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Getting in: Enabling easier access to upper-secondary vocational education and training

This chapter presents what vocational educational training and training (VET) pathways are available for young humanitarian migrants and what barriers are faced by those migrants when entering substantive upper-secondary VET, notably apprenticeships. Barriers are faced by entry requirements that are difficult to attain in a short period time for newly arrived and effectiveness of preparatory measures and financial barriers. For work-based VET in particular, difficulties in connecting to employers and lack of social networks are addressed as well as employer discrimination when securing an apprenticeship. The chapter then lays out how countries and their VET systems can respond to such barriers to facilitate the entry of those migrants across OECD countries.

Challenges facing migrants getting into upper-secondary vocational education and training

Vocational education and training (VET) comprises a broad range of approaches and strategies that aim to enable the school-to-work transition for youth and prepare adults for new career opportunities. It can be composed of both school and workplace learning. In addition, depending on the country and its labour market, a VET system might place more or less priority on apprenticeship, basic skill proficiencies and qualifications (OECD, 2018^[1]).

Due to the general lack of data on refugees and asylum seekers, there is very limited knowledge on how many refugees and asylum seekers have entered VET. Nevertheless, countries where relevant data are available provide evidence on how migrant students fare compared to native students in regard to VET entry. The analysis of these countries shows that many young migrants and refugees struggle to achieve necessary pre-conditions such as language, academic proficiency and social network to get into VET, and a number of countries have implemented support measures for these students.

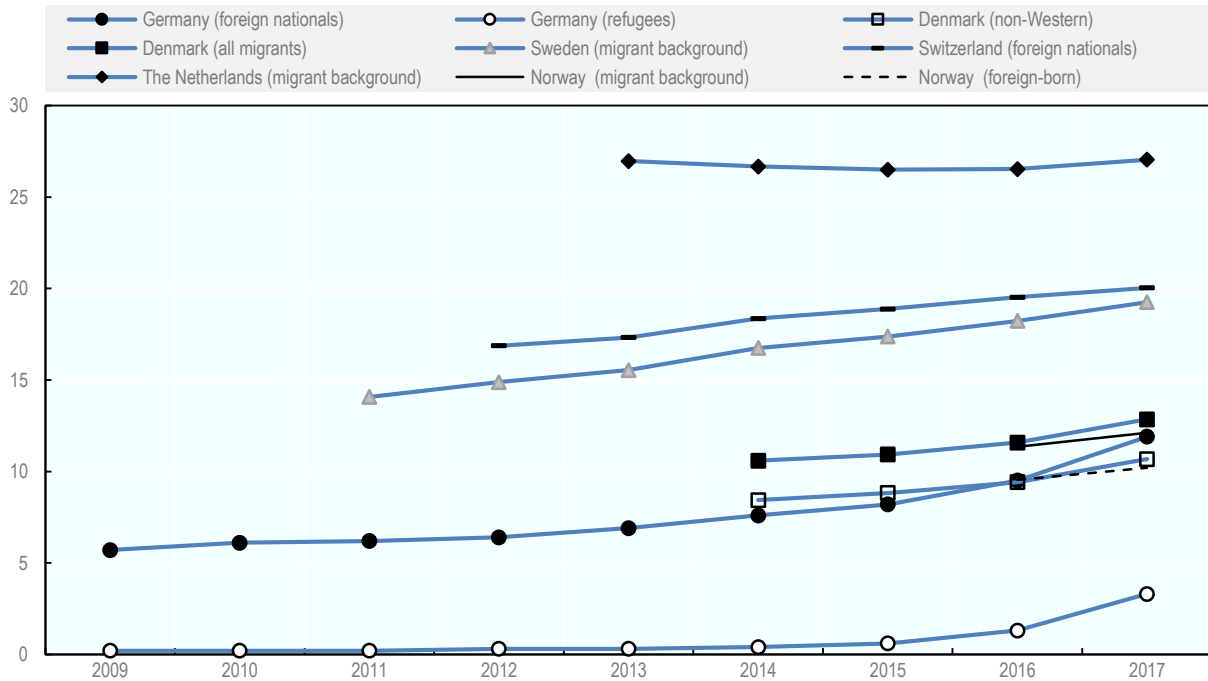
This section presents challenges that migrants face when entering VET and how VET systems across countries respond to those challenges.

Migrants are increasingly applying for, and entering, VET but are less successful in getting into VET, in particular apprenticeships

The share of migrant entrants in VET has increased in recent years in countries that have available data (Figure 4.1) – the definition of migrant students in these countries are different. The share is the highest in the Netherlands, but this is probably because of the high share of migrants in MBO 1 (Level 1 in school-based VET). The MBO 1 programme is roughly equivalent to a transitional programme (see Chapter 3) in the sense that it focuses on young people with a migrant background but without a prior qualification at a lower-secondary level or sufficient Dutch language skills (Cedefop, 2016^[2]). The share in Switzerland is comparatively high as 2-year EBA programmes, with lower entry requirements, attract migrant students. In Denmark, the share of migrant entrants to VET has also increased, in parallel with an increase of non-Western migrant students. Norway has seen a similar increase in recent years.

In Germany, the share of new migrant entrants to dual VET increased from 5.7% in 2009 to 11.9% in 2017, and for refugees from 0.2% to 3.3% (Figure 4.1). In Sweden, while the number and share of native entrants in VET has decreased, the number and share of migrant entrants has been increasing in recent years (Figure 4.1). In addition, there has been steady increase of application rates among migrants from 14% in 2011-12 to 18% in 2016-17 (Skolverket, 2017^[3]). In Finland, foreign-language students have been choosing VET more often than general upper-secondary education (ReferNet Finland, 2017^[4]).

Figure 4.1. The share of migrant entrants in VET has increased in recent years



Note: For Germany, the share refers to new apprenticeship contracts; foreign nationals include persons with only foreign nationality and refugees include persons from asylum countries (i.e. nationals from Eritrea, Nigeria, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan and the Syrian Arab Republic).

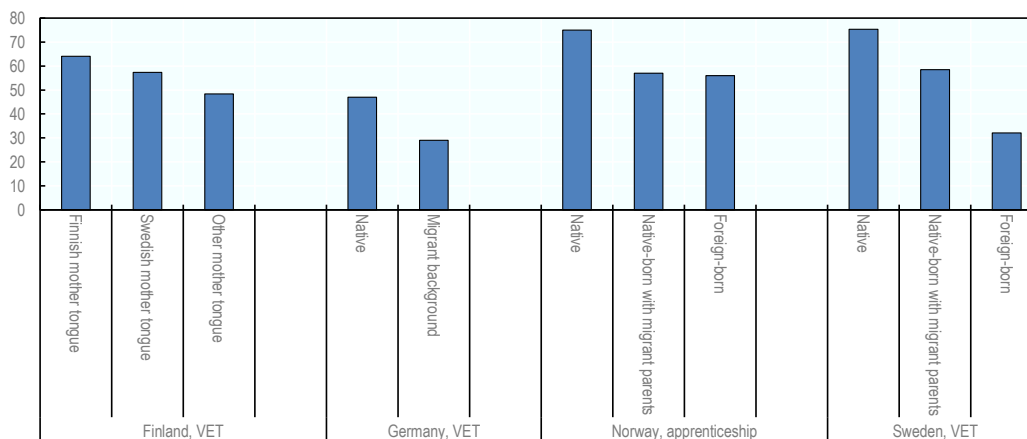
Source: Germany from BIBB (2018^[5]), *Datensystem Auszubildende (DAZUBI) Zusatztabellen. Ausländische Auszubildende in der dualen Berufsausbildung - nach einzelnen Nationalitäten, Deutschland 2008 bis 2017. Ergebnisse auf Basis der Berufsbildungsstatistik*, <https://www.bibb.de/de/1868.php>. Switzerland from Swiss Federal Statistics Office (2019^[6]), *Federal Statistics Office*, <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/catalogues-databases.html>. The Netherlands from Statistics Netherlands (2019^[7]), <https://data.overheid.nl/dataset/53971-mbo--deelnemers--niveau--leerweg--migratieachtergrond>. Sweden from the Ministry of Education in Kuczera, M. and S. Jeon, (2019^[8]), *Vocational Education and Training in Sweden*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/g2g9fac5-en>. Denmark from Statistics Denmark (2019^[9]), *Student Register*, <http://dst.dk/ext/uddannelse/Uddannelsesstabeller>.

