 1.5%). It has remained higher than the EU-27 average for three consecutive years (Figure 2). After a significant downswing at the beginning of the previous decade due to the economic crisis, the Portuguese economy has since been steadily growing. The real GDP growth rate peaked in 2017 and for the next two years was above 2%.

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



Source: Eurostat, tec00115 [extracted on 4.6.2020].

⁽⁷⁾ More information at the National Institute for Statistics (*Instituto Nacional de Estatística*, INE): https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_destaques&DESTAQUESdest_boui=414436913&DESTAQUESstema=55466&DESTAQUESmodo=2

In the upcoming period, Portugal, like the rest of the world, will have to address the challenges posed by the Covid-19 crisis. In the second quarter of 2020, GDP registered a fall of 16.3%, after a reduction of 2.3% in the previous quarter. The strong decline in economic activity reflected the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which was felt most intensely in the first two months of the second quarter ⁽⁸⁾. A significant part of the negative impact to the economy is caused by the major problems that the retail, catering and accommodation sectors have faced. These sectors are responsible for approximately half of the estimated total impact on GDP, followed by the industry sector (manufacturing and extraction), which contributes to a reduction of -1.6 percentage points (República Portuguesa, 2020a).

In this context, VET will play an important role in addressing the needs of the less qualified and ability to keep up with the labour market challenges. VET will place a special focus on those most affected by the automation and digitisation of the economy and at risk of technological unemployment. The government plan to support digital transition (XXII Government of Portugal, 2020a) aims to create an economy and society based on knowledge, where the growth of productivity is sustained by innovation and highly qualified people.

1.2.1. Economic structure

The main economic sectors of the Portuguese economy are:

- (a) services;
- (b) commerce;
- (c) construction and real estate activities;
- (d) agriculture and fisheries.

Large enterprises account for less than 0.1% of the total number of enterprises in Portugal. The rest are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); 96.2% of them are micro, 3.2% are small and only 0.5% are medium-sized. In 2017, the share of individual enterprises was 68% ⁽⁹⁾. The distribution of employed people is 78% in SMEs and 22% in large enterprises ⁽¹⁰⁾.

⁽⁸⁾ More information at INE:

https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_destaques&DESTAQUESdest_boui=414810619&DESTAQUESmodo=2

⁽⁹⁾ More information at INE:

https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_indicadores&indOcorrCod=0009800&contexto=bd&selTab=tab2

⁽¹⁰⁾ More information at *Pordata*:

<https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Pessoal+ao+servi%C3%A7o+das+empresas+total+e+por+dimens%C3%A3o-2896>

1.2.2. Professional regulations

Since 2011, Portugal has been introducing major reforms deregulating professions ⁽¹¹⁾. In 2020, there were 242 professions and 45 competent authorities registered in the regulated professions database of the European Commission ⁽¹²⁾.

In 2015, a new legal framework ⁽¹³⁾ was adopted, defining the ways to access professions and practice them. According to the new framework, these are:

- (a) tertiary education qualifications;
- (b) non-higher qualifications included in the national qualifications catalogue (*catálogo nacional de qualificações*, CNQ), including qualifications acquired through the recognition, validation and certification of competences (*reconhecimento, validação e reconhecimento de competências*, RVCC) process (RVCC process);
- (c) non-higher qualifications not included in the CNQ;
- (d) diplomas or certificates obtained by passing exams without previous training (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019).

The Directorate-General for Employment and Industrial Relations (*Direção-Geral do Emprego e das Relações de Trabalho*, DGERT) is the public body that coordinates the implementation of the Directive on recognition of professional qualifications ⁽¹⁴⁾; it is also officially ⁽¹⁵⁾ designated as the assistance centre providing information to citizens.

1.2.3. Employment and unemployment

Unemployment was on the rise during the economic crisis in the beginning of the previous decade, peaking in 2013 (16.4%) ⁽¹⁶⁾. It has been steadily decreasing since then, reaching 6.5% in 2019, which was lower than the EU-27 average (6.7%) ⁽¹⁷⁾. The higher the level of education attainment, the lower the possibility of being unemployed; tertiary education graduates enjoy lower unemployment rates than graduates of post-secondary education or less.

⁽¹¹⁾ Decree-Law No 92/2011 (*Decreto-Lei No 92/2011, de 27 de julho*).

⁽¹²⁾ More information at:
https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/regprof/index.cfm?action=regprofs&id_country=12&qid=1&mode=asc&maxRows=*#top

⁽¹³⁾ Decree-Law No 37/2015 (*Decreto-Lei No 37/2015, de 10 de março*).

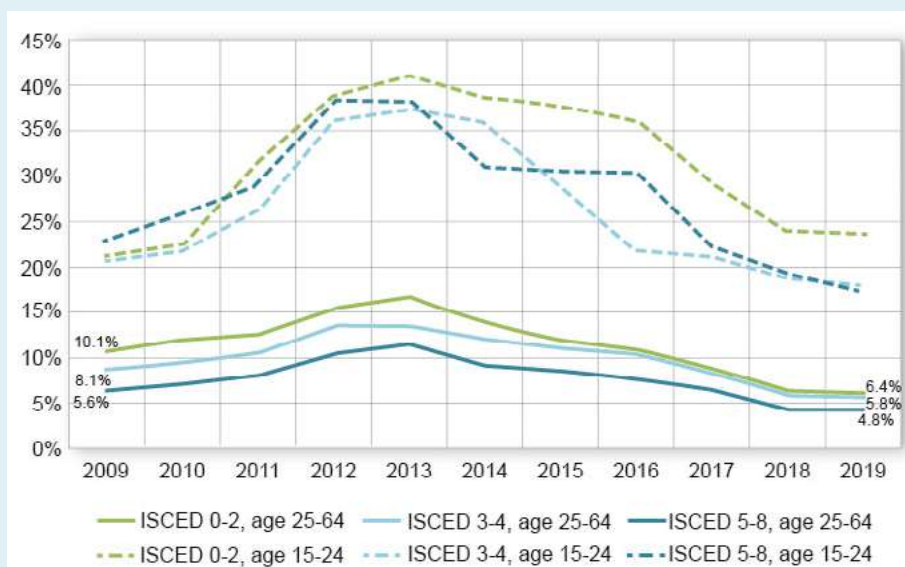
⁽¹⁴⁾ Directive No 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Dispatch No 6518-A/2019 (*Despacho No 6518-A/2019, de 18 de julho*).

⁽¹⁶⁾ Unemployment rate (aged 15-74).

⁽¹⁷⁾ Eurostat, une_rt_a [extracted on 23.11.2020].

Figure 3. Unemployment rate (aged 15-24 and 25-64) by education attainment level in 2009-19



NB: data based on international standard classification of education (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, Ifsa_urgaed [extracted on 26.10.2020].

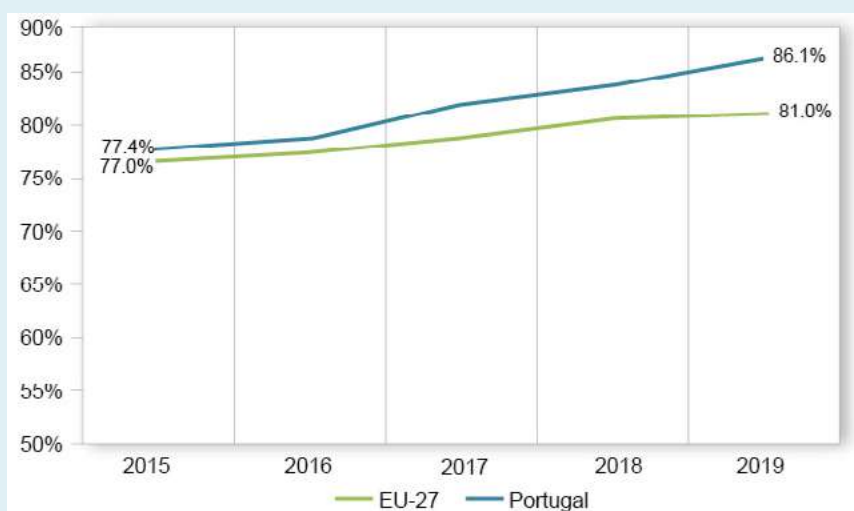
Unemployment of those between 15 and 24 years old is higher at approximately 20% in 2019. In this age group, the unemployment rate of upper or post-secondary education graduates is lower than for their peers with a tertiary education qualification (Figure 3).

Since the country has started to recover from the previous economic crisis, the total employment rate (age group 20-64) has increased by more than 10 percentage points, reaching 76.1% in 2019 (EU 73.1%). Although there is a gap between the employment rates of men and women (79.9% and 72.7% respectively), it is smaller than the EU-27 average (79.0% and 67.3% respectively) ⁽¹⁸⁾.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Eurostat, t2020_10 [extracted on 5.6.2020].

The employment balance between sectors has remained stable since 2012. The services sector continued to grow (69.8%) ⁽¹⁹⁾; particularly the trade, vehicle repair/maintenance, and accommodation and catering industries. Labour market demand has remained constant across recent years, with 31% of job vacancies in the trade sector, 24.4% in consulting, scientific, technical administrative activities and support services, and 20.1% in industry (DGERT, 2019) ⁽²⁰⁾.

Figure 4. **Employment rate of VET graduates (20-34 years old, 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.

Source: Eurostat, edat_lfse_24 [extracted on 26.10.2020].

The employment rate of recent VET graduates increased per almost nine percentage points from 77.4% in 2015 to 86.1% in 2019. It is now more than five percentage points above the EU-27 average (81.0% in 2019) (Figure 4). At the same period, there was a more dynamic increase in the employment rate of VET graduates compared to the total employment rate of all international standard classification of education (ISCED) level graduates (Table 1).

⁽¹⁹⁾ More information at INE:

https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_indicadores&indOcorrCod=0005560&contexto=bd&selTab=tab2

⁽²⁰⁾ More information at INE:

https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_indicadores&indOcorrCod=0006905&contexto=bd&selTab=tab2&xlang=en

Table 1. Total employment rate of all ISCED level graduates (aged 20-34)

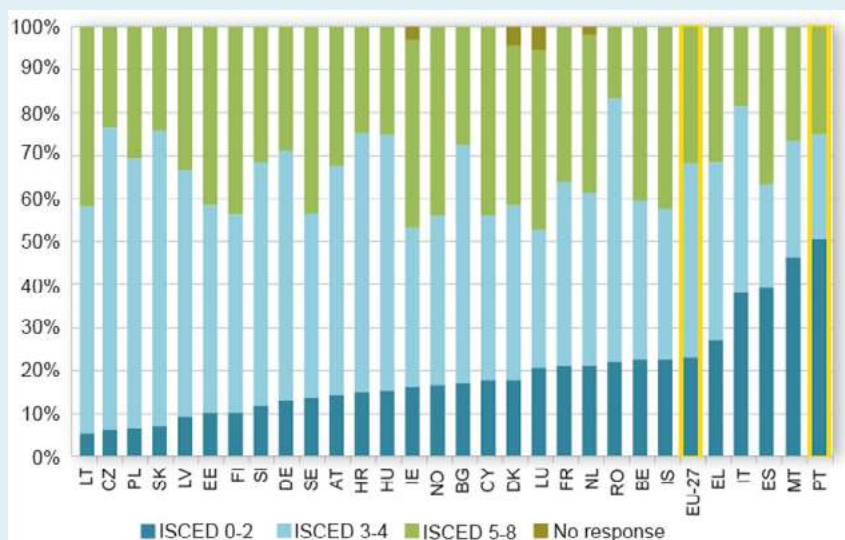
2015	78.4%
2019	84.5%
Change 2015-19 (percentage points)	6.1

Source: Eurostat, edat_ifse_24 [extracted on 5.5.2020].

1.3. Education attainment

Portugal has made significant progress regarding education attainment, but it remains lower than the EU average. Although less than 2015 (73.7%), in 2019 the share of people with low-level or no qualification was 50.2%, the highest in EU. Similarly, the share of those with medium-level qualifications is the second lowest in EU (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Population (aged 25 to 64) by highest education level attained in 2019



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Low reliability for 'no response' in Czechia, Iceland, Latvia, and Poland.

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, ifsa_pgaed [extracted on 26.10.2020].

