As a tradition of more than 50 years, **upper-secondary education (ISCED 3) typically starts from grade 9 in Hungary** after completing the 8-grade single-structure educational phase (i.e. primary and lower secondary, ISCED 1 and 2). Most commonly, it involves 4 grades, less commonly 5, 3 or 2 grades. As another 50-year-long tradition, Hungary has maintained the three main programmes of upper-secondary education: general secondary, vocational secondary and vocational education and training. Besides, the so-called Bridge Programmes belong here that usually last for two years (source about the structural framework: Hungary - VET in Europe: [country report](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice) [1] 2016, 12. p.).

Students completing their studies in general secondary or vocational secondary schools and successfully passing the secondary school-leaving examination are entitled to seek admission to higher education. The three-year vocational education and training does not offer the same qualification and ends with the issuance of a certificate. This certificate provides a state-recognised qualification listed in the National Qualifications Register. It does not entitle school-leavers to enter into higher education. In this form of education, it is possible to obtain a secondary school-leaving certificate in an additional two years, which entitles the student to enter into higher education.

During the previous decade, the content of all of these programmes has changed significantly. The inner structure and proportions of all vocational programmes also changed.

After the political and economic transition of 1989, the extension of upper-secondary education entitling students to enter into higher education was a very important educational policy objective. The expansion of upper-secondary education and that of higher education met population demands also. The reason behind was the fact that the newly opened market economy substantially increased the value of higher qualifications in the labour market. After the early 2000s, proportions of the various educational programmes have barely changed for a decade following the educational expansion of the 1990s. From 2010, educational policy aims at significantly increasing the proportion of vocational education and significantly reducing the proportion of upper-secondary education preparing students for tertiary education. For the time being, enrolment rates do not follow these educational policy guidelines (source: Charts – STADAT yearly data, [education](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice) [2]). Students living in Hungary prefer general secondary education to vocational training.

Enrolling into upper-secondary education institutions does not mean that students complete their studies in the given school. It happens relatively frequently that a student starting his/her studies in secondary school continues studies in adult education most often in grade 9 or following failure in that year. Alternatively, he/she repeats grade 9. **Dropping out is more typical in vocational schools.** This phenomenon is even more frequent nowadays than before since the age limit of compulsory education has been reduced to 16 years instead of 18. It contributes to the fact that, since 2010, early drop-out rates have been on the rise.

Typically, secondary schools provide more than one type of programme. The number of institutions
providing only vocational training programmes is relatively low.

Until 2012, the majority of students attended upper-secondary schools maintained by local governments. As for church-maintained schools, their number and consequently the number of students studying in such institutions has been on the rise. Until 2011, the proportion of institutions maintained by foundations was rising; at present, in accordance with current educational policies, it is decreasing. In 2012-2013, schools maintained by the local governments became state-funded institutions. As for agricultural vocational schools, the majority is maintained by the Ministry of Agriculture. In 2015, vocational training funded by the state was taken over by the Ministry for National Economy from the Ministry of Human Resources.

The programmes of post-secondary education (ISCED 4) that usually last for one or two years were introduced in the second half of the 1990s. The number of post-secondary vocational qualifications have been somewhat higher than the number of upper-secondary vocational qualifications. During the past two decades, the majority of vocational training has been attributed to a higher qualification level. For this reason, i.e. that a significant portion of vocational education and training takes place at a higher level (ISCED 4), the share of upper-secondary vocational education seems to be low in international comparison while its volume at post-secondary level is relatively high.