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Despite the overall paucity of data, evidence from several OECD countries (Figure 4.2) indicates that the success rates of migrant students getting in VET is much lower compared to native students. In Germany, only 29% of applicants from a migrant background progressed to dual VET as compared to 47% of their native-born counterparts, based on the applicant survey (BIBB, 2016^[10]).¹ Importantly, even with the same school leaving qualification, young migrants were much less likely to progress to dual training. Despite considerable endeavours to secure a training place, they were significantly less likely to be invited to interviews or recruitment tests than young people without a migrant background (BIBB, 2016^[10]). In Norway, the success rates of migrant students in securing an apprenticeship contract is about 15-20 percentage points lower than that of native students in 2015-17 (Thorud, 2018^[11]). The gaps in Sweden's admission rates are slightly larger because the number of applicants include non-eligible persons, but still the gaps are significant. In both Germany and Norway, the gap has been increasing in recent years due to the recent high influx of humanitarian migrants. There is also an indication in England (United Kingdom) that migrants or ethnic minorities are underrepresented in apprenticeship (Chadderton and Wischmann, 2014^[12]; Kuczera and Field, 2018^[13]).

Figure 4.2. A lower share of migrant students are admitted to upper-secondary VET

Admission rates of upper-secondary VET applications 2016-17



Note: Sweden's admission rates are the number of students admitted to their first choice of upper-secondary provision divided by the number of applicants who sought their respective programmes in the first place. Applicants include non-eligible persons.

Source: Thorud, E. (2017_[14]), *Immigration and Integration 2016-2017: Report for Norway*, <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/005e1d69ad5141958451b8770552dab9/immigration-and-integration-20162017.pdf> and Thorud, E. (2018_[11]), *Immigration and Integration 2017-2018: Report for Norway to the OECD*, <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/fe206a22df754b8792740fb81109a761/immigration-and-integration-2017-2018-report-for-norway.pdf> for Norway. BIBB (2016_[10]), *Training Chances of Applicants from a Migrant Background – Current Situation 2016 and Development Since 2004*, <http://www.bibb.de/veroeffentlichungen/de/publication/show/8331> for Germany. Statistics Gymnasieskolan – Elever – Riksnivå for Sweden. [Education Statistics Finland](http://www.statistik.gov.se) for Finland (ages 15-34).

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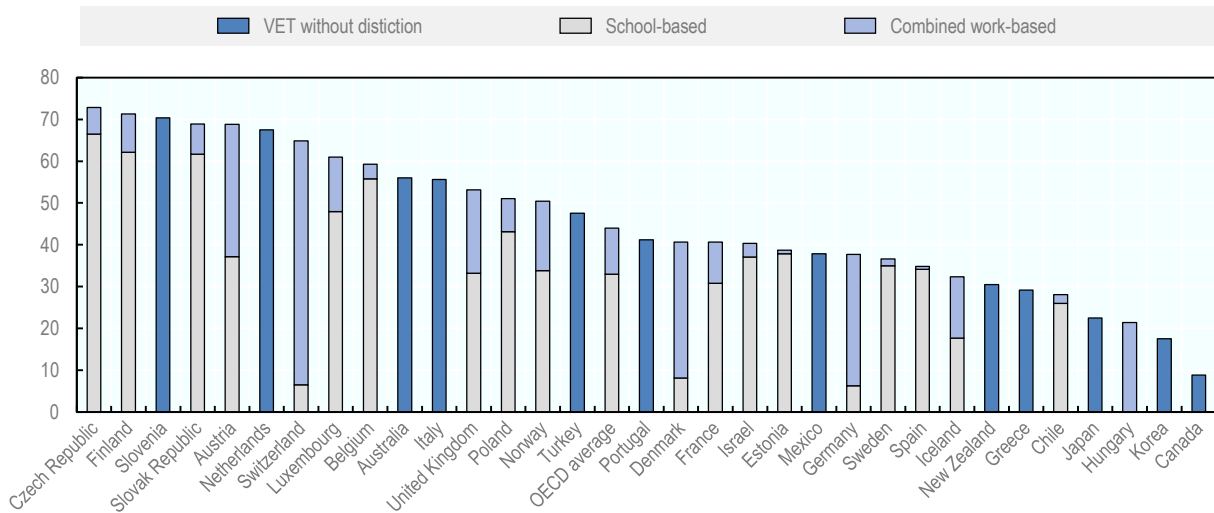
Migrants tend to be more represented in school-based VET than in apprenticeships

Work-based learning is still limited in many OECD countries

Upper-secondary VET systems across OECD countries show a wide range in combining school and workplace learning (Figure 4.3). Between 2005 and 2016, many countries remained relatively stable in terms of work-based programmes whilst Germany, Denmark, the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic and Estonia saw a large shift towards school-based programmes (OECD, 2018_[15]). Though based on limited data, it appears that migrant students tend to experience work-based learning less than native students. According to the EU Labour Force Survey 2016 ad hoc module (Eurostat, 2019_[16]), migrant students are more likely to have no work experience while they were in upper-secondary VET (Figure 4.4). Among those who have work experience, migrant students are more likely to have gained work experience outside of the VET curriculum, compared to native students. Even when looking at VET curriculum work experience, apprenticeships are still fairly uncommon for migrant students, except for Austria and Switzerland (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.3. Work-based learning is still limited in many OECD countries

Share (%) of upper-secondary students enrolled in vocational programmes, 2016



Note: For countries with “VET without distinction”, information on combined programmes is missing or the category does not apply. “Combined work-based” VET programmes are defined as those in which 25%-90% of the curriculum is delivered in the work environment. “School-based” VET programmes may include work-based learning but at a lower share.

Source: OECD (2018^[15]), *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2018-en>.

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School-based VET may be relatively easier to expand and access

