



# Vocational and Professional Education and Training in Switzerland Facts and Figures 2021



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
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Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

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Education and Research EAER  
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**VETPLUS.CH**  
PROFESSIONALS GO FAR.

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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 240 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. There are around 400 federal professional examinations as well as 55 study programmes at professional education institutions.

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 14–19.

## 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 page 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 14.

### Completion rates for 2019<sup>1</sup>

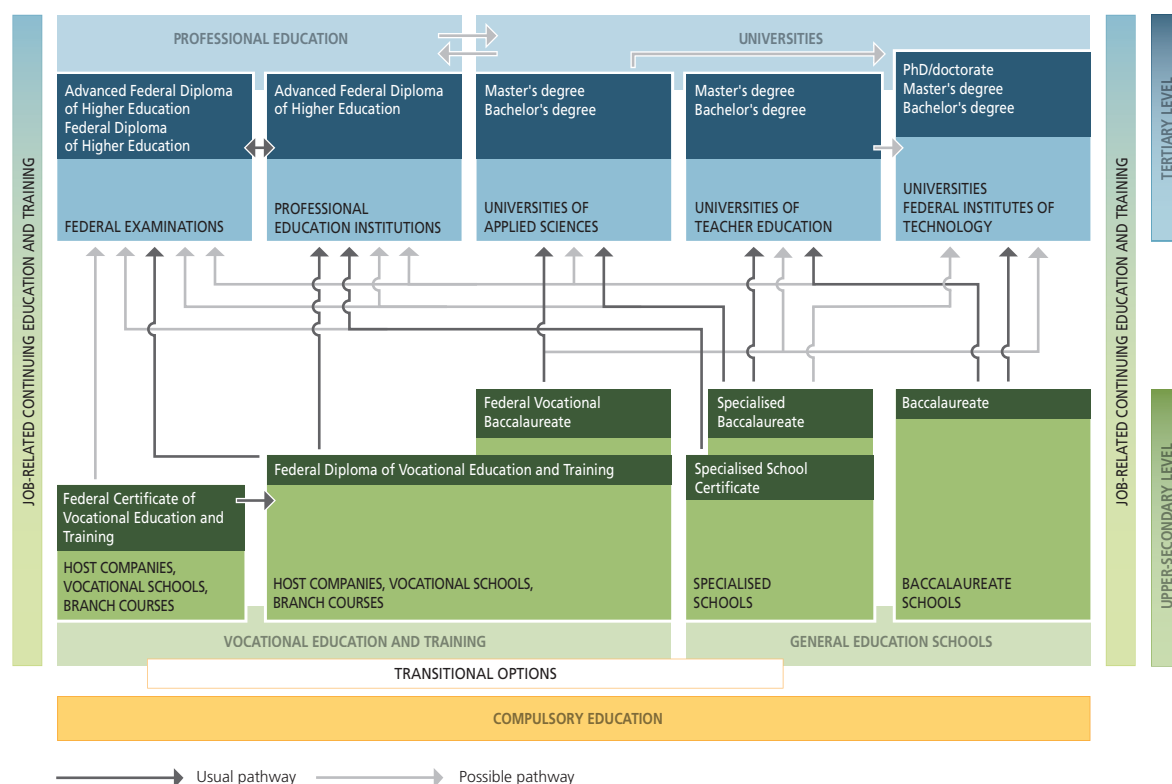
Upper-secondary level: vocational education and training	Total	Women	Men
Federal VET Diploma	61 252	27 473	33 779
Federal VET Certificate	6 707	2 774	3 933
Federal Vocational Baccalaureate	14 524	6 819	7 705
University Aptitude Test	1 027	487	540
Tertiary level: professional education	Total	Women	Men
Study programme at professional education institution	9 732	4 773	4 959
Level-two federal professional examination	2 876	948	1 928
Level-one federal professional examination	14 717	5 945	8 772
Professional education not recognised by the Confederation	322	235	87

<sup>1</sup> Federal Statistical Office (2020a). 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 17–19.

#### **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.

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### **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.





