

FACTS AND FIGURES

VOCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN SWITZERLAND



2012



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Economic Affairs FDEA
Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology OPET

VETPLUS.CH

THE PATH OF PROFESSIONALS.

An initiative of the Confederation,
the cantons and professional organisations

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OVERVIEW

The Swiss VET/PET system enables young people to enter the labour market and ensures that there are enough specialists 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 consist of part-time classroom instruction at a VET school combined with a part-time apprenticeship at a host company. Such VET programmes are referred to as dual-track VET programmes. There are around 230 occupations to choose from. The less common variety is called a full-time VET programme and is based entirely on classroom instruction (i.e. no apprenticeship). Full-time 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 occupational 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 continuing 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 education and training opportunities and later change the course of their professional lives with relative ease. Continuing education and training (CET) options are also available at all levels.

Career prospects

Professional education and training (PET) takes place at tertiary B level and is the next step after vocational education and training (VET). PET provides learners with specific qualifications and prepares them for managerial and specialised positions. There are around 410 PET programmes leading to federal PET examinations and 52 PET college degree programmes in eight different professional fields. The Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB) provides direct access to Swiss universities of applied sciences (UAS).

Joint mission

VET/PET is a partnership, a joint mission pursued by the Confederation, the cantons and professional organisations.

Key VET/PET figures¹

| | |
|---|---------|
| New learners enrolling in VET | 81,200 |
| Total number of learners enrolled in VET programmes | 232,100 |
| Number of Federal VET Certificates or Federal VET Diplomas issued | 68,500 |
| Number of Federal Vocational Baccalaureates issued | 12,200 |
| Number of PET qualifications issued | 28,300 |

¹ Federal Statistical Office (2011c), (2011g)

SWISS VET/PET 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 curriculums and national qualification procedures. They are also characterised by a high degree of permeability: it is possible for learners to pursue additional education and training opportunities and change the course of their professional lives with relative ease. A wealth of continuing education and training (CET) courses can also be found at all levels. The Swiss VET/PET 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 gain access to tertiary-level B professional education and training (PET).

Two-year VET programmes leading to a Federal VET Certificate

Allow more practically minded learners to obtain a federally recognised certificate that matches the needs of 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)

The optional FVB is available to learners who attend the FVB preparatory course, which consists of general education subjects. 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)

PET programmes combine solid practical skills with established theoretical expertise. They also prepare learners for managerial and/or specialised positions.

Federal PET examinations

There are two federal PET examinations: the Federal PET Diploma Examination is intended for people with several years of professional experience who would like to specialise in a given field; the Advanced Federal PET Diploma Examination is generally for learners who have acquired a great deal of professional expertise and/or who intend to hold a managerial position in an SME.

Depending on which federal PET examination is taken, candidates will be awarded either the Federal PET Diploma or the Advanced Federal PET Diploma.

PET college degree programmes

PET college degree programmes are based on a core curriculum.

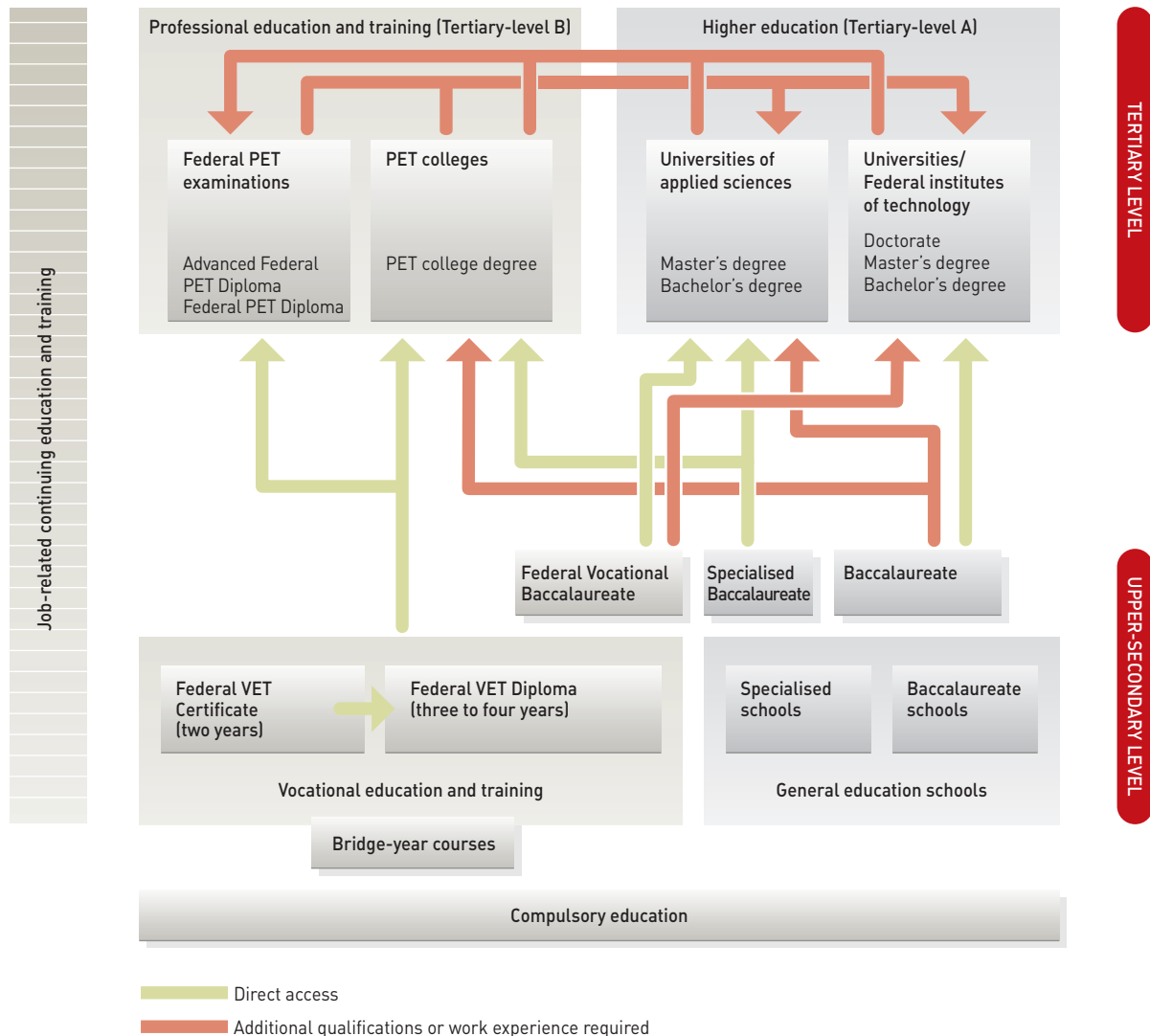
Generally speaking, programmes last for two years (full-time) or three years (part-time) and lead to a federally recognised PET college degree.

