



Vocational and Professional Education and Training in Switzerland

Facts and Figures 2022



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Economic Affairs,
Education and Research EAER
State Secretariat for Education,
Research and Innovation SERI



VETPLUS.CH

PROFESSIONALS GO FAR.

Publication details

Publisher: State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) © 2022

Editor: Strategic Management of ERI

Photos: Monique Wittwer / Adobe Stock / Swiss Pavilion in Expo 2020 Dubai © Presence Switzerland

Graphics: Communication SERI

Printer: Courvoisier-Gassmann AG, Biel-Bienne

Languages: de/fr/it/en



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Overview

The Swiss VPET system enables young people to enter the labour market and ensures that there are enough skilled workers and managers in the future. It has a high labour market relevance and is an integral part of the education system. The VPET system is divided into two sectors: upper-secondary level vocational education and training (VET) and tertiary-level professional education.

The most popular form of upper-secondary level education and training

Two-thirds of all young people coming out of compulsory education in Switzerland enrol in vocational education and training (VET), which provides them with a solid foundation in a given occupation. There are around 245 different occupations to choose from. The VET sector forms the basis for lifelong learning and opens up a wide range of job prospects.

⇒ More information on pages 11–13.

Career prospects

Tertiary-level professional education builds from upper-secondary level vocational education and training (VET). It provides professionals with specific competences and prepares them for challenging technical and managerial positions. Around 420 federal examinations as well as 55 study programmes at professional education institutions are available.

The Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB) opens the way to Swiss universities of applied sciences (UAS). FVB holders who go on to pass the University Aptitude Test (UAT) have the option of enrolling in a cantonal university or one of Switzerland's two federal institutes of technology (ETH Zurich and EPFL Lausanne).

⇒ More information on pages 14–18.

Dual-track approach to learning

Most VET programmes are of the dual-track variety, i.e. training content is divided between different learning locations (part-time classroom instruction at a vocational school, part-time workplace training at a host company and for some occupations also branch courses at a branch training centre). The school-based variety of VET programme (i.e. full-time classroom instruction, no apprenticeship) is less common in Switzerland. Tertiary-level professional education also combines classroom instruction with work-based training, thereby

ensuring a smooth transition from dual-track VET programmes.

⇒ More information on pages 10 and 20.

Permeability

The Swiss VPET system is based on clearly defined education and training options as well as on national qualification procedures. Typically, VET and professional education are very flexible: learners may pursue more advanced education and training opportunities, switch from vocational/professional pathways to general education/university pathways and later change the course of their working lives with relative ease. Continuing education and training (CET) options are also available at all levels.

⇒ More information on pages 6–7 and 15.

Principle of training for a specific professional activity

The Swiss VPET system is built on the principle that each person undergoes training for a specific professional activity. Clearly defined training programmes and nationally harmonised qualification procedures lead to qualifications that are also clearly understood, recognised and in demand on the labour market. Swiss upper-secondary level VET programmes provide learners with the professional competences needed to carry out the given professional activity on their own after graduation.

⇒ More information on page 6.

Labour-market focus

The requirements for individual upper-secondary level vocational qualifications and tertiary-level professional qualifications are determined by the private sector based on the current and future needs of the labour market. Training is designed to impart only those professional competences that are actually in demand and only for existing job vacancies.

⇒ More information on page 10.



Collective governance

The VPET system is collectively governed by the Confederation, the cantons and professional organisations. These three main partners work together to maintain a high level of quality within the VPET system. They also strive to ensure that there is an adequate supply of apprenticeship/traineeship positions and training options. This partnership and respective areas of responsibility are set forth in the Federal Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act (VPETA) and its corresponding ordinance.

⇒ More information on pages 8–9.

Innovations and further developments

The Swiss VPET system must develop over time in response to changes both on a macro and micro level. The Confederation supports research and projects leading to innovations within the Swiss VPET system. This research generates knowledge that can then be used to better guide further developments and adapt the Swiss VPET system to new challenges. Support for projects is aimed at enabling VPET partners to explore new future-oriented.

⇒ More information on pages 8–9, 21–22, 25.

Quality

The high quality within the VPET system is made possible by having all three partners involved in the process of managing it. Moreover, the distribution of training con-

tent across two (or in some cases three) different learning locations – i.e. vocational schools, host companies and branch training centres – helps to improve the quality of upper-secondary level VET programmes. The responsibilities of each actor depend on the tasks assigned to each of the three main partners within the VPET system. In areas where responsibilities overlap, the actors work together on the specific situations and matters at hand.

⇒ More information on pages 8–10.

Efficiency

The consistent focus on the labour market allows VET programmes to be efficiently and effectively organised. One indication of this is the fact that the productive output of learners during their apprenticeships exceeds the gross costs of their training.

⇒ More information on page 21.

Openness to diversity

With upper-secondary level vocational qualifications and tertiary-level professional qualifications available for a wide range of different professional activities, the Swiss VPET system offers something for everyone, no matter what their interests or abilities. There are various career counselling services available, providing support in particular to young people either before or after they enrol in a VET programme.

⇒ More information on page 13.

Completion rates for 2020¹

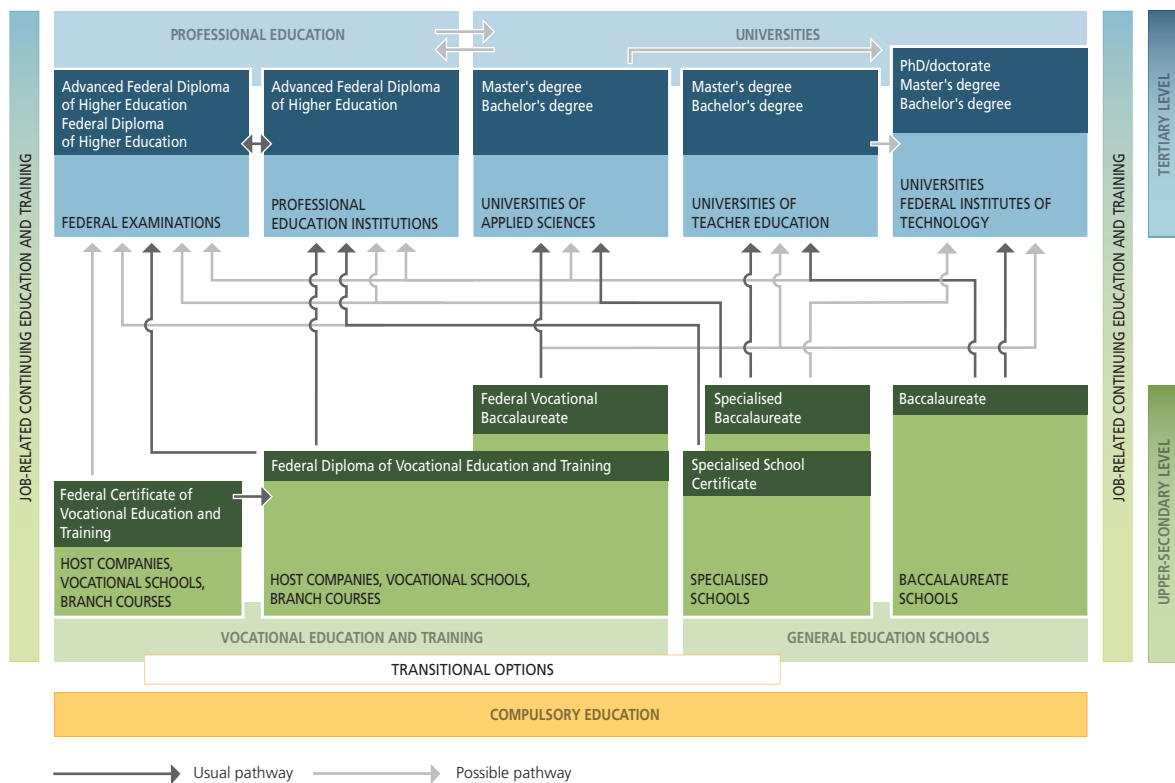
Upper-secondary level: vocational education and training	Total	Women	Men
Federal VET Diploma	63 270	28 157	35 113
Federal VET Certificate	6 890	2 781	4 109
Federal Vocational Baccalaureate	14 418	6 715	7 703
University Aptitude Test	1 032	478	554
Tertiary level: professional education	Total	Women	Men
Qualification from professional education institution	9 908	4 984	4 924
Qualification from Advanced Federal Professional Examination	2 538	694	1 844
Qualification from Federal Professional Examination	13 012	5 244	7 768
Qualification from non-federally regulated professional education course	237	156	81