However, a closer look at the education attainment of the younger generation shows a different picture. For instance, in 2019, the share of the population, aged 20 to 24, having completed at least upper secondary education was 82.9%; in this age group there is a substantial difference in favour of female graduates (87.2% against 78.6% for men) ⁽²¹⁾. Further, in 2019, the share of the population, aged 30 to 34, with tertiary educational attainment was 36.2% ⁽²²⁾. This has risen partly due to specialised measures fostering the enrolment of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in higher education.

In 2016, the national reform programme recognised as main challenges in the area of education and training the high level of underachievement at school and early leaving from education and training (XXI Government of Portugal, 2016). It prioritised the implementation of public policies primarily targeting young people (especially young people not in education, employment or training, NEETs) (DGERT, 2019). Since then, the percentage of early leavers from education and training has been reduced, in 2019 reaching 10.6%, approaching both the EU-27 average and the national target (10.0%) (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Early leavers from education and training in 2010-19



NB: Share of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training.

Source: Eurostat, edat_ifse_14 [extracted on 26.10.2020].

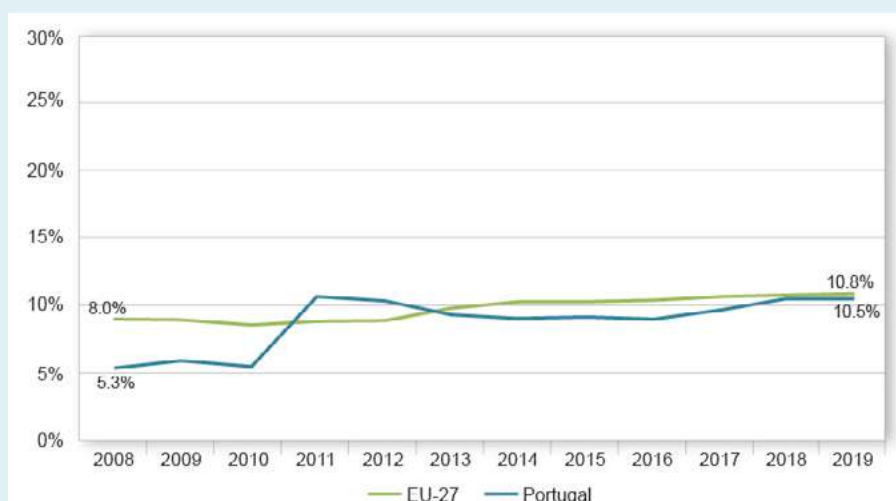
⁽²¹⁾ Eurostat, tps00186 [extracted on 5.6.2020].

⁽²²⁾ Eurostat, edat_ifse_03 [extracted on 5.6.2020].

Measures were also introduced to help young people below 30, who were dropouts, to enrol again and complete their degrees ⁽²³⁾.

The main lifelong learning programmes include education and training programmes for adults (*cursos educação e formação de adultos*, EFA), certified modular training, and recognition of prior learning (RVCC). In 2019, participation in lifelong learning (LLL) was 10.5%, slightly below the EU average (10.8%).

Figure 7. Participation in lifelong learning in 2008-19



NB: Share of adult population aged 25 to 64, participating in education and training.

Source: Eurostat, trng_ifse_01 [extracted on 26.10.2020].

Since 2013, adult enrolment in education and training has remained fairly stable. In 2018-19, 39.43% of those enrolled in education and training programmes were in the RVCC process, while EFA programmes remained adults' main option (44.63%). The highest share of adults enrolled in education is at secondary education (DGEEC, 2020).

The 2020 national reform programme focuses on addressing the relatively high level of grade retention in basic education and training programmes; it also aims to reduce the number of individuals who enter the labour market without completing secondary education, and those without basic digital competences. It highlights the importance of combating existing inequality and the socioeconomic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and upskilling human resources to boost the economy (XXII Government of Portugal, 2020b).

⁽²³⁾ Programa +Superior (2018-19) that replaced but assumed the objectives of Programa Retomar.

1.4. Employment policies influencing VET

The labour ministry manages active labour market policies (ALMPs) and the national Youth guarantee ⁽²⁴⁾ initiative through the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (Instituto do Emprego e da Formação Profissional, IEFP) ⁽²⁵⁾.

In 2019, initiatives supporting traineeships corresponded to approximately 21% of IEFP's expenditure in ALMPs, while hiring subsidies accounted for 6.3% (IEFP, 2019). Currently, the main policy responses include:

- (a) professional traineeships (*estágios ATIVAR.PT*) ⁽²⁶⁾, launched in August 2020; these last nine months and enable beneficiaries to develop practical training experience at the workplace, granting a traineeship ranging from about EUR 527 to EUR 1 053 per month, according to trainee education level attained;
- (b) hiring subsidies (*incentivo ATIVAR.PT*), launched in August 2020, provide financial support to employers who hire registered jobseekers on temporary contracts of at least 12 months (starting at EUR 1 755) or permanent contracts (starting at EUR 5 265), with the obligation to provide 50 hours of professional training and work-based learning (WBL);
- (c) the employment and support programme for people with disabilities, which integrates a set of measures aimed at supporting the qualification and employment of those who have difficulties in accessing, maintaining or progressing in their jobs (IEFP, 2019).

Increased youth unemployment due to the Covid-19 pandemic is one concern addressed by new measures that focus on the (re)integration of young jobseekers in the labour market. Such initiatives include:

- (a) a hiring incentive, aimed to help SMEs operating in strategic economic sectors to hire qualified young adults (*Impulso PME Jovem*), which is expected to enter into force in the short term;
- (b) an integrated support for entrepreneurship, focused mostly on young jobseekers (*Empreende 2020*), also expected to enter into force in the short run.

The Youth guarantee initiative has contributed to lower youth unemployment and NEET rates. According to the European Commission (2020), in 2018 approximately 55% of NEETs aged under 25 were registered (EU average

⁽²⁴⁾ More information at: <https://www.garantiajovem.pt/>

⁽²⁵⁾ The national public employment service.

⁽²⁶⁾ More information at: <https://www.iefp.pt/apoios-a-contratacao>

38.9%); six in 10 were in employment or in education and training, six months after leaving education or training.

Due to the pandemic crisis, the government has approved a set of temporary exceptional measures to help the most affected workers and employers to maintain their jobs and alleviate poverty. The following measures are included in the government stability programme and in the national reform plan:

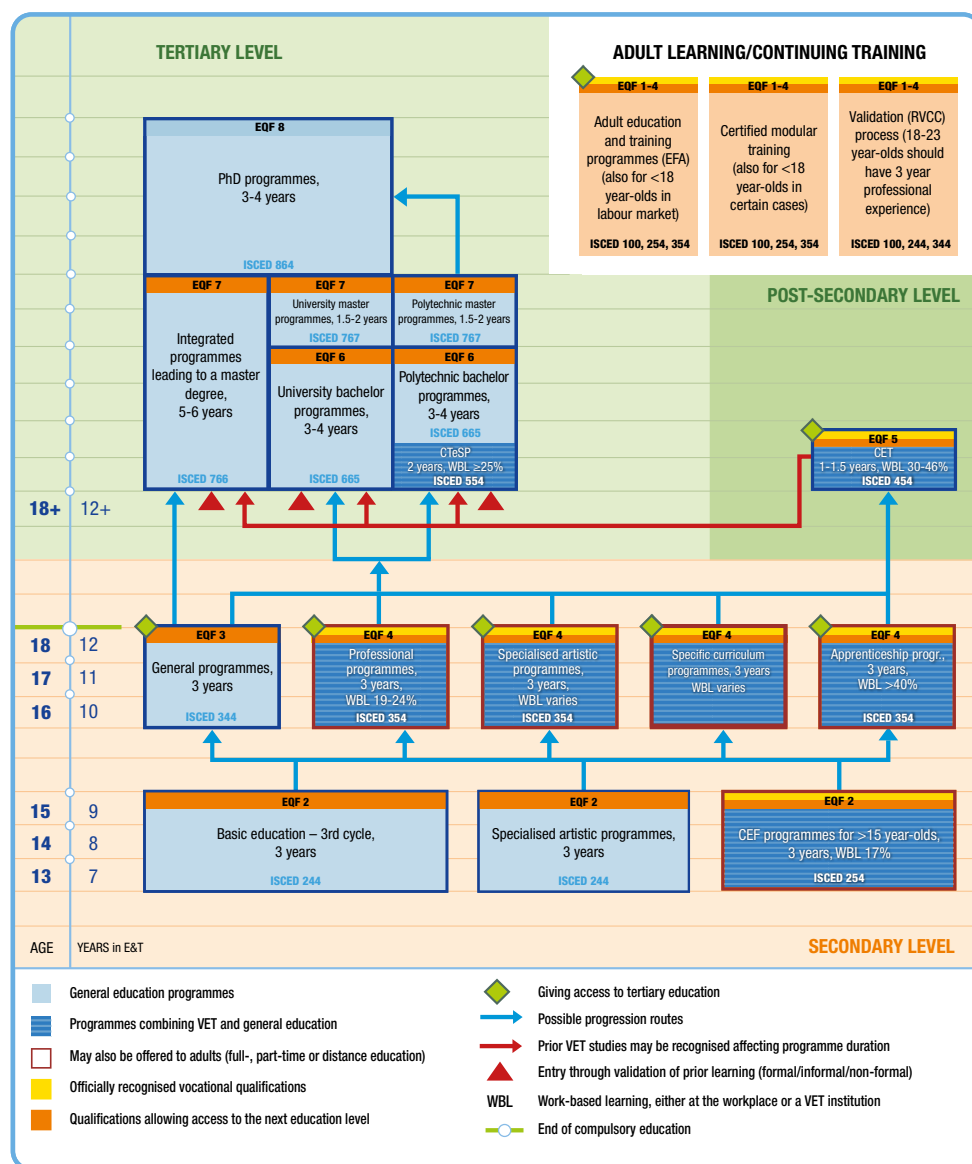
- (a) exceptional incentive to normalise business activity and support the progressive restart of companies affected by the pandemic crisis, by temporarily reducing the normal working period, offering professional training to employees, and supporting the maintenance of employment contracts;
- (b) exceptional training plan for employees (*plano extraordinário de formação*) proposed by employers, developed by IEFP and delivered as part-time training;
- (c) support for the emergency reinforcement of social and health facilities (*apoio ao reforço de emergência de equipamentos sociais e de saúde*) building on a temporary socially useful activity programme and on an exceptional increase in the monthly grants received by participants already placed in social and health facilities (XXII Government of Portugal, 2020b; República Portuguesa, 2020a).

CHAPTER 2.

VET provision



Figure 8. VET in the Portuguese education and training system in 2020/21



NB: ISCED-P 2011. This is a simplified chart, based on the unified approach used for the spotlights on VET in all EU-27 countries plus Iceland and Norway.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Portugal, 2020.

2.1. Education and training system overview

The education and training system comprises:

- (a) optional preschool education, covering children from three to six years old;
- (b) basic education (nine years), integrating three cycles (EQF levels 1 and 2);
- (c) secondary education (EQF levels 3 and 4);
- (d) post-secondary non-tertiary education (EQF level 5);
- (e) tertiary education (EQF levels 6, 7 and 8) (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019).

Compulsory education lasts 12 school years and starts at the age of six ⁽²⁷⁾. It comprises basic and secondary education. Basic education lasts nine years, until age 15 (including VET programmes). It includes three cycles; the four-year first cycle and the two-year second cycle are considered primary education, while the three-year third cycle corresponds to lower secondary education. Secondary education ⁽²⁸⁾ comprises general and VET programmes (10th to 12th year). Graduates of these three-year programmes can access tertiary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019).

Horizontal and vertical permeability is an important element of the education and training system, ensuring links not only among different VET programmes, but also between general and vocational education ⁽²⁹⁾.

In 2017, the *Students' profile at the end of compulsory education* ⁽³⁰⁾ was introduced for programmes under the responsibility of the education ministry ⁽³¹⁾, promoting transversal and interdisciplinary competences that interrelate and mobilise a solid set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.

Tertiary education is provided by universities and polytechnics. Preconditions to enter tertiary education include graduation from a secondary programme or a qualification at the same level, admission exams and specific requirements for each study field (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019). Since 2020, besides the general conditions to

⁽²⁷⁾ Law No 85/2009 (*Lei No 85/2009 de 25 de agosto*).