Preparation for vocational education and training Bridge-year courses

Bridge-year courses consist of practical training and pre-apprenticeships upon completion of lower-secondary level. Bridge-year courses are generally designed to prepare learners for admission to an upper-secondary level VET programme.

Job-related continuing education and training (CET)

Regardless of their stage in life, learners will find a wide range of job-related CET options (i.e. non-formal courses, seminars, etc.) at all training levels.



VET for adults

Adults may take remedial courses to acquire a VET qualification. The Federal Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act leaves several avenues open in this regard: these range from regulated, structured procedures for occupational categories (or subcategories) 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 VET/PET. They also strive to ensure the availability of an adequate number of apprenticeships and CET courses.

Confederation

Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET)

Responsible for the VET and PET sectors at federal level.

Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET)

Mainly provides basic and continuing training to VET and PET professionals, particularly teachers. SFIVET is also involved in research 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 VET/PET system
- Comparability and transparency of courses throughout Switzerland
- Enactment of around 230 VET ordinances
- Recognition of examination regulations and core curricula for PET
- Recognition of training programmes for VET and PET professionals
- Payment of one-fourth of public sector expenditure for the VET/PET system
- Promotion of innovation and support for specific activities in the public interest

Professional organisations

Curricula and apprenticeships

- Determination of training content and national qualification procedures
- Creation of apprenticeship positions
- Provision of occupational skills
- Development of new training courses

Professional organisations

Trade associations

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

Social partners, other relevant organisations and VET/PET providers

Together with trade associations, they are also involved in the further development of VET/PET.

Companies

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

Cantons

Implementation and supervision

- VET/PET offices/supervision of apprenticeships
- VET schools, part-time and full-time curricula
- Occupational, educational and career guidance
- Apprenticeship marketing
- Involvement in further development and planning of the Swiss VET/PET system

Cantons

Swiss Conference of cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)

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

26 cantonal VET/PET offices

Responsible for implementing VET and PET at cantonal level, VET/PET offices coordinate their activities through the Swiss Conference of VET/PET Offices (SBBK), one of EDK's specialised conferences.

Occupational, educational and career guidance counselling services

Provide information and guidance to both young people and adults.

VET schools

VET schools provide classroom instruction and prepare learners for the Federal Vocational Baccalaureate Examination. Some VET schools offer a full-time curriculum.

TRAINING ARRANGEMENTS

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

Vocational education and training (VET)

In-company 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 taught the practical skills needed for their chosen occupation.

Host company networks: in some cases, host companies may wish to combine their strengths to offer one or more apprenticeships in a modular format. Such host company networks are suitable for companies which have limited staff capacities or which are specialised in only one or more aspects covered by the VET programme.

Classroom instruction

VET schools provide classroom instruction. This consists of classroom instruction in vocational and general education subjects. There are a number of ways in which VET programmes can be structured: the standard way is for learners to attend courses one to two days per week at the VET school and do their apprenticeship at a host company for the remaining three to four days per week; the sliding-scale model (initially more days attending courses at the VET school and gradually decreasing the number of days to spend more time doing the apprenticeship) is another alternative; basic training years are a third alternative, etc. Some VET schools also offer a full-time curriculum (e.g. trade schools, commercial schools, etc.) without the need for learners to do an apprenticeship. VET schools also prepare learners for the Federal Vocational Baccalaureate Examination.

Industry courses

Industry courses are meant to complement classroom instruction and work-based training. 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

Federal PET examinations are sponsored by professional organisations. Public and private PET providers offer part-time courses to prepare learners for federal PET examinations, which lead to either the Federal PET Diploma or the Advanced Federal PET Diploma.

PET college degree programmes

Part-time and full-time PET college degree programmes are organised by professional organisations, private businesses or public education institutions.

Job-related continuing education and training (CET)

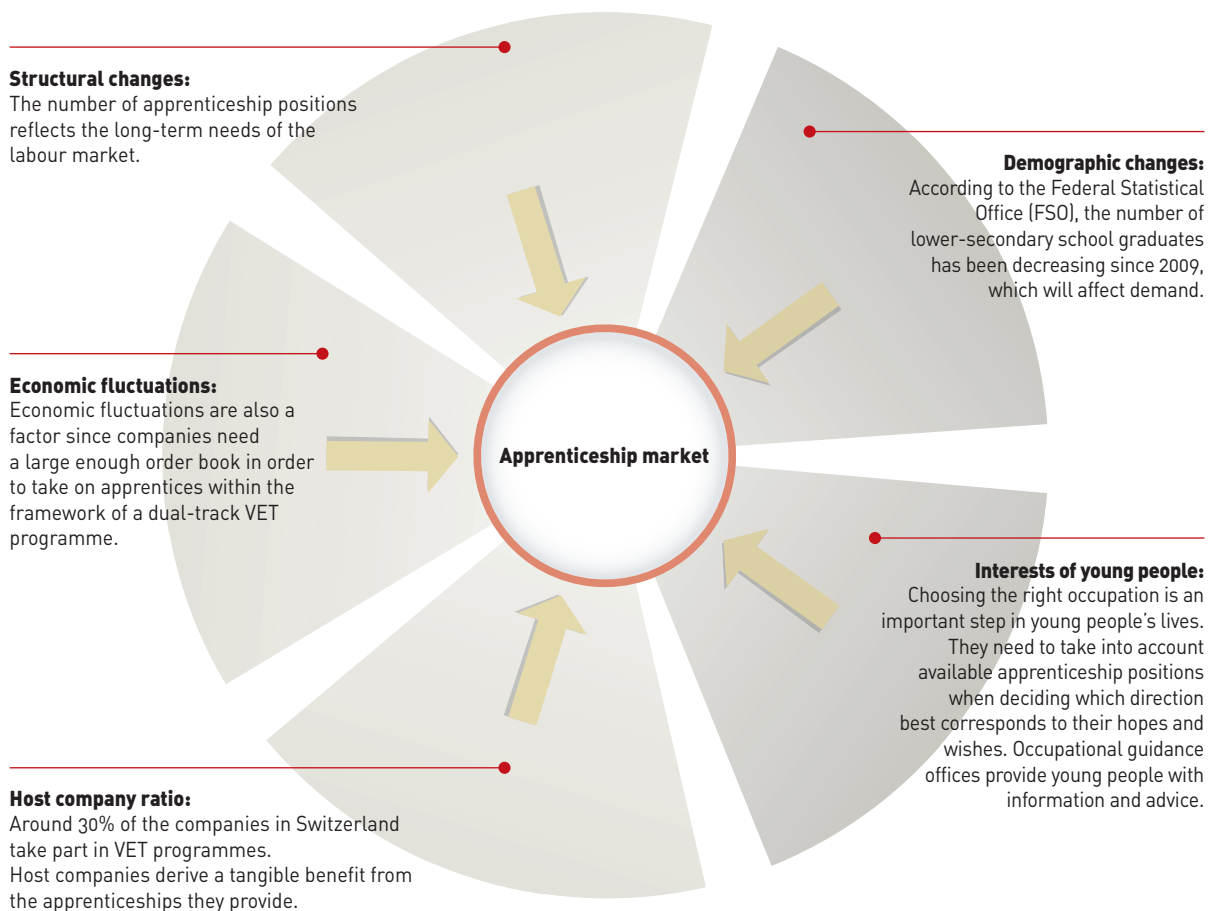
There is a wide range of job-related CET courses. These courses are tailored to suit the requirements of the given occupation or profession. CET courses are mainly organised by the private sector.