¹ Federal Statistical Office (2021a). These figures refer to the number of qualifications awarded, not the number of holders (some of whom may hold several qualifications).



Swiss VPET system

Vocational education and training (VET) is provided at upper-secondary level. Professional education is provided at tertiary level. Both VET and professional education use clearly defined training plans and national qualification procedures. They are also characterised by a high degree of permeability: the ability to pursue subsequent education and training opportunities, switch between vocational/professional pathways and general education/university pathways and change the course of their working lives. The Swiss VPET system offers a broad selection of available training options. Courses cater to different abilities and are geared to the needs of different age groups. A wide range of job-related continuing education and training (CET) courses can also be found at all levels.



Upper-secondary level: vocational education and training (VET)

VET programmes provide learners with solid professional competences and pave the way for lifelong learning.
⇒ More information on pages 11–13.

Two-year VET programmes for the Federal VET Certificate

These VET programmes provide young people with more practical skills to obtain a recognised qualification for a specific occupational profile. Graduates of a two-year VET programme may enrol directly in a three- or four-year VET programme leading to the Federal VET Diploma.

Three-year or four-year VET programmes for the Federal VET Diploma

These VET programmes provide learners with the competences needed to work in a specific occupation and open access to tertiary-level professional education. Learners also have the option of preparing for the Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB) either during their training or after qualifying.

Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB)

Learners enrolled in a three-year or four-year VET programme for the Federal VET Diploma have the option of preparing for the Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB). This preparatory course covers general education subjects and those who pass the FVB examination may enrol in a Swiss university of applied sciences (UAS) without having to take an entrance examination. Moreover, holders of the FVB can prepare for the University Aptitude Test (UAT), which opens the way for enrolment in a cantonal university or federal institute of technology.

Tertiary level: universities of applied sciences

Universities of applied sciences offer Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes that emphasise real-world training. Swiss UAS also pursue applied research. A Bachelor's degree typically entitles the holder to carry out the given professional activity. Master's degree programmes are intended for students seeking in-depth expertise and a more advanced professional activity. Admission to Swiss UAS is generally open to holders of a Swiss federal vocational baccalaureate without the need for an entrance examination.

⇒ More information on page 15.

Tertiary level: professional education

Holders of the Federal VET Diploma or equivalent qualifications may specialise or deepen their expertise at tertiary level by pursuing a professional qualification. Preparation also includes acquisition of managerial skills. The professional education sector is designed to meet the needs of the labour market and builds on existing work experience.

⇒ More information on pages 16-17.

Federal professional examinations (level 1)

This federal professional examination is intended for professionals who wish to improve their knowledge and skills and specialise in a given field after completing upper-secondary level vocational education and training (VET). Successful candidates are awarded the Federal Diploma of Higher Education, which is generally a prerequisite for admittance to the level-2 examination for the Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education.

Federal professional examinations (level 2)

This examination is generally for professionals who have acquired a great deal of expertise in their field and/or who intend to hold a managerial position in a company. Successful candidates are awarded the Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education.

Study programmes at professional education institutions

Study programmes at professional education institutions are intended for professionals holding a Federal VET Diploma or equivalent qualifications who wish to improve their knowledge and skills and hold managerial positions. These study programmes cover a broader and more general range of topics than those addressed in the two federal professional examinations described above. Successful candidates are awarded the Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education.

Transitional options between lower- and upper-secondary level

Transitional options are intended to complement compulsory education by preparing young people for enrolment in an upper-secondary level VET programme. They are intended for young people who have been unable to enrol in a VET programme for social or scholastic reasons or who have not yet found a suitable apprenticeship. The skills acquired improve the person's chances of finding an apprenticeship position.

Job-related continuing education and training

A wide range of job-related CET options (i.e. non-formal courses, seminars, etc.) leading to nationally recognised non-formal qualifications. Such options offer companies in particular the ability to keep their employees 'up-to-date'. CET options can be found at all training levels and encourage lifelong learning.

⇒ More information on page 18.



One mission – three partners

The provision of VET and professional education is a mission collectively shouldered by the Confederation, the cantons and professional organisations. These three partners are jointly committed to the highest possible standard of quality within the Swiss VPET system. They also strive to ensure the availability of an adequate number of apprenticeships and training courses.

Confederation

State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)

SERI is the federal government's specialised agency for national and international matters concerning education, research and innovation policy. SERI is responsible for regulating and co-funding the VET and professional education sectors.

⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch

Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training (SFUVET)

SFUVET provides basic and continuing training to teachers, trainers, instructors and examiners working at both upper-secondary level (VET sector) and tertiary level (professional education sector). SFUVET is also involved in research, studies, pilot projects and the provision of services. It has three regional campuses: in Lausanne, Lugano and Zollikofen.