⁽²⁸⁾ Secondary education corresponds to what internationally is referred to as 'upper secondary education'.

⁽²⁹⁾ Decree-Law No 55/2018 (*Decreto-Lei No 55/2018, de 6 de julho*).

⁽³⁰⁾ *Students' profile at the end of compulsory education* [*Perfil dos alunos à saída da escolaridade obrigatória*]: https://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Curriculo/Projeto_Autonomia_e_Flexibilidade/perfil_dos_alunos.pdf

⁽³¹⁾ *Students' profile at the end of compulsory education* covers all relevant programmes described in Chapter 2, apart from apprenticeship programmes.

access tertiary education, specific access conditions ⁽³²⁾ were introduced for secondary VET graduates. They take into account the score of VET graduates in the final evaluation and aptitude tests, as well as specific tests carried out by each institution to assess if candidates have the necessary knowledge and competences to attend a particular tertiary education programme. Higher education institutions can also determine a special quota for VET graduates.

Universities and polytechnic schools lead to a first-cycle degree (*licenciatura*, EQF level 6) and a second-cycle degree (*mestrado*, EQF level 7). They also provide master programmes, integrating the first two cycles (*mestrado*, EQF level 7) and PhD degrees (*doutoramento*, EQF level 8) ⁽³³⁾ (DGERT, 2019). Polytechnic institutions also offer short-cycle programmes, called higher professional technical programmes (*cursos técnicos superiores profissionais*, CTeSP). CTeSP graduates acquire a diploma of higher professional technician, but not a post-secondary non-tertiary certificate nor a higher education degree.

The national qualifications system ⁽³⁴⁾ (*sistema nacional de qualificações*, SNQ), introduced in 2007 and updated in 2017, is a key element in the development of vocational training. It integrated the existing qualification subsystems and has improved the quality of qualifications and eased access and progression in the labour market. The legislation that introduced SNQ also set up objectives and tools, to support the implementation of policy developments, for instance the national qualifications framework (*quadro nacional de qualificações*, QNQ), the national credit system for VET, the system for anticipating qualification needs (*sistema de antecipação de necessidades de qualificação*, SANQ), and the guidance and registration instrument of individuals' qualifications and competences (*Qualifica* passport). It is in line with the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning ⁽³⁵⁾.

VET programmes within the SNQ lead to a double certification: an education and professional certification. Some of the main objectives of SNQ are to (DGERT, 2019):

- (a) foster secondary education as the minimum education level attained;
- (b) support the education and professional development of individuals;
- (c) adjust VET programmes to labour market needs;
- (d) make VET more responsive and flexible with a lifelong learning perspective;

⁽³²⁾ Decree-Law No 11/2020 (*Decreto-Lei No 11/2020, de 2 de abril*).

⁽³³⁾ Decree-Law No 65/2018 (*Decreto-Lei No 65/2018, de 16 de agosto*).

⁽³⁴⁾ Decree-Law No 14/2017 (*Decreto-Lei No 14/2017, de 26 de Janeiro*).

⁽³⁵⁾ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9620-2017-INIT/en/pdf>

- (e) reinforce the RVCC process;
- (f) promote equal opportunities and support the integration of vulnerable groups.

The QNQ⁽³⁶⁾ defines a structure of qualification levels, which includes access requirements and certifications obtained. It is referenced to EQF, supporting the comparability of qualification levels among different Member States.

As population decreases, enrolments in education and training programmes are negatively influenced. Between 2014 and 2018, the share of VET learners fell by 2.9 percentage points in VET programmes in basic education and by 6.3 percentage points in secondary education (Table 2).

Table 2. Share of learners in VET by level in 2014 and 2018

	Basic education	Secondary education	Post-secondary education
2014	9.4%	46.0%	100%
2018	6.5%	39.7%	100%

NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs01, educ_uoe_enrs04 and educ_uoe_enrs07 [extracted on 5.5.2020].

In the school year 2018/19, almost 20% of all learners were enrolled in secondary education programmes; most VET programmes are at this education level (Figure 9).

In 2018/19, approximately 40% of learners at secondary education followed a VET programme⁽³⁷⁾ (Figures 10 and 11). Most were enrolled in professional programmes; the most popular areas were (DGEEC, 2020):

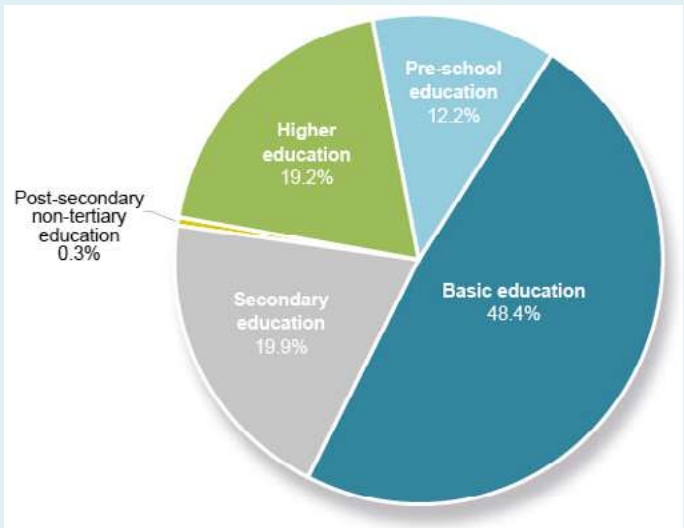
- (a) personal services (30.7%);
- (b) engineering and related disciplines (13.9%);
- (c) computer sciences (13.8%);
- (d) arts (12.6%).

Apprenticeship programmes are selected by 5.8% of learners at secondary level, while the remaining VET programmes play a marginal role in the VET system.

⁽³⁶⁾ Ordinance No 782/2009 (*Portaria No 782/2009, de 23 de julho*).

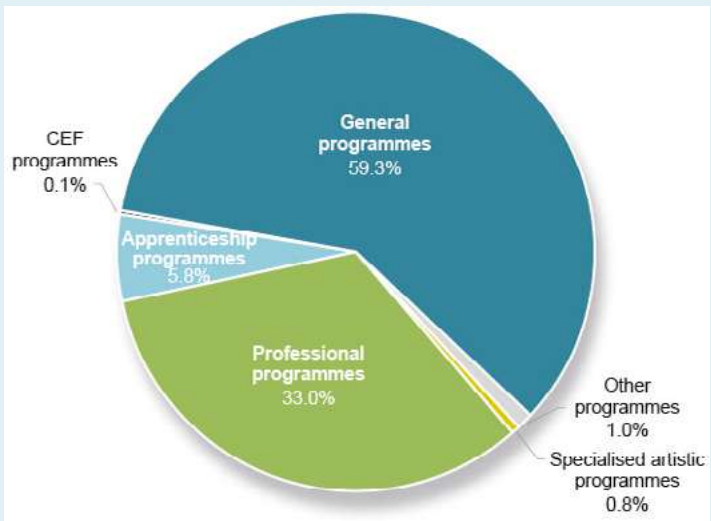
⁽³⁷⁾ At secondary education, VET comprises professional, apprenticeship, specific curricula and specialised artistic programmes (Section 2.2.2).

Figure 9. Learners by education level in 2018/19



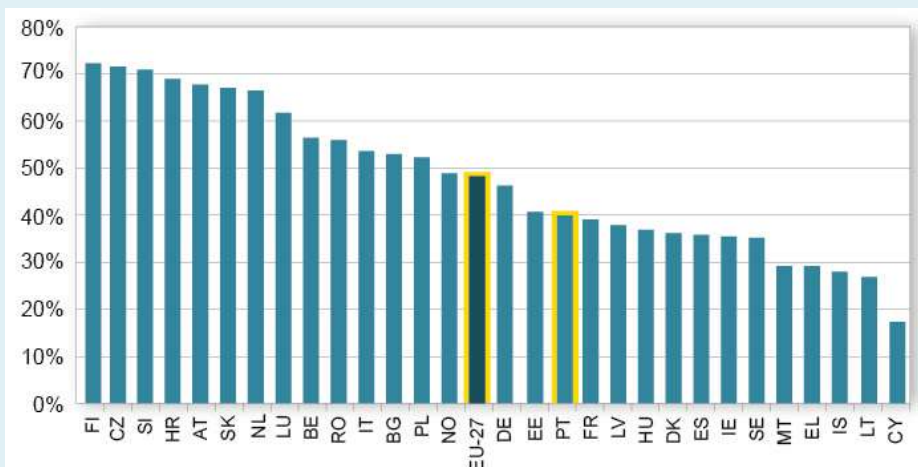
Source: Adapted from DGEEC, 2020.

Figure 10. Learners by secondary education programme 2018/19



Source: Adapted from DGEEC, 2020.

Figure 11. Share of initial VET learners from total learners at upper-secondary level (ISCED level 3), 2018



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs04 [extracted on 26.10.2020].

Usually, more males participate in VET (59.1%), apart from in specialised artistic programmes where, in 2018/19, 65.6% of learners were female. Among the remaining the VET programmes, professional programmes have the highest percentage of female learners (41.3%). Post-secondary non-tertiary VET has a higher rate of males (66.2%) than secondary VET (DGEEC, 2020).

2.2. Government-regulated VET provision

The purpose of VET is to provide the individual with skills and competences to perform one or more professional activities (Article No 3 of Decree-Law No 14/2017 of 26 January).

VET programmes are usually part of secondary education but, in 2004, education and training programmes for young people were introduced in the second and third cycle of basic education.

The following are secondary education VET programmes:

- professional programmes;
- apprenticeship programmes;
- specific curricula programmes;
- specialised artistic programmes.

All basic education graduates may enrol in these programmes, although some providers may define their own selection criteria.

At post-secondary level there are the technological specialisation programmes, while at tertiary level there are the higher professional technical programmes, which are short-cycle programmes of higher education.

2.2.1. Basic education programmes

2.2.1.1. Education and training programmes for young people

Education and training programmes for young people (*cursos de educação e formação de jovens*, CEF) are initial VET (IVET) basic education programmes. They are part of compulsory education and of the formal education and training system. Learners can choose among four types of CEF programmes (from 1 125 to 2 109 hours), based on the education level they have previously achieved. Depending on the type, they lead to EQF level 1 and 2 (ISCED 254) ⁽³⁸⁾; successful graduates are awarded a minimum of 120 credits ⁽³⁹⁾.

The main objectives of these programmes are to reduce the number of early leavers from education and training, by offering flexible learning routes and helping learners enter the labour market. To attend these programmes, learners should have completed the first cycle of basic education (four years) and be at least 15 years old.

CEF programmes combine three school-based components: sociocultural, scientific and technological with work-based learning (at least 210 hours). The share of WBL is 17% and comprises practical training at school and in-company practice. The sociocultural part of the programme includes Portuguese, foreign language(s) and ICT, while the scientific includes training components on applied sciences. Training is offered in fields, such as 'crafts, computer sciences, environmental protection, accounting, management, beauty care, domestic services, electronics, food industry, metallurgy' (DGERT, 2019, p. 20). CEF programmes are provided by a network of:

- (a) public, private and cooperative schools;
- (b) professional schools;
- (c) vocational training centres (supervised by IEFP);
- (d) accredited training providers linked with local authorities, enterprises or business organisations, social partners and local or regional associations.

⁽³⁸⁾ Type 1 CEF programmes lead to a qualification at EQF level 1; they are part of the second cycle of basic education, which is considered primary education.

⁽³⁹⁾ Ordinance No 47/2017 (*Portaria No 47/2017, de 1 de fevereiro*).

Assessment takes both formative and summative forms. The final evaluation test (*prova de avaliação final*, PAF) includes a professional performance assessed by a jury. Learners should prove that they have acquired the most important intended learning outcomes of the programme. Assessment is carried out for each subject/module and training component. Type 1 CEF programmes offer graduates the possibility to enrol in a type 2 CEF programme. Types 2, 3 and 4 lead to a double certification: an education and professional certification (EQF level 2, ISCED 254). As long as graduates meet the relevant access requirements, they can continue their studies at secondary education (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019).

There are three types of CEF programme in secondary education. They target early leavers from education and training or those at risk of early leaving. They have a very limited number of enrolments.

