

SWITZERLAND

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



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1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

1.1 Population

The legal definition of SEN, as mentioned in “Special Need Education – Country Data 2010”, includes most of the learners concerned, as most of the learners that participated in the project “PrA” (presented in the study visit in Switzerland) attended a school which is regulated by the inter cantonal-agreement.

For learners who enter a “practical education and training PrA”, the inter-cantonal agreement is no longer relevant. Instead, they are covered by the law on invalidity insurance, article 16, which regulates initial vocational education and training for people with a disability. This article provides that invalidity insurance should pay for the higher costs of VET programmes resulting from a “disability” (i.e. costs of special VET institutions).

It is important to understand that the term “disability“ in Switzerland refers to the individual’s working capacity/ability to earn money: the invalidity insurance “insures” the gap between the income the person would earn without disability and the income the person is actually earning.

Learners who will not be able to earn at least 2.55 Swiss Francs per hour following the VET programme are excluded from the VET financed by the invalidity insurance and, as a consequence, are excluded from all VET programmes.

1.2 Organisation and Provision of VET programmes

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

Specifically for SEN learners:

“PrA- Practical education and training” (2 years) (600 learners each year)

Invalidity insurance VET programme (1 year) (approx 300 learners each year)

For learners *with or without* SEN:

Two year VET programmes leading to a federal diploma;

Three or four year VET programmes leading to a federal diploma

In extraordinary circumstances: the possibility to change from one programme to the another (permeability).

There is no statistical data available showing how many learners with SEN are in the different separated VET programmes or in the regular VET programmes.

1.2.2 Different types of educational/VET settings

- a) Mainstream educational/VET settings, where learners with SEN are included in mainstream VET courses,
- b) Special VET units attended by learners with SEN within mainstream educational/VET settings,
- c) Special educational/VET settings addressed to learners with SEN.
- d) Others

a) This option is rare.



b) All learners with SEN doing a VET programme leading to a federal diploma attend **the same school** as learners without SEN. These schools have the possibility to offer special support for learners with SEN if needed. The practical training however, takes place **at least in the first year, in a special VET unit**, whereas learners without SEN are always trained in a regular enterprise.

For learners doing a PrA – special VET programme for learners with SEN only - there is only one school in Switzerland that offers the possibility for learners with SEN to learn in a special unit within the regular school. Another school is examining this possibility, but there is an increase of learners doing their VET programme directly in an enterprise in the regular labour market and schooling only taking place within a special educational setting.

c) Most learners who cannot follow a VET programme leading to a federal diploma are trained in special educational VET structures.

1.2.3 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.)

VET courses leading to a federal diploma (2, 3 or 4 years): same curricula for learners with or without SEN. However, students with SEN have the opportunity to have the exam adapted to their special needs, so that they have the same conditions as learners without SEN.

- PrA- the use of individualised curricula is dependent on the resources of the learner with SEN, but whenever it is possible and sensible, the PrA curricula relates to the official curricula of the two year VET programmes. “As standardised as possible, as individualised as necessary.”

1.3 VET programmes and employment

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

PrA: work experience in the open labour market allows for a good link with the labour market: a learner with SEN doing a PrA “supported education” carries out their VET for at least one whole year in the open labour market.

VET courses leading to a federal diploma (2, 3 or 4 years): curricula development is carried out in close cooperation with the professional organisations representing employers → this allows curricula to better reflect the actual labour market.

1.4 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)

1.4.1 Data on the number of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 years old who are enrolled in VET programmes, at national and/or local level.

No data available

1.4.2 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.

No data available

1.4.3 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

No data available

1.4.4 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.

Definition of *Drop out*: Youngsters who are out of the system and without school or vocational and professional qualifications

Early school leavers (general population): 2009 : 5-10%

Drop out during vocational and professional training (general population): 2008 : 10% of the population

Drop out during tertiary-level training (general population): no data available.

Objective for 2015: reduce the percentage of drop outs during vocational and professional training to 5%.

Drop outs in the population with SEN : no data available

Source : Learning for jobs; OECD reviews of vocational education and training – Switzerland

1.4.5 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

PrA: about 1/3 of learners with SEN do make the transition from VET to employment. (No data available for a comparison with students without SEN); about 10% of PrA learners can do a follow up VET programme leading to a federal diploma.

