

FACTS AND FIGURES

VOCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN SWITZERLAND



2014



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

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

VETPLUS.CH

THE PATH OF PROFESSIONALS.

An initiative of the Confederation,
the cantons and professional organisations

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OVERVIEW

The Swiss VPET system enables young people to enter the labour market and ensures that there are enough qualified workers and managers in the future. The VET and PET sectors are closely correlated with the labour market and are an integral part of the education system.

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

Vocational education and training (VET) provides two-thirds of young people in Switzerland with a solid foundation in a given occupation. It also forms the basis for lifelong learning and opens up a wealth of job prospects.

Dual-track approach to learning

Most VET programmes are of the dual-track variety (i.e. part-time classroom instruction at a VET school combined with a part-time apprenticeship at a host company). There are around 250 such VET programmes to choose from. The less common variety is an entirely school-based VET programme (i.e. full-time classroom instruction, no apprenticeship). Entirely school-based VET programmes are generally offered by trade schools or commercial schools.

Close correlation with the labour market

VET programmes closely match the needs of the labour market, both in terms of VPET skills and the number of available jobs. The close correlation with the labour market explains why Switzerland has one of the lowest youth unemployment rates among European countries.

Permeability

The VET and PET sectors are an integral part of the education system. Education and training begins at upper-secondary level with learners having the option of conti-

nuing through tertiary level. VET and PET are based on clearly defined curricula and national qualification procedures.

Typically, VET and PET are very flexible: learners may pursue more advanced education and training opportunities and later change the course of their working lives with relative ease. Continuing education and training (CET) options are also available at all levels.

Career prospects

The Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB) opens the way to Swiss universities of applied sciences (UAS). FVB holders who pass the university aptitude test (UAT) have the option of enrolling in a cantonal university or one of Switzerland's two federal institutes of technology (FIT). Professional education and training (PET) provides learners with specific qualifications and prepares them for highly technical and managerial positions. There are around 400 federal PET examinations as well as 52 PET college degree programmes in 8 different professional fields.

Joint mission

VPET is a joint mission pursued by the Confederation, the cantons and professional organisations.

Key VPET figures¹

New learners enrolling in VET ²	79'700
Total number of learners enrolled in VET programmes	233'200
Number of Federal VET Certificates or Federal VET Diplomas issued	64'900
Number of Federal Vocational Baccalaureates issued	13'500
Number of PET qualifications issued	25'500

¹ Federal Statistical Office (2013), (2012a), (2012b)

² Excl. canton Ticino

SWISS VPET SYSTEM

Vocational education and training (VET) is provided at upper-secondary level. Professional education and training (PET) is provided at tertiary B level. Both VET and PET use clearly defined curricula and national qualification procedures. They are also characterised by a high degree of permeability: a credit system to keep track of prior education and training makes it much easier for learners to pursue additional education and training opportunities and change the course of their working lives. A wealth of continuing education and training (CET) courses can also be found at all levels. The Swiss VPET system offers a broad selection of available training options. Courses cater to different abilities and are geared to the needs of different age groups.

Vocational education and training (VET)

VET programmes lead to recognised qualifications and pave the way for lifelong learning.

Three- or four-year VET programmes leading to a Federal VET Diploma

Provide learners with the skills needed to carry out a specific occupation and open access to tertiary-level B professional education and training (PET).

Two-year VET programmes leading to a Federal VET Certificate

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

Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB)

Further to a VET Certificate the optional FVB is available to learners who attend the FVB preparatory course, which consists of general education subjects. Generally speaking, FVB holders are entitled to enrol in any of Switzerland's universities of applied sciences (UAS) without having to take an entrance examination. FVB holders may also take the University Aptitude Test (UAT) to obtain the additional qualification needed to enrol in a cantonal university or either of Switzerland's two federal institutes of technology (ETH in Zurich or EPF in Lausanne).

Professional education and training (PET)

Professional education and training (PET) is designed to meet the needs of the labour market through a combination of solid practical skills and established theoretical expertise. It also prepares professionals for highly technical and managerial positions.

Federal PET Diploma Examination

This examination is intended for professionals with several years of professional experience who wish to improve their knowledge and skills and specialise in a given field as a follow-up to their VET programme. Successful candidates are awarded the Federal PET Diploma, which is generally a prerequisite for admittance to the Advanced Federal PET Diploma Examination.

Advanced Federal PET Diploma Examination

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

PET college degree programmes

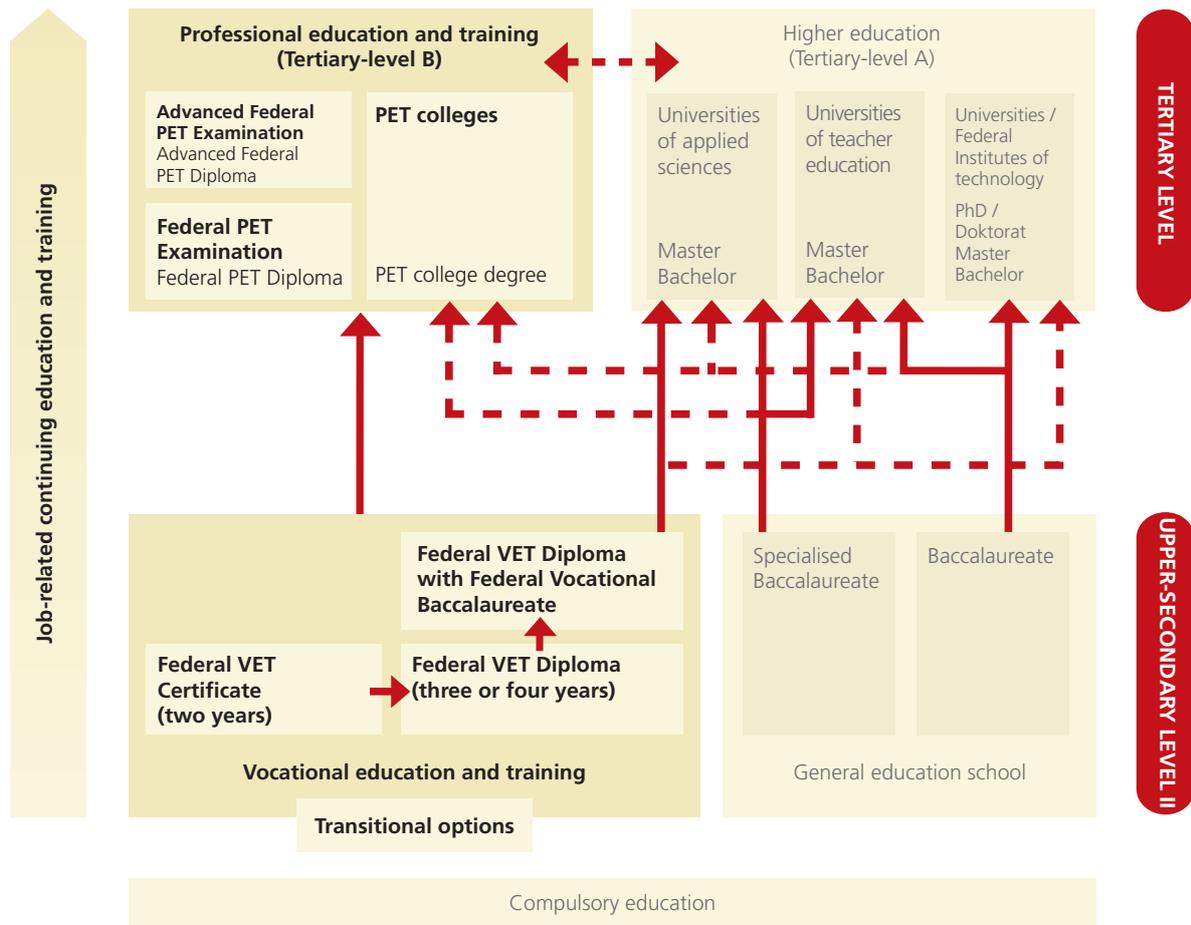
PET college degree programmes are intended for professionals holding the Federal VET Diploma or equivalent qualification who wish to improve their knowledge and skills and hold managerial positions. These degree programmes cover a broader and more general range of topics than those addressed in the two federal PET examinations described above. Successful candidates are awarded a federally recognised PET college degree.