2.2.2. Secondary education programmes

2.2.2.1. Professional programmes

Professional programmes (*cursos profissionais*) are IVET secondary education programmes leading to EQF level 4 (ISCED 354); they are part of compulsory education and of the formal education and training system. They target graduates of basic education aged between 15 and 18 ⁽⁴⁰⁾, who would like to attend a practical programme linked to the labour market. They last three years (from 3 100 to 3 440 hours). Depending on the programme, successful graduates are awarded a minimum of 180 credits ⁽⁴¹⁾. They are the most popular VET programmes (Figure 10).

Professional programmes include four components. The sociocultural, scientific and technological components are school-based. The sociocultural component comprises three general subjects: Portuguese, foreign languages and physical education. The technological training component includes school-based technological, technical and practical subjects. The fourth component WBL (19%-24% of the programme) takes the form of in-company training, covered by an agreement between the school and the enterprise; it lasts from 600 to 840 hours. The learner workplan is an integral part of the training contract (different from a labour contract). WBL is provided in the form of a traineeship carried out in an enterprise or a public organisation. The areas of training include 'applied arts, business administration, computer sciences, electronics, engineering, energy,

⁽⁴⁰⁾ There are exceptions described in the Legislative Order No 6/2018 (*Despacho Normativo No 6/2018, de 12 de abril*).

⁽⁴¹⁾ Ordinance No 47/2017 (*Portaria No 47/2017, de 1 de fevereiro*).

construction and architecture, health services, and tourism and hospitality' (DGERT, 2019, p. 21). Some of the programmes apply the learning outcomes approach. They are provided by professional schools (public or private) and public general education secondary schools.

Assessment is formative and summative, including a professional aptitude test (*prova de aptidão profissional*, PAP). It is a presentation of a project to a jury, demonstrating the knowledge, competences, attitudes and professional skills acquired by learners, with a special focus on the areas of competence registered in the students' profile at the end of compulsory education. Successful completion of a professional programme leads to a double certification: an education (certifying the completion of 12-year compulsory education) and a professional certification. Graduates can continue their studies in technological specialisation programmes (Section 2.2.3.1) and higher education (provided they fulfil the specific requirements of each programme) (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019).

2.2.2.2. Apprenticeship programmes

Apprenticeship programmes (*cursos de aprendizagem*) are IVET secondary education programmes leading to EQF level 4, ISCED 354. They are part of compulsory education and of the formal education and training system. They target graduates of basic education up to age 25. Apprenticeship programmes last three years (maximum 3 700 hours). Depending on the programme, successful graduates are awarded a minimum of 180 credits ⁽⁴²⁾.

The main objective of apprenticeship programmes is to equip learners with relevant and up-to-date knowledge, skills and competences enabling them to find a job. They combine sociocultural, scientific and technological school-based training with mandatory WBL (>40% of the programme). WBL is an alternance scheme taking place at school and in an enterprise; it is obligatory for each apprentice to sign a training contract with the enterprise (training provider) where WBL is carried out. These programmes include general education components also promoting key competences (Portuguese and foreign languages, citizenship, digital competence, and innovation and entrepreneurship). Some of the programmes apply the learning outcomes approach. The main areas of training include 'audio-visual and media production, IT science, trade, construction and repair of motor vehicles, electricity and energy, electronics and automation, hospitality and catering, manufacturing of textiles, clothing, footwear and leather, metallurgy and metal mechanics, and technologies of chemical processing'

⁽⁴²⁾ Ordinance No 47/2017 (*Portaria No 47/2017, de 1 de fevereiro*).

(DGERT, 2019, p. 22). They are delivered in IEFP vocational training centres ⁽⁴³⁾ or private providers, for instance trade unions in agreement with IEFP.

Both formative and summative assessment methods are used. Learners are evaluated by a jury through a final evaluation exam – PAF – which includes a set of practical activities. Successful completion of an apprenticeship programme leads to a double certification: an education (certifying the completion of 12-year compulsory education) and a professional certification. Progression opportunities for successful graduates include post-secondary non-tertiary or tertiary education programmes (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019).

2.2.2.3. *Specific curriculum programmes*

Specific curriculum programmes (*cursos com planos próprios*) are IVET secondary education programmes leading to a double certification: an education and a professional certification at EQF level 4. They are part of compulsory education and of the formal education and training system and mainly provided by private and cooperative schools; since 2012 they can also be provided by public schools. In contrast to professional programmes, they grant autonomy to schools to diversify their education and training provision, by designing a curriculum that combines elements of general and VET programmes in line with the needs and expectations of the local community. They have to be authorised by the education ministry.

These programmes aim at providing learners with initial vocational training and diversified learning, according to their interests. Graduates can continue their studies at higher education ⁽⁴⁴⁾ or enter the labour market. They have a three-year duration and include four training components: general, scientific, technological and WBL. The general and scientific training components have, as reference, the basic curricular plan of scientific-humanistic programmes and the technological training component has the professional competences associated with each programme. WBL takes place as traineeship in companies or other host entities, in periods of variable duration throughout or at the end of the training. Exceptionally, it can be partially achieved through the simulation of a set of professional activities relevant to the respective qualification, for instance in a school laboratory.

The assessment is formative and summative, including a technological aptitude test (*prova de aptidão tecnológica*, PAT). PAT is a presentation before a

⁽⁴³⁾ Law No 85/2009 (*Lei No 85/2009*).

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Provided that they meet the access requirements.

jury of a project demonstrating the knowledge, competences, attitudes and professional skills acquired by learners, with a special focus on the areas of competence registered in the students' profile at the end of compulsory education.

2.2.2.4. *Specialised artistic programmes*

Specialised artistic programmes (*cursos artísticos especializados*) are IVET secondary education programmes leading to EQF level 4 (ISCED 354); they are part of compulsory education and of the formal education and training system. Specialised artistic programmes cover three fields of study:

- (a) visual arts and audio visuals;
- (b) dance;
- (c) music ⁽⁴⁵⁾.

Learners should be at least 15 years old and have successfully completed the third cycle of basic education. Specialised artistic programmes last three years (from 2 152 to 3 730 hours, depending on the training field). Successful graduates of visual arts and audio visuals, and dance programmes are awarded a minimum of 180 credits ⁽⁴⁶⁾.

Specialised artistic programmes have two school-based components: general (Portuguese, foreigner language, philosophy and physical education) and scientific (two to four subjects of the related study area). They also include a technical-artistic training component, which includes practical training at school and in-company practice. In-company practice is mandatory only in the third year of the programme (12th year of schooling). It most often takes place at a workplace in the form of an internship or an occasional job, aiming to offer to learners the necessary knowledge and work experience. It can also be carried out by simulating a set of real-world professional tasks in a school laboratory. These tasks are integrated in the technical-artistic training component. The visual arts programme includes communication design, product design, and artistic production. Programmes are provided by public, private or cooperative schools.

Learners are assessed by formative and summative methods. The artistic aptitude test (*prova de aptidão artística*, PAA) comprises a professional performance and a practical assessment of the knowledge and skills acquired by learners, focusing on the areas of competence registered in the students' profile at the end of compulsory education.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Music programmes belong to general education granting EQF level 3 (ISCED 344).

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Ordinance No 47/2017 (*Portaria No 47/2017, de 1 de fevereiro*).

Specialised artistic programmes lead to a double certification: an education (certifying the completion of 12-year compulsory education) and a professional certification. Graduates can opt to continue their studies in technological specialisation programmes (Section 2.2.3.1) or tertiary education, provided that they fulfil access requirements (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019).

2.2.3. Post-secondary education programmes

2.2.3.1. Technological specialisation programmes

Technological specialisation programmes (*cursos de especialização tecnológica*, CET) are IVET post-secondary education programmes leading to EQF level 5 (ISCED 454); they are part of the formal education and training system. CET programmes last one to one-and-a-half years (from 1 200 to 1 560 hours, depending on the training field). Based on agreements with higher tertiary institutions, CET graduates are credited 60 to 90 ECTS points.

CET programmes are available for young people and adults. To enter these programmes, learners should fulfil one of the following requirements:

- (a) be secondary education graduates;
- (b) have completed all school subjects of the 10th and 11th year of compulsory education, and enrolled in the 12th but without graduating;
- (c) have a CET diploma or a higher education degree.

CET programmes comprise general, scientific, technological and WBL (including practical training at school and in-company practice) components. Through general and scientific components, learners should develop attitudes and behaviours necessary for higher-level qualification professionals (for example adaptability to labour market needs and world of business). They are also expected to improve their scientific knowledge in their field of study. The technological component aims to support learners in developing the ability to perform practical activities and solve problems in their professional practice. Through WBL (30% to 46% of the programme) learners are expected to apply in practice the knowledge and know-how they acquired, and perform tasks under guidance using relevant techniques, equipment and materials. The WBL can adopt different types of practical training in a real work context (for example internships). CET programmes are implemented in different thematic fields, such as computer science, trade, electronics and automation, and tourism and recreation (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019).

CET programmes are carried out by public, private and cooperative schools, IEFV vocational training centres, technological schools and other training providers certified by the labour ministry. Providers develop their programmes in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, such as employer associations and company representatives adopting different training methods, including traineeships. When the provider is subject to public funding, the CET programmes are free of charge (DGERT, 2019).

Assessment is both formative and summative. To graduate, learners should complete all training components. Graduates receive a qualification and a technological specialisation diploma called *diploma de especialização tecnológica* (DET). CET graduates can continue in higher education through a special admission procedure ⁽⁴⁷⁾ (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019).

2.2.4. Tertiary education programmes

2.2.4.1. Higher professional technical programmes

Higher professional technical programmes (*cursos técnicos superiores profissionais*, CTeSP) are tertiary education programmes (ISCED 554). They are part of the formal education and training system. Although they were launched as post-secondary non-tertiary programmes, since 2016 they are considered short-cycle programmes of higher education ⁽⁴⁸⁾. CTeSP programmes last two years (four academic semesters). Successful graduates receive 120 ECTS points: practical training lasts at least one semester and grants 30 ECTS points.

CTeSP programmes are available for young people and adults. To enter these programmes, learners can be secondary education, CET, CTeSP or tertiary education graduates. They are provided by polytechnic institutions. In public institutions, fees vary among different programmes; the minimum fee is EUR 697 in 2020/21 ⁽⁴⁹⁾.

They combine school-based general, scientific and technical components with WBL ($\geq 25\%$) in the form of practical training (internship). The first two components aim to develop necessary attitudes for high-level skilled professionals able to adapt to the changes of the world of business; they also aim to improve

⁽⁴⁷⁾ CET graduates should meet the specific entry requirements set by each academic institution.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Decree-Law No 63/2016 (*Decreto-Lei No 63/2016, de 13 de setembro*).

⁽⁴⁹⁾ More information at DGES:

<https://www.dges.gov.pt/pt/pagina/propinas?plid=371>

learners' knowledge in the scientific fields related to the specific technologies of their training area. The technical training component includes practical activities and promotes problem-solving competences within the scope of the professional practice. Polytechnics submit programme proposals including a study plan indicating for each training component the respective curricular units, their workload and number of credits attributed. The decision to create a programme is the responsibility of the general director of higher education.

To complete a CTESP programme, learners should pass a final examination in all subjects included and get the required number of ECTS points. Graduates acquire a diploma of higher professional technician (not a tertiary education degree). They can continue their studies in tertiary education programmes by following an application process (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019).

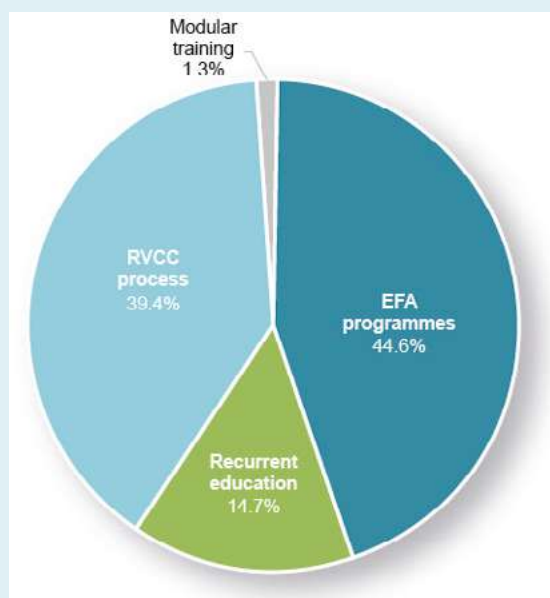
2.2.5. VET for adults

VET for adults is an integral element of SNQ and aims to fulfil many of its main objectives (Section 2.1). This type of programme focuses on lifelong learning, addresses adults' learning needs and increases their employability by upgrading their knowledge, skills and competences. Upskilling adults makes use of the RVCC process (recognition of prior learning) (Section 2.3) and two main programmes:

- (a) EFA programmes;
- (b) certified modular training.

