



Stronger VET for better lives



Cedefop's monitoring report
on vocational education
and training policies **2010-14**

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Foreword

‘Cedefop and the European Training Foundation (ETF) should continue, according to their specific mandates, to support policy development and implementation, to report on progress towards the strategic objectives and the short-term deliverables (STDs) (of European cooperation in vocational education and training (VET)), and to provide evidence for policy-making in VET’ (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2010, p. 18).

This ‘monitoring’ report illustrates progress achieved in VET in Member States and associated and candidate countries in the period 2011-14 towards the 2020 objectives set for education and training and ambitions of Europe’s overall 2020 strategy.

Our key conclusion in this report is that the European VET agenda has prompted a multifaceted process which shows clear signs of progress, but with more work to do. VET in Europe is responding positively and directly to predictable and unpredictable challenges in the labour market. Work on common priorities has had a positive reform effect in several countries and, with already robust VET systems, it is time to move on to higher levels of achievement.

European citizens as learners are at the heart of this process. On a broader scale, the Europe 2020 agenda, education and training 2020 objectives and the Bruges communiqué aim at improving their quality of life. The European Commission, Cedefop and ETF have joined forces to establish the evidence base and framework to support VET policies that help create an inclusive learning environment which empowers all citizens to tap their potential to secure employability and better lives. Hence this report’s title, which reflects two key guiding messages: the need to ensure that European policies and tools for VET get stronger and make it more attractive and relevant to the labour market; and that VET systems in Member States benefit citizens of all ages, backgrounds and potential. If the Europe 2020 strategy is about delivering growth that is smart, sustainable and inclusive, then VET should also be smart, sustainable and inclusive. Long-term investment in VET with strong emphasis on employability is the recipe for growth, competitiveness and innovation.

Since launch of the Copenhagen process (2002), VET has undergone significant transformations. Coupled with the Bologna process (1999), the two traditionally distinct education sectors have established a two-pillar system of quality and standards that offer greater transparency, transferability and permeability. European tools and principles, like European frameworks for qualifications and quality assurance, credit transfer systems, principles for validating non-formal and informal learning or Europass, which helps record people’s skills and qualifications and makes them easily understood across Europe, have helped portray VET’s value. Initiatives promoting apprenticeships and work-based learning more generally, key competences, adult learning, lifelong guidance and counselling and preventing early leaving from education and training – to name just a few – have been instrumental in establishing VET as a core element in knowledge societies.

Member States are at different levels of development in VET. But this is only natural given the variety of systems, their socioeconomic contexts and starting points in the education and training sector, in which responding to new challenges and implementation takes years, not months. Overall, however, the report illustrates that VET is making inroads into the way people perceive learning; that levels of qualifications are progressively moving upwards towards higher VET and that social partners are regularly engaged in strengthening work-based learning to reinforce VET's labour market relevance. These are positive signs upon which we can build priorities for the next years.

Through this report we aspire to uncover how VET reform helps renew structures towards higher standards, quality and labour market relevance of skills and qualifications. This is the major challenge. With high unemployment in many European countries and youth unemployment skyrocketing in some, VET in general, and apprenticeship in particular, has become crucial for European Union (EU) and national policy-makers as it is seen as a principle to prepare young people for today's labour market. In a world of rapid technological change, demographic change and economic restructuring, it is a particular challenge for VET to ensure that young people are also prepared for tomorrow's work places.

Today's challenges for VET could not have been foreseen more than a decade ago when, in 2002, in Copenhagen, under the Lisbon strategy and parallel to the Bologna process for higher education, ministers responsible for VET in the EU, European free trade area (EFTA)-European economic area (EEA) and candidate countries, the European Commission and social partners agreed on a set of overall priorities for VET. The core intentions then were to improve lifelong learning (LLL) opportunities and mobility across Member States in a single European labour market. The coordination process that followed has supported Member State cooperation and become a catalyst for modernising VET systems across Europe.

The Bruges communiqué set the agenda for VET in Europe and encourages action in line with aims of the Europe 2020 and the education and training 2020 strategies. With its adoption and unfolding impacts of the crisis in 2010, European cooperation entered a new phase. Strong VET systems and LLL opportunities increasingly started to be seen as crucial elements in dealing with the crisis. At the same time, their importance as preconditions for long-term growth and competitiveness was increasingly recognised.

In the report readers will find evidence of a structured reawakening of apprenticeship programmes and other forms of work-based learning: greater interest in validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL); setting up qualifications frameworks linked to the European qualifications framework (EQF), thus making education and training outcomes better understood; access to more structured and available guidance and counselling services; more VET qualifications based on a learning outcomes approach; the need to understand and value VET's potential at all levels to contribute to innovation, foster an entrepreneurship culture and therefore promote VET excellence as well as increasing emphasis on VET's capacity to be inclusive through renewed attention for the low-skilled and groups at risk.

These are positive signs that auger well for the future. But we cannot rest on our laurels and ignore the need to intensify our efforts. Challenges include: increasing VET funding; engaging social partners in a more structured

dialogue with education authorities; cooperating with primary and lower secondary education to help ensure that the basic skills and key competences that learners acquire become their bridge to VET; promoting collaboration between guidance and counselling services in education and training and employment sectors and encouraging them to work closely with businesses and emerging employment sectors; making better use of data on transition and labour market outcomes to inform VET provision; placing quality assurance, credit systems and VNFIL at the centre of VET systems; and providing more professional development opportunities for VET teachers and trainers.

VET at all levels is at the heart of Europe's response to the economic crisis, but also addresses long-term trends such as ageing, changing skill needs across the jobs spectrum and the need for greener economies. In countries where VET systems still struggle to gain their rightful place in political priorities and budgets, more young people may fall by the wayside of society as they become inactive, which, in turn, will entail social welfare costs. Citizens expect speedy policy responses with tangible impacts in the short run. However, in times of tight public budgets this is difficult to achieve and implementing sustainable measures takes time. Therefore there has been a growing need in Europe to develop the potential for VET reform and expand policy learning. While copy-paste approaches to policy are rarely effective, other models of policy transfer can go a long way in supporting countries' VET systems. Encouraging stronger cooperation, for instance within the European alliance for apprenticeship or use of European tools will help to achieve this. Use of European tools and principles could also make a significant change to the value given to a person's skills and competences, particularly when accessing the labour market.

Where traditional distinctions between vocational, general and higher education are entrenched in different cultures, VET cannot be seen in isolation: it is part and parcel of developing strong education and training systems in countries. This is because adjusting to labour market needs and avoiding skill mismatches requires flexible education and training opportunities that allow combining different types and levels of learning throughout life.

With the period to implement the STDs agreed in 2010 coming to an end, this report will give readers a comprehensive overview of VET policies and measures until early 2014. It uncovers several issues that, once addressed, could strengthen VET nationally and in Europe.

I trust that this report will encourage VET policy-makers at national and EU levels to reflect and discuss future priorities that are smart, sustainable and inclusive and which make VET systems stronger for Europe's citizens to enjoy a better quality of life.

Joachim James Calleja
Director

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Executive summary

This report provides a comprehensive overview of what European countries (EU Member States, Norway, Iceland and candidate countries) have done to address the priorities set for VET in 2010 in the Bruges communiqué. The report follows the communiqué's structure and reflects on achievements towards the 22 short-term deliverables set for VET, the STDs. Country examples complement detailed analysis of each STD. Based on trends observed from 2010 to 2014, the following main findings emerge.

The Bruges communiqué: inspiration and 'menu'

The Bruges communiqué has inspired national VET reforms in more than two thirds of the countries. In countries with strong VET, the communiqué's influence has been lower than in those with less developed VET systems. Several considered it a menu from which to choose the most relevant deliverables that would inspire solutions to their challenges. Work on qualifications frameworks triggered some systemic reforms focusing on learning-outcomes-oriented standards and curricula. While quality and attractiveness have also been among the impact 'hit-list', outcome indicators to track quality are still not frequently used. Where the national qualifications framework (NQF) was considered the communiqué's main impact, a trend was to use a step-by-step approach with validation, quality assurance and the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) following suit. Most countries lack comprehensive strategies to communicate the EU tools' value, which reflects the work on them so far developed as separate initiatives.

In other countries, the main impact of the communiqué and its deliverables manifested itself in their work on apprenticeships. In most cases, national authorities take the lead in

reforms. Social partners take second place, but their role is expanding as they increasingly contribute to developing VET policies and their implementation, especially in countries with strong social partner involvement in education and training. The approaches used to implement VET policies and measures vary substantially by policy aim: financial incentives are most common in measures to reduce early leaving while new laws or regulations dominate actions to promote continuing vocational education and training (CVET) and key competences.

Stronger VET ...

Analysis in this report shows a strong focus on developing and implementing work-based learning and apprenticeship, a process that takes time and requires active involvement of employers and social partners. Development of NQFs, measures to reduce early leaving and policies to promote LLL for low-skilled and other groups at risk are other areas that have been high on national policy agendas. Such measures to make VET more inclusive have not only become more prominent, but also more comprehensive.

Making VET more attractive and relevant and encouraging quality and efficiency

Countries have worked a lot on making VET more attractive, but more could be done to promote VET in compulsory education. Increasing work-based learning in VET has been a top priority and cooperation between VET and employment stakeholders has become stronger. Work on qualifications frameworks and validation has renewed attention to quality in VET, but challenges in securing quality in work-based learning remain. Key competences and basic skills and opportunities that allow young people and adults to acquire them have received increasing attention. Monitoring labour market

outcomes of VET graduates has become more common, but using the information to inform VET provision remains a challenge in many countries.

Making LLL and mobility a reality in VET

Promoting LLL and mobility has been somewhat less prominent than before, partly due to the economic crisis and high unemployment which led to strong focus on young people in transition to the labour market, but NQFs have been a catalyst for improving access to learning and individualising learning paths. Few countries, however, have comprehensive strategies or approaches for validating non-formal learning and it remains a challenge to start using ECVET to ease mobility within national VET systems. Those who could benefit most from validation are least aware of the opportunities it offers. Internationalisation in VET has mainly been supported by EU training programmes rather than national initiatives. Trends in guidance reflect the increasing need to encourage people to take up VET and to manage transitions. Supporting learning by providing adequate time arrangements and delivery methods and giving VET staff professional development opportunities are less prominent areas on national policy agendas.

Encouraging creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET

Overall, this objective has received less attention. Partnerships for creativity and innovation are developing, but it is a slow process. Networks and partnerships between providers and business to ensure effective and quality-assured technology in VET or using incentives to achieve this, are not yet common practice in many countries. Entrepreneurship is becoming an underlying principle in VET and links between VET and business are expanding, but support for aspiring entrepreneurs and their teachers and trainers could still be strengthened.

Making VET more inclusive

Countries have clearly prioritised actions and measures that make initial vocational education and training (IVET) and CVET more inclusive. Reducing early leaving from education and training has been a top priority, with incentives for learners, enterprises and VET institutions

increasingly used to tackle it. There is also a clear trend towards raising training participation of the low-skilled and other at-risk groups, but there is scope to invest in more training opportunities that meet their learning and practical needs. The potential of using information and communications technology (ICT) to help at-risk groups learn has not been fully tapped. Insufficient monitoring of such groups in VET is an obstacle to targeting provision better to their needs.

...at different speeds

While the process since Bruges has promoted reform in a range of countries, addressing many priorities at the same time in a long lasting economic crisis has been a challenge for some, especially where the VET system was not well developed. Countries have had to prioritise and concentrate their efforts.

Based on overall patterns and stage of VET policy implementation in recent years, Cedefop has clustered countries using four categories. This reflects that they started from very different baselines in terms of the maturity, competitiveness and effectiveness of their VET systems.

- (a) Continuous developers had a good starting position and have worked in recent years to develop their VET systems further.
- (b) Early developers require continuous efforts to secure and sustain their well-developed VET systems.
- (c) Recent implementers need to focus on continued (successful) implementation, which requires persistence and flexible adaptation.
- (d) Some modest developers have already started reforms, while others need to speed them up in at least one policy area.

...and further efforts needed

Several challenges have been identified through the analysis: better use of information on transitions; employability and other labour market outcomes of graduates for VET provision; strengthening efforts to promote creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET; and

ensuring professional development opportunities for VET teachers and trainers.

Giving more people a chance to get the skills they have acquired outside formal education validated, by developing comprehensive and quality-assured approaches, are on the 'room for improvement' list of European tools. The next step in the work on quality assurance is to ensure that frameworks for VET providers do not only apply to work-based learning in education and training institutions, but also to company-based learning that is part of formal VET. To benefit European citizens and help them move easily between different types of education and training and employment, work on European tools will need to ensure they interact better and focus more on end-users.

Issues of concern and areas of less progress will feed into setting new priorities. Monitoring and showcasing developments will also play a major role in the next phase of the process. To increase its policy relevance, the monitoring process will need to be strengthened.

...for better lives

The Bruges communiqué and the current crisis and employment challenges have put VET high on European and national policy agendas. In parallel, the notion that VET is a crucial pillar in knowledge economies and a driver of competitiveness, growth and prosperity is being reinforced. The achievements that countries have made towards reforming their VET systems within the voluntary Bruges framework have made VET in Europe stronger. Although much remains to be done, the changes set in motion by the communiqué can make a difference in the lives of European citizens. VET supports their employability through building and recognising skills and qualifications, and opens up opportunities for further learning and career development. To make a real difference in their lives in the coming years, the further development of VET policies, measures, support and tools should continue to be informed by a focus on European citizens.

How to indicate progress towards the Bruges priorities

1.1. Policy context

The Bruges communiqué (Council of the EU; European Commission, 2010) sets out a global vision for VET. It aims to make European VET systems more attractive, relevant, career-oriented, innovative and flexible. It also highlights the contribution of VET to excellence and equity in LLL.

The four overall objectives of the communiqué correspond to those of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020, Council of the EU, 2009). Both support the EU's 2020 strategy (European Commission, 2010a; European Council, 2010a; European Council, 2010b). This strategy places education and training, and VET in particular, at the core of its policy responses to the economic crisis which started in 2008.

LLL is a fundamental principle underpinning the entire framework, which is designed to cover learning in all contexts – formal, non-formal or informal – and at all levels: from early childhood education and schools through to higher education, VET and adult learning.

The communiqué continues the so-called Copenhagen process. Since 2002 European countries have worked jointly on common objectives and priorities for VET (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2002). Inspired by the Bologna process for higher education, its main objectives have been to improve LLL and mobility in Europe and contribute to the making of a single European labour market. To this end, Member States, EEA/EFTA and candidate countries at the time, the European Commission and the social partners have developed:

- (a) a learning outcomes-based EQF;
- (b) a reference framework for quality assurance in VET;
- (c) the ECvet;
- (d) common principles for validating non-formal and informal learning;

- (e) common principles for guidance and counselling.

Since 2004, countries have also shared national priorities. Despite being voluntary, the process has become a catalyst for reforming and modernising VET in many EU Member States. Some of the common tools and principles are not restricted to VET but apply to LLL in general. As the recent consultation on a European area of skills and qualifications (EASQ) (European Commission, 2014c) confirmed, the learning outcomes approach, which underpins the European tools, is important to help make people's knowledge, skills and competences more understandable.

This illustrates that the Copenhagen process has been an important element of European cooperation on education and training, and its open method of coordination, from the outset. Its aims and priorities have contributed to achieving education and training objectives to support Europe's overall goals: previously those for 2010⁽¹⁾; and now those set out in the ET 2020 strategic framework, as stated in the respective Council conclusions (Council of the EU, 2009).

Prior to 2010, Ministers reviewed and adjusted priorities every two years. These regular reviews kept VET high on national policy agendas irrespective of its status and helped maintain a sense of 'ownership' and sustained commitment among the participants of the Copenhagen process. However, the periods were considered too short to implement policy measures and see their impact.

The Bruges communiqué combines long-term perspective with a short-term programme for action to be reviewed in 2014. A total of 11 strategic objectives, six of which refer to the four ET 2020 objectives, and five so-called transversal objectives form the overall framework. For the

⁽¹⁾ The goals of the so-called Lisbon strategy for 2010 (European Council, 2000), the future objectives of the education and training system (European Council, 2001) and the education and training 2010 work programme (European Council, 2002).

period 2011-14, countries committed themselves to 22 STDs. The current review is to be seen in the broader context of the ET 2020 and Europe 2020 mid-term evaluations.

In parallel to the Copenhagen process, countries are working on their national reform programmes which the European Commission analyses annually to follow up their commitment to the European goals (European semester). The Commission also examines countries' youth guarantee implementation plans (Council of the EU, 2013a) and follows up their developments in apprenticeships, a main pillar of the guarantees. Their aim is to ensure that young people under the age of 25 can either find jobs or continue their education and training. The youth guarantees reinforce elements included in the Bruges communiqué, the Youth employment package, the Commission staff working document *VET for better skills, growth and jobs* (European Commission, 2012c) and the European social partners' *Framework of actions on youth unemployment* (European social partners, 2013). A total of EUR 6 billion have been earmarked for the period 2014-20, to fund the Youth employment initiative (European Council, 2013; European Commission, 2013b) and support the youth guarantees which are also considered important by the G20 labour ministers.

VET and VET-related policies also come under scrutiny in the context of economic policy coordination, which may lead to specific recommendations for Member States (CSRs) in these fields. In 2014, for instance, 22 Member States received VET-related country-specific recommendations, 14 countries on apprenticeship or work-based learning, and eight on the youth guarantee. These different policy instruments, (Council of the EU, 2013b; European Commission et al., 2013) and, most recently, the establishment of a thematic working group on VET which focuses on apprenticeship, reinforce the attention paid to work-based learning in many countries. As previously, Cedefop and the ETF (for the candidate countries) have been requested to monitor progress and analyse developments. Measuring progress towards 22 STDs and taking into account countries' different starting points and their individual contexts, institutions and governance required a new approach to monitoring and reporting. An interim report after

two years, in 2012, reflected development trends whereby the situation in 2010 served as a baseline for analysing progress.

As STDs differ in scope and nature, this has been a challenging task. Sometimes they address complex phenomena such as attractiveness, in other cases they relate to more concrete measures like the European tools. They may address overlapping issues such as key competences and entrepreneurship, which is one of them. Work-based learning, for instance, also helps achieve other deliverables. Adult learning/CVET, however, is covered by most of the other deliverables and includes measures for specific target groups, yet another deliverable. This requires adjusting and fine tuning the approach and will require further adjustments after the present report.

1.2. Defining policy options

Comparing and assessing progress countries are making towards implementing these STDs is not straightforward because many STDs are interlinked and countries work towards them in different ways. This makes identifying trends across countries a challenging task.

To establish a framework for assessment and comparisons of national VET policies and initiatives, Cedefop operationalised STDs by identifying policy options, which may be understood as concrete policies/actions suitable for each of them.

Cedefop's policy option approach is based on the following assumptions:

- (a) each STD can be achieved by implementing a range of different policy options, and most of the policy options can contribute to achieving several STDs;
- (b) national policy measures and initiatives develop dynamically and are at different implementation stages. As many of the STDs and strategic priorities agreed in Bruges were not new, the approach must take into account each country's baseline situation in 2010.

As a first step, a consistent and comprehensive list of policy options was to be defined for each STD. This relied on an extensive review of studies and scientific work, as well as on EU-level policy documents for VET and related

areas. The policy options defined for each STD were fine-tuned following consultation with the European Commission and other stakeholders. Consolidation and restructuring followed STD definition, and similar policy options identified in different STDs were merged. Each policy option was also carefully examined and, if needed, reformulated to capture the developments in different countries. Cedefop then allocated the policy options to different STDs. The allocation was adapted several times afterwards, based on emerging insights and on interim results from monitoring.

The policy options have been reflected in the questionnaire sent to ReferNet, Cedefop’s network of expertise. As using information from other sources for some STDs proved harder than originally foreseen, several policy options were added to the questionnaire at later stages.

ReferNet completed three rounds of the Cedefop policy reporting questionnaire (Cedefop, 2013f), which assessed development for each predefined policy option: in spring 2012, in early 2013 and early 2014. All partners in EU Member States contributed except Ireland in 2012, Denmark in 2013 and Greece, as they did not have a ReferNet partner in place. For Greece, the Ministry of Education provided the input in 2012. In 2013 and 2014, Cedefop collected data in cooperation with the ministry. The survey also covered Iceland and Norway, which have been part of the Copenhagen process from the outset. For countries that did not complete earlier questionnaire rounds, instructions were given to capture missing information retroactively. Candidate countries (excluding Iceland) were reviewed by ETF using the Cedefop questionnaire as a base. Croatia joined the EU and Cedefop’s ReferNet in 2013.

On top of the information collected by ReferNet, progress related to European tools and principles ⁽²⁾ has been assessed using Cedefop’s own monitoring and studies, as well as external sources. Information on European quality assurance reference framework for vocational education and training (EQAVET) (STD3) is mainly based on the 2013/14 EQAVET survey (EQAVET Secretariat, 2013; 2014). The findings

of Cedefop’s NQF/EQF and ECVET monitoring formed the basis for the sections on the developments in qualification frameworks (STD8) and on the credit system for VET (STD11). Trends in key competences (STD4), guidance (STD10) and internationalisation and mobility in VET (STD12) have been reviewed using various sources. More information on these sources can be found in the respective sections.

1.3. Visualising trends in European VET policies

‘Bullet charts’ in Part 1 of the report illustrate trends in progress towards an STD. Two groups of countries are presented in each bullet chart: EU Member States, Iceland and Norway (EU+), and the four candidate countries (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey). Coloured dots indicate the number of countries at any particular stage of development (Table 1). Croatia’s accession to the EU in July 2013 explains the difference in bullet charts between the current report (EU-28+ and four candidate countries) and *Trends in VET policy in Europe 2010-12* (EU-27+ and five candidate countries) (Cedefop, 2012a).

Table 1. **Stages of development for policy options**

●	The policy option was already in place by 2010 and there have been no changes since 2010
●	The policy option was already in place by 2010 and has been adjusted since 2010
●	The policy option has been put in place since 2010
●	The policy option was put in place after 2010 and has been adjusted since
●	The policy option has been in preparation but not yet been put in place (2010-14)
●	No action on the policy option has been reported

⁽²⁾ EQF and NQFs, EQAVET, ECVET, VNFIL and guidance.

Source: Cedefop.

Establishing baselines for 2010 and characterising progress since then has been difficult in some cases. Several STDs were already present in previous Copenhagen reviews but others are new, or have only recently gained more importance on the policy agenda. Adapting the information on European tools and principles is challenging, as their monitoring differs in terms of timing and approach. Therefore, for some STDs, bullet charts follow a different logic from that described above.

Bullet charts illustrate broad trends. ‘No action reported on’ does not automatically mean that countries are lagging behind in making progress towards an STD. As the responsibility for VET and VET-related issues may be outside the remit of national authorities: ‘no action reported on’ could simply mean that information at regional or local level is difficult to capture. Also, as policy options can be alternatives, not all need to feature in addressing an STD. Nevertheless, when a country has not reported on any action for all policy options to address a particular STD, the assumption is that it may need further attention.

Within EU Member States, the Flemish- (Fl), French- (Fr) and German-speaking (Dg) communities are analysed separately for Belgium, as are England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland for the UK. This overview, therefore, reports on developments in 35 VET systems ⁽³⁾ in 28 EU Member States and in four candidate countries. This visual presentation of trends in VET, together with examples of policies, measures and initiatives taken by countries, is presented in Part 1 of this report.

1.4. Understanding progress towards Bruges strategic objectives

The information from ReferNet questionnaires used to produce overviews of trends in implementing the STDs also helps to understand better the focus of the actions since 2010 in

relation to long-term Bruges strategic objectives. Cedefop’s analysis of the policy options has been used to give a synthetic overview of where countries have focused their policy efforts, the so-called ‘policy priority profiles’. The profiles are not strict measures of progress or policy impact. They are based on the number of policy options that countries had in place by 2010, the number of policy options they have implemented since, and the number of policy options they are preparing to implement (see Section 6.2) ⁽⁴⁾.

Based on the answers given by ReferNet to the question of who initiated actions under the policy options, the information has been analysed to summarise the role of the different actors. Cedefop has also applied qualitative data techniques to understand better what types of approach countries have used to implement their policies: whether they have passed laws or developed regulations; whether they have made financing available or developed incentives; or whether they have focused on promoting and marketing VET (Section 6.3).

Monitoring according to policy options establishes a framework to illustrate trends in VET policies in a range of countries that differ in terms of education and training system, economic structure, and socioeconomic conditions; this offers a quick view of main developments. The focus is on policies, measures and initiatives countries have adopted in VET and related fields to address the priorities laid down in the STDs. While policy reforms and measures in 35 VET systems structured according to more than 100 policy options are a wealth of information, they cannot capture all the dimensions of the policy process and their context-dependant interaction.

In contrast to previous reporting on the Copenhagen process, this approach takes account of countries’ starting points and helps understand the trends and stages of development since 2010 in terms of policy implementation. However, it cannot reflect the quality of the actions, their impact or outcomes.

The approach relies on self-assessment of recent national actions. In most cases these measures have not been evaluated, partly

⁽³⁾ These are referred to as EU+ countries in this report.

⁽⁴⁾ The policy priority profiles consider both the ReferNet input and information on the implementation of the European tools and principles for which stages of development are available.

because they are still being piloted or in the preparation phase or they have only been in place for a short time; it is also partly because evaluation cultures and indicators are not well developed.

Impact analysis for policies and actions towards 22 STDs in all the countries is seen as not feasible. Several would require their own comprehensive reviews, similar to those carried out for the European tools. Also, VET governance tends to be complex, with responsibilities shared by different stakeholders, often at regional or local level. The impact of VET and VET-related measures is also closely linked to a country's or region's socioeconomic context and policy measures in related areas. Understanding this context is a prerequisite to identifying challenges in implementing new initiatives.

Using statistical indicators as proxies for impact is a challenge, as such indicators are scarce in VET and rely on data that frequently become available with time lags. But even if better or more timely statistical data in VET were available, it would still be challenging to establish causal relationships between policy actions taken in VET or related domains and (positive) outcomes, as these links are very complex and depend on contextual conditions. To be able to understand cause-effect relationships and measure impact would also require comparison to control groups.

Given such limitations, it is important to keep in mind that this report presents a synthesised image of developments in the countries covered. Analysis based on the policy options in this report signals broad trends that help understand the focus of measures in recent years and identifies possibilities that a range of countries have not yet explored, which could inspire future work.

Following the Bruges communiqué structure, and thus that of ET 2020, this report is consistent with the approach taken for the 2012 interim report (Cedefop, 2012a). However, being limited to using this structure affects the potential for discussing how the different deliverables and objectives interact and makes it difficult to obtain analytically sound results in terms of the strategic objectives.

To address this issue, Part II of the report complements the STD information by providing a more holistic impression of progress and

reflecting on implementation. It builds on the information underlying the policy monitoring and combines it with the views of the main stakeholders in the Bruges process.

In late 2013, Cedefop organised focus groups and interviews with members of the ACVT. Government and national social partner representatives were asked to discuss core VET issues in group sessions moderated by Cedefop. The themes selected for discussion, in consultation with the ACVT enlarged bureau and the European Commission, were labour market relevance of VET and learning for creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. ACVT members discussed actions that they had been involved in, highlighted their specific role in the developments, and debated success factors and bottlenecks. ETF conducted focus group discussions with candidate country ACVT representatives.

In late 2013 and early 2014 Cedefop conducted interviews with the DGVTs, the approach having been agreed with the ACVT enlarged bureau. The interviews focused on the main strategic policy changes in VET since 2010 and emerging challenges and issues to be addressed. They also aimed to deepen understanding of the impact at national level of the Copenhagen-Bruges process and the STDs, as well as the national reform programme and country-specific recommendations. ETF held interviews with candidate countries' DGVTs using the same questions.

Cedefop analysed the information from the ACVT focus groups and the DGVT interviews using qualitative data techniques, focusing on progress since the Bruges communiqué. Combining the views of different stakeholders on developments in VET helps to understand better the impact of the Copenhagen-Bruges process.

This report consists of two parts. Part 1 (Chapter 2, 3, 4 and 5) reviews progress towards priorities requiring immediate action and results by 2014, the STDs. Part 2, synthesises the findings and analyses them in the wider context of the broader Bruges objectives for VET (Chapter 6 and 7).

PART I

Trends in VET in Europe 2010-14

This part of the report maps progress towards the Bruges STDs in European countries. For each STD bullet charts show what policy options countries have used. Stages of development help in assessing trends in the implementation of policies and measures across countries. Following the structure of the Bruges communiqué, Chapters 2 to 5 review the 22 STDs. Each chapter starts with an overview of the ET 2020 objectives, the strategic objectives of Bruges and the STDs that are part of them. For the relevant STDs, each chapter details the state of play in 2010 and presents an analysis of developments and trends since then using bullet charts. Chapter 2 reports on the quality, efficiency, attractiveness and relevance of VET. Chapter 3 describes progress in developing European tools and principles to support LLL and mobility. Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET are discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 looks into measures to make VET more inclusive. Throughout the chapters, country highlights provide illustrations of recent VET reforms and measures.

