

## VET Career Tracking System – Comprehensive Analytical Study

### Summary

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This analytical study, conducted for the purpose of tracking career paths, was commissioned by the National Office of Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning (NOVETAL) as part of the EQAVET project. Its purpose is to present the results of the career tracking indicators developed in connection with the VET Career Tracking System (SZPR) within a uniform, easy-to-understand framework, thereby providing a basis for decision-making regarding the labour market and educational trajectories of students leaving vocational training and education in the context of further education, policy-making, institutional management, and quality improvement processes.

The study describes the main patterns and differences revealed by the indicators in three key areas:

- (1) characteristics of the transition from vocational training to the labour market (such as the timing and stability of employment),
- (2) the main dimensions of labour market integration (such as labour market statuses, intensity of work, income characteristics, and job-search patterns), as well as
- (3) the directions and proportions for continuing education.

The results are generated based on individual-level, anonymous data linkage that combines relevant records from multiple administrative data holders (NOVETAL; Education Office; National Health Insurance Fund of Hungary; National Tax and Customs Administration; Ministry of National Economy – National Employment Service; Diákhitel Központ Zrt.). Consequently, the analysis can reliably capture only those phenomena that become “visible” in domestic administrative systems (for example, declared employment in Hungary; registered job search; domestic educational statuses, etc.), while certain life-path elements – such as working or studying abroad – are reflected only to a limited extent. In interpreting the results, the study consistently points out those areas where the specific characteristics of coverage, update cycles, or conceptual referencing call for caution in interpretation.

In this version, the follow-up covers the period from February 2021 to September 2023, i.e. 32 months; however, the system is expanded upwards every six months and will eventually cover a 9-year follow-up period. Where the temporal development of career paths is relevant, the data are analysed in the form of monthly time-series indicators. For one-off events associated with a “first occurrence” (such as starting a job for the first time), the system uses event-based timing relative to the completion of studies. In addition, certain indicators apply to the entire observation period following the completion of studies and record whether the phenomenon in question occurred at any time after the completion of studies (for example, experiencing a registered job search episode).

Based on the overall picture of the results, one of the key findings regarding the career paths taken following the completion of education is that a significant proportion of those who leave vocational training appear in domestic administrative records as being in declared employment within a short period of time, and that employment rates increase as the months after leaving progress, and then stabilise. At the same time, entry into the labour market cannot be described as a one-off “switch”: in the first few months, several indicators suggest that the transition is gradual, and during a transitional phase, studying, working, and other life situations (or combinations thereof) occur simultaneously. This is also supported by the time-series distribution of the primary labour market statuses: for example, the “studying and working” category has a significant share in several periods, suggesting that for many people, the start of their career involves dual activity (the simultaneous pursuit of studies and work).

Based on job-search indicators, registered job-seeking in the period following the completion of studies primarily occurs in the form of temporary episodes: in the months following completion of studies, the



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proportion of people with registered job seeker status typically spikes, then later declines and stabilises at a lower level. At the same time, it is also evident that while the proportion of those who appear in the register of job seekers at least once represents a significant group (as many as one in four school leavers in the first grade studied), the proportion of those registered as job seekers throughout the entire observation period is exceptionally low; in other words, long-term, continuous registration as a job seeker is characteristic of only a very small group (less than 0.5%). For grades that can be linked to the COVID-19 period, however, the rise after completion of studies is more pronounced, which may be consistent with the uncertainties in the labour market environment during the pandemic or its effects on educational outcomes, though it is important to note that only registered job searches are reflected here.

Work intensity indicators convey a particularly strong message about the quality of integration. The proportion of full-time employees amongst those in employment rises steadily after the completion of studies and stabilises at a higher level, suggesting that employment as an employee not only becomes more common over time, but also more intensive and stable. This is further supported by the fact that the average number of days spent at work remains high, while the pool of employed individuals is gradually expanding: in other words, high intensity is not limited to a narrow group but is becoming increasingly prevalent among a broader group over time. Part-time employment, by contrast, occurs at a lower rate, but exhibits clearly identifiable seasonality, particularly during the summer months, which suggests that seasonal and temporary forms of employment are becoming more prevalent from time to time.

Time series of income indicators provide valuable insights into the interpretation of employment; however, it is important to note that these series are highly sensitive to seasonal and one-off accounting effects. In the case of non-regular benefits, minor and major spikes at the end of the year and during the year are clearly visible, forming a recurring pattern, whereas for regular wage indicators, the one-off spike in early 2022 is most likely the administrative impact of family income tax refunds. For this reason, short-term fluctuations in income time series cannot, in themselves, be interpreted as wage trends; patterns spanning several months and the interpretation of indicators in conjunction with one another provide a more reliable basis for drawing more stable conclusions.

The indicators of further education underscore the importance of educational pathways after leaving, while also drawing attention to the specific characteristics of administrative data sources. The practice of terminating legal relationships established in vocational education and training may substantially distort the identification of “further education,” therefore, this study places special emphasis on indicators of further education outside of vocational training (higher education and adult education), as these more clearly reflect the actual progression of learning pathways. The issue of further education is significant from a policy perspective because it can simultaneously indicate a strategy for catching up, retraining, or upward mobility, and, when considered in conjunction with the timing of labour market entry, it can provide an important reference point for planning institutional and policy interventions.

Overall, the results for the period under study suggest that the career paths of those leaving vocational training typically lead toward employment after the completion of studies, the intensity of integration increases over time, and job searches mostly take the form of temporary episodes. At the same time, due to the various pathways for further education and the specificities of administrative record-keeping, the interpretation of the results requires contextualisation in several respects. From the perspective of their use to support decision-making, the greatest added value lies in the fact that the indicators, taken together and in a time series, can identify points where entry and stabilisation are stronger, and where the start of a career is more protracted or risky – thereby serving as a compass for determining the focus of targeted support and quality improvement interventions.