## 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](http://www.sbf.admin.ch)

#### Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET)

SFIVET 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). SFIVET 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](http://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 240 VET ordinances
- Recognising regulations for around 400 federal examinations as well as 40 core syllabuses for study programmes at 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](http://www.edk.ch)

### 26 cantonal VET offices

Responsible for implementing VET at cantonal level, VET offices coordinate their activities through the Swiss Conference of VET Offices (SBBK), a specialised conference of the EDK.

⇒ [www.sbbk.ch](http://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.

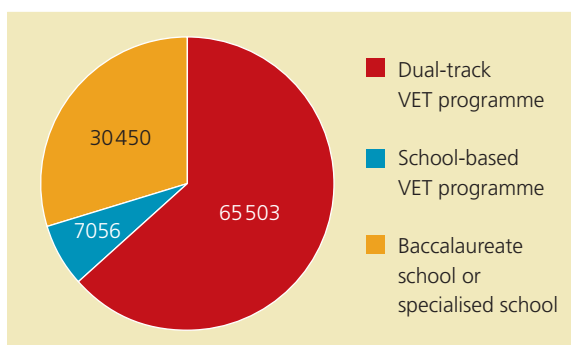




# Vocational education and training

**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 2019<sup>2</sup>



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.

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 2019, only 3.8% of all VET programmes in the German-speaking region were school-based, whereas in the French-speaking region the proportion stood at 23.9% and in the Italian-speaking region at 30.2%.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Federal Statistical Office (2020b). Dual-track and school-based VET programmes, incl. trade schools and IT schools, 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.

### 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](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/barometer)

### The ten most frequently chosen occupations<sup>3</sup>

Occupations	Total
Commercial employee Federal VET Diploma (all profiles)	12814
Health care worker Federal VET Diploma	4920
Retail clerk Federal VET Diploma	4339
Social care worker Federal VET Diploma	3795
IT technician Federal VET Diploma	2194
Electrician Federal VET Diploma	1891
Logistician Federal VET Diploma	1778
Retail assistant Federal VET Certificate	1556
Cook Federal VET Diploma	1540
Draughtsman Federal VET Diploma	1536

In Switzerland, there are VET programmes for around 240 different occupations. The ten most popular occupations in 2019 accounted for just over 50% of all newly signed apprenticeship contracts.

### Links

#### List of federally recognised vocational and professional qualifications:

⇒ [www.bvz.admin.ch](http://www.bvz.admin.ch)

#### Enrolment in VET programme:

⇒ [www.education-stat.admin.ch](http://www.education-stat.admin.ch) ⇒ Personen in Ausbildung ⇒ Sekundarstufe II

#### Website for vocational, educational and career guidance services:

⇒ [www.berufsberatung.ch](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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. For their part, vocational schools offer optional courses to enable young people to acquire additional knowledge relating to their occupation as well as to language, communication and society (e.g. language certification courses).

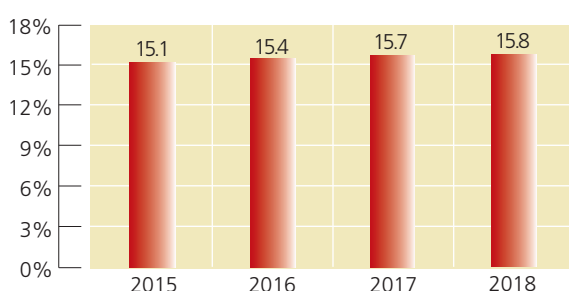




# Federal vocational baccalaureate

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.

## Federal Vocational Baccalaureate uptake<sup>4</sup>



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 Test<sup>5</sup>

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](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/bm)

⇒ [www.berufsmaturitaet.ch](http://www.berufsmaturitaet.ch)

### Information about study programmes at UAS:

⇒ [www.sbf.admin.ch/fhs](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/fhs)

### Study programmes:

⇒ [www.studyprogrammes.ch](http://www.studyprogrammes.ch)

### Information about UAT:

⇒ [www.sbf.admin.ch/passarelle\\_d](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/passarelle_d)



# 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 eight 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.

## Key figures

Bachelor's degree programmes generally take three years to complete for full-time students and four to five years for part-time students. Since the Bachelor's degree already qualifies students for a professional activity, only about 15% of Bachelor's graduates enrol in a subsequent Master's degree programme, which generally lasts three semesters.

