

Foreword

As tertiary education has expanded, it has diversified both in respect of institutional missions and in forms of study. Higher vocational and professional tertiary programmes include a variety of programmes, such as associate degrees, higher technical programmes, professional bachelor qualifications and professional examinations. From a policy perspective, there are strong arguments for countries to monitor professional programmes and to benchmark their own experience against that of other countries, so as to develop their tertiary offer in a constructive way.

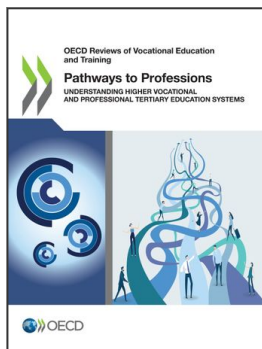
There is a policy debate about the best way in which to prepare people not only for a first job, but also a lifelong career and successful participation in society – and more broadly, about the type of education and training that can help achieve the desired mix of skills in an economy and society. It is sometimes argued that professionally-oriented programmes are most suited to ensure a smooth initial entry into the labour market. On the other hand, it is sometimes argued that programmes with more general orientation equip young people with sound generic skills, which will allow them to adapt to new requirements throughout their careers. This debate has no simple answer, but the first step is to establish reliable comparative data on how different countries prepare young people for the labour market.

The introduction of the International Standard Classification of Education 2011 framework opened the door to better data: countries may now report programmes with professional or academic orientation at all tertiary levels. Yet better data are still waiting on the doorstep because the current lack of internationally agreed definitions to underpin data collections undermines comparative analysis. Admittedly, the task is challenging: there is a continuum of programme orientations, and no classification maps neatly onto all national education and training systems, which are structured differently across countries. But agreeing on a pragmatic way of distinguishing by orientation would allow yield large returns, unlocking the potential of ongoing data collections regarding professional tertiary education.

This report compares the higher vocational and professional tertiary education sector across OECD countries, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data. It describes types of programmes across countries and assesses data quality. It looks at pathways leading into professional programmes and transitions into further learning or the labour market, as well as the profile of learners served by professional programmes and links to the labour market. This report also seeks to improve the availability and quality of comparative data by advancing proposals to develop internationally agreed definitions of programme orientation at tertiary education levels to be used in future data collections.

This report was drafted by Viktória Kis and Simon Normandeau from the OECD Centre for Skills, under the supervision of Marieke Vandeweyer (manager of the VET team) and El Iza Mohamedou (head of the Centre for Skills). The report has benefited from comments provided by Mark Pearson (Deputy Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs), colleagues across the OECD, as well as the Group of National Experts (GNE) on VET. Administrative and editorial assistance was provided by Marie-Aurélien Elkurd and Jennifer Cannon from the OECD Centre for Skills.

This document was produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of the OECD member countries or the European Union.



From:

Pathways to Professions

Understanding Higher Vocational and Professional Tertiary Education Systems

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/a81152f4-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2022), "Foreword", in *Pathways to Professions: Understanding Higher Vocational and Professional Tertiary Education Systems*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/965574b9-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.