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Getting on: Supporting young migrants and refugees to complete upper-secondary vocational education and training

This chapter presents an overview of the experiences of migrant students enrolled in upper secondary vocational education and training (VET) and discusses what challenges they face in successfully completing provision and what support is available for them. Addressing completion is important as resources are wasted due to dropout, which may result in loss of confidence in the system. The chapter also discusses how countries can ensure that young migrants gain necessary and substantial knowledge, skills and experience through VET.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Challenges of young migrants progressing through upper-secondary VET

Vocational education and training (VET), in particular work-based learning, is seen as a vehicle for improving labour market outcomes for disadvantaged young people and adults (OECD, 2018^[1]). Personalised support both at schools and in workplaces can increase the speed with which an apprentice can become a skilled, productive worker. Other supportive interventions such as changes to the standard duration of an apprenticeship can also meet the needs of apprentices with different backgrounds. Such measures are particularly important for migrant students as they are less likely to succeed in completing upper-secondary VET even if they were successful entering into a VET programme. This chapter discusses the challenges faced by migrant students and possible measures to address those challenges.

Migrant students are less successful in completing upper-secondary VET

In general, upper-secondary VET completion rates are lower than general education

In general, completion rates of upper-secondary VET (59%) are lower than those of general education (73%), based on available data for 14 OECD countries (Figure 5.1, Panel A). Except Israel and Portugal, those countries with available data exhibit lower completion rates in vocational programmes compared to general programmes. Completion rates of upper secondary education among migrants are also lower than those of native students (Figure 5.1, Panel B).

VET completion rates are even lower among migrant students

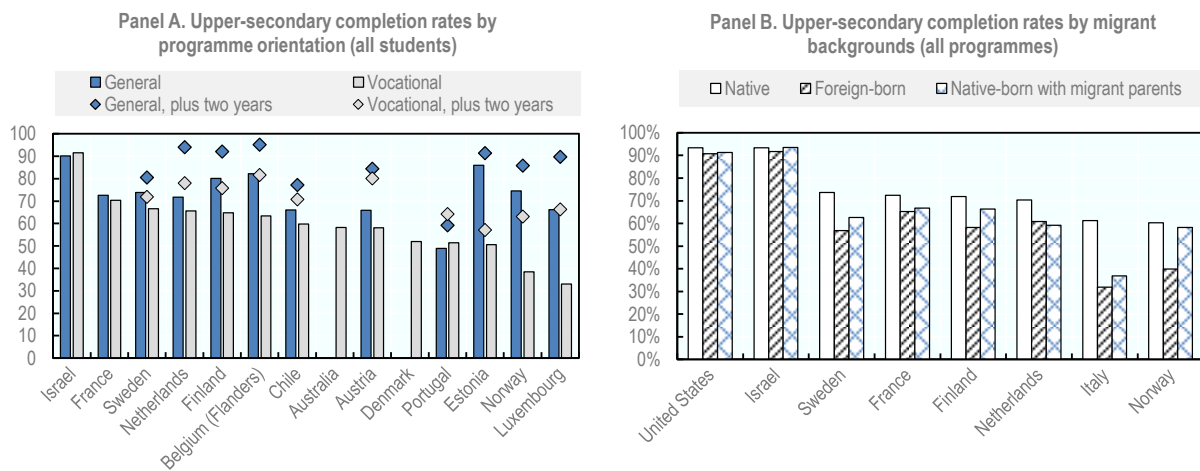
While internationally comparable data on completion rates both by programme orientation and migration backgrounds are scarce, available evidence shows that VET completion rates are even lower among migrant students (Figure 5.2).

In Nordic countries, the gap between native and migrant students ranges from 9 percentage points (pp) in Finland to 18 pp in Sweden. For Germany, dropout rates among foreign-born apprentices are up to 50% higher than among German-born apprentices (Kuczera and Field, 2018^[2]). In addition, a survey data in Germany has shown that apprentices with migrant parents are less likely to complete VET within the three-year period (77%) compared to VET students without migrant backgrounds (85%) (Beicht, Granato and Ulrich, 2011^[3]).¹ In Switzerland, migrants undertaking 3-4 year apprenticeships (EFZ) are less likely to complete the programme than native peers. They experience higher levels of dropout and contract terminations², around one-third of students with a migrant background drop out from apprenticeships, while among Swiss nationals, about one-fifth drop out.

Other evidence also confirms lower completion rates among migrant students in VET, for example in England (Kuczera and Field, 2018^[2]), Austria, Belgium (Flemish Community), the Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary and the Netherlands (Cedefop, 2016^[4]). Tracking of students from a preparatory programme to upper-secondary VET completion is rare, but in Sweden, only 8% of students who started a transitional programme focusing on language training in 2011-12 ultimately completed with an upper-secondary VET diploma within five years (Skolverket, 2017^[5]).

Figure 5.1. In general, completion rates in vocational programmes and for migrants are lower in upper-secondary education (2015)

Upper-secondary completion rates (%)



Note: In Panel A, completion rates are the shares of entrants who have graduated within the theoretical duration (and plus two years) of the programme in which the student entered. Year of reference for France and Finland are other than 2015.

In Panel B, data from France and the United States are based on longitudinal studies whereas the other countries provided data based on registries. Longitudinal studies would not account for the most recent waves of immigration. Year of reference for Finland (Panel A), France (Panel A and B), Norway (Panel B) and the United States (Panel B) are other than 2015.

Source: OECD 2018 ad hoc survey on upper-secondary completion rate by equity dimension from OECD (2018^[6]), *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2018-en> for migrant backgrounds; OECD (2017^[7]), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en> for programme orientation. Denmark and Australia (25 years and under) from Dommers et al. (2017^[8]) *Engaging Young Early School Leavers in Vocational Training*, https://www.ncver.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1390700/Engaging-young-early-school-leavers-in-vocational-training.pdf. Jørgensen, C. (2015^[9]), *Recent innovations in VET in Denmark – responses to key challenges for VET*, Nord-VET – The future of VET in the Nordic Countries, http://nord-vet.dk/indhold/uploads/report1c_dk.pdf, and OECD (2014^[10]), *Education Policy Outlook: Denmark*, http://www.oecd.org/education/EDUCATION%20POLICY%20OUTLOOK%20DENMARK_EN.pdf.