## UAS qualifications awarded by field of study and level, 2019<sup>6</sup>

Field of study	Bachelor	Master
Architecture, Construction and Planning	911	144
Engineering and IT	2 707	277
Chemistry and Life Sciences	516	180
Agriculture and Forestry	129	0
Business and Services	4 455	905
Design	662	222
Sports	26	7
Music, Theatre and Other Arts	854	1 225
Applied Linguistics	119	36
Social Work	1 623	107
Applied Psychology	180	101
Health	1 936	149
<b>Total</b>	<b>14 118</b>	<b>3 353</b>

<sup>6</sup> Federal Statistical Office (2020a).





# 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 2019<sup>7</sup>

Age	25–29	30–39	40+	Total
Completion of regular VET programme	3 065	1 172	330	4 567
Advanced placement in VET programme	1 312	607	345	2 264
Direct access to qualification procedure	385	956	797	2 138
Validation of non-formal and informal learning	49	240	479	768
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 811</b>	<b>2 975</b>	<b>1 951</b>	<b>9 737</b>

## Ten most frequently chosen fields for persons aged 25 and older seeking vocational qualifications in 2019<sup>7</sup>

Occupational field	Total
Nursing and Obstetrics	1 203
Social work and Counselling	1 075
Business Administration	1 061
Wholesale and Retail Trade	836
Civil Engineering	815
Hotels, Restaurants and Catering	584
Housekeeping Services	558
Mechanical Engineering and Metalworking	429
Plant Cultivation and Animal Breeding	400
Electricity and Power	376

## 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.





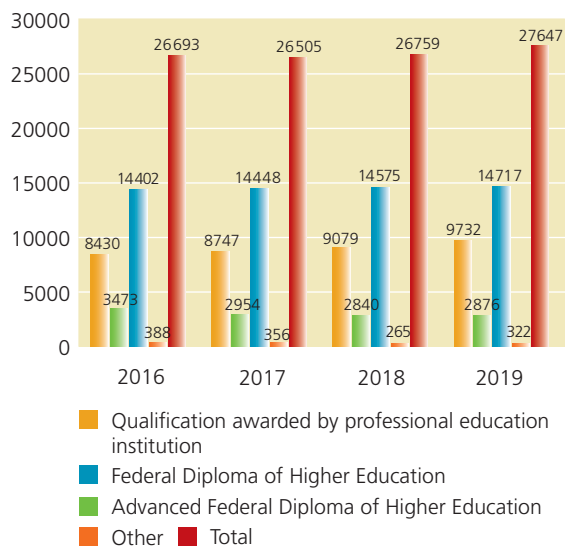
# Professional education

**Swiss tertiary-level education is comprised of professional education, universities of applied sciences (UAS) and cantonal universities/federal institutes of technology. The professional education sector places great emphasis on the actual skills used in a given profession.**

Professional education imparts competences needed to handle challenging technical or managerial activities and provides the labour market with highly skilled workers. Admission to professional education is normally open to

holders of a Federal VET Diploma or equivalent upper-secondary level qualifications. Level-one federal professional examinations are the main pathway leading to professional qualifications.

## Pathway leading to professional qualifications 2019<sup>8</sup>



Most people obtain their professional qualification after having passed a federal examination.

### Link

**List of all federally recognised vocational and professional qualifications:**

⇒ [www.bvz.admin.ch](http://www.bvz.admin.ch)

<sup>8</sup> Federal Statistical Office (2020a).



