



Vocational education and training in Poland

Short description

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Christian F. Lettmayr, *Acting Director*
Hermann Nehls, *Chair of the Governing Board*

'The education priorities of the Polish Presidency will include mobility for learning purposes and university system modernisation.'

We will endeavour to intensify the implementation of language competences as a way to prepare students for educational and vocational mobility. The Polish Presidency is also willing to continue working on lifelong learning, including adult education.'

Successful vocational education is one of the priorities of national education policy. First, a vocational school has to become a positive choice. Only equal integration of general and vocational, according to the needs of learners, will enable students to obtain key competences together with a solid vocational preparation. This will bring vocational education closer to labour market needs.'

Katarzyna Hall
Minister for National Education

Foreword

This short description is published at a time of major reform in Polish vocational education. The strategy for developing lifelong learning fully encompasses vocational education and training. It is also well-aligned with the European process of cooperation in VET, the 'Copenhagen Process'. The strategy for developing education (2007-13) focuses on developing a flexible education and training system, relevant to both the labour market and technological and scientific progress, and responsive to the challenge of globalisation. Transparency of vocational qualifications, the creation of a unified system for their recognition, and the development of key competences alongside vocational skills are pillars continuing efforts to modernise vocational education in the context of a national lifelong learning strategy.

In February 2010, the Ministry of National Education announced a clear policy target: increasing the number of people graduating from vocational education from 12% to 15% by 2013. Several reforms are planned to support this aim, including the creation of training centres and extending the vocational schools offer to adults who want to acquire vocational qualifications.

Increasing the relevance of vocational education and training to the labour market is very much a policy focus in Poland, to be achieved through several actions: strengthening cooperation between vocational schools and employers; engaging them in curriculum development and assessment of vocational qualifications; attracting highly qualified specialists to work in vocational schools; and increasing the quality of vocational education by adapting it better to the economic environment.

Vocational education curriculum reforms will concentrate on implementing a 'learning outcomes' approach, promoting better integration of general and vocational subjects, and setting a minimum number of hours of practical training. Validation of various forms of learning will also be implemented through the harmonisation of exams and assessments, irrespective of the way knowledge, skills and competences have been acquired.

Increasing the transparency of qualifications will also be realised by modernising the classification of vocational qualifications to adjust it better to the needs of the labour market, rationalising the number of existing qualifications and describing qualifications in terms of 'knowledge, skills and competences'. The resulting classification, the Polish national qualification framework, is fully compatible with the European qualifications framework.

This short description of the Polish vocational education and training system provides readers with an introduction to the system and presents continuing developments and reforms in this field. We hope this report will contribute to better understanding of vocational education and training in Poland.

Christian F. Lettmayr
Acting Director

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Poland



CHAPTER 1

General context: framework for the knowledge society

1.1. Political and administrative context

The Republic of Poland is a multi-party republic, with a parliamentary-cabinet system of government and a traditional division into the three powers, the legislative, the executive and the judiciary, as stipulated in the Constitution adopted in 1997.

Legislative power is vested in the bicameral parliament, comprising the *Sejm* as the lower house and the Senate. Members of the *Sejm* (460) are elected by the nation in free, direct and proportional elections conducted by secret ballot; the Senators (100) are elected in free and direct elections conducted by secret ballot. Executive power rests with the President of the Republic of Poland who is elected by popular vote, and with the Council of Ministers (the Government), led by the Prime Minister. The judiciary power is vested in independent courts.

In 1999, a three-tier decentralised system of territorial administration was introduced, under which Poland has been divided into municipalities (*gminy*), districts (*powiaty*) and administrative regions (*województwa*) which are the territorial government units (*jednostki samorządu terytorialnego*). There are 2 478 municipalities, 379 districts (including 65 towns having a district status), and 16 regions which are both self-government units and units of State administration. The *wojewoda* is the State administration representative at regional level.

The official language is Polish and the currency is the zloty (PLN).

1.2. Population and demographics

The territory of Poland has a total area of 312 679 km² and borders with Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Russia.

Poland is the sixth most populous country in the European Union and the 32nd in the world (GUS, 2009). It has over 38 million inhabitants (GUS, 2010a).

Between 2000 and 2009 the Polish population decreased by 90 thousand, mainly due to continuous considerable decrease in the number of births (the

trend experienced for many years)⁽¹⁾ and also the negative international migration balance⁽²⁾. However, in 2008 (and also 2009), a positive real population increase was recorded.

Despite Poland's demographic development in recent years, the age structure of the population is still characterised by a relatively high share of young people, especially when compared with the age structures of many other European nations. In 2009, people in the 0 to 24 age group accounted for around 30% of Poland's population; people aged 59 to 64 were around 56.5%, and the +65 group around 13.5%

In 2008, life expectancy, which has been increasing since the early 1990s, was 80 years for women and 71.3 years for men.

Population forecasts to 2035 (Figure 1) indicate a progressive decline of people aged below 64 years. The natural increase will be negative again from 2014 and the intensity of permanent international migration is to rise. However, immigration flows are expected to increase to improve the negative balance (GUS, 2008a, p. 3, 7-8).

Since the 1990s, a rapid decrease in the number of children and youths reduced absolute participation at practically all educational levels (Figure 2).

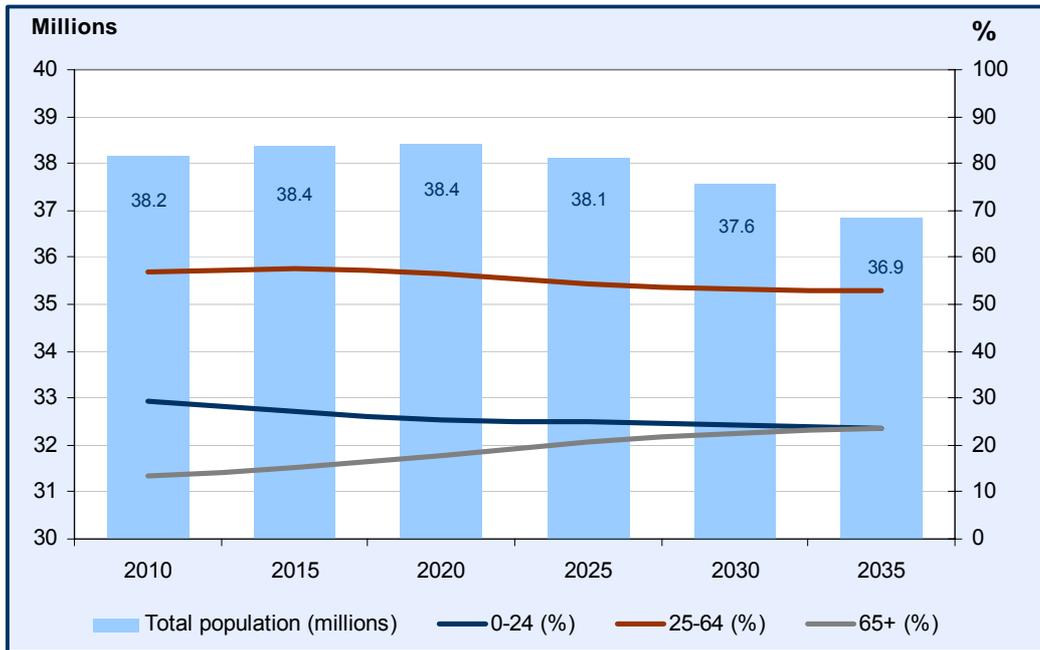
Current and future demographic changes are likely to have far-reaching consequences for the educational structures of the country as they may lead to staff redundancies and reductions in the number of facilities and education providers. However, a smaller student-teacher ratio and more intense competition between educational establishments (as they have to attract students) could contribute to improving the quality of education provision.

Demographic changes may also lead to increased demand for training in the active population due to the need for updating and upgrading the competences and qualifications of workers. Increased demand for health and social care services, triggered by a growing number of old people, will be inevitable and will also affect certain qualifications.

⁽¹⁾ Due to changes in the roles and status of woman and adoption of the Western family model, e.g., longer periods of schooling and increased economic activity of woman, there is a tendency to start a family only after a certain level of economic stability is reached.

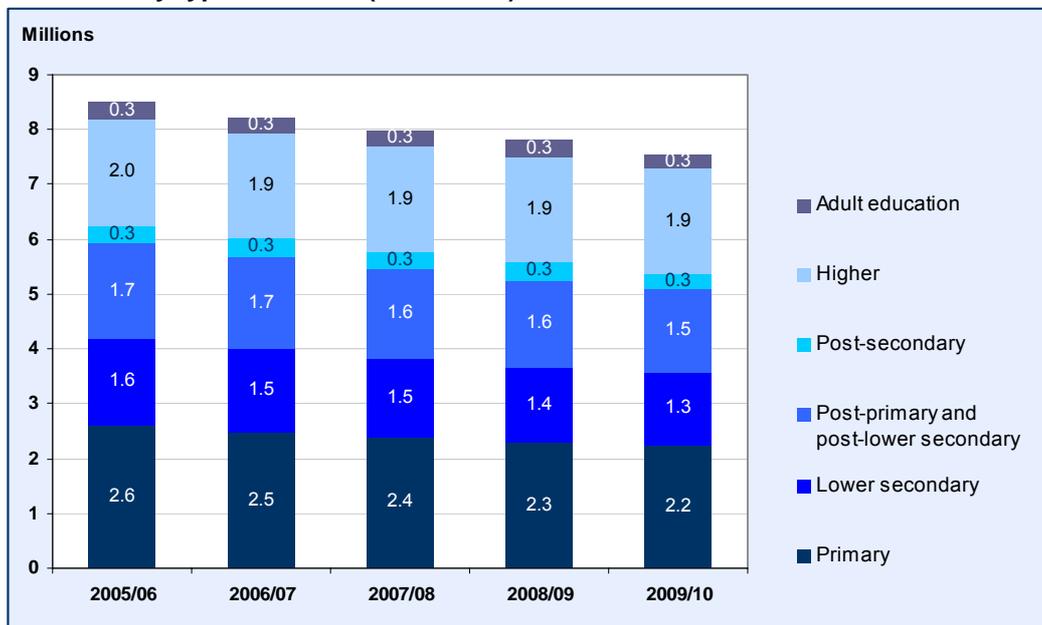
⁽²⁾ Particularly as a result of new opportunities for working abroad following Poland's accession to the EU.

Figure 1 Population projections to 2035



Source: Cedefop calculations, based on Eurostat, Demographic projections, convergence scenario, date of extraction 3.6.2011.