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 VET/PET 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 disadvantageous for the host company, then the federal government may step in to offer additional financial incentives.

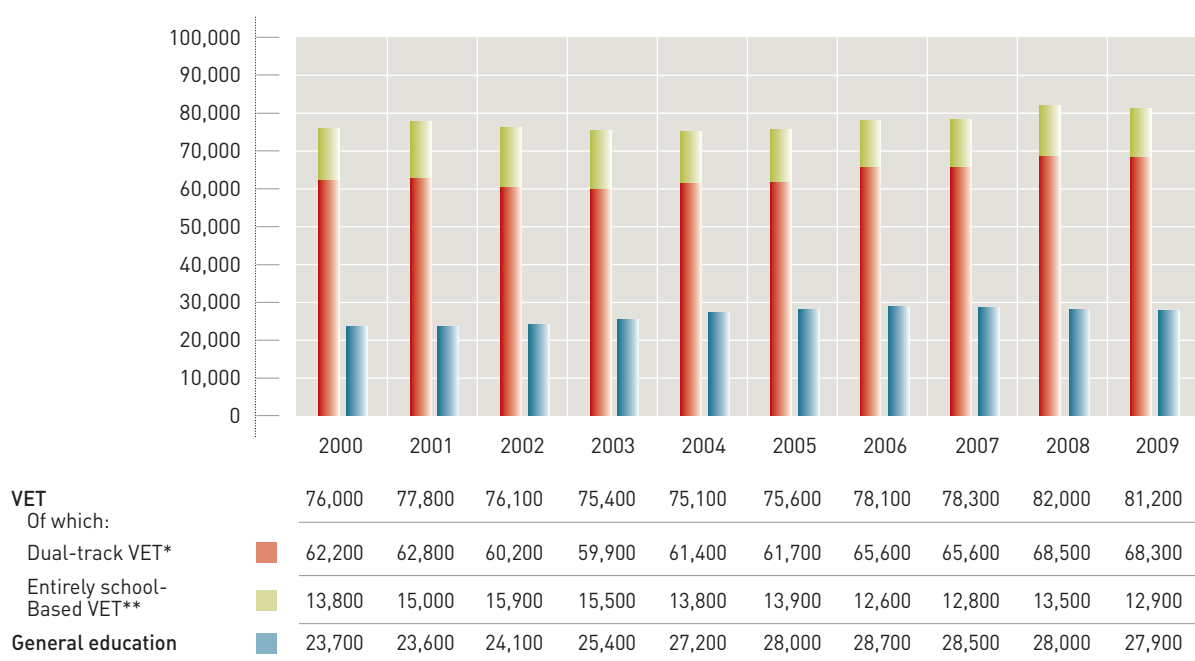
The most important apprenticeship marketing measures

- 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 classes 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.