Better VET: quality, efficiency, attractiveness, and relevance

This chapter assesses the state of play in 2010 and reviews progress that countries have made during 2010-14 towards making VET more attractive and relevant, and encouraging quality and efficiency. It considers national policy actions and initiatives taken until early 2014 that address STDs 1 to 6 and 21 to 22. The main findings are:

- (a) while countries have steadily progressed towards the first deliverable by organising fairs, skills competitions and campaigns, caution is needed when drawing conclusions on whether they have made VET more attractive. Impact evaluation is scarce and cause-effect relationships are difficult to establish. The status of VET is usually influenced by a complex interplay of different factors, including several Bruges deliverables. As countries' work on STD 2 suggests, more could be done to acquaint young people in compulsory education with VET;
- (b) increasing options for work-based learning in VET has been a top priority, even before the launch of the European alliance for apprenticeship (Council of the EU, 2013b) and the youth guarantee recommendation (Council of the EU, 2013a) but sustainable cooperation arrangements with enterprises to help VET teachers stay up to date, remain to be introduced in many countries;
- (c) cooperation between the VET sector and employment services is generally stronger. Employment authorities and social partners frequently participate in committees dealing with VET (policy) and help implement it while VET and social partners often contribute to putting employment policy in practice. In some countries cooperation could improve by introducing incentives or guidelines;
- (d) the work on NQF/EQF, and in particular reflections on integrating non-formally acquired qualifications, moves attention to VET quality higher up national agendas. This renewed emphasis - after a period of increased political attention following the adoption of the EQAVET recommendation in 2009 - focuses on the need to ensure the quality of qualifications design and certification in several countries. While many countries report that their quality assurance frameworks for VET providers also apply to work-based learning, the expansion of apprenticeships requires increasing attention to the quality of learning that takes place in companies;
- (e) key competences have received increased attention in recently reformed outcomes-based IVET curricula and standards, and are included NQF level descriptors in more than half the countries. Increasingly, countries include the chance for youth and adults to make up for basic skills deficits in their LLL and VET strategies and their VET offers: - this has greater priority in the context of the most recent OECD skills survey (programme for the international assessment of adult competences (PIAAC));
- (f) while many countries collect data on the labour market outcomes for VET graduates, using them to inform and strengthen VET provision is much less common. As in 2012, EQAVET outcome indicators, which are not yet extensively used, confirm this finding.

Box 1. STDs on VET quality, efficiency, attractiveness and relevance

ET 2020 objective 2 as adapted for the Bruges communiqué: improving the quality and efficiency of VET and enhancing its attractiveness and relevance ^(a)

Bruges communiqué strategic objectives (SO) 1 and 2

SO1 Making IVET an attractive learning option.

SO2 Fostering the excellence, quality and relevance of both initial (IVET) and continuing VET (CVET).

STDs

STD1 VET attractiveness and excellence (campaigns, competitions).

STD2 Acquainting young people in compulsory education with VET.

STD3 Implementation EQAVET recommendation.

STD4 Key competences and career management skills in VET.

STD5 (a) Work-based learning, including apprenticeships.
(b) Cooperation between VET institutions and enterprises.
(c) Feedback on the employability of VET graduates for VET institutions.

STD6 Monitoring systems on transitions from learning to work.

STD21 ^(a) Structured cooperation mechanisms between VET sector and employment services.

STD22 ^(b) Improving EU level data on IVET students.

^(a) Original wording in ET 2020 'Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training' (Council of the EU, 2009, p. 3).

^(b) Part of the transversal strategic objectives (pp. 7-11) in the Bruges communiqué.

Source: Council of the EU; European Commission, 2010.

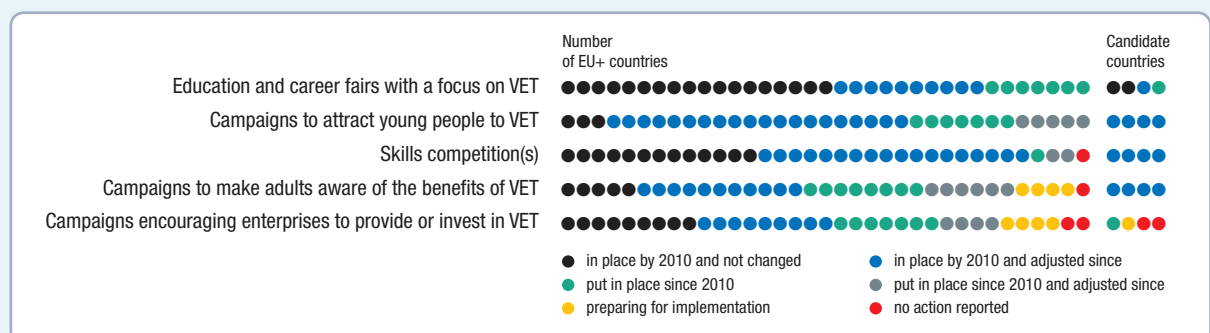
2.1. Attractive VET

VET attractiveness is its capacity to encourage individuals to choose VET and to persuade employers to recruit VET graduates. It is also determined by involvement of stakeholders, such as social partners (Cedefop, 2014b). Even though VET has demonstrated considerable benefits to individuals, enterprises and the economy, it still lacks esteem in some countries when compared to general and university programmes (Cedefop, 2014a, p. 1). Favourable outcomes alone are not sufficient to attract students to VET.

Besides demographic and economic trends, labour market conditions and perceptions of quality, family members and role models are particularly influential when individuals choose their educational pathway. Policies to improve information on occupations in demand and provide guidance and counselling are frequently used to help reduce the risk of ill-informed education and career choices and make VET more attractive. However, as is evident from STD 10 (see Section 3.4) and Cedefop's study on VET attractiveness (Cedefop, 2014a), this requires coordinated guidance services and well-informed staff.

Many countries already had measures in place before 2010 to promote VET and its benefits, but progress in 2010-14 has also been significant (Figure 1). Organising education and career fairs has been the most popular measure to promote VET attractiveness: in 2014, they were organised in all EU+ and candidate countries, including Croatia, Cyprus, Iceland, Latvia, Portugal and the UK (Wales and Scotland), which introduced them recently. Fairs often target young

Figure 1. State of play and progress towards STD1: VET attractiveness and excellence (campaigns, competitions)



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

people as well as adults. They usually focus on informing and guiding learners, teachers and parents on learning opportunities in the country and abroad, but they may also involve interactive careers and skills events or advice sessions, as in the UK (Wales and Northern Ireland).

2.1.1. Campaigns and skills competitions

To attract learners to VET, more than half of EU+ and all candidate countries already organised campaigns for young people before 2010. With most EU+ countries expanding or further developing them since then, these campaigns are evolving dynamically. While campaigns in the Czech Republic, Greece, Italy and Portugal promote VET in a general sense, they have a more focused character, targeting specific learning fields or qualifications in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway. In France, Austria, Sweden and the UK (England, Wales and Scotland) most campaigns promote apprenticeships. Social partners also organise campaigns in some countries. In Finland, empirical evidence suggests that campaigns have contributed to making IVET more attractive (Cedefop, 2014a).

Some countries use the media, web and interactive games (as in Belgium (Fl), Estonia, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland and the UK (Northern Ireland)), while others link their campaigns to school open days or festivals (as in Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Iceland, Hungary, Romania and Slovenia).

Campaigns to make adults aware of the benefits of VET have also gained importance in the past four years, with 14 countries introducing them. Developments in Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Romania, have been dynamic as these countries introduced new campaigns after 2010 which they have since adapted. Most EU+ countries also have campaigns to encourage enterprises to invest in VET, in particular apprenticeships, and several have started working on them since 2012 (see also STD 5a, Section 2.4.2 and STD 16, Section 5.1.2). Promoting investments in VET by enterprises is not yet common practice in the candidate countries.

Skills competitions had become an integral part of making VET attractive before 2010. WorldSkills and EuroSkills have become even

Box 2. Engaging young people, adults and enterprises: country highlights

- (a) Over the past five years, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education has organised an annual VET panorama which promotes occupations taught in VET and gives education and training institutions, businesses, young people and parents the chance to meet. Learners can showcase their skills and competences in competitions and businesses recruit the best.
- (b) In Estonia, VET awareness raising events in supermarkets with VET learners coexist with promotion activities on television, through Facebook and interactive games.
- (c) Activities in candidate countries include the national campaign ‘vocational is the key’ in Montenegro, ‘career guidance info days’ in Turkey, local and regional ‘education markets’ in Serbia, and a television campaign (2013) promoting VET as an attractive choice after lower secondary education in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
- (d) Social partners organise Denmark’s three-year ‘hands on’ campaign to encourage companies to take on apprentices and attract more young and adult people to VET.
- (e) In Italy, video interviews with local authorities and trade unions showcase the benefits of VET to adults. These videos also target people with a migrant background and at-risk groups by stressing the importance of acquiring a VET qualification and a basic level of Italian.
- (f) Candidate countries promote VET for adults mostly through active labour market policy measures (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), a wide offer of VET courses and programmes (Turkey) and regular awareness campaigns such as the adult education festival in Montenegro.
- (g) Extra funding for an existing campaign in the UK (Wales) in 2012 aims to engage more employers in offering apprenticeships.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

more popular in almost all EU+ countries. Skills competitions are also regularly organised in all candidate countries, often supported by sectoral organisations and/or donors. Through demonstrating job realities, contests can help change misconceptions. In 2013, skills competitions in

Box 3. Finland: more attractive and better VET through skills competitions

National skill competitions are part of the Ministry's wider strategy to improve VET attractiveness and quality and ease transitions to the labour market. They are a meeting point for schools, learners and working life. They enable networking and reflection on performance, working methods and environments. One of their objectives has been to continue developing skills demonstrations as a means to assess learning outcomes. Competition assignments are aligned to national curricula and assessment is related to national evaluation criteria.

The contests have helped develop individualised teaching and learning methods, shape learning materials and contributed to teacher development. Research suggests that they help improve cooperation between VET schools and enterprises, and feedback to teachers and trainers. Ministry of Education and European social funds (ESFs) have supported research linked to skills competitions, such as development of talents and vocational excellence or how to transfer innovative practice in preparing participants to mainstream VET in schools and companies. Participation in World- and EuroSkills is also seen as an opportunity to learn from others in skill areas where Finland may need improving.

Key factors have made skills competitions successful as an initiative to help make VET more attractive: skills competitions are not stand-alone events, but linked to other policies as part of a broader strategy; there is a dedicated organisation for national and international skills competitions supported by the ministry and with key policy-makers on its board; this organisation also has the responsibility to ensure that lessons learned through competitions are transferred to VET schools and companies.

Source: Case study Finland in Cedefop 2014a adapted by authors.

Estonia were merged with a two day VET fair while Lithuania approved national skills competitions guidelines. On top of raising the profile of VET, participation in skills competition can drive change. In Ireland, for example, taking part in the WorldSkills competition had a direct impact on upgrading VET curricula. In Finland, national skills competitions act at the same time as showcase and developer of VET.

2.1.2. Acquainting and familiarising young people with VET

To acquaint young people with VET at an early stage, most EU+ countries include VET elements in compulsory (general) education; these include Belgium (Fr and Dg), Bulgaria, Denmark and Portugal, which have recently introduced new arrangements (Figure 2). With adjustments taking place in 22 EU+ countries since 2010, the volume and/or content of these familiarisation schemes and initiatives have been changing rapidly. Belgium (FI), Iceland and Poland plan to include vocational elements in compulsory education. As in the EU+ countries, there are large differences in how candidate countries organise the inclusion of VET elements in primary and lower secondary education.

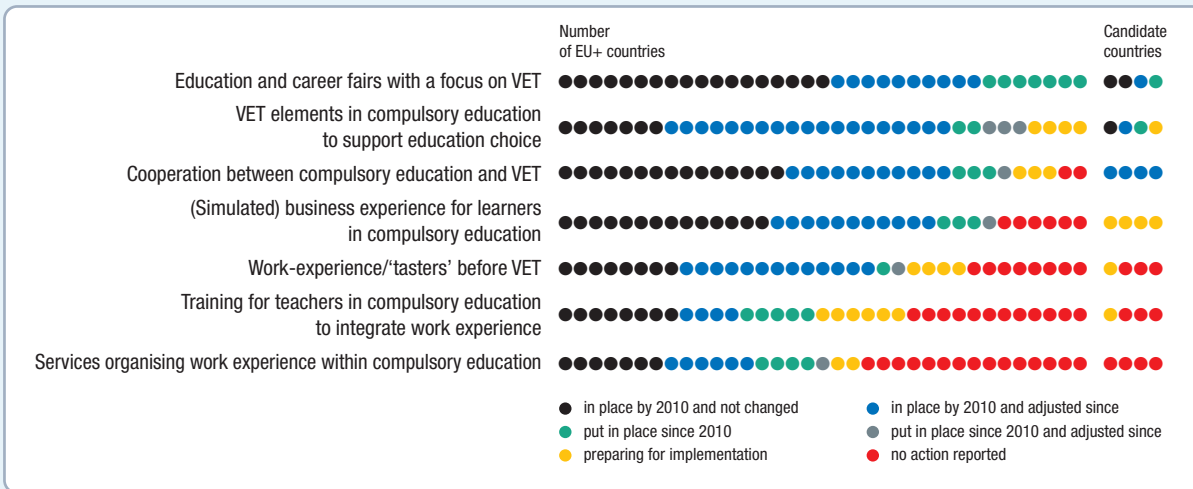
Box 4. Experiencing VET in compulsory education: country highlights

- (a) In Denmark, recent reform of compulsory education also aims to forge stronger links with the business world; regional initiatives introduce VET elements into compulsory schools and bring the teachers of both sectors together.
- (b) The Dutch technology pact (2013) aims at introducing science and technology classes in all primary schools by 2020.
- (c) In Ireland, the optional transition year that provides work experience and focuses on non-academic subjects to prepare students for work life, has become more popular during the past five years.
- (d) In Romania, a new three-year VET programme will be introduced in compulsory education in 2014/15 to offer an alternative qualification path with work-based elements.
- (e) In Montenegro and Turkey, there is mandatory career guidance in lower secondary education; in Serbia, pilot initiatives are increasingly being developed by individual schools.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

In many European countries, cooperation between VET and compulsory (general) education is well established. In most EU+ countries it is based on a harmonised/coordinated legislative framework or curricula, intertwining

Figure 2. **State of play and progress towards STD2: acquainting young people in compulsory education with VET**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

VET with compulsory (general) education. In Austria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Finland, Iceland, Poland, Slovenia and Spain, cooperation mainly takes the form of visits and information sessions for learners. Sharing equipment and facilities is common in Belgium and Lithuania.

Although some progress is visible, several countries could still do more to acquaint young people in compulsory education with VET. Dedicated teacher training, provision of work experience/tasters, services organising work experience, and simulated business experience for students are areas where several countries report no action.

2.1.3. Bringing work experience to compulsory education

Bringing work experience to the classroom helps compulsory education learners get acquainted with the world of work. Half of EU+ countries have established specific services to help organise work experience within compulsory education. In most EU+ countries, including Belgium (Fl and Fr), Germany, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta and the UK (Northern Ireland) these services are provided by the ministry, an agency, schools or the municipality. A total of 15 EU+ countries and the candidate countries have not established such services or not reported on them. The state of play in early 2014 is very similar to that in 2012.

Simulated business experience that provides learners with an understanding of what it means

to run a company is a more common practice, with many countries having long traditions. Since 2010, new schemes have been introduced in compulsory (general) education in Belgium (Fr), Greece, Malta and the UK (Wales). Giving young learners in primary and lower secondary education simulated or real business experience is not yet a well-established practice in the candidate countries.

Box 5. Organising work experience prior to VET: country highlights

- (a) In France and Austria, professionals and social partner organisations help learners and teachers find relevant work experience.
- (b) Work experience in Lithuania and Romania is often organised through projects and cooperation platforms.
- (c) Work experience tasters before VET have been introduced in Malta through job-exposure initiatives in the financial, health and ICT sectors.
- (d) In Slovakia, a support scheme for entrepreneurial skills development for pupils in grades five to six, in place since the 1990s, has been developed further since 2010 by placing more emphasis on national needs and a learning-by-doing approach.
- (e) Student training companies in Lithuania, existing since 1993, opened their doors to 15 to 16 year-old students from VET and general education in 2010.

Source: ReferNet.

Teachers play a crucial role in integrating theory with work experience. This is made possible in Lithuania and Malta through teacher training; in Estonia, teacher training curricula include entrepreneurship as a core topic. In many other countries, however, dedicated training for compulsory education teachers is not yet a reality and progress has been slow. Most countries that have recently taken steps to introduce training are still at preparation stage. In Slovakia, for example, a 2013-15 ESF project linked to vocational guidance foresees support for compulsory school teachers to help them integrate work experience in the school programme. In candidate countries, with the exception of Montenegro, no specific initiatives to train teachers to integrate work experience have been reported.

2.2. Fostering quality: implementing EQAVET

High youth unemployment rates and increasing skill mismatch have moved VET centre stage. More and better VET is called for to help drive economic growth and offer young people and adults the chance to acquire adequate skills. The performance of people with VET background in the OECD's adult skills survey (PIAAC) (OECD, 2013b) has triggered debate. Quality and labour market relevance are key. People are also encouraged to use education and training as well as job opportunities abroad, requiring trust in the skills and qualifications that people acquire in different types of education and training and countries.

Within the Copenhagen process, countries have cooperated on quality assurance in VET since 2002, aiming to build this trust which also needs to underpin the European tools that support mobility and LLL. In 2004 and 2009, the Council endorsed the outcomes of this voluntary collaboration: the common quality assurance framework (CQAF) for VET (Council of the EU, 2004c) and, building on its principles, EQAVET (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009b). EQAVET serves as a reference base for the Member States' work to ensure and improve quality in VET. A European network was set up to support their activities.

The Bruges communiqué reiterated the commitment to implementing the recommendation. Countries also agreed to 'establish at national level a CQAF for VET providers, which also applies to associated workplace learning, by end 2015' (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2010, p. 8).

This objective and deliverable is closely related to STD 5 which aims to expand work-based learning (see Section 2.4.1). Even more significant is relevance to recent policy initiatives: the youth employment initiative (European Council, 2013, p. 23), and apprenticeships as a main pillar of the youth guarantee (Council of the EU, 2013a), so it is also taken up in the Council conclusions on quality assurance throughout education and training (Council of the EU, 2014).

The Secretariat of the European EQAVET network has carried out regular surveys to follow-up and understand progress in countries' work to ensure quality in VET ⁽⁵⁾. External evaluation of EQAVET carried out in 2013 included information on its implementation at EU level and nationally (ICF International, 2013).

2.2.1. National quality assurance approach

While the recommendation proposes that countries devise a national quality assurance approach by 2011, the Bruges communiqué uses the term framework. After a period of ambiguity about these terms, they are now used interchangeably.

In the 2013/14 EQAVET survey, 28 countries reported that they had devised a national quality assurance approach making best use of the EQAVET framework; the figure was 19 in 2011. Montenegro also states it has devised a comprehensive and legally binding framework. Belgium (Fr), the Czech Republic, Croatia, Portugal and Slovakia were in preparation (as compared to 10 countries in the previous survey).

⁽⁵⁾ The information in this chapter is mainly based on data and results derived from EQAVET surveys in 2011, 2012 and 2013/14 (EQAVET Secretariat, 2013; 2014). All EU-28 (i.e. 32 VET systems, two out of three in Belgium and four in the UK; for reasons of simplicity this report refers to them as countries), plus Norway and Switzerland participated in the survey. Iceland did not participate. Findings of the external EQAVET evaluation (ICF International, 2013) are also reflected in this chapter. ETF provided information on the candidate countries under their remit (ETF, 2014a).

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey are also preparing their approaches.

However, the way that countries interpret ‘an approach aiming at improving quality assurance systems at national level’ differs in terms of content and scope. While all countries cover IVET, only around 75% cover CVET. Several countries use the same national quality assurance approach for IVET and CVET; in others, different frameworks apply, as the external evaluation report points out (ICF International, 2013).

This makes cross-country comparison of quality assurance systems difficult. According to the European Commission, the ‘flexible approach of EQAVET, making available tools for selection and adjustment, has facilitated its use, but at the same time has reduced its potential as a common language and conceptual framework across countries’ (European Commission, 2014b).

A shortcoming, as the external evaluation and the European Commission’s report to the European Parliament (European Commission, 2014b) explicitly point out, is that work-based learning had not been appropriately addressed by 2013. It is important to note, however, that the EQAVET recommendation does not explicitly refer to work-based or workplace learning. The Bruges communiqué links quality assurance of workplace learning, i.e. learning in an enterprise, to national frameworks for VET providers.

The 2013/14 EQAVET survey investigated the issue from different perspectives: it widened the issue to work-based learning⁽⁶⁾; and, besides investigating whether common provider frameworks cover work-based learning (see Section 2.2.2), it also explored whether national quality assurance approaches include this aspect.

According to the survey, among the countries that report they have devised national approaches, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania state that these do not apply to work-based learning in either IVET or CVET. Approaches in Poland and Slovenia which only apply to IVET also exclude work-based learning. In Greece and Croatia, it is covered in IVET, but not in CVET.

In CVET, work-based learning is covered in 14 of 20 countries which stated that their national approaches apply to continuing training: (Belgium (Fl), Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Greece, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Romania, Finland, Sweden, and the UK (England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland)).

Countries that had already developed quality assurance approaches around or post 2009 said they were inspired by CQAF and EQAVET. In more than half, the approach is included in legislation or has been formally agreed. Some also report increased attention to quality assurance in VET. This is likely to be caused by qualifications framework developments (Cedefop, 2013c), particularly the reflections on including qualifications acquired outside formal education and training.

Since 2010, the candidate countries have been working to improve their quality assurance approaches using the EQAVET as their frame of reference. Progress has been achieved but several pilots will need mainstreaming. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey are members of the EQAVET network.

According to the EQAVET survey, VET providers and employer and employee associations participate in developing national quality assurance approaches. In countries such as Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Romania and the UK (Scotland)⁽⁷⁾ national institutions responsible for developing VET qualifications have also contributed. In Serbia, stakeholder involvement is supported through different projects.

⁽⁶⁾ The Bruges communiqué refers to workplace learning, i.e. learning that takes place in an enterprise, such as within an apprenticeship or in form of an internship. The EQAVET working group on this issue takes a wider approach and also considers work-based learning that takes place in VET schools/centres, for example in on-site workshops, labs, business/industry projects. In the EQAVET survey, work-based learning refers to combined school- and work-based learning as defined for the Unesco/OECD/Eurostat data collection, i.e. programmes where less than 75% of the curriculum is presented in the school environment, see Unesco/OECD/Eurostat data collection manual Section 4.7 available at www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/uoec-data-collection-education-systems-v1-2013-en.pdf [accessed 14.8.2014].

⁽⁷⁾ As this was not an explicit question in the EQAVET survey, other countries may have done so depending on which body is responsible for developing VET qualifications.

Box 6. **Joining forces to step up quality in company-based training in Austria**

A quality management system has been in place in school-based VET for many years. Different control mechanisms and quality assurance measures are found in apprenticeship but no overall comprehensive quality assurance strategy. Building on these measures, the social partners are gradually introducing a quality management system for apprenticeship.

The governance of apprenticeship with its different learning venues, i.e. schools and enterprises, is more complex than that of school-based VET. Enterprise organisational structures and the ways they manage apprenticeships vary, requiring a different quality assurance and management approach.

A quality management system for apprenticeship is data-driven. New methods to analyse statistical data, provide apprenticeship offices and the regional and federal vocational training advisory boards with disaggregated information and insight into different aspects such as success or dropout rates. These data help the boards, which comprise representatives of social partners and vocational schools for apprentices, respond to (emerging) challenges. A quality committee was established within the federal advisory board to steer this process and develop and improve quality-related and branch-specific support measures.

Together with sectoral organisations, the boards analyse data from sectors and occupations where not only participation but also failure of final exams and early leaving are high, to understand the causes. Then they agree on measures to help achieve better success rates, such as:

- (a) improved guidance and counselling before young people choose an apprenticeship;
- (b) coaching, remedial courses or support to prepare for exams;
- (c) providing or revising training manuals, setting up training networks, training trainers;
- (d) closer cooperation with the vocational schools;
- (e) adjustment of training profiles or of the final exam.

Besides this new initiative, dedicated funding is available for enterprises related to quality and support of specific target groups, in addition to basic subsidies for apprenticeship training.

Labour market representatives in Belgium (Fl), Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria and Finland, for instance, participated in developing the national approach and in making IVET more responsive to labour market needs. Their contribution focused more on planning and implementation and less on evaluation and review stages. Teachers' and learners' roles are less prominent. Similarly, only some countries involve their higher education sector, although this could help build trust and improve permeability.

2.2.2. **Focusing on VET providers**

The recommendation underlines that the EQAVET framework should also be applied to VET providers. The Bruges communiqué goes a step further and explicitly states that national provider frameworks should also cover the workplace learning parts of VET programmes (see Section 2.2). The European Commission and the Council emphasised the need to address the quality of work-based learning in a better way (European Commission, 2014b, Council of the EU, 2014).

All countries except Belgium (Fl, Fr) and the Czech Republic are progressing towards establishing national quality assurance frameworks for VET providers, planning to meet the objective by 2015 as foreseen. Provider frameworks have been agreed or put in place in about half of the countries, while Spain, Lithuania and Hungary have implemented them partially. Bulgaria, Greece, France, Luxembourg, Finland and the UK (Scotland), for instance, were still in development stage in 2013. Norway claims it does not need a common national approach for VET providers, as they are under the remit of the county authorities.

Often, the common provider framework is part of, or closely linked to, the overall approach that applies at system level. Most of the provider frameworks are compatible with EQAVET but not based on it, presumably to suit the national and institutional context. As several of the frameworks were already in place by 2010, this may also be thanks to cooperation at EU level since the setting up of the European VET quality forum (European Forum on the Quality of Vocational Training, 2001).

Box 7. VET providers in focus: creating trust and building a quality culture in Estonia

Following an ESF-supported project, a new VET institutions act (2014) in Estonia has devised an evaluation and accreditation system with the following main principles:

- (a) its focus is on the teaching/learning process and its outcomes;
- (b) fields of study/groups of curricula and cooperation with interest groups are evaluated;
- (c) employers have helped design the method and participate in the evaluation;
- (d) context-sensitive, rather than unified, check-lists with pre-set assessment categories are used;
- (e) an independent committee, which includes sector representatives and VET experts, conducts the assessment taking account of the internal evaluation.

Based on the evaluation, the Ministry of Education grants, expands or withdraws the right (for three to six years) to offer programmes that lead to formal qualifications.

Lessons learned so far:

- (a) employers/industry representatives are keen on participating and become more interested in cooperation, but they need better understanding of VET and the way education and training institutions work;
- (b) VET providers' starting points and understanding of training quality and learning processes differ, but this method supports improvements;
- (c) this method helps engage staff in management processes;
- (d) much information becomes available in a short period but it cannot really be absorbed;
- (e) the strengths of Estonia's VET are modern infrastructure, increasing CVET/retraining and increasing mobility among learners and teachers;
- (f) areas that need improving are: teaching methods and facilities, use of more modern technologies; align work-based learning better to expected learning outcomes; encourage partnerships with enterprises more; monitor work-based or workplace learning better and assess its effectiveness more systematically; shortage of teachers and trainers, especially younger ones with know-how and work-experience; more opportunities to update their skills and gather work-experience in enterprises.

However, provider frameworks have mostly been developed for IVET. Only in countries like Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia they do not cover work-based learning ⁽⁸⁾.

For CVET, 17 countries have common provider frameworks. Of these, 13 also cover associated work-based learning, confirming the need for improvement as pointed out by the European Commission (European Commission, 2014b). As countries are expanding apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning to prevent early leaving and put youth guarantees in place, ensuring their quality becomes key.

2.2.3. Evaluation

In line with the EQAVET recommendation, countries increasingly combine internal and external evaluation to improve VET quality. The evaluation methods they use combine control and support with empowering VET providers. There is a current shift from input- and process-based towards outcomes-based evaluation. More than 70% of the national approaches foresee external reviews for IVET and CVET institutions. In Denmark, Spain, France, Luxembourg, Austria and Romania this is only the case for IVET.

Quality assurance approaches that combine self-assessment of IVET providers with external reviews and system level evaluation using indicators can be found in Denmark, Estonia, Austria, Romania and Finland. In most IVET contexts relevant, frequently used methods have been developed with ESF and Leonardo da Vinci assisted funding. From the candidate countries, currently only Montenegro uses external (since 2006) and internal (since 2010) evaluation, applies common indicators and involves stakeholders.

IVET providers in many countries are required to evaluate their activities, as well as the quality and effectiveness of the training they offer. In Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia and Finland ⁽⁹⁾ this includes mandatory self-assessment reports and plans for improvement.

⁽⁸⁾ According to the EQAVET Secretariat, Malta and Poland did not respond to the corresponding question.

