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Ordinance on Vocational and Professional Education and Training (Vocational and Professional Education and Training Ordinance, VPETO)

of 19 November 2003 (Status as of 1 April 2022)

The Swiss Federal Council,

on the basis of Article 65 paragraph 1 of the Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act of 13 December 2002¹ (VPETA),

ordains:

Chapter 1 General Provisions

Art. 1 Cooperation (Art. 1 VPETA)

¹ Cooperation between the Confederation, the Cantons and professional organisations in the area of upper-secondary level vocational education and training (VET) and tertiary-level professional education ensures that learners receive high-level competences that are comparable throughout Switzerland and correspond to the needs of the labour market.

² The Confederation generally works with national professional organisations that carry out activities all over Switzerland. If no such professional organisation exists for a given economic branch, then the federal authorities shall work with:

- a. organisations that are involved in a similar economic branch; or
- b. organisations that are involved in a corresponding economic branch at regional level as well as with the Cantons concerned.

Art. 2 Research in the area of vocational and professional education and training (VPET)

(Art. 4 VPETA)

¹ The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)² shall encourage Swiss VPET research until human resource and organisational capacities reach a sustainable and internationally recognised scientific level.

² Ten years after commencement of this Ordinance, the Confederation shall decide whether VPET research can be considered a branch of general education research and therefore included in existing national research funding structures.

³ Federally funded VPET research shall be aligned with prevailing conditions applicable to general education research, the education statistics programme and the economic and business world.

Art. 3 Quality improvement

(Art. 8 VPETA)

¹ SERI shall draft a list of methods designed to ensure improvement of quality within the VPET system. This list shall be reviewed periodically.

² Providers of upper-secondary level VET or tertiary-level professional education shall be free to choose from a list of quality improvement methods. The Cantons may make a given method mandatory for public-sector providers.

³ The quality standards established by SERI shall meet current requirements and take account of the needs of various education and training options.

Art. 4 Recognition of non-formal and informal learning

(Art. 9 para. 2 VPETA)

¹ Recognition of non-formal and informal learning shall be decided by:

- a. the cantonal authorities when determining whether or not an individual may shorten the duration of a dual-track VET programme;
- b. the VET school when determining whether or not an individual may shorten the duration of other VET programmes;
- c. the examining bodies in the case of admittance to qualification procedures.

² The Cantons shall establish guidance counselling offices that can help individuals draft assessment portfolios presenting all professional and non-professional experience gained outside formal education pathways. These assessment portfolios shall serve as the basis for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning described in paragraph 1 above.

³ The guidance counselling offices shall work with professional organisations and external experts.

² The name of this administrative unit was amended in application of Art. 16 para. 3 of the Publications Ordinance of 17 Nov. 2004 (AS 2004 4937) on 1 Jan. 2013. The amendment has been made throughout the text.

Art. 5 Private providers

(Art. 11 VPETA)

When establishing an adequate availability of VET programmes and branch courses, the Cantons shall take particular account of courses offered to learners free of charge by private providers.

Chapter 2 Vocational Education and Training**Section 1 General Provisions****Art. 6** Definitions

In implementation of the Federal Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act, or as a complement thereto, the following terms shall be used:

- a. dual-track VET programme: a VET programme where most learning takes place at a host company or within a host company network;
- b. school-based VET programme: a VET programme where most learning takes place at a school, namely a trade school or a commercial school;
- c. host company network: a group of two or more companies that have pooled their resources for the purpose of providing comprehensive and specialised workplace training;
- d. traineeship: a form of workplace training which, while considered part of a school-based VET programme, takes place outside the school.

Art. 7 Preparation for upper-secondary level VET

(Art. 12 VPETA)

¹ After completing compulsory education, pupils may attend pre-vocational courses. These practical and work-related options are intended to prepare pupils for enrolment in upper-secondary level VET.

² Pre-vocational courses last no more than one year and are scheduled according to the academic year.

³ Pupils are assessed at the end of these preparatory courses.

Art. 8 Apprenticeship contract

(Art. 14 and 18 para. 1 VPETA)

¹ If several apprenticeship contracts mentioned in Article 14 paragraph 2 sentence 2 of VPETA are needed to cover the various portions of workplace training, then all of these contracts must be signed and approved by the cantonal authorities prior to commencement of the first apprenticeship.

