

FACTS AND FIGURES

VOCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN SWITZERLAND



2011



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

Vocational education and training (VET) enables young people to enter the labour market and ensures that there are enough specialists and managers in the future. VET is geared to the labour market and is part of the education system.

The most popular form of basic education and training

Vocational education and training provides two-thirds of young people in Switzerland with a solid basis for lifelong learning. It also opens up a wealth of job prospects.

Dual-track approach to learning

Most VET programmes consist of part-time studies at a VET school combined with a part-time apprenticeship at a host company. There are around 230 careers to choose from. There are also VET programmes based on a full-time curriculum (i.e. no apprenticeship). These full-time VET programmes are generally offered by trade schools or commercial schools.

Qualifications which lead to jobs

VET programmes closely match the needs of the labour market, both in terms of professional qualifications 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

Vocational education and training is part of the education system and takes place at upper-secondary level. It is based on clearly defined curricula and national qualification procedures. Typically, it is very flexible: students may pursue vocational opportunities and change course in their professional life with relative ease. Continuing education and training (CET) opportunities are also available at all levels.

Career prospects

Tertiary-level professional education and training (PET) is the next step after vocational education and training (VET). PET programmes provide students with specific qualifications and prepare them for managerial and specialised positions. There are around 400 PET programmes leading to national PET examinations and 400 PET programmes leading to PET college degrees. The Federal Vocational Baccalaureate 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 figures

Students in final year of lower-secondary	88'200
New students enrolling in VET programmes	82'000
Total number of VET students	222'600
VET graduates	65'600
PET graduates	27'500

THE SWISS VET/PET SYSTEM

Vocational education and training (VET) is provided at upper-secondary level and professional education and training (PET) is provided at tertiary B level. Both VET and PET programmes use clearly defined curriculums and national qualification procedures. They are also characterised by a high degree of flexibility: it is possible for students to pursue additional educational opportunities and change course in their professional life with relative ease. A wealth of continuing education and training (CET) courses can also be found at all levels. There is a broad selection of VET and PET programmes available. Courses cater to different abilities and are geared to the needs of different age groups.

Vocational education and training (VET)

VET programmes provide upper-secondary school students with recognised qualifications and pave the way for lifelong learning.

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

Provide students with the qualifications needed to carry out a specific occupation and gain access to tertiary-level professional education and training (PET) programmes.

Two-year VET programmes leading to a Federal VET Certificate

Allow students who are more practically minded to obtain a recognised federal certificate that matches their needs. Graduates from the two-year VET programme may directly enrol in a three- or four-year VET programme.

Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB)

The optional FVB is available to VET students who attend the FVB preparatory course (which consists of general education subjects) either during their VET programme or afterwards. FVB holders are entitled to enrol in any of Switzerland's universities of applied sciences (UAS) without having to take an entrance examination. Alternatively, FVB holders may take the University Aptitude Test (UAT) to obtain the additional qualification required for admission to 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 students for managerial and/or specialised positions.

National 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 people who have acquired a great deal of professional expertise and/or who intend to hold a managerial position in an SME. Depending on which national professional examination is taken, candidates will be awarded either the Federal PET Diploma or the Advanced Federal PET Diploma.

PET college degree programmes

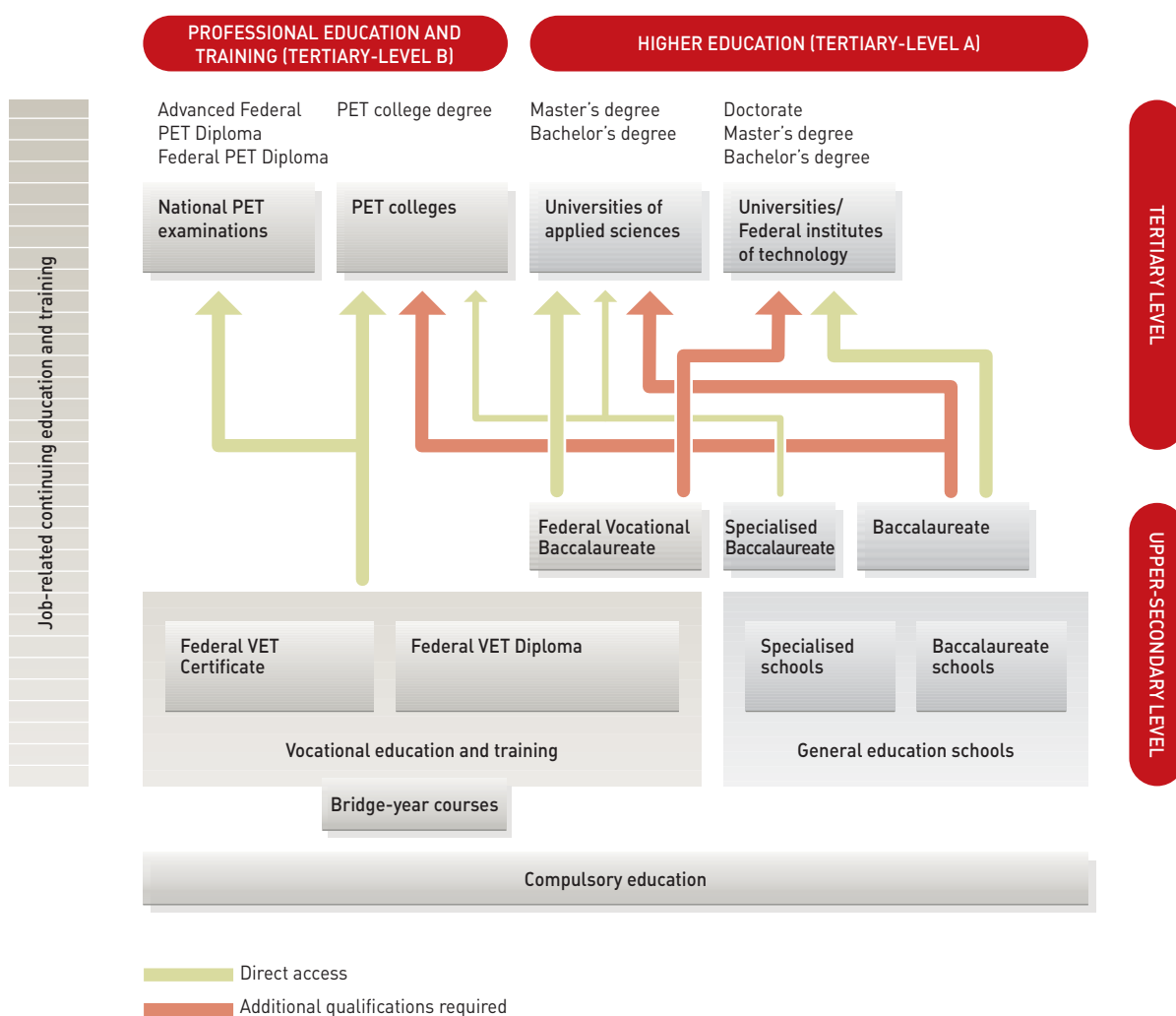
PET programmes offered by PET colleges are based on a core curriculum. Generally speaking, PET programmes last for two years (full-time) or three years (part-time) and lead to a federally recognised PET college degree.