⁽⁹⁾ In Slovenia approximately 78% of VET providers are developing quality assurance systems.

2.2.4. Using indicators

The EQAVET framework includes a set of common indicators to measure quality improvement. Countries either apply them as they are or to form their own indicators but they are not necessarily used and revised systematically (European Commission, 2014b). Montenegro and Turkey are also planning to use the EQAVET indicators; by 2014, Montenegro plans completion of the first phase of harmonising its national indicators with EQAVET ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Box 8. Sweden's use of qualitative indicators and monitoring outcomes to inform VET

Sweden has comprehensive, high-quality data on learners and graduates. They provide information on the destination of learners after upper secondary and higher VET and are disaggregated by variables such as gender, whether or not the learner has a foreign background and parental education background. Reports on the destination of VET graduates used to be published on an ad hoc basis but in 2012, the government decided that the relevant agencies should report more systematically and regularly and also identify how well graduates meet the skills required by the labour market. The reports by the Swedish Agency for Higher VET inform on graduates' labour market outcomes and employability six months, one year and three years after completion of their studies.

The Public Employment Service and Statistics Sweden also conduct regular surveys on labour market trends and skill needs. Several measures have been put in place since 2009 to promote more structured cooperation between VET and the public employment service, particularly concerning apprenticeship training in municipal upper secondary education for adults and higher VET. The aim is to ensure that learning outcomes reflect labour market needs more clearly. So-called competence platforms, launched by the government, enable all relevant actors from different sectors to cooperate and help ensure that regional needs are met.

Source: 2012 EQAVET survey.

The EQAVET survey suggests that of the 17 indicators for IVET, on average more than half are always used. The indicators that are used most for IVET relate to participation, completion, unemployment and mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market. Outcome indicators, such as 'utilisation of skills at the workplace' and 'share of employed learners at a designated point in time after completion of training' are less used.

2.2.5. Supporting EQAVET implementation

The recommendation proposed to set up national reference points (NRP) to promote the EQAVET framework and support related activities. By 2014, apart from Belgium (Fr) and Estonia, 31 countries ⁽¹¹⁾ stated that they had an NRP in place ⁽¹²⁾ to promote the EQAVET approach and inform stakeholders about relevant developments. Montenegro (2012) and Turkey (2013) have also set up NRPs.

Most NRPs fulfil most of the tasks set out in the recommendation. But they are less engaged in helping VET providers develop self-evaluation and tend to implement quality assurance systems in line with the recommendation. Depending on governance structures in the countries, NRPs may also have other responsibilities like external evaluation (e.g. in Romania) or accrediting VET providers (e.g. in Portugal).

All NRPs deal with IVET, though not necessarily with all types of programme. Many also support CVET and other forms of adult learning, an interesting aspect in terms of quality and trust as a prerequisite to encouraging more citizens and employers to engage in LLL. However, it is not easy to draw clear conclusions about the support provided to the different types of VET/adult learning, as the categories overlap and terms may have different meanings and connotations in some countries ⁽¹³⁾.

⁽¹¹⁾ Norway is included; Switzerland also has an NRP but is not counted here.

⁽¹²⁾ In the 2013/14 EQAVET survey only the Flemish- and French-speaking communities participated for Belgium; Iceland did not participate; the UK counts as four countries.

⁽¹³⁾ In Greece, for instance, the term 'non-formal' VET is used for training programmes that would be part of the formal system in others; despite offers in formal education and training, CVET is largely non-formal (depending on the country context); informal learning is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support and often an unintentional result of daily activities related to work, family or leisure.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Indicators: 1(a), 2(a), 8(a) and 10(b) (ETF, 2014a).

Figure 3. **STD3 state of play and progress towards STD3: implementation of the EQAVET recommendation**



Source: Cedefop based on 2013/14 EQAVET survey and ETF.

2.3. Basic skills and key competences

Modern labour markets require people to act in a self-directed way, adapting to rapid changes in sectors, occupations and at the workplace. This requires the ability to apply and adjust one’s knowledge and skills to new work contexts. Increasingly the jobs available at all skill levels will be those that cannot easily be outsourced or replaced by technology or organisational change. These jobs require people to think, be creative, solve problems, communicate, organise and decide. With fewer jobs-for-life, they need the skills to manage transitions within and between jobs and learning. Basic skills of literacy, numeracy and basic maths and science are a fundamental requirement for all to cope successfully with more complex jobs and working lives, as well as to be an active citizen in modern societies. Therefore, more emphasis on basic skills and key competences is needed, including in VET and adult learning as Rethinking education (European Commission, 2012) reiterated. Initial education and training should help all young people to develop these skills and competences and adult learning should allow European citizens to cultivate and build on them (European Parliament and Council, 2006). Although the concepts of basic skills and key competences partly overlap and have been addressed jointly in the EU recommendation on key competences, the next two sections discuss them separately. A review of basic skills based on PIAAC data focusing on literacy is followed by a more in-depth analysis of key competences.

2.3.1. Basic skills

Lack of basic skills early in life can have serious consequences for social and labour market integration. Good basic skills developed at an early age are a prerequisite for success in VET and the foundation for LLL and for sustained employability in a rapidly changing world, when job-specific skills can quickly become outdated. Member States have agreed to work towards reducing the share of 15 year-olds with low achievement in reading, maths and science to less than 15% (Council of the EU, 2009). PISA (OECD, 2014a) assesses learners’ performance in mathematics, literacy and science at the age of 15, usually before learners move to IVET or when they have just started.

Overall, PISA 2012 shows slow progress in the level of reading and science literacy and poor performance in mathematics. The results of the OECD’s survey of adult skills (PIAAC), which collects information on the proficiency of people in literacy and numeracy, complement the picture on the level of basic skills in the EU population. The PIAAC results give an impression of the differences in literacy ⁽¹⁴⁾ between adults (25 to 64 year-olds) with a vocational and a general

⁽¹⁴⁾ Literacy is defined as the ability to understand, evaluate, use and engage with written texts to participate in society, achieve one’s goals and develop one’s knowledge and potential. It does not include writing. Adults at level 1 or below can, at best, read relatively short texts to locate a single piece of information that is identical to that in the question or instruction, or understand basic vocabulary. Literacy is divided into five proficiency levels and a score up to 500 points. The OECD regards 275, between levels 2 and 3 as the cut-off point. Below 275, people can be considered to have too low literacy for modern society and work.

upper secondary or post-secondary (non-tertiary) education (OECD, 2014b, p. 51).

People with upper secondary VET qualifications generally have lower levels of literacy proficiency than people with general upper secondary education. This is not surprising: the survey measures skills that are emphasised more in general programmes than in VET programmes; there is a selection bias as people tend to choose general education rather than VET as their path towards higher education; and people moving to the labour market with upper secondary VET qualifications will tend to occupy jobs where the use and further developments of basic skills may be less emphasised during one's career. But these findings, although worrying, should be viewed in relation to labour market outcomes. Across OECD countries for which data are available, 75% of those with a vocational upper secondary or post-secondary (non-tertiary) qualification are employed, five percentage points higher than that among those with general upper secondary education as their highest qualification. Unemployment rates are also generally lower among individuals with vocational upper secondary or post-secondary (non-tertiary) education: 8%, on average, compared with 9% among adults with general upper secondary education (OECD, 2014, p. 107). This suggests that, despite lower levels of literacy proficiency among adults who have graduated from VET, this route may well equip people with job-specific and other key competences valued at work that provide them good chances on the labour market. In a way, this can compensate for lower levels of basic skills.

Still, the findings signal the importance of putting stronger emphasis on information-processing skills, like literacy and numeracy, in VET to promote even better the employability of VET graduates in the labour market.

The overall picture also masks important differences between countries. Among adults with a VET background the share of people with good literacy proficiency (level 3 or above) is highest in the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden; the share is comparatively low in France, Italy and Poland. In some countries, such as the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden, there are relatively high literacy scores for adults who have graduated from both VET and general education

programmes. In others, such as Estonia, Spain, France and Poland, graduates from both types of programmes tend to have relatively low scores. The negative literacy proficiency gap between people with a VET background and those that followed general education is higher in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, France, the Netherlands and Finland, which partly reflects their tradition of separate vocational and general learning tracks at upper secondary level.

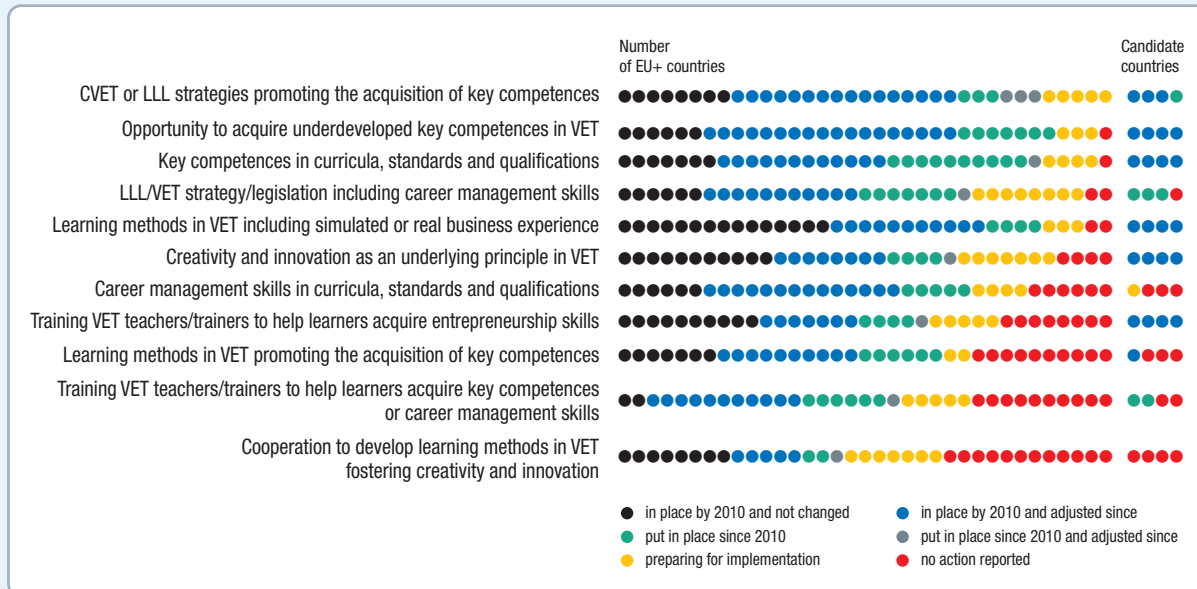
Working adults lacking the most basic skills should be a concern. The work environment can help maintaining skills, which calls for better integration of training and work, but investing in basic skills through training is also needed, as it is a strong basis for sustainable employability. Policies should also target adults outside the labour market and whose skills can be very low, as evidence from PIAAC shows. The overall results indicate the need to step up citizens' basic skills ⁽¹⁵⁾, although there are significant differences between countries (and between people with similar qualifications across countries), which makes it difficult to suggest general policy directions and underlines the need to develop specific national responses.

2.3.2. Acquiring key competences in and through IVET

Basic skills are part of the key competences defined in the EU recommendation: communication in mother tongue and (two) foreign languages; mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; digital skills, plus a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship (see STD15 and STD13 as being able to innovate is part of entrepreneurship); cultural awareness; social and civic competences; and learning to learn skills (European Parliament and Council, 2006). In the Bruges communiqué, countries agreed to '[...] ensure that key competences and career management skills are adequately integrated in IVET curricula and that they can be acquired through training opportunities in CVET' (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2010, p. 9).

⁽¹⁵⁾ See <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/articles/22178.aspx> [accessed 3.12.2014].

Figure 4. State of play and progress towards STD4: key competences and career management skills in VET



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

The specific challenge for VET is providing an adequate skill mix that is specific enough to meet occupation needs and broad enough to give learners a basis to adapt to other education or occupation areas and to progress to further learning. VET also needs to give young people and adults the chance to acquire or update basic skills. The importance allocated to key competences varies between different occupation groups and job functions (Cedefop, 2013a). The heterogeneous target groups and different qualifications levels indicate the challenge that VET faces in achieving its double aim of excellence and inclusion and in setting up programmes that balance labour market needs with educational goals.

LLL strategies and educational development plans tend to underline the importance of key competences and the need to give adults the chance to acquire or update them (see Section 2.3.4). In around half of the countries, these strategies have been adjusted since 2010 to place even more emphasis on key competences or to introduce or reinforce a particular one, such as career management skills.

In all countries, key competences are part of IVET curricula, as subject areas, underlying principles/learning outcomes across subject areas, or integrated in vocational subjects. They

can also be implicitly integrated through work-based learning and other learning methods. Increasing attention is being paid to career management skills (see Section 3.4.3) to empower young people to make informed decisions and ease transition to the labour market; more than 20 countries reported adjustments or new initiatives to introduce career management skills in curricula, standards and qualifications. Cedefop’s evidence also suggests that work-based learning is increasingly understood as a way to acquire key competences.

Form and extent depend on type and level of programmes and the degree of autonomy that VET institutions have in shaping or adjusting programmes and curricula. In many countries, key competences have been part of VET for a long time; school-based VET usually includes mother tongue, maths and science and often foreign language learning. In several cases, the recommendation gave a new impetus to reinforce them in line with the EU framework. In recent years, the emphasis on learning outcomes, the work on educational and vocational standards, and the revision of curricula have drawn more attention to key competences (Cedefop, 2012d).

An accompanying document to the Commission communication rethinking education argued that only a narrow set of skills and

competences is assessed and advocated assessment and evaluation frameworks to support key competence development (European Commission, 2012a). Whether they are assessed in VET or not, and in what way, depends on the specific key competence, the type of programme and the end qualification. In VET programmes that give access to higher education, maths, mother tongue and foreign languages, have traditionally formed part of upper secondary school-leaving exams. In other cases, key competences, in particular soft skills, may be assessed in a cross-curriculum manner, for example in the context of occupational skills demonstrations, within training firm or projects learners carry out jointly with or for enterprises (Cedefop, 2012d).

More than 50% of countries have included key competences in their NQF level descriptors (see Section 3.2.1). In most, this signals that they can be acquired in the VET programmes that lead to the respective qualifications. In Estonia, for instance, VET legislation agreed in 2013 outlines the expected learning outcomes in initiative and entrepreneurship in all VET programmes leading to EQF levels 2 to 5. In the UK, a set of key competences has recently become a mandatory part of the training in apprenticeships. Including key competences in NQF level descriptors also means embedding, and, eventually, assessing them.

Evidence suggests that teacher and trainer training on key competences is organised when curricula are revised, but countries do not report if it is provided regularly, once the curricula are introduced. In several cases, emphasis is put on a particular type of key competence, for instance, entrepreneurship or career management. In countries that joined the EU more recently, this type of training seems to be largely supported by ESF. Professional development to help learners acquire entrepreneurship skills was a reality in almost half the countries before 2010 as attention to entrepreneurship was already strong. A total of 10 countries have not adjusted since and eight more have not reported any developments (see Section 4.3).

As in the Member States, mother tongue, foreign language, maths and science, were part of the secondary VET curriculum in the western Balkans long before 2010 and have been

reinforced since. The Bruges communiqué has inspired these countries to pay more attention to entrepreneurship skills, digital competences and learning to learn. This is also reflected in their VET strategies (as in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia). In Turkey, all eight key competences have been included in the national curriculum as the basis for general education and VET since 2004.

The economic transition of the three western Balkan countries from industrial to service-based economies, and the post-crisis difficulties in anticipating skill needs, are an even stronger argument for broader skills sets which help people switch to other occupation fields or progress to higher education. Concerns shared by these countries include effective learning of key competences, adequate and good quality practical training or innovation (ETF, 2013).

Box 9. **Fit for work and life through key competences in IVET: country highlights**

- (a) Entrepreneurial skills, basic digital and mathematical competences are included in Ireland's VET strategy. Learning to learn skills are integrated in the NQF competence strand. Appropriate standards must be met to merit certification. In addition to technical skills, proficiency is required in teamwork, communication skills and other key competences.
- (b) The revised core curricula in Poland include common learning outcomes in personal and social skills across all occupations (2012) for placements in enterprises (organising teams, running a business, language skills for occupation purposes). Social and civic competences (such as voluntary work and peer support) are taken into account when assessing behaviour. Entrepreneurial skills are also assessed in vocational schools.
- (c) In the renewed Slovak curricula (2013) key competences are reinforced as transversal objectives, defined as learning outcomes and grouped in broad clusters (acting autonomously; communication in languages and digital competence; social skills and ability to cooperate). National (electronic) key competence testing is being developed with ESF support (2013-15).





Regional centres have been set up to cooperate with teachers developing test assignments.

- (d) In Slovenia, key competences, based on national standards, also include learning to learn, intercultural and aesthetic skills, social science, social competence, health protection and care for wellbeing. Only those that are subject areas, such as maths, mother tongue or foreign language are assessed. However, VET schools are obliged to monitor progress in all of them. Key competences are an integrative part of the project work learners have to carry out for their final exams. Since 2012, a handbook has guided teachers and trainers in using vocationally oriented approaches to acquire key competences. Guidelines on how to implement them also include exam criteria.
- (e) In the Czech Republic and the Netherlands central exams have been introduced in IVET to assess certain key competences such as English. In the Netherlands, methods to develop key competences include self-directed learning, focus on applying knowledge, workplace learning, simulation enterprises and assignments for companies. In Cyprus, there is a common approach for continuous formative assessment.
- (f) In Germany, occupational and key competences are acquired in an integrated way in the working process. The Ministry of Education funds research to develop skills and competence assessment in VET using a technology-based approach (2011-14). Competence models and measuring instruments are developed, tested and analysed nationwide in four important occupation fields.

Source: ReferNet.

2.3.3. Promoting foreign language skills

In 2010, the average number of foreign languages learned in upper secondary IVET was 1.2, a figure that seems to have remained constant throughout several years. In 18 of the 28 Member States, learners in upper secondary VET learned more than one foreign language in 2012 ⁽¹⁶⁾. The average number of languages learned is highest in Luxembourg, Poland and Romania. Less than one foreign language, on

average, according to Eurostat data of June 2014, was learned in IVET in the EU-28, in Belgium (Fr), Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Hungary and the Netherlands ⁽¹⁷⁾. Only Estonia reported having a foreign language learning strategy in VET.

As the 2012 European survey on language competences among 16 countries illustrates (European Commission, 2012b), a foreign language was compulsory at least for learners in certain types of VET in all except the UK (England). A national survey in 2012 revealed that 68% of employers in the UK were not satisfied with young people's foreign language skills.

School-based IVET usually includes at least one mandatory foreign language. In some countries up to three are mandatory, in training for certain sectors (e.g. tourism). In others, one or more other languages are optional. It is in upper secondary apprenticeship programmes that language learning occurs to a lesser extent.

There is a trend towards defining standards for expected outcomes, with at least half of the countries applying the levels of the common European framework of reference for languages (Council of Europe, 2001) ⁽¹⁸⁾. Germany and Austria, for instance, also offer their learners the opportunity to acquire international certificates. More and more countries use the language portfolio. Increasingly, VET programmes combine acquiring occupational and language skills (content and language integrated learning, 'learning through languages') or offer some bilingual programmes or modules, as in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden.

2.3.4. Fostering innovative and entrepreneurial skills

Science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) skills are in high demand and will remain so in the future. Currently, around 30% of upper secondary VET graduates come from

⁽¹⁷⁾ Eurostat. Language learning latest update of 24.6.2014 extracted on 21.7.2014. No data available for Spain, Finland and the UK.

⁽¹⁸⁾ For information on the common European framework of reference for languages CEFR levels see Council of Europe, 2001 and Europass, 2014.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Eurostat data were not available for all countries.

engineering, manufacturing and science, maths and computing (Cedefop, 2014c) ⁽¹⁹⁾. Despite increasing ICT skills ⁽²⁰⁾, PIAAC results suggest that too large a share of Europe's working age population, regardless of age, is not sufficiently prepared to face the challenges and reap the advantages of the digital world (OECD, 2013b). Alongside Germany's focus on STEM as part of its high-tech and innovation strategy, only the UK (Northern Ireland) reported having a specific strategy (in 2011). In the revised IVET curricula in Romania, green skills have been embedded in the learning outcomes of all qualifications, while Cyprus was focusing on green skills in 2011.

As STD 13 illustrates, creativity and innovation tend to be cross-curriculum objectives or underlying principles in VET, closely linked to entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. While they are more explicit in programmes that prepare for creative industries, they are an inherent part of different learning/working methods in other types of VET. Austria, Denmark, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, the Netherlands and Slovenia for instance, include business/industry projects or assignments in their VET programmes. In some cases they are also part of the final exams of school-based VET (see also Section 4.1).

As well as placements in enterprises, simulated or real business experience has been a common method of promoting entrepreneurship skills in school-based VET and is being expanded, as almost half of all countries have adjusted existing policies or initiated new ones since 2010. Some countries see development of entrepreneurial skills as inherent in apprenticeship training (see also STD15, Section 4.3). However, cooperation to develop learning methods that promote creativity and innovation in VET remains a challenge, although several countries were active in this area before 2010. Belgium (Fl), Spain and Slovenia are among the countries that have adjusted existing policies since then or implemented new ones. A third of all countries, however, have not reported any developments.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Not all countries are included in the calculations due to problems with data availability and quality.

⁽²⁰⁾ See <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/articles/20404.aspx> [accessed 3.12.2014].

2.3.5. Making up for deficits and developing key competences further through (C)VET

Where learners do not manage to acquire basic skills and/or a broader spectrum of key competences before entry into VET, they need to catch up. Apart from six countries, where the measures in place in 2010 still apply, developments have been quite dynamic. In 18 countries, opportunities to make up for deficits in key competences were in place before 2010 and have been adjusted since. They are offered either in IVET or CVET, as boundaries are not clear cut ⁽²¹⁾ and include adjustment of curricula to learners' needs in 'mainstream' VET, 'bridge programmes' and learner support to make transition into VET easier (see Sections 5.1 and 5.2).

Most countries with CVET or LLL strategies promoting key competence development ⁽²²⁾ advocate 'key competences for all'. Information on explicit policies or objectives for CVET/adult learning (available in Estonia or the Netherlands, for instance) seems to be less frequent ⁽²³⁾. Others focus on specific groups, such as learners with a migrant background (e.g. Germany, Austria), disadvantaged people (e.g. Hungary) and the low- or unskilled (e.g. the Czech Republic, Portugal, the UK (England, Scotland)) (see also Section 5.2).

Box 10. Key competences within CVET: country highlights

- (a) A recent initiative (2012) in Greece invites social partners to set up CVET programmes for employees and the self-employed in several areas, including key competences, such as entrepreneurship or career management.
- (b) In Slovakia, companies in industry that apply for ESF support for CVET (since 2013) are required to consider key competence development in their projects.

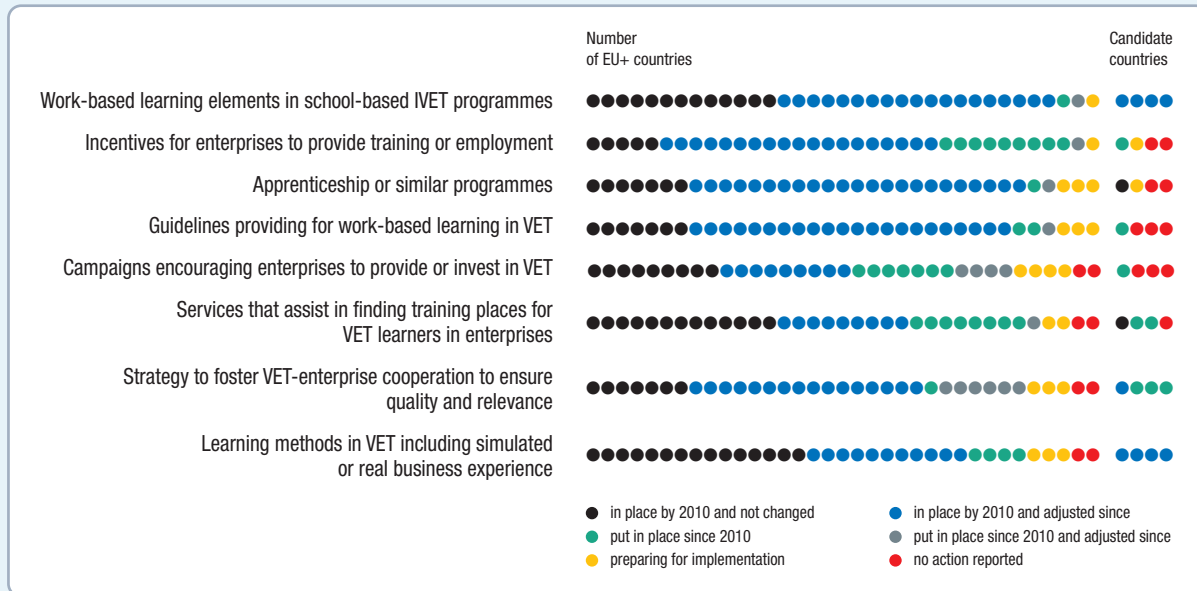
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet.

⁽²¹⁾ VET for young people and adults rather than IVET and CVET is considered more suitable by Scandinavian countries and the UK.

⁽²²⁾ Specific language programmes in CVET are not included here.

⁽²³⁾ The question to ReferNet related to policy priorities within LLL or VET strategies. The information received, however, frequently referred to specific measures or programmes.

Figure 5. State of play and progress towards STD5a: work-based learning, including apprenticeships



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

2.4. Work-based learning

While even the most labour-market-relevant education and training cannot create sufficient jobs or increase demand, apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning ⁽²⁴⁾ can provide high-quality training for young people and help match learning outcomes to the skills required. They can provide young people and adults with a mix of job-specific and transversal skills that are difficult to acquire in classroom environments.

Evidence confirms better employment prospects for young people who have had some work experience, in particular apprenticeships (Cedefop, 2012e). Relatively low youth unemployment during the crisis, for example in Germany, the Netherlands and Austria, has been attributed in part to their apprenticeships

(Cedefop, 2014). Apprentices of today could also be the entrepreneurs of tomorrow.

These schemes have therefore moved high up on national, EU and international policy agendas and are clearly visible in the policy developments of recent years, from the Youth on the move flagship initiative (Council of the EU, 2010) to the Youth guarantee (Council of the EU, 2013a). Increasing apprenticeship places requires a sufficient number of enterprises that are ready to train and youth who select this path. However, only around a quarter of Europe’s enterprises with more than 10 staff take on apprentices and upper secondary VET is largely school-based in many countries. Taking a wider approach to suit different country realities, policymakers committed themselves in the Bruges communiqué to ‘maximising work-based learning, including apprenticeships’.

A range of initiatives to support work-based learning was in place already by 2010. Since then, many countries have adjusted their policies and measures (Figure 5). As is evident from Part 2 of this report (see Sections 6.3.1. and 6.5.1), this deliverable has become a strategic priority in nearly half the countries. In the candidate countries, governments and other stakeholders have also been paying increasing attention to work-based learning.

⁽²⁴⁾ Work-based learning comprises:

- (a) apprenticeships or similar schemes that alternate learning in a VET school/institution and in an enterprise (substantial share);
- (b) on-the-job training periods in companies within school-based VET, i.e. internships, work placements or traineeships (often 25-30% or less of the programme);
- (c) learning in workshops, labs and practice firms of VET schools/training centres or in business and industry facilities.

2.4.1. Work-based learning in school-based VET

Work-based elements have been part of school-based VET for a long time in almost all EU+ and all candidate countries. Hungary and Poland, however, have only recently introduced them. In-company training is the most popular type of work-based learning. Other forms include simulating the workplace in schools or specialised services as in Denmark, France, Croatia and Malta.

IVET students can acquire business experience through training firms and management of a small scale business in most countries. Some recent examples of measures include entrepreneurship camps (Estonia), simulation games (Germany), mini-enterprises (Belgium (FI and Dg), France and Luxembourg) (see also Sections 2.3.3, 4.1 and 4.3).

Work-based learning has a long tradition in Turkey, where students in vocational and technical schools start gaining practical work experience from the second year of their schooling onwards. In contrast, in the three western Balkan candidate countries the provision of practical skills predominantly takes place in school workshops. Guidelines regulating work-based learning are available or being prepared in all EU+ countries, but they are not commonly available in candidate countries.

2.4.2. Apprenticeship schemes central to EU and national policy agendas

Even in the first phase of the Copenhagen process, Cedefop identified a trend towards apprenticeship revival (Cedefop, 2010). Since then, many countries have adjusted or adapted their programmes. Several countries have also received specific recommendations to set up or reinforce their apprenticeship schemes in the context of the European semester. Spain, Lithuania and Slovakia for instance, are currently actively preparing the launch of new apprenticeship options in their countries.

In countries such as Germany and Austria, apprentices have traditionally been trained in a broad range of occupations, including in newly emerging fields such as information technology or the growing care sector. In others, apprenticeships have traditionally been limited to, or most common in, construction, technical and

manufacturing occupations. As service industries are becoming more dominant, non-traditional areas are also starting to train apprentices, as examples from France and the UK show.