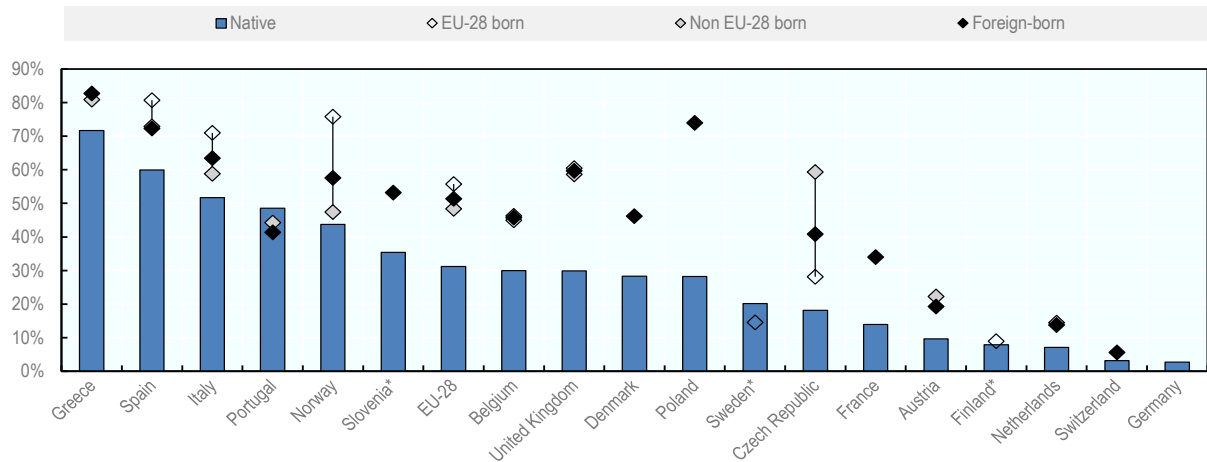
The higher levels of concentration of migrants in school-based VET programmes may be for a number of reasons. These programmes may be easier to expand as is the case in general education. Certain occupational sectors, however, tend to use school-based VET as entry mechanisms and these sectors disproportionately attract migrants, for example, the health and social care sectors in Sweden and Germany – sectors which are experiencing intensifying skills shortages. School-based VET may also be relatively easier to access as it largely depends on individual’s ability rather than external factors such as the student’s social network, legal barriers to access workplace learning, or overall level of employer engagement or openness in VET for migrant students. For example, in Germany, while asylum seekers and persons with tolerated status² require permission to access dual VET or other types of traineeships/apprenticeships from local immigration authorities, this is not necessary for school-based VET.

School-based VET may accommodate migrant students more easily, but are less effective in facilitating school-to-work transitions

In countries with available data, migrant students in VET tend to be overrepresented in school-based programmes compared to work-based programmes, although there is no clear trend (Table 4.1). This is also suggested by other study (Cedefop, 2016^[17]). Students in school-based VET often struggle to gain the same levels of hands-on experience of the labour market as enjoyed by students in work-based VET, so they may face more challenges in finding a job. Work-based VET mitigates the difficulties in finding a job, as many employers prefer to hire applicants with work experience. Therefore, without access to certain forms of work-based learning, school-based VET may have limits to facilitate the school-to-work transition.

Figure 4.4. Migrant VET graduates are less likely to have gained work experience during upper-secondary VET

Share of upper-secondary VET graduates who had no work experience during the course of upper-secondary VET, 2016



Note: The sample covers upper-secondary VET graduates whose highest level of education was upper-secondary VET and who had no work experience during the time they enrolled in the upper-secondary VET programme. Data from countries with an asterisk (*) – Slovenia, Sweden and Finland – include those who had work experience outside the curriculum, in addition to those who had no work experience. See Annex A for 2009 data.

Source: Eurostat (2019_[16]), EU Labour Force Survey 2016 ad hoc module. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-labour-force-survey>.

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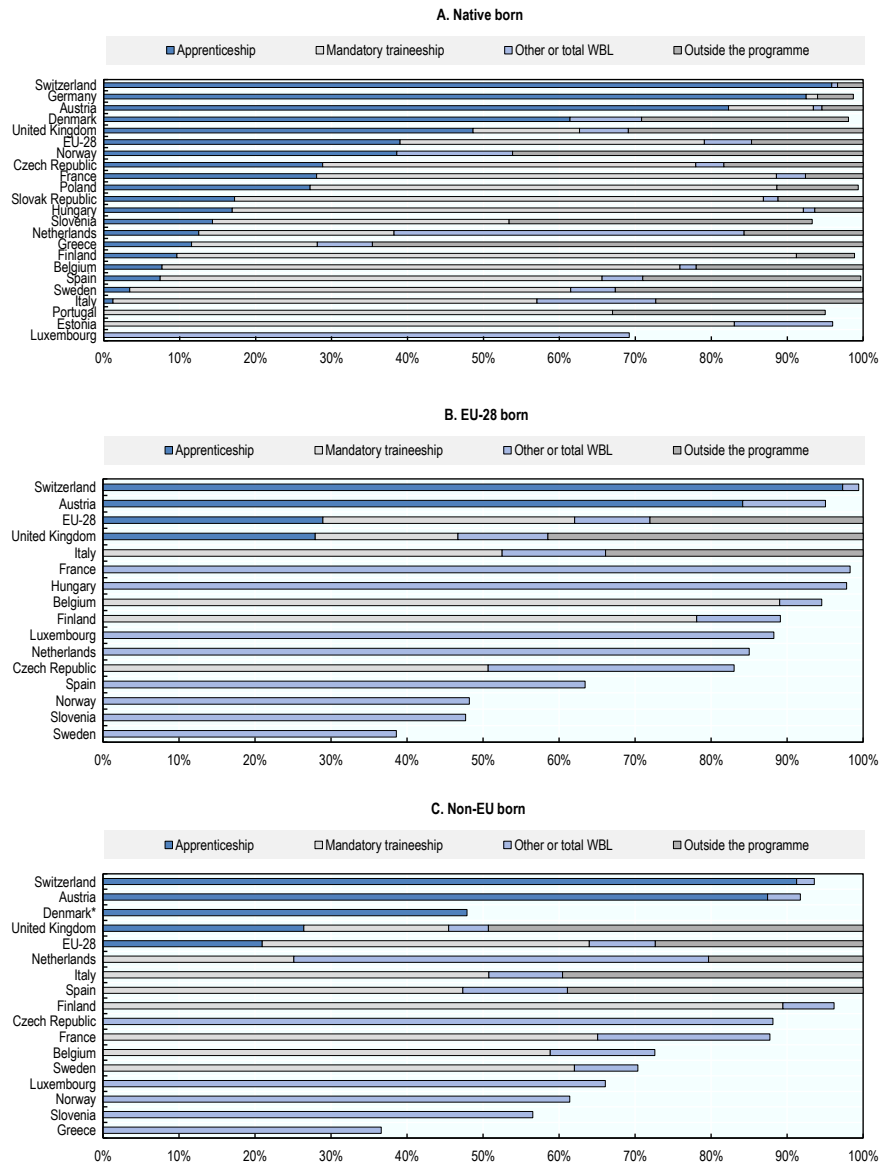
Both demand- and supply-side factors make apprenticeships more difficult to access

In general, the share of apprenticeships in upper-secondary VET is relatively low across countries (on average a quarter of upper-secondary VET students combine work-based learning in OECD countries (OECD, 2018_[15])), but it is even lower among migrants. Therefore, increasing the overall availability of apprenticeship positions may improve the access of migrant students to apprenticeship opportunities. For example, lack of apprenticeship places is a common issue in some Nordic countries (Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education, 2016_[18]) where apprenticeships largely start after school-based part during VET (which is discussed further in Chapter 5).

In other countries, despite many unfilled apprenticeships, the access to apprenticeship among migrants, in particular refugees, is a challenge due to various other factors. In Germany, 34% of apprenticeships were left unfilled in 2017 due to a shrinking student population and the increasing interest of school leavers in going to higher education, according to a recent survey of over 10 000 businesses, conducted by the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK, 2018_[19]).³ According to a survey by the German Federal Institute for VET (BIBB), about 1 in 10 companies reported that they had offered VET and work placement opportunities for refugees between 2015 and 2016 while one in four companies were approached regarding VET opportunities for refugees (BIBB, 2016_[20]).

Figure 4.5. Migrant graduates are less likely to be engaged in work-based learning during VET

Type of work experience undertaken during the course of upper-secondary VET programme (15-34 years old)



Note: The sample covers upper-secondary VET graduates whose highest level of education was upper-secondary VET and who had work experience during the time they enrolled in the upper-secondary VET programme. Apprenticeship is defined as the mandatory work-based learning with a total duration of at least 6 months and paid. The distinction between apprenticeship and mandatory traineeship is based on duration and payment, and when is not possible to make the distinction, then the category of other work-based learning applies. Data for non-EU born in Denmark includes those who had work experience through apprenticeship only.