Preparation for vocational education and training Bridge-year courses between lower- and upper-secondary level

Bridge-year courses consist of practical training and pre-apprenticeships. These courses are generally designed to prepare students for admission to upper-secondary level VET programmes.

Continuing education and training (CET)

Regardless of their stage in life, students will find a wide range of CET options (incl. both formal programmes and courses as well as non-formal courses, seminars, etc.) at all training levels.



Vocational education and training 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 and subcategories to individual qualification procedures.

ONE MISSION, THREE PARTNERS

Vocational and professional education and training 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 and strive to ensure that there is an adequate number of apprenticeships and CET courses.

Confederation

Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET)

Responsible at federal level for vocational and professional education and training needs.

Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET)

Mainly provides basic and continuing training to VET and PET professionals, particularly VET 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 programmes
- Payment of one-fourth of public sector expenditure for the VET/PET system
- Recognition of training programmes for VET and PET professionals
- Promotion of innovation and support for specific activities in the public interest

Professional organisations

Curricula and apprenticeships

- Definition of the curriculum and national qualification procedures
- Creation of apprenticeship positions
- Provision of vocational qualifications
- Development of new education and training courses

Professional organisations

Trade associations

Define the curriculum and national qualification procedures, organise VET programmes, create VET apprenticeships (upper-secondary level) and PET traineeships (tertiary level).

Social partners, other relevant organisations and VET providers

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

Companies

Where possible, companies provide VET apprenticeships and PET traineeships for the chosen occupation, thereby paving the way for the next generation of qualified workers. Their involvement in VET/PET programmes 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. Inter-cantonal cooperation through EDK helps to strengthen cantonal authority over education.

26 cantonal VET/PET offices

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

Occupational, educational and career guidance counselling services

Provide information and guidance to both young people and adults.

VET schools

VET schools generally work with host companies on what is referred to as a dual-track approach to learning: students learn theoretical principles at the VET school part-time and do an apprenticeship at a host company part time to gain practical skills. Some VET schools provide students with both education and training on the basis of a full-time curriculum.

TRAINING ARRANGEMENTS

The trademark and strength of VET/PET programmes is their direct correlation with the needs of 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, students 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.

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.

In-school education

VET schools provide in-school education. This consists of vocational instruction and general academic subjects. There are a number of ways in which VET programmes can be organised: the standard way is for students 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 students to do an apprenticeship.

Industry courses

Industry courses are meant to complement in-school education and in-company training. Industry courses often take place at third-party training centres run by the industries involved.

Professional education and training (PET)

National PET examinations for the Federal PET Diploma and Advanced Federal PET Diploma

Professional organisations as well as public and private PET colleges offer part-time courses for these two types of national PET examinations.

PET colleges

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

Continuing education and training (CET)