Nevertheless, image problems still prevail, even in countries with high participation. In some countries, apprenticeships are associated with low status and low wage sectors and occupations. In 2012, only 27% of VET learners were in programmes where 25% or more of the curriculum takes place outside the school environment. In Germany, where about half of the learners at upper secondary level are in VET, the share of apprenticeship was around 88%; Belgium, with its high proportion of vocational students, has only 4.3% combining school and work-based learning. However, there is a lack of reliable and internationally comparable statistical data, as the term apprenticeship is understood differently and concepts, models and target groups vary across countries.

The youth guarantees and similar initiatives stress the inclusive aspect of apprenticeships, also emphasised at the 2013 Davos World Economic Forum meeting. As evident from STD16 and 17, many countries devise apprenticeship type schemes and other forms of work-based learning to prevent youth from leaving education and training early or to help young people and adults reintegrate and acquire a qualification (see also Section 5.1).

However, countries seem to become increasingly aware that the dual track principle can contribute to excellence and innovation and also benefit higher education. This is also illustrated by the IMD world competitiveness database (World Economic Forum, 2014), which examines whether enough apprenticeships are available in the different countries ⁽²⁵⁾.

Analysis of countries' work on apprenticeships and work-based learning generally shows that post-secondary or higher education programmes increasingly include substantial work-based learning elements or are inspired by the dual principle. This is also confirmed by a Cedefop study on programmes leading to qualifications at EQF level 5 and above (Cedefop, 2014f).

⁽²⁵⁾ The questions are addressed to about 5 000 business executives per year.

Box 11. Apprenticeships at all levels and in new areas: country highlights

- (a) Belgium (Fr) has introduced master degrees based on alternating work and learning (2011).
- (b) Italy has recently overhauled its apprenticeship-type schemes. Besides programmes for minimum 15 year-olds leading to initial qualifications at EQF levels 3 and 4 and those that allow young adults to re(qualify), there are so-called ‘higher education and research apprenticeships’. They enable 18 to 29 year-olds to obtain qualifications that are usually offered through school-based programmes at secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels through dual track studies (EQF levels 4 to 8, including the doctoral degree). In the UK, apprenticeships are increasingly offered in services industries, as in health and social care, business administration, management, customer service and hospitality and catering. Recently, apprenticeships have also been developed in law, accountancy and advanced engineering as an alternative to qualifying for these professions by completing university degrees.
- (c) The principles for implementing apprenticeship-type schemes in Spain are set out in legislation of 2012 which also encourages enterprise participation in formal IVET. Sectoral agreements also aim at motivating chambers and enterprises to help develop and implement training programmes. One of the main aims is to improve learners’ employability and ease their transition into the labour market. The programmes are expected to help the low-qualified and early leavers return to education and training to upgrade their skills. Since 2012, regions have developed dual programmes and are piloting them.
- (d) Apprenticeship schemes in Turkey which are outside formal education are delivered through a network of vocational training centres.

Source: Cedefop, ReferNet and ETF.

The European Commission launched the European alliance for apprenticeships (Council of the EU, 2013b) to boost new initiatives. This builds on partnerships and peer learning between countries and different education and labour market actors to develop or strengthen apprenticeships. By the end of 2012, Germany

had arrangements with Greece, Spain, Latvia, Portugal and Slovakia to cooperate in this field.

As the starting points and purpose for setting up apprenticeships differ across countries, context matters in cooperation projects. This is exemplified by the countries that have recently asked Cedefop to review their (initiatives to set up) apprenticeships. The focus of the review takes account of national features and priorities. While in Lithuania, the focus is on addressing youth unemployment and skill mismatch, Malta aims at integrating apprenticeships, and the resultant qualifications, better into formal education and training and the NQF.

2.4.3. Financial incentives for enterprises

Governments and social partners are striving to increase the number of apprenticeship places as the economic crisis has reduced the opportunities for VET learners to find one. Since 2010, new incentives for enterprises to provide training or employment have been introduced in 10 and adjusted in another 19 EU+ countries. With many new measures introduced after 2012, recent progress has been substantial. Subsidies to enterprises are the most popular incentive and can take the form of a grant and reimbursement of training costs or allowance/wage. Tax benefits appear less popular. Not all recent developments have been positive: in some countries, such as Denmark, financial bonus schemes have been abolished.

Box 12. Work-based learning incentives for enterprises: country highlights

- (a) In 2013 a one-time bonus for companies offering apprenticeship training was introduced in Austria. Bulgaria is introducing a better regulated apprenticeship framework that includes support for companies that hire apprentices.
- (b) In the Czech Republic, legal changes introduced in 2014 allow tax exemptions for employers that provide training to learners in IVET.
- (c) In Denmark, all employers, both public and private, pay an amount into a fund called the employers’ reimbursement scheme (*Arbejdsgivernes Elevrefusion*), regardless of whether or





not they provide training placements. This fund finances both IVET and adult vocational (continuing) training. In 2012, all employers were obliged to pay an annual contribution of EUR 393 per full-time employee. These funds are then allocated to the places of work taking in apprentices, so they do not bear the cost of training alone. Employers receive wage reimbursement during apprentices' periods of college-based training.

- (d) Ireland currently has a pilot direct cash incentive to encourage private, community, not-for-profit and voluntary sector employers to hire long-term unemployed individuals.
- (e) France has a bonus-malus system. Companies not reaching the threshold of 4% of staff being employee-apprentices or employed under vocational training contracts, pay a contribution. But companies above the threshold are paid a bonus of EUR 400 for each learner, up to a limit of 6% of the total workforce.
- (f) Spain offers a bonus to enterprises that provide training (2012) within training and learning contracts: employers' social security contribution may be reduced by 75% (companies with 250+ workers) or by 100% (others) when hiring, on-the-job training, part-time employment including training for young people under 30 with no work experience or unemployed for more than 12 months.
- (g) Swedish employers can receive a grant per apprentice and year, and a kind of bonus if the in-company trainer has completed his/her training.
- (h) In Turkey, tax exemptions for companies that support the establishment of private vocational schools are available.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

2.4.4. Involving employers to ensure quality and relevance

Since 2010, strategies to foster cooperation between VET schools and enterprises to ensure quality and relevance of provision have been adopted or established in Belgium (Fr), Denmark, France, Italy, Hungary, Malta and Portugal. Two thirds of all existing strategies have been amended during the past four years. This shows that countries have been looking to make cooperation arrangements more effective and

adjust them on a regular basis to adapt to changing circumstances. In candidate countries, cooperation between VET institutions and businesses is seen in exchanging staff and organising enterprise traineeships for teachers, as in, for example, the 2010-14 Montenegrin VET strategy. However, many cooperation arrangements remain to be fully implemented.

Box 13. Learning in work settings, support for enterprises and learners: country highlights

- (a) Bulgaria is introducing a better regulated apprenticeship framework that includes support for companies that hire apprentices.
- (b) In the Czech Republic a national project provides internship opportunities for one to three months free of charge as an extra-curricular activity. A training demand/supply match database has been developed with ESF support (2012).
- (c) In Greece, apprenticeship and work-based learning schemes have recently been introduced for a wide range of qualifications in most types of secondary VET programmes.
- (d) Following an agreement with the government (2011), the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been in the driving seat of VET reform. Work-based learning has been expanded and, for certain programmes, inspired by the dual principle. The chamber monitors contracts and provides a support network which may also help learners find training places. Companies' training fund contributions can be used up to a certain ceiling for training provided within cooperation agreements between VET institutions and companies. Since 2013, per capita payment reflects training cost by occupation.
- (e) In Sweden, efforts to strengthen apprenticeship have also led to national projects to train in-company trainers. Public funding is increasingly channelled to support school-company partnerships and to train trainers through national VET councils. One of the challenges is reaching trainers in enterprises; as a result, participation is low.
- (f) In Ireland, several initiatives not only assist finding, but actually provide themselves, training places for learners in VET.





- (g) An online internship search assistance service in the Netherlands (since 2009) addresses learners, schools and enterprises. Links to social media and a smartphone application are available. A total of 72% of learners in school-based VET preparing for the trade sector use the website to find placements. Some 80% find the tool easy to use and 70% think that the internship offer is satisfactory.
- (h) Also Bulgaria, Ireland, France, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and the UK (Wales and Scotland), have set up or piloted services that assist VET learners in finding training places. The matching service in Wales helps employers and training providers find suitable young people while the national vacancy handling service in Scotland has been expanded to aid young people find apprentice and trainee opportunities. In Bulgaria, France and Romania, online services support cooperation between providers and companies and help students find training places.
- (i) Since 2011 each Montenegrin VET school has a practical training coordinator.
- (j) In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a craftspeople law is being drafted to introduce an apprenticeship system in the near future.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

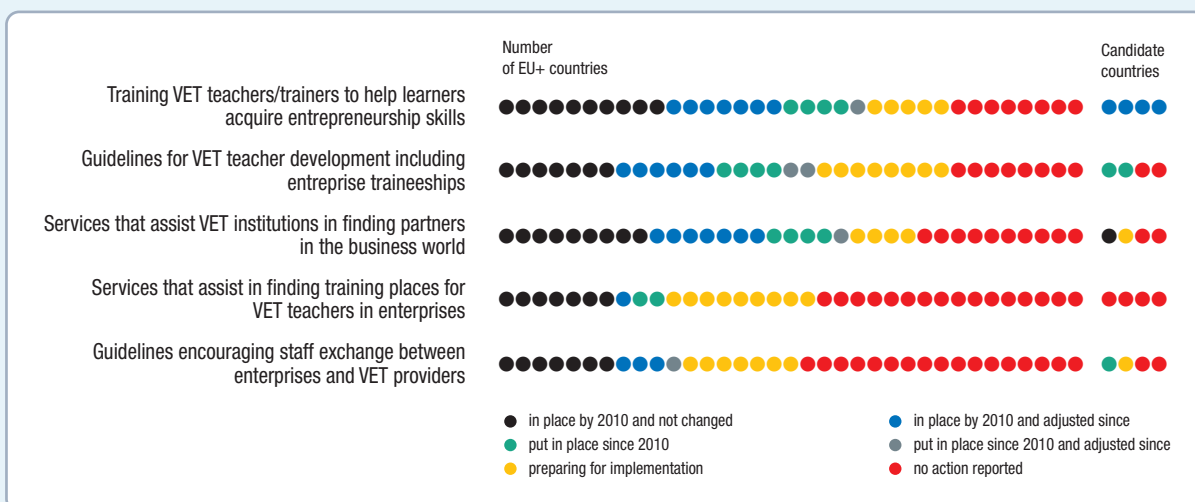
2.5. Cooperation with employers and employment services

2.5.1. Building partnerships with employers

VET enterprise cooperation goes beyond arrangements to enable and promote relevant and high quality work-based learning. Employers, as social partners, are involved in developing and updating VET curricula in many countries. In working groups for curriculum development, employers have a decision-making role in countries such as Germany, Spain, the Netherlands and Romania, while they mainly advise in countries such as France, Portugal and Slovakia.

Employer involvement in curriculum design can also take the form of consultation (as in Ireland and Finland) or through national, sector and VET programme councils. STD5b calls for arrangements to improve and extend cooperation between VET institutions and enterprises and highlights the role of VET teacher and trainer continuing development. Figure 6 shows to what extent and how VET cooperates with business to support teacher development by building strong partnerships with the world of business. Several possible options for this type of cooperation appear underused and overall progress since 2010 has been limited, although some countries made adjustments to measures that already existed in 2010.

Figure 6. State of play and progress towards STD5b: cooperation between VET institutions and enterprises



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

Services that assist VET institutions in finding partners in the business world appear non-existent in many countries and recent progress in establishing such services is limited. Countries that do have these services organise them in different ways. They are led by social partners in Denmark, Estonia, Slovenia, and, in some cases, also in Spain. They can also take the form of an agency or office (e.g. Belgium, Finland, Greece, Malta and Norway), web platforms (as in Romania and the UK (Wales)) or networks/stakeholder groups (including Germany, France, Latvia, Austria, the UK (England, Scotland and Northern Ireland)).

Similar to the situation in 2010 and 2012, most EU+ and all candidate countries do not have dedicated services that help to find training places for teachers in enterprises, and many countries have no guidelines to encourage staff exchange. Most countries that took action after 2010 (such as Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal), have not reached the stage of full implementation. Some countries with staff exchange arrangements in place use practitioners from enterprises as guest teachers in VET schools (as in Estonia, France, the UK (England)).

By 2010, 17 EU+ countries and all the candidate countries were training their VET teachers and/or trainers to help learners acquire entrepreneurship skills, a measure that not only illustrates VET cooperation, but also supports entrepreneurship (see Chapter 4). This includes, for example, company management training programmes (Belgium, Latvia, Luxembourg, Austria, Poland and Sweden), manuals/guidelines (Croatia, Lithuania, Romania and Finland), organised visits to companies (Estonia), and updated teacher training standards (Portugal). Another five EU+ countries are preparing to introduce new teacher training schemes. Several countries have introduced guidelines for VET teacher development that include enterprise traineeships or are planning to do so. While some of the training measures for VET teachers or trainers focus on business set-up skills, most of them aim at stimulating an entrepreneurial mindset in a more general sense.

Box 14. **Training teachers in enterprise: country highlights**

- (a) in Lithuania and Poland, enterprises are encouraged to invest in VET by providing teacher training opportunities. In both countries, the ESF is added to support development and provision of training programmes for VET teachers in cooperation with enterprises.
- (b) Turkey has adopted regulations for VET teachers to be trained in companies and many teachers have already used this opportunity.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

2.5.2. **Cooperation between VET, employment services and social partners**

STD 21 calls for structured cooperation mechanisms between the VET sector and employment services as well as social partners. Figure 7 gives an overview of such mechanisms and highlights the main trends since 2010. Operational mechanisms vary from country to country, in terms of governance, types and levels of partnership and degree of formalisation. As the overall situation in early 2014 is very similar to that of 2012, progress appears limited recently.

Cooperation between VET and employment authorities and social partners can take the form of participation in committees dealing with VET policy, a well-established practice in European countries before 2010. In 2014, employment authorities cooperated with social partners and discussed VET policy in committees or other forums in all countries. Estonia, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden have recently strengthened cooperation arrangements. Strategic cooperation between VET authorities and employment authorities is established in all but five EU+ countries. This type of cooperation often involves ministries or decision-makers directly under their control.

VET authorities participate in councils or boards dealing with employment policies in almost all EU+ and the candidate countries. This often includes participation in working groups and committees on education, qualifications, employment and entrepreneurship issues. It also involves contributing to development plans and employment strategies. Such arrangements can

Box 15. Teaming up with employment services: country highlights

- (a) In the UK (England), to drive economic growth and job creation, legislation devolves more power to cities/local level, which could entail closer cooperation between VET and employment actors/networks. The country also stimulates cooperation between VET and employment services by linking funding to employment outcomes.
- (b) In Latvia, the government gave a mandate to the education and welfare ministries to start a pilot to ensure greater involvement of European regional development fund (ERDF) supported public VET schools in providing training for the unemployed in 2014.

Source: ReferNet.

have a real impact. Examples are new active labour market policies in the Czech Republic and Norway, new approaches to help youth at risk in Germany’s *Länder*, and a proposed employment strategy (2014-20) in Lithuania. In Bulgaria, VET authorities participated in reforming employment and labour market legislation.

In Greece, financial incentives encourage VET providers to cooperate with social partners

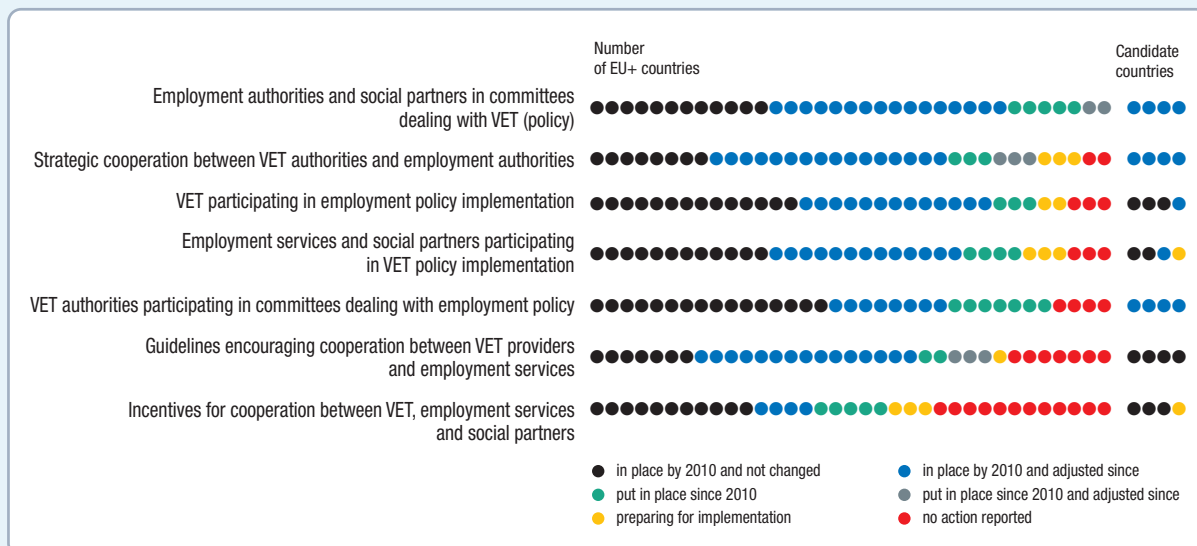
but cooperation is not always based on guidelines or incentives. In about a third of the EU+ countries no incentives were reported. In some, incentives are not needed as cooperation is based on a tradition of social dialogue or informal arrangements within the autonomy of VET providers and other stakeholders.

Cooperation in candidate countries varies from simple consultations to intensive collaboration and joint production of policy papers, sector strategies or operational deliverables such as curricula. Social partners are usually involved in VET policy implementation through their participation in consultative and management boards, based on guidelines and in the context of VET and employment strategies. In Turkey, the major platform for dialogue between employers/social partners and education institutions is via central and provincial vocational education boards.

2.6. Monitoring employability and transitions, plus feedback to VET provision

Feedback mechanisms are needed to ensure that VET is relevant to the labour market. Such mechanisms ensure that labour market trends

Figure 7. State of play and progress towards STD21: structured cooperation mechanisms between VET sector and employment services



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

Box 16. Feedback loops to ensure VET labour market relevance

Cedefop's study (Cedefop, 2013g, p. 9) describes different VET governance structures and has identified four main types of feedback mechanism. These four types are:

- (a) 'liberal', characterised by a low degree of coordination, where feedback between VET providers and the labour market is mainly left to the market. This type is most likely to be found in countries where skill formation systems are market-led, such as the UK (England) and Ireland. Its features are marginal social partner involvement and more direct communication between VET and the labour market;
- (b) 'statist', characterised by strong state regulation of education and weak links between education and the labour market in terms of formal communication. Statist feedback mechanisms are prevalent in systems which focus on state-regulated and school-based VET, such as VET in Bulgaria, Estonia and Poland, and school-based VET in Germany, Austria and Sweden. Social partners are not involved as formal actors;
- (c) 'participatory', which allows for the participation of social partners in the processes, but mainly in a consultative role. This type of feedback mechanism can be found in countries where the state prescribes a precise role for social partners in policy-making and in countries where the state is formally involved in implementing VET. Although concrete arrangements differ between them, France, Hungary, Finland, and Sweden are examples of countries with participatory feedback;
- (d) 'coordinated', where social partners are the drivers of renewal processes and are active in their implementation. This type of feedback is mostly found in collective skill formation systems such as the dual system in Germany and Austria and IVET in Denmark, the Netherlands and Slovenia.

Source: Cedefop, 2013g.

and outcomes and the opinion of employers and other relevant stakeholders are taken into account when renewing VET qualifications and curricula. These mechanisms might be formal or informal. Formal feedback mechanisms typically have a legal foundation, are permanent, and

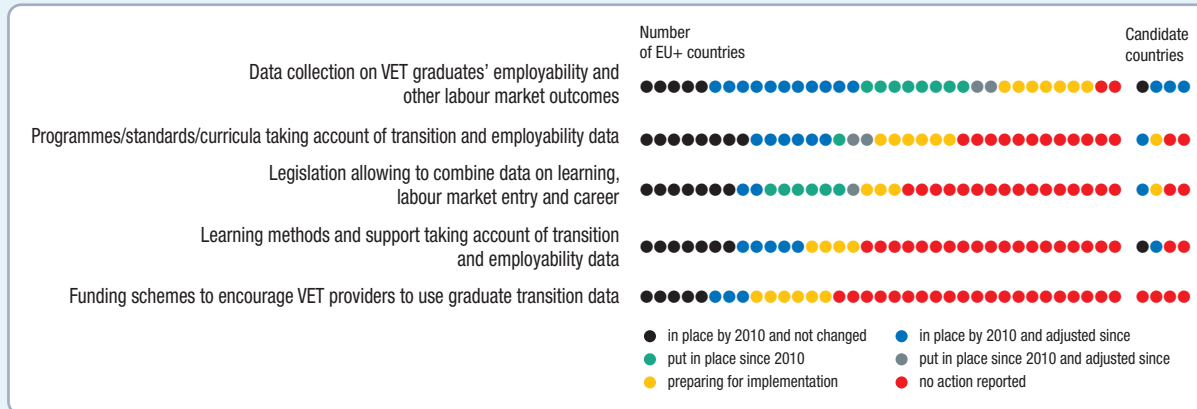
comprise two or more actors (such as the state, employer and employee organisations). A Cedefop study shows the complexity of these formal feedback mechanisms between VET and the labour market, which are embedded in national traditions and differ across and within countries.

The Bruges communiqué also highlights the importance of regularly monitoring employability and labour market transitions of VET graduates to inform VET policy development and VET system governance. Information on how well VET graduates perform in the labour market enables VET institutions, providers and other stakeholders to identify quality and relevance issues and to address them. It also allows policy-makers to take well-informed decisions on necessary adjustments to renew VET systems, such as adaptation of programmes and curricula and fine-tuning financial incentives.

Figure 8 shows what countries have been doing to ensure adequate feedback of VET graduate employability to VET institutions. As the state of play in early 2014 is not very different from the situation in 2012, progress towards implementing this STD appears slow and may have even slowed down in the past two years. This is worrying as feedback from the labour market on the employability of VET graduates is one of the fundamental pillars of ensuring the relevance of VET.

Most countries, including all candidate countries, collect data on the employability and other labour market outcomes of their VET graduates. However, programmes, standards and/or curricula take account of transition and employability data only in half of the EU+ countries. Some of the Nordic countries and the Netherlands have systems with strong feedback loops. In many countries where feedback loops are weak, this is linked to legal restrictions that make it difficult to combine data on learning, labour market entry and career. For example, in Ireland, there have been discussions between the key stakeholders for developing a comprehensive labour path-tracking system and first steps have been taken but, although individuals can be identified, data protection laws restrict practical implementation. In Belgium (FI), privacy legislation makes it difficult to cross data on learning pathways with labour market

Figure 8. **State of play and progress towards STD5c: feedback on employability of VET graduates for VET institutions**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

participation. After 2012, some countries have started working on changes in legislation to address this.

Other factors that inhibit using information on VET graduate employability are lack of funding schemes to encourage VET providers to do so (for instance through performance-based funding) and missing links between information on graduate employability and learning methods and learner support. No countries have reported on new methods or schemes during 2010-14.

Candidate countries mostly use ad hoc data collection on VET graduate employability that is not always being used by VET institutions in a systematic manner. Since 2010 some initiatives have been taken to fill the data gap.

Tracking VET graduate employability can be part of monitoring systems for the VET-to-work transition and is usually carried out using follow-up surveys. Figure 9 shows that most EU+ countries collect data on transitions from VET to work. In eight countries, data collection is in preparation or has been recently launched. Seven countries have indicated that they use the ESF to finance data collection or analysis. Examples of ESF cofunded measures are graduate transition surveys in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia and studies on VET graduate transitions in Estonia and Lithuania. In the candidate countries, monitoring systems on the transition from learning to work are at various stages of development and are mainly funded through regular public budgets. Although data collection takes place, the

Box 17. Tracking labour market outcomes for better VET: country highlights

- (a) In Bulgaria, an agreement between the education and labour ministries foresees combining data on early school leavers and VET graduates with information on transitions to employment. The outcome will inform measures to prevent unemployment, shape policies to activate early school leavers, and help design schemes to increase the employability of young people.
- (b) A new bill is being prepared by the UK government in 2014 to make possible sharing data on learners' destinations with providers; in Wales, destination surveys of further education graduates (including VET) have been published.
- (c) Quality improvement funds in the UK (Wales) and performance-based funding in Finland encourage VET providers to use VET graduate employability information; for transition programmes, curricula design takes account of data on progression to employment or further learning.
- (d) The national action plan for youth (2013-15) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia includes the set-up of a tracking system to monitor transition from school to work and employment outcomes.
- (e) In Montenegro, VET schools are required to collect data about the destination of graduates within one year after programme completion.
- (f) The VET centre in Serbia has developed methodology to monitor labour market transitions.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

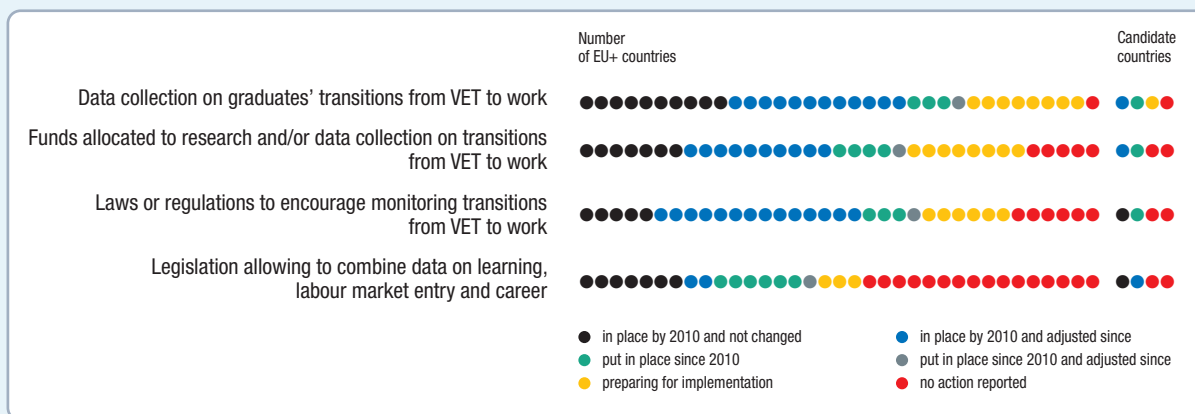
regulatory basis to collect information on the employment status of VET graduates is often not clearly defined.

To improve EU level data on IVET students, data collection on employability and learning mobility at national level had been agreed by EU Member States in Council conclusions in 2011 and 2012 (Council of the EU, 2011b; 2012a). However, collection of such data is still a challenge (Figure 10).

All candidate countries publish statistical data

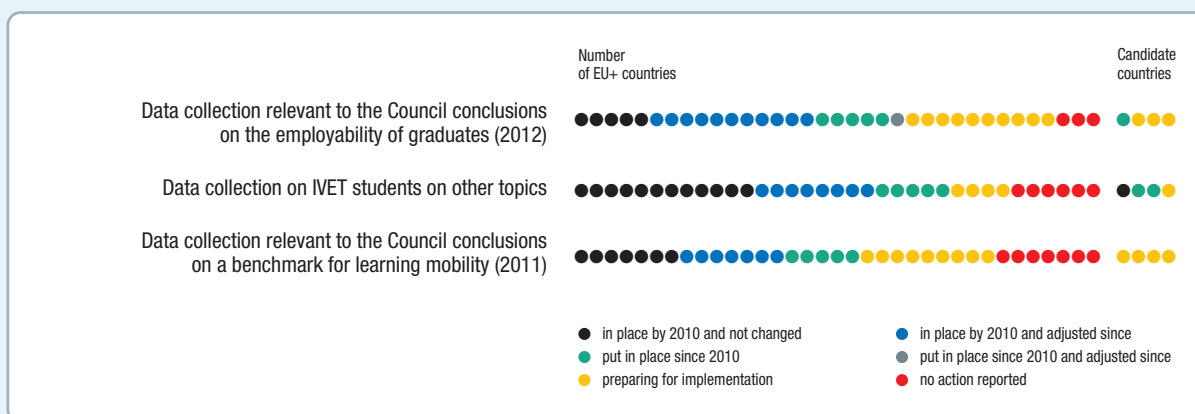
on VET and provide inputs to EU level data collection; most have launched advanced systems for data collection on VET and employment issues after 2010. European countries use the EU LLL programme’s project-based activities to monitor mobility. It is possible, or foreseen, to use more extensive data gained through various studies or surveys in Austria, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and the UK (see also Section 3.6).

Figure 9. State of play and progress towards STD6: monitoring systems on transitions from learning to work



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

Figure 10. State of play and progress towards STD22: improving EU level data on IVET students



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

Accessible and open VET: lifelong learning and mobility

This chapter aims to capture the situation in 2010 and review progress that countries have made during 2010-14 to make LLL and mobility a reality through VET. It considers national policy actions and initiatives taken until early 2014 that address STDs 7-12.