#### The ten most frequently taken federal professional examinations (level 1) in 2019<sup>9</sup>

Occupation	Total
Human resources specialist	858
Technical sales specialist	691
Police officer	629
Finance and accountancy specialist	581
Social insurance specialist	571
Trainer	537
Property manager	382
Marketing specialist	339
Electrical project manager	309
Specialist in Long-term Care and Assistance	304

#### The ten most frequently taken federal professional examinations (level 2) in 2019<sup>9</sup>

Occupation	Total
Complementary medicine therapist	250
Auditor	233
Electrician	197
Chief Accountant and Comptroller	144
Master farmer	120
Naturopath	120
Sales manager	117
Property Fiduciary	67
Tax expert	61
Real estate fiduciary	60

#### Top ten study programmes completed at professional education institutions\* 2019<sup>9</sup>

Study programme	Total
Nursing	1 938
Business management	1 177
Social pedagogy	753
Mechanical engineering	419
Business processes	410
Hotels, restaurants and catering	393
Business informatics	385
Child care	331
IT	326
Constructional Engineering	305

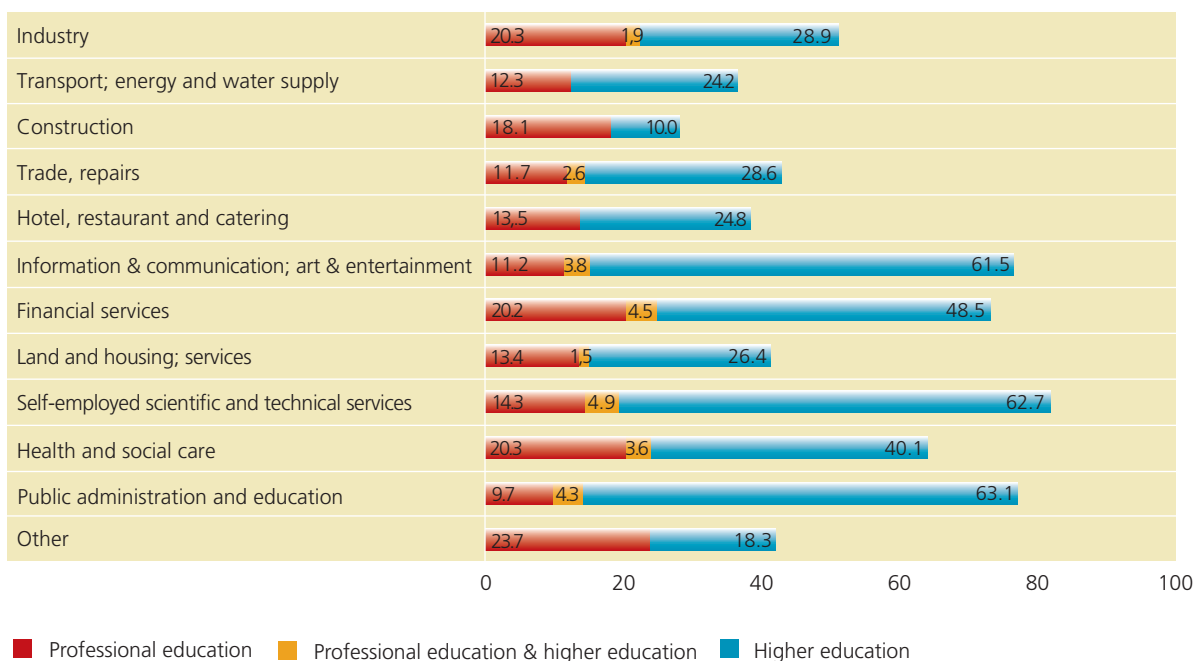
\* Formerly and newly recognised programmes are combined.

In Switzerland, there are federal professional examinations at level 1 for around 220 different professions and at level 2 for around 170 different professions. The ten most frequently taken level-1 federal professional examinations accounted for approximately 35% of all federal professional examinations taken in 2019. In comparison, the ten most frequently taken level-2 federal professional examinations accounted for just under half.

Study programmes are available at professional education institutions for around 450 different occupations. The ten most frequently completed study programmes accounted for around two-thirds of all PEI study programmes completed in 2019.