⇒ www.ehb.swiss

Confederation

Strategic management and development

- Providing quality assurance and further development of the Swiss VPET system
- Ensuring comparability and transparency of courses throughout Switzerland
- Enacting around 245 VET ordinances
- Approval of around 420 examination regulations for federal examinations and 50 core syllabuses for professional education institutions
- Recognising preparatory courses for the federal vocational baccalaureate examination and organising this examination
- Recognition of non-formal continuing education and training programmes at professional education institutions
- Recognising training courses for teachers, trainers, instructors and examiners within the VET and professional education sectors as well as training courses for vocational, educational and career guidance counsellors
- Recognising foreign qualifications
- Contributing funding to cover one-fourth of public sector expenditure for the VPET system
- Promoting innovation and supporting specific activities in the public interest



Professional organisations

Training content and apprenticeships

- Establishing the training content of VET programmes and study programmes at professional education institutions
- Establishing national qualification procedures for VET programmes as well as for level-1 and level-2 federal professional examinations
- Creating apprenticeship positions
- Imparting professional competences at tertiary level (professional education)
- Developing new training courses
- Organising branch courses
- Managing VPET funds

Cantons

Implementation and supervision

- Implementing the Federal Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act
- Supervising apprenticeships, vocational schools and professional education institutions
- Providing vocational, educational and career guidance services
- Creating options that prepare young people for enrolment in VET programmes
- Issuing permits authorising host companies to take on apprentices and/or trainees
- Apprenticeship marketing
- Providing training to workplace trainers at host companies

Professional organisations

Trade associations / branch organisations / sponsors

These determine the content of training and national qualification procedures, and organise courses at upper-secondary level (VET sector) and tertiary level (professional education sector).

Social partners, training providers and other organisations

Together with trade associations, they are also involved in the further development of the Swiss VPET system.

Companies

Where possible, companies provide apprenticeships and traineeships, thereby paving the way for the next generation of qualified workers. Their involvement in the Swiss VPET system is voluntary.

Cantons

Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)

The cantons are generally responsible for education and training in Switzerland. National cooperation via the EDK complements and reinforces cantonal authority.
⇒ www.edk.ch

26 cantonal VET offices

Are the implementation bodies of the VET system at cantonal level. They coordinate their activities through the Swiss Conference of VET Offices (SBBK)
⇒ www.sbbk.ch

Vocational, educational and career guidance services

These provide information and advice to both young people and adults.



Learning locations

The trademark and strength of the Swiss VPET system is the direct correlation with the labour market. This is reflected in various learning locations.

Upper-secondary level: vocational education and training (VET)

Workplace training at host companies

With the dual-track approach, learners attend courses at vocational schools on a part-time basis. The remaining time is spent doing an apprenticeship at a host company where they are provided with the practical know-how, knowledge and skills needed for their chosen occupation. Learners also actively take part in the host company's production processes. Host company networks: in some cases, host companies may wish to combine their strengths to offer one or more apprenticeships in a modular format.

Classroom instruction at vocational schools

Vocational schools provide classroom instruction. This consists of instruction in vocational subjects as well as subjects falling under the Language, Communication and Society (LCS) category. Classroom instruction is intended to develop the technical, methodological and social skills of learners while imparting the theoretical and general principles needed to perform occupational tasks. Classroom instruction covers one or two days per week. Vocational schools also offer a preparatory course for the Federal Vocational Baccalaureate Examination.

Branch courses at branch training centres

Branch courses are meant to complement classroom instruction at vocational schools and apprenticeship training at host companies by providing learners with essential practical skills. Branch courses often take place at third-party training centres run by the branches involved.

Tertiary level: professional education

Preparation for federal professional examinations

Preparation for federal professional examinations for the Federal Diploma of Higher Education and Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education takes place alongside one's usual working activities. Although there is no requirement to do so, candidates for federal professional examinations may enrol in part-time preparatory courses, which are offered by public and private providers in the evenings or at weekends.

Study programmes at professional education institutions

Study programmes at professional education institutions may be attended on either a full-time or part-time basis. Students enrolled in the full-time programme complete internships over the course of their studies. In order to enrol part-time, students must be employed at least 50% of a standard workweek. The aim is to apply what one learns in an actual working environment.

Tertiary level: Universities of applied sciences

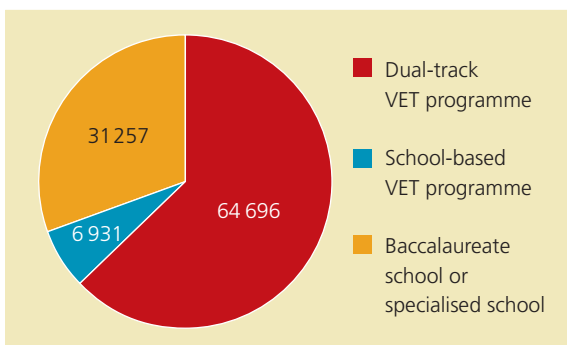
Study programmes at universities of applied sciences may be attended on a full-time or part-time basis. Modular in structure, these study programmes are intended to prepare students for professional activities in a specific field.



Vocational education and training

Vocational education and training provides young people with their first exposure to working life. It is the basis for lifelong learning and opens a wide range of career prospects.

Enrolment in upper-secondary level in 2020²



Around two-thirds of young people coming out of compulsory education in Switzerland enrol in an upper-secondary level VET programme lasting either two years (for the Federal VET Certificate) or three / four years (for the Federal VET Diploma). This proportion has remained constant for years. Dual-track VET programmes are by far the most prevalent form of vocational education and training. In the French- and Italian-speaking regions of Switzerland, however, there is a marked preference for school-based VET programmes compared to the German-speaking region: in 2020, school-based VET programmes accounted for 4% of all VET programmes in the German-speaking region of Switzerland compared to 23.7% in the French-speaking region and 27.7% in the Italian-speaking region.²

The vast majority of young people coming out of compulsory education, enrol in either a vocational school (VET sector) or in a baccalaureate school or a specialised school (general education sector). Many young people who are unable to transition directly to upper-secondary level opt for a transitional option such as a 10th school year or a preparatory course for VET. Others do a motivation semester or spend time abroad to improve their language skills such as language learning, a traineeship or work as an au-pair.

² Federal Statistical Office (2021b). Excl. non-formal two year apprenticeships.



Apprenticeship market

There are two sides to the apprenticeship market: the supply side (host companies offering apprenticeship positions) and the demand side (young people looking for apprenticeship positions). The State plays a mediating role: it ensures the best possible general conditions for host companies, encourages the provision of apprenticeship positions and helps young people to choose an occupation. Various factors influence supply and demand on the apprenticeship market. On the supply side are structural changes, economic fluctuations and the host company ratio (i.e. proportion of companies that are willing and able to train apprentices). On the demand side, demographic changes and the interests of young people have an impact on the apprenticeship market.

The ten most frequently chosen occupations³

Federal VET Diploma programme	Total
Commercial employee (all profiles)	12768
Healthcare worker	4979
Retail clerk	4196
Social care worker	3951
IT technician	2237
Electrician	1946
Logistician	1771
Draughtsman	1504
Cook	1487
Farmer	1420

Transitions Barometer

The Transitions Barometer provides quick updates on the current situation and development trends following compulsory education. Representative surveys are conducted among companies and young people to identify and monitor key indicators of the present situation. This survey is conducted each year in April and August.

⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch/barometer

Switzerland offers VET programmes for around 245 different occupations. In 2020, the ten most frequently chosen occupations accounted for nearly half of all newly signed apprenticeship contracts.