Figure 2 Students in school years 2005/06, 2006/07, 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10 by type of school (in millions)*



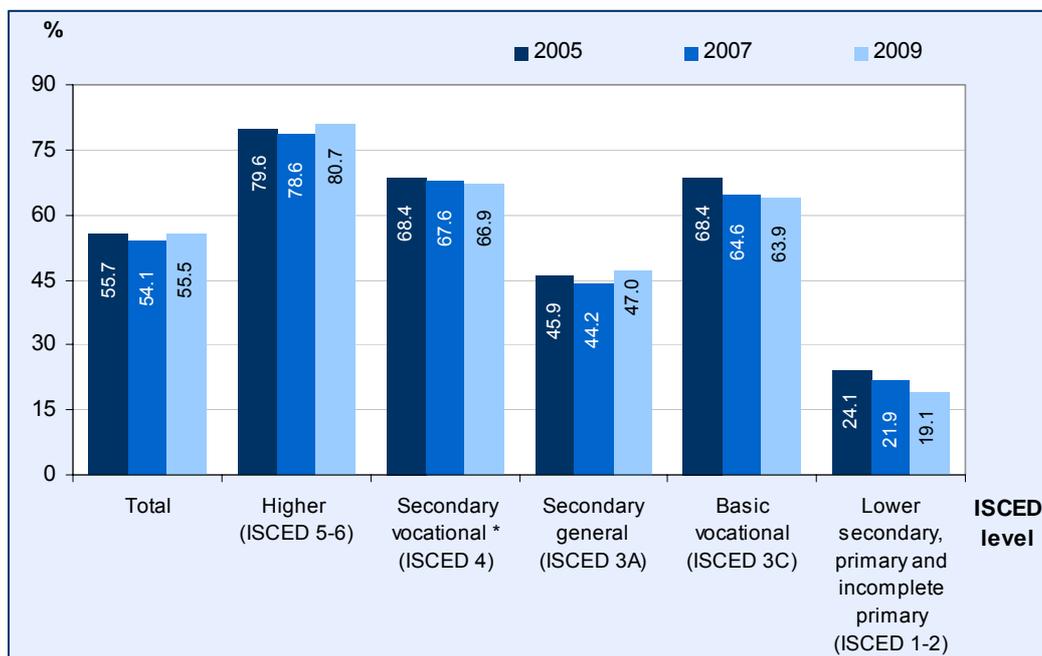
* as at the beginning of the school academic year.

Source: Prepared by the author based on data from the concise statistical yearbooks of Poland (GUS, 2009; 2010a).

1.3. Economy and labour-market indicators

Even though economic restructuring is taking place, the share of the agricultural sector in overall employment in Poland remains higher than in countries with a highly developed market economy: agriculture sector 12.8%, industry sector 30.2%, services sector 56.9% (out of 15 961 thousand employed people in 2010) (GUS, 2010c).

Figure 3 **Economic activity rate of population aged +15 by level of education (in 4 quarter; in %)**



* Including post-secondary schools.

Source: Prepared by the author based on GUS (2008b, p.107).

1.3.1. Economic activity rate

In 2010, the economic activity rate reached 55.7% (MPiPS, 2010a). The activity rate of people with higher education (80%) and secondary vocational education (around 67%) is well above the country average. It stands in sharp contrast with the activity of those with lower secondary and primary education, which is slightly above 20% in this group (Figure 3).

The educational attainment of individuals is, therefore, an important factor in stimulating economic activity.

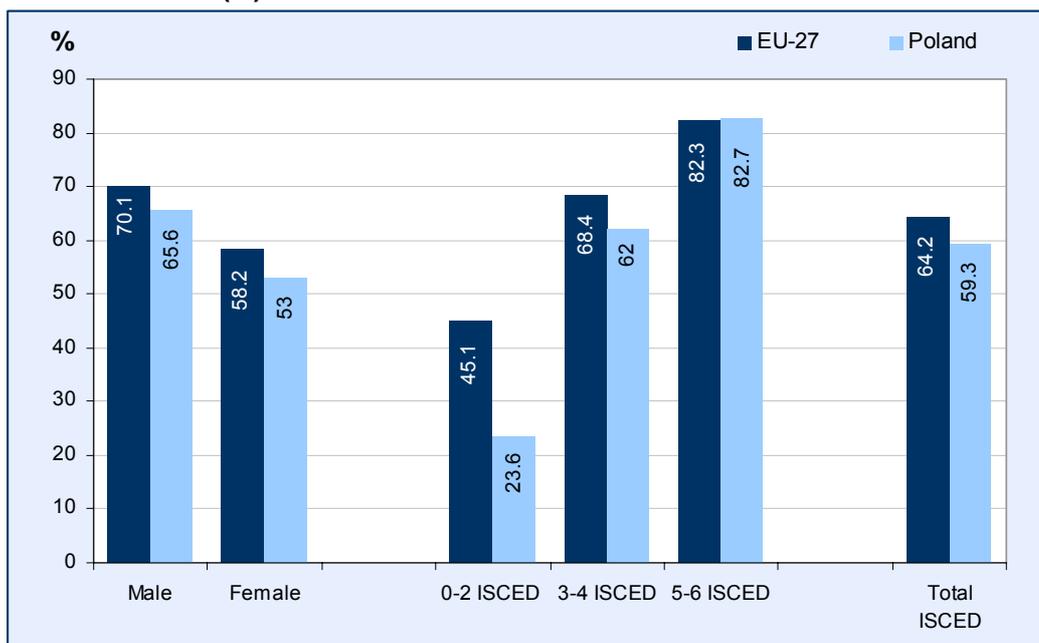
1.3.2. Employment and unemployment rates

Poland has not been affected by the crisis to the same extent as other EU countries. The employment rate has been growing steadily, though it is still markedly lower than the EU average ⁽³⁾.

Employment rate figures vary according to education level (Figure 4). Analysis shows that people with tertiary education are the least affected by unemployment, both in Poland and EU-27. Employment of those with pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0 to 2) is much lower in Poland than EU-27.

At the beginning of 2011 unemployment was 13.1%, increasing in comparison to 2010 by around 0.8% (MPIPS, 2010a). It is also considerably higher among young people (15 to 24 age group) and those with lower educational levels (Figure 5). As in the rest of the Member States, low-skilled people are at disadvantage on the labour market.

Figure 4 **Employment rates by gender and by highest level of education attained, 2010 (%)**

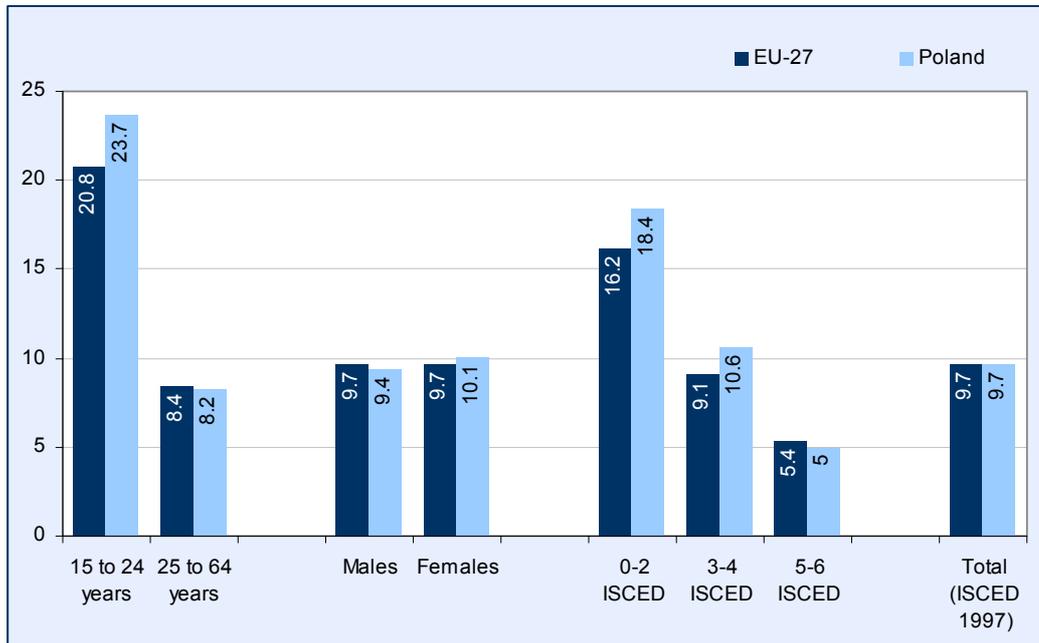


Description: employment rates represent the number of employed persons as percentage of the total population. Specific rates are calculated by age groups and educational level.

Source: Eurostat (labour force survey); extracted on 19.5.2011; last update: 12.5.2011.

⁽³⁾ 50% of the aggregate population aged +15 in the first quarter of 2011.

Figure 5 **Unemployment rates by age, by gender and by highest level of education attained, 2010 (%)**



Description: unemployment rates represent the number of unemployed persons as percentage of the active population (employed + unemployed)

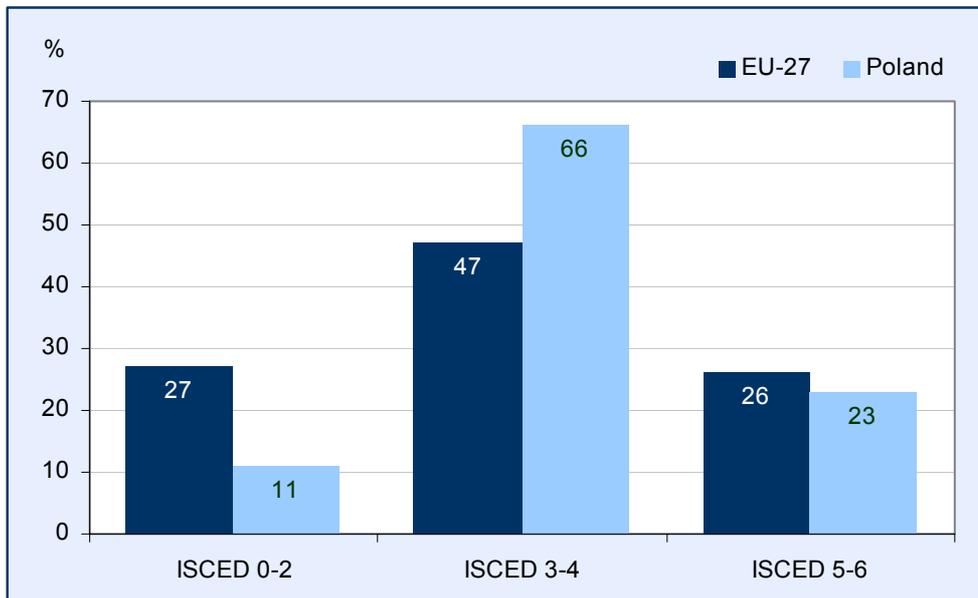
Source: Eurostat (labour force survey); extracted on: 19.5.2011; last update: 12.5.2011.

1.4. Educational attainment of population

Population figures show that most people aged between 25 and 64 have upper secondary education without ISCED 3C short, post-secondary non-tertiary education (level 3 to 4), both in Poland and EU-27. However, in Poland this group is significantly bigger (66%) than in EU-27 (47%). In Poland people with pre-primary education, primary education and lower secondary education (level 0 to 2) constitute the smallest group (11%); in EU-27 this is the second largest group (27%).

In 2010, the percentage of the early school leavers in Poland was 5.4% (Figure 7), a relatively low figure compared to the EU average 14.1%. Data show a decreasing tendency since 2004, as in the EU more generally (16.1% in the EU and 5.6% in Poland), indicating increased awareness in society of the need for education.