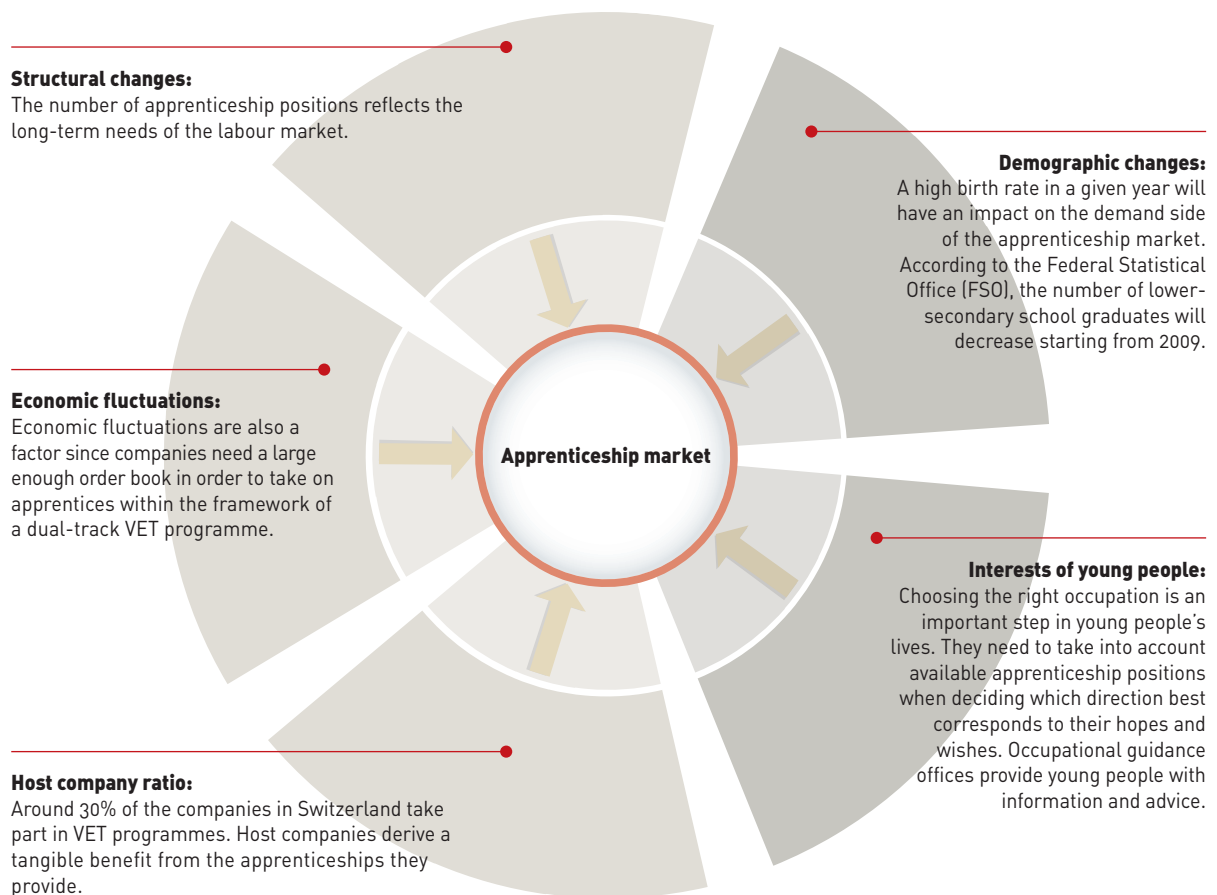
There is a wide range of CET courses. These courses are tailored to suit the requirements of the given occupation or profession. CET courses are mainly organised by the private sector.





THE APPRENTICESHIP MARKET

There are two sides to the apprenticeship market: the supply side (host companies offering apprenticeship positions) and the demand side (VET students 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.

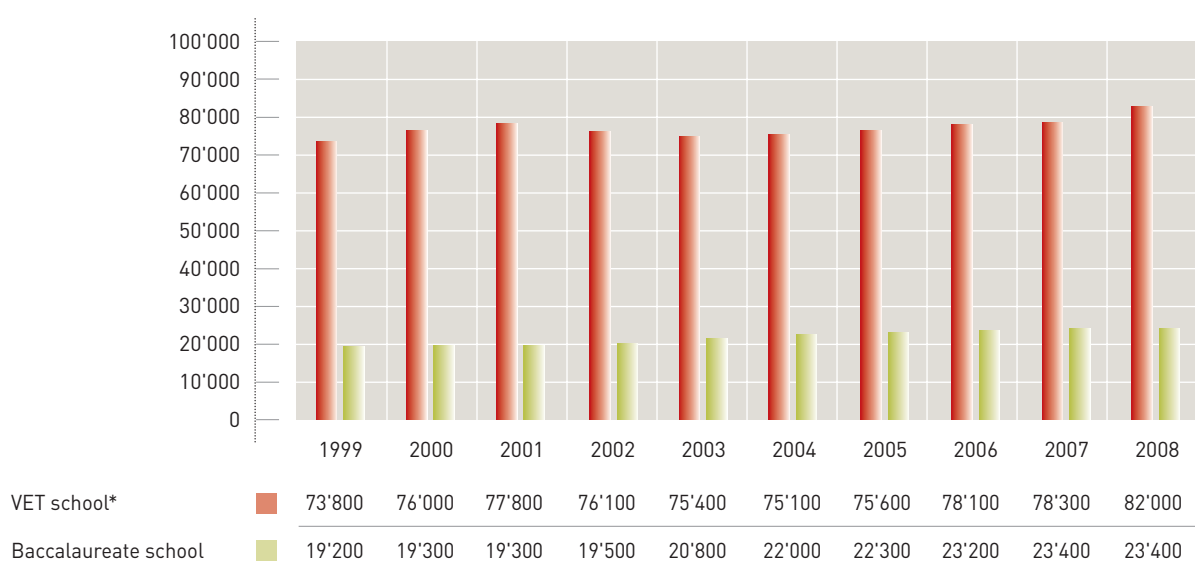
The most important apprenticeship marketing measures

- Information and advice on careers
- Apprenticeship records
- Creation of host company networks
- Provision of bridge-year courses (mainly to prepare students for VET programmes)
- 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.