Transitional options between lower- and upper-secondary level

Transitional options include such things as practical training and pre-apprenticeships. These options are generally designed to prepare students for admission to upper-secondary level VET programmes.

Job-related continuing education and training (CET)

A wide range of job-related CET options (i.e. non-formal courses, seminars, etc.) are available at all training levels as part of lifelong learning.



VET for adults

Adults may take remedial courses to acquire a VET qualification. The Federal Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act (SR 412.10) leaves several avenues open in this regard: these range from regulated, structured procedures for occupational categories to individual recognition procedures.

ONE MISSION, THREE PARTNERS

The provision of VET and PET is a mission shouldered by the Confederation, the cantons and Professional organisations. These three partners are jointly committed to the highest possible standard of VPET. They also strive to ensure the availability of an adequate number of apprenticeships and CET courses.

Confederation

State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)

Responsible for regulating and co-funding the VET and PET sectors.

Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET)

Mainly provides basic and continuing training to VET and PET professionals and examiners. SFIVET is also involved in research, studies, pilot schemes and the provision of services. It has three regional campuses: in Lausanne, Lugano and Zollikofen.

Confederation

Strategic management and development

- Quality assurance and further development of the Swiss VPET system
- Comparability and transparency of courses throughout Switzerland
- Enactment of around 250 VET ordinances
- Recognition of around 400 examination regulations and 40 core curricula for PET
- Recognition of training programmes for VET and PET professionals as well as for occupational, educational and career guidance counsellors
- Recognition of foreign qualifications
- Payment of one-fourth of public sector expenditure for the VPET system
- Promotion of innovation and support for specific activities in the public interest

Professional organisations

Curricula and apprenticeships

- Establishing the training content of VET programmes and PET college degree programmes
- Establishing national qualification procedures for VET programmes as well as for federal PET examinations
- Creation of apprenticeship positions
- Imparting competences at PET level
- Developing new training courses
- Organising industry courses
- Managing VPET funds

Cantons

Implementation and supervision

- Implementing the Federal Vocational and Professional Education and Training
- Supervising apprenticeships, VET schools and PET colleges
- Providing occupational, educational and career guidance services
- Providing offers which prepare young people for enrolment in VET programmes
- Issuing permits authorising host companies to take on apprentices and/or trainees
- Apprenticeship marketing
- Providing training to VET trainers in host companies

Professional organisations

Trade associations / industry organisations

Determine training content and national qualification procedures, organise VET and PET courses.

Social partners, other relevant organisations and VPET providers

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

Companies

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

Cantons

26 cantonal VPET offices

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

Occupational, educational and career guidance services

Provide information and advice to both young people and adults.

VET schools

VET schools provide classroom instruction for both dual-track (i.e. combined work and school) and entirely school-based (i.e. full-time classroom instruction, no apprenticeship) VET programmes. They also prepare learners for the Federal Vocational Baccalaureate Examination.

Swiss Conference of cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)

The cantons are generally responsible for education and training in Switzerland. National cooperation through EDK helps to consolidate cantonal authority over education.

TRAINING ARRANGEMENTS

The trademark and strength of VPET is the direct correlation with the labour market. This is reflected in various training arrangements.

Vocational education and training (VET)

Work-based training

With the dual-track approach to learning, learners attend courses at VET schools on a part-time basis. The remaining time is spent doing an apprenticeship at a host company where they are provided with the practical know-how, knowledge and skills needed for their chosen occupation. Learners also actively take part in the host company's production processes.

Host company networks: in some cases, host companies may wish to combine their strengths to offer one or more apprenticeships in a modular format.

Classroom instruction

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

Industry courses

Industry courses are meant to complement classroom instruction at VET schools and work-based training at host companies by providing learners with essential practical skills. Industry courses often take place at third-party training centres run by the industries involved.

Professional education and training (PET)

