

**ICELAND**

**Summary  
Country Report, REFERNET Cedefop**

**and**

**Summary report on Vocational Education and  
Training (VET) for learners with Special  
Educational Needs (SEN)**



## CONTENTS

<b>1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Diagram of the education and training system.....	4
1.2 Definitions.....	4
1.3 Objectives and priorities of the national policy development areas of VET.....	5
1.4 Institutional and legislative framework for IVET .....	5
1.5 Types of teacher and trainer occupations in VET .....	6
1.6 Systems and mechanisms for the anticipation of skill needs .....	6
1.7 Practices to match VET provision with skill needs .....	7
1.8. Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment in IVET.....	7
1.9 Funding for initial vocational education and training .....	7
1.10 References .....	8
<b>2 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS.....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 Population .....	9
2.2 Organisation and Provision of VET programmes.....	9
2.2.1 <i>IVET system options for SEN learners: lower and upper secondary levels, apprenticeship training and other youth programmes.</i> .....	9
2.2.2 <i>Different types of educational/VET settings</i> .....	9
2.2.3 <i>The curricula of VET programmes, the assessment procedures, types of qualifications and assessment criteria (e.g. flexibility on curricula composition and individual adaptations, diplomas etc.)</i> .....	9
2.3 VET programmes and employment.....	9
2.3.1 <i>Strategies and practices used to match the local labour market needs with the skills acquired by learners in the course of the VET programmes</i> .....	9
2.4 Data (relating to learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 years old and enrolled in VET programmes in the academic year 2010/2011 and relating to their transition to employment) ..	9
2.4.2 <i>Data on how many of these learners are enrolled in mainstream VET programmes, how many are enrolled in special units within mainstream VET settings and how many are enrolled in special VET programmes.</i> .....	10
2.4.3 <i>Data on the number and percentage of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in comparison with the number and percentage of the general youth population of the same age enrolled in VET programmes, at national and/or local level.</i> .....	10
2.4.4 <i>Brief definition and explanation of “drop out”. Data concerning the drop out rate of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in comparison with the drop out rate of the general youth population, at national and/or local level.</i> .....	10