Links

List of federally recognised vocational and professional qualifications:

⇒ www.bvz.admin.ch

Enrolment in VET programme:

⇒ www.education-stat.admin.ch ⇒ Personen in Ausbildung ⇒ Sekundarstufe II

Website for vocational, educational and career guidance services:

⇒ www.berufsberatung.ch

Guidance and support for young people

Careers advice and counselling

Cantonal career guidance services work closely with schools to help young people choose an occupation and find a suitable apprenticeship.

⇒ www.adressen.sdbb.ch

Apprenticeship vacancies bulletin

The apprenticeship vacancies bulletin enables young people to search all open apprenticeships using various search criteria.

⇒ www.berufsberatung.ch ⇒ [Lehrstellensuche](#)

Transitional options from lower- to upper-secondary

Transitional options are intended for young people who are not yet able to enrol in a VET programme for social or scholastic reasons or who have been unable to find an apprenticeship. In addition to courses aimed at improving scholastic, linguistic or other skills, young people attend a course to prepare them for enrolment in a VET programme. The acquired skills increase their chances of finding an apprenticeship.

Coaching and mentoring

Coaching and mentoring entails the provision of individual guidance to young people during the period of compulsory education. One of the aims is to help young people to improve occupational and social skills and optimise their CVs. The various projects and programmes are sponsored by both the cantons and private organisations.

VET Case Management

VET Case Management is intended to help young people, who are particularly at risk of dropping out of VET programmes. The aim is also to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of measures taken. VET Case Management is a structured process: a case manager coordinates institutional activities in accordance with an established plan so as to ensure that the young person receives adequate support.

⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch/cmbb

Apprenticeship placement services

Apprenticeship placement services are available to young people in the fourth quarter of the last year of lower-secondary school. The aim is to further assist young people in their efforts to find an apprenticeship position.

Individual guidance

Individual guidance is for young people who encounter learning difficulties. They receive comprehensive support involving the host company, the vocational school, the branch training centre and social surroundings. Learners enrolled in two-year VET programmes are legally entitled to individual support and guidance. However, learners enrolled in three- or four-year VET programmes may also make use of these services.

SwissSkills, EuroSkills and WorldSkills competitions

Each year, numerous Swiss trade associations select their champions to compete at skills competitions at various levels. Thanks to the 'SwissSkills' initiative, centralised competitions are held on a regular basis. These events are opportunities to showcase and experience occupations live. SwissSkills competitions also serve as a qualifier for EuroSkills and WorldSkills competitions.

⇒ www.swiss-skills.ch

Support options for young people

Young people who are both hard workers and fast learners have the possibility of shortening the duration of their VET programme, obtaining exemption from portions of education training and even waiving the final examination. Workplace trainers at host companies are also encouraged to give greater responsibility and more challenging tasks to such young people. Vocational schools also offer optional courses (e.g. language proficiency courses). There are also associations that provide support to innovative young people. One such association, 'Schweizer Jugend forscht', organises national competitions where young people can submit ideas relating to any subject course. The most promising proposals receive corresponding support.

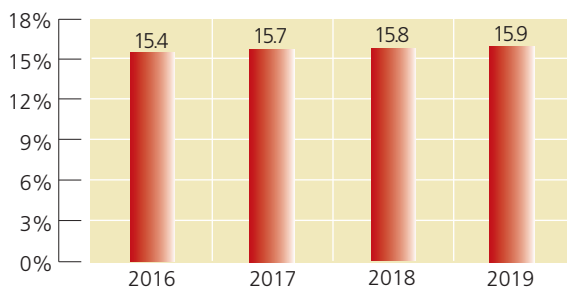
⇒ www.sjf.ch/nationaler-wettbewerb



Federal vocational baccalaureate

The Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB) gives Federal VET Diploma holders further, more general education and entitles them to enrol in a Swiss university of applied sciences (UAS). If an FVB holder also takes the University Aptitude Test (UAT), then enrolment in a cantonal university or one of Switzerland's two federal institutes of technology is also possible.

Ratio of FVB holders⁴



The preparatory course for the FVB examination is generally taught by vocational schools. There are two options: either to take this preparatory course alongside the normal training regimen for the given VET programme or to do so after completion of the VET programme. In recent years, the proportion of VET graduates who also obtain the FVB has been increasing steadily.

From federal vocational baccalaureate to a university of applied sciences

Holders of the FVB can generally enrol in a UAS without taking an entrance examination. Preparatory courses for the FVB examination provide learners with the knowledge and skills needed to pursue a Bachelor's degree at a Swiss UAS. Generally speaking, the orientation of the FVB will be aligned with the occupation covered in the VET programme:

- Engineering, architecture, life sciences
- Nature, agriculture and food
- Business and services
- Design and art
- Health and social care

University Aptitude Test⁵

The University Aptitude Test (UAT), which may be taken by holders of the Federal Vocational Baccalaureate, enables one to enrol in any study programme at a Swiss cantonal university or federal institutes of technology. The preparatory course for the UAT takes a year. This option has become increasingly popular in recent years.

Links

Information about the FVB:

⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch/bm

⇒ www.berufsmaturitaet.ch

Information about study programmes at UAS:

⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch/fhs

Study programmes:

⇒ www.studyprogrammes.ch

Information about UAT:

⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch/passerelle_d

⁴ Federal Statistical Office (2021a).

⁵ Federal Statistical Office (2021a).



Universities of applied sciences

Universities of applied sciences (UAS) are part of the Swiss higher education sector. They prepare for professional activities through practical studies and applied research. Study programmes are structured according to the Bachelor-Master system. UAS enjoy freedom of action with regards to the public authorities that sponsor them. UAS enable professionals to obtain higher education qualification.

Real-world training

UAS offer practical studies as well as applied research. As a rule, the Bachelor's level qualifies the holder to carry out a specific professional activity. At the Master's level, UAS provide students with in-depth, specialised knowledge, preparing them for a more advanced qualification in their field. Holders of the FVB can generally enrol in a UAS without taking an entrance examination. In contrast to cantonal universities and federal institutes of technology, which are mainly involved in fundamental research, UAS focus on applied research. At the crossroads between the private sector and science, they play an important role as drivers of innovation.

Wide range of fields of study

There are currently nine public universities of applied sciences covering the following fields of study: engineering and information technologies; architecture, construction and planning; chemistry and life sciences; agriculture and forestry; business and services; design; health; social work; music, theatre and other arts; applied psychology; applied linguistics; sports. UAS are also very active in the provision of non-formal continuing education and training, offering modular programmes for the Certificate, Diploma and Master of Advanced Studies. These advanced studies programmes are tailored to the needs of the economy.

Duration of studies

Full-time studies for a Bachelor's degree typically last three years. Part-time studies take between four and five years to complete. Since a Bachelor's degree already qualifies the holder to work in a give profession, only 16% of all holders of a Bachelor's degree will continue their studies to obtain a Master's degree. Master's degrees generally last three semesters.