Source: Eurostat (2019^[16]), EU Labour Force Survey 2016 ad hoc module. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-labour-force-survey>.

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Table 4.1. The presence of migrant students vary across countries and VET systems

Migrant students as share (%) of total upper-secondary VET enrolments/entrants (i.e. natives plus migrants)

	Total VET		Work-based VET		School-based VET		General education
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016
Denmark, entrants	11.6	12.8	7.9	8.3	12.4	13.8	
Italy, enrolments	11.0		-	-	-	-	4.1
Germany, entrants (all VET)	9.7	10.7	9.7	11.1	10.3	10.4	6.7
Germany, enrolments (apprenticeship)	-	-	7.9	9.4	-	-	-
Sweden, enrolment	17.4	18.2	-	-	-	-	23.8
Switzerland, enrolments	19.5	20.0	-	6.6 (9.6)	-	11.4 (15.4)	20.1
The Netherlands, enrolments		27.0	16.6		29.9	-	-

Note: The variables for migrants differ across countries upon the definition used in their national statistics, for example, Denmark (Western and non-Western: ages 15-34), Germany and Sweden (foreign national). The [Netherlands'](#) work-based VET refers to BBL (dual VET) and school-based VET refers to BOL. Transition programmes are not included in this table. For Switzerland, the data for the same disaggregation were not available, so the estimated share is an approximation: share of migrant students in occupations with apprenticeship only and occupations of school-based VET only. The number in brackets refers to the share of migrant students in occupations with higher number of total students in apprenticeship and in school-based VET respectively.

Source: National statistics. Switzerland from the Federal Statistical Office (2018^[21]), *Education Statistics 2017*, <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfsstatic/dam/assets/5306746/master> and Federal Statistical Office (2019^[22]), *Élèves et étudiants: tableaux de base 2017/18*, <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/fr/home/statistiques/education-science/personnes-formation/degre-secondaire-ll/professionnelle-initiale.assetdetail.7586317.html>. The Netherlands from Statistics Netherlands (2019^[7]), <https://data.overheid.nl/dataset/53971-mbo--deelnemers--niveau--leerweg--migratieachtergrond>. Denmark from Statistics Denmark (2019^[9]), *Student Register*, <http://dst.dk/ext/uddannelse/Uddannelsesstabeller>, <http://dst.dk/ext/uddannelse/Uddannelsesstabeller>. Germany from Statistisches Bundesamt (2019^[23]), *Statistisches Bundesamt*, https://www.destatis.de/DE/Home/_inhalt.html (*integrierte Ausbildungsberichterstattung, iABE [integrated training reporting]*). Italy is from INAPP (2017^[24]), *INAPP. XV Rapporto di monitoraggio delle azioni formative realizzate nell'ambito del diritto-dovere. 2015-2016*, <http://www.regione.puglia.it/web/ufficiostatistico/-/inapp-xv-rapporto-di-monitoraggio-delle-azioni-formative-realizzate-nell-ambito-del-diritto-dovere-2015-2016>.

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Box 4.1. Understanding and comparing school-based VET and work-based VET systems

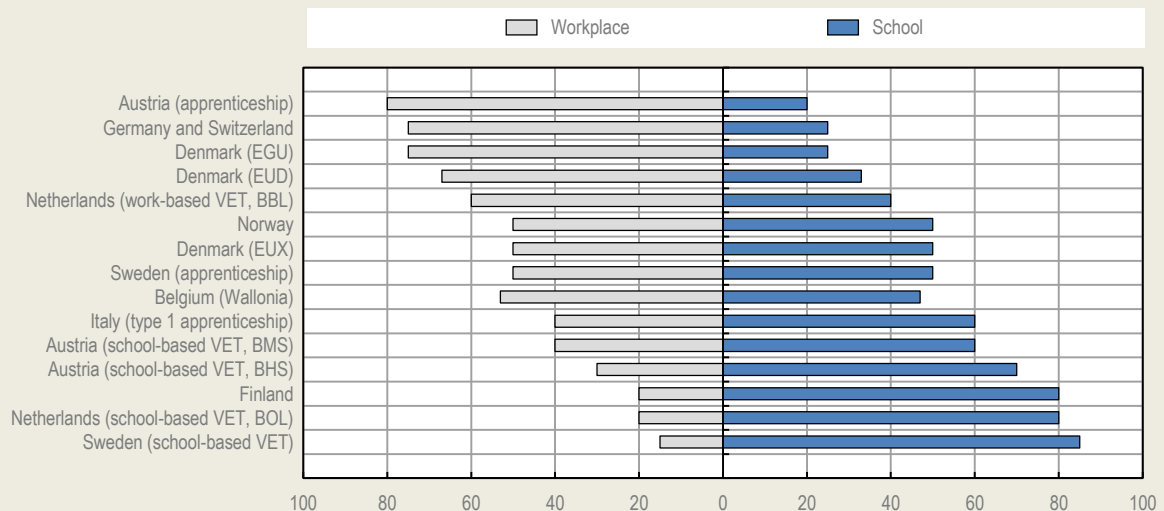
For several reasons, it is not possible to directly compare the share of migrants (entrants and enrolments) between school-based VET and work-based VET.

- *The degree of combining school and workplace learning varies across countries* (Figure 4.6) as well as sectors, occupation, employers' preference and incentives. Italy has 3 to 4-year regional VET that offers a greater proportion of work-based learning (WBL), compared to 5-year national VET programmes that are mainly school-based. Austria and Germany have dual VET that combines work and school, with a strong emphasis on apprenticeship. School-based VET exists in these countries, but is largely concentrated in sectors such as health or early childhood education and care. The overall degree of apprenticeship provision can be very low, which makes difficult to see if there is a significant difference in shares between migrants and natives – for example, Sweden has mainly school-based VET, and apprenticeship has grown recently but is still small at about 3% (Kuczera and Jeon, 2019^[8]).

- *Data are not yet readily available* to see whether migrants are overrepresented in a specific form of VET (in the spectrum between school-based and work-based). For example, data from Eurostat are available in terms of work-based learning, but yet on an ad hoc basis (e.g. the EU Labour Force Survey 2009 and 2016 ad hoc module). The EU Labour Force Survey will collect such data starting in 2021.
- *Characteristics of migrant students differ* across countries, which may affect the likelihood of successful entry. They include levels of education and skills including language as well as preferences or perceptions regarding apprenticeship, aspirations and networks (Chadderton and Wischmann, 2014^[12]).
- *Attractiveness, role and perception of each type of VET differs across countries.* The available pathways after completion also differ, which may affect the attractiveness of VET for migrants. School-based VET can be offered for low-performing students or for when the student is not able to find an apprenticeship in the place of apprenticeship. Denmark and Norway provide an alternative school-based VET if the student cannot find an apprenticeship, in order to fulfil the student right to upper-secondary education. While this is comparatively more flexible to offer, school-based VET is considered to be lower in quality.

Figure 4.6. Differences in VET systems may affect migrant integration through VET differently

Defined or typical time duration of selected VET programmes, by training place



Note: The duration of WBL varies within each country. For example, in Sweden, 60% of student who studied in 2011/12-2013/14 passed the minimum duration of WBL (15 weeks) and around 30% passed 17-49 weeks. Approximately 5% carried out WBL over 50 weeks, which corresponds to apprenticeship routes and 4% of student did not receive the required WBL (based on a survey carried out among school principals and teachers). For Denmark, the law on VET contains no prescription and time allocation is decided by the social partners for each trade (usually, the ratio is 1 in school and 4 in company).