Box 18. STDs dealing with LLL and mobility

ET 2020 objective 1: making LLL and mobility a reality

Bruges communiqué strategic objectives (SO) 3 and 4

- S03** Enabling flexible access to training and qualifications.
- S04** Developing a strategic approach to the internationalisation of IVET and CVET and promoting international mobility.

STDs

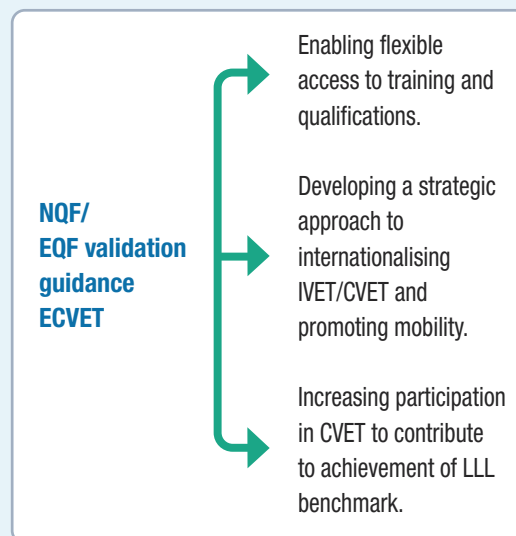
- STD7** Participation in CVET in line with ET 2020 15% benchmark.
- STD8** Comprehensive NQFs based on learning outcomes linked to EQF.
- STD9** Procedures for the validation of learning supported by EQF/NQFs.
- STD10** Integrated guidance services closely related with labour market needs.
- STD11** ECVET implementation in line with the recommendation and participation in testing ECVET.
- STD12** Internationalisation and mobility in VET.

Source: Council of the EU and European Commission, 2010.

In this section, discussing progress by deliverable, as in the other groups, poses several challenges:

- (a) this group exemplifies the complex interrelation between various deliverables. The STDs on the common European tools and principles (STDs 8-11) support the strategic objective, ‘flexible access to training

and qualifications’ and STD on CVET (STD7). Both are also sustained by STD4 (key competences) or STD17 (raising participation of low-skilled/at-risk groups). Further, STDs 8-11 are interrelated. They need to be underpinned by quality assurance (STD3) which contributes to making VET (more) relevant, attractive and excellent (SO1, SO2). For a brief discussion on how different deliverables interact, see Part 2 of this report;



- (b) the common European tools and principles have their own governance and monitoring processes based on different approaches from that used for following up the Bruges deliverables and their own reporting rhythms; all deliverables of the Bruges communiqué also apply to continuing vocational training; as most non-formal adult learning is job-related, i.e. (linked to) CVET, there is an overlap with the European agenda for adult learning (Council of the EU, 2011c), which was adopted after Bruges and has its own governance process. In line with the communiqué, a policy handbook on access to and participation in CVET is being published (Cedefop, 2014m);

- (c) the labour force survey (which is the source used to monitor progress towards the LLL benchmark) only gives basic information on participation in adult learning. The adult education (AES2), the continuing vocational training survey (CVTS4) and the first OECD adult skills survey (PIAAC) cannot give a picture of participation in 2014, as data were collected in 2010, 2011 and in 2011/12. This means that the data do not reflect the impact of Bruges and provide a statistical picture which is not coherent across surveys.

Considering this background, the main findings are the following:

- (a) before 2010, and as a first response to the economic crisis, attention shifted increasingly to adult learning/CVET (Cedefop, 2010). Since then, the prime concern has been to address youth unemployment and skill mismatch through VET for the young; promoting LLL and mobility has been less prominent. However, a major step towards improving access to further learning and individualised learning paths has been countries' work on establishing NQFs;
- (b) EQF level 5 qualifications, which are accessible to adult and non-traditional learners, play an important role in providing advanced technical and managerial skills that are in high demand. Combining labour-market-relevant training with progression opportunities to/within higher education, they contribute to achieving Europe's higher education benchmark. In countries where higher education is held in greater esteem, EQF level 5 programmes could help raise the image of VET (Cedefop, 2014g);
- (c) the EQF has become an accepted reference point for national qualifications. Work on learning-outcomes-based EQF and NQFs has triggered reflections on how to include non-formally acquired qualifications, but most countries do not yet have a clear link to their validation arrangements. To make sure that they benefit citizens, NQFs and the EQF need to become more visible and better known by labour market actors;
- (d) validation arrangements, which can help make education and training more flexible to suit individual learner needs, exist in most countries, but they tend to relate to specific parts of education and training. They are still most common in VET. Higher education institutions are increasingly opening up to validation and should be encouraged to continue these efforts. Validation is also used more to ease access and grant exemptions from studies rather than to help people acquire qualifications. Having different arrangements for different education sectors makes it difficult to achieve an integrated national validation system, as advocated in the 2012 recommendation. Using different standards for awarding qualifications within formal learning and validation risks that they are not equally valued. Citizens are still often unaware about validation opportunities, in particular the low-qualified who could benefit most (Cedefop, 2014k);
- (e) most countries see ECVET as an instrument to ease cross-border mobility of VET learners rather than a tool that helps them move more flexibly within their countries' VET systems. While the majority are developing a policy environment that would make using ECVET possible, many have adopted a 'wait and see' strategy;
- (f) measures to internationalise VET tend to focus on mobility. Despite several bilateral and multilateral initiatives, the main share of mobility in VET has been organised within, and supported by, EU education and training programmes;
- (g) guidance is underpinning a range of policy measures that aim at encouraging young people and adults to take up VET and help them manage transitions in education and training and in the labour market. Youth guarantees, measures to reduce early leaving from education and training, and the need for more adult learning, reinforce the need for high quality and individualised guidance and the development of individuals' career management skills;
- (h) adjusting framework conditions in adult learning (such as time and delivery methods) to suit people's needs, along with providing adequate teacher and trainer development opportunities, have received less attention on national policy agendas.

Figure 11. **State of play and progress towards STD7: participation in CVET in line with ET 2020 15% benchmark**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

3.1. Lifelong learning

LLL plays a crucial role in the knowledge economy. Although it encompasses learning from early childhood until retirement age and beyond (Council of the EU, 2002), the term LLL is often used to refer to adult learning. This also applies to the ET 2020 benchmark: by 2020, the share of the population aged 25 to 64 participating in learning should reach 15%.

After several years of remaining at around 9%, data suggest that the EU average increased to 10.5% in 2013. However, this may be due to methodological changes in gathering the data ⁽²⁶⁾. While several EU+ countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK) had already met the target in 2010, seven were still at only 5% or below (Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia). Candidate countries lag far below the EU average. In 2011, 60% of Europe's adults

between 25 and 64 did not take part in formal or non-formal learning during the 12 months preceding the survey (Eurostat, 2011).

Since most non-formal learning is job-related and around one third of it is employer-sponsored, CVET plays a major role in bringing LLL participation in line with the ET 2020 benchmark (Eurostat, 2011). In 2010, two thirds of the EU's enterprises with 10 or more staff provided training (compared to 60% in 2005) ⁽²⁷⁾.

In the Bruges communiqué, countries have agreed to promote CVET (STD7) which can respond flexibly to short-term needs and helps improve citizens' employability and enterprises' competitiveness.

3.1.1. Promoting CVET participation

Policy-makers need to understand what prevents people from taking part in learning and what impedes enterprises from providing staff training. In the AES survey, people cited family commitments, conflicting work and training schedules and costs as main reasons. Many do not consider training necessary for their jobs. Enterprises that do not offer CVET considered

⁽²⁶⁾ The 2013 EU-28 average is much higher than the EU average for 2012 due to a large increase in LLL in France. At the time of writing this report, it was not clear whether a break in series will be indicated or if data revisions will occur. Slovenia had also reached the benchmark in 2010, but the share of adults participating in learning has decreased and is slightly below 15% in 2013. (Eurostat, 2014a).

⁽²⁷⁾ The discussion on AES and CVTS data in this section is based on Cedefop, forthcoming a.

their staff's skills adequate or preferred recruiting new people (CVTS4) (Cedefop, forthcoming a), an interesting phenomenon in times of increasing skill mismatch and problems in recruiting skilled workers.

Against this background, it is not surprising that targeted campaigns to make adults aware of VET's benefits have developed dynamically across countries. They include a range of measures from adult learning awards, to multimedia campaigns, CVET days, sector open days, fairs by large CVET providers, and training for specific skills areas (such as training for green jobs in Belgium). They complement education and career fairs which, traditionally, have informed people about VET opportunities on offer and are now used in all countries (Figure 11). Promotional campaigns and more information on available qualifications and programmes have been complemented by financial incentives and support.

The Bruges communiqué includes a specific deliverable (STD17) to increase skills development opportunities for those normally less likely to participate. The information available, however, suggests that countries' general LLL strategies, and/or those that foster CVET generally, aim at widening access for the unemployed and/or low-skilled while target-group-specific strategies are less frequent (see Section 5.2). Employment strategies may also advocate continuing training.

These strategies or national legal frameworks may include general rights to training and training leave, to receive guidance, or to have their skills identified, recorded and validated (see below and Sections 3.3 and 3.4). They may also emphasise specific aspects like ensuring that young people and adults can acquire, revive or further develop their basic skills/key competences or can progress (more) easily to further/higher education and training.

Most EU+ countries have one or more strategies in place. Strategies change frequently: more than half of the countries that had a CVET or LLL strategy promoting key competences in place by 2010 have updated or replaced it since then. Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Malta are examples of countries that have new or renewed strategies. Some strategic measures include second chance programmes promoting

basic skills or curricula that place a strong emphasis on them (see Section 2.3).

Box 19. Strategies to boost CVET: country highlights

- (a) For a long time, private sector employees in Luxembourg have had the right to 80 days of training during their career. In Norway, adults have a right to upper secondary education adapted to their individual needs. In Portugal, CVET is a legal right of workers and a duty of employers. Since 2010, workers in large enterprises in the UK (England, Wales) have had the right to request time for work-related training.
- (b) The 2013-20 Bulgarian employment strategy focuses on VET quality and attractiveness and foresees measures to increase the participation of employed or unemployed adults in VET. VET opportunities for adults offered by the employment service are promoted through regional campaigns, conferences and workshops.
- (c) The new Croatian education, science and technology strategy sets out conditions to include more adults in LLL and promotes key competences.
- (d) Cyprus is putting a new competence-based national curriculum for VET in place to boost CVET participation.
- (e) Following a pilot started before 2010, Poland created the legal basis for establishing distance learning in VET and has prepared related regulations on learning/teaching methods.
- (f) In 2014, Turkey adopted a new LLL strategy to boost CVET and adult education.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

Making CVET attractive also requires ensuring the value of qualifications. Several countries have parallel qualification systems for formal and non-formal education and training. Guidelines to ensure that qualifications achieved through CVET or labour market training are valued by employers and education and training were already in place in more than half the EU+ countries and two candidate countries before 2010. Arrangements vary across countries and have changed since 2010 in many cases. In some countries (e.g. Denmark and the candidate countries) CVET qualifications are part of the

Box 20. CVET: ensuring value and easing progression to higher education attainment: country highlights

- (a) In Estonia, VET providers train the unemployed and learners receive the same diplomas or certificates as other graduates.
- (b) In Greece, labour market training for the unemployed is provided by the public employment service based on guidelines that define mandatory skills to be acquired.
- (c) Agriculture skills training for job seekers of all ages in France is coupled with advice from professionals based on an agreement (2011) between the government and social partners from the sector.
- (d) Legislation for accrediting work experience supports access to higher VET in France. People have the right to progress at least one level of qualification during their professional life.
- (e) The Danish growth plan includes a VET reform proposal (2013) that broadens access to higher programmes leading to EQF level 5 and beyond for VET students and making stronger efforts to support recognition of prior learning in CVET.
- (f) Although there is no strategy in Ireland that enables adult learners to access higher VET, links between colleges, institutes of technology and universities have existed for many years to enable learners to progress to higher education; the coexistence of VET and academic qualifications at EQF level 5 described in learning outcomes has made higher education providers more open to vocational graduates progressing to programmes leading to a higher NQF level.

Source: Cedefop, ReferNet and Cedefop (2014g).

NQF; in others the frameworks are starting to open up to include qualifications acquired through non-formal learning (see also Section 3.2). To ensure that training provision is aligned to labour market needs, and to give learners the best progression opportunities possible, the UK (Wales) is introducing a funding model that requires providers to use labour market intelligence when planning their activities. Providers are also encouraged to get qualifications recognised for the qualifications and credit framework (QCF).

Since 2010, several countries (including Denmark, Estonia, the Netherlands and Finland) have introduced strategies or guidelines to support adult learner access to higher VET leading to qualifications at EQF level 5+, allowing for more flexible education and training routes. Ireland, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Poland and Romania, are planning to introduce guidelines. In the candidate countries, strategies and policy documents highlight possibilities for adults to access higher VET, but specific measures to encourage this are not yet in place. EQF level 5 qualifications appeal to learners as they open up employment, career advancement prospects and further learning. Their focus on advanced technical and managerial skills also makes them valuable to employers.

EQF level 5 qualifications can be acquired in short-cycle higher education programmes, in formal VET, outside formal education and training or in several of these learning venues. In many countries, access to programmes and qualifications at EQF level 5 is also possible through validation of work experience. The flexibility and diversity from focusing on outcomes, rather than the institution where the qualifications are acquired, allows wider groups of learners to progress to higher education qualifications, contributing to the 40% EU target for tertiary education attainment. By offering specialisation geared to the labour market, they also attract people with higher education degrees, as in Denmark. This illustrates that progression is not a one-way street and education and training careers are not necessarily linear (Cedefop, 2014g).

3.1.2. Supporting learners and teachers

To strengthen guidance and counselling for adults, legal provisions or guidelines are in place in 28 EU+ countries, while the others (Belgium-Fr), Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Italy, Romania and Slovenia) are preparing for their implementation. In some countries, guidance and counselling services for adults have a long-standing tradition. Malta has services available in all educational institutions. Legislation in Romania for apprenticeship provides for mandatory counselling, career guidance and mentoring and allows for flexible time arrangements that suit adult learners' needs. While mentoring for adult

learners has been organised in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, legal provisions or guidelines for guidance and counselling are not yet a reality in any of the candidate countries; employment services guidance for the unemployed has also limited capacity (see also Section 3.4).

Box 21. Helping teachers help adult learners: country highlights

- (a) In Denmark, VET teachers must have diploma level pedagogical education, including andragogy and catering for groups at risk.
- (b) In 2013, Spain introduced mandatory formal training for trainers working in VET under the remit of the employment authorities to help them support adult learning. Compulsory master degrees for teachers in the education system (for VET, secondary and adult education) were introduced in 2007.
- (c) Since 2010, most trainers in Ireland have been required to undergo continuing professional development. This helps trainers in community training centres support adults by giving them the skills to integrate literacy and numeracy education into the mainstream curriculum.
- (d) ESF projects supported the development of modularised training programmes for CVET trainers in Slovakia and help Maltese trainers support vulnerable students at risk of not completing their studies.
- (e) Training teachers and trainers to work with adults has been a priority in Montenegro. The country's adult education law prescribes such training and the VET centre has organised it.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

Although there is no specific deliverable for the countries on initial and continuing training of VET teachers and trainers, well-trained staff is a prerequisite for high quality adult learning/CVET. They are important agents in increasing participation rates in adult learning (European Commission and Cedefop, 2014). Given their increasing roles and tasks, improving competence and professional development of in-company trainers has been on the EU policy agenda for some years. There are very few

programmes and initiatives that specifically address training needs of employees who also act as trainers in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (European Commission and Cedefop, 2013). With seven countries reporting no measures at national level, and little activity since 2012 in general, teacher and trainer development to work with adults is likely to be an area of limited progress.

Another area where more work remains to be done is making learning arrangements suitable to the needs of learners, by making learning venues easily accessible, creating suitable time arrangements for learning, and through measures easing the combination of CVET with family obligations. The candidate countries face similar challenges. While the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey have made arrangements for training outside regular working hours, easing the combination of CVET and family obligations has not been a clear priority in the candidate countries.

3.2. Qualification frameworks

The creation of NQFs across Europe is one of the main and most tangible outcomes of the Copenhagen process ⁽²⁸⁾. It was triggered by the launch of the EQF in 2008 (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2008). Prior to 2008, NQFs based on learning outcomes only existed in Ireland, France and the UK.

The EQF was developed to assist LLL and mobility by making qualifications from different countries easier to understand and recognise; it is not limited to VET. The levels span the full scale of qualifications, from basic education to doctorates. Its purpose is to help translate all types and levels of qualifications that people can acquire in various learning settings throughout their lives (Council of the EU, 2002). The design

⁽²⁸⁾ The information on this STD is based on NQF/EQF monitoring (Cedefop, 2013e; countries' referencing reports informing on how they are linking up their qualifications to EQF and the analysis of these reports (European Commission and Cedefop, 2014). It also draws on Cedefop's analyses of NQF level descriptors (Cedefop, 2013d) and qualifications at EQF level 5 (Cedefop, 2014f; 2014g). The ETF provided additional information on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

of the eight level EQF, which takes account of the common degree structure in higher education (qualifications framework-European higher education area (EHEA))⁽²⁹⁾, is based on extensive conceptual work supported by Cedefop and collaboration between the EU and the countries.

In the Bruges communiqué, countries reconfirmed their commitment to linking their NQF to the EQF and, in addition to those that already had one, most countries decided to develop NQFs. At the time of writing, 36 countries⁽³⁰⁾ are working together to implement the EQF: the EU-28 Member States plus the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey.

3.2.1. From design to operation: more countries have moved to an operational stage

Developing an NQF focusing on learning outcomes often meant a new departure and extensive discussions among stakeholders about the relationship between different qualifications and their value. In several countries, this has influenced how qualifications are classified.

Work on NQFs usually develops in different stages which may overlap (design/development, formal adoption, operational stage, review). By the beginning of 2010, most of the countries were still in the design and development phase, discussing rationale, policy objectives and architecture of their NQF. By mid-2014, most of the 36 countries had agreed on the overall structure. In 29 countries NQFs have eight levels, while the others have 5, 7, 9, 10 and 12. Some (such as Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic

of Macedonia, Montenegro, the Netherlands) also have sublevels. A total of 30 countries are working on comprehensive frameworks that cover all types and levels of qualifications but, in six, the NQFs currently only include a limited range.

Some countries, such as Estonia, Portugal and Romania, use EQF level descriptors; others have adjusted them to suit their respective national contexts, complexities and priorities. Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Poland and Sweden, for instance, broadened the descriptors. In particular, the ‘competence’ pillar has been reshaped, as this term is interpreted in many different ways: from general competence (Norway) to social competence (Poland), to competence as a holistic concept embracing an entire range of knowledge, skills and attitudes (e.g. Belgium, Germany, Hungary and the Netherlands). Countries that have engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including social partners and research communities, tend to have broader descriptors.

In more than half of the NQFs, level descriptors include key competences. Analytical/problem-solving, communicative and/or social skills are included in Austria, Belgium (Dg, Fl), Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and the UK (Scotland) (see also Section 2.3.1).

To put NQFs in practice requires some form of formal adoption. This could be done through legislation which focuses on or includes NQF, or some other formal agreement. By mid-2014, 23 countries had at least reached this stage, the most recent among them Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Romania. Belgium (Fr), Finland, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Turkey were preparing for formal adoption. Finland, which was advanced in earlier years, exemplifies that introducing NQFs is not just a technical process but also requires political support.

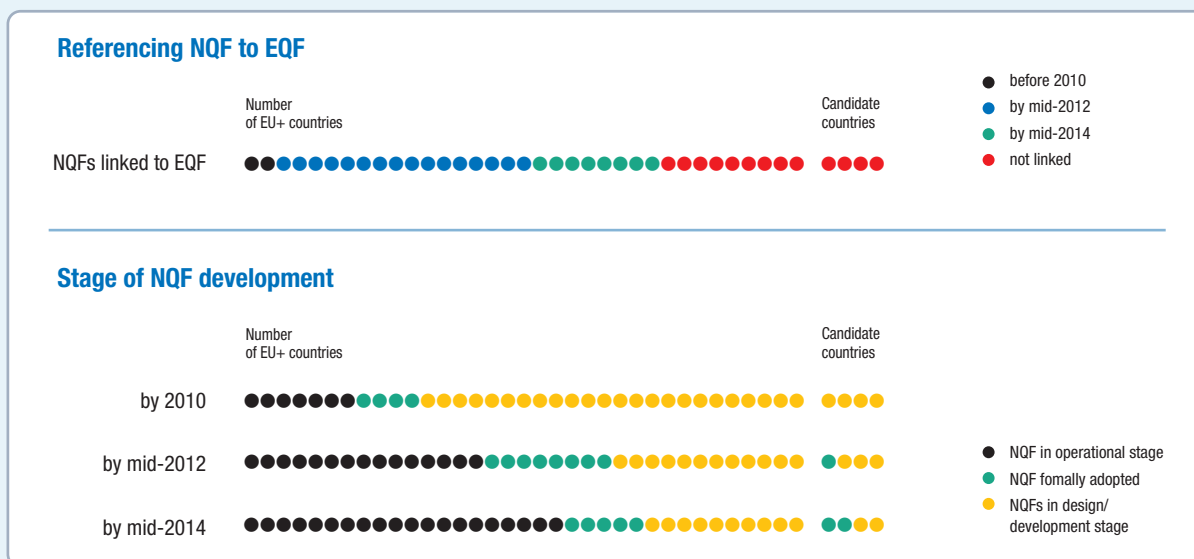
The next stage of implementation focuses on practical arrangements. These include defining stakeholder roles and responsibilities and developing criteria and procedures for allocating qualifications to NQF levels. In 12 countries the NQFs were in this operational stage by June 2014: Belgium (Fl, Dg), Croatia, Estonia,

⁽²⁹⁾ Qualifications framework in the EHEA, established by the Ministers for Higher Education participating in the Bologna process. <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=65> [accessed 5.7.2014].

⁽³⁰⁾ This refers to EU-28+: Member States plus EEA countries, in this case Iceland and Norway (also candidate country status but accession negotiations currently on hold); plus four candidate countries: the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey; plus Liechtenstein and Switzerland (currently not participating in the meetings of the advisory group).

NB: during the reporting period, the number of Member States increased from 27 to 28, as Croatia joined the EU on 1 July 2013.

Figure 12. **State of play and progress towards STD8: comprehensive NQFs based on learning outcomes linked to EQF**



NB: In this bullet chart every NQF is treated as a country for the sake of simplicity.

Source: Cedefop and ETF.

Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway and Portugal.

NQFs have achieved an advanced operational stage when they are used as a reference point by public administrations, the private sector and individual citizens. This is the case in Denmark, Ireland, France, Malta and the UK. However, once countries reach this stage, work does not stop. NQFs require continuous cooperation, review and further development. Early experiences in Ireland, France and the UK suggest that developing and implementing an NQF is a continuous circle of improvement. The recent review of the QCFs in the UK illustrates this.

Considering the different starting points in individual countries, the wide range of qualifications to be covered and the need to balance diverse stakeholder interests, NQFs have developed dynamically. So far, most of the NQFs are education- and training-led and are built on formal qualifications. The next step is to include qualifications awarded outside formal education and training, for instance in continuing training offered by the private sector and in active labour market measures (see also Section 3.3). One third of the 36 countries intend to do so. Denmark, Ireland, France, the Netherlands and Sweden, for instance, have already moved in this

direction while Austria, Germany and Norway are exploring the issue.

3.2.2. Indicating links to the EQF and making it visible

By mid-2012, 15 countries had linked their NQFs⁽³¹⁾ or qualifications to the EQF. By mid-2014, the total was 23: Austria, Belgium (Fl, Fr), Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales). These countries have presented reports explaining how they relate their qualifications to the EQF to the advisory group which was set up to ensure that the way countries link their qualifications levels to the EQF is clear and coherent⁽³²⁾. Several of these reports are still work in progress.

⁽³¹⁾ Belgium is developing separate frameworks for the Flemish-, French- and German-speaking communities and had submitted two reports by mid-2014. In the UK, England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland have their own frameworks but provided only one report.

⁽³²⁾ This advisory group is jointly steered by the European Commission and Cedefop and comprises representatives of Member States, ETF, the Council of Europe, candidate countries, European social partners and other stakeholders.

Spain, Hungary, Slovakia and Sweden are expected to present their reports in autumn 2014 or in spring 2015. From the candidate countries, Montenegro and Turkey are closest to this objective. The other countries will follow within the next year. This may be perceived as a considerable delay, as all countries should have completed this work by 2010 according to the Council recommendation. While this deadline was ambitious, it was an impetus to move forward. This also applies to the candidate countries.

Box 22. Towards a comprehensive framework in Montenegro

Montenegro has developed a comprehensive NQF for LLL based on learning outcomes (legislation adopted in 2010). Its purpose is to make the different paths that lead to a qualification visible, show how they are interlinked and help develop and compare qualifications. Its eight levels and sublevels comprise all qualifications from general education to VET and higher education. It also includes professional qualifications which can be acquired through validation of non-formal learning.

Establishing the NQF and aligning it to EQF are a political priority. The shift to learning outcomes is an essential part of this work. Qualifications and programmes are being reviewed accordingly. Overall responsibility lies with a national qualifications council, set up in 2011, comprising representatives from the Ministry of Education, other public authorities, social partners and universities. Its main tasks are to decide on inclusion and classification of qualifications in the NQF and propose the development of new qualifications. The Council has also set up 15 sectoral committees. All revised and new qualifications developed are compatible with the EQF.

Source: ETF and Cedefop.

To make use of the EQF as easy as possible for education and training institutions and employers and, ultimately, to benefit citizens, all certificates, diplomas and Europass documents should indicate the corresponding EQF levels (originally by 2012). This is already (partly) the case in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, France, Lithuania and Malta.

The Netherlands and Portugal have started the legislation process to do so. In the UK (England and Northern Ireland), where awarding bodies are free to decide whether to refer to the corresponding EQF levels or not, there has been some – albeit slow – progress. Where and for which qualifications the references are made varies: in the Czech Republic and France, the VET qualifications included in the national registers indicate the respective NQF/EQF levels. In the Czech Republic and France, they have also been included on all Europass certificate supplements since 2012; in Denmark they are also on the diploma supplements. This is also planned in Slovenia and has been formally agreed in Italy. In Portugal, the reference features on qualifications levels 1 to 4. In Malta the NQF/EQF levels are shown on all general, vocational and higher education qualifications awarded by public institutions and on newly-developed and accredited qualifications from private providers.

Indicating the EQF level on certificates can be a way to signal parity of esteem between VET and academic higher education, as the example of Germany shows. While Germany attributes its master craftsperson qualifications to EQF level 6⁽³³⁾, France, Croatia and Luxembourg relate it to level 5 and Slovenia to level 4. Although learning outcomes may vary across countries, these differences show that EQF implementation is an iterative process. Further evidence and discussion among the countries concerned will be needed to ensure that the allocation of levels is clearly understood and can be trusted. Another example is the upper secondary school leaving certificate from general education. This is linked to EQF level 4 as it traditionally allows progression to higher education across Europe and (potential) allocation to other levels caused lively debates across countries.

Country reports explaining the allocation to EQF levels followed a set of agreed criteria. In the discussions of these reports, it has become evident that some of the criteria need deepening and reports need revising to ensure that EQF is used in a coherent and consistent manner. This

⁽³³⁾ Austria's master craftsperson qualifications have provisionally also been assigned to level 6.

is also necessary, as national systems and qualifications are not static.

The recent NQF evaluation in Denmark shows that Danish stakeholders are familiar with the framework (70% of respondents to an external evaluation said they knew it well).

Box 23. Certificates signal parity of esteem between VET and academic higher education

Since the beginning of 2014, German master craftsperson certificates show the corresponding NQF and EQF level. Like the bachelor degree, they are related to level 6. From an education and training policy perspective, this is considered a milestone. The allocation to level and the reference on the certificates signal the high value and quality of this qualification. In Germany, VET qualifications are placed on nearly all NQF/EQF levels with three year apprenticeships leading to level 4.

Source: BMBF, 2014.

Box 24. Making NQF/EQF visible and easy to use

Denmark adopted a comprehensive NQF (eight levels) in 2009 and completed referencing to the EQF in 2011. The Danish NQF can now be considered operational and is becoming more visible to learners. In January 2013, Denmark started issuing VET qualifications with an explicit reference to national and European levels. Since spring 2014, this reference is also included in the Europass certificate and diploma supplements. The NQF is a reference point for designing qualifications, in both vocational and higher education. NQF levels are also being used to structure national databases on qualifications, making the learning outcomes approach more widely understood. By 2013, national stakeholders were familiar with the framework (70% of respondents to an external evaluation 'know it well').

Source: Cedefop (2013e).