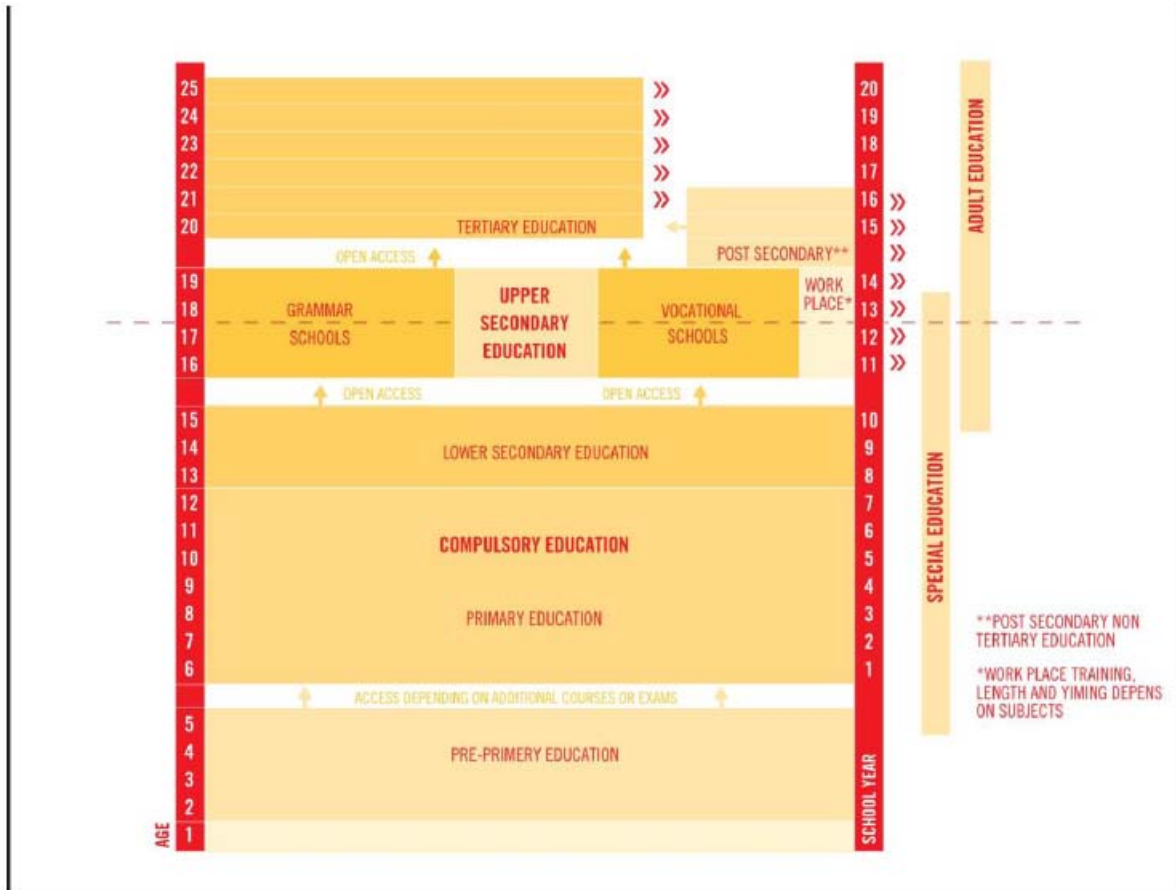
---

2.4.5 Data on the transition rate of learners with SEN from VET to employment in comparison with the transition rate of the general youth population from VET to employment at national and/or local level .....	10
2.5 Legislation and policy .....	10
2.5.1 Brief description of existing legislation .....	10
2.5.2 Main objectives and priorities of the national/regional policy relating to VET for learners with SEN and the transition from VET to employment .....	10
2.5.3 Roles and responsibilities within the institutional framework.....	11
2.5.4 The actors involved in improving standards and evaluating the VET programmes on offer for learners with SEN, relating to the job market.....	11
2.6. VET teachers, trainers and other professionals .....	11
2.6.1 Information on the VET staff (teachers, trainers, career counsellors, transition officers etc.) .....	11
2.6.2 Information on the careers/employment guidance and counselling services offered to learners with SEN who are enrolled in VET programmes .....	11
2.7 Funding .....	11



# 1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

## 1.1 Diagram of the education and training system



## 1.2 Definitions

### PRE-VOCATIONAL OR PRE-TECHNICAL EDUCATION (UNDIRBÚNINGUR UNDIR STARFSMENNTUN):

Education which is mainly designed to introduce participants to the world of work and to prepare them for entry into vocational or technical education programmes. Successful completion of such programmes does not yet lead to a labour-market relevant vocational or technical qualification. For a programme to be considered as pre-vocational or pre-technical education, at least 25 per cent of its content has to be vocational or technical.

Source: ISCED 1997

### INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (GRUNNSTARFSMENNTUN):

Initial vocational education and training (IVET) is defined as training undertaken after full-time compulsory education to promote the acquisition of the necessary knowledge, skills and competences for entry to an occupation or group of occupations. It can be undertaken purely within a school-based and/or work-based environment. It includes apprenticeship



training (**SAMNINGSBUNDIÐ NÁM**). It is the most common form of VET. Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

**VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (STARFSMENNTUN)**: Education which is mainly designed to lead participants to acquire the practical skills, know-how and understanding necessary for employment in a particular occupation or trade or class of occupations or trades. Successful completion of such programmes leads to a labour-market relevant vocational qualification recognized by the competent authorities in the country in which it is obtained (e.g. Ministry of Education, employers' associations, etc.). Source: *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "International Standard Classification of Education - ISCED 1997", Paris, November 1997*

**TECHNICAL EDUCATION (TÆKNIMENNTUN)**: Specialised vocational education and training dealing with technical aspects. This education usually takes place at post secondary level. Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

**TRAINING (ÞJÁLFUN)**: Usually referring to training taking place at work-places as part of apprenticeship programmes; Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

### 1.3 Objectives and priorities of the national policy development areas of VET

Since 2005, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (menntamálaráðuneyti), on behalf of the government, has lead intensive work towards the formation and implementation of a comprehensive national lifelong learning strategy. This resulted in 3 new laws on pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary education which were passed by Parliament in 2008. The main emphasis has been on “co-operation and continuity between school levels, improved governance, increased decentralisation and autonomy, quality assurance and evaluation and the enhancement and improvement of vocational education and training as well as flexibility and second chance for those who drop out... [T]he main emphasis [is] on flexibility and to make it easier to combine academic and vocational education so that those who choose vocational lines will have easier access to Higher Education Institutions should they choose to do so. (Source: Joint Report Education and Training 2010 National Report Iceland)

### 1.4 Institutional and legislative framework for IVET

The central government is in charge of all upper secondary and tertiary education (giving specific framework to private institutions). Different ministries are participants: Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti), Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Industries and Innovation and Ministry of the Interior.