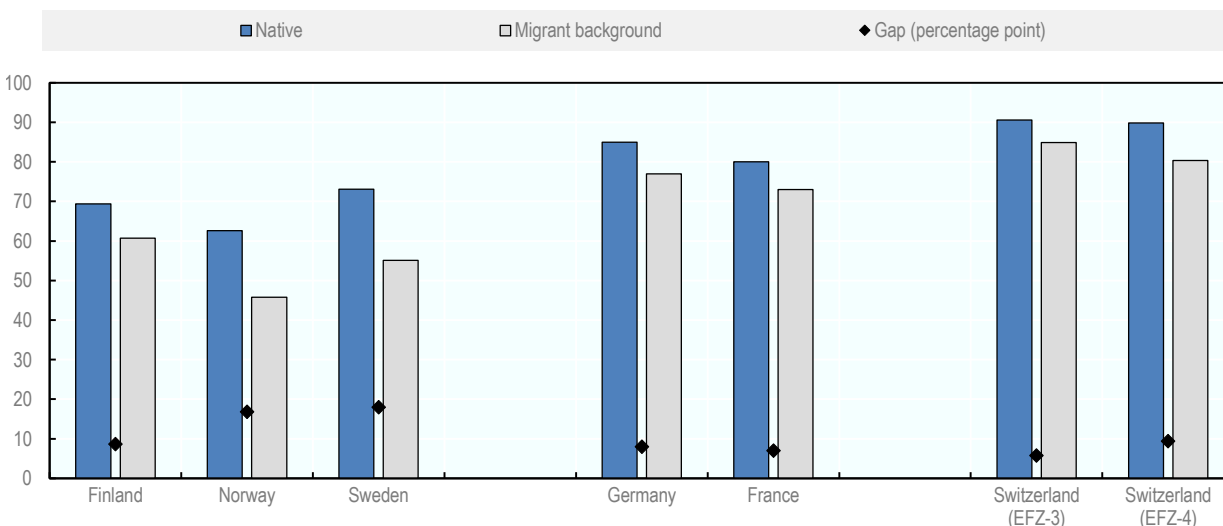
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Higher dropout among migrants is more problematic for work-based provision

Dropout is a particular problem for work-based provision, such as apprenticeship, because skills and productivity develop over time so the productive value of the apprentice emerges most strongly towards the end of apprenticeship. Employers typically invest relatively more at an earlier phase of the apprenticeship and recoup investment at a later phase. Therefore, dropouts cause loss of investment and time for both apprentices and employers. For school-based provision, work-based learning tends to be at the end of programmes of study, those dropped out of the programme at the earlier phase of the VET programme would have much less opportunity to apply skills in real workplaces, develop economic networks and references and position themselves optimally for transitions into work (OECD, 2018^[11]).

Figure 5.2. Completion rates in upper-secondary VET are lower among students with migrant backgrounds

Share (%) of students who completed upper-secondary VET with an expected qualification within 3-5 years, cohorts from various years



Note: Data from France (2003-12) refer to school leavers with qualification without distinction of programme orientation. Migrants in Germany refer to apprentices with migrant parents (no information on place of birth). Migrants in Switzerland refer to permanent residents without Swiss citizenship, both native- and foreign-born.

Source: Official Statistics of Finland (2018_[11]), "Foreign background especially affected completion of upper secondary level education" (2013 cohort by 2016), http://www.stat.fi/til/opku/2018/opku_2018-03-14_tie_001_en.html. Statistics Norway (2019_[12]), "Completion rates of pupils in upper secondary education" (2012 cohort by 2017), <https://www.ssb.no/en/statbank/table/11222/>. Skolverket, (2017_[13]), "Monitoring results of upper secondary schools 2017" (2013 cohort by 2016), <https://www.skolverket.se/getFile?file=3766>.

Beicht, U., M. Granato and J. Ulrich (2011_[3]), "Mindert die Berufsausbildung die soziale Ungleichheit von Jugendlichen mit und ohne Migrationshintergrund?", in Granato, M., D. Münk and R. Weiß (eds.), *Migration als Chance: ein Beitrag der beruflichen Bildung*, W. Bertelsmann Verlag, Bielefeld. Le Rhun, B. et al. (2013_[14]), "Origine et insertion des jeunes sans diplôme", *Formations et emploi*, <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/1374351?sommaire=1374357>. Swiss Federal Statistical Office (2018_[15]), Termination of apprenticeship contract, re-entry, certification status [su-f-15.10.01-06] (2012 cohort by 2017), <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home.assetdetail.6446763.html>.

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Why are dropout rates higher for migrants?

Youth at risk develop skills more slowly and thus tend to need more instruction time, which may create higher costs for employers (OECD, 2018_[1]; Kis, 2016_[16]). The risk of taking a migrant apprentice is higher than a native apprentice, as migrant students are more likely to dropout. These students may struggle with lack of language and other skills, adjusting to both school and workplace environments that are still new to them, and dealing with a variety of other socio-cultural issues. Several reasons may explain this higher dropout rates among migrants and different VET systems exhibit different reasons of dropout.

Low completion rates among migrants are largely due to lack of academic proficiency or relevant skills

Evidence suggests that low completion rates among migrants are explained largely by their lack of academic proficiency or relevant skills. For Switzerland, differences in skills largely explain contract terminations and grade repetitions (Wolter and Zumbuehl, 2018_[17]). The above-mentioned survey in

Germany (Beicht, Granato and Ulrich, 2011^[3]) has also shown that when controlling for migrant students' generally less advantageous starting positions (such as lower grades and lower likelihood to do VET in their preferred occupation), the likelihood of obtaining a VET degree are comparable with native peers (Bergseng, Degler and Lüthi, 2019^[18]).

Difficulty in securing training placements during VET in some countries

While the difficulty in securing an apprenticeship is an issue for VET entry in Germany and Switzerland, it is an issue for continuing and completing VET in Denmark and Norway. In Denmark and Norway, upper-secondary VET is split over two stages, the first school-based lasting one to two years and the second work-based. The majority of young people who enrol on such programmes do not have a training contract beforehand and they face the difficulty in securing a training place during the school-based part of their programmes (see Figure 4.7). Therefore in these two countries, the difficulty in securing a training place during VET may result in dropout in VET (Jørgensen, 2015^[9]). With the supply of training placements in companies depending on the vibrancy of the labour market, in times of economic downturn, many students who have completed the first part of the VET programme may struggle to access to a training placement. This includes students with a migrant background, in particular non-Western students (OECD, 2016^[19]).

In response to the shortages of work-placements, Denmark offers a school-based practical training (*skolepraktik*) for those students who were unsuccessful in finding a training place with an employer during VET. Nevertheless, labour market outcomes from these school-based programmes are not comparable with those from apprenticeship in terms of employment rates and career prospects, partly due to the fact that these programmes are considered as a second choice option (Jørgensen, 2014^[20]).