Preparation for federal PET examinations

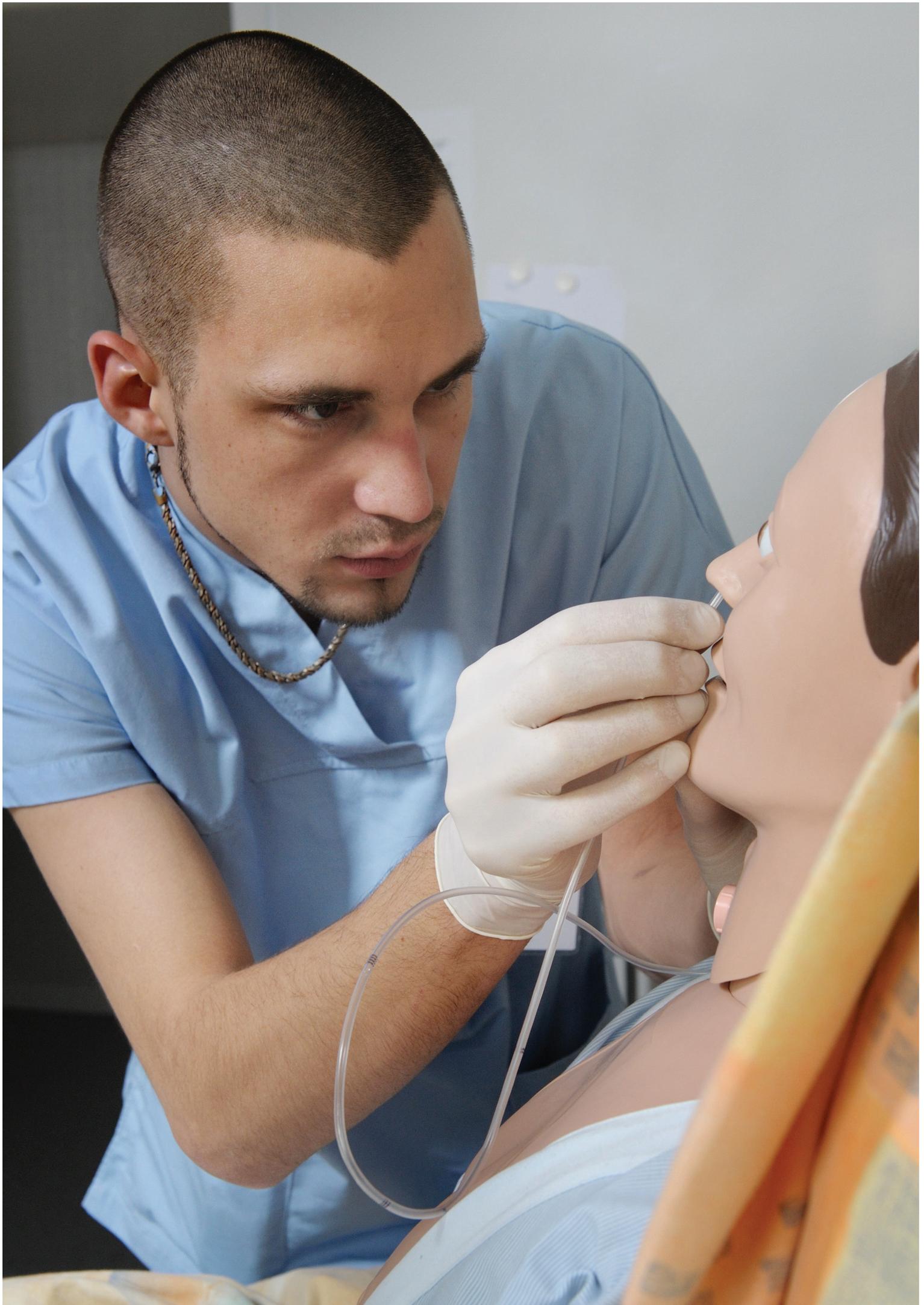
Preparation for federal PET examinations takes place alongside one's usual working activities. Although there is no requirement to do so, candidates for federal PET examinations may enrol in part-time preparatory courses, which are offered by public and private PET providers in the evenings or at weekends.

PET college degree programmes

PET college degree programmes may be attended on either a full-time or part-time basis. With full-time enrolment, 20% of the study time is devoted to a traineeship. In order to enrol part-time, students must be employed at least 50% of a standard workweek. The aim is to apply what one learns in an actual working environment.

Job-related continuing education and training (CET)

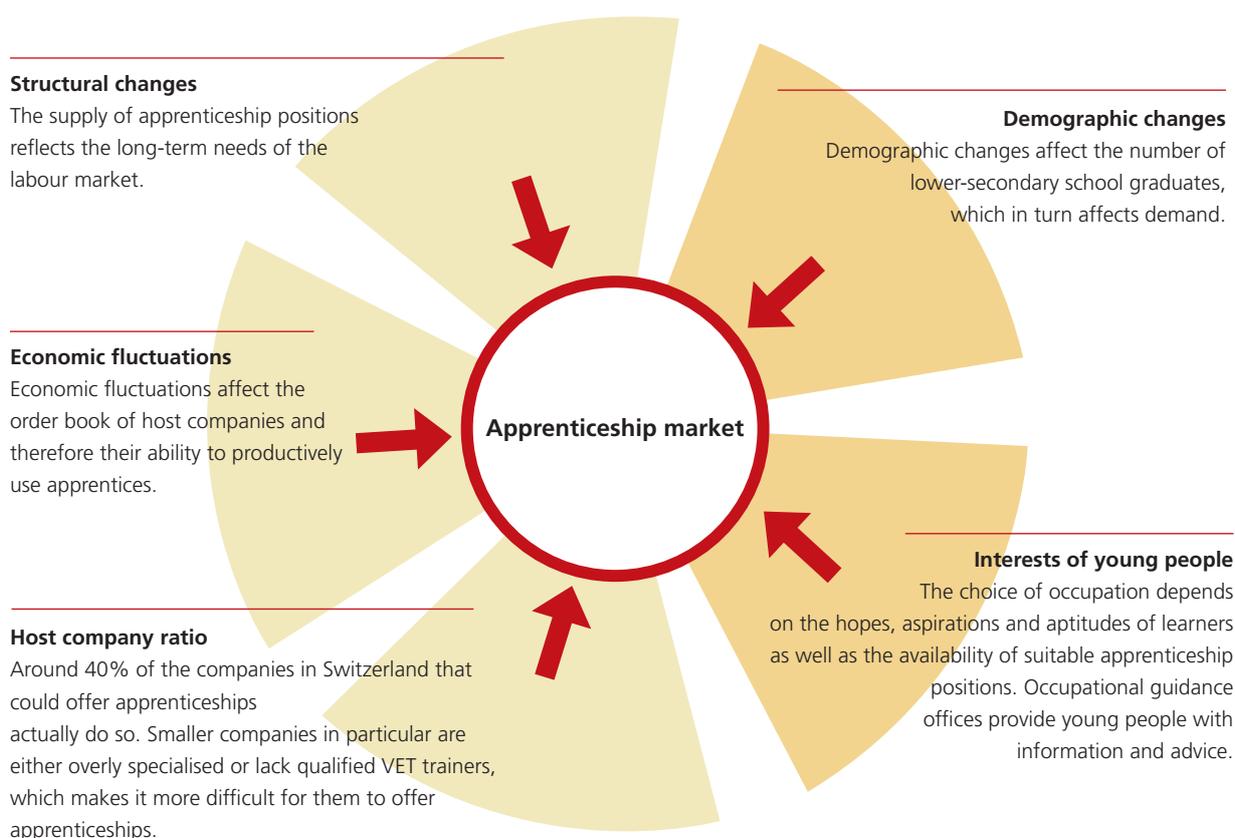
There is a wide range of job-related CET courses. These courses are tailored to suit the requirements of the given occupation or profession. CET courses are mainly organised by the private sector.





APPRENTICESHIP MARKET

There are two sides to the apprenticeship market: the supply side (host companies offering apprenticeship positions) and the demand side (young people looking for apprenticeship positions). The State plays a mediating role: it ensures the best possible general conditions for host companies, encourages the provision of apprenticeship positions and helps young people to choose an occupation.



Apprenticeship marketing – a cantonal task

Cantonal VPET offices are familiar with the conditions in their regions. They also establish and maintain contacts with local businesses. Accordingly, they are the best placed to assess the number of available apprenticeships, to take suitable measures at the right time and to offer individual support to young people in their search for an apprenticeship position. If the apprenticeship situation is strained, then the federal government may step in to offer additional financial incentives.