Regional and local authorities play no role in IVET as they are responsible for compulsory education only and at that level, no IVET is on offer.

The Occupational Councils (starfsgreinaráð) are the strongest link to the industry.

Policies: Two laws set the framework for IVET policy:

- the Compulsory School Act number 91/2008 it is stipulated that students have the right to partake in individual subjects at upper secondary level if they have shown the necessary skills (article 26);
- the Upper Secondary School Act (lög um framhaldsskóla – number 92/2008) gives the right of any pupil who has completed compulsory or equivalent education or is 16 years of age to enter upper secondary school (which includes IVET), where they have the rights to study for at least two years (source Upper Secondary School Act 92/2008 article 32. In article 25 it is stipulated that Occupational Councils for

different professions make curricula suggestions to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (menntamálaráðuneyti) for each profession. (article 2)

### 1.5 Types of teacher and trainer occupations in VET

According to the Acts on education and training (pre-primary, compulsory, upper secondary and the protection of the professional titles and rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and compulsory school head teachers) 87/2008 to be fully implemented by 1. July 2011, all teachers will be required to have a master's degree as either teachers or in a certified trade.

TYPE OF TEACHER/TRAINER	ROLES	SETTINGS
Practical subject teacher	Curriculum development, assessments, theoretical and general tuition in schools	Classrooms
Vocational theory subject teacher	Curriculum development, assessments, theoretical and hands-on tuition in schools	Workshops
General subject teacher (e.g. languages and social skills)	Curriculum development, assessments, theoretical and general tuition in schools	Classrooms
Work-place trainers	Hands-on tuition at a work-place	Work-places
Special education teachers	Curriculum development, assessments, theoretical and general tuition in schools	Classrooms
Special education trainers	Theoretical and hands-on tuition in schools	Classrooms and workshops

### 1.6 Systems and mechanisms for the anticipation of skill needs

There are two main methods used when anticipating skill needs:

- the formal approach which builds on interviews with selected people from the industry (employers and employees) on which the skills demands for each professions is later built. This is an approach which was developed through a Leonardo de Vinci project in 1998-2006
- an informal approach where key people from the industry sit together and discuss trends and perspectives and likely scenarios.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (menntamálaráðuneyti) uses both approaches in its work with the Occupational Councils (starfsgreinaráð) in formulating the National Curriculum Guide for each VET-programme. Each VET school has full liberty in introducing new study material, which in many cases is developed by individual teachers in each profession as they see new need arise. The industry makes constantly new and changed demands for different knowledge as new material and new technique is developed locally or imported. In order to survive in the competition for students, the schools are obliged to follow suit.



## 1.7 Practices to match VET provision with skill needs

The Occupational Councils (starfsgreinaráð) are formally responsible for providing the Ministry with advice on skills needs for their respective trades/industries, which involves making recommendations for new/altered qualifications.

In regulated professions, the curricula are developed by VET schools on the basis of guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (menntamálaráðuneyti). These are in turn drawn up in cooperation between the above Ministry and the Occupational Councils (starfsgreinaráð), which are appointed by social partners and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

According to the Upper Secondary School Act (article 11) a teacher at upper secondary school, who has worked for at least five years, can request a special study leave for the purpose of improving his/her knowledge and teaching ability.

## 1.8. Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment in IVET

The compulsory and upper secondary acts passed in 2008 both give all students the right to counselling given by a specialist. In the Act on Educational and Vocational Guidance Counsellors (number 35/2009) it is stipulated that only people who have specific permission from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture can use the title educational and vocational counsellors.