Discrepancy between workplace and school is exacerbated among newly arrived migrants

In the dual VET system, students often experience a lack of interaction between VET schools and the enterprise employing the apprentice. In an employer survey conducted in Bremen, Germany, 93% of companies reported that they did not or seldom co-operated with the vocational schools of their apprentices (Gessler, 2017^[21]).³ Such lack of collaboration and weak connection between two learning environments could result in discrepancy between the teaching of theory in schools and practice in the workplace (Jørgensen, 2015^[9]).

This gap between workplace and school is exacerbated among newly arrived migrants who need to cope with two different environments at the same time. The difficulties encountered by students who alternate schools and workplaces, compounded by differences in environments and learning approaches between the two, may contribute to poor final exam performance at school within the dual system. General improvement of the interaction between schools and training employers may help migrant students better adjust to working between two different environments during VET.

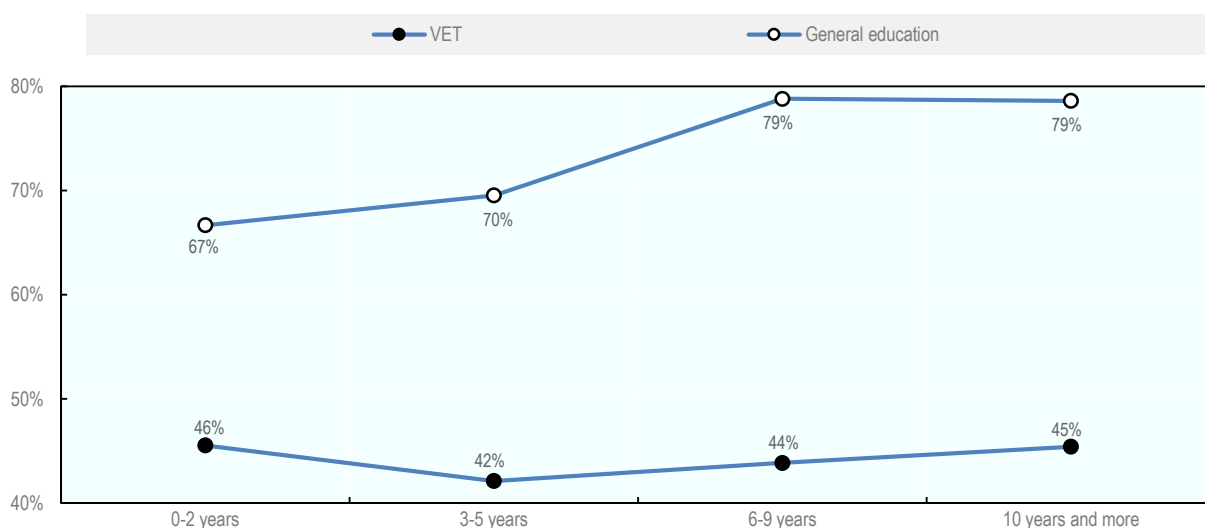
Longer length of residence may not necessarily reduce the chance of dropping out, without appropriate interventions

While in general education and employment outcomes of migrants improve with their length of residence in the host country, Norway's example suggests that the number of years of residence in the host country does not necessarily or only marginally contributes to the likelihood of completing VET. For the case of general education, the longer the length of residence in Norway is, the higher the completion rates are. However, for the case of VET, completion rates remain at similar levels regardless of the length of residence (Figure 5.3). Whilst further investigation may better explain why this happens, this suggests that interventions should be made to address other factors in order to help migrant students succeed in VET.

Research from Norway has shown that children of migrants have greater difficulties in finding apprenticeships (a step that normally takes place after two years of school-based programmes), in particular children of “non-Western origin” (Liebig, 2009^[22]; Thorud, 2017^[23]; Thorud, 2018^[24]). In fact, less than half of the migrant students who begin upper-secondary VET in Norway complete their education, compared to more than half in other countries (Figure 5.2). This means that in the absence of targeted and supplementary social and academic supports (e.g. supports before and after entering into mainstream upper-secondary VET in Germany, Sweden and Switzerland), simply living longer in a host country can often mean a loss of opportunities.

Figure 5.3. Longer length of residence may not contribute to the higher completion of VET without appropriate policy interventions

Completion rates of migrants in upper-secondary education in Norway, by programme orientation in 2017 (2012 cohort)



Note: The total sample size of migrant students in VET (3 452) is larger than in general education (2 554), which include ‘completed, in the programme, enrolled but failed exams and not completed’. The size of migrant students under ‘completed’ category was smaller (1 515 in VET versus 1 884 in general education).

Source: Statistics Norway (2019^[12]), “Completion rates of pupils in upper secondary education” in StatBank, <https://www.ssb.no/en/statbank/table/11222/>.

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There are also other challenges to overcome: health, housing, security, mobility and family care

In particular for humanitarian migrants, socio-economic instability may prevent them from investing time in training. Refugees are in general more prone to health problems than the general population and other immigrant groups, and a considerable share suffer from traumatic and often violent experiences related to their forced migration (OECD, 2016^[25]). The Norwegian living condition survey shows refugees who report symptoms of anxiety and depression have considerably lower employment rates, compared with refugees and other migrants without such symptoms (Liebig and Tronstad, 2018^[26]). For both preparatory and VET programmes, refugees are often more likely to dropout, especially when they need to go for regular doctor visits, in addition to taking care of children or working full-time (Mathema, 2018^[27]).

Lack of access to transportation – whether because of cost or availability – is also a significant barrier for refugees, limiting access to training classes, hospitals, schools, and other programme sites. For this reason, some programmes in the United States provide bus passes in areas where transit is well established, while also teaching their clients to ride buses to help them become independent. In places where transit is not available, they find alternatives, for example carpooling (Mathema, 2018^[27]). In Germany, while some *Länders* provide free public transit to refugee and asylum seeking learners, it is only valid within limited hours (e.g. outside of rush hours). The OECD review visit to Germany learned that this restriction limits the choice of courses or other necessary activities.