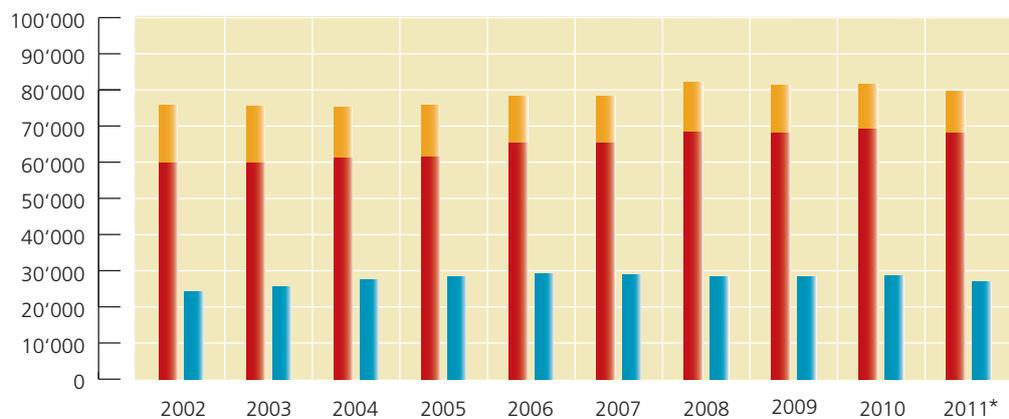
The most important apprenticeship marketing measures

- Information and advice on careers
- Apprenticeship records
- Creation of host company networks
- Provision of state-sponsored transitional options (mainly bridge-year courses)
- VET promotion agents deal directly with companies, encouraging them to create apprenticeship positions
- Placement and individual mentoring of young people who have been unable to find a suitable apprenticeship

ENTERING THE LABOUR MARKET

Around two-thirds of young people coming out of compulsory education enrol in a VET programme. Dual-track VET programmes (i.e. part-time classroom instruction at a VET school, part-time apprenticeship at a host company) are by far the most common form of vocational education and training in Switzerland. Entirely school-based VET programmes at VET schools are more popular among students in the French- and Italian-speaking regions of Switzerland than among students in the German-speaking region.

Enrolment in upper-secondary level³

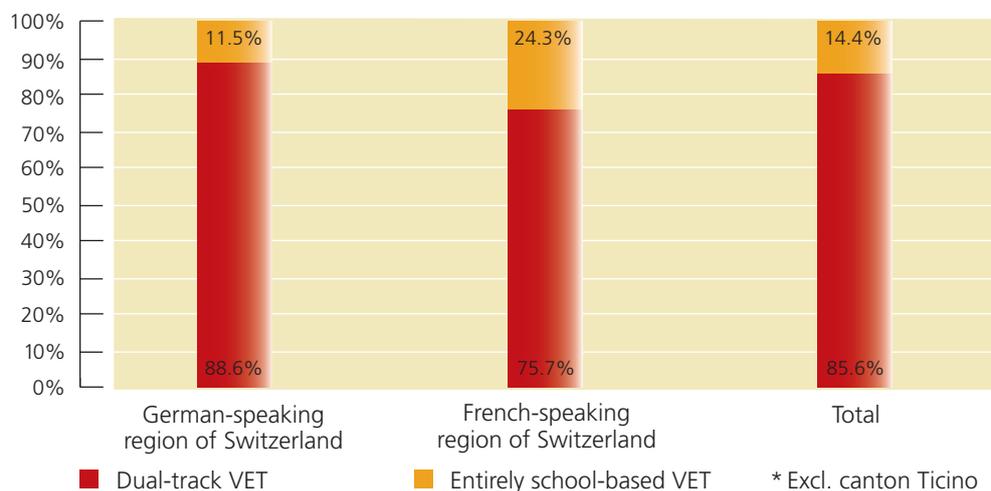


VET of which**	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011*
Dual-track VET	60,224	59,933	61,350	61,748	65,572	65,572	68,474	68,289	69,450	68,203
Entirely school-based VET	15,905	15,470	13,757	13,892	12,569	12,756	13,531	12,932	12,079	11,473
General education	24,211	25,510	27,476	28,361	29,033	28,748	28,279	28,308	28,592	26,965

* Excl. canton Ticino

** Incl. commercial and IT schools

VET by linguistic region in 2011*⁴

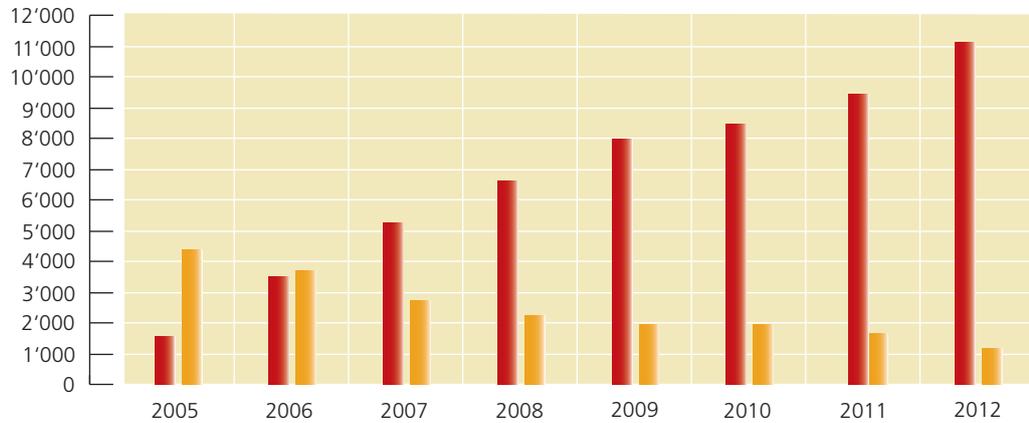


* Excl. canton Ticino

³ Federal Statistical Office (2013h)

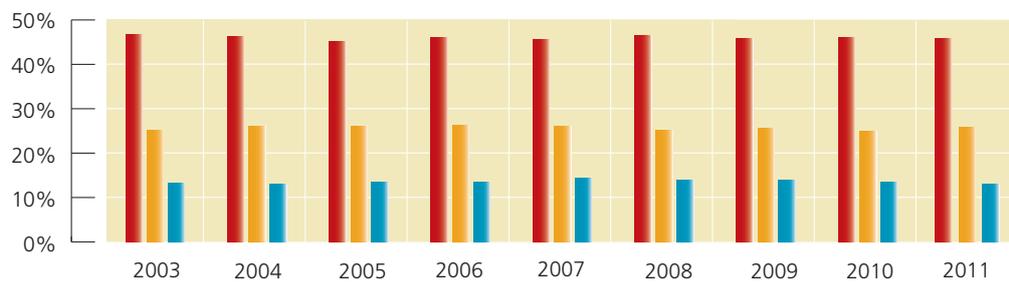
⁴ Federal Statistical Office (2013h)