UAS-awarded qualifications by field of studies and level, 2020⁶

Field of studies	Bachelor	Master
Architecture, Construction and Planning	855	175
Engineering and IT	2 647	329
Chemistry and Life Sciences	428	158
Agriculture and Forestry	90	0
Economics and Services	4 526	974
Design	665	243
Sports	36	23
Music, Theatre and Other Arts	885	1 191
Applied Linguistics	105	38
Social Work	1 527	86
Applied Psychology	200	105
Health	2 018	149
Total	13 982	3 471

⁶ Federal Statistical Office (2021a).



Professional education

Professional education is geared to the needs of the labour market and prepares students for challenging technical or managerial roles. Training combines theory and practice and ensures that the Swiss economy has an adequate supply of highly skilled workers. The knowledge and skills acquired are directly applicable in everyday working life.

Professional education builds on previous work experience. It allows professionals holding a Federal VET Diploma or equivalent upper-secondary level qualification to specialise in a given field and deepen their technical expertise. In addition, professional education provides the knowledge, skills and know-how needed to manage a company. Together with the higher education sector (universities), the professional education sector makes up Swiss tertiary-level education. It includes the following:

- Federal examinations (for Federal and Advanced Federal Diploma)
- Study programmes at professional education institutions

Strong labour market acceptance

Professional education opens up excellent career prospects: professional organisations and trade associations determine training content and ensure that it is tailored to economic needs. This practical approach explains the high level of acceptance of professional qualifications on the labour market.

Real-world training

Professional education is designed to impart specific knowledge and skills needed for the labour market in a way that is relevant, highly innovative and readily applicable. This helps to ensure that the Swiss economy has an adequate number of highly specialised professionals.

A worthwhile investment

Professional education is financed through a combination of private and public funding. It pays off for its graduates. The majority of people complete their training while working. Compared to employees holding an upper-secondary level vocational qualification, holders of professional qualifications earn on average nearly 30% more.

Appealing training options for all professional activities

Professional education covers the full range of professional activities. There are around 470 different professional qualifications to choose from, most of which are at level 1.

Links

Information about Swiss professional education sector:

⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch/hbb

List of all federally recognised professional qualifications:

⇒ www.bvz.admin.ch

Statistics on professional education:

⇒ www.education-stat.admin.ch

Information about transitions to universities of applied sciences:

⇒ www.swissuniversities.ch ⇒ Service ⇒ Studying in Switzerland ⇒ Admission to universities of applied sciences and arts



Top-ten federal professional examinations (level 1) in 2020⁷

Profession	Total
Human resources specialist	826
Technical sales specialist (starting in 2019)	754
Police officer	742
Finance specialist Accountant	606
Trainer	519
Marketing specialist	377
Property manager	319
Occupational safety and health (OSH) specialist	278
Manager	275
Executive assistant	256

Top-ten advanced federal professional examinations (level 2) in 2020⁷

Profession	Total
Auditor	245
Sales manager (starting 2019)	151
Electrician	144
Chief accountant and controller	134
Master farmer	111
Naturopath	98
Complementary medicine therapist	90
Construction manager	89
Fiduciary	76
Industrial foreman	65

Top-ten study programmes completed at professional education institutions in 2020⁷

Field	Total
Nursing	1 964
Business management	1 279
Social pedagogy	791
Business processes	470
Business informatics	417
Child care	411
Hotels, restaurants and catering	409
IT	365
Mechanical engineering	360
Construction engineering	307

*Formerly and newly recognised programmes are combined

Federal examinations

There are around 260 federal professional examinations (level 1) and 160 advanced federal professional examinations (level 2) to choose from. In 2020, the top-ten federal professional examinations accounted for around 42% of all completed federal examinations. The top-ten advanced federal professional examinations accounted for just under half.

Study programmes at professional education institutions

There are around 440 study programmes at Swiss professional education institutions. The top-ten study programmes accounted for around two-thirds of all professional qualifications awarded in 2020.

⁸ Federal Statistical Office (2021a).



CET and lifelong learning

Continuing education and training (CET) is important for individuals, society and the economy. The constant changes in the labour market combined with technological advances challenge adults to adapt and develop professionally throughout their working lives.

CET is an integral part of the Swiss education system. In Switzerland, 68%⁸ of the population between the ages of 25 and 65 pursue CET. This proportion is significantly higher than that found in EU Member States (42.7%).⁹ Together with the cantons, the private sector and other partners, SERI is committed to encouraging individuals to take the initiative in continuing their professional or personal education. To this end, it creates conditions that enable all individuals to undergo continuing education and training.

Basic skills for adults

SERI works with the cantons to ensure that adults can acquire and maintain basic skills. Such skills are a prerequisite for lifelong learning and enable participation in social and everyday working life.

Vocational qualifications for adults

Adults have the opportunity to obtain a vocational qualification. The Confederation, the cantons and professional organisations work together to improve the general conditions that enable adults to obtain vocational qualifications.

⇒ More information on page 19.

CET in companies

With the Simply better!... funding campaign to encourage workplace training, SERI helps companies to equip their employees for the challenges they face in the workplace. The 'CET coaching for SMEs' project is intended to support industry associations that are interested in developing and testing CET coaching for their economic sector.

Professional education

Professional education offers various appealing tertiary-level training options. Since January 2018, those completing preparatory courses for federal examinations receive a subsidy from the federal government.

⇒ More information on pages 17–18.

CET at higher education institutions

Swiss higher education institutions offer a wide range of opportunities for both tertiary-level study programmes and continuing education and training. Each university is free to decide on its own range of CET options.

CET organisations

SERI can support the information, coordination and quality assurance activities of national and non-profit continuing education organisations.

Information and guidance

Cantonal vocational, educational and career guidance offices are available to provide information, support and guidance to interested parties regarding the various continuing education and training options.

Links

More information:

A guidebook on continuing education and training can be found on the SERI website. This guidebook provides information about the various activities carried out by SERI to encourage lifelong learning.

⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch/weiterbildung



Vocational qualifications for adults

In Switzerland, adults may also seek vocational qualifications by various means. There are four different pathways.

Number of vocational qualifications awarded to persons aged 25 and older in 2020¹⁰

Age	25–29	30–39	40+	Total
Regular VET programme	3 422	1 349	367	5 138
Advanced placement in VET programme	1 302	618	339	2 259
Direct access to qualification procedure	486	1 119	1 015	2 620
Validation of non-formal and informal learning	42	212	388	642
Total	5 252	3 298	2 109	10 659

Ten most frequently chosen fields for persons aged 25 and older seeking vocational qualifications in 2020¹⁰

Occupational field	Total
Nursing and Obstetrics	1 326
Social work and Counselling	1 179
Business Administration	1 177
Wholesale and Retail Trade	1 041
Civil Engineering	848
Housekeeping Services	658
Hotels, Restaurants and Catering	638
Plant Cultivation and Animal Breeding	454
Mechanical Engineering and Metalworking	410
Electricity and Power	374

Four established pathways

For adults, there are several ways to obtain a Federal VET Certificate or a Federal VET Diploma. The first pathway to vocational qualifications consists of enrolment in a regular dual-track VET programme. The second pathway is to obtain advanced placement in a regular dual-track VET programme. The third pathway is to obtain direct admission to the qualification procedure without having to complete training. The fourth pathway is to obtain validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIL).