### Completed tertiary-level study programmes by economic branch 2019<sup>10</sup>



Professional education pays dividends for qualification holders. Most people complete their training on a part-time basis. Holders of tertiary-level professional qualifications earn an average of 30% more than holders of upper-secondary level vocational qualifications

#### Links

##### Information about Swiss professional education sector:

⇒ [www.sbf.admin.ch/hbb](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/hbb)

##### Statistics on professional education:

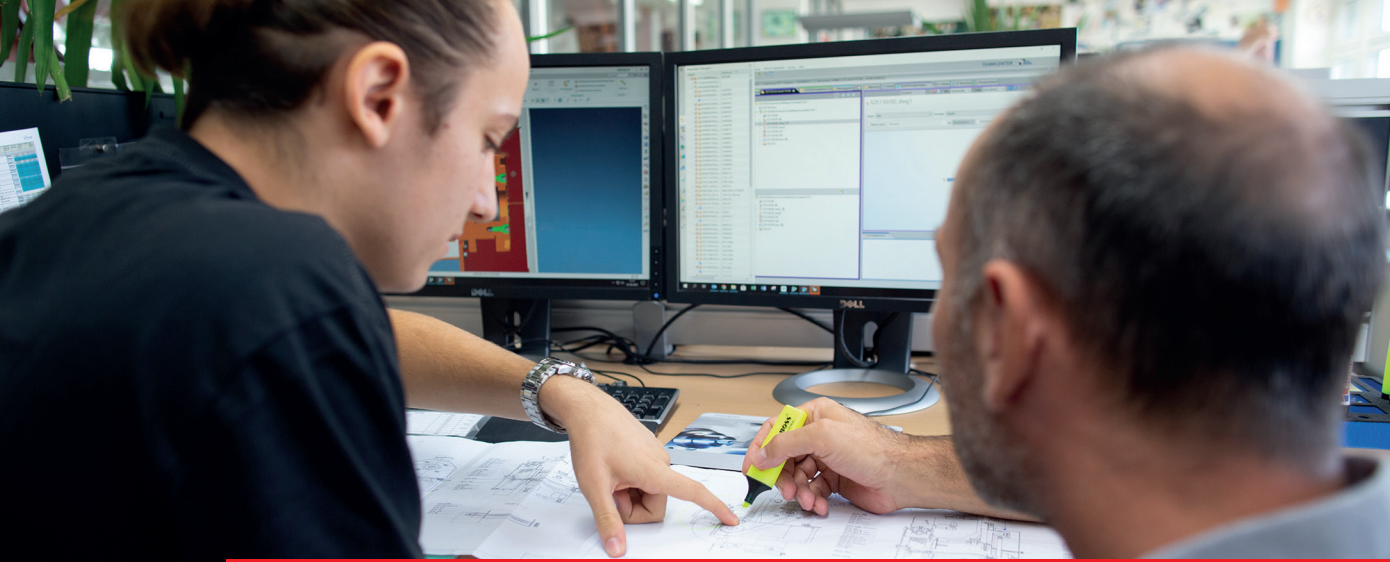
⇒ [www.education-stat.admin.ch](http://www.education-stat.admin.ch)

##### Information about transitions to universities of applied sciences:

⇒ [www.swissuniversities.ch](http://www.swissuniversities.ch) ⇒ Services ⇒ Studieren ⇒ Studieren in der Schweiz ⇒ Zulassung zur FH

<sup>10</sup> Federal Statistical Office (2020d).





# 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:

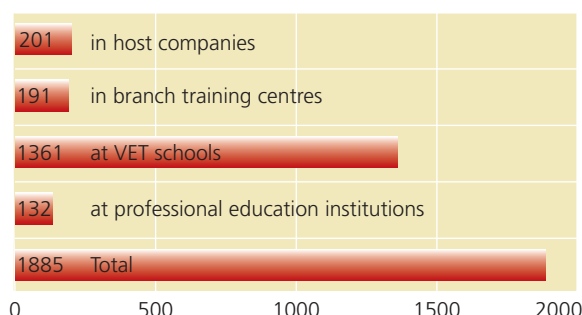
- **Host companies:** as VET trainers;
- **Branch training centres:** as branch course instructors (also at similar third-party training locations, at trade schools or at other recognised learning institutions);
- **VET schools:** as instructors for the VET programme and the federal vocational baccalaureate;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