Total number of apprenticeship contracts in relation to formal (i.e. leading to Federal VET Certificate) and informal two-year apprenticeships⁵



Federal VET Certificate	■	1,600	3,600	5,200	6,800	8,000	8,500	9,400	11,100
Informal two-year apprenticeship	■	4,400	3,800	2,800	2,300	2,000	2,000	1,700	1,200

Young people enrolling in upper-secondary level immediately after lower-secondary⁶



VET*	■	48.2%	47.8%	46.7%	47.6%	47.0%	47.9%	47.4%	47.6%	47.3%
General education**	■	25.9%	27.0%	27.0%	27.2%	28.9%	26.0%	26.5%	26.8%	26.7%
Transitional options***	■	13.7%	13.4%	14.0%	14.0%	14.9%	14.5%	14.4%	14.0%	13.5%
No. of pupils in final year of lower-secondary school		84,300	85,700	87,000	88,300	88,200	85,600	84,500	85,100	85,600

* Incl. informal two-year apprenticeships

** Baccalaureate schools, specialised schools

*** Transitional options include 10th school year (i.e. bridge-year courses), pre-apprenticeships and preparatory courses

Broad range of transitional options

Upon completion of compulsory education, the vast majority of lower-secondary school graduates enrol directly in upper-secondary level, entering either the VET sector (VET school) or the general education sector (i.e. baccalaureate school or specialised school). Transitional options such as a 10th school year, pre-apprenticeship, or

preparatory courses are available to lower-secondary school graduates who have been unable to enter upper-secondary level directly. Young people sometimes take advantage of the transitional period between lower-secondary and upper-secondary to do an exchange semester or learn a foreign language abroad.

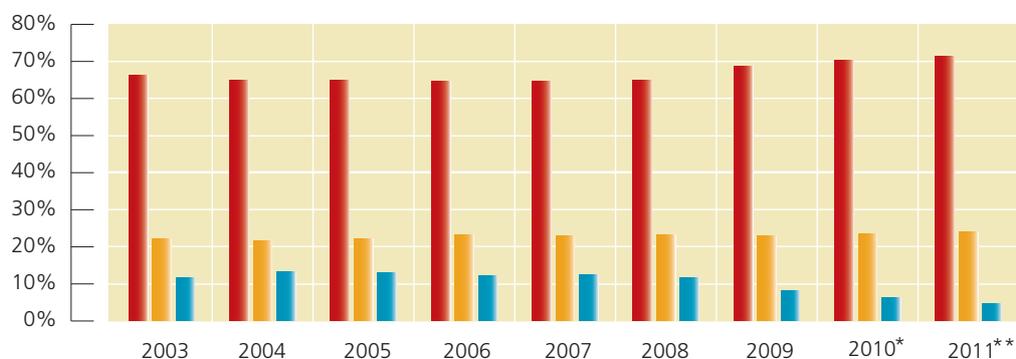
⁵ Federal Statistical Office (2013i); Federal VET Certificates have replaced informal two-year apprenticeships since 2004.

⁶ Federal Statistical Office (2013f), (2013h)

GRADUATION RATE OVER 90 PERCENT

VET qualifications increase one's job prospects on the labour market and form the basis for lifelong learning. In Switzerland, over 90% of young people hold upper-secondary level qualifications. The aim is to increase this figure to 95% by 2020.

Upper-secondary level qualifications⁷

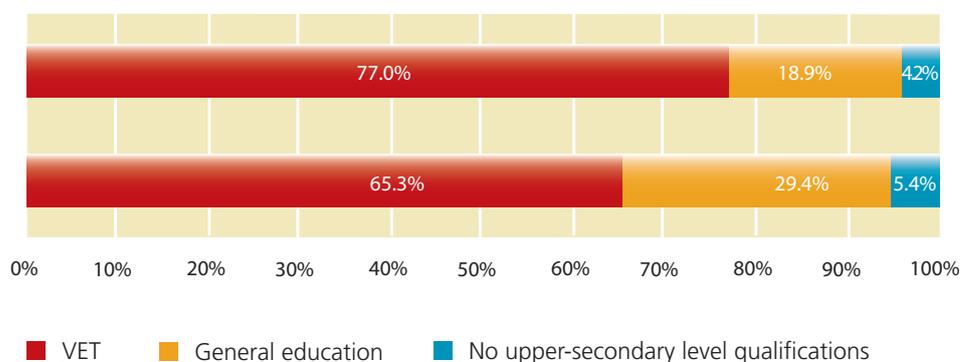


VET	■	66.2%	64.9%	64.9%	64.6%	64.6%	65.0%	68.7%	70.2%	71.3%
General education	■	22.1%	21.7%	22.2%	23.2%	23.0%	23.3%	23.0%	23.5%	24.0%
No upper-secondary level qualifications	■	11.7%	13.4%	13.0%	12.2%	12.4%	11.6%	8.3%	6.3%	4.7%

* Breach in series because of the modernisation of the Pupil and Student statistics

** Excl. canton Ticino

Completed upper-secondary level education and training in 2011^{*,8}



* Excl. canton Ticino

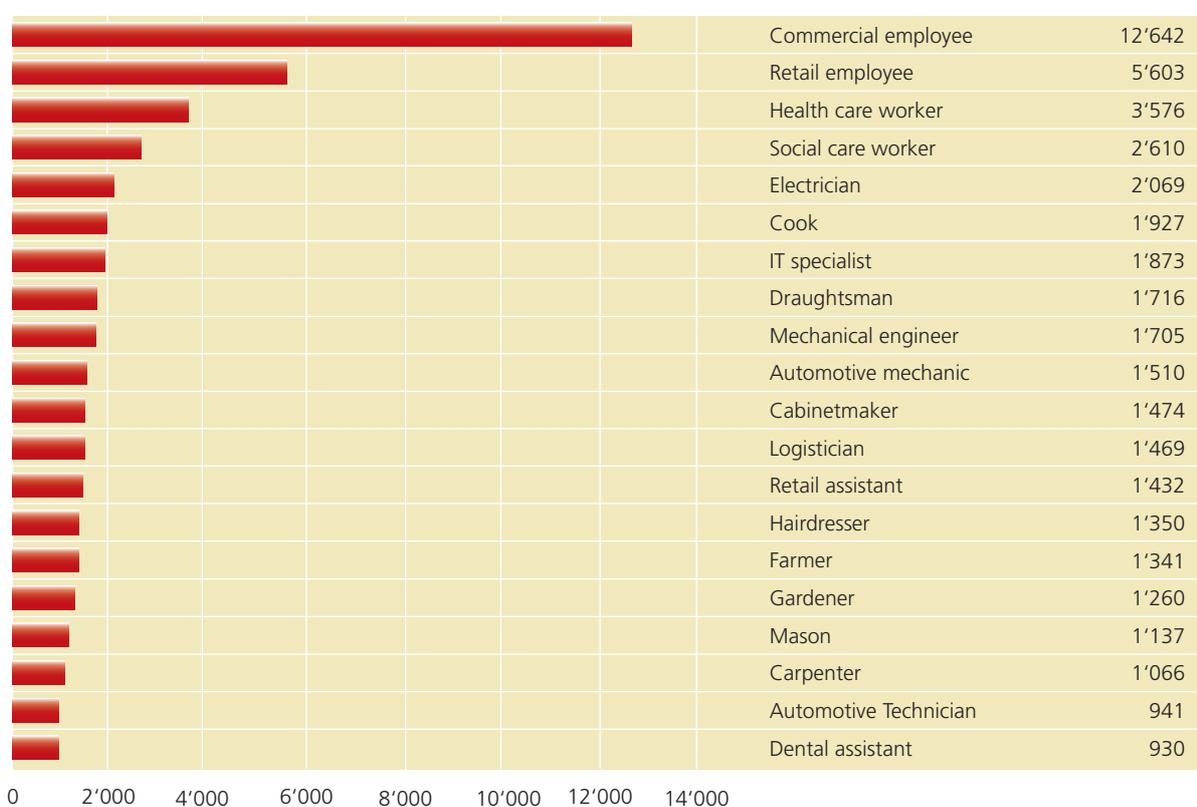
⁷ Federal Statistical Office (2013d)