In other countries, however, learners, workers, education and training providers, employers and other organisations do not always know that NQF and EQF exist. Earlier studies in Ireland indicated increased awareness among

Box 25. The Irish NQF: a first generation framework and lessons that can be learned from it

Launched in 2003 and linked to the EQF since 2009, the Irish NQF is comprehensive and has 10 levels. It covers all types and levels of qualifications available through formal education and training and is open to those awarded by professional and international organisations. There are four categories of qualifications to capture all kinds of learning.

The NQF is at an advanced operational stage, but progressing at different speeds in different parts of education and training. It has promoted the use of learning outcomes, especially in VET/further and higher education, and acts as a reference point for curriculum development as well as a tool for other reforms. It also has a strong external dimension through collaboration and research with non-European countries.

The process was strongly supported by major stakeholders. Since 2012, through the setup of one single national qualification and quality assurance body (Quality and Qualifications Ireland), coordination of qualifications has been further reinforced. The NQF has become widely known, also outside the education and training environment. EQF and NQF levels are indicated on Europass certificate supplements.

Lessons that can be learned from the Irish NQF implementation:

- (a) putting an NQF in place and using it relies on step-by-step development, broad partnerships and strong support of different stakeholders;
- (b) understanding concepts and promoting cultural change takes time;
- (c) stakeholder involvement throughout all stages is key to a sense of ownership;
- (d) developing an NQF is an iterative process whereby the education and training system and the framework are progressively aligned with each other;
- (e) implementation within subsystems and cross-system developments need balancing out;
- (f) an NQF needs to be broad enough to include different types of learning;
- (g) NQFs need to be aligned with institutional requirements and supporting policies, enabling change.

Source: Cedefop, forthcoming h and National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, 2009.

the general public, but pointed to the need to make the NQF more visible to labour market actors. Informing citizens and other stakeholders is one of the main tasks of the national coordination points. These activities are cofinanced by European grants.

3.3. Validation

Comprehensive strategies and arrangements to recognise learning that occurs on the job, through volunteering, in family life or other situations, benefit people and employers alike. People may be more motivated to take up learning, could acquire formal qualifications without or saving study time, and progress or return more easily to education and training. This may help them find or change jobs or advance in their careers. Employers can benefit from validation for recruitment, personnel development and career progression. Validating the skills that people have acquired outside formal education and training, irrespective of their formal qualification levels, contributes to promoting LLL and mobility and may help address early leaving from education and training, skill mismatch and unemployment.

For more than a decade, work at EU level has aimed to support Member States in devising policies and schemes to validate people's non-formally and informally acquired knowledge and skills, to use their full potential for learning and work. In the first phase of the Copenhagen process, this was done by an expert working group, inventories of validation practices (European Commission et al., 2010; 2014b), a set of common principles for validating non-formal and informal learning (Council of the EU, 2004a) and guidelines for policy-makers and practitioners (Cedefop, 2009).

Nevertheless, by 2010 only Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway and Portugal had a highly developed validation system. Denmark, Germany, Spain, Luxembourg, Romania, Sweden and the UK had well established but partial systems, for instance within specific education and training subsystems, or a national one that was still in its initial phase. Greece, Cyprus and Hungary offered hardly any opportunities for validating non-formal and informal learning.

While the Bruges communiqué confirmed readiness to take the work on validation further more generally, the 2012 recommendation (Council of the EU, 2012b, p. 3) asks Member States to:

- (a) have validation arrangements in place by 2018, whereby they may prioritise certain areas and/or sectors in line with their needs;
- (b) make it possible for people to obtain full or partial qualifications by validation ⁽³⁴⁾.

To support implementation, it foresees different reporting activities. These include regular reviews of the European guidelines (Cedefop, 2009) and the European inventory. Its first update after the recommendation is due to be published in autumn 2014 ⁽³⁵⁾.

3.3.1. Validation strategies: comprehensive or a result of different arrangements

Taking the recommendation as a starting point, all countries have some sort of validation arrangement in place. However, there are wide differences in the ways validation is approached, the range of qualifications that are covered, and in the level of up-take. Evidence from the 2014 inventory update ⁽³⁶⁾ suggests that political commitment in creating comprehensive national validation strategies is increasing (from 5 to 13 countries since 2010). Comprehensive national validation strategies include:

- (a) comprehensive arrangements covering all education sectors and establishing good links between them;
- (b) good connections between validation in the public, private and the youth and voluntary sectors;
- (c) having measures in place that ensure the quality of validation procedures;
- (d) activities to promote take-up.

⁽³⁴⁾ Unless the qualifications are subject of Directive 2013/55/EU (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2013b).

⁽³⁵⁾ The information in this chapter draws on that gathered for the 2014 inventory update (European Commission et al., 2014b); see also footnote 37); Cedefop's analyses of NQF developments, EQF/NQF referencing reports as well as work in the EQF advisory group; information provided by ETF on the candidate countries under their remit.

⁽³⁶⁾ The inventory covers the EU-28 plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey through 36 country reports, as the UK includes three reports (England/Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales) and Belgium two (Fl, Fr). Each report is treated as a 'country' for the sake of simplicity.

In 2010, only France, Portugal and Finland were considered to be in this category, while in 2014 Spain was also included. Portugal was redesigning its system at the time of drafting the inventory. Of the 36 countries that participate in the inventory update, 11 have a strategy but do not cover all elements described above. Links between different education sectors are not well established and those to the private or third sector ⁽³⁷⁾ are lacking in most countries. Even countries with highly developed validation systems do not necessarily have an overall strategy in place.

A total of 13 countries are developing a strategy, versus five in 2010. Nine, in comparison to 17 in 2010, reported not to have a national strategy. However, these countries may have decentralised validation arrangements for specific education and training subsystems, the private and or third sectors. Social partners play an active role in setting up national validation systems and in defining standards in more than half the countries.

Box 26. Towards comprehensive legal frameworks for validation: country highlights

- (a) Recent legislation in Italy (2012, 2013) defines a national comprehensive framework for validation, bringing together all regions to agree on a common approach.
- (b) Lithuania, Romania and Switzerland have legal frameworks for specific sectors and are planning to develop them into more comprehensive ones. Greece and Croatia are also in the process of developing such approaches.
- (c) In Belgium (Fl) separate measures are in place to encourage the take-up of validation and ensure the quality of validation procedures in most sectors. Belgium (Fl) is currently working on an integrated approach for all sectors, apart from sports and sociocultural.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet.

Decentralised arrangements often mean different coexisting legal frameworks for validation. Only France, Malta and Turkey stated they had a single legal framework in place in 2014. However, in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Spain, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Finland and Sweden the different frameworks are clearly linked.

The legal framework for validation may also be connected to other initiatives, increasingly to the NQF. The Bruges communiqué advocated that NQFs should support the use of validation. In most cases, NQF work has first focused on qualifications that are awarded in formal education and training. Where these can be acquired through validation, there is an implicit link between these tools. Work on the NQFs has, however, also raised the question of how to integrate qualifications acquired outside formal education and training and how to link validation schemes (better) to NQFs. This is also evident in the candidate countries. Countries' work on validation reflects the different stages of NQF development (see also Sections 3.1, 3.2, Part 2 and Annex 2). By entrusting the EQF advisory group with follow-up of the validation recommendation, the Council set a strong signal for linking these 'tools'.

3.3.2. Outcomes of validation: qualifications, exemptions or access

This discussion also draws more attention to the question of whether people can acquire full qualifications through validation and which status they have, i.e. if they are the same as those obtained in formal education and training. In 2014, 25 countries reported that awarding full qualifications of the same or equivalent standard as those obtained through formal education is possible, at least in some sectors. In 11 countries this is not possible. However, there may be other qualifications that are not regarded as 'formal' (e.g. the qualifications awarded by the Human Resource Development Authority in Cyprus) that can be obtained through validation.

In Belgium (Fl), the Czech Republic, Ireland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey and the UK (Wales) it is possible to award qualifications through validation, but standards may differ from those of formal qualifications. In Belgium (Fr), for example, validation of CVET leads to skill certificates which

⁽³⁷⁾ I.e. youth sector, volunteering.

are not equivalent to VET degrees. The situation is similar in the Czech Republic and Slovenia, where the qualifications obtained through validation are different from those obtained through formal VET. Few qualifications can be obtained fully through validation and require taking the final exam of the corresponding formal programmes. Partial qualifications can be obtained in about two thirds of the countries, with some restricting validation to this type of award.

Overall, validation is still more common in VET and for qualifications closer to the labour market than for those awarded in general education. Higher education institutions increasingly seem to be opening up to validation practices but not for acquiring full degrees. Qualifications granted by public employment authorities (such as VET certificates in the Czech Republic, *certificados de profesionalidad* in Spain, or the Human Resource Development Authority qualifications in Cyprus) or qualifications that entitle people to perform certain occupations normally make more use of validation. Despite the increasing debate on how to connect these to the formal qualifications and how to integrate them into the NQFs, few countries have arrived at this stage. A main concern in this context is to ensure the quality of the certification processes in validation.

Two thirds of the countries state that the qualifications that can be acquired through validation are the same as those awarded in formal education and training (Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK (England, Scotland, Wales)). In a third, the quality assurance process is the same for both ways of obtaining a qualification.

Institutions awarding the qualifications are often the same as those used for formal education. Quality assurance measures may also apply to specific education and training subsystems or be decentralised to the respective institutions. In France there is no single quality assurance framework but each awarding body is responsible for developing its own quality assurance system, most of the time, through legal provisions. None of the countries covered by the 2014 update has a national quality assurance framework exclusively for validation.

Many validation arrangements focus on supporting access and progression to education and training programmes, for instance through exemptions, or admission to exams that award official qualifications. Exemptions for parts of formal programmes are possible in about two thirds of the countries. Higher education institutions, which can generally decide on their validation procedures, seem to be increasingly allowing this option. In 18 countries, people can obtain European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS) credits via validation.

A total of 20 countries provide access through validation to formal education, 16 of these to higher education. In most cases, people need to be already entitled to access higher education or need to acquire - through validation - the desired admission requirements. In around a third of the countries, validation is used to determine the training needs for obtaining a full qualification.

3.3.3. Challenges and take-up of validation

While the inventory does not explicitly examine whether people and the labour market consider qualifications obtained through validation equivalent to those acquired in formal education, it shows that some countries do not apply the same standards to both (see above) ⁽³⁸⁾. This practice does not encourage parity of esteem, one of the objectives of validation.

Employees should also get the chance to use their validated skills for further education and training and new jobs outside their current working environment. So far, however, validation systems used in enterprises to assess and record competences of employees and recruits, rarely interact with those of the public sector (Cedefop, 2014d).

As is evident from the above, countries do not have quality assurance frameworks exclusively dedicated to validation. Whether the quality assurance systems and procedures that are used can ensure reliable, valid and credible assessment is not really clear. Assessment in formal education is different from assessing non-formal or informal learning and a qualification for validation practitioners would be useful.

⁽³⁸⁾ The information in this subsection is based on Cedefop, 2014k.

Education and training institution financing schemes, based on the number of learners at any given time, may be a disincentive for validation. As granting exemptions to formal requirements shortens the time learners spend in formal education, validation would lead to reduced financial resources. Cost and red tape may also be a barrier to (further) implementation, especially for SMEs.

In France, Ireland and Norway, for instance, people have the legal right to have their non-formally and informally acquired knowledge, skills and competence validated. But if this regulation is not binding, procedures differ, or people are simply not aware of the opportunities, take-up will be limited. Information on take-up and outcomes of validation is patchy. Where data exist, they may not be available nationally. Information on the shares of qualifications acquired through validation is not publicly available. Nevertheless, among the countries where information is available or inferences can be made, most have seen an increase in use of validation. In eight, take-up has remained the same, including in France and the Netherlands, or has experienced contrasting trends in different sectors.

According to the survey, citizens are still often unaware about validation opportunities, which is partly due to the fragmentation of practices. The most disadvantaged, such as migrant women, are often those least aware of how validation can benefit their personal and professional development. They need to be convinced of its value, which requires better counselling. As low-qualified people are the main target group of validation initiatives throughout Europe, there is a need for countries in times of high unemployment to focus on whether and how people use the opportunities provided. Better data on who needs and who uses validation would also allow authorities to demonstrate to citizens, companies and institutions that validation is a cost-effective way of acquiring qualifications.

3.3.4. Validation in candidate countries

The concept of non-formal and informal learning is still fairly new in the candidate countries, as most adult learning has traditionally taken place in formal education and training. Validation is generally at an early stage of development and none of the countries yet has a national strategy.

Box 27. Candidate countries: stepping stones towards validation strategies

- (a) The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia aims to support non-formal and adult education policies and structures; legislation, procedures and practices for validation are not yet in place.
- (b) In Serbia, validation features in strategic documents and adult education legislation adopted in 2013; procedures still need developing.
- (c) Legal conditions are in place in Montenegro. Validation is described in the legislation for national vocational qualifications (NVQ). Qualifications acquired through validation can be used to access further education. The NQF website informs on certification institutions, examiners, exam dates and appeal procedures. Practice is still at an early stage.
- (d) Turkey's 2014-18 LLL strategy reflects the need to value non-formal and informal learning. A validation system is being developed. Some centres are already operational, among them sector organisations (employer-led, trade union-led or bipartite), chamber affiliated centres and some universities. There is an accreditation process for each individual qualification. A network of validation experts in higher education exists, but acquiring degrees through validation is not possible.

Source: ETF.

3.4. Guidance in line with labour market needs

'Lifelong guidance can be seen as being akin to mortar in masonry, binding together different elements of the 'Youth guarantee' programmes and allowing young people to have a coherent range of experiences, to explore their own interests, skills and attitudes, and to build up their own career portfolios' (ELGPN, 2013). If youth guarantees are to succeed, guidance is pivotal. To reduce Europe's high shares of youth who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs), anyone younger than 25 should receive a good-quality job offer, a traineeship, an apprenticeship

or another education and training option; and this within four months of leaving formal education and training or becoming jobless (Council of the EU, 2013a, p. 3).

Europe's skill mismatch challenge is partly caused by ill-informed education choices (Cedefop, 2014e). Current and emerging skills shortages require that Europe also taps the potential of its older population, residents, newly arriving people and those who are inactive or whose skills are underused. Managing several transitions between formal and non-formal learning, jobs, voluntary work, spells of unemployment and time-out periods is becoming the norm.

People may want to find a placement for an apprenticeship, internship or traineeship, choose online education and training offers, make use of mobility opportunities, or may be interested in becoming entrepreneurs: all this requires reinforced guidance and counselling services that are coordinated, coherent and consistent. More emphasis is needed on career management skills to help people shape their learning and career paths.

Even in the first phase of the Copenhagen process, guidance and counselling was like a golden thread running through the policies to address different priorities. Confirming this finding, the analysis of the 2012-14 Bruges deliverables and countries' policy responses point to the specific role of information, guidance and advice/counselling in developing flexible learning and career pathways ⁽³⁹⁾.

The Bruges communiqué aims to 'provide integrated (education, training and employment) guidance services which are closely related with labour market needs' (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2010, p. 12). It builds on the preceding Council resolution (Council of the EU, 2008) which called on Member States to ensure cooperation and coordination among stakeholders, easy access to guidance, and better quality, and promote career management

skills. An ELGPN set up in 2007 ⁽⁴⁰⁾ assists countries in these efforts and supports cooperation at EU level. It collaborates with the Euroguidance network, established in the 1990s to inform on mobility opportunities, which targets guidance practitioners and policy-makers, promotes cooperation among the different stakeholders and provides information on guidance systems and practices in Europe.

3.4.1. Towards strategic and coordinated approaches

People mainly use career guidance and counselling while they are in education and training (61%), but less so when they are looking for a job (36%) and/or additional education and training opportunities (23%), as a recent Eurobarometer survey confirms (European Commission, 2014a) ⁽⁴¹⁾. Education and training institutions, where teachers often act as counsellors and the employment sector - in most cases employment services - tend to be the main providers.

However, it is not just two guidance worlds that people are dealing with. Depending on the country, there may be a wide range of national, regional and/or local actors. These may include social partner organisations (for instance in Germany and Austria), enterprises, and services that cater for different target groups such as youth, employees, people with migrant background or older workers. An increasing range of web-based services is also available. However, increased information and guidance services do not necessarily mean that people are well informed. If not well coordinated, provision risks being fragmented and without adequate support; people may feel overwhelmed and find it difficult to identify a solution that fits their needs.

In line with the Council resolutions (Council of the EU, 2004b; 2008), nearly all countries have

⁽³⁹⁾ This section includes information available through ReferNet and the European lifelong guidance policy network (ELGPN). ETF provided the information on the candidate countries under their remit. The structure of this section reflects the main themes included in the Council resolution.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ At the time of writing, the ELGPN comprised 31 countries, i.e. EU-28 plus Iceland, Norway and Turkey. Kosovo (*) and Serbia are associated countries, Switzerland has observer status.

(*) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

⁽⁴¹⁾ There were six possible responses to the question 'when have you used career guidance service'. The shares exceed 100%, as multiple replies were possible.

set up national lifelong guidance forums or similar platforms to help coordinate policies and the activities of different providers. These include, for example, a strategic forum for career development in Wales and a provider independent guidance network in Austria. The latter aims to inform adults about learning/CVET opportunities and issues related to access requirements, qualifications, validation within the different regions and across the country. Some regions in France are piloting a regional network scheme for a public lifelong guidance service based on common objectives. A more comprehensive national approach has been developed in Portugal to support guidance activities in schools, VET centres, employment services and companies. Despite this rise in stakeholder cooperation, only a few countries, such as France, the Netherlands and Finland, seem to be moving towards a holistic approach to guidance and counselling.

A trend towards reinforced cooperation between education and training and employment services has become evident in the candidate countries, where guidance has moved up on the policy agenda again since the previous peak before 2010. This has led to new strategies (Montenegro, Serbia) and action plans and/or new centres and services (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro) complementing or replacing the initiatives launched at that time.

To help policy-makers and other actors review lifelong guidance provision, the ELGPN has developed a European glossary to harmonise guidance concepts and a resource kit⁽⁴²⁾. This offers policy advice and examples of practice in improving policy coordination. Since 2012, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Spain, France, Croatia, Austria and the UK (England), for instance, have made this kit available nationally and/or started to use it. The ELGPN's work on guidelines for lifelong guidance policies and systems development is in progress.

3.4.2. Towards easy access to guidance

Guidance services should be available for all citizens and easily accessible during and beyond their education and training and career paths. By supporting validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL), guidance helps people shape individualised and flexible learning paths where possible (see also Section 3.3). The recommendation on validation (Council of the EU, 2012b) also proposes skills audits for unemployed or people who risk becoming jobless. Skills audits and personalised guidance are among the key components to make the youth guarantee work.

As the analysis of national measures to address STDs 2, 16 and 17 shows (see Chapters 2 and 5), they have focused on offering personalised and multidisciplinary services to young people when they move into VET or the labour market or help them stay in or reintegrate. The number of countries offering some sort of mentoring is increasing. Denmark and some German programmes, for instance, also include skills assessment. The *Maison d'orientation* in Luxembourg and youth centres in Denmark are based on the one-stop-shop approach.

Many countries have a wide range of web-based portals and services for different target groups, such as youth or adults, which often mirror the variety of providers. Those set up since 2010 comprise self-help tools, in particular self-assessment, e-guidance and social media (as in Bulgaria, Denmark, Ireland, Latvia, Norway, Romania). In Germany, the Netherlands and Portugal, for instance, the portal includes an online portfolio. The Portuguese portfolio can be shared with firms or schools. In some cases, these services have been created with ESF support. As ICT tools may not be suitable for all, or useful at all times, services that combine different information and communication channels such as those in Denmark and the UK (England) may be more helpful.

Guidance for specific groups (the unemployed, low-qualified, people with special needs, migrants and ethnic minorities, young people, women) exists only in around a third of the countries. Although employment services increasingly address older workers, specific activities for this target group remain limited, are

⁽⁴²⁾ The kit also comprises access to guidance and counselling including validation of non-formal or informal learning, quality assurance and development of career management skills (see ELGPN, 2012).

often self-help tools or part of active labour market measures (Cedefop, 2015). Guidance services have a key role to play in helping foreigners integrate in their host countries through clear information about local labour market demand, opportunities to get qualifications recognised and skills validated and about suitable education and training (Cedefop, 2014j). Germany, Austria, Sweden, the UK and Luxembourg are examples of countries which have reported on dedicated counselling for people with migrant background. In Denmark, France, Iceland, Latvia and Sweden, access to information and guidance is a legal right. VET institutions are often obliged to provide education and career guidance, in some countries not only to young people but also to adults. Nevertheless, the use of guidance services varies widely across Europe, with take up being highest in northern Europe.

The 2014 Eurobarometer survey suggests that lack of access is the main reason why people do not use guidance. In particular, people in Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Slovakia consider that career guidance services are not easily accessible. Getting information on internships, traineeships or apprenticeships, turned out to be difficult for around a third of the people who needed it (see also Section 2.4).

While the Eurobarometer data are based on small samples, can only give a snapshot, and may not take account of recent reforms, they may point to issues that need attention. One such issue is that people who are likely to need guidance and counselling most, i.e. the lower qualified, older generations and those who think they are on a lower step of the social ladders, found it most difficult to get what they were looking for.

3.4.3. Empowering people through career management skills

Choosing suitable learning and career paths is not easy. It requires gathering and analysing information about the skills that are/will be in demand on the labour market, education and training opportunities, occupations, benefits and job realities. But this is not enough. Understanding one's own interests, talents and learning needs is crucial. Young people need opportunities to acquire these so-called career

management skills⁽⁴³⁾ and adults need to be able to develop them further.

Career management skills tend to be part of the guidance support in active labour market and youth guarantee measures. Alternative or bridge programmes for the young who have not found a training place embrace them as one of their key features (as in the Czech Republic, Germany, Luxembourg, Austria, Romania and the UK). Increasingly, they are also included in mainstream education and training, more specifically in the years before learners need to choose between general education and VET and then in VET. This is also evident from the analysis of STD4, key competences in VET in 2012 (see Section 2.3).

In VET provision, career management skills are usually an integral part of curricula (Cyprus, Denmark, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the UK) and either subject-based (as in Austria, France, Malta, Turkey), cross-curricular (the Czech Republic, Estonia), or both (Finland, Sweden). In Finland's VET, they support learning to learn skills and translate into credit points. In some cases, (such as Bulgaria, Estonia and Lithuania) career management and entrepreneurship skills are combined in one subject area, as career planning may include becoming an entrepreneur and this, in turn, includes career planning. Both require autonomy and sense of initiative.

Sweden has integrated career management skills in adult education/training, within guidance to support accreditation of prior learning. In Portuguese companies that undergo restructuring, guidance staff help workers improve career management skills based on competence-assessment. Increasingly, they are also included in apprenticeship support services (as in Belgium and Germany).

⁽⁴³⁾ According to the ELGPN toolkit (ELGPN, 2012), career management skills refer to a range of competences which provide structured ways for individuals and groups to gather, analyse, synthesise and organise self, educational and occupational information, as well as the skills to make and implement decisions and transitions.

Box 28. Towards better guidance: country highlights

- (a) Danish youth guidance centres reach out to dropouts and have to assess their skills to identify suitable education and training. A youth data base system (on education/employment status) helps devise targeted measures. Similar to the model used for account managers in banks, counsellors monitor and manage a group of learners, assessing risk and intervening when needed.
- (b) In Greece, web services have been developed which include: a forum for guidance staff; a new adult career development portal and a database on learning and training opportunities, as well as an interactive guidance portal for youth.
- (c) Latvia is planning to adopt a lifelong guidance system in 2014, following postponement due to the economic crisis. VET schools that aim to obtain the status of competence centre must prove career education.
- (d) Career guidance in VET is available in Lithuania. VET institutions have employed career coordinators and are to offer adult guidance services. A quality monitoring system for guidance in (VET) schools has been adopted. Standards and methods for the guidance of unemployed adults and the occupational profile for guidance staff have been approved. A portal accessible to people with special needs has been developed. A national framework for career management skills exists.
- (e) Guidance for young learners and adults is included in sectoral plans agreed between the Dutch government and social partners and cofinanced by the state. The amended VET law puts emphasis on guidance and foresees a careers education framework for (VET) schools. An assessment tool for quality in careers education, partly inspired by the ELGPN framework (balanced score card type of tool), is being piloted.
- (f) The VET strategy (2013-20) of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia addresses guidance in a LLL perspective and foresees career guidance at all levels of education. Many VET schools have set up centres which are gradually developing into a network. The Education Ministry regulates the certification of career advisors, whose training is being developed. Private employment agencies help young people prepare for recruitment interviews.
- (g) In Montenegro, career orientation is to become part of school curricula. Centres for career information and counselling set up by employment services are also open to learners. Additional training for school staff and advisors is foreseen.
- (h) A reference document aims to improve guidance provision in Portugal. Centres for qualification and vocational education have been set up jointly by the different ministries. They build on the previous new opportunities centres and are to bridge the worlds of education, training and employment. Their tasks include guidance, validation and certification of skills acquired in informal and non-formal learning. A guide for using LLL standards is available to the centres. An e-guidance portal supports their work. Most qualifications include career management skills in their training standards/modules.
- (i) In Slovakia, a national forum for guidance policy is in the planning stage. The development of a CVET qualifications system is to be supported by guidance and counselling. Work on further education and counselling for adults (ESF project) aims to help improve access to and quality of guidance to increase participation in CVET/LLL. Counselling centres have been set up.
- (j) Schools and colleges in the UK (England) have to give their learners access to independent and impartial career information, advice and guidance. ICT is seen as an effective means to provide equal access to guidance. A national career service for youth and adults is in place (phone, online and face-to-face). The e-guidance portal offers online career management skills training. Measures tend to focus on easing transition of young people into further education/apprenticeship or into work. A new enterprise loan scheme for training and mentoring of young people has been piloted. The quality framework for guidance was revised, leading to accreditation against standards. There are initiatives to strengthen the UK careers profession (national register of career practitioners).

Source: ELGPN, 2013, ReferNet and ETF.

3.4.4. Increasing guidance quality

Even before 2010, ELGPN initiated discussions on evidence-based guidance policy and system development to make guidance more effective and efficient. By 2010 ⁽⁴⁴⁾ work on quality

assurance in guidance comprised a variety of initiatives: quantitative approaches; quality

⁽⁴⁴⁾ This information was based on Cedefop's guidance policy review (Cedefop, 2011a).

assurance frameworks, self-evaluation; external evaluation; support to practitioners; some research and longitudinal analyses on quality and impact of guidance services. In the period 2011-12, countries took these approaches forward.

Later developments include new guidelines for guidance and counselling which emphasise career management skills in Sweden and a new quality development framework and standards in Germany. A blueprint career management skills framework that will eventually underlie all careers education and guidance under its responsibility is in use at the Portuguese Ministry of Education. Luxembourg has also worked to improve its career management skills framework. The Czech government has reconsidered reorganising the employment services of 2010-12 by outsourcing guidance and counselling to become more cost-effective. Resources of the Irish employment service have been increased by redeploying staff from other government departments.

As demand for high-quality services is increasing, and counsellors' roles are becoming more complex, their competences are receiving more attention. Even before 2010, several countries focused on qualifications, standards for and certification of guidance staff working in employment services, and teachers acting as counsellors. Work since 2010 in Finland, Hungary, Norway, Romania, the UK and the candidate countries, confirms this trend. Hungary has developed a national competence matrix for guidance practitioners. The Netherlands, Norway and Sweden have been working on introducing masters for guidance counsellors in the past few years. In Lithuania, Malta and Slovenia, for instance, ESF initiatives have supported training for guidance staff and/or career guidance teachers. This has recently also been the case in Slovakia.

3.5. ECVET

Education and training needs to encourage and support lifelong and life wide learning as rapid changes challenge the traditional 'job for life model'. People should also get the chance to benefit from education or training offers, work-experience and job opportunities abroad. This requires flexible, individualised learning paths

where people can 'take learning along'.

The European Commission, countries and the European social partners agreed in the Copenhagen declaration (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2002) to work on a system that would make it possible to transfer learning in VET. Following cooperation at expert level, Member States were recommended in 2009 to promote an ECVET and to apply it gradually to VET qualifications at all EQF levels from 2012 onwards (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009a) ⁽⁴⁵⁾. In the Bruges communiqué, countries agreed to follow the recommendation and test ECVET for mobility.

3.5.1. Objectives of ECVET

ECVET aims to:

- (a) help transfer and recognise learning that has taken place during a stay abroad (see also Section 3.6);
- (b) support LLL by allowing people to transfer and accumulate knowledge and skills from different contexts within their country to build up recognised qualifications, update or upgrade them.

This section will focus on the second objective, credit transfer within a country.

One of the prerequisites is that qualifications are described in terms of learning outcomes. The recommendation distinguishes between the components of VET qualifications or units of learning outcomes and the components of a formal programme, commonly known as modules. However, the two terms are often used interchangeably and units may translate into 'credits'. Combined, they help acquire a full or partial qualification. They also help understand which learning outcomes different VET qualifications have in common.