Special conditions for adults with work experience

Advanced placement in a dual-track VET programme, direct admission to the qualification procedure and VNIL were all developed specifically for adults who have already gained a certain amount of work experience. Therefore, prior knowledge and know-how can be taken into account. For direct admission to the final examination, the person must have at least five years of work experience. While direct admission to the final examination is possible for all occupations, the VNIL option is only available for a limited number of occupations.

Choice of pathway influenced by age

Young adults tend to choose the first two options, enrolling either in a shortened or standard dual-track VET programme. Adults aged 25 and older tend to prefer preparation for direct admission to the final examination. VNIL is the preferred option for even older adults.

¹⁰ Federal Statistical Office (2021a). Calculations: SERI.



VET professionals

VET professionals are responsible for apprenticeship training at three different learning locations (host companies, branch training centres and VET schools) as well as at professional education institutions. It is important that training is practice-oriented and directly related to the situation at the place of work and learning. SERI ensures the quality of training for VET professionals.

VET professionals work at the following learning locations:

- **Host companies:** as VET trainers;
- **Branch training centres:** as branch course instructors (also at similar third-party training locations, at trade schools or at other recognised learning institutions);
- **VET schools:** as instructors for the VET programme and the federal vocational baccalaureate;
- **Professional education institutions:** as instructors.

Training for VET professionals

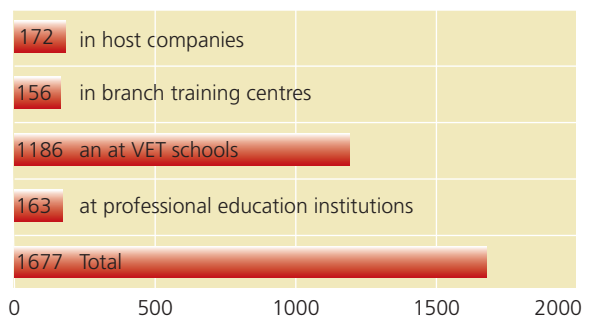
Training for VET professionals is based on the situation at the place of work and learning and takes into consideration:

- the education system, education law and educational opportunities
- apprentices and their professional socialisation
- the organisation of learning activities, and support and guidance of apprentices
- the application of acquired knowledge in a work or teaching situation
- understanding the role of teachers
- working with apprentices and cooperation with other actors
- general topics such as work culture and ethics

Vocational training stands for practical teaching

What is particularly important for teaching in vocational training is the proximity to the work place and the work environment. This is a practice-oriented approach to learning that is directly related to the work at the place of work.

VET professional diplomas awarded 2020/2021



Providers

Vocational education programmes for VET professionals are mainly offered at the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET) and at teaching colleges, and occasionally directly by professional associations.

14 institutions offer a total of 46 recognised training options, some of which are offered in cooperation with various partners.

Recognition and supervision

SERI is responsible for the recognition and supervision of VET study programmes. It thus contributes to quality assurance and further development.

Links

VET professionals:

⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch/bbverantwortliche_d (webpage available in German, French and Italian)

Supervisory procedures:

⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch/aufsichtsverfahren_bpbg (webpage available in German, French and Italian)



Swiss VPET funding

The VPET sector is funded by the Confederation, the cantons and professional organisations, each to its own extent. Most of the costs of professional education and job-related CET programmes are borne by companies and private individuals.¹¹

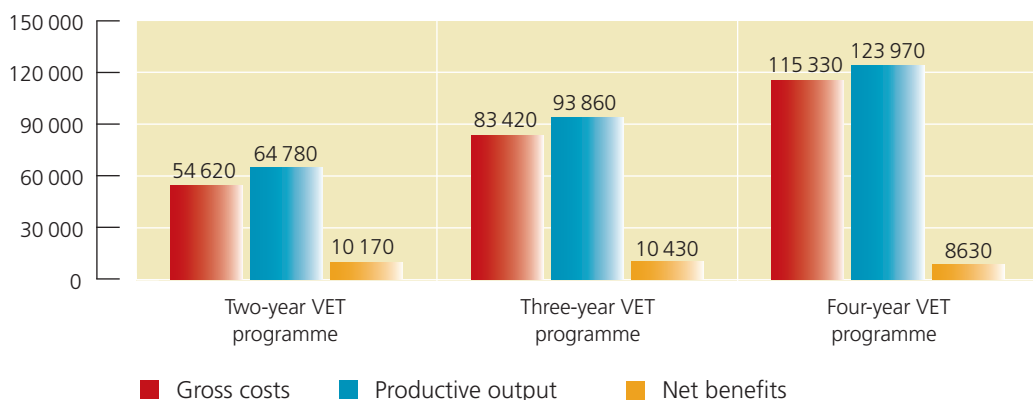
Public sector

Public expenditure for the Swiss VPET system stood at around CHF 3.6 billion in 2020. The cantons bore most of this expenditure, which was used for implementation purposes: approx. 73% of the cantonal budgets were allocated for vocational schools, 12% for professional education institutions and 7% for preparatory courses for admission to upper-secondary level VET. The Confederation contributes one-fourth of total public expenditure. In 2020, the federal government contributed CHF 950 million to the Swiss VPET system. Up to 10% of the federal funds are earmarked for development projects and special services in the public interest.

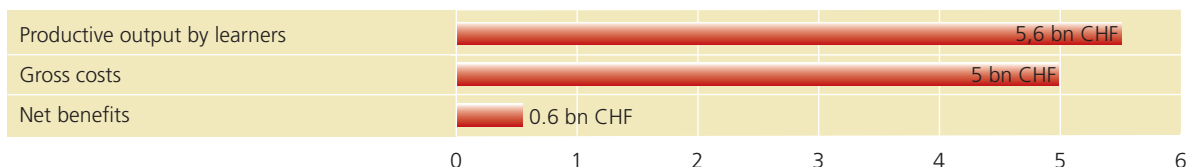
Private sector

Professional organisations provide both services and funding for the Swiss VPET system: they do the groundwork, run their own training centres and promote specific occupations (VET sector) and professions (professional education sector). For their part, companies help to fund the system by creating apprenticeship positions.

Costs and benefits by duration of training in CHF, survey year 2016¹²



Cost/benefit ratio for Swiss companies involved in VET programmes, survey year 2016¹²



¹¹ State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (2021), Kostenerhebung der kantonalen Berufsbildung 2020.

¹² Gehret A., Aepli M., Kuhn A. and Schweri J. (2019), Lohnt sich die Lehrlingsausbildung für die Betriebe? SFUVET.



Funding of VET sector

Upper-secondary level vocational education and training (VET) is both publically and privately funded. Public funding comes from the cantons, the Confederation and the communes. Private funding comes from host companies as well as professional organisations. Generally speaking, host companies stand to benefit from taking part in VET programmes. According to a cost/benefit study conducted in 2016, gross costs of involvement in VET amounted to CHF 5 billion. This figure was outweighed by the productive output generated by apprentices, which amounted to CHF 5.6 billion.