⁸ Federal Statistical Office (2013d)

THE 20 MOST COMMON OCCUPATIONS

In Switzerland, there are VET programmes for around 230 different occupations. The 20 most popular occupations in 2011 account for over 60% of all newly signed apprenticeship contracts.

New enrolments 2012⁹

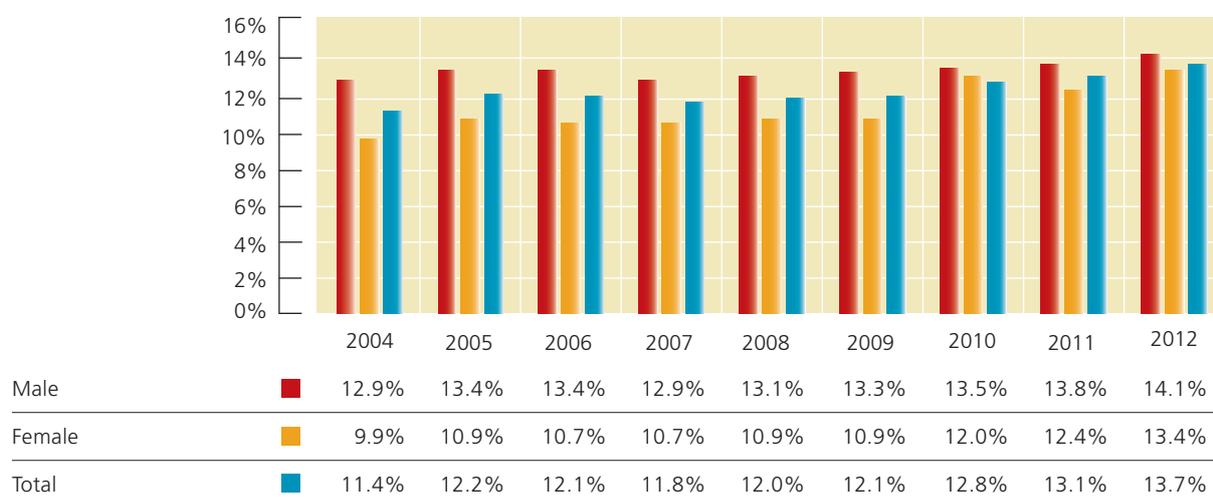


⁹ Federal Statistical Office (2013i)

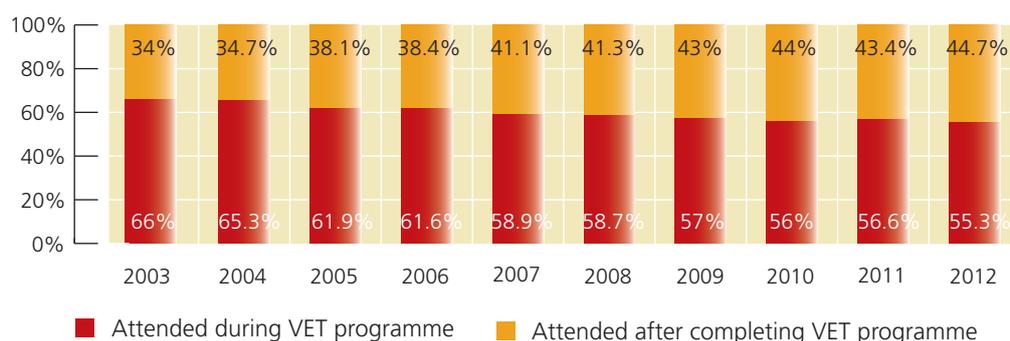
FEDERAL VOCATIONAL BACCALAUREATE

The Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB) was introduced in 1994. It has been successfully established among learners with strong academic skills. Issued as a complement to the Federal VET Diploma, the FVB entitles the holder to enrol in a Swiss university of applied sciences (UAS) without having to take an entrance examination. If an FVB holder also takes the University Aptitude Test (UAT), then enrolment in a cantonal university or one of Switzerland's two federal institutes of technology (FIT) is also possible.

Percentage of VET graduates who also obtained an FVB¹⁰



Attendance of FVB preparatory courses¹¹



Proportion of FVB holders who enrolled in a UAS degree programme¹²

Immediate enrolment	19.9%	18.9%	19.4%	19.5%	21.2%	21.7%	20.3%	21.5%
Enrolment after one year	15.7%	17.1%	19.3%	20.4%	19.6%	20.7%	21.8%	
Enrolment after two or more years	19.4%	19.7%	19.9%	18.4%				
Total	54.9%	55.7%	58.6%	58.3%				
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012

¹⁰ Federal Statistical Office (2013e)

¹¹ Federal Statistical Office (2013j)

¹² Federal Statistical Office (2013g)