Source: CEDEFOP (2019^[25]), *Apprenticeship Schemes in European Countries*, <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/722857>. For France, Ministère de l'Intérieur (2016^[26]), *Guide du demandeur d'asile en France*, <https://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Asile/Guide-du-demandeur-d-asile-en-France>. For the Netherlands, Norway, Finland, Sweden, see Kuczera, M. and S. Jeon, (2019^[8]), *Vocational Education and Training in Sweden*, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/g2g9fac5-en>. For apprenticeship programmes in Sweden, see Cedefop (2016^[27]), *Spotlight on VET: Sweden*, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/8095_en.pdf and Kuczera, M. and S. Jeon, (2019^[8]), *Vocational Education and Training in Sweden*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/g2g9fac5-en>. For Austria, Cedefop (2018^[28]), *Spotlight on VET: Austria*, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/8127_en.pdf.

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Why are migrant students less successful in getting into upper-secondary VET?

Weaker knowledge and skills against entry requirements to upper-secondary VET may be a hurdle

Wide variation of entry requirements to upper-secondary VET

As seen in Chapter 3, migrant students tend to have weaker knowledge and skills, and for these migrants, requirements for entry into the mainstream upper-secondary VET schools can be barriers. Some countries that have strong adult education system provide courses for young adults to complete upper-secondary VET through adult education (see Box 5.2). Entry requirements in adult education are much more flexible, in particular for cases where the learning approach is more individualised.

Requirements for entry in the mainstream upper-secondary VET schools slightly vary across countries, especially age eligibility, but in general terms, they are similar (Table 4.2). Typically, the completion of lower-secondary education is formally required. When this is not officially required, it is still important as informal criteria in practice. In upper-secondary VET systems where students are required to find an employer, academic competencies (study record, grades, ranking) or work experience are typically an advantage.

In mainly school-based systems, such as in Finland, VET providers decide on student admissions and may use entrance and aptitude tests or interviews, for example, to support their selection ([Eurydice](#)). In Sweden, the requirements for young people are restrictive, serving effectively to reduce participation from those with weaker academic records. Such students typically follow an Introductory Programme which is preparatory to participation in continuing education or entry to the labour market. The requirements in adult education are flexible and individualised: for example, passing grades in certain subjects (which are required for the mainstream education) are not required.

More importantly, there are different entry points to mainstream upper-secondary VET across OECD countries and each of these entry points can have different requirements – such as a lower-secondary qualification or the availability of an apprenticeship placement (Figure 4.7). Migrants with weak academic skills can still have access to mainstream upper-secondary VET programmes while receiving support during VET, for example, in the Netherlands (MBO 1), Switzerland (2-year EBA) and possibly Germany. Sweden retains these students in preparatory courses and provide alternative support to transition into upper-secondary VET including adult education. In addition, VET schools in Sweden are responsible for finding a work placement for potential apprentices. For newly arrived migrants, this could be a significant advantage compared to more market-based matching systems.

In the case of dual systems such as in Germany and Switzerland, students must already have a training placement in order to gain access to a vocational programme. In the same way as job-seekers would apply for a job, young learners apply to employers to be taken on as an apprentice. Finding an apprenticeship under a market-based matching system can be challenging. Employer demand will fluctuate with local labour market conditions, meaning that even well prepared students might struggle to find a placement. With hiring decisions driven by a cost-benefit analysis of apprenticeship, work-based VET may serve to work against newly arrived or even established, well-qualified migrants when in competition with native-born peers. Being structurally less likely to have family members with direct personal experience of apprenticeship in the host countries, migrant learners can be expected to possess weaker resources in terms of cultural familiarity and social networks which positively help in securing placements.

In the case of Denmark and Norway, the difficulty in finding an apprenticeship comes later. In these countries, during the full-time school-based basic course (6-12 months for Denmark and 24 months for Norway) students have to find a training placement to be able to continue VET (which is discussed in Chapter 5). This is similar in Italy, but the work-based VET in upper-secondary education is largely linked

to mandatory traineeships (*Alternanza Scuola Lavoro*), which do not lead to a qualification by itself and are not involved in an employment contract as apprenticeships are (Savitki and Jeon, forthcoming^[29]).

In Switzerland, those who are not ready to enter the mainstream VET programmes (3-4 year EFZ), including many migrants, can start with less demanding VET programmes (2-year EBA), which is part of formal upper-secondary VET system. Similarly in Italy, completers of 3-4 year regional VET can access to 5-year mainstream VET programmes but also those who complete the third year in the mainstream upper-secondary VET programmes can obtain the same qualification as regional VET (Savitki and Jeon, forthcoming^[29]). In the Netherlands, MBO 1 is part of regular VET but functions as a transitional programme. In Sweden, the recently launched Vocational Packages in transitional programme that can be closely linked to the mainstream upper-secondary VET provision as well as adult education are expected to increase flexibility and permeability in the system (Kuczera and Jeon, 2019^[8]). Such flexibility and permeability in these countries may allow migrants with weak skills to better access upper-secondary VET and provide wider opportunities to pathways towards becoming skilled workers.

Are entry language requirements realistic?

Most, but not all, OECD countries require specific levels of language proficiency. For example, in Germany, while no formal prerequisites are required to get an apprenticeship, employers often demand that apprentices should reach level B2. In Switzerland, transitional programmes require an A2 level in CFER and an apprenticeship requires a B1 level. In Sweden, to be eligible for upper-secondary VET, students should master Swedish as a Second Language at a compulsory school level in addition to passing grades in English, mathematics and five other subjects, before the year they turn 20 (Kuczera and Jeon, 2019^[8]). In the Netherlands, an A2 level is required for Level 1 programme in the upper-secondary VET (MBO 1). This Level 1 programme concentrates young people with a migrant background and weak Dutch language skills. For the higher levels (Level 2-4), a level close to B1 is required.

In the United States, in general many VET programmes accept adult students only after they have reached a certain proficiency level with local variations. For example, in Washington D.C., some public charter schools require ESL learners to reach National Reporting System⁴ level Advanced before starting vocational nursing classes (Santa Monica College, 2019^[30]). Other programmes require applicants to have the equivalent of a high school degree. Community college programmes use *Accuplacer* (college or technical school placement tests) and TOEFL to place students in VET and concurrent ESL classes.

The newly arrived may take several years to master language to the level of entry requirement for VET. Even if there are no formal entry requirements it may take time for newly arrived to reach a level of language proficiency needed in a learning environment: for example, in Sweden this usually takes between six and eight years (Skolverket, 2011^[31]). Ultimately, building closer links between upper-secondary VET and adult education (Chapter 6) can benefit migrants and refugees as they may otherwise miss opportunities to obtain the qualifications they require.