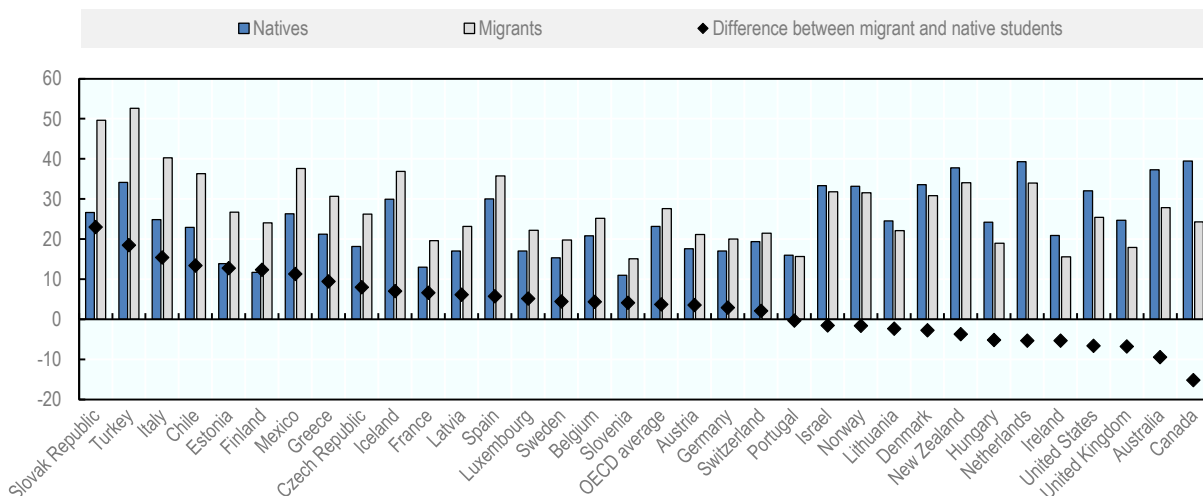
Immediate needs may compel migrant learners to enter work rather than VET

Many of young migrants who arrive around the end of compulsory schooling age are keen to enter the labour force immediately, and indeed, higher shares of migrant students perform paid work than native students in many OECD countries according to 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) analysis (Figure 5.4) and having paid work has negative correlation with academic proficiency (OECD, 2018^[28]). In this regard, apprenticeship can be more attractive to young migrants because of the possibility of earning income. It may be more rewarding than academic tracks for those who have desperate need to secure living expenses or to meet other needs such as paying off debts linked to their journey to safety. However, participation in VET has opportunity costs (such as foregone earnings as an unskilled worker). Apprenticeship wages are often lower than low-skilled jobs. Such costs may lead to a situation where refugees lower their potential due to their desperate economic needs. This is an issue not only for migrants but all youth at risk (Kis, 2016^[16]).

During VET, migrant students tend to have gained work experience outside of the VET curriculum, compared to native students, rather than benefiting from work-based learning (Figure 5.5). In addition, employment rates are in general lower among migrant VET graduates compared to native VET graduates (Figure 5.6), which may demotivate migrant students to complete VET.

Figure 5.4. Higher shares of migrant students perform paid work than native students in many OECD countries

Shares of migrant and native students performing paid work and the difference between the two groups, PISA 2015

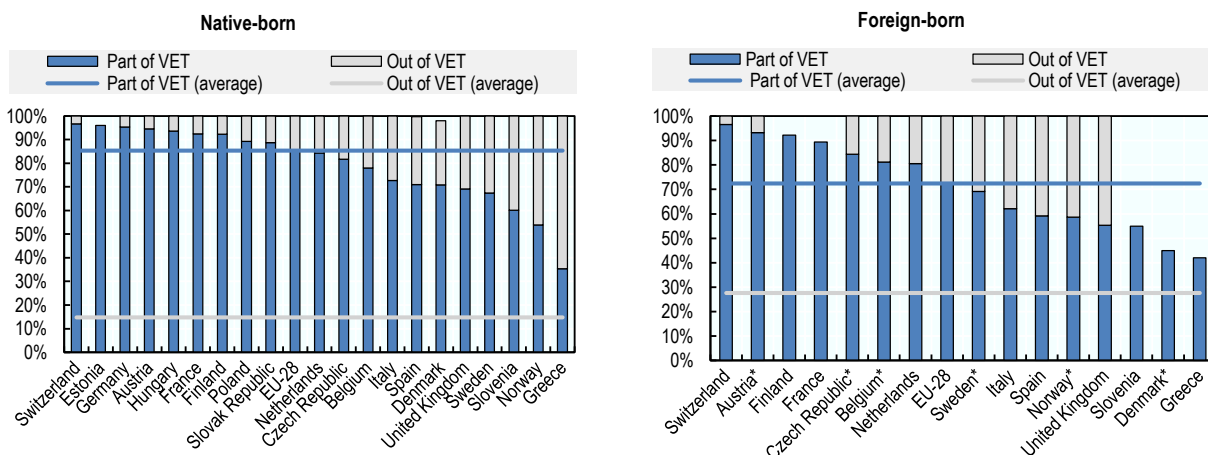


Source: OECD (2018^[28]), *The Resilience of Students with an Immigrant Background: Factors that Shape Well-being*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264292093-en>.

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Figure 5.5. Migrant VET graduates are more likely to have gained work experience outside of the VET curriculum compared to native VET graduates

Type of work experience undertaken during the course of the upper-secondary VET and outside of VET, 2016