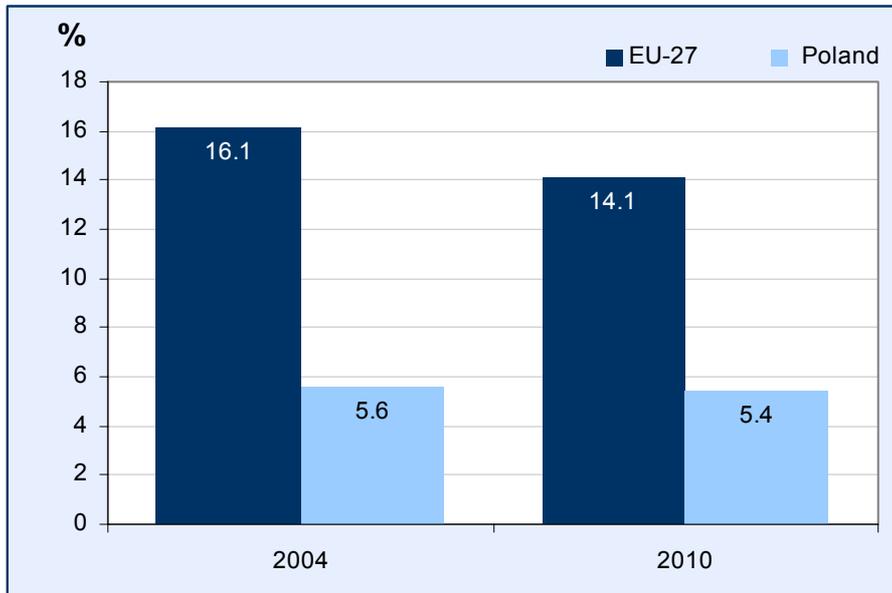
Figure 6 **Population aged between 25 and 64, by highest level of education in EU-27, 2010 (in %)**



Note: ISCED: International standard classification of education.
ISCED 0-2: pre-primary education, primary education, lower secondary education, including 3c short (preparatory vocational and vocational education of less than two years duration).
ISCED 3-4: upper secondary education without 3c short, post-secondary non-tertiary education.
ISCED 5-6: tertiary education.].

Source: Cedefop calculations, based on Eurostat (labour force survey), extracted on: 19.5.2011; last update: 12.5.2011

Figure 7 **Early school leavers 2004-10 (%)**



Description: Percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training.

Source: Eurostat (labour force survey); extracted: 19.5.2011; last update 1.4.2011.

CHAPTER 2

Policy development and priorities

2.1. National lifelong learning strategy

In 2003, the *Strategy for the development of lifelong learning until 2010* was introduced by the Ministry of National Education (MEN, 2009) and accepted by the Council of Ministers. The strategy introduced the term 'lifelong learning' and describes it as the basis for creating a knowledge-based society. The strategy included assignments for the national central and local government, research and education institutions and social partners. The education and training 2010 programme, which was accepted in 2002 by the Ministers for Education and the European Commission, has influenced education and vocational training policy.

The new national lifelong learning strategy has not yet been developed in Poland, although the National reform programme for years 2008-11, set out by the Ministry of Economy, foresees preparation and implementation of the lifelong learning strategy together with legal and institutional instruments resulting from it. To respond to the challenge of setting down the national lifelong learning strategy, the Ministry of National Education undertook steps such as the appointment of a team of experts and counsellors who will be responsible for preparing the necessary reforms in vocational education. Further, under the Operational programme human capital, the Ministry of National Education carries out activities focused on creating and implementing the national qualification framework and promoting lifelong learning.

2.2. Policy developments in vocational education

The recent developments in vocational education arise from the priorities of education policy set up in the *Strategy for the development of lifelong learning until 2010* (MEN, 2009) and in the *Education development strategy for 2007-13* (MENiS, 2005b). They include:

- (a) developing a flexible system able to adapt to the changes connected with progress in science, new technologies and globalisation, plus changes in the labour market;
- (b) building up a transparent system of vocational qualifications;

- (c) creating a unified system for recognising vocational qualifications acquired in different forms;
- (d) developing key competences along with vocational skills.

But the reforms are also induced by the needs of the labour market, requirements of the Copenhagen process, and the need to prepare the system for the implementation of the national qualification framework. In February 2010, the Ministry of National Education published assumptions on planned changes in vocational education. The government will increase the number of people graduating from vocational education from 12% to 15% by 2013. The planned reforms take in various aspects of VET:

- (a) organisation and structure of the system:
 - (i) granting schools more flexibility in integrating general and vocational subjects;
 - (ii) creating branch training centres which will include:
 - basic vocational and technical schools;
 - schools for adults (*gymnasium* and *lyceum*);
 - continuing education and training providers;
 - centres responsible for vocational qualifications exams, and coordinating their activities.
 - (iii) extending the vocational schools offer to include courses for adults who want to acquire vocational qualifications;
 - (iv) strengthening cooperation between schools and employers to ensure work placements and adequate equipment for schools;
 - (v) engaging employers in developing curriculum and examination standards, assessing vocational qualifications (as members of the examination boards) and shaping the content of courses for adults who want to acquire vocational qualifications;
- (b) curricular reform:
 - (i) enhancing general education in basic vocational schools curricula (in line with the set of general subjects in general secondary schools and technical schools);
 - (ii) setting the minimum number of hours for practical training for particular type of vocational schools;
 - (iii) basing the curricula for all occupations on learning outcomes;
 - (iv) including key competences into vocational school curricula;
 - (v) making the exams lead to uniform vocational qualifications, irrespective of the way skills and competences have been acquired;

- (c) modernising the classification of vocational qualifications:
 - (i) increasing classification flexibility to adjust it better to labour-market needs;
 - (ii) reducing the number of existing qualifications by grouping/integrating them;
 - (iii) describing qualifications by a set of skills and competences. As a result of this reform the schools will offer multi-vocational education allowing students to acquire the 'skills and competences portfolio' (both general and specific ones) rather than a certain qualification;
 - (iv) making the Polish qualification framework compatible with the European qualification framework and allowing comparison of vocation qualifications, irrespective of the route by which they were acquired;
- (d) teacher training and development:
 - (i) attracting highly qualified specialists to work in vocational schools;
 - (ii) increasing the quality of vocational education and adapting it better to the economic environment (for more information see Chapter 6).

2.3. National qualifications framework and European credit transfer system for VET

Although the national qualification framework has not yet been introduced in Poland, work on its development and implementation is well under way. Currently, the key effort in this regard is the execution of the Operational programme human capital project entitled Development of content and institutional assumptions for implementation of national qualifications framework and the National Qualification Register for lifelong learning. The project, under the Institute for Educational Research, started in July 2010 and continues the works of an earlier project called Stocktaking of competences and qualifications for the Polish labour market and the development of the national qualifications framework model (carried out by the Ministry of National Education in 2008-10). This initiative is carried out by a team of experts who represent general, vocational and tertiary education, as well as employers and other institutions involved in developing and implementing the qualification framework. The referencing report is expected to be prepared in 2011.

The development of the Polish qualification framework will continue until 2012. As part of this exercise, there will be full stocktaking of the components of the qualifications system; the framework and its implementation methods will be designed, including legislative changes deemed necessary. Parallel to that, a

system for validating learning outcomes acquired outside the education system will be developed.

Introduction of the European credit transfer system for VET (ECVET) is delayed because it will require national qualification framework implementation. However, the evaluation and certification of qualifications seems to be easier than in other countries, as the Polish system of education is strongly centralised. There are no regional divisions and, therefore, qualifications are perceived and evaluated in the same way across the country.

2.4. Mechanisms to anticipate skill needs and develop vocational qualification standards

Developing sets of skills for occupations is mainly done within the formal vocational education system, at different levels of education, supervised by different ministries ⁽⁴⁾.

Employers carry out random surveys related to the vocational competences of school leavers and demand for specific skills as part of sectoral, regional or local research projects. Some of these are funded by grants from the State Committee for Scientific Research (*Komitet Badań Naukowych*).

To date no skill needs strategy has been developed. However, the Centre for Human Resource Development (*Centrum Rozwoju Zasobów Ludzkich*) has a project aimed at diagnosing demand for occupations, qualifications and skills on regional and local labour markets, analysing their functionality and usefulness and designing new adequate methods, tools and procedures for public employment service. Another project is developing recommendations for changes in current methodology for monitoring surplus and scarce occupations on the local labour market ⁽⁵⁾

In the past 10 years, various studies have contributed to diagnosing the level of adaptation of the VET system to the labour market needs, including:

- (a) Agroalternative Mazowsze 2000: development and implementation of an advisory programme for *powiat* (district) governments related to the diagnosis of training needs in local labour markets, Sycyna Educational Association (*Stowarzyszenie Oświatowe Sycyna*);

⁽⁴⁾ There is no national system of anticipating skill needs in Poland.

⁽⁵⁾ <http://www.crzl.gov.pl/projekty-mainmenu-5/rynek-pracy-mainmenu-52/projekt-13-mainmenu-55> (project 1.3 *Opracowanie nowych zaleceń metodycznych prowadzenia monitoringu zawodów deficytowych i nadwyżkowych na lokalnym rynku pracy*).

- (b) a diagnostic study, The labour market and VET in the Mazowsze region, by the Voivodship Labour Office (*Wojewódzki Urząd Pracy*) in Warsaw;
- (c) an expert study, The external vocational examination: analysis, diagnosis and perspective for changes, by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (*Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk*);
- (d) Validation of employee qualifications in the Polish construction sector, by the Education and Labour, Research and Development Centre (*Edukacja i Praca*);
- (e) a research project in the *Podkarpackie voivodship*, Standardisation of vocational competences and training for a job', by the Institute of Labour and Social Studies (*Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych*);
- (f) VET and various aspects of labour market positions, by the Warsaw School of Economics;
- (g) Quality assessment and optimisation of a modular VET system, by the Institute for Sustainable Technologies (*Instytut Technologii i Eksploatacji*) – National Research Institute (*Państwowy Instytut Badawczy*) in Radom

The work carried out so far to develop vocational qualification standards can be seen as an exceptionally successful exercise aimed at adapting the vocational education offer to skill needs. The methodology of doing research and preparing the results was developed by research institutions themselves, but the content of individual standards was mostly defined by employees working in a specific job, their immediate superiors and directors (owners) of enterprises. Vocational qualification standards are among the basic considerations (on a par with the core curriculum for a given occupation) in designing modular curricula.

Cooperation between employer and employee communities was also very strong during the implementation of the project Development of innovative VET curricula, delivered as part of the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2004-06, and run by the department of vocational and continuing education of the Ministry of National Education (MEN) in cooperation with the national centre for supporting vocational and continuing education (KOWEZIU) in Warsaw. The outcome of the project included the development of innovative modular curricula for occupations listed in the classification of VET occupations published by the Ministry of National Education.

CHAPTER 3

Legislative and institutional framework

3.1. Legislative framework

The right to education is safeguarded by the Constitution of the Republic of Poland. It obliges the public authorities to ensure that citizens have general and equal access to education.

The basic legislative act which regulates the functioning of the education system, including vocational education and continuing education ⁽⁶⁾, for youths and adults, is the Education System Act of 7 September 1991, with further amendments. The training for unemployed, job-seekers and vocational guidance and counselling is regulated by the Act of 20 April 2004 on promotion of employment and labour market institutions, and by various ordinances of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MPIP) and the Ministry of National Education (MEN).

Most legal decisions regarding vocational education are made through ordinances by the Ministry of National Education. In recent years, more than a dozen such ordinances have covered key issues: standards for examinations leading to vocational qualifications; operation of public continuing education establishments (i.e. continuing education centres, practical training centres); core curricula for vocational education; and rules for employing vocational teachers.

In higher education, changes in the law were introduced on 24 September 2010 and a new law was adopted by the government on 18 March 2011. The new regulations will come into force on 1 October 2011.

3.2. Institutional framework

The management and administration of the education system, including vocational education, has a five-level structure resulting from the administrative division of the country.

⁽⁶⁾ There is no separate legislative and institutional framework for continuing vocational education and training in Poland.

