



Professional Education and Training (PET) in Switzerland Strengths, Challenges and Recommendations

STRENGTHS

- Employers and professional associations are engaged with and actively contribute to professional education and training (PET). The system is highly responsive to labour market needs.
- Policy development has a strong institutional leadership in the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET), allowing consensus among stakeholders to be balanced by policy development and reform.
- The system offers a flexible and effective response to diverse student requirements, with part-time, evening, weekend and modular provision.
- Work-based learning is generally well integrated into PET programmes, with work linked to study for part-time students, and substantial internships for full-time students.
- The professional exams effectively link upskilling to recognition of prior learning.
- The PET system is well articulated with upper secondary VET, offering a wide range of progression opportunities for graduate apprentices.
- Teachers and trainers in professional colleges are well prepared both in their vocational field and in pedagogy.
- While international recognition of PET programmes and qualifications remains a challenge, it can build on the already established high status of certain programmes.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- There are some potential financial and non-financial barriers to access to PET, and government financial support may be biased towards academic tertiary education.
 - *On a pilot basis, explore whether a loan and grant scheme would remove an access barrier to participation in PET.*
- In contrast to most other sectors of education and training, inter-cantonal arrangements for funding PET are haphazard, leading to confusion, unfairness and inefficiency.
 - *As already envisaged by the Swiss authorities, implement an effective inter-cantonal financial agreement allowing for consistent and co-ordinated funding across cantons in support of an effective PET market.*
- Information on the quality and costs of PET courses is inadequate, and there are quality weaknesses in some areas.
 - *Collect and disseminate better information from PET providers on course quality and costs. Encourage industry self-regulation of preparatory courses to ensure high and consistent standards.*
- Globalisation is putting a number of different pressures on the Swiss PET system, intensifying the need for international recognition of Swiss PET qualifications and demanding new higher level and sometimes globally defined competencies as part of many jobs.
 - *Respond actively to globalisation and technological change by: i) improved permeability and collaboration between PET and academic tertiary education; and ii) strengthened international network building on sectoral and professional college levels.*
- Numeracy and literacy are of increasing importance in professional occupations, and the PET system, alongside other parts of the Swiss education system need to address them more effectively.
 - *Encourage a stronger emphasis on numeracy and literacy in professional colleges, especially by introducing targeted measures for remediating basic skills gaps identified on entry.*

FURTHER INFORMATION

Increasingly countries look beyond secondary school to more advanced qualifications to provide the skills needed in many of the fastest growing technical and professional jobs in OECD economies. The OECD study, *Skills beyond School*, is addressing the range of policy questions arising, including funding and governance, matching supply and demand, quality assurance and equity and access. The study will build on the success of the previous OECD study of vocational education and training *Learning for Jobs* which examined policy through 17 country reviews and a comparative report. The study also forms part of the horizontal OECD Skills Strategy (OECD, 2012).¹

Full country policy reviews are being conducted in Austria, Denmark, Egypt, Germany, Israel, Korea, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom (England), and the United States (with case studies of Florida, Maryland and Washington State). Shorter exercises leading to an OECD country commentary will be undertaken in Belgium (Flanders), Canada, Iceland, Romania, Spain, Sweden and in Northern Ireland and Scotland in the United Kingdom. Background reports will be prepared in all these countries, and in France, Hungary and Mexico.

[A Skills beyond School Review of Switzerland, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training](#) (Fazekas, M. and S. Field, 2013) was published on 7 January 2013.

Further information about the policy review and reports on VET systems in other countries is available on the OECD website www.oecd.org/education/vet

1. OECD (2012), *Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives: A Strategic Approach to Skills Policies*, OECD Publishing. Doi: 10.1787/9789264177338-en