Most adults enrol in EFA programmes, while the RVCC process is also a very popular option. A significant share of learners chose recurrent education (general programmes) taking place at evening schools (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Participation in adult learning in 2018/19



Source: Adapted from DGEEC, 2020.

2.2.5.1. Education and training programmes for adults

Education and training programmes for adults (*cursos de educação e formação para adultos*, EFA) are officially recognised programmes leading to EQF levels 1 to 4 (ISCED 100, 254, 354); they are part of the formal education and training system. They are flexible programmes offering different training paths with their duration varying from 315 to 2 390 hours (one to three years) ⁽⁵⁰⁾ depending on the level of qualification. Graduates can receive up to 60 credits for each year of the VET programme that they complete.

EFA programmes allow adults to develop social, scientific and professional competences and complete basic or secondary education. They are organised in different types of training course that integrate three components:

- basic training, structured in areas of key competences, aiming to contribute to the development of adult personal, social, cultural and scientific competences;
- technological training, organised in training units of short duration (*unidades de formação de curta duração*, UFCD), aiming to help learners develop a set of technical skills necessary for professional practice;

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Annex I of the Ordinance (*Portaria*) No 283/2011, de 24 de outubro.

- (c) training in the work context, held in companies or other employers, aiming at the acquisition and development of technical and organisational skills and personal and social competences relevant to the professional certification.

EFA programmes target adults and, exceptionally, learners under 18 years old who are employed, offering them the option to complete the different cycles of basic education, secondary education and obtain a professional certification if they so choose. Learner training paths are defined either by training providers, based on a diagnostic assessment, or through recognition and validation of the competences already obtained by each learner. Those attending the module learning with autonomy (*aprender com autonomia*) can obtain a basic education certification or a double certification, while those attending the learning portfolio (*portfólio reflexivo de aprendizagens*) can acquire a secondary education certification or a double certification. Both modules apply a reflective education approach. The paths that lead to a double certification also include at least 210 hours of in-company WBL per year.

EFA programmes can also provide learners with a certificate of successful completion of specific modules/units. Additionally, there are flexible EFA paths targeting adults who have carried out RVCC processes (Section 2.3) and award partial certifications. EFA graduates can continue their studies, provided that they meet the access requirements of the programmes (DGERT, 2019).

2.2.5.2. Certified modular training

Certified modular training (*formações modulares certificadas*) was launched in 2008, targeting individuals who are at least 18 years old. Learners below this age can be accepted if they prove to be in the labour market. This training targets those who have not completed basic or secondary education, do not have the necessary skills to enter or progress in the labour market, or only need to attend specific modules to get a full qualification.

Modular training allows adults to create or follow tailored flexible courses of varying duration. The training plans for modular courses are based on UFCD available at the CNQ. Their maximum duration is 600 hours. If it exceeds 300 hours, one third of UFCDs must correspond to units of the base component ⁽⁵¹⁾. Practical training in the context of work is required; however, learners having professional experience in the specific training field are exempt from practical training.

⁽⁵¹⁾ The base component has a common structure for all modular training courses. It promotes specific key competences, such as 'society, technology and science' and 'culture, language and communication'.

Adults who complete modular training receive a certificate of qualifications that identifies each completed UFCD. To obtain a CNQ qualification, a final validation process is required, performed by a technical commission (*comissão técnica de certificação*) in a *Qualifica* centre; it allows learners to obtain certification at levels 1 to 4 of the EQF (ISCED 100, 254, 354). Progression to post-secondary and tertiary education is possible if learners meet the access requirements of the programme they wish to attend (DGERT, 2019).

2.2.6. VET for vulnerable groups

One of the main objectives of SNQ is education and training to promote equal opportunities and support the integration of vulnerable groups. Consequently, all government-regulated VET programmes are available for vulnerable groups. However, there are also initiatives targeting specifically vulnerable groups enabling them to access lifelong learning and other education and training offers:

- (a) Portuguese language courses;
- (b) basic competences courses;
- (c) special measures for those with disabilities.

2.2.6.1. Portuguese language courses

The courses of Portuguese for non-native speakers (*Português língua de acolhimento*, PLA) ⁽⁵²⁾ respond to the learning needs of migrant citizens, facilitate their social integration and help them find a job.

PLA is provided by public schools, IEFP vocational training centres and *Qualifica* centres, in cooperation with the High Commission for Migration (*Alto Comissariado para as Migrações*, ACM) targeting migrants aged 18 or over. Language courses are organised according to training standards included in the CNQ, at levels A1 to B2 of the common European framework of reference for languages. Courses focusing on technical terminology (*Português técnico*) are offered exclusively by IEFP vocational training centres and focus on sectors with a high number of migrant workers:

- (a) commerce;
- (b) construction;
- (c) accommodation and food services;
- (d) beauty care.

These initiatives help migrants learn Portuguese, improve their communication skills and understand their basic civil rights. The duration of the courses varies according to previously achieved language competences (DGERT, 2019).

⁽⁵²⁾ Ordinance No 782/2009 (*Portaria No 782/2009, de 23 de julho*).

2.2.6.2. *Basic competences courses*

Basic competences courses (*competências de base*) ⁽⁵³⁾ focus on adults with low-level qualifications, offering them the necessary competences to enter an EFA programme or initiate a RVCC process. Learners are trained in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology competences. Their duration varies from 150 to 300 hours (DGERT, 2019).

2.2.6.3. *Special measures for those with disabilities*

Initial and continuing VET courses ⁽⁵⁴⁾ are designed to enable those with disabilities to obtain a qualification ⁽⁵⁵⁾ that will help them enter the labour market, keep their job and/or foster their professional development. The courses are designed taking into account the needs of these learners and based on CNQ standards and IEFP know-how (DGERT, 2019).

2.3. Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The recognition, validation and certification of competences process aims to identify the formal, non-formal and informal competences that individuals have developed. It comprises two paths, education and professional, each based on a different set of standards:

- (a) the key competence standards (for education validation);
- (b) the professional competence standards (for professional validation).

The RVCC process also utilises a set of specifically designed evaluation tools. Candidates following the education path can obtain a certificate of basic or secondary general education (EQF levels 1 to 3). The professional path leads to a professional certification. If candidates also hold the corresponding academic certificate, they obtain a double certification at EQF level 2 or 4. Candidates can follow the education and professional path simultaneously if they wish to acquire a double certification.

⁽⁵³⁾ Launched by Ordinance No 1100/2010 (*Portaria No 1100/2010, de 22 de outubro*) and changed by Ordinance No 216-C/2012 (*Portaria No 216-C/2012, de 18 de julho*).

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Decree-Law No 108/2015, Article 6 (*Decreto-Lei No 108/2015, de 17 de junho*).

⁽⁵⁵⁾ For instance the qualification of people with disabilities (*qualificação de pessoas com deficiência e incapacidade*): <https://www.iefp.pt/qualificacao-de-pessoas-com-deficiencia-e-incapacidade>

Individuals can initiate a RVCC process at a *Qualifica* centre ⁽⁵⁶⁾ at any time of the year. There are around 300 centres supervised by ANQEP. The RVCC process is open to candidates who are at least 18 years old. Candidates younger than 23 should provide verification from a social security office, proving that they hold at least three years of professional experience. To complete the RVCC process, learners should attend at least 50 training hours to acquire the necessary competences. They can also attend a 25-hour training to get ready for the final evaluation. Both RVCC paths mainly involve face-to-face procedures and training, although distance learning is also an option (Guimarães, 2019).

A main evaluation tool of the RVCC process is the reflective learning portfolio (*portefólio reflexivo*). This records candidates' competences, displaying a critical evaluation of their knowledge, competences and experience, including all relevant supporting documentation.

Candidates are evaluated by a jury, appointed by a *Qualifica* centre, which certifies their competences. The evaluation can be written, oral or practical or combine these methods to assess the acquired key competences (education path), or professional competences (professional path). Candidates can also obtain a partial certification enabling them to attend the missing training components to acquire a full certification. Certifications acquired through the RVCC process are equal to any other, enabling learners to continue their studies (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019).

2.4. Other forms of training

In-company continuing professional training, in both the public and private sectors, is usually offered outside the CNQ framework. Training providers can register issued certificates at the platform of the integrated system of information and management of the education and training programmes (*sistema integrado de informação e gestão da oferta educativa e formativa*, SIGO) ⁽⁵⁷⁾ (DGERT, 2019).

In 2018, the labour ministry issued the survey of continuing professional training (*relatório anual de formação continua*), covering 258 592 enterprises, which employed 2 870 008 workers. The economic sectors with the higher rates of training were:

⁽⁵⁶⁾ *Qualifica* centres offer guidance and counselling to low-skilled individuals (aged 15 or older), focusing on NEETs and adults in a RVCC process.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ Ordinance No 474/2010 (*Portaria No 474/2010, de 8 de julho*).

- (a) water collection, treatment and distribution;
- (b) electricity, gas and water.

The accommodation and food service and agriculture, fishing and hunting sectors had lower rates. Training was attended by 1 052 600 workers, with close participation rates between genders. Workers with a higher education degree and with higher qualified professions tended to attend more training. The education and training areas with higher participation were:

- (a) social sciences, commerce and law;
- (b) services.

However, science, mathematics and informatics is the only area in which there was an increase between 2017 and 2018. In 2018, companies declared to have provided an average of 33.8 hours per worker (GEP, 2020).

2.5. Financing VET

'In 2017, public expenditure on education was 5% of GDP, slightly more than in 2016 (4.8%) and above the EU average (4.6%)' (European Commission, 2019, p. 5). However, it remains below the pre-crisis level of expenditure (7.1% in 2010). In secondary education the reduction was 25%. Annual expenditure per student was below the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average at all education levels. Although the education ministry targets addressing challenges in school infrastructure, public spending remains relatively low. 'The proportion of expenditure on education (from primary to tertiary) from private sources (20.8%) is among the highest in EU countries' (European Commission, 2019, p. 6).

VET is almost fully funded through the State budget, the social security budget and the European Social Fund (ESF). Municipalities and the autonomous regions of Madeira and Azores participate in the funding of VET.

ESF promotes VET policies and provision focusing on reducing early leaving from education and training, supporting IVET programmes at basic and secondary education. It also supports higher education attainment and promotes lifelong learning and learner employability through the *Qualifica* programme, RVCC and EFA programmes.

In the beginning of the previous decade, due to the economic crisis, VET for adults was underfunded. The *Qualifica* programme, launched in 2017, has

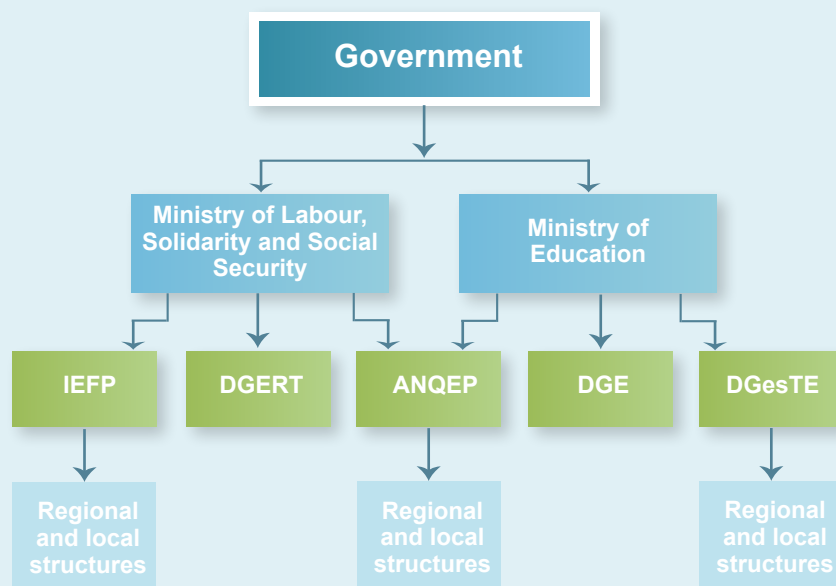
as a main objective to support VET for adults by increasing its funding (DGERT, 2019).