Students entering upper-secondary level



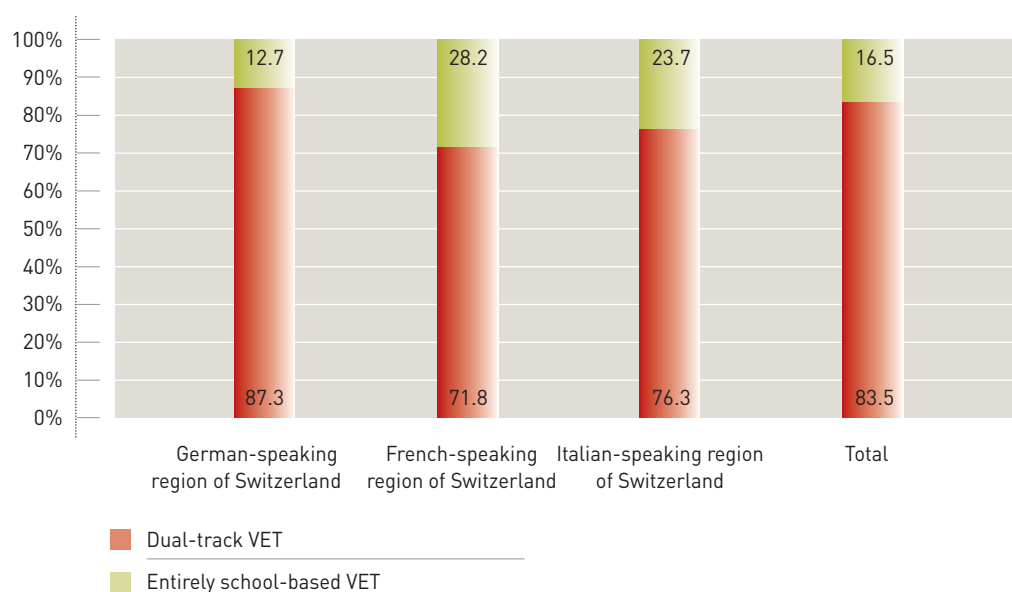
Students entering VET programmes: dual-track programmes predominate



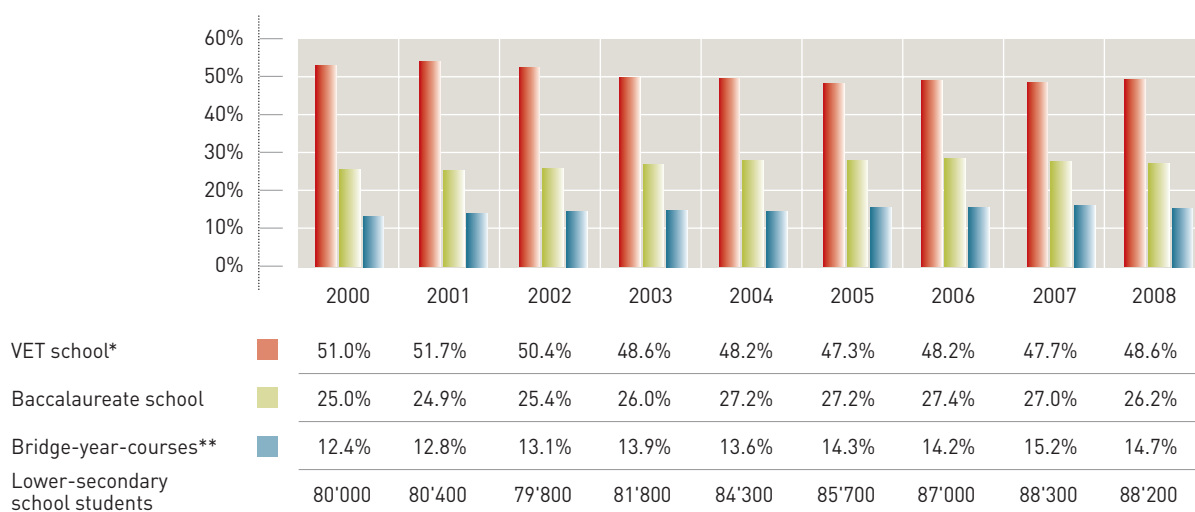
* incl. students enrolled in full-time curriculum (commercial schools and IT schools), without informal two-year apprenticeships

** incl. commercial schools and IT schools

Vocational education and training by linguistic region in 2008



Student enrolment ratios immediately after lower-secondary



Broad range of bridge-year courses

Upon completion of compulsory education, the vast majority of lower-secondary school students enrol directly at upper-secondary level in either a baccalaureate, specialised or VET school. Bridge-year 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 learn a foreign language abroad.

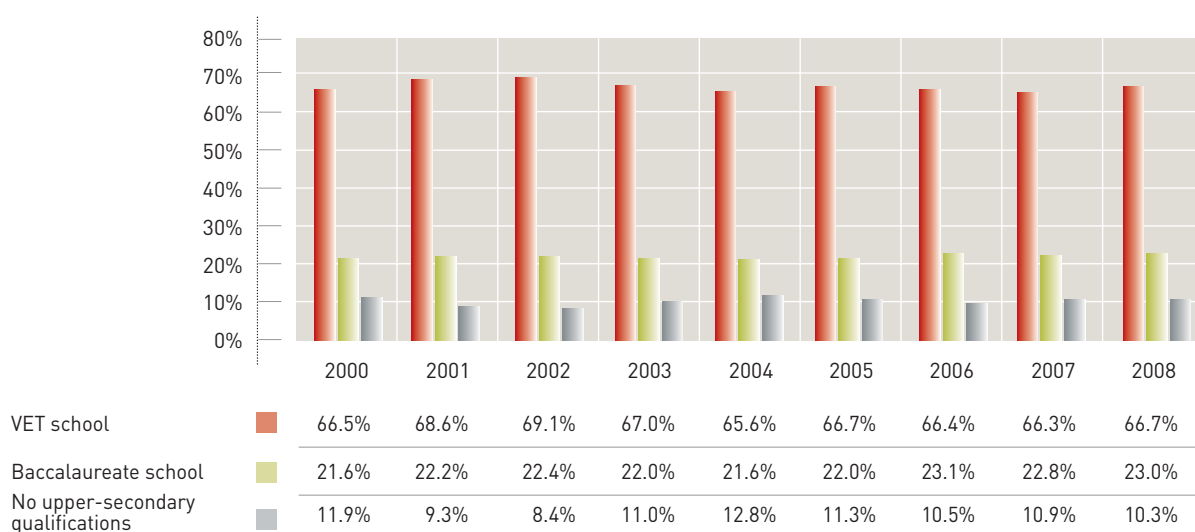
* incl. informal two-year apprenticeships