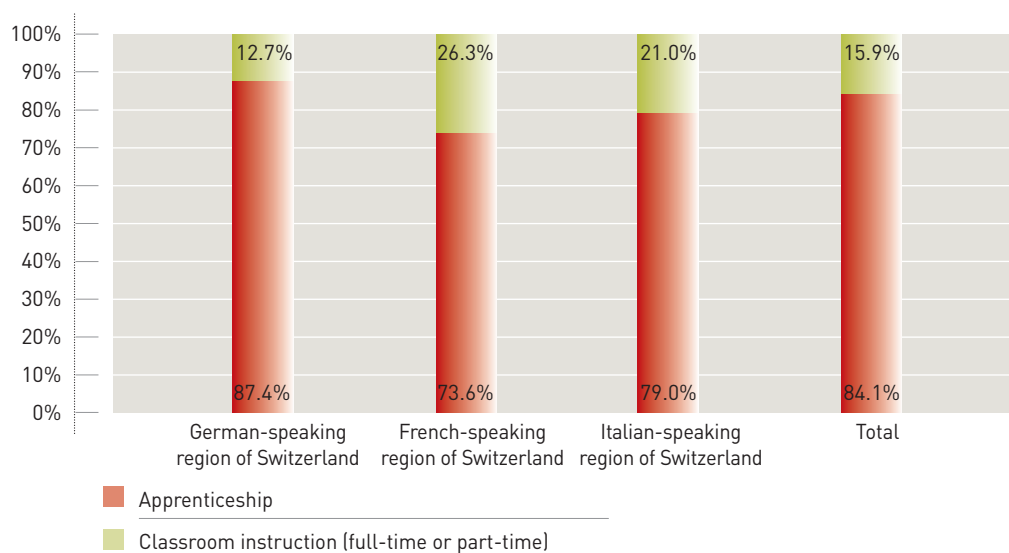
Enrolment in upper-secondary level²



* excl. informal two-year apprenticeships

** incl. commercial and IT schools

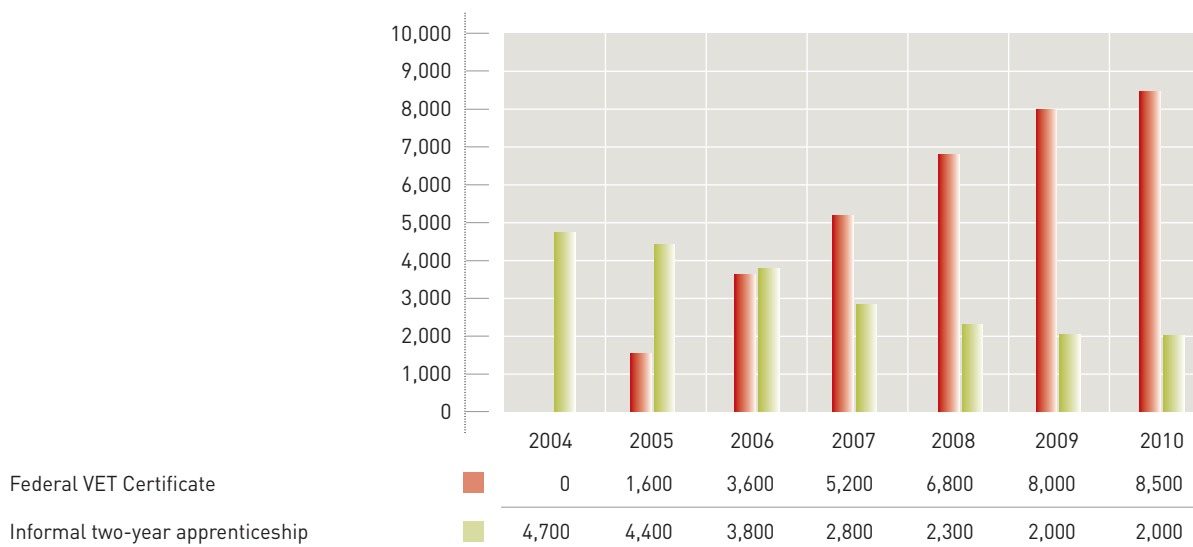
VET by linguistic region in 2009³



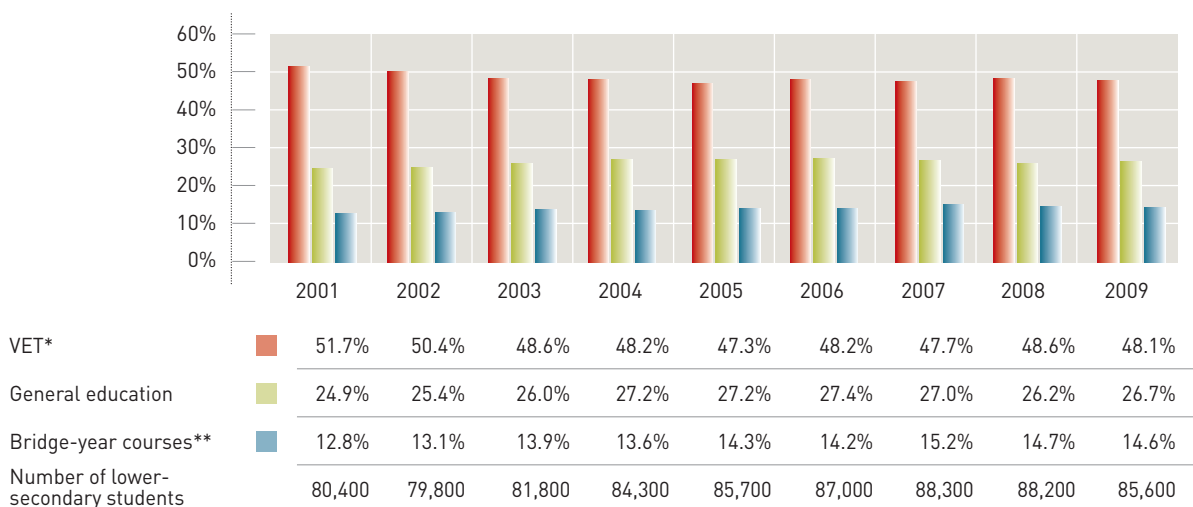
² Federal Statistical Office (2011a), (2011d)

³ Federal Statistical Office (2011b)

Total number of apprenticeship contracts in relation to formal (i.e. leading to Federal VET Certificate) and informal two-year apprenticeships⁴



Young people enrolling in upper-secondary level immediately after lower-secondary⁵



* incl. informal two-year apprenticeships

** Bridge-year courses include 10th school years, pre-apprenticeships and preparatory courses

Broad range of bridge-year courses

Upon completion of compulsory education, the vast majority of lower-secondary school students 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 do not have immediate follow-up plans. Young people sometimes take advantage of the bridge-year period between lower-secondary and upper-secondary to do an exchange semester or learn a foreign language abroad.