2.6. VET governance

The Government is at the apex of VET governance. The education ministry is responsible for pre-primary, basic and secondary education, and school-based training, while IEFP, supervised by the labour ministry, implements active labour market policies and carries out apprenticeship programmes and continuing VET (CVET).

ANQEP is jointly supervised by the education and labour ministries; together with IEFP they share the responsibility for carrying out VET policies. At regional and local level, policies are implemented by regional authorities for VET, supervising regional and local structures: adult qualification centres, basic and secondary education institutions, vocational and professional training centres. The Directorate-General of School Establishments is responsible for managing schools, including those providing VET programmes and implementing regional administrative measures (Figure 13).

Figure 13. VET governance structure



Source: DGERT.

VET has been carried out within SNQ, established in 2007 and updated in 2017 ⁽⁵⁸⁾, reorganising VET into a single system. It is coordinated by the Education and Labour ministries including the main VET stakeholders: ANQEP, Directorate-General for Education (*Direção Geral da Educação*, DGE), the General Directorate for Employment and Industrial Relations, IEFP, bodies responsible for funding VET policies, sectoral councils for qualification (*conselhos setoriais para a qualificação*, CSQ), *Qualifica* centres (adult qualification centres, supervised by ANQEP), basic and secondary education institutions (supervised by the Directorate-General for School Establishments (*Direção-Geral dos Estabelecimentos Escolares*, DGEstE), vocational and professional training centres (supervised by IEFP), centres of vocational excellence and accredited ⁽⁵⁹⁾ VET providers. The SNQ incorporates private enterprises and institutions promoting continuing vocational training, and higher education institutions. The social partners are involved in the coordination of SNQ as members of the general council of ANQEP, the management board of IEFP, and the monitoring board of DGERT (DGERT, 2019).

ANQEP is responsible for the specific tools set by the SNQ:

- (a) the QNQ, which is referenced to the EQF, including eight levels of qualification and level descriptors indicating the specific learning outcomes at each qualification level;
- (b) the CNQ, which is a tool linked to QNQ, aiming to manage and regulate non-higher VET programmes leading EQF level 2, 4 and 5 qualifications;
- (c) the national credit system for VET (*sistema nacional de créditos do EFP*), which allocates credits to VET qualifications in the CNQ;
- (d) the *Qualifica* passport, which is an online instrument for recording qualifications and competences acquired throughout life; the *Qualifica* passport also offers a guidance service suggesting to users, based on their background, the most suitable learning path. Individuals' qualifications are also visible to employers (DGERT, 2019).

2.7. Teachers and trainers

2.7.1. Vocational teachers and trainers

In VET, there are:

- (a) VET teachers;

⁽⁵⁸⁾ Decree-Law No 14/2017 (*Decreto-Lei No 14/2017, de 26 de janeiro*).

⁽⁵⁹⁾ In Portugal, the term *certificação* is used for the accreditation of VET providers.

- (b) trainers;
- (c) trainers in companies (nationally referred to as tutors);
- (d) technicians of guidance, recognition and validation of competences ⁽⁶⁰⁾.

VET teachers should be graduates of an initial teacher training programme at tertiary level, such as teacher and trainers training and education sciences programmes. Since 2014, new VET teachers also should hold a master degree ⁽⁶¹⁾. Learners at these programmes should pass knowledge and competences exams and undergo subsequent supervised practice. To become teachers in the public sector, applicants must go through a nationwide public recruitment procedure, based on academic qualifications and work experience. VET teachers usually teach the general/sociocultural and scientific components of VET programmes (DGERT, 2019).

The trainer profession, for those working within the SNQ, is regulated by law ⁽⁶²⁾. Trainers' initial pedagogical training is compulsory with a minimum duration of 90 hours. It includes 10-hour modules and is flexible and responsive addressing each candidate's needs. The requirements to become a trainer are: an initial pedagogical training certification ⁽⁶³⁾ and a master degree (EQF level 7); or a qualification at least at the same level of the programme they work for and five years of proven professional experience in a relevant field.

Trainers can also teach the sociocultural and scientific components of VET programmes, provided that they hold the same qualifications as VET teachers (DGERT, 2019).

Trainers in companies are often employees; enterprises should select them according to their professional and pedagogical competences. Trainers in companies should carry out each learner's individual activity plan; support learners' integration in the working environment; assess whether they have achieved the expected learning outcomes; and communicate with the VET institution. Each one can be responsible for up to five learners (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019). Trainers in companies can certify their pedagogical competences acquired through formal, non-formal and informal ways via the recognition, validation and certification of competences of trainers (RVCC-For) process ⁽⁶⁴⁾.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ They work in *Qualifica* centres supporting the RVCC process.

⁽⁶¹⁾ The requirements for general and vocational education teachers are the same.

⁽⁶²⁾ Ordinance No 214/2011 (*Portaria No 214/2011, de 30 de maio*).

⁽⁶³⁾ This certification can be acquired through the completion of an initial pedagogical training at tertiary level; recognition, validation and certification of pedagogical competences acquired through prior experience; and recognition of an equivalent degree, for example higher education diploma or certificate including pedagogical training compatible with the skill referential of the position.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ More information at: <https://netforce.iefp.pt/pt-PT/WPG/Home/RVCC>

Technicians in guidance, recognition and validation of competences work at *Qualifica* centres ⁽⁶⁵⁾. They should have a higher education degree and experience in one of the following:

- (a) education;
- (b) professional guidance;
- (c) adult education and training methodologies;
- (d) work methodologies suitable for special education needs (SEN) learners ⁽⁶⁶⁾.

They are responsible for conducting the RVCC processes at *Qualifica* centres (including welcoming participants, initial diagnosis, information and guidance and suggesting to participants the most suitable training programme) (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019).

2.7.2. Continuing professional development of teachers and trainers

Continuing professional development (CPD) is mandatory for VET teacher and trainer career progression ⁽⁶⁷⁾. To be promoted, they should attend at least one-fifth of the total number of hours of compulsory training that is required for each position. CPD can take the form of training courses, workshops, internships and accredited projects ⁽⁶⁸⁾. According to the latest legislation ⁽⁶⁹⁾, CPD includes inclusive education, and teacher training on the implementation of curricula of basic and secondary education. It can be provided by higher education institutions, training centres run by school associations ⁽⁷⁰⁾, non-profit scientific associations, the education ministry, and public or accredited private and cooperative associations.

CPD for trainers is provided by IEFP. Trainer CPD is based on specific modular standards of competences with flexible duration. They can be:

- (a) pedagogical modules aiming to improve, deepen or diversify trainers' competences including pedagogical, organisational and ethical issues;
- (b) scientific and/or technological modules aiming to update trainers' knowledge and skills in line with labour market needs;
- (c) operational research modules aiming to improve training standards and methods, that can be implemented in different contexts, including WBL.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ *Qualifica* centres target people over 18 years old who are seeking a qualification and, exceptionally, young NEETs; they initiate and develop RVCC.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ Ordinance No 232/2016 (*Portaria No 232/2016, de 29 de agosto*).

⁽⁶⁷⁾ Decree-Law No 22/2014 (*Decreto-Lei No 22/2014, de 11 de fevereiro*).

⁽⁶⁸⁾ Scientific-pedagogical Council for Continuing Education (*Conselho Científico-pedagógico da Formação Contínua*, CCPFC).

⁽⁶⁹⁾ Dispatch No 779/2019 (*Despacho No 779/2019, de 18 de janeiro*).

⁽⁷⁰⁾ Schools association training centres (*centros de formação de associação de escolas*, CFAE).

Trainer CPD is organised into 10-hour units (or multiples of 10 hours), structured according to each training standard. Seminars, technical meetings, workshops or similar events may have a shorter duration (DGERT, 2019).

2.8. Recent policy changes

Several policy developments have recently been introduced, focusing primarily on promoting digital competences and supporting vulnerable groups.

The programme National digital competences initiative e.2030 (*INCoDe.2030*), approved in 2018 ⁽⁷¹⁾, aims at providing the population with the right competences to use effectively digital technologies, investing in the training of the population. In 2019, the dynamic reference framework for digital competences (QDRCD) was developed, based on *DigComp 2.1* (European framework of digital competence for citizens); it was deemed fundamental to the success of *INCoDe.2030*. Also, the programme *Capacitar i4.0* ⁽⁷²⁾, has been created including the following initiatives (Ferreira, 2020):

- (a) the setup of in-company i4.0 academies to promote innovative technologies, processes, operations and methodologies;
- (b) intercompany training actions on digital competences;
- (c) a network of qualified trainers in the field of i4.0.

In 2019, the Second opportunity programme was launched. This targets young people who have left the education system and are at risk of social exclusion. It provides them with qualified training, oriented towards their needs and specific interests, aligned with local labour market trends. The programme includes close monitoring of learners' autonomy development and socio-professional integration (Cedefop and ReferNet, 2020). An individual training plan is developed for each beneficiary, who can attend either an EFA programme or an integrated education and training programme ⁽⁷³⁾. The progression of each individual is followed up for two years after leaving this programme.

⁽⁷¹⁾ Resolution of the Council of Ministres No 26/2018 (*Resolução do Conselho de Ministros No 26/2018, de 8 de março*).

⁽⁷²⁾ More information at: <https://www.iapmei.pt/Paginas/Capacitar-i4-0.aspx>

⁽⁷³⁾ The integrated education and training programme (*programa integrado de educação e formação*, PIEF) is only used in limited and exceptional cases, when learners have failed to complete the other available education and training programmes:
<https://www.dge.mec.pt/programa-integrado-de-educacao-e-formacao>

IEFP has developed the pilot project Apprenticeship gives employment, aiming to raise the attractiveness of apprenticeship. Training courses are carried out in partnership with training providers and business associations, introducing innovations in apprenticeship programmes. It also aims to reinforce the link with companies and the labour market and increase the visibility and attractiveness of these programmes among civil society, young people, families and companies (Cedefop and ReferNet, 2020).

CHAPTER 3.

Shaping VET qualifications



3.1. Anticipating skills needs

The system for anticipating qualification needs was launched in 2015 and is supervised by ANQEP. Its methodology evaluates the relevance of qualifications to the labour market and monitors trends regarding the skills of the human resources supply. Thus, it allows shaping the criteria for defining the network of education and training programmes and its priority thematic areas of focus.

SANQ has been progressively improved, due to the diversified data analysed and the contributions of DGEstE and an important and representative number of regional and local authorities.

ANQEP, in cooperation with DGEstE, defines the priority thematic areas that the education and training programmes should focus on. It is up to the local authorities to participate cooperatively in defining the thematic areas of the education and training programmes that will be implemented. IEFP and *Qualifica* centres should also be involved in this process. Schools are responsible for presenting proposals through the integrated information and management system for education and training offers.

The 2017 legislation ⁽⁷⁴⁾ strengthened the role of SANQ in promoting the effectiveness and efficiency of vocational education and training by anticipating qualification needs and introducing mechanisms that contribute to quality assurance. SANQ especially influences the number and selection of professional and CEF programmes, their design and education and training area of focus.

VET programmes and courses promoted by IEFP's employment and vocational training centres are also influenced by SANQ results. IEFP cooperates with its regional delegations to develop annual lists of thematic priorities ⁽⁷⁵⁾ to address labour market needs. The list of regional and local priorities for VET 2020-21 ⁽⁷⁶⁾ identifies the opportunity areas in line with the country economic priorities (DGERT, 2019).

Identifying developments related to skill needs is also the responsibility of the sectoral councils for qualification (Section 3.2.1.1). These are technical and consultative working groups, coordinated by ANQEP, ensuring the active participation of stakeholders. They propose the inclusion, exclusion and update of the qualifications available in the CNQ.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ Decree-Law No 14/2017 (*Decreto-Lei No 14/2017, de 26 de janeiro*).

⁽⁷⁵⁾ One of the sources used in the preparation of this list are SANQ data.