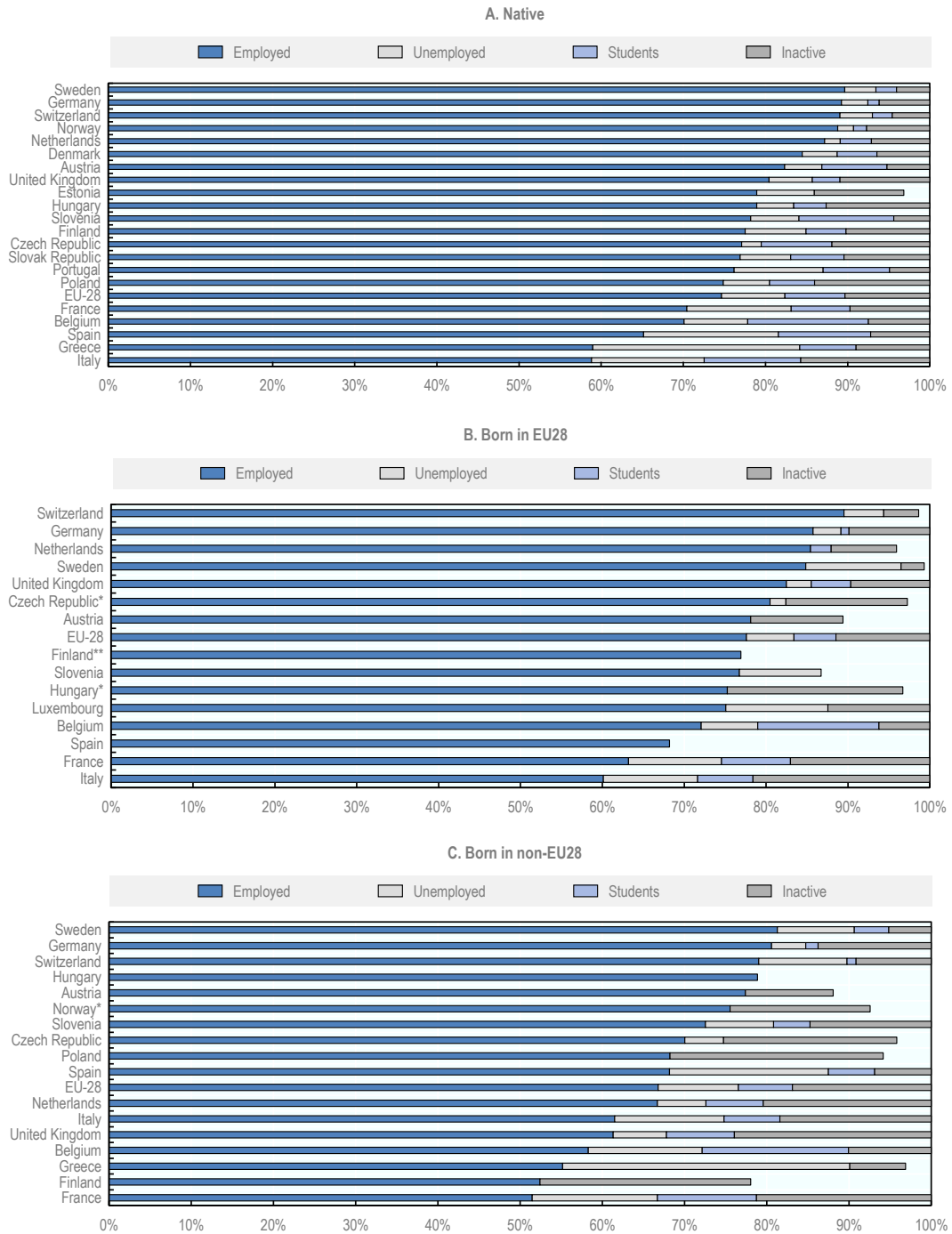
Note: The sample covers upper-secondary VET graduates whose highest level of education was upper-secondary VET and who had work experience during the time they enrolled in the upper-secondary VET programme. "Part of VET" is sum of work-based learning categories as part of VET and "Out of VET" is work outside the curriculum. Denmark for foreign-born only counts apprenticeship. Data from countries with an asterisk (*) have low reliability issue.

Source: Eurostat (2019^[29]), EU Labour Force Survey 2016 ad hoc module. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-labour-force-survey>.

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Figure 5.6. Migrant VET graduates are less likely to be employed than their native peers

Share (%) of upper-secondary VET graduates by employment status, 2018



Note: The sample covers upper-secondary VET graduates whose highest level of education was upper-secondary VET. Hungary, the Czech Republic and Norway (*) contain 2017 data and Finland (**) 2016 data.

Source: Eurostat (2019^[29]), EU Labour Force Survey. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-labour-force-survey>.

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Support at schools and workplaces lead to better VET outcomes among migrant students

Tailored programmes enable migrant students to succeed

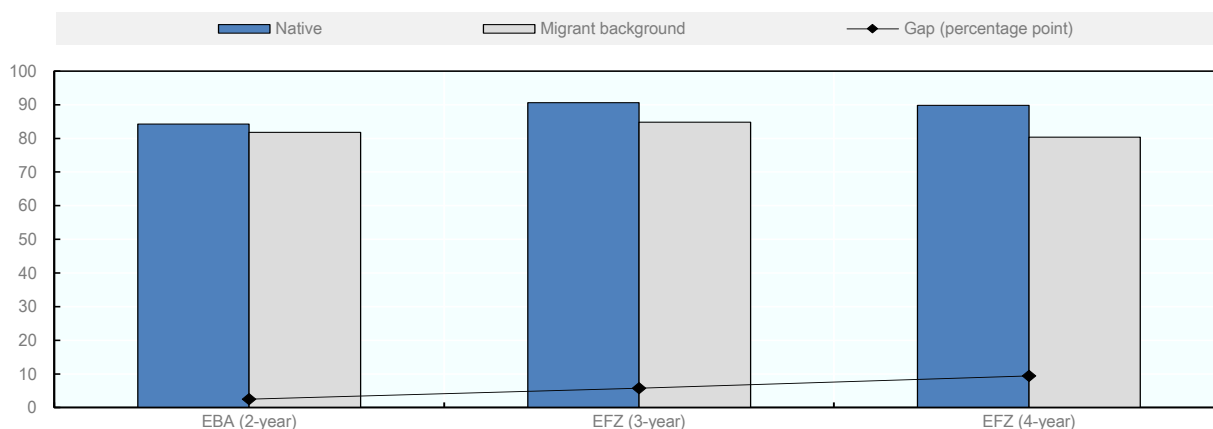
Lower completion rates among migrants illustrate the importance of adequately preparing and continuously supporting migrants who lack the skills necessary to succeed during apprenticeships, in particular language skills, or those who have trouble finding an apprenticeship. This support can take the form of shorter, longer or modular courses, that are better adapted to the migrant context.

Modularised VET courses can involve not only lowering the entry requirements but also less demanding curricular that lead to lower or partial qualifications. This approach can provide a good option for migrants with weak skills, while at the same time responding to labour market needs and providing a stepping stone towards a full qualification.

An example from Switzerland shows that tailored design and delivery of VET may help in reducing the completion gap. In contrast to 3-4 year EFZ programme, the completion rate of migrants in the 2-year EBA programme is not significantly lower compared to that of native Swiss (Figure 5.7). This is probably due to the fact that EBA is designed for lower performing students and provides support measures such as individual tutoring, remedial courses and support from in-company supervisors (Lüthi, forthcoming^[30]). In Sweden, Vocational Packages (see Chapter 4) are expected to play a similar role to the EBA. Another example is the pilot 1+3 VET model in Bavaria, Germany, which allows one additional year for intensive language training in addition to the usual three-year apprenticeship (Bergseng, Degler and Lüthi, 2019^[18]). This kind of tailored approach could make a significant difference in a migrant student's educational and career path.