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

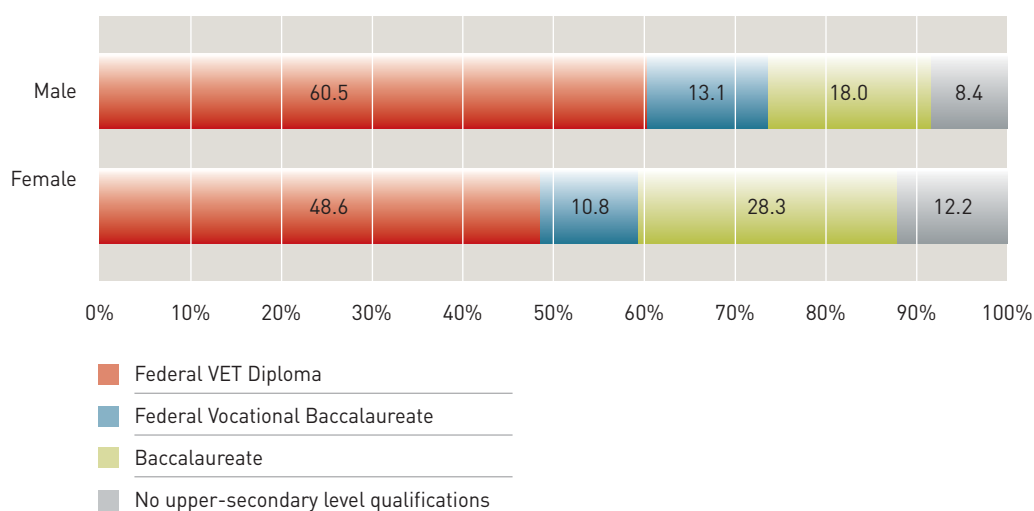
GRADUATION RATE OF 90 PERCENT

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

Upper-secondary level graduation rates



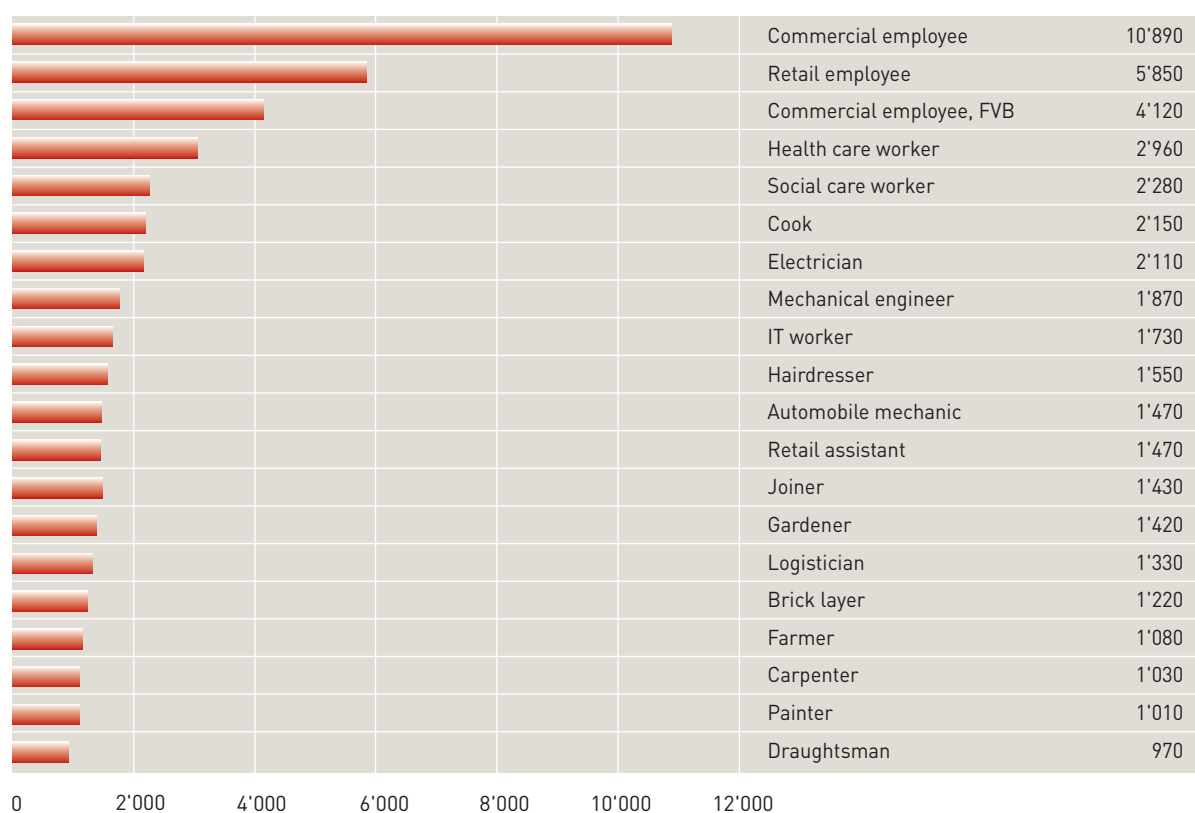
Completed upper-secondary level education and training in 2008



THE 20 MOST POPULAR 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.