## VET professional diplomas awarded 2019/2020



## 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.

## 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.

## Links

### VET professionals:

⇒ [www.sbf.admin.ch/bbverantwortliche\\_d](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/bbverantwortliche_d)  
(webpage available in German, French and Italian)

### Supervisory procedures:

⇒ [www.sbf.admin.ch/aufsichtsverfahren\\_bpb](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/aufsichtsverfahren_bpb)  
(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.<sup>11</sup>

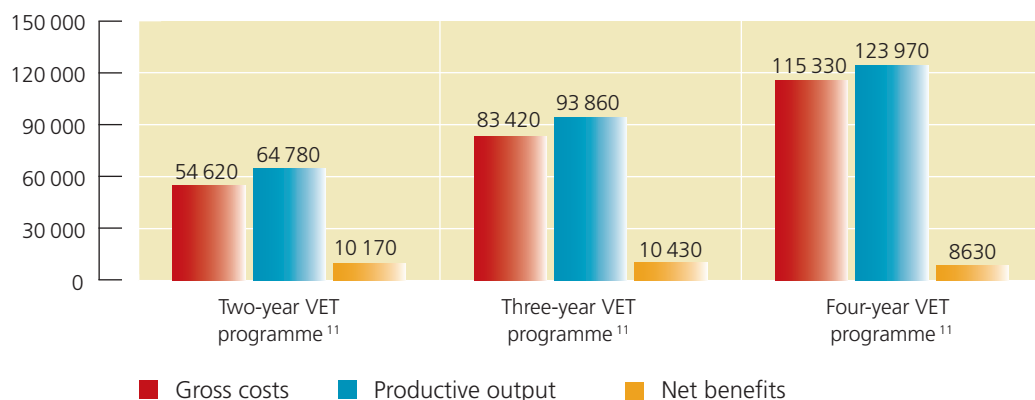
## Public sector

Public expenditure for Switzerland's VPET system stood at around CHF 3.6 billion in 2019. The vast majority of this funding was provided by the cantons as implementing partners: 72% of the costs for vocational schools, 12% of the costs for professional education institutions and 7% of the costs for preparatory courses for entry to VET. In 2019, the Confederation contributed CHF 929 million to cover the total costs of the VPET system. Up to 10% of federal funding is earmarked to promote VPET development projects and specific activities that serve the public interest.

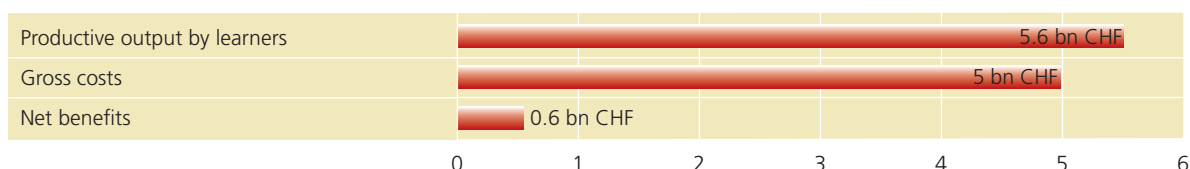
## Private sector

Professional organisations provide both services and funding for the Swiss VPET system: they do the ground-work, 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 2016<sup>12</sup>



## Cost/benefit ratio for Swiss companies involved in VET programmes, survey year 2016<sup>12</sup>



<sup>11</sup> State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (2020), Kostenerhebung der kantonalen Berufsbildung 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Gehret A., Aepli M., Kuhn A. and Schweri J. (2019), Lohnt sich die Lehrlingsausbildung für die Betriebe? SFIVET.





### 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. In 2019, public expenditure for professional education and job-related continuing education and training (CET) was around 575 million.<sup>12</sup>

### 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 2019, 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.

### 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](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/bbfonds_d)

### Links

#### Information about funding of federal professional examinations:

⇒ [www.sbf.admin.ch/bundesbeitraege](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/bundesbeitraege)

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

⇒ [www.edk.ch](http://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.<sup>13</sup>

Emphasis is placed on achieving the international recognition of Swiss vocational and professional qualifications and on encouraging mobility of the VPET stakeholders. International exchanges serve the purpose of monitoring trends and maintaining the quality of the Swiss VPET system.