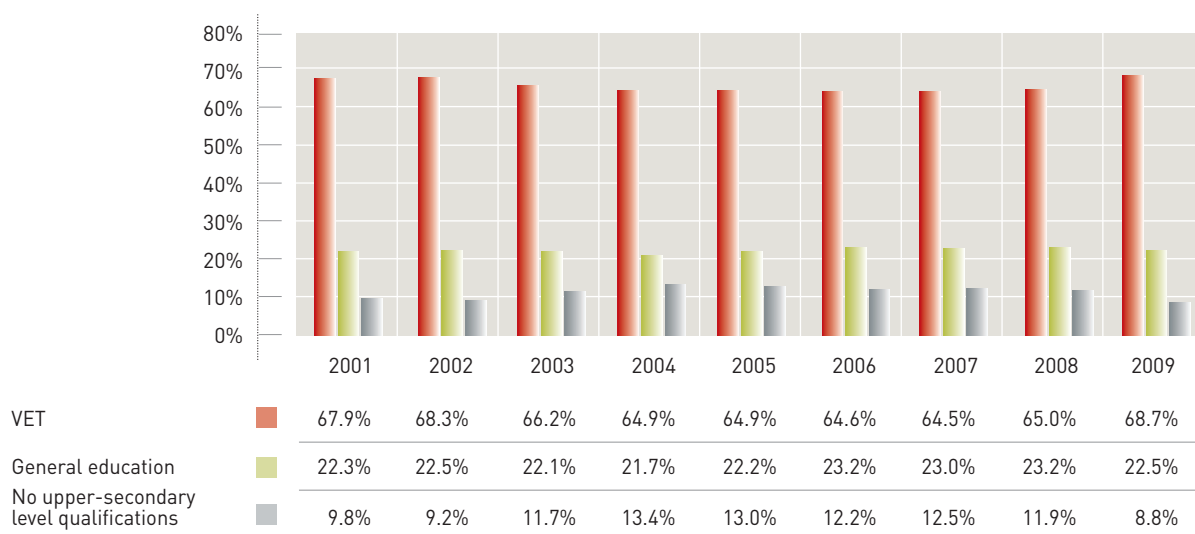
⁴ Federal Statistical Office (2011h)

⁵ Federal Statistical Office (2011f), (2011g)

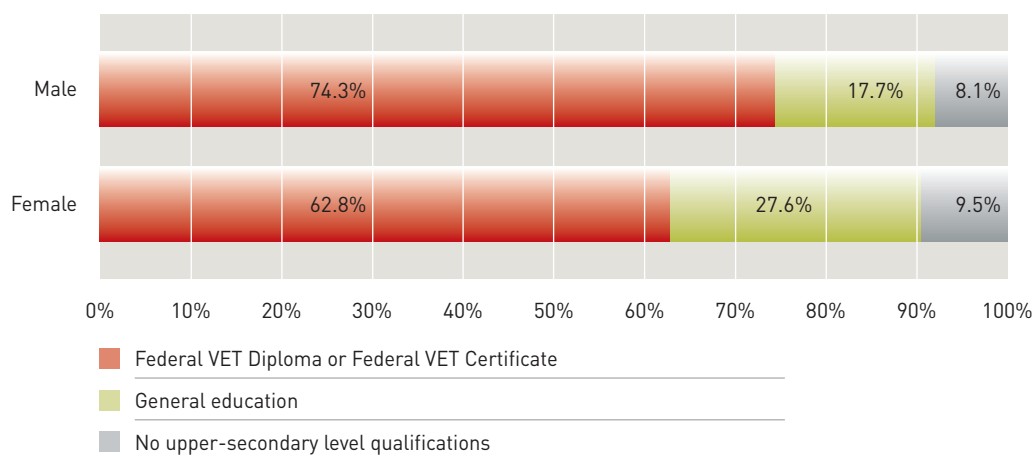
GRADUATION RATE OF 90 PERCENT

VET qualifications increase a person's job prospects on the labour market and form the basis for lifelong learning. In Switzerland, 90% of young people hold upper-secondary level qualifications. The aim is to increase this figure even more in the coming years.

Upper-secondary level qualifications⁶



Completed upper-secondary level education and training in 2009⁷



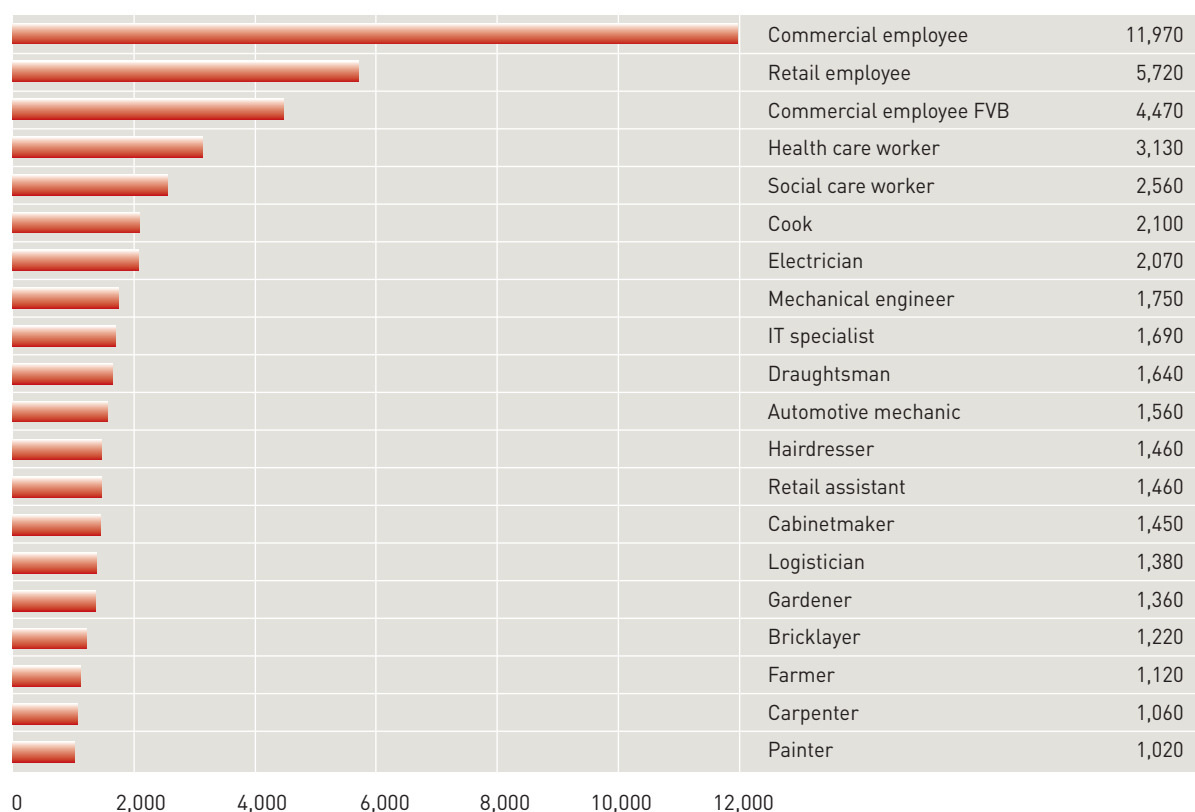
⁶ Federal Statistical Office (2009b), (2011c)

⁷ Federal Statistical Office (2009b), (2011c)

THE 20 MOST COMMON OCCUPATIONS

In Switzerland, there are VET programmes for around 230 different occupations. The 20 most popular occupations in 2009 account for about 60% of all newly signed apprenticeship contracts.