## 1.9 Funding for initial vocational education and training

The new laws passed in 2008 call for an increase of funding due to two factors:

- Teachers will gradually all obtain a master's certificate. It is likely that this will result in increased salary costs both for the state and the municipalities;
- Compulsory school students will be able to take more courses at upper secondary level without paying either school fees or for learning material. This means increased expenditure by the state, which is responsible for upper secondary education. These students are not likely to be many so it will not mean a major increase in funds.

**Venture fund** (Article 53 of the Upper Secondary School Act number 92/2008). It 'shall support development and innovation in school activities according to official policy and National Curriculum Guides. The fund shall be common for preschools, primary schools and upper secondary schools. Contributions shall be made to the fund according to the annual national budget.



**TABLE 1 - FUNDING FOR INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

<b>TYPES OF IVET</b>	<b>INSTITUTIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR FUNDING</b>	<b>PAY FOR*</b>
Regulated professions	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (menntamálaráðuneyti)	Education and training at schools
	Social Partners	Apprentices' salaries
	Individuals	School fees and study material
Health and welfare professionals	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	Education and training at schools
	Ministry of Health (heilbrigðisráðuneyti)	Salaries for trainees at hospitals
	Individuals	School fees and study material
Police officers	Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs (dóms- og kirkjumálaráðuneyti)	Education and training at schools plus salaries of trainees
Pilots	Individuals	Pay all costs
Non-regulated professions	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	Most of the training at schools
	Individuals	School fees and study material

*\*Precise information is not available on each partner's share of funding contribution.*

## 1.10 References

Stefánsdóttir, D and Ólafsson, P. (2009): Iceland. VET in Europe. Country Report. Report within the Framework of ReferNet Iceland. Thessaloniki: Cedefop.





## **2 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

### **2.1 Population**

The target group in the Icelandic project was aged 16-20 years so the Agency's definition provided for Iceland relates to that group perfectly.

### **2.2 Organisation and Provision of VET programmes**

*2.2.1 IVET system options for SEN learners: lower and upper secondary levels, apprenticeship training and other youth programmes.*

Again considering the target group aged 16-20 years, there are 34 upper secondary schools in Iceland, 23 of which offer special programmes for SEN pupils. In all of the upper secondary schools in Iceland there are approximately 29,000 pupils and in the special programmes in the 23 schools there are approximately 360 pupils.

*2.2.2 Different types of educational/VET settings*

In the 23 Icelandic upper secondary schools pupils with SEN are offered special programmes, as in b) and c).

*2.2.3 The curricula of VET programmes, the assessment procedures, types of qualifications and assessment criteria (e.g. flexibility on curricula composition and individual adaptations, diplomas etc.)*

A special curriculum is offered within the special programmes for SEN pupils, which is based on the National Curriculum Guidelines. These guidelines are now being revised, together with the special curriculum. Assessment is more or less provided in the form of written statements rather than in numbers on an individual level. Every student receives his own diploma when he finishes the four year special programme for SEN pupils. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is responsible for the external assessment of the upper secondary schools.

### **2.3 VET programmes and employment**

*2.3.1 Strategies and practices used to match the local labour market needs with the skills acquired by learners in the course of the VET programmes*

We have no centralised means by which to match the needs of the labour market to the needs of pupils with SEN; every upper secondary school that offers special programmes for SEN pupils has its own way doing this. However, the Ministry of Education has on its agenda the drafting of guidelines for such strategies in the new curricula. This is intended to be ready in 2015.

### **2.4 Data (relating to learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 years old and enrolled in VET programmes in the academic year 2010/2011 and relating to their transition to employment)**

As stated in question 2.2 above, we have approximately 360 pupils in special programmes for SEN in 23 upper secondary schools.



*2.4.2 Data on how many of these learners are enrolled in mainstream VET programmes, how many are enrolled in special units within mainstream VET settings and how many are enrolled in special VET programmes.*

This information is unfortunately not available in Iceland.

*2.4.3 Data on the number and percentage of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in comparison with the number and percentage of the general youth population of the same age enrolled in VET programmes, at national and/or local level*

The closest information available to answer this question is the same as in question 2, which relates to all students in Icelandic upper secondary schools. Unfortunately we were not able to find out the percentage for VET students only.

*2.4.4 Brief definition and explanation of “drop out”. Data concerning the drop out rate of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in comparison with the drop out rate of the general youth population, at national and/or local level.*

‘Statistics Iceland’ defines Early School leaving (ESL) as the percentage of students who have been listed in the student statistics in one year and are not included in the statistics the following year, excluding students who have graduated or are deceased.