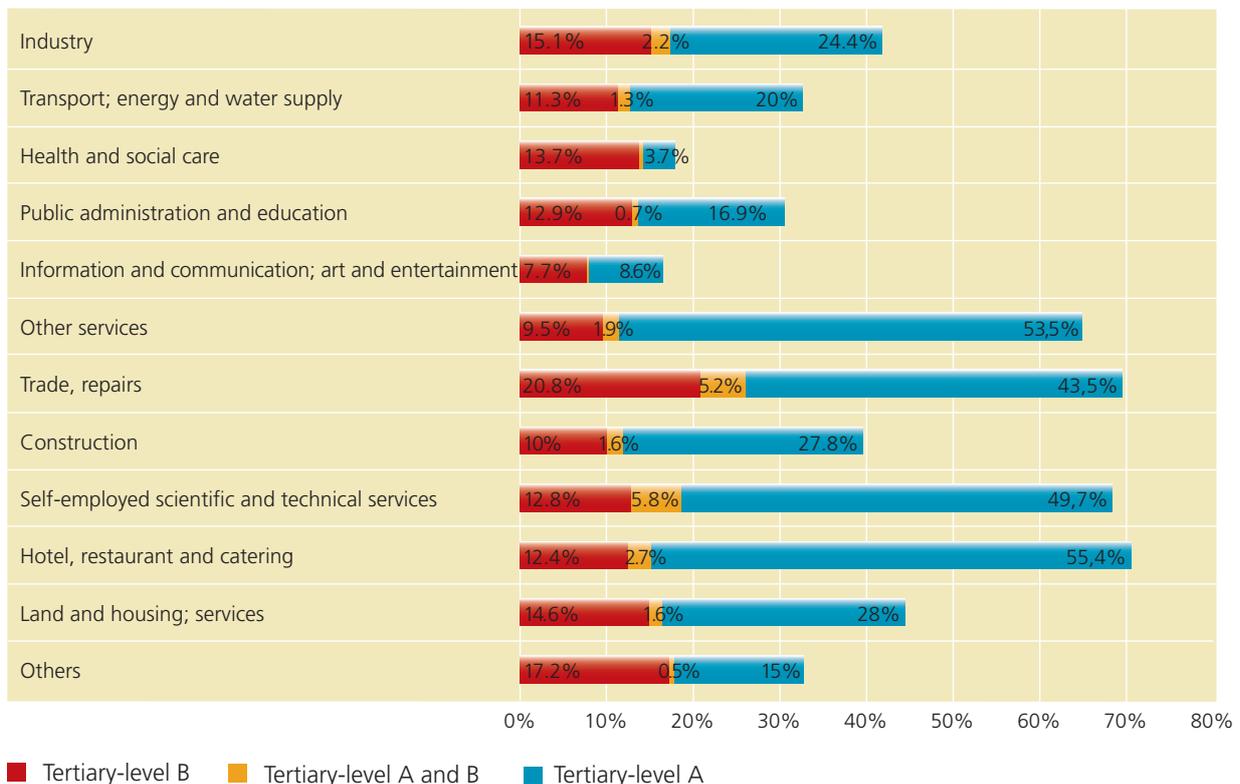
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (PET)

Swiss tertiary-level is comprised of professional education and training (PET), universities of applied sciences (UAS) and cantonal universities/federal institutes of technology (FIT). The PET sector places great emphasis on the actual skills used in a given profession and hence PET is closely correlated with the needs of the labour market. PET imparts the competences required to handle challenging technical or managerial tasks and ensures that employers can find suitably qualified workers.

PET qualifications¹³

PET college degree	3'528	4'003	4'020	3'971	4'081	4'132	7'234	7'337	7'009	6'780
Advanced Federal PET Diploma	3'028	3'188	2'556	2'919	2'563	2'812	2'656	3'160	2'950	2'815
Federal PET Diploma	12'367	11'376	12'251	13'180	11'723	12'474	12'196	13'144	13'160	13'582
Other PET qualifications	7'860	10'590	10'453	9'385	8'844	8'168	5'421	4'621	3'583	2'343
Total	26'783	29'157	29'280	29'455	27'211	27'586	27'507	28'262	26'702	25'520
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012

Tertiary-level qualifications by economic branch¹⁴



¹³ Federal Statistical Office (2013a)

¹⁴ Federal Statistical Office (2013c)

SWISS VPET FUNDING

The VET sector is funded by the Confederation, the cantons and professional organisations, each to their own degree. Most of the costs of PET and job-related CET programmes are borne by companies and private individuals.

Public funding

Public expenditure for Switzerland's VPET system stood at around CHF 3.5 billion in 2012. The cantons are responsible for implementing VPET. As such, they cover at least three-fourths of associated costs. The Confederation's share of public funding of the VPET system corresponds to one-fourth of the total costs. A total of 10% of federal funding will be used to promote VPET development projects as well as specific activities that serve the public interest.

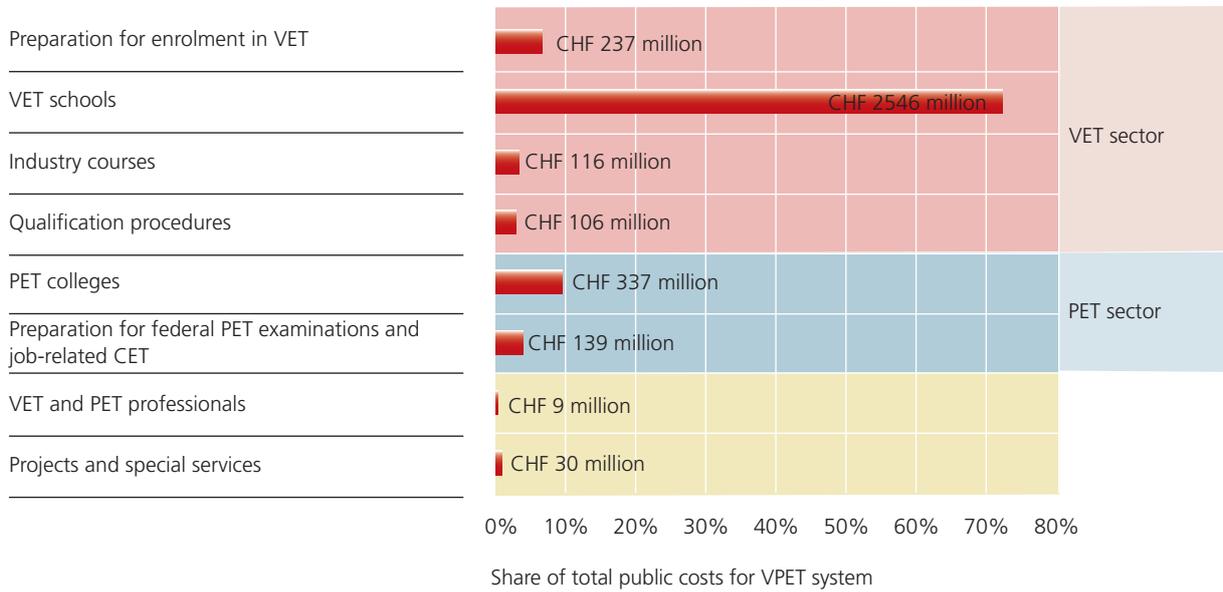
Professional organisations

Professional organisations provide both services and funding for the Swiss VPET system: they do the groundwork, run their own training centres and promote specific occupations (VET sector) and professions (PET sector). Generally speaking, host companies stand to benefit from taking part in VET programmes. According to a cost/benefit study conducted in 2009, gross costs of involvement in VET amounted to CHF 5.3 billion. This figure was outweighed by the productive output generated by learners, which amounted to CHF 5.8 billion.