Funding of professional education sector

Unlike the upper-secondary level VET sector, the tertiary-level professional education sector relies much more heavily on funding from students and employers. Federal professional examinations in particular and the corresponding preparatory courses are mostly paid for by the private sector. Nevertheless, the public sector contributes substantial funding. Public expenditure for the professional education sector and job-related CET stood at around CHF 573 million in 2020.

VPET funds

All companies within a given economic branch are required to contribute to a corresponding VPET fund, which is used to cover the costs of activities within the VET sector and professional education sector (e.g. development of training programmes, organising courses and qualification procedures, promotion of specific occupations). The Confederation may declare some VPET funds to be of general interest and therefore mandatory for all companies within a given economic branch.

⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch/bbfonds_d

Federal professional examinations

Most individuals attend courses to prepare for federal professional examinations. Although these preparatory courses are not regulated by the state, the Confederation provides a subsidy to cover 50% of the course costs. These subsidies are paid directly to the students themselves. The remaining half must be met privately (by employers or the students). The amount contributed by employers is agreed upon on a case-per-case basis in discussions with their employees.

Around 60% to 80% of the total cost of conducting federal professional examinations is paid for by the Confederation. In 2020, this amounted to around CHF 35 million.

Professional education institutions

Public funding of study programmes at Swiss professional education institutions is provided by the cantons under the terms of the Intercantonal Agreement on Funding Contributions for Study Programmes at Professional Education Institutions (ISA-PEI). The cantons pay the professional education institutions lump sum contributions per student up to a maximum of 50% of the average costs of each study programme. When a given study programme is particularly important to the general public (e.g. health), then cantonal contributions can be as high as 90% of the average costs. The remaining costs are covered by tuition fees.

Links

Information about funding of federal professional examinations:

⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch/bundesbeitraege

Intercantonal Agreement on Funding Contributions for Study Programmes at Professional Education Institutions (ISA-PEI):

⇒ www.edk.ch ⇒ Arbeiten ⇒ Finanzierungsvereinbarungen ⇒ Höhere Fachschulen



VPET at international level

The internationalisation of education and labour poses challenges for the Swiss system of vocational and professional education and training (VPET). Switzerland has therefore taken active steps at multiple levels to address this phenomenon. With the aim of further strengthening the position of Swiss dual-track VET programmes at international level, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) is taking corresponding measures in coordination with the cantons and professional organisations.

International cooperation in vocational education and training (IC-VPET)

By working with other countries in the area of vocational education and training, the Confederation pursues three parallel objectives that each reinforce and intensify the impact of the others:

1. Strengthening the Swiss VPET system within an international context
2. Supporting socioeconomic development in partner countries
3. Successfully positioning Switzerland at the international level

The IC-VPET activities of the various federal agencies have a strategic basis in several policy areas (education, development cooperation, foreign affairs, economics and migration).

For SERI priorities of ERI policy include promoting the cosmopolitan character of Swiss vocational education and training, raising its profile abroad and facilitating the international exchange of knowledge and experience.¹³

Here the focus is on international recognition of vocational and professional qualifications as well as on the cross-border mobility of VPET stakeholders. The Covid 19 crisis prevented or hindered some of these activities. International exchange also helps to identify trends and to improve the quality of the Swiss VPET system.

⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch/ibbz

Transfer of expertise

The Swiss VPET system has generated international interest. Switzerland exchanges knowledge at both diplomatic and technical levels. It also receives numerous foreign delegations interested in finding out more about the Swiss VPET system. At the same time, Switzerland maintains continuous dialogue with countries that have their own VET systems or would like to develop one.

SERI makes use of existing forums or those created by national or international partners to raise the profile of the Swiss VPET system and encourage interaction among the various stakeholders. As a case in point, SERI organises an event at the Swiss House of the World Economic Forum in Davos and takes part in the WEF's Global Learning Network. In addition, various VET-related activities take place at international events (e.g. Expo 2020 in Dubai and Pop-Up House of Switzerland in Stuttgart in 2021 and in Milan in 2022). Switzerland will also take part in the European Vocational Skills Week organised by the European Union as well as in other events.

⇒ <https://swisspavilion.org/swissnex/>

⇒ www.houseofswitzerland.org

EU education and training programmes

Switzerland indirectly participates in EU education and youth programmes (Erasmus+). Among other things, this includes the provision of funding for mobility and cooperation activities relating to vocational education and training. Performance figures dropped sharply in the previous year as a result of widespread Covid 19-related restrictions (see key figures). Previously, the number of mobilities exceeded 1 500 per year.

⇒ www.movetia.ch

¹³ Federal Council (July 2018), Switzerland's International Strategy on Education, Research and Innovation.



National Qualifications Framework (NQF VPET)

The Swiss National Qualifications Framework for Vocational and Professional Qualifications (NQF VPET) makes it easier to compare and appreciate the value of Swiss vocational and professional qualifications at the international level. In the future, all vocational and professional qualifications will be assigned to a level within the NQF VPET. In addition, each VET qualification will be accompanied by a corresponding certificate supplement and each professional education qualification with a corresponding diploma supplement. These documents explain the competences acquired by the qualification holder and will be available in the Swiss national languages and English.
 ⇒ www.nqr-berufsbildung.ch

Recognition of foreign vocational and professional qualifications

SERI recognises many foreign upper-secondary level vocational and tertiary-level professional qualifications. Recognition makes it easier for holders of foreign qualifications to carry out a professional activity regulated in Switzerland, thereby facilitating integration on the Swiss labour market. In most cases, recognition is based on a comparative analysis of the content and structure of training in the country where the foreign qualification was issued. This is done to determine whether the foreign qualification is equivalent to a Swiss one. Any significant discrepancies can be overcome by means of compensatory measures. SERI works closely with Swiss professional organisations and training institutions, which helps to ensure a high level of acceptance of recognition decisions.
 ⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch/diploma

Pursuing international cooperation in VPET through international organisations

Participation in international organizations (e.g. OECD) or in EU committees leads to greater understanding of vocational education and training at international level. The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) represents Switzerland in various European bodies in matters pertaining to VET. This has enabled Switzerland to present its positions and exchange good practices. This cooperation has led to international VET projects.
 ⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch/eu_berufsbildung
 ⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch/oeecd_e

EuroSkills and WorldSkills competitions

Switzerland regularly sends its best young professionals to the international skills competitions, such as the EuroSkills competition and the WorldSkills competition. These competitions are an incentive for young professionals and an opportunity for Switzerland to demonstrate the excellence of its vocational education and training.
 ⇒ www.worldskills.org

Swissnex is Switzerland's global network for education, research and innovation. It facilitates international networking between Swiss and foreign partners and helps them to share knowledge, ideas and talents. Vocational education and training is a topic that is frequently raised by Swissnex at various locations, e.g. by bringing together interested stakeholders at events or by taking part in conferences and world exhibitions.
 ⇒ www.swissnex.org

Key figures for international VPET activities

Exchange and mobility within the VET sector

Approved budget in 2021 for learning mobility (Leonardo da Vinci)	CHF 2.6 m
Number of people taking part in VET mobility programme in 2021	612
Swiss nationals abroad	482
Foreign nationals to Switzerland	130

Swiss performance at the last two WorldSkills competitions

Kazan 2019	4th place
Abu Dhabi 2017	2nd place

Swiss performance at the last two EuroSkills competitions

Graz 2021	3rd place
Budapest 2018	1st place



VPET research

The Swiss VPET system is an important asset for the Swiss economy and strengthens its international competitiveness. Subsequent development and adaptation of the VPET system to fresh challenges requires knowledge, which can be gained through VPET research.