Table 4.2. Mainstream upper-secondary VET requirements/student admissions criteria in selected countries

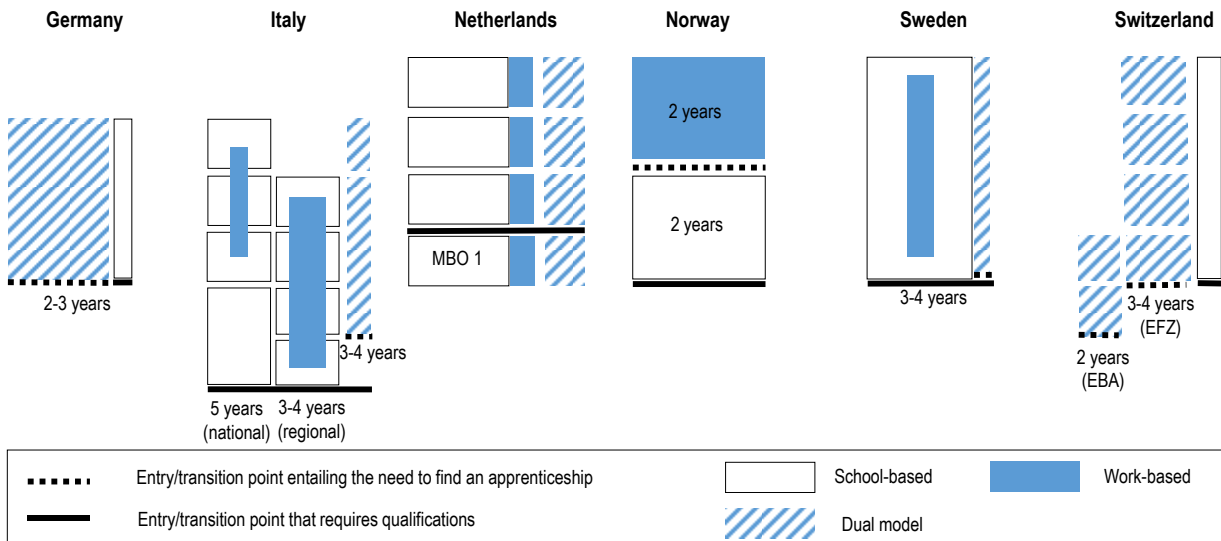
Country	Legal requirements (age, permit)	Academic and other requirements/criteria	Flexibility of eligibility and financial support
Austria	Entry at 15 onwards Work permit	Completion of nine years of compulsory schooling. No specific school qualification is required.	Asylum seekers below the age of 25 may be granted a work permit for an apprenticeship in shortage occupations. Otherwise the asylum seekers do not have access to VET.
Denmark	Entry at 15-24	Danish 9th grade leaving exams or exam grade average equivalent to 2 or higher in maths and Danish (level G). ⁵	Vocational colleges will decide.
Finland	Entry at 15 (minimum 15 – no maximum age)	Completed the basic education syllabus. Admission can be based on academic performance and work experience.	Providers decide to organise an entrance exam or an aptitude test. Students receive financial support.
Germany	Entry at 16-18 and work permit (vary across <i>Länders</i>)	No formal requirements but lower-secondary qualifications or language skills are generally required (vary across <i>Länders</i>).	Eligible to receive support for the costs of living for the duration of training or studies under the same conditions as German citizens. Apprentices receive wage.
Italy	Entry at 15-18	First-cycle leaving certificate (8 years of education). Schools establish their own criteria when excessive applications.	Apprenticeship that leads to a vocational qualification and upper-secondary education diploma (for ages 15-25) may apply to upper-secondary VET programmes.
Netherlands	At least 16	No specific requirements for entry Level 1. Admission requirements apply for courses from level 2 upwards: e.g. a school-leaving certificate or completion of a basic VET for level 2 entry.	Asylum seekers do not have a right to financial study aid from the government, but loans for vocational training are made available to beneficiaries of international protection through the Education Executive Agency (DUO).
Norway	Entry at 15-24	Completion of compulsory education (not pass grade but participation).	
Sweden	Entry at 15-20	Pass grade (A-E) in Swedish, English ⁶ and mathematics and in at least five other subjects.	Migrants with a residence permit are entitled to Swedish student finance (asylum seekers are excluded).
Switzerland	Entry at 15 and work permit (varies by cantons)	Completion of lower secondary level.	Various training companies also require applicants to sit an aptitude test; entrance examination for full-time vocational schools.

Note: Age requirements may differ depending on sector. Academic criteria include equivalents. Denmark and Finland offer VET in English or other languages, in which case an equivalent level of language of instruction is required instead.

Source: Eurydice (2018^[32]), *Organisation of Vocational and Technical Upper Secondary Education (various countries)*, <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice> for Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. Euroguidance Austria (2014^[33]), "The Austrian education system", <https://www.bildungssystem.at/en/> for Austria. The Danish Ministry of Higher Education and Science (2017^[34]), "Admission to vocational education and training (VET)", <https://ufm.dk/en/education/recognition-and-transparency/recognition-guide/admission-vet> for Denmark. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (2018^[35]), "Qualifications and studies in vocational education and training", https://minedu.fi/en/qualifications-and-studies_vet for Finland. The European Migration Network (2016^[36]), *Synthesis Report – Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection/Humanitarian Protection into the Labour Market: Policies and Good Practices*, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/emn-studies-00_integration_of_beneficiaries_of_international_protection_eu_2015_en_final.pdf. For France, Forum Réfugiés-Cosi (2018^[37]), "France: Access to the labour market", www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/france/reception-conditions/employment-and-education/access-labour-market. For the age of compulsory schooling, see (OECD, 2018^[15]), *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2018-en>, and for Italy Cedefop (2017^[38]), *Apprenticeship Review: Italy. Building Education and Training Opportunities through Apprenticeships*, <https://doi.org/10.2801/63364>.

StatLink  <https://doi.org/10.1787/888933997987>

Figure 4.7. Indicative illustration on different entry points and requirements of the mainstream upper-secondary VET systems in selected OECD countries



Note: Size does not accurately reflect the proportion of different programmes and steps.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Preparatory measures may not be sufficiently effective

As a consequence, many migrants may spend considerable time on transitional courses that do not lead to a formal qualification. Direct comparison regarding the transition rate to mainstream upper-secondary VET programmes across countries is not feasible because of different programme lengths, objectives, content, quality and requirements as well as student composition and pathways to different VET programmes (vis-à-vis general education). Nevertheless, evidence shows that transition to a regular upper-secondary VET programme ranges from 20% to 80%.

For example, in Switzerland, 78% of those in the transition system proceed into VET while 7% proceed into general education (Babel, Laganà and Gaillard, 2016^[39]). Under the German dual system, a sub-national transition rate in Bavaria is estimated about 40% in 2016 from a 2-year preparatory programme (Vocational Integration Classes [*BerufsinTEGRATIONSklassen*]) to dual or school-based VET, 7% continued with preparatory traineeship, 4% with upper-secondary education and 5% found employment (Schiffhauer and Magister, 2016^[40]). For Hamburg, around 30% entered VET, around 8% found employment and another 7% continued with upper secondary education (Hamburger Institut für Berufliche Bildung, 2018^[41]). In the Netherlands, following a Level 1 programme in the upper-secondary VET (MBO 1), 60% of students of school-based VET move to Level 2 (the transition rate to Level 2 is 21% for apprentices due to higher employment rates) (Fazekas and Litjens, 2014^[42]). In Sweden, although the VET entry requirements are less demanding than the general track, many newly arrived young people find it difficult to meet these criteria within prescribed time limits (Kuczera and Jeon, 2019^[8]). In a transitional programme focusing on language training where foreign-born students are overrepresented, about 36% of those students who started this programme in 2011-12 were able to transfer to a mainstream upper-secondary programme within five years; 21% of these students proceeded to a VET programme (Skolverket, 2017^[43]). As Sweden has a well-established adult education system where language teaching is often combined with vocational training, 47% of the students continue with adult education. This picture may change for the students starting from 2018 when Vocational Packages were introduced in the transitional programmes (Kuczera and Jeon, 2019^[8]).

Preparatory programmes help migrant students to prepare for further education and labour market, there is a wide variety of preparatory programmes and they are largely outside of formal education system thus quality and effectiveness vary and they are rarely rigorously evaluated (Kis, 2016^[44]).