⇒ [www.sbf.admin.ch/ibbz](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/ibbz)

⇒ [www.ibbz.admin.ch](http://www.ibbz.admin.ch)

### **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 uses existing forums or those created by national or international partners to promote the visibility of the Swiss VPET system and the exchange with various stakeholders. In Switzerland, for example, SERI participates in the Future Talk event organised by Worlddidac and organises an event at the Swiss House of the World Economic Forum in Davos. Abroad, SERI plans to participate in international events (e.g. the Swiss Pavilion at the Expo in Dubai), the European Vocational Skills Week organised by the European Union and other events.

⇒ [www.swisspavilion.org/de/swissnex](http://www.swisspavilion.org/de/swissnex)

⇒ [www.futuretalk.org](http://www.futuretalk.org)

⇒ [www.houseofswitzerland.org/de/events/house-switzerland-am-wef-2020](http://www.houseofswitzerland.org/de/events/house-switzerland-am-wef-2020)

### **EU education programmes**

Switzerland indirectly takes part in EU education and youth programmes (Erasmus+). Among other things, this includes funding for mobility and cooperation activities in the area of VPET.

⇒ [www.movetia.ch](http://www.movetia.ch)

<sup>13</sup> 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](http://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 compensa-

tory 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](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/diploma)

### Pursuing international cooperation in VPET through international organisations

Cooperation with international organisations such as the OECD or the EU fosters an understanding of VET 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](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/eu_berufsbildung)

⇒ [www.sbf.admin.ch/oecd\\_e](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/oecd_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.swiss-skills.ch](http://www.swiss-skills.ch)

⇒ [www.worldskills.org](http://www.worldskills.org)

⇒ [www.euroskills2020.com](http://www.euroskills2020.com)

### Key figures for international VPET activities

#### Exchange and mobility within the VET sector

Approved budget 2020 for Swiss participation in EU-sponsored traineeships abroad (Leonardo da Vinci)	CHF 8.1m
Number of young people doing traineeships abroad in 2020	1855
Outgoing	1608
Incoming	247

#### Swiss performance at last three WorldSkills competitions

Kazan 2019	4th place
Abu Dhabi 2017	2nd place
São Paulo 2015	4th place

#### Swiss performance at last three EuroSkills competitions

Budapest 2018	1st place
Göteborg 2016	1st place
Lille 2014	4th 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 shorter-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 research:

⇒ [www.sbfi.admin.ch/bbforschung\\_d](http://www.sbfi.admin.ch/bbforschung_d)

#### Information about support instruments:

⇒ [www.sbfi.admin.ch/bbforschung\\_d](http://www.sbfi.admin.ch/bbforschung_d) ⇒ Einzelprojekte

#### Information about Leading Houses:

⇒ [www.sbfi.admin.ch/leading-houses](http://www.sbfi.admin.ch/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.sbfli.admin.ch](http://www.sbfli.admin.ch)

### SERI documentation

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

⇒ [www.sbfli.admin.ch/pubbbb](http://www.sbfli.admin.ch/pubbbb)

### The VPET campaign

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

⇒ [www.berufsbildungplus.ch](http://www.berufsbildungplus.ch)

### VPET website

Cantonal website providing extensive information about the Swiss VPET system.

⇒ [www.berufsbildung.ch](http://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](http://www.lex.berufsbildung.ch)

### Swiss education statistics

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

⇒ [www.education-stat.admin.ch](http://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](http://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](http://www.panorama.ch)

### Swiss education information platform

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

⇒ [www.educa.ch](http://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](http://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 Institute for Vocational Education and Training – SFIVET

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](http://www.ehb.swiss)



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State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (2020), Kostenerhebung der kantonalen Berufsbildung 2019.