New enrolments 2010⁸

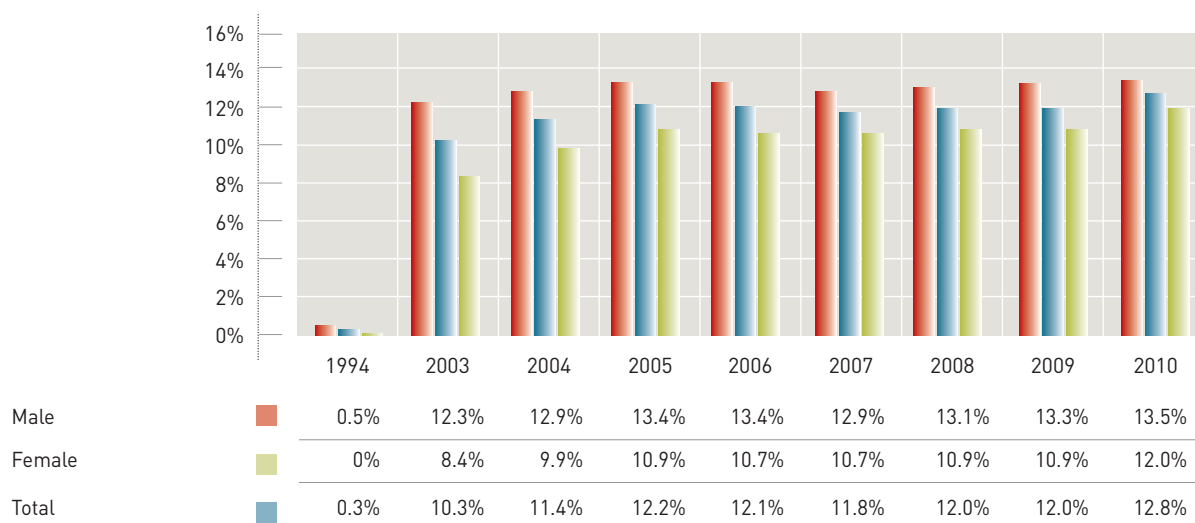


⁸ Federal Statistical Office (2011h)

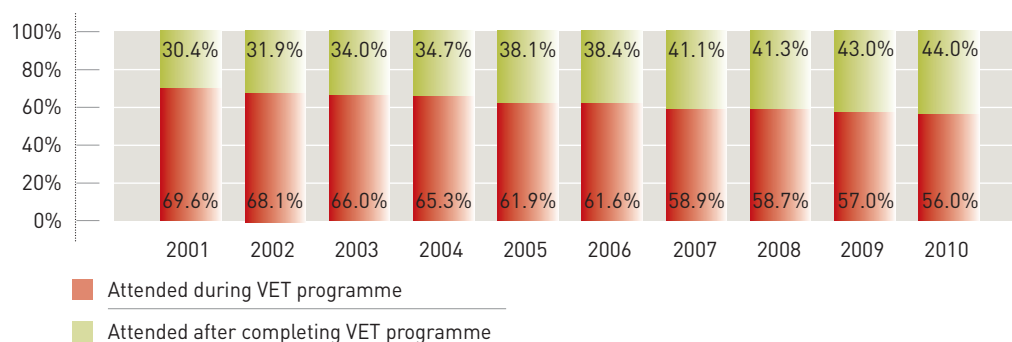
FVB: A SUCCESS STORY

The Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB) was introduced in 1994. It is awarded to learners with strong academic skills. Issued as a complement to the Federal VET Diploma, the FVB entitles the holder to enrol directly in a Swiss university of applied sciences (UAS). If an FVB holder 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 FVB⁹



Attendance of FVB preparatory courses¹⁰



Proportion of FVB holders who enrolled in a UAS degree programme¹¹

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Immediate enrolment | 24.8% | 20.6% | 19.9% | 18.9% | 19.3% | 19.5% | 21.2% | 21.7% |
| Enrolment after one year | 13.5% | 16.3% | 15.7% | 17.1% | 19.3% | 20.4% | 19.6% | |
| Enrolment after two or more years | 16.9% | 17.0% | 15.9% | 14.7% | 15.2% | | | |
| Total | 55.2% | 53.9% | 51.5% | 50.6% | 53.9% | | | |
| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |

⁹ Federal Statistical Office (2011e)

¹⁰ Federal Statistical Office (2011h)

¹¹ Federal Statistical Office (2011i)

