



Postsecondary Vocational Education and Training in Iceland Strengths and Challenges

STRENGTHS

- Building on current experience in the occupational councils, the Icelandic social partners are clearly willing to further engage with the VET system.
- The system is highly diverse, with many options, programmes and modes of study serving the needs of many different groups.
- There is a strong apprenticeship system associated with the regulated trades, with an effective balance of on and off the job training, and clear options for further upskilling as master craftsman or through other routes.
- Outside apprenticeships, most upper secondary vocational programmes make use of workplace training. Additional incentives have recently been created to provide such placements.
- In sites throughout Iceland, combined with distance learning, vocational programmes are made available to a widely dispersed population in rural areas.
- There are effective adult learning arrangements in place. Arrangements to offer second chances so that dropouts can return to education and training are strong.
- Good use is made of recognition of prior learning, helping adults to re-engage with education.

CHALLENGES

- Dropout is a major challenge, particularly affecting vocational programmes. Although many dropouts return to education and training later on, this still represents delay and inefficiency in initial education and training.
- Despite the creation of the occupational committee, it may not have the right composition to assist in the overall steering of the VET system.
- The strong apprenticeship system is not used outside the traditional trade professions. This may be a missed opportunity.
- The mix of provision in VET primarily reflects student preferences, and gives inadequate weight to labour market needs.
- Transitions between upper secondary vocational programmes and higher education are sometimes obstructed or difficult to navigate.
- Articulation between postsecondary VET and university education is often lacking, so that credit is not portable.
- Career guidance may retain an academic bias, and is sometimes lacking.

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.¹ The study also forms part of the horizontal OECD Skills Strategy (OECD, 2012).²

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 and Hungary.

[A Skills beyond School Commentary on Iceland OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training](#) (Musset, P. and R. Castañeda Valle, 2013) was published on 18 April 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

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1. OECD (2010), *Learning for Jobs*, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training, OECD Publishing. doi: [10.1787/9789264087460-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264087460-en)
 2. OECD (2012), *Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives: A Strategic Approach to Skills Policies*, OECD Publishing. doi: [10.1787/9789264177338-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264177338-en)