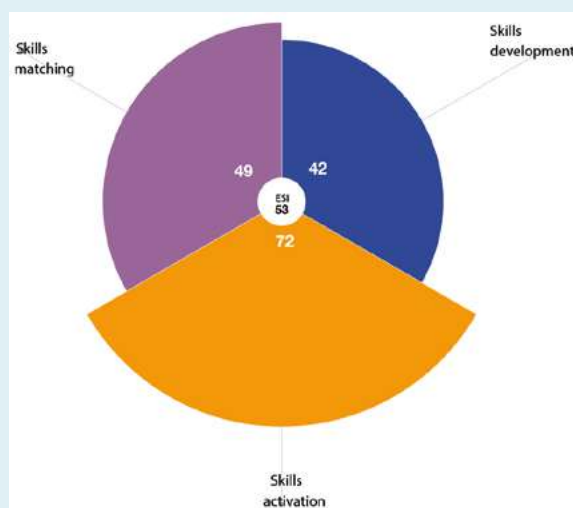
⁽⁷⁶⁾ More information at IEFP:

https://www.iefp.pt/documents/10181/227378/2019-12-12_%C3%81reas+e+saidas+priorit%C3%A1rias+%28Anos+2020-2021%29.pdf/64755994-80d4-4918-beb2-0578ef13601c

In 2020, and for the first time, the National Institute for Statistics, in collaboration with ANQEP and DGEEC, launched a survey on the identification of skills needs in enterprises ⁽⁷⁷⁾. The survey aims to identify areas of improvement essential for the development of education, training and employment in Portugal.

Cedefop's European skills index (ESI) measures countries' performance in skills development, activation and matching. A score of 100 corresponds to the ideal performance, which is the highest achieved by any country over a period of seven years. In 2020, Portugal is in the middle-achieving group (23rd), gaining one position since 2018. Portugal ranks 17th in skills activation ⁽⁷⁸⁾, obtaining a very good score for the activity rate of the younger cohort (20-24); it is also in the middle-achieving group regarding skills matching ⁽⁷⁹⁾. However, Portugal is doing relatively less well in skills development ⁽⁸⁰⁾ (Figure 14).

Figure 14. European skills index: Portugal



NB: 2020 data.

Source: Cedefop's European skills index.

⁽⁷⁷⁾ More information at INE: https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_destaques&DESTAQUESdest_boui=415477898&DESTAQUESmodo=2&lang=en

⁽⁷⁸⁾ According to Cedefop's European skills index, skills activation includes indicators of the transition from education to work, together with labour market activity rates for different groups of the population, to identify those which have a greater or lesser representation in the labour market.

⁽⁷⁹⁾ According to Cedefop's European skills index, skills matching represents the degree of successful utilisation of skills, the extent to which skills are effectively matched in the labour market.

⁽⁸⁰⁾ According to Cedefop's European skills index, skills development represents the training and education activities of the country and the immediate outputs of that system in terms of the skills developed and attained.

3.2. Developing VET qualifications

As a strategic tool of the national qualifications system, the national qualifications catalogue includes and regulates non-higher qualifications under the responsibility of ANQEP. ANQEP is responsible for designing VET qualifications in cooperation with sectoral councils for qualification.

The design methodology of qualifications (revised in June 2020) is in line with the European recommendations on education and training, focusing on transparency and recognition of qualifications at European and international levels. It satisfies the CNQ objectives through the structuring of qualifications into competence units, which are based on and described in learning outcomes and allowing to obtain credits.

Using this methodology, ANQEP plans a wide range of sectoral studies to identify the needs for qualifications and competences, and to develop qualifications standards to be included in the CNQ.

3.2.1. National qualifications catalogue

The CNQ ⁽⁸¹⁾ was launched in 2008. Its objectives comprise developing qualifications standards and defining the necessary key competences to foster personal and social development and the competitiveness of the economy, strengthening transparency of qualifications and easing the recognition and validation of competences. CNQ qualifications are structured by certification level and training areas. In October 2020, the CNQ included 390 qualifications in 47 areas of education and training with 7 427 training units of short duration.

Each CNQ qualification standard is composed of:

- (a) a professional profile, including the work tasks linked to the qualifications and the necessary knowledge and skills to perform them;
- (b) a training framework, defining the content and the competences that a learner should acquire to get the double (education and professional) certification. The framework consists of a basic training component (school-based) and a technological training component structured in autonomously certifiable units of 25- to 50-hours duration, promoting flexibility and permeability among different qualifications in the same education and training field;
- (c) a framework for RVCC, fostering the recognition of prior formal or informal learning, easing the acquisition of an education certificate and/or a vocational qualification (DGERT, 2019).

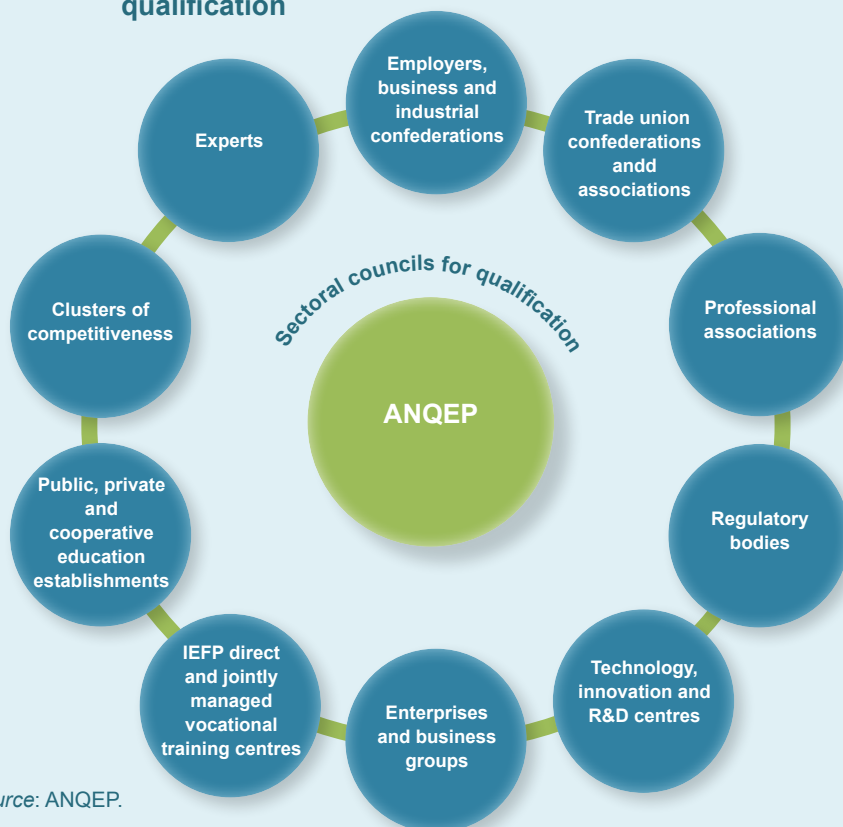
⁽⁸¹⁾ More information at: <http://www.catalogo.anqep.gov.pt/Home/CNQ/>

3.2.1.1. Sectoral councils for qualification

CSQ are consultative bodies created within the SNQ framework, supporting ANQEP in updating the CNQ. They have as main task the identification of strategic and essential skills and competences for the different sectors of the economy in response to labour market needs. They also ensure the active and regular participation of relevant stakeholders by including representatives of ministries, social partners, enterprise representatives and training providers (Figure 15). CSQs usually (DGERT, 2019):

- (a) identify the developments in their sector and skill needs;
- (b) suggest specific updates for the CNQ;
- (c) analyse and advise on proposals for updating and revising CNQ received from third parties other than those mentioned in Figure 15;
- (d) support the design of qualifications;
- (e) ease cooperation among the different stakeholders of each economic sector.

Figure 15. Stakeholders involved in sectoral councils for qualification



Source: ANQEP.

There are 18 CSQs. The two most recent were set in 2020, focusing on the areas of defence and security, and economy and sea.

3.3. Quality assurance

3.3.1. Accreditation of VET providers

The accreditation of VET providers (*certificação de entidades formadoras*) falls under the responsibility of DGERT. It aims to promote the quality and credibility of the training providers operating within the SNQ ⁽⁸²⁾. The accreditation aims to certify that a VET provider can develop and carry out all the stages of the training cycle in the education and training areas they focus on.

The accreditation process is voluntary and includes the evaluation of applicants against a quality standard and a technical assessment of their structure and organisation. VET providers should meet specific quality requirements, which refer to (DGERT, 2019):

- (a) internal structure and organisation (human resources and infrastructure) of the provider;
- (b) development and implementation of training programmes (planning, design, organisation, implementation and assessment);
- (c) assessment of outcomes and continuous improvement (post-training follow-up, annual assessment of results, constant improvement measures).

Initially, VET providers should define the training or education programme which will be under evaluation. Then, they self-evaluate its structure and practices against the quality standards. Subsequently, providers submit an electronic request for accreditation to DGERT, which can then carry out evaluation (technical, documentary or audit-supported) to certify that providers can actually develop such a training or education programme in the specific thematic area. At the final stage, DGERT accredits successful candidates. If an already accredited VET provider wishes to extend the scope of accreditation to other education and training areas, it can submit another accreditation request ⁽⁸³⁾.

DGERT performs regular audits using performance indicators and evaluating the results of VET provider training activity. Only successful VET providers maintain their accreditation.

⁽⁸²⁾ Ordinance No 208/2013 (*Portaria No 208/2013, de 26 de junho*).

⁽⁸³⁾ More information at Cedefop:

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/portugal-certification-training-providers>

Accredited VET providers enjoy specific benefits, such as (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019):

- (a) quality accreditation;
- (b) training diploma recognised within the national qualifications system;
- (c) access to national or community public funding programmes for vocational training;
- (d) tax benefits for them or their clients.

3.3.2. Implementation of the EQAVET recommendation

Given the strategic importance of quality assurance in VET, ANQEP has defined a model for aligning quality assurance systems with the European quality assurance in vocational education and training (EQAVET) framework. This model is mandatory to VET providers offering professional programmes, but also applicable to other VET providers offering IVET programmes for young people at national qualifications framework (NQF)/EQF level 4.

According to 2014 legislation ⁽⁸⁴⁾, ANQEP is responsible for promoting, monitoring and supporting the implementation of quality assurance systems for VET providers offering professional programmes and achieved learning outcomes ⁽⁸⁵⁾. ANQEP recognises and certifies them, in line with the EQAVET framework. Their compliance with EQAVET is verified by external experts, teachers or researchers from higher education with knowledge in quality assurance and vocational education. VET providers implementing quality assurance systems in line with EQAVET framework receive from ANQEP the EQAVET seal.

ANQEP is the body responsible for defining technical and methodological support guidelines. The national EQAVET model, implemented through the EQAVET platform ⁽⁸⁶⁾, is defined in the *Guide for the alignment process with the EQAVET framework* (*Guia para o processo de alinhamento com o quadro EQAVET*) and the *Guide for the compliance verification process with the EQAVET framework* (*Guia para o processo de verificação de conformidade com o quadro EQAVET*). There is also a support guide for VET providers and EQAVET compliance verification teams on how to use the EQAVET platform ⁽⁸⁷⁾.

⁽⁸⁴⁾ Decree-Law No 92/2014 (*Decreto-Lei No 92/2014, de 20 de junho*).

⁽⁸⁵⁾ The implementation of quality assurance systems is optional for VET providers offering other IVET programmes at NQF/EQF level 4 supervised by ANQEP.

⁽⁸⁶⁾ More information at: <http://www.qualidade.anqep.gov.pt/>

⁽⁸⁷⁾ More information at: <http://www.qualidade.anqep.gov.pt/documentacao.asp>

CHAPTER 4.

Promoting VET participation



4.1. Incentives for learners

Inclusive VET and equal opportunities are central elements of the Portuguese education and training system. It aims to lift barriers to participation in education and training for learners from vulnerable groups or a disadvantaged socioeconomic background. Since 2010, the country has made considerable progress in fighting early leaving from education and training. Financial support for learners is available.