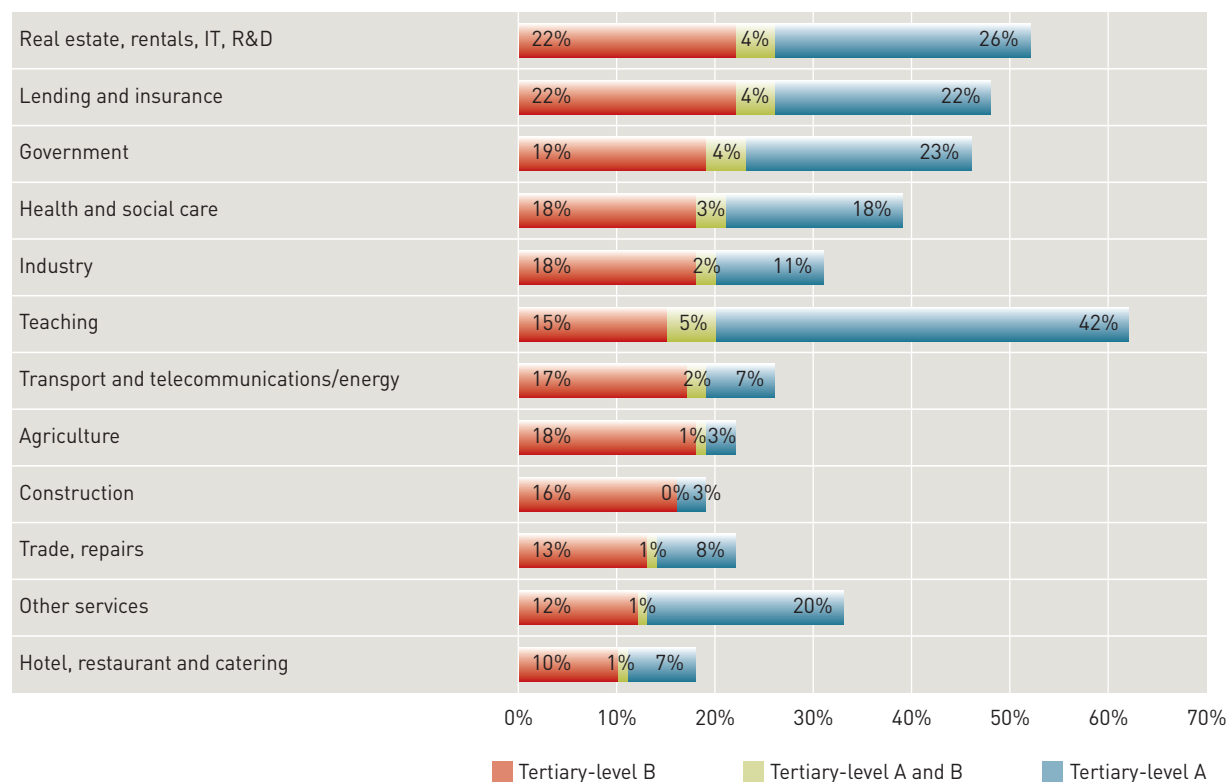
HIGHER-LEVEL PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

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 needed for a given profession and therefore provides learners with a solid foundation on the labour market. Employed persons in Switzerland include as many holders of PET qualifications as holders of university qualifications.

PET qualifications¹²

| | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| PET college degree | 3,700 | 4,100 | 4,100 | 4,100 | 4,200 | 4,200 | 7,200 | 7,300 |
| Advanced Federal PET Diploma | 3,000 | 3,200 | 2,600 | 2,900 | 2,600 | 2,800 | 2,700 | 3,200 |
| Federal PET Diploma | 11,200 | 11,400 | 12,300 | 13,200 | 11,700 | 12,500 | 12,200 | 13,100 |
| Other PET qualifications | 8,100 | 10,700 | 10,600 | 9,400 | 8,800 | 8,100 | 5,400 | 4,600 |
| Total | 26,000 | 29,400 | 29,500 | 29,700 | 27,200 | 27,600 | 27,500 | 28,300 |
| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |

Tertiary-level qualifications by economic branch¹³



¹² Federal Statistical Office (2011c)

¹³ Federal Statistical Office (2009a)

SWISS VET/PET 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

The cantons are responsible for implementing VET/PET. As such, they provide at least three-fourths of public funding. The Confederation will increase its share of public funding of the VET/PET system to one-fourth of the total cost. A total of 10% of federal funding will be used to promote VET/PET development projects as well as specific activities that serve the public interest. Public funding of the VET/PET system currently stands at around 12% of total public education funding in Switzerland. In 2010, around CHF 3.4 billion was allocated to the VET/PET system.

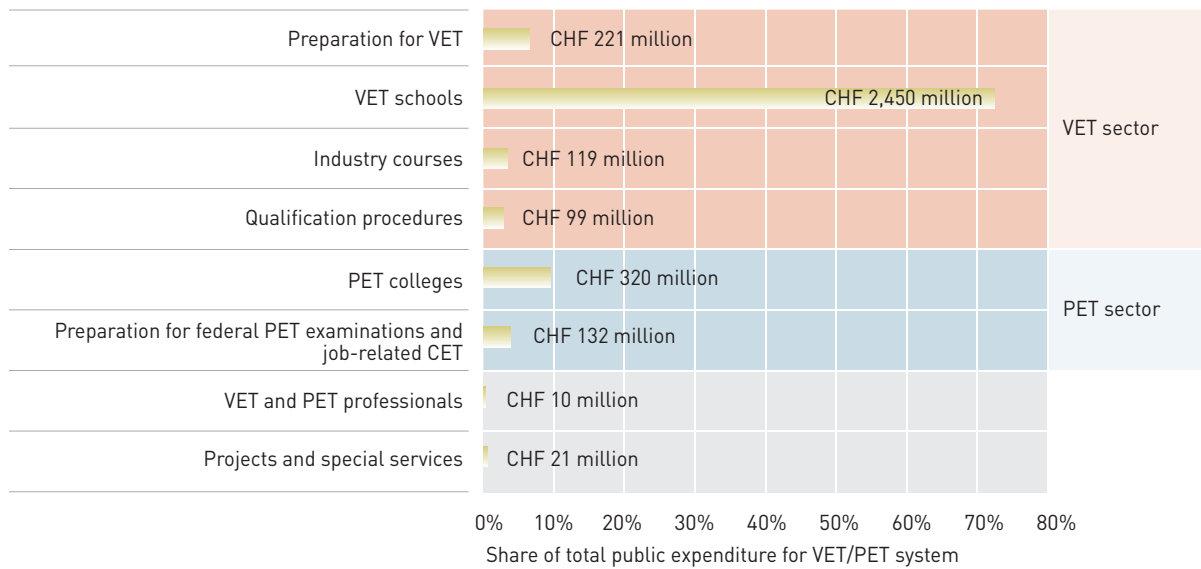
Professional organisations

Professional organisations provide both services and funding for the Swiss VET/PET 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 2004, gross costs of involvement in VET amounted to CHF 4.7 billion. This figure was outweighed by the productive output generated by learners, which amounted to CHF 5.2 billion.

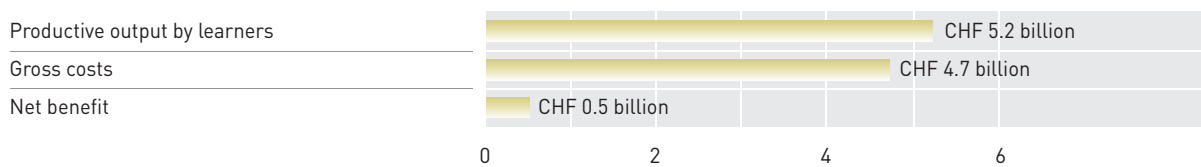
VET/PET funds

Under VPETA provisions, VET/PET funds are specific to a given economic branch. These funds ensure that all companies, including those that do not belong to the professional organisation, make suitable contributions to help cover the cost of the professional organisation's VET/PET activities. The Confederation may declare some VET/PET funds to be of general interest and therefore mandatory for all companies within a given economic branch.