Figure 8 Management and administration of the education system

National level	<p>The Minister for National Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> formulates education policy; creates a legal framework for functioning of all educational establishments, including vocational education and training; manages the national budget for education; sets out the core curricula for general and vocational education; accepts the curricula for particular subjects; approves the textbooks used in both general and vocational education; partly supervises the operation of school superintendents (<i>kurators</i>). 	
	<p>The Board of National Education (consultative body)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cooperates with the Ministry of National Education in formulating educational policy to higher education; gives opinions on the proposed direction of changes in education; consults the proposals of legislative acts; provides suggestions on reforms in education. 	<p>Institutions of social dialogue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consults the proposals of legislative acts; gives opinions on issues concerning vocational education, training for unemployed people, and programmes promoting employment.
Regional level	<p>The regional authorities represented by school superintendent (<i>kurator</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> supervise implementation of national policy; provide pedagogical supervision for educational establishments in the region; run schools and educational establishments of regional significance, including schools for medical staff and social workers, public establishments for teacher training and development, as well as teachers' libraries. 	
	<p>Institutions of social dialogue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> give opinions on VET in the region consult questions of educational organisation and financing. 	
District level	<p>Institutions of social dialogue: district employment boards (consultative bodies)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> gives opinions on VET in the district. 	
	<p>The district authorities (<i>powiaty</i>) represented by their heads (<i>starosta</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are in charge of managing upper secondary education (including vocational education); run post-secondary schools and special schools (primary and secondary), sports schools and schools of sports mastery; manage practical and continuing education centres; are in charge of psychological and pedagogical assistance centres. 	
Local level	<p>Local self-governments (<i>gmina</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are in charge of managing lower secondary education; run primary schools; are in charge of pre-school education (kindergartens). 	
School level	<p>The headmaster of a school or educational establishment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> chooses curricula; provides pedagogical supervision; hires and dismisses personnel; manages the school budget. 	
<p>Source: ReferNet Poland (2010).</p>		

3.2.1. National level

Education policy is formulated and implemented centrally by the Ministry of National Education. The Minister for National Education, by means of regulations and detailed arrangements, creates a legal framework for the functioning of all educational establishments, including vocational education and training. The Minister for National Education cooperates with Ministers from other branches supervising vocational schools: the Minister for Culture and National Heritage (artistic schools), the Minister for Agriculture (agricultural schools), and the Minister for Environment (forestry schools).

Social partner involvement in vocational education is done through the main institutional platform, the Tripartite Commission on Socioeconomic Issues (*Komisja Trojstronna ds. Społeczno-Gospodarczych*). This Commission is composed of representatives of public administration, employers, the largest trade unions and some sectoral unions. All these organisations function in two capacities in vocational education: both as consultative bodies and as initiators of legal measures.

The Central Employment Board (*Naczelna Rada Zatrudnienia*) is another national body for social dialogue. It fulfils an advisory role to the Minister for Labour and comprises public administration representatives, employers' organisations, trade unions and local government representatives. It is consulted on issues related to training for unemployed people, programmes promoting employment, planning, and use of the labour fund (State purpose fund).

3.2.2. Regional level

The regional authorities (*województwa*) mainly play a coordinating role: they supervise the implementation of national policy and provide pedagogical supervision. The representative of the education authority at this level is a school superintendent (*kurator*), who is appointed by the head of the regional government (*wojewoda*). The regional authorities also run schools and educational establishments of regional significance, including schools for medical staff and social workers, public establishments for teacher training and development, and teachers' libraries. Regional commissions for social dialogue consist of regional administration representatives, employers' organisations, trade unions and regional government representatives. Sometimes district government representatives are invited to meetings. The commissions meet at least once every three months and discuss social and economic matters crucial for the region, including questions of education organisation and financing.

3.2.3. District level

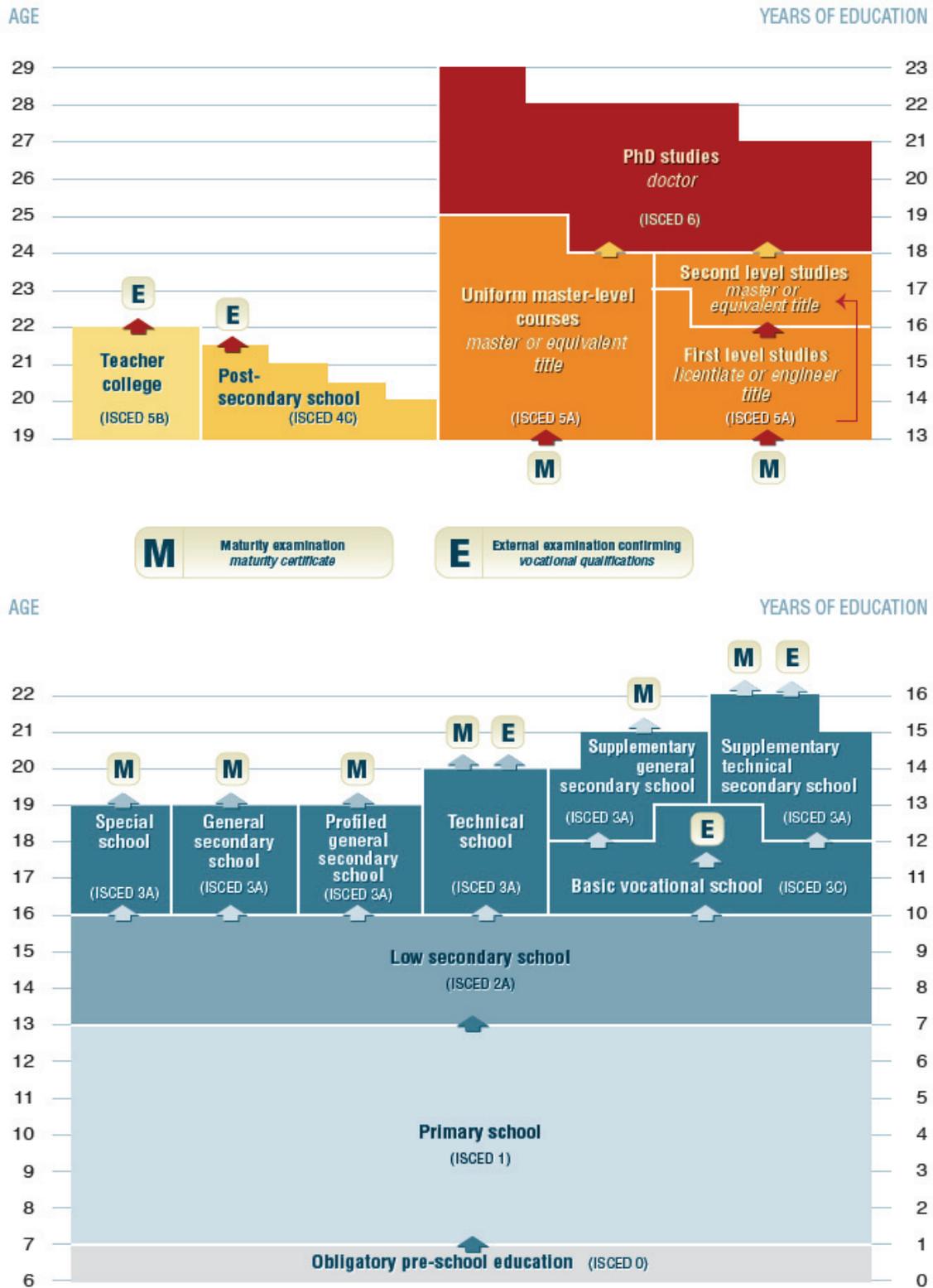
The district authorities (*powiaty*) and their heads (*starosta*) are in charge of upper secondary education (including vocational education), post-secondary schools and special schools (primary and secondary), sports schools and schools of sports mastery, practical and continuing education centres, psychological and pedagogical centres. At regional and district levels, regional and district employment boards take actions to achieve full employment in the region, evaluate the management of the labour fund, submit applications, and give opinions on VET.

3.2.4. Local level

In Poland, the local level is the municipality (*gmina*). All kindergartens, primary schools and lower secondary schools (*gymnasium*) are run by local governments.

In enterprises, social partner involvement in vocational education is mostly through either the organisation of practical training or of work placements for vocational education students, based on agreements concluded between employers and particular schools. They are also involved in organising vocational training under the apprenticeship scheme (Chapter 5).

Figure 9 The education system in Poland



Source: ReferNet Poland (2010).

CHAPTER 4

Initial vocational education and training

4.1. Background

Compulsory education obligation in Poland is fulfilled by attending primary and lower secondary schools. Compulsory education starts at the beginning of the school year, in the calendar year in which the student becomes seven years old ⁽⁷⁾ and continues until graduation from a lower secondary school (usually at the age of 16).

Obligatory schooling (imposed by the Constitution) lasts until the person is 18 years old. This can be achieved by attending one of several options: a public or non-public upper secondary school; extracurricular classes in accredited public and non-public institutions; classes carried out as a part of educational activities provided by legal and natural persons; or vocational training with an employer (subject to separate regulations).

No official definition of initial vocational education and training (IVET) is used in Poland and the term is rarely used, restricted to European publications seeking comparison of the systems. In such cases IVET is understood as vocational education carried out in schools, usually before entering working life.

Upper secondary general education or vocational education in schools starts at the age of 16. It lasts between two and six years depending on the type of school. Most vocational students complete their studies at the age of 19 or 20.

The following types of schools provide initial vocational education at upper secondary level:

- (a) four-year technical secondary school (*technikum*);
- (b) three-year supplementary technical secondary school, existing only until the end of 2012 (*technikum uzupełniające*);
- (c) two/three-year basic vocational school (*zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa*);
- (d) three-year special needs school, preparing mentally or physically handicapped students for work (*szkoła specjalna*).

Vocational education is also provided in post-secondary schools:

- (a) two and a half year post-secondary school (*szkoła policealna*);

⁽⁷⁾ Additionally, since 2004/05 school year children aged six are obliged to attend '0 grade', preparing for primary education.

Until the end of obligatory schooling, vocational training can also be followed outside the school system in the form of an apprenticeship.

Different types of schools pursue different educational objectives. General secondary schools (*licea ogólnokształcące*) prepare students for a *matura* exam and to pursue their education in higher-education institutions. Other upper secondary schools are focused on providing vocational qualifications; their curricula are different and their educational process includes practical training in the workplace.

Whether in secondary technical schools, basic vocational schools or post-secondary schools, vocational education is provided for occupations included in the classification of occupations for VET (MENiS, 2007), which is consistent with the classification developed for labour market needs (MPiPS, 2010b). In the 2009/10 school year, there were 5 771 upper secondary vocational schools for youths including 427 special needs schools (*szkola specjalna*).

After years where general education has been the more popular, a significant increase in interest in VET has been noted since the school year 2006/07. This can be explained by changes on the labour market connected with the Polish accession to the EU and gradual opening of the European labour markets to Polish employees. External demand for qualified workers and their migration to other Member States prompted the increase in national demand for workers having certified qualifications in particular occupations.

4.2. Upper secondary level vocational education

4.2.1. Schools

The basic criterion for admittance to all schools at upper secondary level is completion of the lower secondary school (*gimnazjum*).

Technical secondary schools (*technikum*) enable the acquisition of both an upper secondary school-leaving certificate (*matura*) and vocational qualifications to the level of technician. Students start their education in technical secondary schools at the age of 16 and finish in four years. The most popular qualifications offered by technical secondary schools are accountant, mechanic, electronics specialist, and salesperson.

In the school year 2009/10 there were 559 530 students in both types of school, including 220 969 girls. After completion of technical secondary school, graduates may take an external exam, based on national examination standards, confirming their vocational qualifications. .