Assessing and validating a person's non-formal or informal learning against single units of

⁽⁴⁵⁾ This section is based on Cedefop's 2013 ECVET monitoring report (Cedefop, 2014i) and the respective briefing note (Cedefop, 2013b). The monitoring exercise covered 38 countries/regions (EU-28 plus Iceland, the former Republic of Macedonia, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia (since 2002-03), Switzerland, Turkey. Belgium is counted as three countries (Dg, Fl, Fr), but the UK only as one contrary to other chapters. In this case, 2009 formed the baseline, the data were collected in the period March-September 2013). ETF provided additional information on the candidate countries under their remit.

formal learning outcomes, may improve the chance to access a formal education and training programme, lead to exemption from some of its parts, or to partial certification. Non-formal and informal learning may also be validated as credits. However, the role of ECVET in supporting VNFIL needs to be made more explicit. (For more information on validation see Section 3.3).

3.5.2. ECVET readiness

Cedefop's 2013 monitoring (Cedefop, 2014i, p. 20) confirmed that units or modules are widespread in CVET but they are also used in IVET. By 2009, 19 countries/regions already had modules or units in place in IVET: Belgium (Dg), Croatia, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland (VET qualifications under the common awards system, excluding apprenticeship), Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK.

The other 19 do not make use of units and/or modules in IVET. Of these, in 2013 six were either gradually introducing units or modules or piloting them: Belgium (Fr), Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and Montenegro were piloting or starting to introduce units or modules in 2013.

In most of the countries that have units or modules, IVET is mainly school-based, while several without modules or units have strong apprenticeship strands (Austria⁽⁴⁶⁾, Denmark, Germany⁽⁴⁷⁾, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland)⁽⁴⁸⁾.

As Box 29 shows, in countries with units/modules, VET tends to be flexible and transfer is generally possible. However, this does not necessarily guarantee that qualifications can be acquired by accumulating them. In most countries, awarding a qualification is based on a final exam. Iceland and Slovenia, for instance,

which have units/modules and credit transfer systems, do not support accumulation. In countries without units or modules, transfer opportunities within their education and training system vary.

Box 29. Taking learning outcomes along and building qualifications at national level: country highlights

In countries with modules or units:

- (a) taking learning along is possible through a credit transfer system in Finland, Iceland, Ireland (excluding apprenticeship), Luxembourg, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK;
- (b) accumulating units/modules that are assessed and certified separately is possible in Ireland, Spain, Luxembourg, Finland, Sweden, the UK, though Spain and Luxembourg do not use credits;
- (c) award on final assessment (final exam) takes place in Belgium (Dg), Estonia, France, Hungary, Iceland, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia; Iceland, Romania and Slovenia have a credit transfer system.

In countries without modules or units:

- (a) transfer is possible, for example in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Norway;
- (b) transfer is difficult or not possible, for instance in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Switzerland.

Source: Cedefop, 2014i.

Transfer is technically possible in most of the countries. Among the major obstacles to learning transfer, lack of procedures and no use of learning outcomes are cited by only one fifth of the respondents to the 2013 ECVET monitoring survey. For the majority, the main barriers are the heterogeneous nature of VET and the apprenticeship structure and the holistic competence it leads to. Assessment quality and low demand from learners are also frequently cited. In countries that have strong apprenticeship strands, employers seem to show little interest in unitised qualifications.

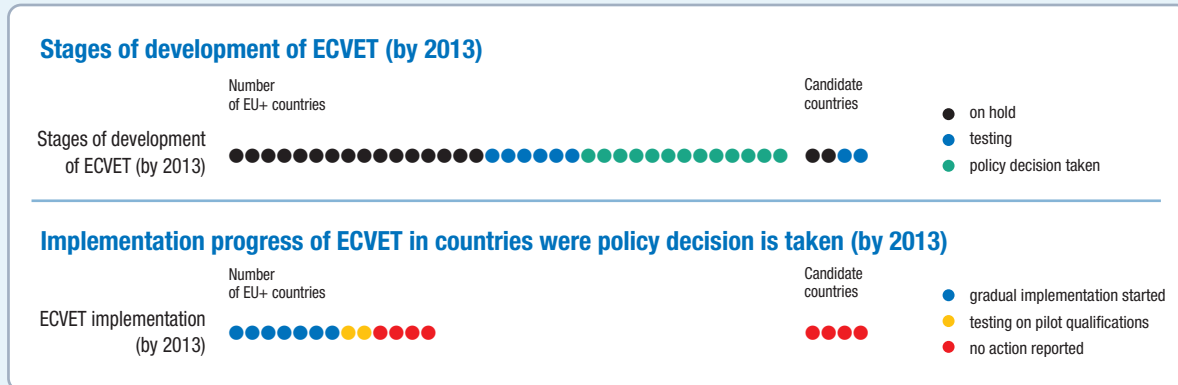
Further, funding arrangements for providers based on learner completion of modules and/or units are perceived as inhibitive. Providers that may be reluctant to support flexible pathways as

⁽⁴⁶⁾ In Austria, school-based VET and apprenticeship are both strong (in year 10 about half the VET learners are in mainly school-based programmes and the other half in apprenticeships); in apprenticeship, around 4% of the programmes have been modularised, but they do not follow the ECVET philosophy.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ DECVET (development of a credit system for VET in Germany) is a pilot initiative to test the principles for credit transfer for the purposes of permeability between the different VET subsystems in Germany (2007-10).

⁽⁴⁸⁾ In Ireland, which has a credit system with units and modules, the apprenticeship system is not modularised.

Figure 13. **State of play and progress towards STD11: ECVET implementation in line with the recommendation**



Source: Based on Cedefop, 2014i.

an exemption from a unit or module will reduce the funding they receive (Cedefop, forthcoming b).

National views on the benefits of ECVET for increasing progression opportunities within their own education and training systems vary. Countries that already have credit transfer systems for VET tend not to attach particular value to ECVET for ‘internal purposes’; those with more holistic structures (no units, modules) see the benefits in applying ECVET. Future testing may bring more countries from different starting points to acknowledge ECVET’s benefits.

Belgium (Fr) and Finland illustrate this possibility. Belgium (Fr) has decided to develop a credit system for geographic mobility and LLL (based on a cooperation agreement between the three governments). Some qualifications have been divided into units as a direct result of the ECVET recommendation and have credit points attached. The system is tested through European and national projects. Finland, which already had a credit system in place, used to see international mobility as the main added value of its ECVET approach. Years of testing have shown the benefits for its competence-based approach and recognition of prior learning for mobility within the system.

Developing ECVET and NQF are linked, as the focus on learning outcomes is at the core of both. Most countries have prioritised establishing NQFs and validation procedures, and have not yet committed themselves to putting ECVET in place. Like Belgium (Fr) and Bulgaria, several other countries considered having an NQF in

place as a prerequisite for ECVET. However, most countries with a formal commitment to develop ECVET within their national education and training systems say they will do it in parallel to NQF.

Although countries are becoming more ECVET-ready, this does not necessarily translate into rapid progress towards implementation. ECVET is mainly seen as a toolbox and support by national authorities is still mixed. Nearly half the respondents to the 2013 survey see ECVET’s value mostly in its use for implementing the learning outcomes approach. While ECVET receives mixed support in the context of national VET reforms, its role in cross-country mobility is widely acknowledged, despite concerns that it may entail red tape and increased workload for education and training providers (see Section 3.6.2).

3.5.3. From commitment to testing: building capacity

According to Cedefop’s monitoring report (Cedefop, 2014i), ECVET is on hold in 17 countries, eight are testing it and 13 have already formalised a policy commitment to implement it as part of national VET reforms.

Necessity and value of a European point system for VET are still debated. Credit points tend to be valued in systems that already had a credit transfer system for VET before the ECVET recommendation, as well as in most of those that are developing one. Others, where transfer of learning outcomes and recognition has worked so

far without credit points, are less convinced.

National systems tend to allocate credit points based on a combination of learning inputs and outcomes (as in Denmark, Slovenia, Finland and the UK) and transnational mobility in VET is often too short to be assigned points according to the procedure indicated in the recommendation. Another challenge is the link to ECTS. In many countries, VET qualifications at tertiary level are included in the qualifications framework-EHEA and use ECTS or credit systems that are compatible. However, apart from the UK (Scotland, Wales), national VET credit systems are usually not linked to ECTS.

Box 30. Moving on with ECVET

Most of those that keep ECVET on hold either have national credit transfer systems in place – prior to ECVET – or their IVET system has a strong apprenticeship strand. The main reason seems to be the need to reorganise the qualification system and the concern that the changes may result in heavier administrative burdens on systems that seem to work well.

By 2013, gradual implementation had started in six countries (Belgium (Fr), Estonia, Hungary, Malta, Poland and Romania) while Finland was planning to do so in 2014. Latvia and Lithuania were still in the piloting phase. Despite a formal policy commitment, no activity was reported for Greece, Croatia, Italy and Slovakia. Six countries (Bulgaria, France, Germany, Montenegro, Portugal and Turkey) were running tests on formal VET qualifications. The Czech Republic and Norway were testing ECVET in the context of non-formal and informal learning, while Austria and Sweden were considering such pilots.

In Romania, it was the recommendation that initiated the work on a credit system. The other countries had developed their credit systems before or independently of the Council recommendation. While Finland has decided to align its credit system to ECVET, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK consider that their systems work well and are in line with the ECVET philosophy.

Source: Cedefop, 2014i.

Real commitment to ECVET requires cooperation between all partners involved in defining qualifications, standards, programmes,

delivering education and training, and assessing and certifying learning outcomes. In most cases, education ministries are leading the work on ECVET. As was already evident in the 2012 interim Bruges review (Cedefop, 2012a), several countries had set up steering or working groups with other relevant ministries, qualification authorities, other institutions with VET responsibilities and social partners.

Countries have also taken the initiative to set up national contact points (from 15 in 2011 to 26 in 2012 to 28 in 2014). In many cases, the contact points are located within the authorities responsible for NQFs or EQAVET, which can support the efforts to create synergy between the tools at least at institutional level (see also Section 2.2 and Annex 2).

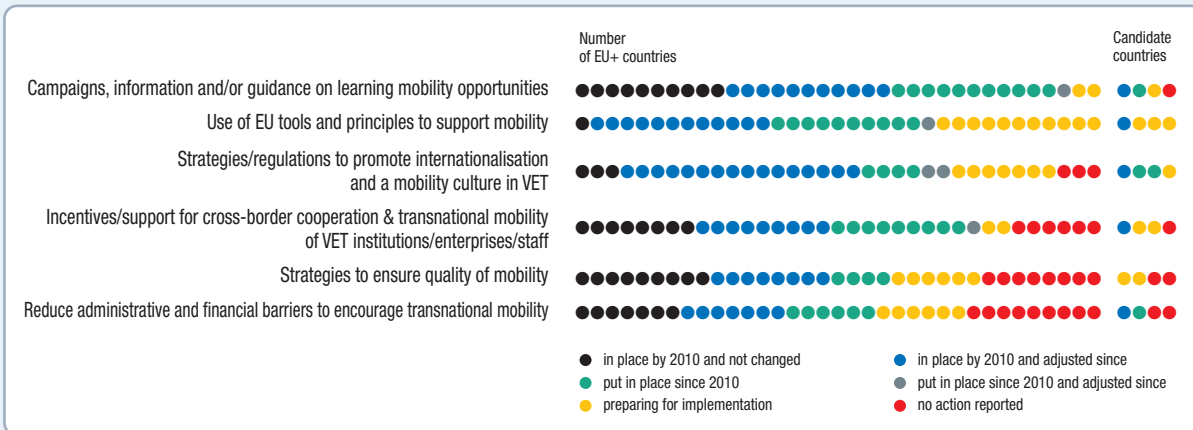
3.6. Internationalisation and mobility

Learning or work placements abroad may later encourage people to take jobs or further education and training opportunities in other countries. Stays abroad signal their willingness to adapt to different environments and ways of working; this may improve their chances on the job market. Experience and intercultural competences gathered abroad may help them innovate, succeed in multinational environments, and engage in international cooperation.

The Bruges communiqué aims to enable more VET learners to benefit from international cooperation and spend time abroad.

This deliverable is multidimensional, covering quantitative, administrative and content issues. Mobility in VET also puts its quality to the test, an issue that the question of recognition and credit transfer illustrates (see Sections 3.5.2 and 3.6.2). Through their work on the EU tools and the corresponding Bruges deliverables, countries are making learning outcomes more visible and easier to compare, paving the way for easier recognition of the skills and qualifications people obtain in different countries. They also agreed to address (other) obstacles to mobility in VET, including lack of foreign language skills, depending on countries, sectors and programmes (see Section 2.3.2), and the need to assist host and sending organisations.

Figure 14. State of play and progress towards STD12: internalisation and mobility in VET



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

The overall aim of the different subdeliverables is to promote internationalisation strategies for IVET and CVET ⁽⁴⁹⁾.

Europe’s flagship initiative Youth on the move (European Commission, 2010b), the Council recommendation on learning mobility (Council of the EU, 2011a) and the European benchmarks set the policy framework for mobility in all education and training sectors. For VET, at least 6% of Europe’s 18 to 34 year-olds with an initial qualification should have spent a minimum two weeks of VET-related study or work experience abroad or less, if documented by Europass (Council of the EU, 2011b) (see Section 2.6).

The recommendation reiterated the need to support learning mobility for apprentices. Subsequently, Erasmus+ (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2013a) has set the framework for giving around 650 000 VET learners the chance to spend some time abroad. The EU’s measures to tackle youth unemployment, which is particularly high in Greece, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and Slovakia, also include initiatives that offer young people apprenticeships abroad. By promoting bilateral cooperation among countries

to reinforce and expand work-based learning within the framework of the European alliance for apprenticeships (Council of the EU, 2013b), which started in 2013, a further step has been made at EU level towards internationalising VET.

3.6.1. Strategic approaches to internationalising VET

Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway already had internationalisation strategies for VET in place by 2010 (Cedefop, 2010). Internationalisation was also part of VET development plans in Germany, Finland and Sweden and long-standing cooperation initiatives in France and Austria, for instance. Since then, more countries have integrated international dimensions in their VET development plans, including Belgium (Fr, Dg), Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Spain. In Spain and Italy internationalisation is promoted as part of regional VET development while in Malta and the UK this happens at provider level.

Where national strategies and policies exist, mobility initiatives are at their core with a focus on IVET and on outgoing mobility. Only Greece, Croatia, Lithuania and Slovenia refer to mobility in CVET or for adults. Few countries, such as Germany, Lithuania and Finland, have specific national targets to increase mobility. While strategies to promote internationalisation and a mobility culture seem to have developed dynamically, Cedefop’s 2013 ECVET monitoring (Cedefop, 2014i) provided a less optimistic

⁽⁴⁹⁾ Some of the aspects included in the Council recommendation on mobility (Council of the EU, 2011a), which covers the whole education and training spectrum for young people, form part of other STDs, for instance STD4-key competences, STD8-EQF/NQF, STD11-ECVET. The information in this section only relates to mobility policies and measures devised at national level; regional, local, institutional or virtual mobility is outside the scope of this report.

Box 31. Off to new horizons with VET: country highlights

- (a) Promoting cross-border competences and qualifications is part of VET policies and strategies in Belgium (Dg) (Euregio MaasRhein and region SaarLorLux). There are agreements with Germany on dual certification in apprenticeship and master craftsmen training.
- (b) The Danish Education Ministry promotes work placements abroad through campaigns and competitions. Trade committees and VET colleges are required to set up targets for learners' international competences. ECVET tools help to understand and recognise competences when organising VET study or work placements abroad. The long-standing 'work placement abroad' scheme (since 1992 which, since 2008, also operates beyond the EU and the EEA) includes recognition of learning outcomes as part of the qualification the people acquire.
- (c) Within the review of its apprenticeship system, the Irish training and employment authority has considered placing apprentices abroad in cooperation with governments of other Member States. In the context of setting up apprenticeships, Spain has concluded bilateral agreements with Germany, Portugal and the UK for work placements abroad.
- (d) To increase competitiveness, foreign companies (subsidiaries) in Slovakia cooperate with VET schools and support placements abroad, in particular with their 'mother' countries. Increasing mobility in VET is also part of the memorandum of understanding that Slovakia signed with Germany at the end of 2012 and which is expected to receive support through the European alliance for apprenticeships.
- (e) The German Ministry of Labour launched a programme for the period 2013-16 that offers training places to 18 to 35 year-olds from other EU Member States. The programme includes tuition in German, learning support, financial aid and assistance with social issues. An office for international cooperation in VET was set up in 2013 to support the government through a platform for information exchange. The Portuguese employment service acts as partner in mobility projects. It promotes information sessions and interviews by counsellors with young people (aged 18 to 35) who want to take up VET offered in Germany which will last up to three years and may cover various occupations.

Source: ReferNet.

picture. It concluded that more than two thirds of the countries surveyed did not consider geographic mobility a priority, correlating this to lacking mobility culture and limited financial resources (see also Section 3.6.3).

Bilateral and multilateral agreements such as Nordplus for the Scandinavian and Baltic countries have existed for a long time. There are also partnerships between regions and/or municipalities. Schemes may extend beyond Europe to include Canada, China, India or the US. Institutional twinning and joint education projects and programmes also contribute to internationalising VET.

Evidence available for Cedefop's 2012 review indicated that learners in VET schools were still the main beneficiaries. Nationally reinforced work on work-based learning may draw more attention to mobility in apprenticeships. In decentralised education and training systems, however, information and data on these initiatives are difficult to obtain. Analyses or surveys, like those on internationalisation in Finnish adult education or on mobility in Germany, are scarce. The latter revealed that around 7% of companies send apprentices abroad, more than two thirds from SMEs.

Apart from Turkey, VET transnational mobility in the candidate countries is still lacking a relevant legal and administrative basis and appropriate financial resources. Where mobility initiatives exist, they are mainly based on bilateral agreements. Progressive participation of candidate countries in Erasmus+ is seen as the most relevant lever for developing transnational mobility in VET.

3.6.2. Transferring and valuing learning outcomes

Lack of recognition for qualifications is commonly quoted as one of the main obstacles to mobility, though this is not confirmed by Cedefop's 2013 ECVET survey (Cedefop, 2014i) nor by a recent Eurobarometer. Only around a quarter of the respondents think that their qualifications would not be recognised abroad. Danish and Swedish respondents seem most optimistic. Among the people with medium-level VET qualifications, more than 60% share this view. Around two thirds of those who have already studied or worked abroad said such experiences would be

recognised in their own countries. Traineeships and internships were considered less likely to be recognised (just over half of the respondents) (European Commission, 2014a) (see also Section 3.5).

Legislative or regulatory frameworks in several countries allow recognition of mobility experiences (as in Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria, Portugal, Romania and the UK). In some cases this mainly relates to work-placements. There seems to be a trend towards making transfer of learning experience acquired abroad possible, in particular where it is part of a VET programme (such as in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden) or based on bilateral agreements (Spain). This also applies to work placements that are a prerequisite for completing a programme or accessing higher level training (as in Bulgaria, Lithuania, Malta). Whether transfer is possible or not, depends on the VET system structure, the duration of the stay, trust in the quality of the learning and quality assurance regulations in the home country. Learning experience from abroad tends to be included in the overall assessment of the respective units, modules or programmes (Cedefop, 2014i, see also Section 3.5.2).

Since the 2012 review, guidelines and training have become available to VET teachers and trainers as well as companies that intend to use or are testing ECVET (e.g. Belgium (Fr), the Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, France, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Finland). This support is provided by ECVET experts (including in Greece, Croatia, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Sweden). They help develop memoranda of understanding for mobility partnerships and learning agreements. The memoranda outline the responsibilities of the partner institutions, the cooperation principles and the conditions for validating and recognising credits. The agreements, which are based on EQAVET quality circles, define what participants will learn within specific mobility activities and how the (units of) learning outcomes can be transferred and recognised at home.

Together with their partners abroad, VET providers develop units of learning outcomes and define assessment criteria for cross-country mobility. This helps overcome quality concerns and ensure that the home institution takes

account of the learning abroad to avoid repeating what has already been learned and to include it in the assessment of the units/module or programme. Currently, ECVET does not fulfil its credit transfer and accumulation function. Its potential to transfer learning transnationally risks remaining limited in the near future. Obstacles include national regulations that may not allow assessing and certifying units and/or modules and the duration of VET mobility, which tends to be shorter than a national unit/module.

3.6.3. Financing cross-border mobility

The EU LLL programme, in particular Leonardo da Vinci, has been the main source of funding for most VET-related mobility initiatives. The 2012 Bruges review found that higher shares of the Leonardo da Vinci funding were earmarked to encourage mobility among apprentices (e.g. in Norway, Romania). Stays abroad have also been supported by the EU structural funds (as in Belgium (Dg), the Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, the UK (Northern Ireland and Wales)) and Youth in action (Belgium, Italy, Malta, Slovakia and the UK). In the Nordic and Baltic countries financial aid for VET-related stays abroad is also available through the Nordplus programme (e.g. Iceland, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden). Host country grants, support through bilateral agreements and various funds are also used.

Several countries have national, regional, local or sectoral funds. VET institutions also (co)finance mobility activities, for instance in Finland and Lithuania. Nevertheless, several sources throughout the years suggest that limited finances are among the main mobility obstacles in VET, for instance the Eurobarometer in 2011 (European Commission, 2011b) and Cedefop evidence collected in 2013 (Cedefop, 2014i). In the Netherlands, budgetary constraints may make private funding even more important in the future.

3.6.4. Encouraging and supporting mobility initiatives

Activities to promote mobility are usually also organised within the framework of EU programmes and by the respective national agencies. Conventional ways of encouraging VET institutions, companies and learners to

engage in cross-country mobility include targeted events, information within education and training fairs, information about available support or successful initiatives through different channels, national and EU web platforms and social media. Some countries also have incentives and support measures suited to their particular situations and needs. To ensure the quality of mobility, most countries rely on the criteria that apply within Leonardo da Vinci and on learning agreements (see Section 3.6.2). Quality strategies that also cover mobility taking place outside the LLL programme seem to be lacking.

Europass mobility, which helps record work placements or stays in (VET) institutions abroad, is issued by most countries. Some, like Bulgaria and Austria, make it mandatory. In decentralised systems, like in the UK, its use is at the discretion of the VET institutions. So far, it is the most frequently cited EU tool used for mobility. Countries also referred to using the ECVET tools (see above) and the Erasmus+ quality charter. Some explicitly mentioned the reference to EQF levels in qualifications databases and/or on certificates and Europass documents (see Section 3.2.2) while others pointed more generally to NQFs as a mobility tool.

Cedefop evidence suggests that the main obstacle to mobility in VET is the diversity of VET systems (Cedefop, 2014i). The strategy in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus and the Netherlands to promote mobility through the use of the European tools could help reduce this challenge and understand how learners can benefit from the similarities and differences.

Some countries address the issue of bureaucracy and limited human resources by lightening administration procedures and improving support structures for institutions and enterprises. Others provide incentives for VET institutions, staff, specific target groups and enterprises. There is, however, no clear trend across countries and most of the measures were launched or in place by 2012.

Box 32. Making more mobility possible: country highlights

- (a) In Germany, mobility advisors at economic chambers (with ESF assistance) support work placements for apprentices in SMEs abroad. VET schools have taken over administrative issues to make procedures easier for companies. Spanish chambers of commerce support host organisations and/or companies.
- (b) Accreditation of workplaces abroad has been legally required in the Netherlands since 2012. Centres of expertise, which are sectorally organised institutions, have been assigned the task to run the process and assess the quality of the work placement abroad.
- (c) Austrian companies have been able to get wage subsidies for apprentices abroad through national funds since 2011. Financial incentives are also available to enterprises in France. French teachers receive financial support to participate in year-long mobility programmes while IVET teachers and trainers in Cyprus can get paid leave. Incentives for sending organisations are also in place there. Incentives supporting VET providers, companies and local/regional authorities to participate in cross-border mobility are in place in Romania.
- (d) Belgium (Fr), Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia are among the countries that have given or are giving specific support or priority to disadvantaged groups.
- (e) As poor language skills frequently hamper mobility, Romania has devised incentives to promote language learning through cross-border cooperation for teachers and learners. A workplace training regulation in the Basque vocational training plan 2011-13 includes a grant to improve language skills. The Netherlands expect the centralised English exams introduced in 2013 to help improve VET learners' mobility.

Source: ReferNet.

Modern VET: creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship

This chapter assesses the state of play in 2010 and reviews progress that countries have made during 2010-14 in creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET. It considers national policy actions and initiatives taken until early 2014 that address STDs 13 to 15. The main findings are:

- (a) in most countries, modernising VET by stimulating creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship has been less prominent in shaping national policies than the other Bruges strategic objectives, as the policy priority profiles in the second part of this report show;
- (b) partnerships for creativity and innovation are developing, but the process is slow;
- (c) setting up networks and partnerships between providers and business to ensure effective, innovative and quality-assured technology in VET or introducing incentives to establish them is not yet common practice in many countries;
- (d) while entrepreneurship is increasingly becoming an underlying principle in VET and VET business links are expanding, training for VET teachers and trainers to help learners acquire entrepreneurship skills and support for aspiring entrepreneurs could be strengthened in several countries.

Box 33. STDs dealing with creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship

ET 2020 objective 4: enhancing creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship

Bruges communiqué strategic objectives (SO) 5

S05 Fostering innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, as well as the use of ICT (in both IVET and CVET).

STDs

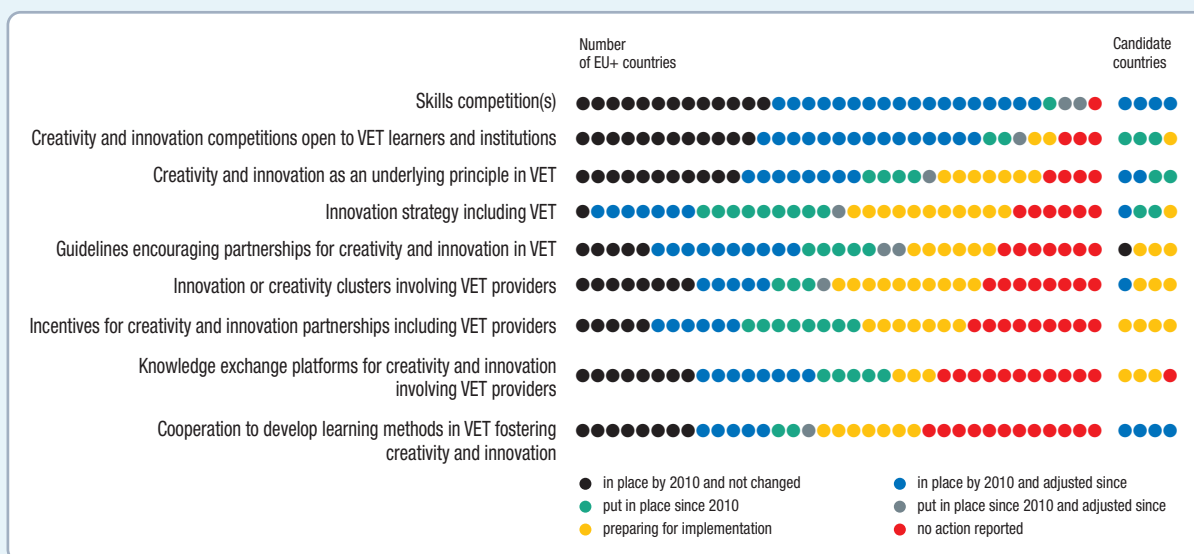
- STD13** Partnerships for creativity and innovation.
STD14 Effective and innovative, quality-assured use of technology by all VET providers.
STD15 Entrepreneurship.

Source: Council of the EU and European Commission, 2010.

4.1. Creativity and innovation

National policies for innovation and competitiveness related to education and training, along with international innovation monitors and scoreboards, have traditionally focused on higher education (Dehmel and van Loo, 2014). The potential of VET at all levels as a crucial factor contributing to innovation has been neglected. Apart from preparing learners for occupations where creativity is a must, VET can foster skills to innovate and be creative and drive new ideas in business and industry. It also supports competitiveness through the development and diffusion of new technologies, processes, and services and ultimately impacts on growth and prosperity (Cedefop, 2012b) (see also Section 2.3). Figure 15 presents an overview of trends in national policies and measures to help learners develop their skills to be creative and innovate.

Figure 15. State of play and progress towards STD13: partnerships for creativity and innovation



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

4.1.1. Embedding innovation in VET

Even before 2010, creativity and innovation, integral to entrepreneurial skills, was an underlying principle in VET in half of the EU+ countries and all candidate countries (see also Section 4.3). In the EU+ since then, eight countries have adapted or improved their policies and several have prepared or fully implemented new policies. Two candidate countries implemented new measures.

In contrast, innovation strategies included VET only in eight EU+ countries and in one candidate country before 2010. Since then, 10 EU+ countries and two candidate countries have introduced innovation strategies that include VET, and several have done so after 2012. In Belgium this has resulted in integrating environmental issues in VET and new VET programmes for green jobs in the building sector. Strategies for smart specialisation (Cyprus, Slovakia) refer to the potential of VET. The types/levels of VET included in strategies varies across countries. Romania's research and innovation strategy, for example, focuses on VET at tertiary level, while the Swedish innovation strategy sees VET at all levels as a driving force for innovation.