Figure 5.7. VET designed for lower performing students with support measures may facilitate completion for migrant students

Share (%) of students who completed upper-secondary VET with an expected qualification, 2012 cohort from Switzerland, 2017



Note: Data refer to 2012 cohort who obtained a vocational training qualification by 2017. Migrants refer to permanent residents without Swiss citizenship, both native- and foreign-born.

Source: Swiss Federal Statistical Office (2018^[15]), Termination of apprenticeship contract, re-entry, certification status [su-f-15.10.01-06], <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home.assetdetail.6446763.html>.

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Ensuring a good learning experience in VET schools

Support from schools

VET schools can help overcome learning difficulties for students or apprentices in terms of academic or technical coursework or with preparing for exams, through remedial courses. Mentors or coaches may help apprentices with everyday problems and act as mediators if problems arise between the apprentice and their firm or school (OECD, 2018^[1]). As such, some schools and local authorities invest considerable resources to establish systems to identify and respond to newly arrived migrant students' academic and socio-emotional needs. For example, in the United States, school registration is used for schools and districts to set newly arrived students up for success. During this process, migrants' needs assessment by school personnel is conducted to ensure they are placed in an appropriate instructional setting and connected with additional resources and assistance. After the initial welcome phase, schools continue to provide these migrant students with supports through investing additional instruction time for these students as well as home visits, coaching and mentoring, and planning for educational and career paths. Schools may also provide support to newly arrived students' communities and families through adult education and community outreach and, in doing so, empower them to advocate for and support individual students as well as the needs of the community as a whole (Sugarman, 2017^[31]).

Individual approaches are in particular helpful for the newly arrived. In Sweden, while individual study plans are common across all levels of education, upper-secondary Introductory Programmes where most newly arrived are enrolled provide counselling to help support individual pathways into mainstream upper-secondary education programmes, including VET, adult education or into the labour market through Vocational Packages. Teachers are not directly responsible for support other than teaching, but municipalities have support system and various state grants are available for assisting migrant students.

Inclusive classroom environment

Analysis from OECD PISA data highlights the importance of student sense of belonging within a school and their academic success. For young people from a migrant background, simple interventions such as buddying schemes, mentoring and student counselling help enrich relationships between teachers and students and across the student body which are in turn associated with better outcomes for learners who may struggle to engage fully in the educational institution (OECD, 2018^[28]). An inclusive classroom environment, where students with different characteristics are well supported in the learning process, has been shown to improve learning outcomes in more diverse schools. Some VET schools in Switzerland started to have two teachers in integration classes to cope with the diversity of learners, similar to the team-teaching strategy of the *Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training* (I-BEST) programme, successfully implemented in the United States (see Box 3.2) (Wachen, Jenkins and Van Noy, 2010^[32]).

The role of diversity-aware teachers for supporting all learners

Migrant students benefit from teachers who take into account the diversity of their student populations in their instructional approaches (OECD, 2015^[33]). Training to teach students with diverse backgrounds could include intercultural training and training for different learner needs. For example, in the French Community of Belgium, intercultural education has been part of teacher training since 2000 (OECD, 2018^[28]). In the Netherlands, an understanding of cultural diversity is also a prerequisite for gaining a qualification as a teacher. In Norway, the government introduced a five-year plan in 2013 to improve multicultural competence among teachers, including multilingualism and second-language teaching (see Box 3.5). Initial teacher education in the United Kingdom focuses on standards including those related to equality and diversity (OECD, 2018^[28]). However, evaluation of effectiveness of these approaches could be further improved.

Support at the workplace during apprenticeships

Support for learners and employers

Supporting struggling apprentices can benefit both employers and apprentices. As seen above, proportionately more young migrants find completing an apprenticeship challenging compared to their native counterparts. Migrant students tend to need more instruction time, which creates higher costs or fewer benefits for employers. Offering extra support can help apprentices to learn faster and overcome difficulties, resulting in better chances of completion; such support also covers the costs incurred by employers. As a result, employers benefit from better performing apprentices and can reduce the risks of costly dropouts. Approaches which recognise challenges facing more vulnerable learners, regardless of migrant background, are widely viewed as symptomatic of effective VET systems (OECD, 2018^[11]).

An effective means to support young people at risk within apprenticeships is to offer support to employers to reduce their costs and to increase the speed at which apprentices develop the knowledge and skills which drive economic outputs (OECD, 2018^[11]). There are several countries that provide such support, usually from the preparatory phase (Box 5.1). Targeted training, for example, is offered to apprentice supervisors in a number of OECD countries. Employers and apprentice supervisors can also benefit from easy access to external organisations which help address specific challenges faced by refugees (Mathema, 2018^[27]).

Offering personalised services can also increase the effectiveness of apprenticeships

In Germany, proactive measures are in place to prevent dropout, including [VerA](#) (*Verhinderung von Ausbildungsabbrüchen*) that is initiated by the the German Federal Ministry of Education (BMBF). Within VerA programme, voluntary senior experts (e.g. retired professionals) counsel apprentices who have difficulties and are considering terminating their training. The programme resulted in a high level of completion: about 80% of the participants successfully completed their apprenticeship in 2013 (Borchers et al., 2013^[34]) (Huisman, 2018^[35]). In addition to such federal initiatives, many *Länder* have developed their own [programmes](#) to support apprentices and prevent dropouts. For apprentices struggling to finance their training or preparatory programmes, the Vocational Training Allowance (*Berufsausbildungsbeihilfe*, BAB) offers financial support. Asylum seekers with good prospects of remaining are eligible for this allowance when they are not covered by the asylum support (*Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz*) anymore (BMBF, 2018^[36]). In 2017, about 87 000 persons received BAB. The share of foreign nationals among them is rising from 13% in 2016 to about 17% in 2017 (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2018^[37]) (Bergseng, Degler and Lüthi, 2019^[18]).

Support from trade unions

Trade unions can also play a role in building an environment where migrants and refugees can develop social relations and networks through the workplace while at the same time supporting their rights.

For example, the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) called for a ban on the detention of migrant apprentices for certain immigration offenses under the logic that the government's first priority should be economic security for both migrants and companies. They also called for more legal certainty for young tolerated refugees doing apprenticeships as well as an increased use of the 3+2 regulation to grant vocational training (German Trade Union Confederation, 2018^[38]). Beyond VET, trade unions are playing an increasingly important role in education in general. For example, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) launched the project "European Sectoral Social Partners in Education promoting effective integration of migrants and refugees in education" in 2017 which will continue until November 2019 (European Trade Union Committee for Education, 2019^[39]).