Supplementary technical secondary school (*technikum uzupełniające*) for basic vocational school leavers is a three-year secondary vocational school with a follow-up curriculum to that of the basic vocational school. Its goal is to bring the students' education up to the intermediate level and prepare them for the examination confirming their vocational qualifications and for the *matura* exam. At completion, students are awarded a *technikum* certificate, provided they have received no fail marks at the end of the final year.

The only vocational school at upper secondary level that awards a skilled worker vocational qualification but does not lead to a *matura* is the basic vocational school (*zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa*). This type of school starts at the age of 16 and lasts two or three years, depending on qualifications. The duration of education for particular qualifications is indicated in the classification of occupations for VET (MENiS, 2007). The most popular qualifications in the two-year schools are shop-assistant, cook and gardener; in three-year schools they are automobile mechanic, hairdresser and baker.

In the 2009/10 school year, basic vocational schools were educating 240 699 students.

Three-year special needs schools (*szkoła specjalna*), offering preparation for a given job, are foreseen mostly for mentally disabled students and for those with complex disabilities who completed lower secondary school. Curricula and organisation of education are adapted to the needs and capabilities of these students. At completion, they receive certificates confirming their preparedness to perform specific work, but not full vocational qualifications.

The proportions of general and vocational education (including theoretical and practical vocational subjects) are specified in general teaching plans relevant for the given type of school and prepared by the Ministry of Education. In technical secondary schools, vocational subjects consume 36% of all hours envisaged for learning in the entire cycle of education. In basic vocational schools, vocational subjects amount to 53% of all hours envisaged for education.

Practical vocational training is organised in schools and at the workplace. It aims to provide the vocational skills necessary for a particular occupation and may take place in school workshops and laboratories, school farms, continuing education centres or practical training centres. In basic vocational schools, practical training corresponds to 50% of all hours envisaged for vocational subjects. In technical secondary schools this proportion varies from 20 to 25%.

There are work placements in all types of VET, lasting four weeks and occurring once or twice in the education cycle. They are meant to deepen students' vocational knowledge and skills and to teach them how to apply such knowledge and skills in real work conditions.

4.2.2. Other youth programmes and alternative pathways

Apprenticeship training

Apprenticeship training is regarded as a special type of VET in Polish education. The main qualification for participating in this type of training is completion of lower secondary school (*gimnazjum*) and being at least 16 years of age. However, in special situations, the law allows for some exceptions.

Apprenticeship training is organised in small and medium-sized enterprises, mainly in handicrafts. Employers are usually members of a guild or a chamber of handicrafts, with a particular chamber of handicrafts or appointed guild supervising apprenticeship training. According to data provided by the Polish association of crafts (*Związek Rzemiosła Polskiego*), in the 2009/10 school year, 90 669 juvenile workers took part in apprenticeship training in 26 662 enterprises. Apprenticeship in crafts is offered in 117 occupations; the most common occupations are hairdresser, carpenter, baker and confectioner.

Apprenticeship can take either of two forms:

- (a) apprenticeship as occupational training (ISCED 3) leading to qualification as an apprentice or a skilled worker. This comprises practical vocational training at the employer's organisation and theoretical training. Trainees/students (under the age of 18) can choose theoretical training in the school system or in non-formal education contexts. Most trainees/students (88%) complete their theoretical education in basic vocational schools. Training lasts between 24 and 36 months and finishes with the apprentice exam organised by the chamber of crafts;
- (b) apprenticeship as training to perform a specific job (ISCED 2) and covering only selected work activities. This is limited to a small group who, for different reasons, did not complete lower secondary school and are at least 15 years of age. The employer defines curriculum in line with existing core curricula. Training takes three to six months. After passing a test, the trainee receives a certificate stating acquisition of particular skills in a particular occupation. The certificate is issued by the enterprise where the training took place and is recognised by the education system. After finishing training, the young workers (between 16 and 18 years old) can continue the apprenticeship, leading to a qualification (the duration of the first is included into the duration of the latter).

The Ordinance of the Minister for Labour and Social Policy of 7 April 2009 on vocational preparation of adults permits participation in similar apprenticeships by adults. However, due to their earlier work experience, the programmes for

adults are shorter: occupational training lasts 12 to 18 months and training aimed at preparation for performing a specific job 3 to 6 months.

Voluntary labour corps (Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy)

The Voluntary Labour Corps was established in recognition that young people from specific backgrounds are disadvantaged on the labour market. The corps is a State organisation (under the Ministry of Labour) with 58 education centres across the country. The centres provide a range of training, further training and employment opportunities and work in cooperation with district governments.

Voluntary labour corps are targeted at youths between 15 and 18 years old, who have completed primary school and who are experiencing problems: going through difficult economic, family or personal circumstances; experiencing difficulties at school or school dropouts; coming from dysfunctional, broken or jobless families; or from orphanages. Youths who face especially difficult circumstances are guaranteed free accommodation and board.

During two or three years these young people have the opportunity to complete their education, work and gain vocational qualifications. In the 2006/07 school year 33 575 students participated in education and training organised by voluntary labour corps ⁽⁸⁾.

4.3. Post-secondary (non-tertiary) level vocational education

In the 2009/10 school year there were 3 210 post-secondary schools educating 284 836 people. Entry criteria are completion of upper secondary school or an upper secondary school-leaving certificate (*matura*). Students usually start their education in post-secondary schools aged 19 to 21 years, but every sixth student is over 25. Education in post-secondary schools takes up to two and a half years.

Post-secondary graduates acquire the qualification of technician or skilled worker, which they may confirm through an external vocational exam. The vocational profiles these types of schools offer include technical sciences, economics and commerce, administration, general services, medical and social services, agriculture, culture and arts. Every third student graduates in IT, economics or commerce.

⁽⁸⁾ Source: Voluntary labour corps main headquarters in Warsaw (2008).

4.4. Tertiary level vocational education

Students typically start tertiary education aged 19 (after upper-secondary general schools and profiled *lycea*), 20 (after technical secondary schools) or 21-22 (after supplementary technical secondary schools). Entry criteria to tertiary education are passing the matriculation exam (a final general education exam at the end of an upper secondary school) and obtaining upper secondary school-leaving certificate (*matura*). Tertiary education providers can decide on other admittance criteria, which may include entrance exams, interviews or the grades achieved at the end of upper-secondary school.

In 2005 important changes were introduced in higher education in a new legislative Act (of 27 July 2005), the 'Law on Higher Education'. The act legitimised the three-level system of studies, and the higher education institutions, according to their competence, academic or vocational. Both types are entitled to provide first and second level studies as well as uniform master studies; however, vocational schools cannot offer doctoral studies. First level studies – four-year engineer programmes or three-year *licencjat* programmes – are focused on preparing graduates for a particular profession. The essential element of these programmes is 15 weeks of practical training. The graduates from *licencjat* and engineer studies are entitled to continue education at supplementary two or two-and-a-half-year master's courses.

Teacher training also takes place at tertiary level and can be considered as vocational.

Graduates from foreign language teacher colleges obtain qualifications entitling them to teach a foreign language in primary, lower and upper secondary schools. Other teacher colleges prepare teachers for kindergartens, primary schools and other educational establishments, over three years.

In the 2008/09 school year, 21 300 people acquired qualifications in 108 teacher colleges.

CHAPTER 5

Continuing vocational education and training for adults

5.1. Background

Polish continuing education takes place either in schools for adults or out of school schemes targeted to people who, after compulsory education, want to gain or supplement their knowledge and skills, to gain access to qualifications. The term 'continuing education' is used not only for vocational education and training but also for complementing adult general education at a higher level than that reached during compulsory education. Continuing education can be formal when it takes place in the schools and institutions supervised by the Ministry of National Education or non-formal when being offered by other providers.

The development strategy to 2010 for continuing education provides the definition of non-formal education as 'purposely organised educational activity that takes place outside the formal school system, undertaken individually or as organised group action, enabling a group of participants achievement of assumed educational goals' (MENiS, 2003).

As the responsibility for continuing education and training is divided between the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (Chapter 3) the legal basis is established in various documents. These are mainly the Education System Act of 7 September 1991, with further amendments, and the Act of 20 April 2004 on promoting employment and labour market institutions, which regulates training and vocational guidance and counselling for the unemployed and job-seekers.

The principles and conditions of adult vocational qualification and general education development are also defined in regulations issued by both ministries, especially in the Ordinance of 12 October 1993 and the amendment in the Act of 2 February 1996. Additionally, the Labour Code (*Kodeks pracy*) specifies certain obligations and rights of employers and employees regarding staff qualification development (Act of 5 January 2011 amending the Labour Code Act).

The development strategy to 2010 for continuing education (MENiS, 2003), accepted by the Council of Ministers on 8 July 2003, specifies the strategic objective of continuing education development and lifelong learning: 'giving support and direction to personal development, stimulating human

innovativeness and creativity'. Implementation of the objective will help 'increase competitiveness, improve work organisation and build foundations for the knowledge-based society'.

To attain this strategic objective, six priorities corresponding to the European area of lifelong learning have been identified:

- (a) broader access to continuing education;
- (b) improved quality of continuing education;
- (c) collaboration and partnership;
- (d) increased investment in human resources;
- (e) developing awareness of the role of continuing education;
- (f) access to reliable information, advisory services and counselling.

5.2. Formal continuing vocational education and training

5.2.1. Major characteristics

Continuing education can be carried out on daily basis as extramural or distance learning in various types of schools for adults and other institutions, public and private. These use the curriculum statutorily defined for a given level of education and leading to qualifications and certificates defined by the Ministry of National Education in relevant legal regulations. Formal continuing education in public establishments is free of charge.

Providers

Article 68a of the Education System Act (1991) states that continuing education is organised and carried out by:

(a) Schools for adults

Adult education is provided in schools of all types and at levels ISCED 2-4, as per the provisions of the Education System Act of 1991. Schools for adults are meant for people who, in the time and conditions prescribed for the education of children and youth, did not reach the target education level. Such people have the option to complete general education, and gain or acquire new vocational qualifications. Adults can choose to attend classroom courses, distance learning or prepare themselves for final exams.

(b) Institutions of continuing education, practical training centres and further training centres

The statutory duty of these institutions is to organise and provide continuing education (according to nationally developed core curricula) on a daily basis,

as distance learning or support self-preparation for final exams. There are 136 continuing education centres (*centrum kształcenia ustawicznego*), 137 practical training centres (*centrum kształcenia praktycznego*) and 24 further training centres (*zakład doskonalenia zawodowego*) across the country.

- (c) Higher education institutions, units of the Polish Academy of Science (*Polska Akademia Nauka*) and research institutes

Higher education institutions, units of the Polish Academy of Science and research institutes also provide tertiary-level graduates with post-diploma studies aimed at completing or upgrading adults' qualifications and knowledge necessary to perform a given occupation (e.g. pedagogical studies, managerial studies, medical studies), to acquire qualifications in a profession related to their own or for doctoral studies.

- (d) The association of Polish crafts

Apprenticeship training is also available to adults who want qualification as an apprentice, skilled worker or a master.

Qualifications and certificates

A student at primary, lower secondary or upper secondary level of education, who completed a specific level, receives a certificate which has the status of a State certificate and a diploma confirming vocational qualifications. The graduate of the upper secondary school can obtain an upper secondary school-leaving certificate (*matura*).

Representatives of chambers of crafts take examinations for the titles of apprentice and master craftsman. The chamber of crafts issues the relevant certificate following success in an apprentice or master examination.