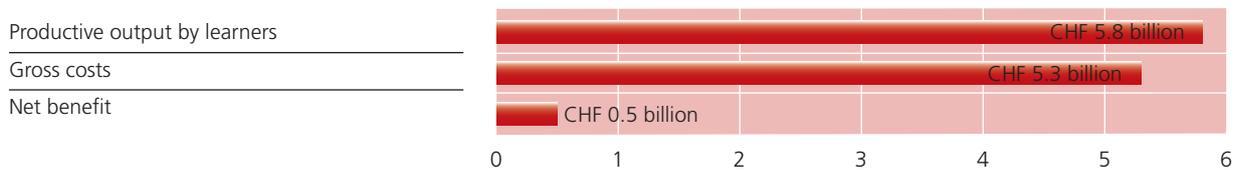
VPET funds

Under the Federal Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act provisions, companies within a given economic branch contribute to a corresponding VPET fund, which is used to cover the cost of VET and PET activities (e.g. development of training programmes, organising courses and qualification procedures, promotion of specific occupations). The Confederation may declare some VPET funds to be of general interest and therefore mandatory for all companies within a given economic branch.

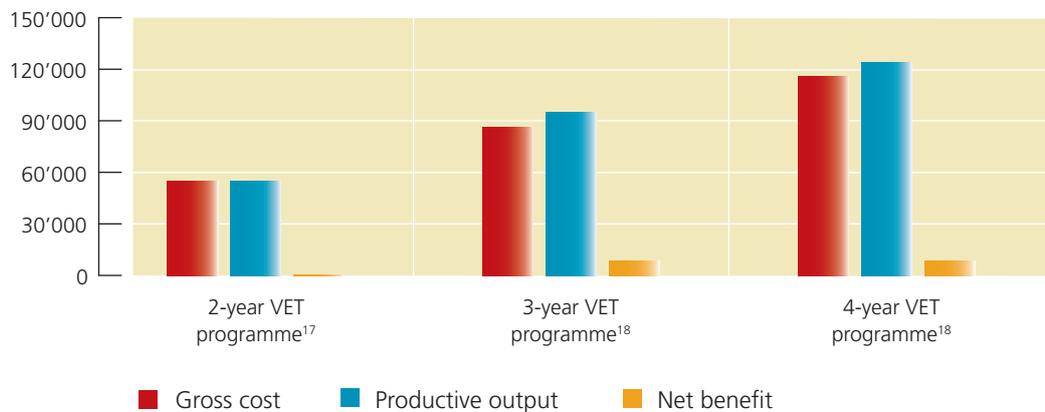
Public expenditure for VPET system in 2012¹⁵



Cost/benefit ratio for Swiss companies involved in VET programmes, survey year 2009¹⁶



Cost/benefit ratio by apprenticeship duration, in CHF



¹⁵ State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (2013)

¹⁶ Strupler and Wolter (2012)

¹⁷ Fuhrer and Schweri (2010)

¹⁸ Strupler and Wolter (2012)



VET AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Due to its very close correlation with the labour market, Switzerland's VPET system has proven to be a successful model. The Confederation works at various levels to draw greater international attention to the strengths of Switzerland's dual-track approach to learning. In addition to stronger networking, priority is given in particular to improved recognition and appreciation of VET and PET qualifications. This also provides greater mobility for Swiss specialised personnel.

Copenhagen Process

Comparability, transparency and mobility between European VET systems are the main objectives of the Copenhagen Process. Represented by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Technology (SERI), Switzerland is currently drafting a national qualifications framework as well as certificate supplements for VET qualifications and diploma supplements for PET qualifications. The aim is to achieve a better positioning of VET (uppersecondary level) and PET (tertiary B level) both in Switzerland and abroad.

www.sbf.admin.ch/copenhagen*

OECD studies on VET systems

Switzerland regularly takes part in OECD country studies on VET. These studies confirm the strengths of the Swiss VPET system and raise its profile internationally.

www.sbf.admin.ch/oecdstudies

VPET research

The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) maintains active networking ties in the area of VPET research. It also provides funding for publications in the international journal "Empirical Research in Vocational Education and Training (ERVET)".

www.sbf.admin.ch/vetresearch

Expertise transfer

Based on Switzerland's international strategy for education, research and innovation, which was approved by the Federal Council in 2010, the reputation and position of the Swiss VPET system should be strengthened. Initial cooperation supported by SERI in this direction has already taken place between Switzerland and India with the first transfer project, where aspects of the dual-track approach to VET are being implemented.

www.sbf.admin.ch/education-cooperation

International and national competitions

Each year, numerous trade associations send their best qualified workers to national skills competitions. The winners of these competitions qualify to take part in EuroSkills and the WorldSkills competitions. The last WorldSkills Competition was held in Leipzig (Germany) in July 2013. Strong Swiss performance confirms the quality of dual-track VET programmes and leads to greater international recognition.

www.swiss-skills.ch/fr*

International VET Congress

Switzerland will host an international VET Congress in 2014, in 2015 and in 2016. In 2014, the Congress will be held in Winterthur (Switzerland) from 15 to 18 September. The aim is to strengthen VET programmes at the international level, and facilitate the exchange of expertise between important national and international actors in the VET field.

www.vpet-congress.ch

* Information available in French, German and/or Italian only.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

List of occupations and professions

List of all federally recognised occupations (VET) and professions (PET): Legal bases and addresses.

www.sbf.admin.ch/ldp*

SERI documentation

Collection of SERI publications on VET and PET.

www.sbf.admin.ch/doc-vet

Apprenticeship barometer

Representative survey of the apprenticeship situation from the perspective of young people and host companies. Conducted every April and August since 1997.

www.sbf.admin.ch/barometre*

Training of VET and PET professionals

Information on recognition of training programmes for VET and PET professionals as well as on equivalency of their qualifications.

www.sbf.admin.ch/responsible-fp*

Leading Houses

Leading Houses are responsible for a SERI programme to support the continuing development of VPET research activities in Switzerland.

www.sbf.admin.ch/vetresearch



Portal on VPET system

www.formationprof.ch*

Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIL)

www.berufsbildung.ch → Themen → Berufsabschluss für Erwachsene → Validierung von Bildungsleistungen*

The path of professionals

www.vetplus.ch*

Portal on occupational, educational and career guidance

www.orientation.ch*

Information platform on the Swiss education system

www.educa.ch

Serveur de documents pour l'éducation et la formation

www.educa.ch

Document server for education

www.edudoc.ch

Electronic newsletter on VPET system

www.panorama.ch*

VPET Lexicon

www.lex.formationprof.ch*

Host company label

www.vignette.formationprof.ch*

Federal Statistical Office (FSO)

www.education-stat.admin.ch

Cost/benefit survey of Swiss companies involved in VET programmes

www.ffb.unibe.ch

Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET)

www.sfivet.ch

Swiss Conference of VPET Offices (SBBK)

www.csfp.ch*

Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)

www.edk.ch

* Information available in French, German and/or Italian only.

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