Box 5.1. Support at the workplace during apprenticeships

In **Austria**, integrative apprenticeships (IBA) are upper-secondary VET programmes that target youth at risk of poor outcomes, including dropouts from basic schooling. IBA accounted for 6% of apprentices in 2014. IBA participants receive support both during work placements and at school and can take an additional year or two to complete their apprenticeship, or may choose to obtain a partial qualification. Firms taking on young people in this programme receive higher subsidies than other firms, and public resources cover additional training needed by apprentices and trainers in the firm.

In **Germany**, public employment service (PES) offers Assisted Apprenticeship (*Assistierte Ausbildung*, AsA) and Training Assistance (*Ausbildungsbegleitende Hilfen*, abH) during the dual apprenticeship programmes.

- Assisted Apprenticeship (AsA) is designed to support both apprentices and employers from preparatory programmes to completion of upper-secondary VET (BMBF, 2018_[36]). Recent data shows that over 40% of learners benefiting from AsA come from migration backgrounds with almost 17% of new participants in the programme in 2016-17 being humanitarian migrants, more than half of them refugees (Bergseng, Degler and Lüthi, 2019_[18]).
- Training Assistance (abH) is available to young people taking an apprenticeship, as well as supporting dropouts seeking to transition into another apprenticeship. Assistance includes remedial education and support with homework and exams, which helps to overcome learning difficulties. Socio-pedagogical assistance (including mentoring) is also available, and this includes support with everyday problems and mediation with the training company, school trainers and family.

In **Switzerland**, apprentices in two-year VET programmes (EBA) are entitled to publically-funded individual coaching and remedial courses, mostly to tackle weak language skills, learning difficulties or psychological problems. Most coaches are former teachers, learning therapists or social workers, and receive targeted training in preparation for their job (e.g. 300-hour training in the case of Zurich).

In **Spain**, the Professional Experiences Programmes (2008-12) in Andalusia (co-funded by the European Social Fund) targeted migrants who lacked adequate educational background or work experience and offered 3-month apprenticeships. A personalised integration pathway and coaching for each migrant during the apprenticeship ensured successful completion, in addition to coaching by an external and dedicated social worker, helping out with personal problems (Metis GmbH, 2016_[40]).⁴ This programme is running again for 2014-20 with a broader target group (Andalusian Employment Service, n.d._[41]).

Source: For Austria, Germany and Switzerland, OECD (2018_[1]), *Seven Questions about Apprenticeships: Answers from International Experience*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264306486-en>. Bergseng, B., E. Degler and S. Lüthi (2019_[18]), *Unlocking the Potential of Migrants in Germany*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/82ccc2a3-en>.

Increase interaction between the workplace and schools

In response to weak connections and co-ordination between the two learning environments addressed above, Denmark introduced a *Practicum*, a third learning space, to connect education and work; financial support for VET teachers to do short internships in training companies to make a better connection between the two learning environments; a stronger link between theory (in the training places) and practice (in school). A *Practicum* involves defining a common project work that connects school and the workplace – a kind of “third learning environment” situated between the vocational school and the training company.

It commits school teachers, workplace trainers and the apprentice to work together to define and solve a work-related problem (Jørgensen, 2015^[9]).

Also additional support for catching up theoretical part through workplace learning and for refining technical skills through theoretical training while in school would help. For example, language training in school may focus on key terminologies used in the workplace and at workplace apprentices may practice tasks that link to theories learnt in school. The OECD team met employers in Switzerland who offer extra studying hours for their migrant apprentices and trainees at the workplace. Such gesture would help for migrant apprentices to successfully complete dual VET.

Box 5.2. Alternatives: VET programmes and support for adult migrants and refugees

The recent inflow of adult refugees and asylum seekers without upper-secondary education has made it more important to provide comprehensive educational offerings for adults. In recognition of this importance, countries use different measures to activate vocational skills of young adults who left school or who are not eligible for upper-secondary education. While in countries such as Germany and Switzerland, young adults can still access mainstream upper-secondary VET, in other countries such as Italy and Sweden they are directed to adult VET or other types of VET including introductory integration programmes for newly arrived adults, labour market training programmes or fast-tracks.

Upper-secondary VET provision through adult education

Some countries provide courses for young adults to complete upper-secondary VET through adult education, while other countries offer the mainstream upper-secondary option for young adults. For example, in Sweden, municipalities provide adult education, including *Swedish for Immigrants* (SFI). Any migrant over the age of 16 who lacks basic knowledge of Swedish is eligible for SFI, while migrants over the age 20 are eligible for additional courses including adult VET. Many municipalities organise SFI combined with adult VET (Eurydice, 2018^[42]).⁵ A modularised approach that grants partial qualifications is expected to facilitate access to VET for adults as well as access to education in general through adult education.

Denmark and Norway offer VET through upper-secondary schooling up to age 24 and through adult education from age 25. Denmark's adult VET provides adults with the same skills and qualifications as VET for young people. Courses and duration vary depending on the adult student's level of work experience, but are generally shorter than those for youth. Participants should have at least 2.0 in both Danish and mathematics, either at the 9th grade, final exam in the 10th grade or equivalent – it can differ based on whether the participant has an internship or relevant work experience in the field. Those who do not meet this requirement can be referred to general adult education.

While Germany has no specific age limit for upper-secondary VET (as it is up to the employer to decide or it is set by *Länders*), the vast majority of VET students start their apprenticeship directly or soon after completing compulsory schooling. For example in 2016, about 80% of apprentices in the dual VET system were 22 or younger.

Labour market training programmes

According to the analysis of 87 programmes, covering 14 countries (1998-2013), including Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland, Switzerland (Bonoli and Liechti, 2018^[43]), compared to nationals, migrants are systematically underrepresented in job-creation, wage-subsidy and training programmes.

More recently, countries have made improvements. Migrants and refugees in the *labour market training programmes* are often treated as unemployed or receive additional support and more targeted measures. For example, the German Federal Employment Agency (BA) has developed in co-operation with the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) and employer associations a number of targeted short-term programmes such as “Perspectives for Refugees” (PerF), which include vocational language training, site visits to companies, skills assessment and counselling for asylum seekers and refugees (Konle-Seidl, 2017^[44]). Sweden also introduced [Vocational Introduction Employments](#) targeting recently arrived migrants and other vulnerable groups (15-24 years old) to combine work and training, and Entry Agreements to enable newly arrived migrants and the long-term unemployed to gain employment (Kuczera and Jeon, 2019^[45]).