Distance learning

The model of open, or distance, learning is not very common. To make this form of education possible, in June 2005 the Ministry of National Education and Sport (MENiS, 2005a) suggested a concept referring to a model which includes formal, informal and non-formal education. The Polish model of distance learning is being implemented by the national centre for supporting vocational and continuing education as part of the project 'the model of implementation and dissemination of distance learning in lifelong learning' ⁽⁹⁾ financed from the European Social Fund.

⁽⁹⁾ <http://www.koweziu.edu.pl/index.php?id=projekty&n=5>.

5.2.2. Statistical data

The participation of adults in continuing education (both formal and non-formal) is relatively low in Poland compared to other Member States. According to Eurostat data in 2008 it covered 4.7% of population in the 24 to 65 age group, well below the EU average of 9.5%.

Statistical data prepared by the National Statistical Office (*Główny Urząd Statystyczny*, GUS) from 2006 on participation in formal education by educational attainment and gender show that the group with the highest participation rate is women (57.1%) of which 59.4% had higher education. The figure for men in formal education with higher education was 52.8%. The data also show that employed people are more likely to participate in formal education and that almost half of those in formal education (49%) were not above 30 years of age. The groups that face problems in access to continuing education are the disabled, people aged 45+, and women coming back to the labour market after maternity leave. For example, in 2006, people in the age group 45+/50+ represented only 8% of all participants in continuing education.

5.3. Non-formal continuing vocational education and training

5.3.1. Major characteristics

The development strategy for continuing education to 2010 (MENiS, 2003) which was accepted by the Council of Ministers on 8 July 2003 defines non-formal education as 'purposely organised educational activity that takes place outside the formal school system, undertaken individually or as organised group action, enabling a group of participants achievement of assumed educational goals'.

Non-formal education can take the form of training, workshops, conferences, seminars, correspondence courses or e-learning courses. It is not administered centrally by one single body so it is difficult to indicate its general objectives or priorities. Mostly it responds to current trends, general continuing vocational training policy and labour-market needs.

Admission requirements are defined by the education providers and usually depend on the aims of training.

Non-formal education is usually funded by participants. The two exceptions are training financed by the European Social Fund or training for unemployed people financed by the labour fund. Resources for non-formal continuing education mainly come from the State budget, employers, the labour fund, individual own budgets and structural funds.

Providers

Non-formal education and training can be organised by:

- (a) public education institutions (continuing education centres, practical training centres, vocational upgrading and further education centres) providing training in short forms and various vocational and qualifications courses;
- (b) upgrading and further education centres of branch associations;
- (c) higher education institutions, units of the Polish Academy of Science, research institutes, providing training, seminars, workshops, etc.;
- (d) labour-market institutions, including voluntary labour corps;
- (e) private training companies;
- (f) enterprises (employers);
- (g) associations, foundations and other corporate bodies and individuals.

Validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning

There is no system for validating and recognising qualifications/skills and competences acquired in non-formal education in Poland. There are separate solutions in different branches: external examinations by territorial examination boards allow adults to receive the certificate of primary school lower (*gimnazjum*) or upper-secondary general school (*liceum ogólnokształcące*) without actually attending the school. However, external examinations confirming vocational qualifications are foreseen only for the graduates of particular vocational schools.

According to the planned new reform of vocational education, connected to the work on the national qualification system, the vocational system examination will be unified regardless of learning forms, school or non-school (Chapter 2).

5.3.2. Statistical data

Statistical data on participation in non-formal education by educational attainment and working status show similar trends to data on participation in formal continuing education. The 2006 data, from the National Statistical Office (GUS), indicate that the highest participation rate can be noted among employed people with higher education. It also shows that women undertake such activities more often than men (almost 52% of women compared to about 48% of men) and non-formal education is more common in cities (78%) than in rural areas. The latter may result from the limited offer of non-formal education in rural areas and also from the lower educational attainment of inhabitants.

5.4. Measures for job-seekers and those vulnerable to labour market exclusion

According to the Act of 20 April 2004 on promoting employment and labour-market institutions, some institutions, such as district labour offices, organise training for the unemployed, those threatened with unemployment, youths giving up education, school leavers and disabled people. The training is aimed at increasing the employability of participants through the upgrading of vocational qualifications or requalification. Training is financed from the labour fund, a special-purpose fund, administered by the minister competent for labour issues. A labour office decides on the form of training, taking into consideration the needs of the labour market and the unemployed. Such training may last up to 12 months, and up to 24 months in the case of people with no vocational qualifications.

Various incentives are provided to job-seekers. For example, unemployed persons who are registered with the labour office may receive partial reimbursement of examination costs, costs for licence or postgraduate studies. Unemployed persons under 25 without vocational qualifications and from families entitled to social welfare benefits can receive a grant to continue education. In addition, a labour office may offer work placements or vocational training to people under 25.

Most recent data are from 2007, when the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy conducted an in-depth analysis of training programmes and other services aimed at improving qualifications and offered by labour offices in the period 2000-06. In 2006, over PLN 186 million were allocated from the labour fund to financing of training programmes, i.e. over PLN 1 300 per trainee. This type of expenditure does not exceed 10% of the aggregate funds earmarked for active forms of combating unemployment. In this regard, Poland considerably lags behind other Member States where training expenditure accounts for almost one third of the total public allocation for such actions. Training for the unemployed and job-seekers was provided by nearly 8 500 training institutions operating on the free market for training services. The national action plan for employment 2009-11, prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MPiPS, 2010c), identified activities to promote employment. Currently, the greatest challenge is to increase economic activity, with the economic slowdown being the most serious threat. Other challenges include the demographic changes taking place in Polish society. The development of continuing training is the top priority. Professional insertion activities should be aimed at equalising the opportunities of these threatened with unemployment or social exclusion, such as those aged +50, the

young, residents of rural areas, the disabled, and foreign nationals. These types of activity envisage the promotion of social economy, development of centres and clubs promoting social integration and expanding their operational scope (MPiPS, 2010c).

CHAPTER 6

Teachers and trainers

6.1. Types of teachers and trainers

Teachers and academic teachers, distinguished in the legislation as separate categories, work within the education system and provide both initial and continuing education. Teachers work in institutions which provide training below the higher education level, and academic teachers in higher education institutions.

Teachers whose primary responsibility is related to teaching in a classroom include:

- (a) general subject teachers or college teachers (if working in colleges, which are not recognised as higher education institutions (ISCED 4);
- (b) theoretical vocational subject teachers;
- (c) practical vocational training teachers.

There are also four categories of teacher performing the role of learning facilitator:

- (a) teachers-pedagogues who provide educational support to students;
- (b) teachers-psychologists who provide psychological support to students, teachers and parents;
- (c) teachers-methodological advisers who provide support to teachers and school teaching councils;
- (d) teachers-consultants who develop teaching materials, design and deliver in-service training courses for teachers and education managers, etc.

Teachers may also act, either as primary or additional role, as advisers and consultants.

Academic teachers are divided into four categories according to their responsibilities: research and teaching staff, teaching staff, research staff, and qualified librarians, scientific documentation and information staff. However, only the first two categories are involved in teaching.

Trainers are not distinguished as a distinct occupational category. Trainers may include:

- (a) practical vocational training instructors who, as defined in the legislation, are employees, employers or private farm owners providing practical vocational training as part of IVET and CVET at the workplace or in a farm;

- (b) trainers-specialists who, while not defined in the legislation, may include various groups of practitioners providing training as their primary or additional activity, mainly as part of CVET outside the education system.

6.1.1. Types of teachers and trainers in initial vocational education

Teachers

There are general-subject teachers, theoretical vocational subject teachers and practical vocational training teachers. These categories work in vocational secondary and post-secondary schools for young people, public and accredited non-public centres of continuing education, and voluntary labour corps.

Practical vocational training teachers work in practical training centres. Theoretical vocational subject teachers also work in practical training centres and in retraining and further training centres.

College teachers work in colleges of social work and in teacher training colleges (not recognised as higher education in the national legislation).

Teachers-pedagogues and teachers-psychologists work in VET secondary schools for young people.

Academic teachers

Research and teaching staff and teaching staff work in higher education institutions.

Trainers

Practical vocational training instructors work in enterprises and privately owned farms; trainers-specialists work in enterprises and accredited commercial providers. On a limited basis they both work in training institutions within the education system.

6.1.2. Types of teachers and trainers in continuing vocational education

Teachers

General-subject teachers, theoretical vocational subject teachers and practical vocational training teachers work in vocational secondary and post-secondary schools for adults and continuing education centres. Theoretical vocational subject teachers and practical vocational training teachers also work in practical training centres. Only theoretical vocational subject teachers work in retraining and further training centres.

College teachers work in colleges of social work and teacher training colleges (not recognised as higher education in national legislation).

Teachers-methodological advisers and teachers-consultants work in vocational secondary and post-secondary schools for adults, continuing education centres, practical training centres and in-service teacher training institutions.

Academic teachers

Research and teaching staff and teaching staff work in higher education institutions.

Trainers

Practical vocational training instructors work in enterprises and privately owned farms; trainers-specialists work in enterprises, employers' organisations, trade unions, employment services, government bodies, research institutions, churches and other religious organisations, and commercial providers. On a limited basis they both work in training institutions within the education system.

6.2. Qualification requirements

There is no distinction between teachers, academic teachers, practical vocational training instructors and trainers-specialists working in initial and continuing vocational education. Entry requirements, pre-service and in-service arrangements for a given category of practitioners in continuing education are the same as for those working in initial education.

Teachers must have a specific level of subject/occupational qualification, depending on the level and/or type of training to be provided, and a pedagogical qualification.

Academic teachers are not required to hold a pedagogical qualification, and there are no general qualification requirements applicable to all academic teachers. Additional requirements may be laid down in the statutes of individual higher education institutions.

Teachers-methodological advisers and teachers-consultants, involved only in continuing education as teacher trainers, are required to:

- (a) hold a Master's degree and a pedagogical qualification;
- (b) have obtained the professional promotion grade of appointed teacher or chartered teacher (the third and fourth grade, respectively, in the four-grade promotion system);

(c) have at least five years' experience of teaching.

Prospective advisers and consultants first complete the pre-service training necessary to become teachers, following one of the training paths outlined above, and take on their roles only in the course of their professional career. Although no specific training is required, many prospective advisers and consultants take training courses for teachers working with adult learners. In-service training for advisers and consultants is organised in the same way as for other teachers, but there are also courses specifically for this group.

Practical vocational training instructors must hold specific occupational qualifications, not dependent on the level of training provided, and a pedagogical qualification.

Trainers-specialists are only required by the legislation to have occupational qualifications appropriate to the type of training provided. Specific requirements are laid down by individual VET providers.

6.2.1. Pre-service

Pre-service varies according to the type of teachers and the vocational education provided by the education providers:

- (a) general-subject teachers (ISCED 3A and 4) and college teachers (ISCED 5B) have the following options:
 - (i) subject training and pedagogical training within a Master's degree programme (teaching specialisation track) in a higher education institution;
 - (ii) subject training within a Master's degree programme and separate pedagogical training (optional programme followed in parallel to the degree programme or non-degree postgraduate programme undertaken either in the final years or after the completion of the degree programme) ⁽¹⁰⁾ in a higher education institution;
 - (iii) subject training within a Master's degree programme in a higher education institution and a separate pedagogical qualification course undertaken in an in-service teacher training institution or a teacher training college either in the final years or after the completion of the degree programme;
- (b) general-subject teachers (ISCED 3C) have the same options as for point (a), plus the following:

⁽¹⁰⁾ Teaching specialisation tracks, which combine subject and pedagogical training within a degree programme, are normally not available in the type of higher education institutions which train theoretical vocational subject and practical vocational training teachers.