## Orders

[www.vetplus.ch](http://www.vetplus.ch)

## Contact

State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation, Einsteinstrasse 2, 3003 Bern,  
[www.sbfi.admin.ch](http://www.sbfi.admin.ch)

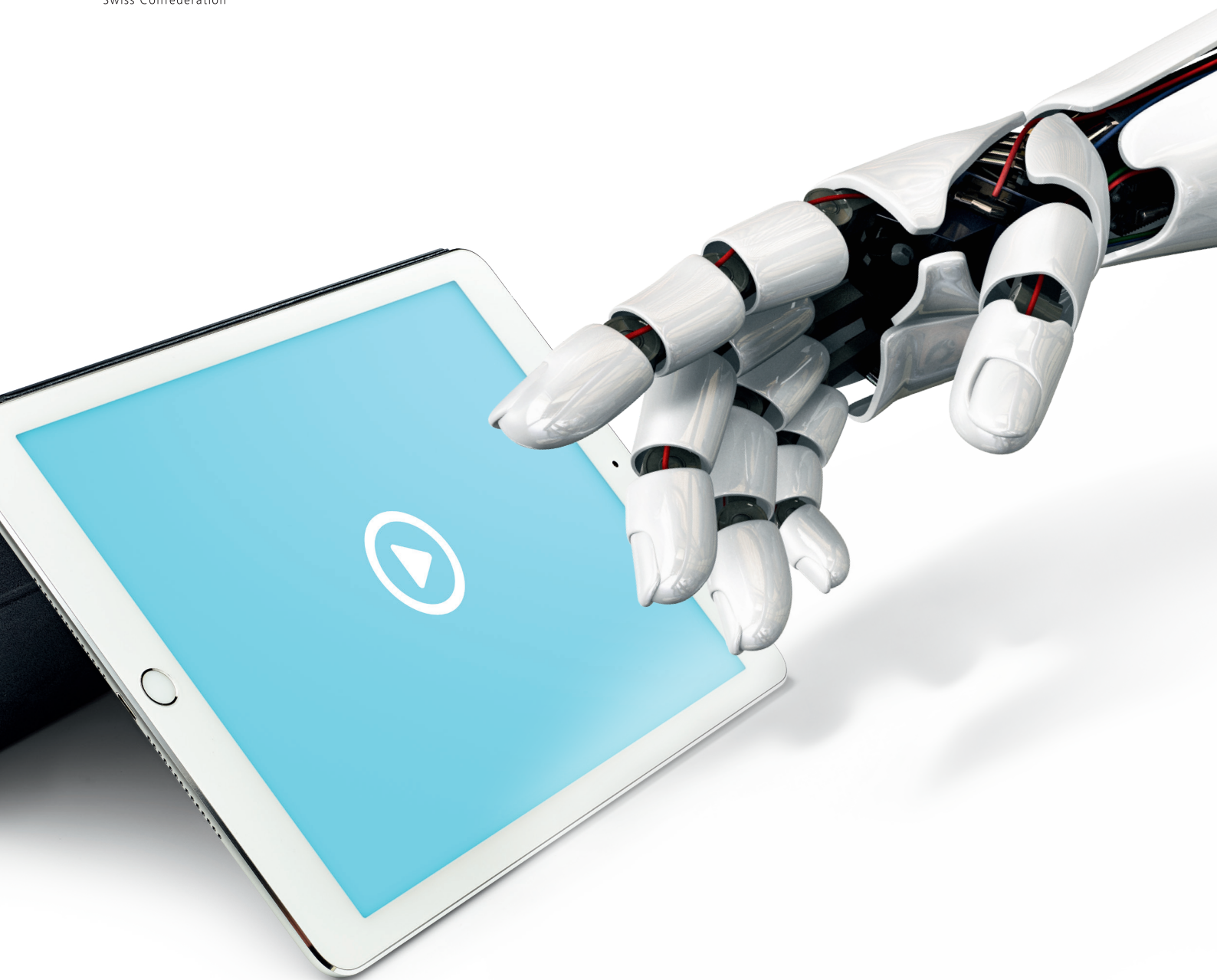


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