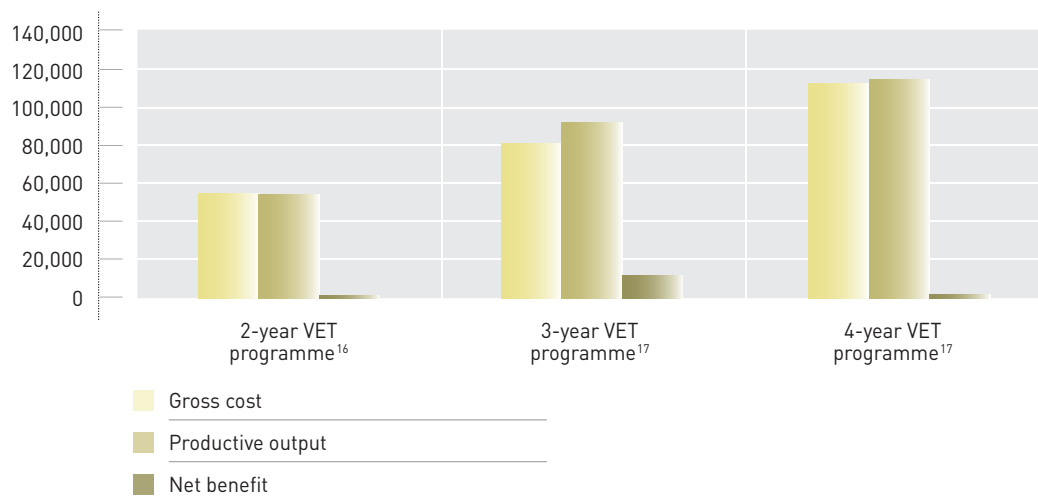
Public expenditure for VET/PET system in 2010¹⁴



Cost/benefit ratio for Swiss companies involved in VET programmes, survey year 2004¹⁵



Cost/benefit ratio by apprenticeship duration, in CHF



¹⁴ Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (2011)

¹⁵ Mühlemann et al. (2007)

¹⁶ Fuhrer and Schweri (2010)

¹⁷ Mühlemann et al. (2007)



VET AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Maintaining a very close correlation with the labour market, Switzerland's VET/PET 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. Its objectives include greater recognition of VET and PET qualifications as well as greater mobility of qualified workers.

Copenhagen Process

Permeability, transparency and mobility between European education systems are the main objectives of the Copenhagen Process. Represented by the Federal Office for Professional Education and Training (OPET), Switzerland is currently drafting a national qualifications framework as well as diploma supplements for VET and PET qualifications. The aim is to achieve a better positioning of VET (upper-secondary level) and PET (tertiary B level) both at the national and international level.

www.bbt.admin.ch/cph

EU Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)

Since 2011, Switzerland is entitled to fully take part in the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), which includes a sub-programme "Leonardo da Vinci" devoted specifically to the VET sector. There are also multilateral projects to further develop VET systems as well as partnerships to make use of synergies.

www.ch-go.ch

OECD studies on VET systems

In 2009, Switzerland took part in two OECD country studies on VET and innovations within the VET sector: the first study report published was "Learning for Jobs" and the second "Systemic Innovations in VET". Switzerland was praised in both reports. Since 2011, Switzerland serves as a case study for another OECD country study on PET. The corresponding study report is entitled "Skills beyond School".

www.bbt.admin.ch/oecdstudies

VET/PET research

OPET maintains active networking ties in the area of VET/PET research. It also provides funding for publications in the international journal "Empirical Research in Vocational Education and Training (ERVET)".

www.bbt.admin.ch/vetresearch

Exporting education and training

Based on Switzerland's international strategy for education, research and innovation, which was approved by the Federal Council in 2010, the Swiss education system should be better positioned as an export product. Initial cooperation in this direction has already taken place between Switzerland and India, where aspects of the dual-track approach to VET were implemented.

www.bbt.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 next EuroSkills Competition will take place in Spa-Francorchamps (Belgium) in October 2012. The next WorldSkills Competition will be held in Leipzig (Germany) in July 2013.

www.swiss-skills.ch/fr*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Directory of occupations

List of all federally recognised occupations: Legal bases and addresses.

www.bbt.admin.ch/ldp*

OPET documentation

Collection of OPET publications on VET and PET.

www.bbt.admin.ch/doc-fp*

VET/PET portal

Information about the Swiss VET/PET system and instruments used in the VET sector.

www.formationprof.ch*

Vetplus.ch

Information on the full range of options within the VET/PET system.

www.vetplus.ch*

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.bbt.admin.ch/barometre*

Training of VET and PET professionals

Here you will find information on recognition of training programmes for VET and PET professionals as well as on equivalency of their qualifications.

www.bbt.admin.ch/responsable-fp*

Validation of prior learning

This initiative gives adults the opportunity to obtain federally recognised qualifications without having to attend formal education and training programmes.

www.validacquis.ch*



Host company label

In recognition of their work, companies that train apprentices receive a special label from the cantonal VET/PET office. This label can also be used for marketing purposes.

www.vignette.formationprof.ch*

Leading Houses

Leading Houses are responsible for an OPET programme to support the continuing development of VET/PET research activities in Switzerland.

www.bbt.admin.ch/fprecherche*

Cost/benefit survey of Swiss companies involved in VET programmes

Conducted by the University of Bern's Centre for Research in Economics of Education, this survey focuses on the economic aspects of VET.

www.ffb.unibe.ch

Portal for occupational, educational and career guidance

www.orientation.ch*

Swiss education server

www.edudoc.ch

Document server for education

www.panorama.ch/fr*

Electronic VET/PET newsletter

www.educa.ch

VET/PET Lexicon

www.lex.formationprof.ch*

Federal Statistical Office (FSO)

www.education-stat.admin.ch

Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET)

www.sfivet.ch

Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)

www.cdip.ch

* Information available in French and German only.

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