Poor social networks between students with a migrant background and employers

Jobs in OECD countries are often filled through networks or informal contacts. Social networks present a form of social capital, connecting job seekers with individuals, whether recruiters or peer workers, with knowledge about economic opportunities. Creating and maintaining such social networks is an area where recently-arrived refugees face difficulty (Liebig and Tronstad, 2018^[45]). In Germany, although the difficulty in finding and completing an apprenticeship is a widely present problem regardless of student's migration background, a higher share of students with a migration background have difficulties in securing a traineeship than native-born peers (Beicht, 2017^[46]).⁷

From the demand side, many employers who are considering training and hiring refugees see challenges rather than opportunities. While approximately 40% of 2 230 small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) surveyed in Germany regard VET for refugees as an opportunity to ensure the next generation of skilled workers, a similarly high figure did not feel that they were able to offer a clear assessment on this issue, and approximately one in seven of companies surveyed were sceptical about making such a statement. Furthermore, half of the surveyed SMEs felt that the economy would suffer a financial impact because of refugee education training – an impact which could only be managed with government assistance (BIBB, 2016^[20]).

Discrimination in the apprenticeship market

A series of experimental studies have shown that migrant students are often vulnerable to discrimination. For example, in an experiment that sent out fictitious, identical applications, it took on average seven applications by young people with a Turkish name to be invited to an interview for an apprenticeship placement versus five with a German name (Schneider, Yemane and Weinmann, 2014^[47]). Further studies have shown that discrimination in the application process is particularly pronounced for Muslim applicants (Scherr, Janz and Müller, 2013^[48]).

In Switzerland, even among candidates with comparable competence levels and socioeconomic backgrounds, foreign nationals are less likely to get an apprenticeship contract (Haeblerlin, Imdorf and Kronig, 2005^[49]). In a 2014 study, non-native students in Switzerland had to send twice as many applications as native students to secure an apprenticeship (23 compared to 11) (Imdorf and Scherr, 2015^[50]) while in 2017, they sent on average 15.7 applications, compared to 8.8 for Swiss school-leavers (LINK, 2017^[51]).

Perceived discrimination might be more common than actual discrimination but that does not diminish its effect – the perception of discrimination can reduce the attractiveness of VET or discourage young people from actively searching for an apprenticeship or a job (Bergseng, Degler and Lüthi, 2019^[52]). A survey in 2013 reported that more than half of the refugees in Germany felt that they had experienced discrimination, with the most frequent cases of discrimination occurring the search for employment or apprenticeships (55%) (Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, 2016^[53]). Other evidence from Germany suggests that companies with little migrant experience are typically more likely to discriminate (Barabasch, Scharnhorst and Leumann, 2016^[54]).

Discrimination in the apprenticeship market is a difficult problem to tackle as the character of discrimination and effective responses to it are still poorly understood (Avis, Mirchandani and Warmington, 2017^[55]). Discrimination may be unspoken and reflect poorly informed attitudes and assumptions related to perceptions over the type of person who would be well-placed to thrive in an apprenticeship, or could reflect

concerns over potential legal barriers preventing employers from reaping the full benefits of investing in an apprentice (Chadderton and Wischmann, 2014^[12]).

Effective approaches to enhance migrant entry into upper-secondary VET

Flexible modes of VET provision with varying entry requirements can address barriers to VET entry

Tailored VET programmes benefit both learners and employers as these programmes address the specific needs of both parties. Adjusting key parameters of VET programmes including apprenticeship schemes, such as through changing duration or training time arrangement and providing remedial courses for basic skills and other support measures, helps balance costs and benefits to be well aligned with employers' business objectives (Kis, 2016^[44]). There are established means of improving access to VET for youth-at-risk including migrant students.

For example, the 2-year EBA programme in Switzerland, discussed above, presents an important example of the way in which changing the design of apprenticeship programmes can increase access while maintaining attractiveness to employers. Modularising VET provision may also reduce barriers to entry for youth-at-risk. Sweden has recently introduced Vocational Packages (*yrkespaket*)⁸ that provide the possibility of obtaining partial qualifications within Introductory Programmes as well as adult education. The Packages may enable those who are not sufficiently qualified for a mainstream upper-secondary programme (in particular, newly arrived) to be able to work with a partial qualification rather than no qualification at all. Vocational Packages are an attractive option for newly arrived students as they offer an alternative way for young people to obtain an upper-secondary qualification or to transition to the world of work as a qualified worker. The packages allow different combinations of existing courses, including work-based learning, delivered at different educational levels, thus can be an efficient and attractive tool for education and career development. Different packages can be combined based on a student's career goal or employer needs. They are developed with employers, industry experts, local authorities and schools, and flexible in terms of skills, requirements, curricula and duration. The packages may decrease time spent at school or training through modularising skills and by delivering qualifications that are in high demand or shortage in the labour market.

Allowing legal flexibility for young migrants and refugees to enter into and complete upper-secondary VET

Legal status and type of permit possessed by migrants and refugees have important repercussions regarding their access to upper-secondary VET and other support services. Uncertain legal status – being defined as an asylum seeker, a person with a temporary protection, refugee or resident – is one of the main barriers preventing employers from taking on apprentices who are migrants and refugees. Without legal certainty, refugees and asylum seekers may not want to engage or fully complete non-compulsory upper-secondary studies or apprenticeships, and equally schools and employers would hesitate to accept these migrants (this is less the case for refugees who have permanent residence and more for other humanitarian migrants and asylum seekers who have temporary or limited status). For employers, offering an apprenticeship is a substantial investment with returns which may not be fully compensated until after the conclusion of the course of training. Even if they take on refugees and asylum seekers as an apprentices as part of their corporate social responsibility activities, it often costs more for employers due to the needs of additional support such as language training and more demanding mentorship. Through providing additional legal flexibilities, Germany and Sweden are encouraging young migrants and refugees to enter the education system, become skilled workers, and integrate more fully into their host countries (Box 4.2). Support measures for employers by clarifying the legal status of migrants such as 3+2 rule in

Germany can help to prevent discriminatory behaviour by reassuring employers. However, there is no data available on how many persons have received a status under these schemes, which renders it difficult to ascertain the impact of such measures.

Box 4.2. Efforts to remove legal barriers for VET and to inform VET employers

Germany introduced the “3+2 rule” to grant rejected asylum seekers, under certain conditions, a tolerated status for three years if they are doing an apprenticeship. They are guaranteed that during their education they will not be deported even if their asylum claim is denied. After completing VET, they can remain in the country for two years more if they find employment corresponding to their skills level. While this rule in principle enhances legal certainty considerably, the implementation of this rule differs across regions.

In **Sweden**, through amendments to the Act on Temporary Restrictions on the Possibility of Obtaining Residence Permit in Sweden in 2017, newly arrived young people are entitled to a temporary residence permit to enable them to complete their upper-secondary education. In 2018, further amendments were made as a temporary measure to enable young people who arrived in Sweden at the latest on 24 November 2015, and who have been negatively affected by lengthy processing times and received a decision on expulsion, a possibility of obtaining a residence permit to enable them to finish their upper-secondary education if they meet certain criteria. These changes in 2018 have also broadened the scope of study pathways eligible for residence permit to include those who attend vocational packages in introductory programmes or adult education.

Source: Bergseng, B., E. Degler and S. Lüthi (2019^[52]), *Unlocking the Potential of Migrants in Germany*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/82ccc2a3-en> for Germany and inputs from the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research for Sweden.