Every pupil with SEN who is enrolled in the special programmes has the right to stay in the programme for four years. There are almost no drop outs in this group! However, in the general youth population at national level there is around a 30% drop out rate for students aged 16-24 years.

*2.4.5 Data on the transition rate of learners with SEN from VET to employment in comparison with the transition rate of the general youth population from VET to employment at national and/or local level*

This information is not available at this moment but the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. will be providing the upper secondary schools that offer special programmes to SEN pupils with guidelines for transition plans from school to the next level or next year. Subsequently, the Ministry will gather information from the schools in connection with the transition plans. Data on the transition rate for other VET students is unfortunately not available at the moment.

## **2.5 Legislation and policy**

### *2.5.1 Brief description of existing legislation*

A new Act on the upper secondary level was adopted in 2008. In article 34 of the law, pupils with disabilities and special needs are given the right to have the support needed. A special regulation has just been adopted to stipulate this right further. There is rich cooperation between the local government and nongovernmental organisations in terms of pupils with SEN. The transition from VET to employment is not formalised, but in some cases there is cooperation between upper secondary schools and sheltered employment or employment with special support.

### *2.5.2 Main objectives and priorities of the national/regional policy relating to VET for learners with SEN and the transition from VET to employment*

According to the new regulation for pupils with disabilities and SEN, the upper secondary schools are supposed to work on a transition plan for every pupil in the special



programmes. The Ministry of Education will offer guidelines to the schools, based on the European Agency's project. See also the answer given to question 14 below.

### *2.5.3 Roles and responsibilities within the institutional framework*

The Icelandic Parliament authorises the law on the educational system and the Government decides on the costs required to implement the law. The Ministry of Education makes direct contract with the upper secondary schools. As Iceland is a small country in terms of inhabitants (roughly 300,000 inhabitants) the system is fairly simple and there is rich cooperation between partners involved in the educational system. We have no National Board in Iceland.

### *2.5.4 The actors involved in improving standards and evaluating the VET programmes on offer for learners with SEN, relating to the job market*

The Ministry of Education has recently carried out an evaluation of the special programmes in the 23 upper secondary schools. The outcome is now being worked upon in the Ministry and will be used to reform and revise the curriculum for the programmes. One of the items evaluated in this project was the status of transition to the labour market after the four year programmes. The plan is to offer upper secondary schools support and guidelines to improve and increase the cooperation between the schools and the labour market. This will be worked on from next autumn and the new guidelines will be ready in 2014.

## **2.6. VET teachers, trainers and other professionals**

### *2.6.1 Information on the VET staff (teachers, trainers, career counsellors, transition officers etc.)*

- A) Every teacher in upper secondary school is required to have a Masters degree in education. The career counsellors need a Masters degree in education and career counselling. Both degrees are 5 years in duration at University. No special qualification is required for the trainers and we do not have special transition officers.
- B) No formal initial training is offered to the staff.
- C) Many schools offer in-service training, both for the staff and the employers who offer the SEN pupils work or sheltered work after the four year programme in the upper secondary schools. However, this is not formalised, so the Ministry of Education does not require this training.

### *2.6.2 Information on the careers/employment guidance and counselling services offered to learners with SEN who are enrolled in VET programmes*

Unfortunately, the guidance and counselling services in upper secondary schools are mostly segregated, i.e. the pupils with SEN do not have direct access to these professionals. This has come under criticism, especially from the staff in the special programmes and, naturally, the pupils themselves. This information came to light in the above-mentioned evaluation and will be taken into consideration when the reformation work begins, starting next autumn.

## **2.7 Funding**

Almost all upper secondary schools in Iceland are funded by the State; we have only two private schools at the upper secondary level. The schools that offer special programmes receive a separate finance budget for the programmes, based on the needs of the students. Concerning a) and b), we have no special financial support or incentives for the



---

learners with SEN or their families, nor for the companies that employ the young people. However, a special programme financed by the local municipality of Reykjavík is offered to some pupils leaving the four year programme, in which they receive special support in finding a job and the employer receives financial support for some time, depending on the needs of the employee and the length of employment. Such professional and financial support will be further examined by the Ministry of Education as part of the revision and reform taking place over the next few years.