Legal mandate

The Federal Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act (VPETA) states that the Confederation must contribute to the development of the Swiss VPET system through VPET research, among other things. Quality and independence must be assured through qualified research institutes.

Objectives

The Confederation will continue to support VPET research until a lasting infrastructure is in place that conducts research to an internationally recognised standard. VPET research findings should enable continuous development of the Swiss VPET system. In addition, research findings should produce the knowledge needed to manage Swiss VPET policy. Together with funding of projects aimed at developing the VPET system and support for special services, federal VPET research constitutes a viable means of ensuring innovation within the VPET system.

Support instruments

The support programme sponsored by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) is comprised of two support instruments: Leading Houses and Individual Projects. These instruments complement one another. The Leading House instrument pursues long-term objectives with the aim of establishing new research structures. Leading Houses focus on clearly defined, relevant research topics that are relevant to vocational and professional education and training. In their respective areas, each Leading House acts as a competence centre. In contrast, Individual Projects pursue short-term objectives and fill research gaps that are not being addressed by the Leading Houses. With these two instruments, it is possible to conduct both fundamental and applied research in support of the VPET system.

Links

Information about VPET:

⇒ www.sbfi.admin.ch ⇒ Education ⇒ VPET Planning and Policymaking ⇒ VET/PET Research

Information about funding:

⇒ www.sbfi.admin.ch ⇒ Education ⇒ VPET Planning and Policymaking ⇒ Individual Projects

Information about Leading Houses:

⇒ www.sbfi.admin.ch ⇒ Education ⇒ VPET Planning and Policymaking ⇒ Leading Houses



Useful links

Information about VPET from SERI

The latest information about the Swiss VET and professional education sectors can be found on the website of the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI).

⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch

SERI documentation

Collection of SERI publications on VET and professional education. Mostly available in different languages.

⇒ www.sbf.admin.ch/pubbb

The VPET campaign

Website providing information about the campaign to promote the Swiss VPET system.

⇒ www.berufsbildung.plus.ch

VPET website

Cantonal website providing extensive information about the Swiss VPET system.

⇒ www.berufsbildung.ch

Glossary of Vocational and Professional Education and Training

Key terms relating to upper-secondary level vocational education and training and tertiary-level professional education along with brief explanations – in German, French, Italian and English.

⇒ www.lex.berufsbildung.ch

Swiss education statistics

Statistics, publications and interactive statistical tools from the Federal Statistical Office (FSO).

⇒ www.education-stat.admin.ch

Swiss Coordination Centre for Research in Education SCCRE

Documentation and information about publications and findings produced by the Swiss and international VET research community.

⇒ www.skbf-csre.ch

Tripartite Conference Vocational and Professional Education and Training (TBBK)

Documentation and information on the strategic management of VPET among partners.

⇒ <https://tbbk-ctfp.ch> (website available in German, French and Italian)

VPET-related magazine and newsletter

Range of products for professionals and institutions within the VET and professional education sectors, vocational, educational and career counsellors and labour market authorities.

⇒ www.panorama.ch

Swiss education information platform

Swiss education server with information and materials concerning the Swiss education system.

⇒ www.educa.ch

Document server for education

Electronic repository of documents relating to education, education management, planning, research and development in Switzerland.

⇒ www.edudoc.ch

Eurydice – European Information Network

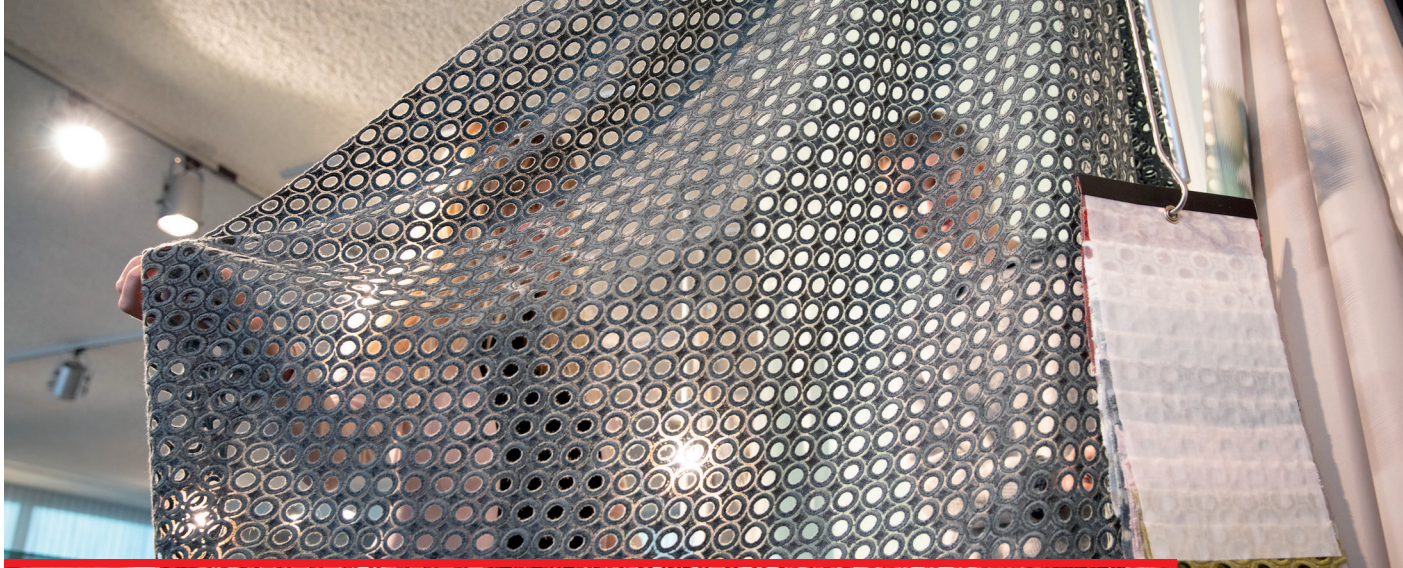
Electronic database on national education systems in Europe with comparative analyses, indicators and statistics.

⇒ <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice>

Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training (SFUVET)

Information on education and training of VET professionals, VPET research, the development of occupations and international cooperation in vocational and professional education and training.

⇒ www.ehb.swiss



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Orders

www.vetplus.ch

Contact

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www.sbf.admin.ch

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A STEP AHEAD.

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