Allowances, grants and scholarships target inactive or unemployed learners. The operational programme for human capital (*programa operacional capital humano*, POCH) and the operational programme for social inclusion and employment (*programa operacional inclusão social e emprego*, POISE) include financial support for VET learners. Learners receive these financial support incentives through VET providers. Incentives for VET learners can take the form of:

- (a) professionalisation scholarship: aims to support learners during the WBL period (subject to attendance). The monthly amount is EUR 43.88 (10% of the social support index, (*indexante dos apoios sociais*, IAS)) ⁽⁸⁸⁾;
- (b) study material (*bolsa de material de estudo*): set according to the learner's economic needs and corresponds to a value established by the school social support (*ação social escolar*);
- (c) training grant: awarded to unemployed people who are at least 23 years old. The age limit does not apply to NEETs who are not beneficiaries of a professionalisation scholarship, or to people who are at risk of social exclusion or with disabilities. The monthly amount is EUR 125.37 (29% of the IAS), and EUR 219.40 (50% of the IAS) for people with disabilities;
- (d) travel allowance: covers the cost of travelling by public transport. When learners cannot use public transport, they are entitled of a transport allowance, up to EUR 29.25 a month (6.66% of the IAS). It is provided when the learner does not receive an accommodation subsidy;
- (e) accommodation subsidies: provided to learners living more than 50 km away from the premises of the VET provider, or to those that cannot use public transport to reach the premises of the VET provider;
- (f) food/meals subsidies: learners receive the same amount as stipulated for public officials whenever the training is equal to or longer than three hours;

⁽⁸⁸⁾ The social support index is a monetary amount that serves as a reference to social security for the calculation of workers' contributions, the calculation of pensions and other social benefits. In 2020, the IAS is EUR 438.81.

- (g) social support to learners with dependants: covers the expenses of taking care of learners' dependants while they are attending training. It covers up to EUR 219.40 (50% of the IAS);
- (h) personal accident insurance: expenses for personal accident insurance for young people, unemployed and inactive trainees attending VET programmes or employees who attend training on their own initiative.

VET support for employed adults is carried out by enterprises under the monitoring and evaluation of the operational programme for competitiveness and internationalisation (POCI/COMPETE 2020) (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019). IEFP also offers social support programmes if EU funding is not available.

4.2. Incentives for enterprises

The most important source of funding for VET programmes and VET providers, including enterprises, is POCH, complemented by some actions financed by POISE. These operational programmes fall under Portugal 2020, a partnership agreement adopted between Portugal and the European Commission, which brings together the work of the five European structural and investment funds, including the ESF (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019).

Employers may receive financial support for staff training or to cover costs when training takes place during normal working hours and is carried out by an external VET provider.

The government provides financial support to enterprises that set employment contracts with unemployed people including professional training (Section 1.4) ⁽⁸⁹⁾. Enterprises providing professional training to workers also enjoy exemption or reduction of employer contributions for social security.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the government launched an exceptional training plan to enable employers promote the professional qualification of their employees. The initiative aims to help companies to mitigate the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, ensuring their viability and employees to maintain their employment contracts.

⁽⁸⁹⁾ More information at: <https://www.iefp.pt/apoios-a-contratacao>

4.3. Guidance and counselling

Guidance is provided in various forms, in diverse contexts, at different education levels, with a lifelong learning perspective. Formal guidance is provided by professionals at schools (in the form of psychology and guidance services), IEFP (public employment services) and *Qualifica* centres. Guidance provided by public services is free of charge. Vocational career guidance for those with disabilities falls under the remit of the Portuguese Federation of Vocational Training and Employment Centres for Disabled People (*Federação Portuguesa da Formação Profissional e Emprego para Pessoas com Deficiência e Incapacidade*, FORMEM). The main public authorities for providing guidelines and tools, regarding guidance services, are the education ministry, ANQEP and IEFP. There is a growing effort to foster cooperation and synergies among the main stakeholders (Cedefop, 2020).

IEFP has cooperated with the education ministry, Lisbon University and ANQEP to create a career management skills framework including guidelines on areas, such as how to interact effectively, manage information and changes, find and keep a job, and decision-making (Cedefop, 2020).

All public schools provide guidance services to learners from age five to the end of compulsory education. School psychology and guidance services mainly focus on the psycho-pedagogical field, fostering school community relationships among learners and teachers, and on lifelong guidance. School psychologists work in an integrated way, cooperating closely with teachers, parents and other stakeholders. They use different types of activities, including extracurricular: individual/group sessions, study visits, and job placements (Cedefop, 2020). They aim to reduce early leaving from education and training, attract more learners to VET programmes, and match VET learners' skills and competences with labour market needs. In professional programmes (Section 2.2.2.1), guidance is taking place in three different stages (Cedefop, 2020):

- (a) before enrolment, aiming to attract learners;
- (b) during enrolment, aiming to inform applicants and identify their strengths and needs;
- (c) during programme delivery, aiming to support learners and ease their transition to tertiary education or to the labour market.

IEFP supervises a network of accredited professional integration offices (*gabinetes de inserção profissional*, GIP). GIPs support the unemployed to (re) enter labour market. IEFP implements a guidance intervention model for the

unemployed that includes two main elements: the profiling system and the personal employment plan (PEP). PEP aims to improve the employability profile of the unemployed and ease their (re)integration in the labour market, either through finding a job or through becoming self-employed or creating an enterprise. IEFP also runs an online guidance platform ⁽⁹⁰⁾, which provides information, allows users' interaction and career management. Guidance professionals, teachers and parents are also target groups of the platform (Cedefop, 2020).

Qualifica centres provide information, counselling and guidance services to adults (whether unemployed or not) regarding education and training provision, the labour market, skills mismatches and professional opportunities. They also carry out the *Qualifica* programme, aiming to improve the education and training levels of the population and raise employability. Their main objectives are to:

- (a) identify which VET programme better serves each learner's needs and expectations;
- (b) offer a RVCC process (Section 2.3) for each applicant;
- (c) boost lifelong learning awareness among young people, adults, and employers (Cedefop and Directorate-General of Employment and Industrial Relations, 2019).

Non-formal guidance, in the form of actions and tools raising awareness of vocational guidance and VET provision, also plays an important role. Vocational fairs, such as *Futurália* and *Qualifica* were held nationwide. They aim to promote education and training programmes at secondary or higher level and enable young people and families to learn more about VET. Web portals, such as Worldskills Portugal ⁽⁹¹⁾ and *Qualifica* ⁽⁹²⁾, also present online information about VET (DGERT, 2019).

4.4. Challenges and development opportunities

High on the policy agenda are issues related to VET challenges: increasing participation in lifelong learning; modernising VET provision by introducing new teaching methods and diversified VET courses leading to competence-based qualifications; aligning VET with labour market needs; and upskilling and reskilling vulnerable groups (including those who did not complete secondary education). Although early leaving from education and training has been significantly reduced since 2010, it remains a priority. Portugal is paying particular attention

⁽⁹⁰⁾ More information at: <https://iefponline.iefp.pt/IEFP/web/guest/sobre-orientacao-profissional>

⁽⁹¹⁾ More information at: <https://worldskillsportugal.iefp.pt/>

⁽⁹²⁾ More information at: <https://www.qualifica.gov.pt/#/>

to responding to the profound transformations that have been taking place in the labour market as a result of the digitalisation of the economy. By improving digital competences, the country aims to promote employability, increase people's qualifications and support the development of the economy.

In the current economic context, where the socioeconomic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic are apparent, the strengthening of the *Qualifica* programme will continue to play an important role in up- and reskilling adults, focusing on supporting them to restart their studies and acquire a qualification at a higher level.

The preliminary version of the recovery and resilience plan has identified several areas that future policy interventions should focus on. For instance, it draws attention to the share of active population that has a low-level qualification (approximately 50%), being an obstacle to economic growth and upward convergence. It sets as objectives for the education and training system to:

- (a) fight social inequality and foster job resilience;
- (b) modernise VET;
- (c) promote quality VET;
- (d) support the transition towards a digital and greener economy by offering learners necessary skills and competences;
- (e) develop skills for innovation and industrial renewal in liaison with the world of business;
- (f) promote a people-centred recovery and modernisation of the economy, through focusing on STEAM;
- (g) attract more learners to higher education, particularly from VET.

The plan aims to expand the network of adult education and training providers in cooperation with the *Qualifica* centres to attract more adult learners to VET programmes (República Portuguesa, 2020b).

Acronyms and abbreviations

ACM	<i>Alto Comissariado para as Migrações</i> [High Commission for Migration]
ALMPs	active labour market policies
ANQEP	<i>Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional</i> [National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training]
CCPFC	<i>Conselho Científico-pedagógico da Formação Contínua</i> [scientific-pedagogical council for continuing education]
Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CEF	<i>cursos de educação e formação para jovens</i> [education and training programmes for young people]
CET	<i>cursos de especialização tecnológica</i> [technological specialisation programmes]
CFAE	<i>centros de formação de associação de escolas</i> [schools association training centres]
CNQ	<i>catálogo nacional de qualificações</i> [national catalogue of qualifications]
CPD	continuing professional development
CSQ	<i>conselhos setoriais para a qualificação</i> [sectoral councils for qualification]
CTeSP	<i>cursos técnicos superiores profissionais</i> [higher professional technical programmes]
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
DET	<i>diploma de especialização tecnológica</i> [technological specialisation diploma]
DGE	<i>Direção Geral da Educação</i> [Directorate-General for Education]
DGEEC	<i>Direção Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciência</i> [General Directorate for Education and Science Statistics]
DGERT	<i>Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciência</i> [General Directorate for Education and Science Statistics]
DGEstE	<i>Direção-Geral dos Estabelecimentos Escolares</i> [Directorate-General for School Establishments]
ECTS	European credit transfer and accumulation system

EFA	<i>curios educação e formação de adultos</i> [education and training programmes for adults]
EQAVET	European quality assurance in vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESF	European Social Fund
ESI	European skills index
EU	European Union
FORMEM	<i>Federação Portuguesa da Formação Profissional e Emprego para Pessoas com Deficiência e Incapacidade</i> [Portuguese Federation of Vocational Training and Employment Centres for Disabled People]
GDP	gross domestic product
GIP	<i>gabinetes de inserção profissional</i> [professional integration offices]
IAS	<i>indexante dos apoios sociais</i> [social support index]
ICT	information and communications technology
IEFP	<i>Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional</i> [Institute for Employment and Vocational Training]
INE	<i>Instituto Nacional de Estatística</i> [National Institute for Statistics]
ISCED	international standard classification of education
IVET	initial vocational education and training
LLL	lifelong learning
NEET	person not in education, employment or training
NQF	national qualifications framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAA	<i>prova de aptidão artística</i> [artistic aptitude test]
PAF	<i>prova de avaliação final</i> [final evaluation test]
PAP	<i>prova de aptidão profissional</i> [professional aptitude test]
PAT	<i>prova de aptidão tecnológica</i> [technological aptitude test]
PEP	personal employment plan
PIEF	<i>programa integrado de educação e formação</i> [integrated education and training programme]
PLA	<i>Português língua de acolhimento</i> [Portuguese for non-native speakers]
POCH	<i>programa operacional capital humano</i> [operational programme for human capital]

POISE	<i>programa operacional inclusão social e emprego</i> [operational programme for employment and social inclusion]
QNQ	<i>quadro nacional de qualificações</i> [national qualifications framework]
RVCC	<i>reconhecimento, validação e reconhecimento de competências</i> [recognition, validation and certification of competences]
SANQ	<i>sistema de antecipação de necessidades de qualificação</i> [system for anticipating qualification needs]
SEN	special education needs
SIGO	<i>sistema integrado de informação e gestão da oferta educativa e formativa</i> [integrated information and management system for educational and training offers]
SME	small and medium-sized enterprise
SNQ	<i>sistema nacional de qualificações</i> [national qualifications system]
UFCD	<i>unidades de formação de curta duração</i> [training units of short duration]
VET	vocational education and training
WBL	work-based learning

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Vocational education and training in **Portugal**

Short description

This short description contributes to better understanding of vocational education and training (VET) in Portugal, by providing insight into its distinctive features and highlighting system developments and current challenges.

VET in Portugal offers a wide range of programmes, flexible in type and duration. Promoting equal opportunities and supporting the integration of vulnerable groups are main features of the system. Some 40% of learners in secondary education undertake a VET programme.

The national qualifications system has reorganised VET into a single system in which programmes lead to a double certification. VET for adults is an integral part of the national qualification system, having education and training programmes for adults and recognition and validation of prior learning as key elements.

Responding to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, Portugal has increased its focus on revitalising adult learning by supporting both the up- and reskilling of adults and the transition towards a digital economy.

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