- (i) a Master's degree
 - (ii) a Licentiate's degree;
 - (iii) subject and pedagogical training within a training programme in a teacher training college.
- (c) theoretical vocational subject teachers (ISCED 3A, 3C and 4) have as options:
- (i) subject training within a Licentiate's or Master's degree programme and separate pedagogical training (optional programme followed in parallel to the degree programme or non-degree postgraduate programme undertaken either in the final years or after completion of the degree programme) in a higher education institution;
 - (ii) subject training within a Master's or Licentiate's degree programme in a higher education institution and a separate pedagogical qualification course undertaken in an in-service teacher training institution either in the final years or after completion of the degree programme;
- (d) practical vocational training teachers (all types of ISCED 3 and 4) need to have one of the following:
- (i) both options available to theoretical vocational subject teachers;
 - (ii) subject training at least in a secondary school and a pedagogical qualification course undertaken subsequently in an in-service teacher training institution;
- (e) teachers-pedagogues and teachers-psychologists (ISCED 3) need:
- (i) subject and pedagogical training within a Master's degree programme (teaching specialisation track) in a higher education institution.

6.2.2. In-service

There is no specific in-service training requirement for teachers. However, participation of teachers in in-service training is specified in the legislation as one of the criteria for promotion to the next professional grade together with the assessment of teacher performance and quality assurance at institutional level. In-service training takes place both within institutions where teachers work and with various external providers.

In-service training is organised mainly by an extensive network of in-service teacher training institutions, as well as by higher education institutions, various continuing education providers and teacher training colleges. Academic teachers are required by the relevant legislation to upgrade their skills but there are no specific national arrangements in this area. Detailed arrangements are laid down by individual higher education institutions. Practical vocational training instructors may attend training courses for practical vocational training teachers.

6.3. Reforms over the past 10 years

Uniform requirements (national standards) for pre-service teacher training programmes in higher education institutions were laid down by a 2003 Regulation of the Minister for Education, amended in 2004. The regulation specifies all compulsory training components, including subject, theoretical and practical pedagogical, IT and foreign language training, and their duration and contents.

On the 30 June 2006, the Ministry of National Education issued a regulation on standards for education in teacher training colleges and teacher training colleges of foreign language.

Detailed entry requirements concerning the level of subject qualifications and pedagogical qualifications for practical vocational training instructors were laid down in the Regulation on practical vocational training of 1 July 2002, as amended.

As additional quality improvement measures, regulations adopted by the Minister for Education in 2003 introduced accreditation for in-service teacher training institutions and continuing education providers. However, in both cases accreditation by the educational authorities is voluntary. In March 2009, the Ministry of National Education issued a regulation on the specific qualifications required from teachers and schools and cases in which teachers with no higher education or having completed teacher training can be employed. There were increased requirements for teachers in vocational schools. A teacher must have a higher education diploma of the first degree (a licentiate) as a minimum; only in specific cases is it possible to employ people with no teacher qualifications. All types of special schools were specified with division on students' disabilities and defined qualification requirements for teachers in these schools.

In September 2009, new legislation on teacher qualifications came into force, increasing qualification requirements for teachers in basic vocational schools who now must have at least higher vocational education and pedagogical preparation. A new curriculum reform launched mechanisms to encourage employers to engage in the process of training and vocational education. Teachers will be affected by mechanisms of the system including training through internships or work placement. Periodic training will be conducted in modern methods of vocational training and modern techniques and technology.

According to the amended Education System Act ⁽¹¹⁾, a person who is not a teacher by education but who has competences approved by the school principal

⁽¹¹⁾ Act of 19 March 2009 amending the Education System Act and certain other acts (OJ, 2009 No 56, item 458).

as satisfactory for conducting classes in a given subject may be employed, in justified situations, in a public school, with the consent of the school superintendent, or the minister competent for culture and national heritage in case of schools of arts.

A new provision in the amended Education System Act permits vocational schools to hire specialists in a given field, who do not have teaching but only topical qualifications, to conduct classes as vocational education teachers. This is an example of a matching of the education system with labour-market requirements, as classes can be conducted by employees who actually perform specific vocational tasks in their work. This allows direct development of desirable skills in the vocational education provided at schools.

CHAPTER 7

Guidance and counselling

7.1. Strategy and provision

In recent years there has been development of vocational counselling and guidance in Poland through the introduction of new regulations, development of training curricula for practitioners, improved national and European cooperation and the use of funds from community programmes.

The key priorities in developing vocational guidance include building up information resources in continuing education and promoting further development of vocational guidance and counselling services. A new form of vocational guidance — distance counselling — is also being developed.

Vocational guidance is under the remit of two departments: education (Ministry of National Education), responsible for providing guidance and counselling services to young people at school, and labour (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy), responsible for guidance and counselling services to adults.

Vocational guidance services under the remit of the department of education are provided by specialised pedagogical assistance and counselling centres as well as school career centres (*Szkolne Osrodki Kariery*). The national centre for supporting vocational and continuing education (KOWEZiU) organises courses for vocational counsellors upgrading their skills and knowledge, including vocational counselling for disadvantaged groups such as the disabled. A virtual platform for vocational counsellors ⁽¹²⁾ has been launched, enabling easy access to further training.

Input by the public employment services into vocational guidance is regulated by the Act of 20 April 2004 on promoting employment and labour market institutions. This Act specifies the tasks of the State in alleviating the consequences of unemployment, employment promotion and vocational activity. These tasks are performed by 338 district labour offices and 53 vocational information and planning centres at regional labour offices.

⁽¹²⁾ <http://www.koweziu.edu.pl/moodle>

7.2. Target groups and modes of delivery

7.2.1. Young people

Pedagogical assistance and counselling centres offer a broad range of psychological and pedagogical assistance. These include vocational guidance services to children and young people, and counselling to both teachers and parents on education and raising children and young people. These services are provided free of charge and on a voluntary basis.

Since 2003, school career centres (*Szkolne Ośrodki Kariery*) have been established in lower and upper secondary schools, occupying more than a thousand full time counsellors in 2010. These centres belong to the internal career guidance system at schools. They are designed as facilities in *gimnazjum* or upper secondary schools where students can acquire knowledge and skills (necessary for a certain job position) helpful in their future career paths, such as information about the local labour market, rules and principles governing the labour market, and labour law.

The basic task of Career Bureaux (*Biuro Karier*), set up at Polish higher education institutions since 1993, is provision of assistance to students and graduates in planning their career paths. This is done through:

- (a) helping students and graduates identify their innate abilities and advising them how to use them in a conscious way to manage their careers;
- (b) collecting information about companies operating on the labour market and employment possibilities for graduates from various types of studies;
- (c) finding job offers for future graduates through such initiatives as establishing contacts with employers in Poland and abroad;
- (d) collecting information about vocational and language courses, scholarships, postgraduate studies and studies abroad.

Voluntary labour corps are State-run labour-market institutions designed to assist young people in entering employment and to prevent social exclusion. Their youth career centres, youth labour offices and job clubs provide vocational information, guidance and counselling, not only to typical voluntary labour corps clients but to all young people seeking advice about their future careers or looking for placements or jobs. In 2004, 49 mobile vocational information centres were established within the voluntary labour corps structure to provide vocational guidance services for young people from rural areas.

7.2.2. Adults

District labour offices are targeted mainly at the unemployed and job-seekers, at different stages of their careers. Vocational guidance services include provision of advice (to individual and groups) intended to aid career or retraining choices, taking up or changing work. Information is offered about occupations and the labour market, psychological tests and medical examinations. Employers are provided with assistance in selecting of candidates for positions requiring specific mental or physical predispositions.

Vocational information and planning centres at regional labour offices offer individual and group counselling and guidance, as well as vocational evaluation. They are targeted (similarly to district labour offices) at the unemployed and those threatened with unemployment, but especially at disadvantaged groups such as the long-term unemployed, the disabled, and single mothers. They do not have job offers but work on activation of the disadvantaged groups: organising job clubs, training regarding self-presentation, and active methods of seeking jobs.

There are also non-public entities among labour-market institutions, such as employment agencies, which include vocational guidance agencies. They mainly offer assistance in making informed career and employment decisions, vocational information, and assistance to employers in selecting candidates for positions requiring specific mental and physical predispositions. They are paid for their services only by employers.

7.3. Guidance and counselling personnel

Vocational guidance services within the education and employment sector are provided by highly qualified staff: counsellors must have university education. Most have a degree in pedagogy or psychology, and many completed postgraduate studies in vocational orientation and guidance. Most vocational counsellors are women.

The department of education plans to increase the number of vocational counsellors by enabling candidates to complete relevant postgraduate studies to work in over 23 000 lower and upper secondary schools. There are also plans to prepare teachers to work as vocational counsellors through postgraduate studies; these will be graduates from master and higher vocational studies — teachers of lower and upper secondary schools who are interested in work as vocational counsellors at school — with an ultimate planned number of 3 432 people).

National statistics confirm the increasing number of vocational counsellors employed by the education and employment sectors. About one thousand counsellors were employed in education and 23 222 in employment in 2009 (Dziedzic et al., 2010). Vocational counsellors are also employed by private employment agencies. About 800 vocational counsellors are employed in public employment services, district labour offices and vocational information and planning centres.

The nature of the counsellors' work requires interdisciplinary knowledge and specific skills. Vocational counsellors should have social competences (such as specific personality traits, aptitudes and interests to support effective work with people) and should continually improve their professional qualifications by self-study and participation in postgraduate studies and other forms of training. They should also have considerable knowledge of vocational guidance, psychology, sociology, pedagogy, social policy, education and labour market issues, and public administration tasks.

CHAPTER 8

Financing: investment in human resources

The basic premise on which the system of financing education is founded is compliance with the constitutional principle. This guarantees free schooling for children and youth under 18 years of age in all types of public schools.

Regulations governing the financing of public schools, including all types of vocational schools and public educational and training institutions (such as continuing education, practical training and further training centres) were laid down in the Educational System Act of 1991 and other legislation on public finance, revenues of local government bodies (Act of 13 November 2003) and supports to regional development. The budget allocation for all educational tasks, including VET, is made in the Budget Act for a given year.

In 2007, Poland allocated 1.9% of GDP to education at ISCED 2-4 level. The EU-27 average for the same period was 2.2%. General programmes of ISCED 2-4 level got 3.2% of the amount of all public expenditures in Poland and 1.2% of all public expenditures were destined for pre-vocational education at level ISCED 2-4.

In 2009, public expenditure on education totalled PLN 53.1 billion, which accounted for 3.9% GDP. The State budget expenditure on education was PLN 35.7 billion, including PLN 33.2 billion (i.e. 93%) of the appropriation for education of the general subsidy for local governments (GUS, 2010b).

8.1. Funding for initial vocational education

Currently, most public schools and other educational institutions are administered and financed by local governments: *gminas* (municipalities), *poviats* (district) and *voivodships* (regions). Schools offering vocational education are set up and administered by *poviat* governments, while regional governments are in charge of schools having a regional significance (GUS, 2006).

Public schools administered by entities which do not belong to the public finance sector receive a subsidy for every student, from the budget of the local government. Local governments are also obliged by law to award subsidies for the cofinancing of day-to-day (statutory) activities of entities listed in relevant legislation, for example non-public schools and other educational institutions

having the status of a public school (including vocational schools), schools without the status of a public school and other non-public educational institutions (Education System Act, of 7 September 1991).

Local government bodies may commission education-related tasks to non-government organisations whose statutory activity is in education. In such a situation, the financing for non-public continuing education providers comes from public funds.