Moreover, while asylum seekers are usually not registered with the public employment services (PES) or because they are not entitled to PES measures, PES increasingly offer services to asylum seekers even before they obtain protection status, for example in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden (European Union, 2017^[46]). In Finland, the National Board of Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Employment and the Economy organises language training and other integrative training for asylum seekers living in reception centres while waiting for relocation to a municipality. A modularised integration training also aims to inform the Finnish PES offices in validating the qualifications of asylum seekers, and to make integration training more job-orientated. During 2017-18, the Skills Programme for Immigrants (MAO) was created for asylum seekers who arrived in Finland in 2015 to support those with work experience to learn vocational Finnish part of their vocational qualification.

Table 5.1. Examples of introductory integration programmes for adult migrants and refugees

	Name	Duration
Denmark* (ages 18+)	Integration programme for refugees	1 year (up to 5 years)
Belgium (Flanders) (ages 18+)	Custom-made integration course depending on educational, social or professional perspective	
Finland	Integration training	3-5 years
Italy* (ages 16+)	Integration agreements	2 years (can be extended to 3 years)
Norway* (ages 18-55 who need to acquire basic qualifications)	Integration programme for humanitarian migrants (and their family members)	2-3 years (for 2 years, full time: introduction programme [introduksjonskurs])
Sweden* (ages 20+)	Introduction programme (individually tailored)	2 years maximum (full-time)
United States	Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Programme	Initial six-week entry level course; a three-week supervisory course for incumbent workers, and a bridge/support course for postsecondary hospitality management certification (U.S. Center for Law and Social Policy, 2016 ^[47]).

Note: * is mandatory. Intensity of programmes varies across countries.

StatLink  <https://doi.org/10.1787/888933998139>

Introduction programmes or introductory integration programmes for newly arrived adults

Introductory integration programmes are usually designed to facilitate a smooth transition to the labour market or provide necessary training programmes for the transition. Main goals of such programmes are to enhance language skills, cultural awareness, civic or social participation and physical and mental health as well as to build local and social networks. These programmes can function as VET but usually as stepping stone for formal VET (e.g. in Norway, participants in these programmes can receive upper-secondary VET). (Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity, 2016^[48]).

In general, these programmes are free of charge. Nordic countries offer living costs conditional to the programme participation and completion (Sweden). Denmark offers performance subsidies based on participants' language and employment outcomes. In addition to this, these programmes may provide career guidance, counselling, internship opportunities or employment with a wage subsidy.

Personalised services that address their needs are particularly effective when sufficient resources are available. This includes a co-ordination of the integration path of refugees and cooperation with relevant actors based on their needs. In many countries, PES are responsible for these programmes with various degrees (European Union, 2017^[46]).

Supports for highly qualified migrants and refugees

Fast-track approaches are targeted towards highly qualified refugees and refugees with skills and qualifications in sectors with high workforce demand. In these fast-tracks, complementary education for migrants is available only in terms of a small number of occupations. The Swedish PES invites social partners and other agencies to create fast-track initiatives in various sectors with intensive language training. In Norway, a fast-track for refugees was put in place based on an agreement between the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities and the social partners.

With the goal of setting up a fast track in the United States, several attempts and recommendations were made nationally and in different states on reforming state licensing laws, increasing the number of language and transitional programmes, improving adult education and workforce training systems, and enhancing technical assistance to address employer bias (McHugh and Morawski, 2017^[49]). For example, Minnesota developed a task force to make strategies to integrate refugees, asylum seekers and other migrant physicians due to expected shortages. Identified challenges include residency, language, hands-on experience in the country and licensing, which would cost about USD 10 000-60 000 per migrant. The task force recommended to develop a standardised and rigorous assessment process to evaluate the readiness of immigrant physicians and create a certificate of clinical readiness and new licensing options for immigrant physicians as well as develop a clinical preparation programme for those needing it and a structured apprenticeship programme (Minnesota Department of Health, 2015^[50]). Other example includes a vocational counselling programme under New American Pathways, which provides opportunities for adult refugees to learn industry-specific information, grow networks, familiarise them with employers through mentorships. For example, the programme pairs refugees who are civil engineers with local civil engineers or someone who works with civil engineers (Mathema, 2018^[27]).

Source: For Finland and Germany: European Union (2017^[46]), *Thematic Paper. Public Employment Services (PES) Initiatives Around Skills, Competencies and Qualifications of Refugees and Asylum Seekers*, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=18319&langId=en>; Denmark is from Ministry of Higher Education and Science of Denmark (2019^[51]), https://ufm.dk/en/education/recognition-and-transparency/recognition-guide/admission-vet_and Ministry of Education of Denmark (2019^[52]), *State education support*, <https://www.ug.dk/uddannelser/artikleromuddannelser/oekonomi/statens-uddannelsesstoette-su>; Introductory integration programmes: European PES Network (2016^[53]), *Labour Market Integration of Refugees – Key Considerations*, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=20661&langId=en> for Finland, Norway and Sweden. Kuczera, M. and S. Jeon (2019^[45]), *Vocational Education and Training in Sweden*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/g2q9fac5-en> and OECD (2016^[54]), *Working Together: Skills and Labour Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children in Sweden*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264257382-en> for Sweden.

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Notes

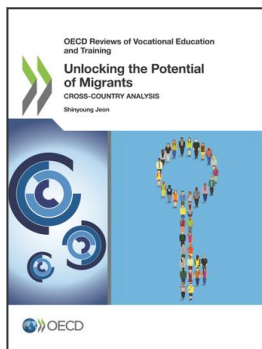
¹ The survey only included students with an intermediate school leaving certificate (*Realschule*), and it is thus not clear if graduation rates may be different among students with a lower-secondary degree. Moreover, no distinction was made whether students were born in Germany or abroad. For refugee students, graduation cohorts are still too small to assess how they fare in their final exams (Bergseng, Degler and Lüthi, 2019^[18]).

² Termination rates are not exactly the same as dropout rates. A termination of an apprenticeship contract does not always lead to a dropout, since many apprentices simply change their training firm. However, the rates of re-entry after a contract termination are lower among migrants, compared to native students (Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2018^[15]).

³ An online survey of 2 131 companies offering apprenticeships in Bremen.

⁴ A total of 32 602 migrants carried out apprenticeship programmes and a third could be inserted in the labour market after completion.

⁵ Other initiatives include: Education and Training Obligation for low-educated migrants (since January 2018); Education Entry Grant to facilitate basic education for low-educated adults; [Vocational Introduction Employments](#) targeting recently arrived migrants and other vulnerable groups (15-24 years old) to combine work and training; Introduction Jobs to facilitate labour market entry; and Entry Agreements to enable newly arrived migrants and the long-term unemployed to gain employment (Kuczera and Jeon, 2019^[45]).



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