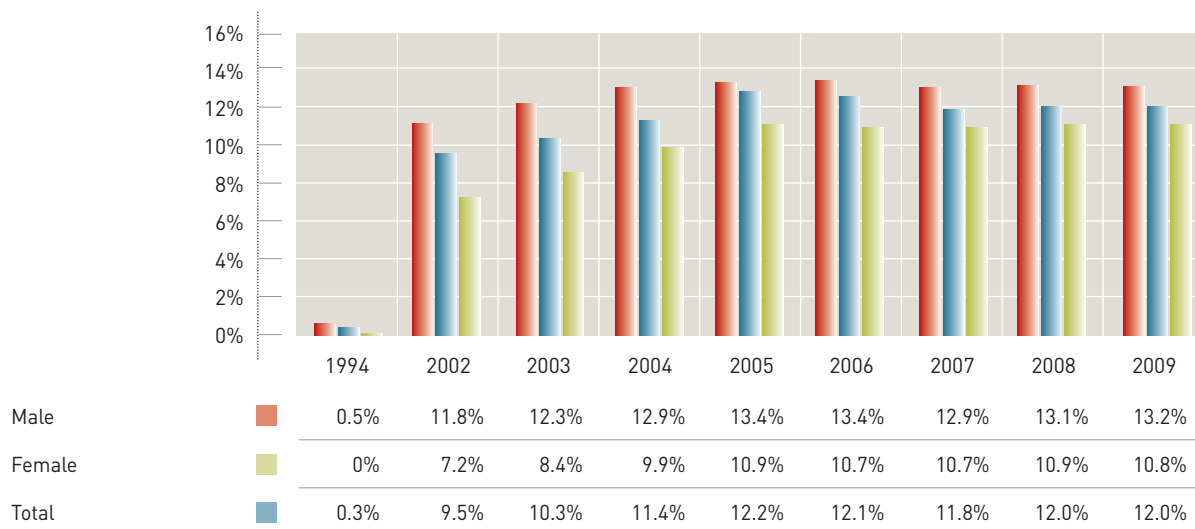
Number of newly enrolled VET students in 2009



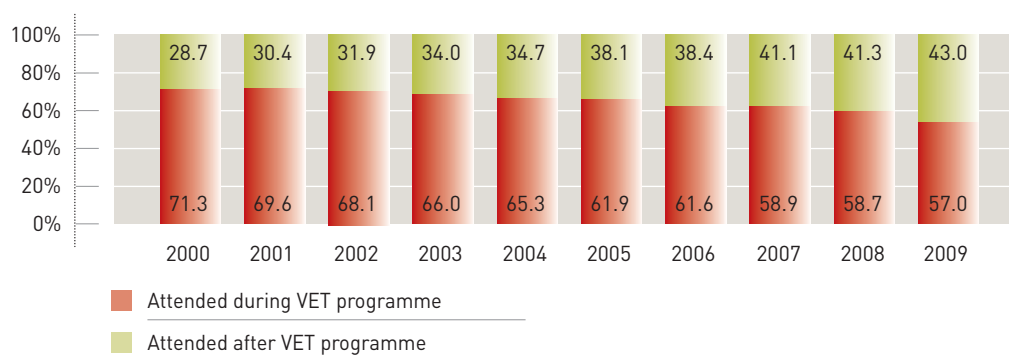
FVB: A SUCCESS STORY

The Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB) was introduced in 1994. It is awarded to VET students 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 Switzerland's two federal institutes of technology (FIT) is also possible.