8.2. Funding for continuing vocational education and adult learning

8.2.1. Funding for publicly provided continuing vocational education

Several levels of state administration are in charge of adult continuing education. Responsible bodies at central level include the Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Finance.

Adult education institutions are either administered by public administration bodies at different administration levels or operate on the free market under laws governing business activities. Such providers offer different types of education and have the right to award certificates and qualifications at different levels.

Formal and non-formal adult continuing education can be financed from several sources: State and local government budgets; special-purpose funds (labour fund, State fund for rehabilitation of disabled persons); programmes supporting vocational activity of people with disabilities; foreign assistance funds (PHARE grants, World Bank loans, EU funds); and enterprises.

Formal (school) continuing education of adults is funded from the State budget. Tuition in public schools for adults is free, while non-public schools and non-formal education providers charge fees (e.g. an exam fee). At the same time, due to insufficient funding for public schools, expenses other than salaries can be financed by student autonomous government bodies.

Continuous professional development of teachers of all types of public schools and educational institutions has been covered starting from 2001 by having 1% of the annual teachers' pay budget reserved specifically for cofinancing university studies or teacher training, fees for qualification programmes and further training courses, and reimbursement of accommodation and travel costs. These funds can be spent with the approval of the school principal (Act of 26 January 1982, Teachers' Charter, Art. 70).

8.2.2. Funding for continuing vocational education in enterprises

Further training for employees is regulated by the provisions of the Labour Code (Act of 26 June 1974). Employers are obliged to support employee access to continuing vocational training and upgrading of vocational qualifications. Employees can be referred to a school or to out-of-school training; the initiative is with both sides, i.e. the labour office and the employee. Employees referred to a school have several rights, such as a day off or paid training leave. The employer can award additional benefits to the employee who has been referred for training, for example reimbursement of the costs of travel, accommodation, textbooks and training materials.

If employees start training without the employer's referral, they can negotiate similar arrangements with the employer, although the actual extent of support remains at the employer's discretion.

Employers can seek financial support from the Labour Fund or they can set up a training fund. The fund can serve to finance or cofinance costs of continuing vocational training of both employees and employers. Setting up the training fund is not obligatory but employers who do so must allocate to it no less than 0.25% of the budget for salaries. Partial training costs of employees threatened with dismissal are statutorily reimbursed from the Labour Fund.

Training costs supported by public resources concern mostly areas such as setting up and running a private firm or legal issues, usually not of interest for enterprises. Branch or specialist training is rarely financed from public means. EU means usually cover the cost of training in such fields as education, science, culture, health care (40%), production (22%), commerce (7%) and services (4%). The European Social Fund mainly supports human capital development, including training in ICT, e-business, clustering and development of the training infrastructure supporting human capital in Polish enterprises.

8.3. Funding training for the unemployed and others excluded from the labour market

8.3.1. The unemployed and job-seekers

Regulations concerning such issues as alleviating the adverse effects of unemployment, and employment and vocational activation of the unemployed and job-seekers are laid down in the Act of 20 April 2004 on promoting employment and labour market institutions.

Funding for all programmes and measures aimed at supporting employment and the return to active life for the jobless comes from labour fund resources.

This is a special-purpose fund, administered by the Minister for Labour; its revenues come from mandatory contributions paid by employers and other entities, such as farmers' production cooperatives, and from the State budget.

Programmes and measures for the long-term unemployed, those over 50, with no vocational qualifications or with disabilities, include a training component

Regional and *powiat* governments receive money from the labour fund to finance various measures intended to promote employment, alleviate the adverse effects of unemployment and support vocational activation in a given *voivodship* (region).

In 2010, the labour fund spent PLN 32 172 584.66 on active measures counteracting unemployment, promoting employment and softening the effects of unemployment (Warsaw Labour Office, 2011).

8.3.2. People with disabilities and socially excluded

8.3.2.1. People with disabilities

Young people with disabilities can receive education in post-lower secondary schools on similar conditions and occupations as those without. Training for the disabled, intended to provide them with possibilities to learn vocational skills, get a job and have a career, is offered as part of vocational rehabilitation (the Vocational and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with disabilities Act of 27 August 1997).

The training costs of people with disabilities are funded from the State fund for the rehabilitation of disabled persons and from the labour fund.

8.3.2.2. People disadvantaged in the labour market

Special forms of vocational activation and training targeted at socially excluded groups are financed from the labour fund, from European Social Fund projects and the State fund for the rehabilitation of disabled persons (since the disabled are also regarded as a disadvantaged group).

The Act of 13 June 2003 on social employment defines the framework to promote social employment through the centres for social integration for:

- (a) people taking part in programmes to escape homelessness;
- (b) the unemployed, out of work for over 36 months;
- (c) persons released from prison and having difficulties in social reintegration, alcohol and drug addicted who have completed psychotherapy in an addiction treatment centre, and after that were offered support in finding employment or starting business activity.

Centres for social integration offer a special form of training and work in some kind of production, trade or service activity. With active participation in a centre's work, socially excluded people can get accommodation and food and receive an integration allowance for a period of up to 11 months. The centres are financed according to their founding bodies — either from the territorial government budget or from non-governmental organisations.

ANNEX 1

Glossary

European vocational education and training definitions are not acknowledged by the Polish education community and sometimes stand in sharp contrast to their traditional connotations in general pedagogy or pedagogy of work.

Apprenticeship — *Nauka zawodu u pracodawcy*

Apprenticeship in Poland can take one of two forms: practical training at the employer's, with theoretical knowledge completed in formal basic vocational school; or in non-formal forms to acquire qualification as an apprentice or skilled worker, such as training at the employer's premises to perform a specific job, covering only selected work activities.

Continuing education — *Kształcenie ustawiczne (Unesco, Nairobi 1976)*

A set of educational processes, whether formal, non-formal or informal, which, regardless of their content, level and methods, allow improving educational attainment in school-based and other forms, as a result of which adults can improve their skills, broaden their knowledge, upgrade their vocational qualifications, learn a new occupation or change their attitudes.

Source: MENiS (2003) — a document adopted by the Council of Ministers on 8 July 2003.

General education — *Kształcenie ogólne*

Education intended to ensure an understanding of subjects or groups of subjects through courses with general orientation, not focusing on any particular specialisation.

Source: Regulation of the Council of Ministers of 6 May 2003 on the Polish classification of education.

Post-secondary non-tertiary education — *Kształcenie policealne*

Post-secondary schools prepare students for those occupations and specialities which require secondary education. Programme duration varies from occupation to occupation and is defined in the VET classification of occupations (from 1 to 2.5 years).

In the Polish system, post-secondary schooling belongs to post-*gimnazjum* education (secondary), and corresponds to ISCED level 4.

Source: Eurydice (2007).

School-based programmes — *Kształcenie szkolne*

The term refers to instruction provided in full-time, extramural or evening programmes in various types of schools, using the curriculum statutorily defined for a given level of education.

Source: BAED (survey on adult education activity) 2004.

Technical education — *Kształcenie techniczne*

Technical education can be divided into general technical education and technical vocational education. Its main goals include provision of basic technical and technological knowledge and development of skills needed for performing specific tasks of a given occupational profile.

Source: Nowacki (2004).

Tertiary education or higher education — *Kształcenie wyższe*

Tertiary education is offered by colleges (teacher training colleges, foreign language teacher training colleges, colleges of social workers, level ISCED 5B), higher education institutions (ISCED 5A and ISCED 6), and academic and research institutions (ISCED 6).

Higher education programmes include first-cycle courses (undergraduate, or first-degree), second-cycle courses (graduate, or second-degree) and long-cycle courses (directly leading to second degree).

Teacher training colleges, foreign language teacher training colleges and colleges of social workers are included in the higher education system for the purposes of international comparisons only and are not regarded as components of the tertiary system in national legislation (Education System Act of 7 September 1991).

Source: Eurydice (2007).

Training — *Szkolenie*

Training is a form of non-school instruction aimed at acquiring, supplementing or improving the vocational or generic skills and competences needed to perform a job, including the ability to seek employment.

Vocational education — *Kształcenie zawodowe*

Vocational education refers to all forms of vocational development or further education and continuing professional development. It includes all structured activities and processes leading to the acquisition of vocational competences and qualifications, including career guidance and, in particular, preparation to work in a specific occupation, in a specific sector, and at a specific position.

Source: Nowacki (2004).

ANNEX 2

Legislative references

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- 2003 Act of 13 June 2003 on social employment (OJ, 2003, No 122, item 1143).
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- 2003 Ordinance of the Minister for National Education and Sport of 20 December 2003 on accreditation for in-service teacher training institutions (OJ, 2003, No 227, item 2248).
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ANNEX 4

Main organisations and projects

Central Examination Commission
<http://www.cke.edu.pl/>

Central Statistical Office
<http://www.stat.gov.pl>

Centre for education development
<http://www.ore.edu.pl>

Centre for Human Resource Development
<http://www.crzl.gov.pl/>

EU Structural Funds in Poland
(information service of the Ministry of Development)
<http://www.funduszezstrukturalne.gov.pl/english/>

Gdańsk Institute for Market Economics
<http://www.ibngr.edu.pl>

Ministry of Economy
<http://www.mg.gov.pl>

Ministry of Economy database on modular vocational training
and vocational qualification standards
<http://www.standardyiskolenia.praca.gov.pl>

Ministry of National Education
<http://www.men.gov.pl>

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
<http://www.mipps.gov.pl>

National Agency for the Leonardo da Vinci Programme
<http://www.frse.org.pl/>

National Centre for supporting vocational and continuing education:
Information on system project
<http://pokl.koweziu.edu.pl/index.php?id=2>

Educational platform
<http://www.koweziu.edu.pl/moodle>

National Europass Centre

<http://www.europass.org.pl/> Cooperation fund Foundation
<http://www.cofund.org.pl/index.php?IDJęzyk=2>

National Rehabilitation Fund for the Disabled

<http://www.pfron.org.pl>

National System of Services for small and medium-sized enterprises

<http://ksu.parp.gov.pl>

Official promotional website of the Republic of Poland
(service under auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

<http://www.poland.gov.pl>

Polish Academy of Sciences

<http://www.english.pan.pl/>

Polish Agency for Enterprise Development

<http://www.parp.gov.pl>

Polish Crafts Association

<http://www.zrp.pl/tabid/314/language/pl/Default.aspx>

Polish National Bank

<http://www.nbp.pl>

Public Employment Services

<http://www.psz.praca.gov.pl>

Trade Unions Forum

<http://www.fzz.org.pl>

Voluntary Labour Corps

<http://www.ohp.pl/en/>

ANNEX 5

List of abbreviations

CVET	continuing vocational education and training
GDP	gross domestic product
ISCED	International standard classification of education
IVET	initial vocational education and training
PHARE	Poland and Hungary assistance for restructuring their economies
PLN	Polish zloty



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EN

Vocational education and training in **Poland**

Short description

Vocational education and training in Poland is mostly organised in schools and is known as 'vocational education'. It is undergoing major reform to improve quality and labour-market relevance, with increasing focus on improving system flexibility and responsiveness to labour-market needs. The measures taken include greater involvement of employers in curriculum design and assessment, modernisation of vocational qualification classifications, moving to a learning outcomes approach, and making it more attractive for highly qualified specialists to work in vocational schools. Vocational education is also being opened to adults, who may use it to obtain a vocational qualification. The report summarises the country's socio-economic background and planned VET reforms. It explains how VET for young people and adults is currently organised and addresses topics such as teachers and trainers, guidance and counselling, and financing.

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