² If workplace training takes place within a host company network, then the apprenticeship contract shall be signed by the coordinating company or organisation and the learner.

³ The trial period shall run from the apprenticeship start date established in the corresponding apprenticeship contract. If an apprenticeship contract under paragraph 1 has been drafted to cover only a portion of workplace training, then the trial period for that portion shall generally be one month in duration.

⁴ The provisions of the apprenticeship contract shall apply to dual-track VET programmes even when learners start out in a school-based VET programme for an extended period of time. The cantonal authorities may grant exemptions if they can guarantee that learners have received enough practical training while enrolled in the school-based VET programme to complete the dual-track VET programme.

⁵ The host company or host company network shall submit the signed apprenticeship contract to the cantonal authorities for approval prior to commencement of the VET programme.

⁶ The contracting parties shall use the standard contract forms provided to them by the Cantons. SERI shall ensure that the same contract forms are used throughout Switzerland.

⁷ If the parties to the apprenticeship contract intend to extend or reduce the duration of a VET programme as described in Article 18 paragraph 1 VPETA, the cantonal authorities shall decide on the matter after discussion with the parties to the apprenticeship contract and the VET school.

Art. 9 Official location of the workplace training segment

(Art. 16 para. 2 let. a VPETA)

¹ The official location of the workplace training segment of a dual-track VET programme shall be the main location where workplace training takes place.

² If the legal domicile of the host company and the main location where workplace training takes place are in two different Cantons, the main location where workplace training takes place shall be considered as the official location.

³ For host company networks, the location used by the coordinating company or organisation shall be considered as the official location.

⁴ If the cantonal authorities are unable to agree on the official location of the workplace training segment, then SERI shall decide.

Art. 10 Special requirements for two-year VET programmes

(Art. 17 para. 2 and 18 para. 2 VPETA)

¹ Compared to three-year and four-year VET programmes, two-year VET programmes provide learners with specific vocational qualifications that are easier to acquire. They take account of the individual capabilities of learners by offering them a particularly broad range of courses and a personalised teaching approach.

² VET ordinances for two-year VET programmes include provisions enabling learners to subsequently enrol in the three-year or four-year VET programme.

³ Two-year VET programmes may be extended or shortened by no more than one year.

⁴ If a learner runs the risk of not completing a VET programme, the cantonal authorities shall, after listening to the learner and the VET school, decide whether competent individual tutoring should be provided to the learner in question.

⁵ Competent individual tutoring not only includes classroom instruction but all relevant areas of training that the learner requires.

Art. 11 Supervision

(Art. 24 VPETA)

¹ The cantonal authorities shall refuse to issue VET accreditation or shall revoke already issued VET accreditation if the workplace training proves unsatisfactory, if workplace trainers fail to adhere to legal requirements or if they fail to fulfil their obligations.

² If there is a risk that a learner will be unable to complete a VET programme, the cantonal authorities shall discuss the matter with the people involved and take such steps as are needed to ensure that the learner is able to undergo vocational education and training in accordance with his or her skills and aptitudes.

³ If necessary, the cantonal authorities shall recommend that contracting parties revise the apprenticeship contract, or shall help the learner to transfer to another VET programme or learning location.

Section 2 **VET Ordinances**

Art. 12 Content

(Art. 19 VPETA)

¹ VET ordinances shall cover the following aspects mentioned in Article 19 paragraph 2 VPETA:

- a. admission requirements;
- b. possible ways in which VET programmes may be structured in terms of course content and the level of personal maturity required for a given activity;
- c. instruments to improve the quality of VET programmes such as training plans and other related instruments;
- d. possible regional particularities;
- e. measures to ensure occupational health and safety;
- f. requirements in terms of content and structure of workplace training in a school within the meaning of Article 6 letter b;
- g. the organisation, duration and content of branch courses and similar third-party training courses and the coordination of these courses with classroom instruction at the VET school.

^{1bis} VET ordinances also regulate the composition and tasks of Swiss committees for occupation development and quality (CODQ), which are established for the purpose