Innovations in matching of migrant skills to VET and labour market needs

Currently, most countries distribute asylum seekers randomly or based on a set of criteria, but rarely based on patterns of labour market demand or VET outcomes. In Switzerland, while currently the distribution of asylum seekers is done randomly among its cantons according to a quota system, the State Secretariat for Migration has placed 1 000 asylum seekers according to a new algorithm within a pilot project which aims to see if more strategic distribution will lead to a meaningful increase in employment success over a three-year period. A control group of equal size will be distributed at random to compare success rates. Switzerland is the first country to test such a data-based placement system, but it may be an attractive model to replicate. Analysis informing the pilot exercise suggests that use of the algorithm could increase employment of asylum seekers by up to 30%. Based on big data gleaned from tens of thousands of people from past and present – focussing on gender, nationality, age, language and other criteria – the algorithm calculates in which canton an asylum seeker would be most likely to find work. It also continuously learns and updates itself according to the situation and placement success of new arrivals, as well as the constantly shifting labour markets in the various cantons (Bansak et al., 2018^[56]; ETH Zurich, 18 January 2018^[57]).

In addition, countries can also distribute students with a migrant background to avoid their concentration in disadvantaged schools. Schools that struggle to do well for native students might struggle even more with a large population of children who cannot speak or understand the language of instruction. Countries that distribute migrant students across a mix of schools and classrooms achieve better outcomes for these students. A more even distribution also relieves the pressure on schools and teachers when large numbers of migrant students arrive over a short period of time (OECD, 2018^[58]).

Intermediary bodies can help to build networks

A strong relationship between organisations serving young refugees and local employers is critical, since refugees themselves have limited or no networks in the host country. The lack of networks means a lack of information about the availability of job or apprenticeship opportunities and the knowledge about required qualifications and other attributes for those opportunities (Mathema, 2018^[59]). Institutions that provide preparatory courses including language training can facilitate the smooth transition of humanitarian migrants into VET and the labour market by actively reaching out to employers and building professional networks to connect employers and refugee students.

KAUSA (*Koordinierungsstelle Ausbildung und Migration* [Co-ordination Office for Vocational Education and Training and Migration]) in Germany, a federal initiative, helps apprenticeship market matching by supporting companies that have apprenticeship tradition which are mainly owned by migrants. It also promotes the engagement of migrant entrepreneurs, who are often not aware whether and how they can offer apprenticeships. In addition, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK) has initiated a programme to support the integration of refugees, where they inform and counsel employers and help refugees to find apprenticeships. Local IHK agencies usually offer information events, individual counselling, firm visits, counselling in VET schools, job fairs and other initiatives (Bergseng, Degler and Lüthi, 2019^[52]).

In the United Kingdom, the Bridges Programme matches refugees with employers who offer short (around 12 days) work opportunities. The involvement of this programme ensures that the placement (and possible continuation of work) does not violate immigration or labour law, depending on an individual's status or benefits. While placements are unpaid and there is no obligation to offer a job afterwards, many employers choose to keep refugees as employees (OECD and UNHCR, 2018^[60]).

Intermediary bodies can be internet-based, helping to match employers and apprentices. In Switzerland, new initiatives such as [LENA](#)⁹ (an apprenticeship notification service where one can search apprenticeship places by filtered by places, cantons and occupations) may play such role.

Enhancing direct contact between migrants and employers

Direct contact between migrants and employers has also been observed to be helpful to tackle prejudices and obstacles. For example, transitional courses, pre-apprenticeships, or internships, class visits by employers or VET fairs, discussed in Chapter 3, are effective measures to signal that migrants are ready for apprenticeship that yield high productivity as other candidates. Direct contact can challenge discriminatory assumptions and enable migrants to better understand the broad expectations of employers, including the navigation of recruitment processes (Scherr, Janz and Müller, 2015^[61]). Especially for smaller firms, which in many countries are responsible for a large share of apprentices, increasing familiarity is a means of addressing concerns over the potentially perceived risk of higher costs linked to the recruitment of migrant apprentices. The availability of in-work support measures by professional organisations and regional institutions as well as training networks (Box 4.3) is also likely to increase confidence.

Box 4.3. Mechanisms to help students secure an apprenticeship

1. Training company network can help training and hiring migrant students

In **Switzerland**, training networks (*Ausbildungsverbund*) consist of training companies that collaborate to offer training placements. The apprentices typically rotate between the training companies with a period of one year in each company. This initiative increases the supply of training placements and gives apprentices access to the diverse learning environments of multiple firms (Imdorf and Leemann, 2011^[62]). When individual training firms become more specialised, a network of training firms can offer the broader range of skills required to be trained in an occupation (Jørgensen, 2015^[63]). For instance, in Basel the [trade association](#) directly hires commercial apprentices, who then rotate among participating firms. Besides addressing potential discrimination, this approach enhances the engagement of small firms in training activities by taking care of administrative processes.

Training offices (*opplæringskontor*) in **Norway** aim to establish new apprenticeship places, supervise training firms, train apprentice supervisors and deal with administrative tasks. Many training offices organise the theoretical part of training and sign the apprenticeship contracts on behalf of firms. About 70-80% of firms with apprentices are associated with training offices. The offices often take responsibility for recruiting new training enterprises and for training staff involved in the tutoring of apprentices. The institutional support given by the offices is important for the apprenticeship scheme to work.

2. Better information on apprenticeship markets

In **Switzerland**, in addition to training company networks that are developed to share costs and experience of apprenticeship across companies, an “apprenticeship barometer” estimates demand and supply for apprenticeship and identifies mismatches.

In **Germany**, the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) carries out short-term econometric models to forecast the supply and demand for apprenticeship places for the following year.

Source: OECD (2018^[1]), *Seven Questions about Apprenticeships: Answers from International Experience*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264306486-en>; OECD (2010^[64]), *Learning for Jobs*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264087460-en> for Austria, Germany and Switzerland. OECD (2016^[65]), *Getting Skills Right: Assessing and Anticipating Changing Skill Needs*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264252073-en>. Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU) (Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education, 2016^[18]), *Vocational Education and Training in Europe: Norway*, https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_CR_NO.pdf.

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Notes

¹ Surveys of young people displaying apprenticeship entry maturity and registered with the Federal Employment Agency (BA) as training place applicants (BA/ Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) Applicant Surveys 2004 to 2016) (German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, 2017_[70]).

² People with a toleration status are persons whose deportation is temporarily suspended due to administrative or other obstacles (Degler and Liebig, 2017_[70]).

³ National estimation revealed that the number entering university studies is 40% larger compared to ten years ago whilst 7% fewer young people apply to an apprenticeship (Zimmermann, 2016_[70]).

⁴ The National Reporting System (NRS) is the accountability system for the federally funded, State-administered adult education program.

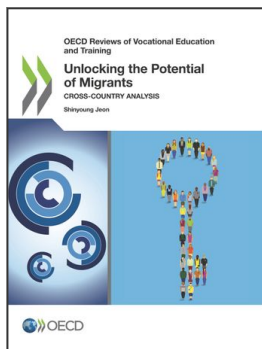
⁵ For example, FVU (Preparatory Adult Education) level 4, AVU (General Adult Education) Danish as a second language, Danish 3 Exam or the Study Test in Danish as a Second Language (Higher Education Exam).

⁶ Pass grade in English could be exempted, for example in the case of newly arrived migrants that do not have any previous knowledge of English. Those students should be offered basic English in upper secondary school.

⁷ 26% students with migration background versus 12% of those without reported no problem in finding an apprenticeship. Those with migration background have 14% lower chance to get contract in dual vocational training (ibid).

⁸ See Skolverket (2017_[68]) and (2017_[69]).

⁹ <https://www.orientation.ch> or www.berufsberatung.ch



From:
Unlocking the Potential of Migrants
Cross-country Analysis

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/045be9b0-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

Jeon, Shinyoung (2019), "Getting in: Enabling easier access to upper-secondary vocational education and training", in Shinyoung Jeon, *Unlocking the Potential of Migrants: Cross-country Analysis*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/c84dd125-en>

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