Percentage of VET graduates who also obtain an FVB



Attendance of FVB preparatory courses



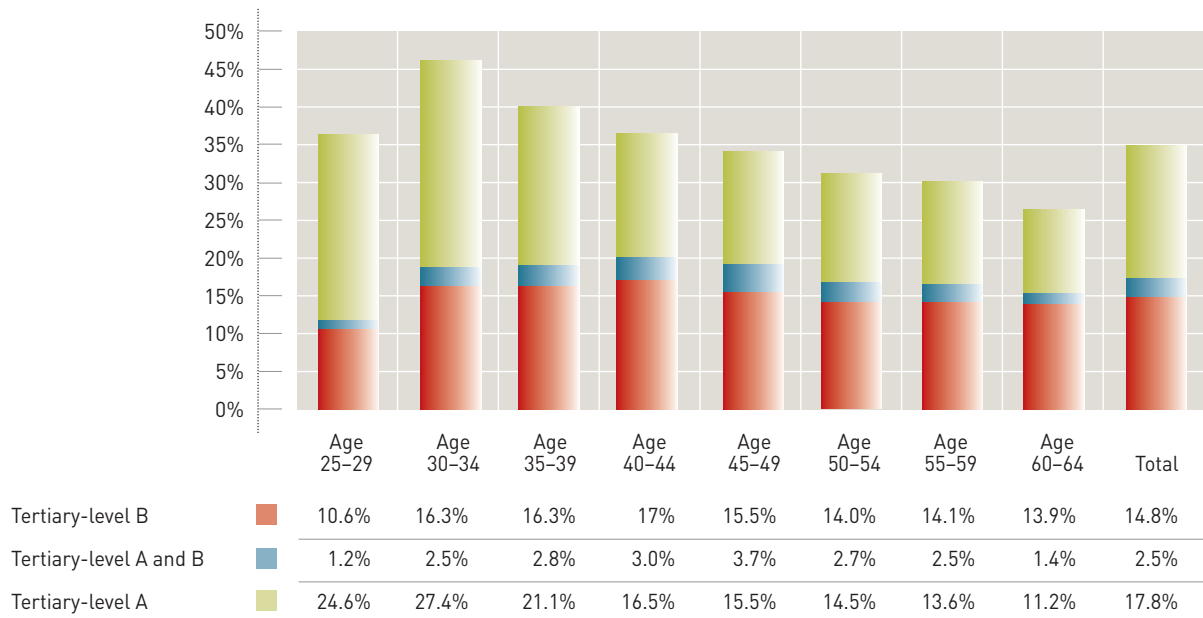
Proportion of FVB holders who enrolled in a UAS degree programme

Immediate enrolment	24.0%	24.8%	20.6%	19.9%	18.9%	19.3%	19.5%	21.3%
Enrolment after one year	14.4%	13.5%	16.3%	15.7%	17.1%	19.3%	20.4%	
Enrolment after two or more years	17.3%	16.9%	17.0%	15.9%	14.7%			
Total	55.7%	55.2%	53.9%	51.5%	50.6%			
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009

INCREASING NUMBER OF TERTIARY-LEVEL QUALIFICATION HOLDERS

The number of tertiary-level qualification holders has been increasing steadily. In 2009, one-third of the population had a tertiary-level A or B qualification.

Tertiary-level qualifications: Education level by age group (2009)



Tertiary-level B qualifications by type

PET college degree	3'400	3'500	4'000	4'000	4'000	4'100	4'100	7'200
Advanced Federal PET Diploma	3'000	3'000	3'200	2'600	2'900	2'600	2'800	2'700
Federal PET Diploma	9'500	12'400	11'400	12'200	13'200	11'700	12'500	12'200
Other PET qualification	8'500	8'000	10'600	10'500	9'400	8'800	8'200	5'400
Total	24'400	26'800	29'200	29'300	29'500	27'200	27'600	27'500
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009

SWISS VET/PET FUNDING

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

Public funding

The cantons are responsible for implementing VET/PET programmes. As such they provide at least three-fourths of public funding. Under the new Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act (VPETA), the Confederation will increase its share of public funding of the VET/PET sector to one-fourth of the total cost. 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 sector currently stands for around twelve per cent of total public funding in Switzerland. In 2009, a total of CHF 3.4 billion was allocated to the VET/PET sector.

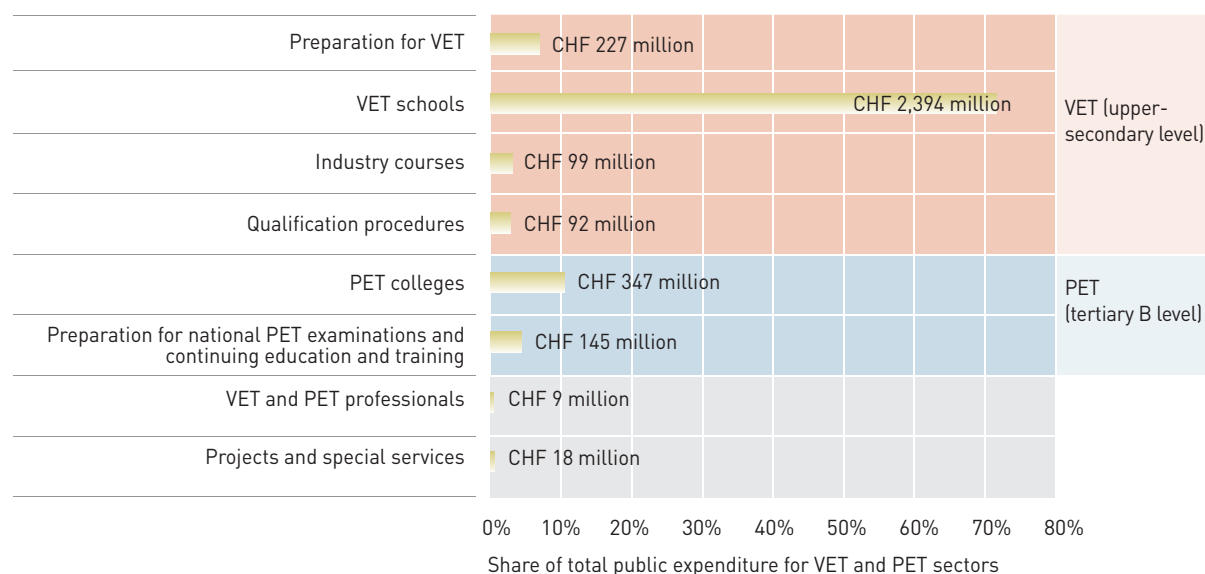
Professional organisations

Professional organisations provide both services and funding to the VET/PET sector: they do the groundwork, run their own training centres and promote specific occupations. Generally speaking, host companies stand to benefit from taking part in VET and PET programmes. According to a cost/benefit study conducted in 2004, gross costs of involvement in VET/PET programmes amounted to CHF 4.7 billion. This figure was outweighed by the productive output generated by VET apprentices and PET trainees, which amounted to CHF 5.2 billion.