1.5 Legislation and policy

1.5.1 Brief description of existing legislation

Legislation

- BBG = Federal Act, 13th December 2002 on Vocational and Professional Education and Training; Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act (VPETA). This law regulates the entire vocational and professional education and training system (EBA and EFZ qualifications, except the PrA, which is a special VET programme proposed by associations (ex: INSOS, INSIEME) defending the interests and rights of students with SEN.
- IVG = Federal Act, 19th June 1959 on Invalidity Insurance; Invalidity Insurance Act (InvIA): Professional programme for disabled people. Programme financed by the Invalidity Insurance.
- Invalidity Insurance Circular 299, 30th May 2011: ensures the financing of the professional education of disabled youngsters in the following manner: one year of education for those candidates capable of earning at least CHF 2.55 per hour once they've accomplished the educational programme; two years of PrA for all candidates who are likely to enter the primary labour market
- Invalidity Insurance Circular 252, October 2007: financing of job coaching.

Institutional framework



The implementation of VET is a mission shouldered by the Swiss Confederation (strategic management and development), the cantons (implementation and supervision) and the professional organisations (curricula and apprenticeships).

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

1. Integration in the open labour market as much as possible, both during the training and afterwards.
2. To reduce the drop out rate during the time between school and employment/employment and work by means of job coaching, case management, vocational advisory service/assessments before choosing a programme, promoting employment by providing active assistance in finding employment and giving advice to employers
3. "Return on investment": VET courses financed by the invalidity insurance should lead to a minimum wage which reduces the invalidity pension.

Individual vocational advisory service/assessments

Training at an individual level

Services are offered depending on the young person's individual situation.

Employment service after completion of training

1.5.3 Roles and responsibilities within the institutional framework

PrA: INSOS defines minimal quality standards for institutions offering special VET programmes (PrA courses); the PrA has been evaluated by the Interkantonale Hochschule für Heilpädagogik → the results of this evaluation will influence the further development of the PrA

(<http://www.bsv.admin.ch/praxis/forschung/publikationen/index.html?lang=de&download=NHzLpZig7t,Inp6l0NTU042l2Z6ln1acy4Zn4Z2qZpnO2Yuc2Z6gpJCDfIF7qGym162dpYbUzd,Gpd6emK2Oz9aGodetmqaN19Xl2ldvoaCUZ,s-.pdf>)

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

Responsibility for VET programmes (on upper secondary and tertiary levels) is shared by the Confederation, the cantons and professional organisations. This cooperation is a fundamental principle of the VET system and is set forth in Art. 1 of the Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act (VPETA). Together the three partners ensure a high level of quality of VET programmes and an adequate number of apprenticeships/traineeships for VET students.

The **Confederation** (OPET) is mainly responsible for development and quality assurance for the entire system and for the comparability and transparency of courses throughout Switzerland.

The **Cantons** are responsible for implementing and supervising the VET system. Each of the 26 cantons has its own VET agency. Cantonal activities specifically cover establishing vocational schools as well as implementing VET programmes in these schools, advising the parties to apprenticeship contracts (VET students and host companies) and finding a sufficient number of companies willing to provide VET apprenticeships (apprenticeship marketing).

Professional organisations (which include trade associations, social partners and other organisations and VET providers) are responsible for establishing and updating the



content of vocational and professional education programmes. This ensures that the education and training programmes respond to economical needs, match the qualifications needed and take into account the actual number of jobs available. Professional organisations work with the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET) and the Cantons on the legislation and on the enactment of VET ordinances.

1.6. VET teachers, trainers and other professionals

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

- PrA: A minimum of a federal diploma of a three or four year VET programme, plus further education either in the professional field or in the “agogical” field (ideally a double qualification in the profession being trained and “Agogik”)
- EBA/EFZ: at least a federal VET diploma, 2 years work experience in the professional field,
- Teachers: Full-time vocational teachers. There are different programmes at the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET)

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

Students with SEN have the opportunity to receive counselling through the invalidity insurance. More importantly, there are usually counsellors within special VET programmes (job coaches, psychologists).

1.7 Funding

- The invalidity insurance pays the for VET programmes for students with SEN. The invalidity insurance is mainly financed by the contributions of employers and employees. A small part is financed by the confederation.
- The invalidity insurance also pays employers to offer VET programmes to students with SEN or to offer employment after a VET programme.