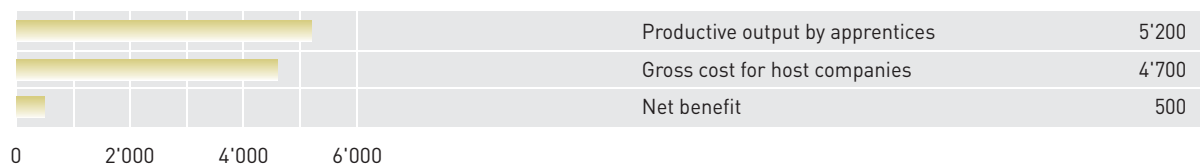
VET/PET funds

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 involvement in VET/PET programmes. The Confederation may declare some VET/PET funds to be of general interest and therefore mandatory for all companies within a given economic branch.

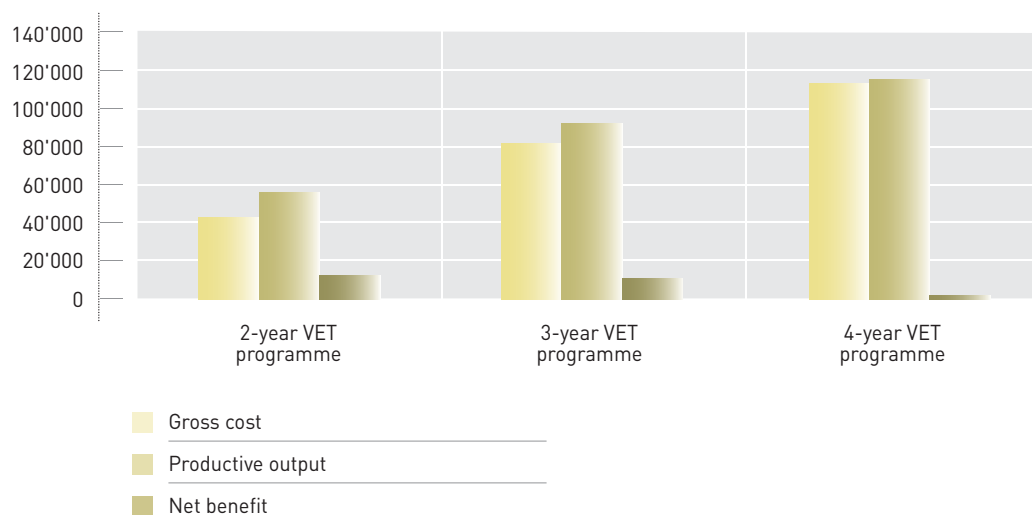
Public expenditure for VET/PET sector in 2009



Cost/benefit ratio for Swiss companies involved in VET programmes, in CHF million, survey year 2004



Cost/benefit ratio by programme duration, survey year 2004





VET AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Maintaining a very close correlation with the needs of the labour market, Switzerland's VET and PET sectors have proven to be a successful model. The Confederation therefore seeks to draw greater international attention to the merits of combined school/work-based (dual) approaches 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 Copenhagen objectives. The Federal Office for Professional Education and Training (OPET) represents Switzerland in this process. 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 for education and training (LLP), which includes a sub-project "Leonardo da Vinci" that is specifically devoted to the VET sector.

www.ch-go.ch

OECD studies on VET systems

In 2009, Switzerland took part in two OECD country studies on VET and VET innovations: the first study report published was "Learning for Jobs" and the second "Systemic Innovations in VET". Switzerland was praised in both reports. In 2011, Switzerland will be serving 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 the international education, research and innovation strategy 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 VET approach have been 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 European and world skills competitions. The next WorldSkills Competition will be held in London in October 2011.

www.swiss-skills.ch*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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*

VET Graduate Employment Barometer

Monitors changes in VET student job prospects immediately after graduation on the basis of existing supply and demand on the labour market. The barometer is the result of analysis of current job postings.

www.bbt.admin.ch/entree-vie-prof*

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/PET programmes.

www.ffb.unibe.ch

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*

Recognition of non-formal education and training

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

www.validacquis.ch*

Leading Houses

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

www.bbt.admin.ch/vetresearch



Host company label

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

www.vignette.berufsbildung.ch*

Website on Switzerland's VET/PET sector

This Website provides information about Switzerland's VET/PET sector as well as important aspects.

www.berufsbildung.ch*

Directory of occupations

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

www.bbt.admin.ch/ldp*

Web site on Switzerland's VET/PET sector

This Web site provides information about Switzerland's VET/PET sector as well as important aspects.

www.berufsbildungplus.ch*

Portal for occupational, educational and career guidance

www.berufsberatung.ch*

Swiss education server

www.educa.ch

Electronic VET/PET newsletter

www.panorama.ch*

VET/PET Lexicon

www.lex.berufsbildung.ch*

Federal Statistical Office (FSO)

www.education-stat.admin.ch

Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET)

www.ehb-schweiz.ch

Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)

www.edk.ch

* Information available in French and German only.

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www.education-stat.admin.ch
Page 19: University of Bern's Centre for Research in Economics of Education and Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET)

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Contact

Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology, Effingerstrasse 27, CH-3003 Bern,
Telefon +41 (0)31 322 21 29, berufsbildung@bbt.admin.ch, www.bbt.admin.ch