4.1.2. Stimulating innovation through partnerships and clusters

Several EU+ countries have also introduced incentives to encourage innovation and creativity partnerships or have started preparations to do so. Using EU funds, the Croatian VET and adult education agency supports partnerships between VET providers and other stakeholders to encourage innovation in VET. Cyprus introduced a scheme encouraging enterprises to implement innovative ways of training staff. Cooperation with employers is an important part of the national competition to promote quality and effectiveness in VET schools in Poland. Some measures explicitly target SMEs. In Bulgaria, ESF-funded innovation projects in SMEs include (higher) VET institutions.

Clusters ⁽⁵⁰⁾ and knowledge exchange platforms for business, education and training and research involving VET providers are not yet common in both the EU+ and the candidate countries. Several countries have plans to establish clusters or have them only in particular sectors. Five EU+ countries have introduced knowledge exchange platforms since 2010.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Clusters can be defined as a group of firms, related economic actors, and institutions that are located near one another and have reached a sufficient scale to develop specialised expertise, services, resources, suppliers and skills. http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/innovation/glossary/ind_ex_en.htm [accessed 10.9.2014].

Several recent measures focus on improving the quality of teaching. Denmark introduced a digital platform to help VET teachers and trainers bring innovation in the classroom. France set up an observatory to share best practices in entrepreneurship education.

With a range of countries implementing new measures or adapting existing ones, there are signs that the role of VET in innovation is increasingly acknowledged. Innovation strategies including VET, innovation or creativity clusters and corresponding incentives, or cooperation to develop learning methods that foster creativity and innovation are becoming more popular, but the process is slow. There is scope for more action in the coming years: around half the countries have not yet (fully) implemented these measures.

Box 34. Innovation partnerships and platforms: country highlights

- (a) Based on successful pilots, Italy adopted new legislation to set up networks of different types of upper secondary and higher education VET institutions and enterprises in the regions, to stimulate technical and scientific mindsets and promote employability among young people.
- (b) Financed by the Ministry of Education, local communities and companies, intercompany training centres act as knowledge exchange platforms in Slovenia and increase the capacity to train students, workers and VET teachers.
- (c) The German funding programme for innovative SMEs, which supports cooperation networks, was extended until end 2014; public-private science and industry partnerships for innovation that include CVET can be subsidised.
- (d) Together with the German association for international cooperation, the Montenegrin Education Ministry and VET centre have organised extensive innovative teaching methods training for VET teachers.
- (e) Romania established a platform in 2013 linking education with the business world to promote innovation by sharing knowledge and promoting partnerships. As a result, 16 sectoral innovation clusters involving VET schools have been set-up.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

4.1.3. Competing to unleash potential

Creativity and innovation contests organised for, or open to, VET learners or institutions were already quite common before 2010 and more are being introduced. More than half the EU+ countries and all the candidate countries that had competitions in place by 2010 have adapted, improved or changed them during 2010-14.

Box 35. Who is the most innovative: country highlights

- (a) Examples of innovation contests launched since 2010 are a national competition for innovative teaching and teaching materials in the Czech Republic, the 'innovation in education' competition in Latvia and a new competition for VET providers to stimulate cooperation with innovative business in the UK (Wales).
- (b) In Hungary, there are different types of competitions to demonstrate creativity and innovation skills. National competitions organised by ministries exempt successful participants from exam modules or give them extra points towards higher education entrance exams.
- (c) Some candidate countries also organise creativity and innovation contests open to VET learners or institutions, such as the robot competition in Turkey and the young inventor/researcher competitions in Montenegro.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

By stimulating new ideas to perform better, traditional skills competitions can also contribute to creativity and innovation. Recent changes in the regulation, organisation, set-up or use of skills competitions illustrate national efforts to capitalise on innovation potential. In the Netherlands, there were discussions on setting up regional skills competitions while Sweden piloted VET competitions at school level. Norway aims to increase the use of skill competitions as a learning method. Skills competitions in candidate countries are becoming increasingly international, with Turkey hosting international skills competitions since 2013 and Montenegro joining the EuroSkills Association in 2014.

Box 36. ‘Technology in VET’ strategies: country highlights

- (a) Bulgaria’s new LLL strategy 2014-20 envisages using more modern technologies in VET and LLL such as e-textbooks, up-to-date equipment and ICT.
- (b) Amendments to the Latvian VET modernisation strategy aim to update training infrastructure by increasing funding from the ERDF for modernisation projects while rationalising the number of VET schools.
- (c) The Turkish Ministry of Education strategic plan for 2010-14 includes strategies for the use of technology in VET.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

Strategies to ensure that VET providers use state-of-the-art technology were already common before 2010, with two out of three EU+ countries having them. Such strategies tend to be dynamic; since 2010, about half of the countries have revised their strategies. With three countries introducing them since 2010, most strategic measures to ensure state of the art technology in the candidate countries are recent. Several countries did not change or introduce an explicit strategy, but their arrangements achieve the same aims. Extensive communication between social partners in VET councils and authorities helps uncover the need for changes in VET programmes in Norway. Slovenia combined VET schools into VET centres to ensure cost-effective use of equipment.

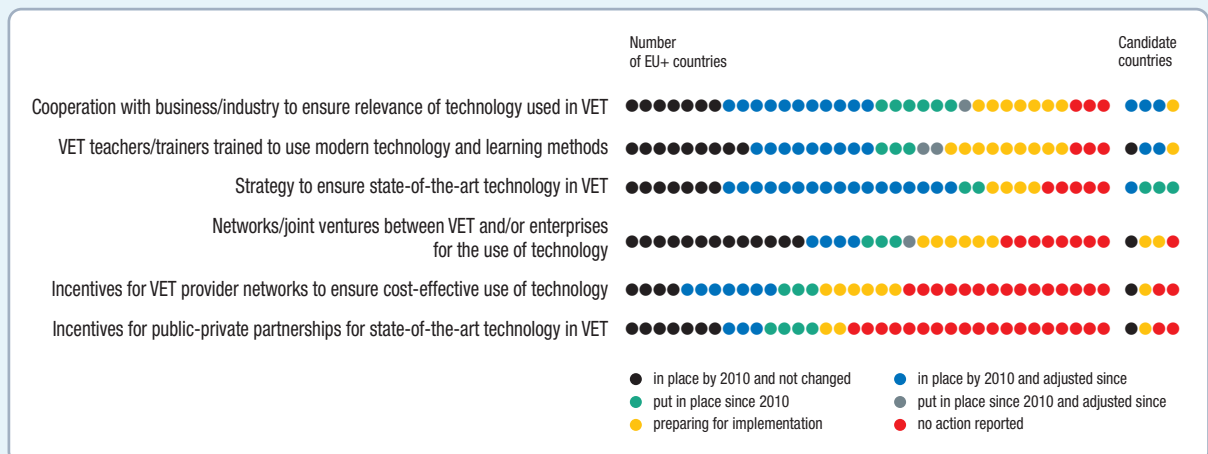
4.2. Using innovative technology effectively

Using innovative technology in VET serves multiple purposes. It stimulates creativity and innovation, supports the labour market relevance of VET, and ensures its quality. Countries can implement various policies and measures to ensure that VET providers use effective, innovative and quality-assured technology. Figure 16 gives an overview of the situation in 2010 and the developments since then.

4.2.1. Supporting VET teachers

Policies or measures to ensure that VET teachers can use modern technology and learning methods were in place in half of all EU+ countries and three candidate countries by 2010. Several countries have worked to improve or adapt measures and some have implemented new initiatives. The main VET providers in Malta participate actively in mobility programmes that enable staff to visit other training institutions to acquire new skills or to update them. As part of the ‘teacher agenda’, the Netherlands introduced a specialisation for VET teachers in 2013 and plans to expand learning opportunities in

Figure 16. State of play and progress towards STD14: effective and innovative, quality-assured use of technology by all VET providers



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

enterprises for teachers. Belgium (Fl) has an action plan for teacher in-service training aimed at implementing e-learning.

Nine EU+ countries have taken new actions to support VET teachers to use modern technology and learning methods, but are not yet at the stage of full implementation. Greece used a new e-platform for adult learning to support VET trainers in municipal LLL centres in using technology in the classroom. In 2012/13, Sweden created opportunities for VET teachers to take part in workplace internships in the sector they specialise in. In Latvia, education development guidelines for 2014-20 highlight VET teacher training in cooperation with employers. There is training for pedagogic specialists to help Bulgarian VET teachers use state-of-the-art technology.

Box 37. Networking to ease access to technology: country highlights

- (a) In Italy, a network of VET institutions and employers established in 2013 supports access to technology and enables more flexible learning.
- (b) To modernise VET curricula and support modern and up-to-date school-based practical training, Croatia implemented a grant scheme in 2013 that supports partnerships between VET providers and other stakeholders.
- (c) As part of the Dutch technology pact (2013), enterprises will invest in joint study programmes or make available technical installations and laboratories for VET.
- (d) In the UK, bodies representing business take on the task of ensuring that national occupational standards are kept up to date by updating equipment and other educational resources.
- (e) As part of the education reorganisation act (2013), France is reinforcing partnerships by creating campuses which involve VET, business and research institutions. These campuses are licensed for four years, are created in industries with job-creation and innovation potential and help combine class-based instruction with work-based learning.
- (f) In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, some VET institutions are able to offer their students access to advanced technology and laboratories on the basis of agreements with higher education institutions.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

4.2.2. Involving enterprises and building networks

Cooperation with business and networks between VET providers and enterprises or for the use of (relevant) technology existed in the majority of EU+ countries before 2010. In the candidate countries, cooperation arrangements are more popular than networks, with cooperation often taking the form of employers equipping school workshops with state-of-the-art technology. In more than half of the EU+ countries with measures in place in 2010, cooperation has since been reinforced either by adjusting existing initiatives or by introducing new ones. Several countries without arrangements in place in 2012 have prepared their introduction since then.

Not many countries have reported on incentives to encourage VET provider networks and public-private partnerships that could reduce the cost of modernising technology. Only a few EU+ countries have introduced incentives since 2010. In 2011, the German Ministry of Education started funding research and developments projects of public-private partnerships for a period of up to 15 years. Slovakia's largest car manufacturer and a metallurgy company received a grant (2013) aimed to link better the world of education, research and work; this focuses on tertiary education but also includes basic and secondary education. A programme in the UK (Wales) that supports knowledge and technology transfer projects and public-private partnerships of business with higher and further education was amended to include non-technological projects in 2013. In the candidate countries, the use of incentives for cooperation also appears limited. The Turkish government has provided incentives for contributions to education from business. In Montenegro a law on public-private partnerships is being prepared and tax incentives for employers cooperating with schools are under discussion.

4.3. Entrepreneurship

'Entrepreneurship and a sense of initiative' is an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects to achieve objectives. An entrepreneurial mindset is one of the key competences that helps people

succeed in different work and life contexts (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2006; European Commission, 2012a) (see also Sections 2.3 and 2.5). Employees with a sense of initiative and responsibility, skills to work in teams and innovate also benefit enterprises.

Europe's drive for entrepreneurial skills is as much about building an entrepreneurial workforce as generating new businesses. New companies create new jobs. While around half of the EU's young adults would like to set up their own business, many others think it is too complex and risky, lack access to finance or feel they do not have the necessary skills (European Commission, 2011b). Most young people and adults would prefer to work as employees (European Commission, 2012d).

Data from the 2013 global entrepreneurship monitor, which involved 23 EU Member States, provide more detailed insights. Compared to the situation in the USA, Europe's adults perceive fewer entrepreneurial opportunities (28.7% vs 47.2% in the USA), fewer capabilities (42.3% vs 52.4% in the USA) and higher levels of fear of failure in starting a business (39.8% vs 31.1% in the USA). While entrepreneurial intentions are similar, compared to the USA, European countries are less effective in new business creation. Europeans that start new businesses more often do so out of necessity, while research shows that new ventures started because of identified opportunities have a higher chance to succeed in the medium to longer term. Building entrepreneurship skills and mindsets, European education and training and in particular VET can help contribute to more opportunity-driven entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship skills come from practical experience in enterprises and other contexts, problem-based learning and involving experts from businesses in VET provision. Education and training programmes in entrepreneurship have a positive impact on developing individuals' entrepreneurial qualities, raising awareness of self-employment as a career option and creating a positive attitude towards entrepreneurial activity. A Eurobarometer in 2012 confirms that education and training helped half of the respondents develop an entrepreneurial attitude. While only 28% became interested in setting up their own business, more than 40% said they had

acquired the necessary skills to do so (European Commission, 2012d).

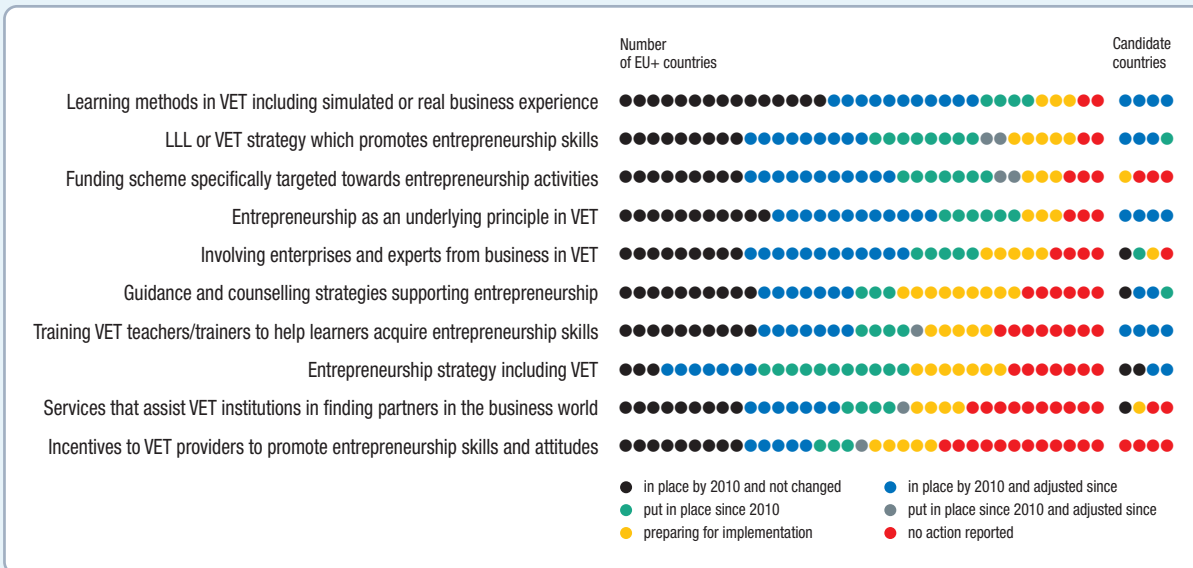
Box 38. **Unleashing entrepreneurial spirit: country highlights**

- (a) In Belgium (Dg) the business development agency promotes enterprise creation in schools.
- (b) Within its VET curriculum reform, Estonia allocates resources for guest teachers from enterprises.
- (c) In the UK (England) industry representatives provide special classes and volunteers share job-related experience in schools.
- (d) Business is part of IVET course development in Denmark in a project to make the learning experience more realistic and motivating for students.
- (e) Finland has ESF-funded centres that offer entrepreneurship training in many regions.
- (f) The 2013 entrepreneurial learning strategy in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia focuses on creativity and innovation among learners, teachers and education institutions.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

Figure 17 gives an overview of what countries have done in national VET and related policies to support entrepreneurship since 2010. In most EU+ countries and in all the candidate countries, entrepreneurship is an underlying principle of VET. What this means in practice differs across countries, as various definitions of entrepreneurship are used. Recent initiatives that reinforce entrepreneurship as a basic principle in VET include the introduction of compulsory entrepreneurship and self-employment modules in Spain and the inclusion of short-term training units in Portugal's qualifications catalogue. In Slovakia, new national curricula (2013) include entrepreneurship as a learning domain, with learning outcomes on entrepreneurship in school curricula mandatory. In addition to Spain, several other countries are introducing modules or subject areas (Estonia, France, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia) to strengthen entrepreneurship in VET or are planning to do so (Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands). The government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia recently decided to reinforce

Figure 17. State of play and progress towards STD15: entrepreneurship



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

entrepreneurship in secondary education, including VET (see also Section 2.3.3).

Many countries have measures in place that bring the world of work closer to the classroom, so policies develop dynamically. While several countries have recently started to involve enterprises and experts from business in VET, 12 countries with measures already in place by 2010 adapted their existing schemes.

Despite its crucial role, almost half of the EU+ countries do not support entrepreneurship within guidance and counselling strategies or measures. With only three countries implementing new measures, recent progress has been limited. In the candidate countries, guidance for entrepreneurship is more common.

While training of VET teachers/trainers to help learners acquire entrepreneurship skills occurs in all candidate countries, it is an area with limited progress in the EU+ countries. Among the countries that did take action are Germany, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, where further training courses for teachers encourage the integration of entrepreneurship in the classroom through e-training modules and business games (see also Section 2.5).

Box 39. Supporting aspiring entrepreneurs: country highlights

- (a) Italy, within a state-regions agreement, promoted measures to combat unemployment by supporting guidance and counselling for entrepreneurship.
- (b) Portugal's public employment service also reinforced guidance services, helping the unemployed to become self-employed.
- (c) France's business creation agency implemented an action plan to coordinate better the provision of information and support for entrepreneurs.
- (d) Portugal created standards for entrepreneurship and start-up training, which help teachers in preparing VET learners.
- (e) When Montenegro introduced entrepreneurship in many VET curricula, it supported learners not only by training their teachers, but also by organising assistance provided by local entrepreneurs acting as mentors or joint teachers.
- (f) In Norway, new regulations are to emphasise innovation and entrepreneurship and there is agreement to include entrepreneurship in VET teacher training.
- (g) E-modules are available for teachers in Germany and Slovenia that familiarise them more with business processes and promote their entrepreneurial mindsets.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

4.3.1. Using strategies to promote entrepreneurship

Developing the key competence ‘entrepreneurship’ and giving young people a chance to gather entrepreneurial experience is among the objectives of the European Commission’s entrepreneurship 2020 action plan, which focuses on new business and job creation (European Commission, 2013a). Entrepreneurship strategies that include VET at all levels were not that common by 2010, but many EU+ countries have since worked on them.

In Belgium (Fl), the entrepreneurship in education action plan aims to set up mini enterprises in compulsory education, while Belgium (Fr) has a similar initiative within the second Marshall plan. The Lithuanian entrepreneurship 2020 action plan foresees incorporating entrepreneurship and its assessment into education and training programmes. Germany has had a national business start-up strategy since 2010 and dedicated entrepreneurship initiative targeting young people, their teachers and heads of schools. By 2010, all candidate countries had included VET in their entrepreneurship strategies and these have been developed in recent years.

While entrepreneurship strategies that include VET are still to be developed in many EU+ countries, 28 of them had LLL or VET entrepreneurship strategies in place in early 2014. Some countries have recently taken action. In Bulgaria, the recently adopted LLL strategy considers entrepreneurship as a key competence for all forms of learning and envisages wider opportunities for entrepreneurship training. In Greece, recent policy documents position entrepreneurship as a major driver to improve post-secondary and tertiary education, including VET. Hungary is working on a new LLL strategy, which considers the development of entrepreneurial skills as a priority in adult training and state-supported in-company training.

4.3.2. Helping VET and business find each other

Links between VET and business can be important factors in a country’s entrepreneurship climate but more than 10 EU+ countries and two candidate countries have no dedicated services to help VET providers find partners in the business world. Recent progress has been limited and several countries that have taken some action have not fully implemented their measures. In Bulgaria, partnerships with enterprises can be established through a database that matches supply and demand for practical training places. In France, technological training advisors with a business background provide voluntary support to school/enterprise partnerships. Involving a broad range of stakeholders, including the government and social partners, Turkey established an entrepreneurship council in 2010 to promote entrepreneurship at all levels. Montenegro’s employer associations and the Chamber of Economy are increasingly supporting VET business cooperation through their services.

Box 40. Funding and incentives for entrepreneurship: country highlights

- (a) In Denmark a foundation allocates funding to projects developing entrepreneurship. The projects aim to develop new ways of cooperation between VET and enterprises to stimulate entrepreneurship mindsets among VET teachers and trainers.
- (b) In Spain, training centres are competing for projects in regional contests, and public grants for training consider entrepreneurship a priority area.
- (c) Belgium (Fr) launched the small business act (2011), increased funding of vouchers giving access to language and entrepreneurship/management skills training, has support for the partly self-employed to become fully self-employed, and has a fund for establishing innovative enterprises (Brussels).
- (d) In Slovakia, non-governmental organisations fund out-of-school activities to help develop entrepreneurship skills and attitudes.

4.3.3. Using funding schemes or incentives

Funding schemes for entrepreneurship activities are present in most EU+ countries, but this is not the case in the candidate countries. In several EU+ countries, such as Greece, France, Croatia and Luxembourg, grants to the unemployed help them to become self-employed. The only candidate country with some dedicated funding for entrepreneurship activities is Montenegro, which finances entrepreneurship training and promotional activities. The number of countries offering incentives to VET providers to promote entrepreneurship skills and attitudes is still low. Almost half the countries did not report on incentives or mentioned initiatives that have not yet been fully implemented, and the practice appears non-existent in the candidate countries.

Inclusive VET: equity, social cohesion and active citizenship

This chapter assesses the state of play in 2010 and reviews progress that countries have made during 2010-14 to make IVET and CVET more inclusive and cohesive. It considers national policy actions and initiatives taken until early 2014 that address STDs 16 to 19. The main findings are:

- (a) countries have clearly prioritised reforms and measures that make VET more inclusive, as the policy priority profiles in the second part of this report show;
- (b) reducing early leaving from education and training has been a top priority and many countries have introduced new early-school-leaving measures or adapted existing ones during recent years. There is a trend toward using incentives for learners, enterprises and VET institutions;
- (c) countries have also made substantial progress in raising training participation of the low-skilled and other at-risk groups, but there is scope to do more to offer training opportunities for adults that meet their learning and practical needs;
- (d) few countries have taken measures to use better the potential of ICT to help at-risk groups learn;
- (e) not monitoring at-risk groups in VET remains an important obstacle to targeting VET provision better to their learning needs.

Box 41. STDs dealing with inclusive IVET and CVET

ET 2020 objective 3: promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship

Bruges communiqué strategic objectives (SO) 6

S06 Realising inclusive IVET and CVET.

STDs

STD16 Maximising the contribution of VET in combating early leaving from education and training.

STD17 Raising participation of low-skilled and other at-risk groups in education and training.

STD18 Using ICT to maximise access to training and to promote active learning.

STD19 Using existing monitoring systems to support the participation of at-risk groups in VET.

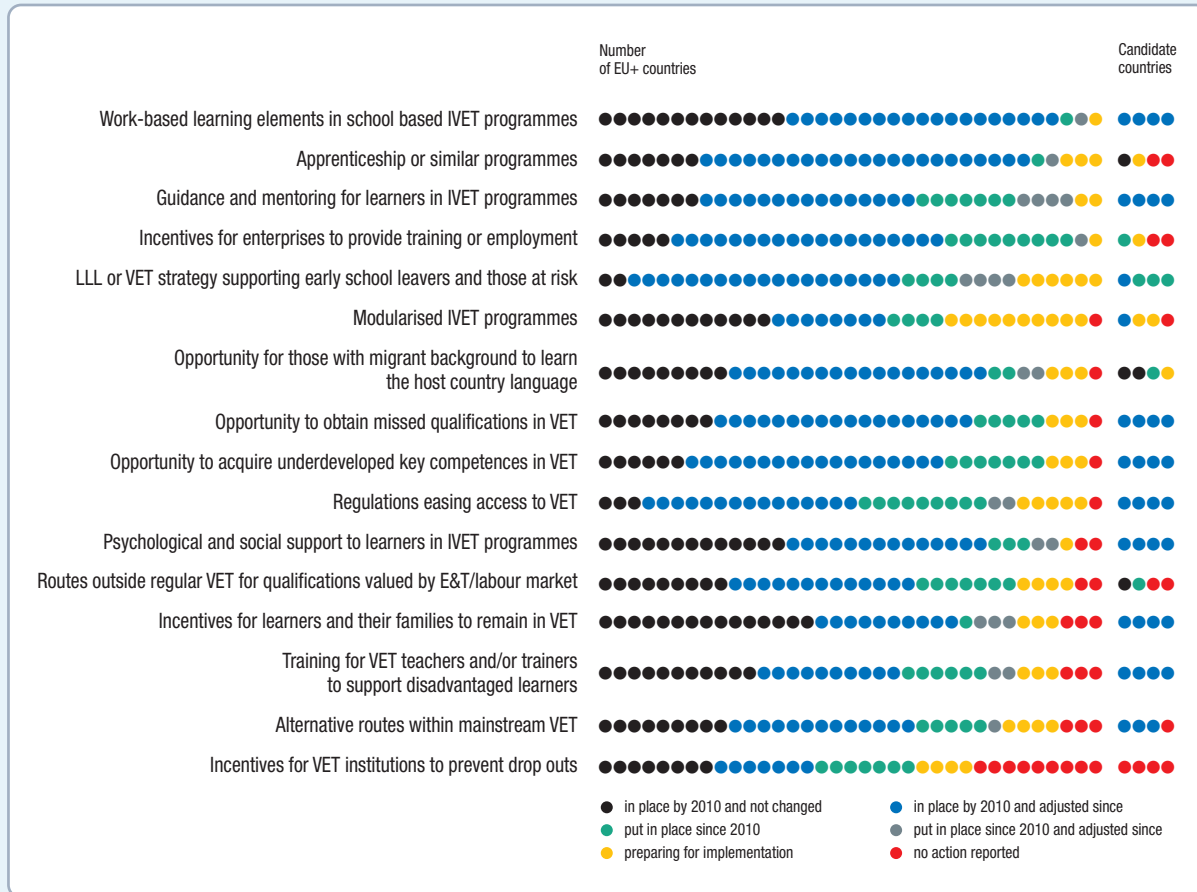
Source: Council of the EU and European Commission, 2010.

5.1. Early leaving from education and training

Although early leaving from education and training decreased significantly from 17.6% in 2000 to 11.9% in 2013, it remains an important problem in the EU. The target for early school leaving (expressed as share of population aged 18 to 24 with, at most, lower secondary education that is not in further education or training) of 10% had not been reached by 2010, but countries have invested considerable energy in reducing early leaving since then.

The role of VET is not limited to reducing dropout rates; it includes VET's potential to attract, retain and reintegrate young people in education and training. Early leaving from VET is not necessarily related to the quality of VET, but reflects on education systems which tend to direct

Figure 18. **State of play and progress towards STD16: maximising the contribution of VET in combating early leaving from education**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

those who are at greater risk of early leaving towards VET. The way VET is organised, for instance in terms of the structure of programmes, and labour market factors also impact on early leaving.

The Bruges communiqué (STD16) calls on countries to maximise the contribution of VET in combating early leaving from education and training. This deliverable covers the European survey on languages in education and training, and not just VET, which means that possible measures range from efforts to keep VET learners from leaving education and training early to compensation measures for learners that have not managed to complete general education programmes.

Figure 18 shows that countries have taken actions on several fronts to tackle early leaving from education and training through VET. Countries adapted or expanded the measures

they had in place already before 2010, implemented a range of new measures, or are taking steps to prepare their introduction. The fact that most existing measures to reduce or address early leaving have been adjusted in the 2010-14 period illustrates that policy initiatives in this area develop dynamically to improve effectiveness or to respond to changing circumstances.

The majority of EU+ countries in 2014 have an LLL or VET strategy in place that supports early leavers. The others are preparing to implement such a strategy. With many new measures introduced after 2010, reducing early leaving has also been a top priority in the candidate countries. As part of their strategies, many countries (e.g. Austria, Belgium (Fr, Dg), the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania) have increased individual support for VET learners at

risk of becoming early leavers. As well as implementing a range of reforms, candidate countries have also invested in large scale awareness campaigns highlighting the importance of completing education.

Strong links with the world of work can contribute to motivating learners to stay in education and training. Apprenticeship or similar programmes and work-based learning elements in school-based IVET exist in almost all countries. As shown in Chapter 2, the volume and scope of work-based learning varies from country to country and schemes have developed dynamically after 2010.

Since 2010, countries have taken a range of new preventive and remedial measures to address early leaving. Regulations easing access to VET, incentives for enterprises to provide training or employment, and guidance for learners in IVET appear to be the most popular.

5.1.1. Making VET access and progression easier

A total of 11 EU+ countries without measures in place in 2010 have made access to VET easier by adopting new regulations since then. The focus has been on increasing the training offer (Belgium (Fr), Iceland, the UK (Wales)), facilitating entry or progression through bridge years/programmes (Belgium (Dg), Italy, Hungary, Sweden) and allowing entry through assessments or exams (Spain, Slovakia). In the EU+ countries, alternative routes within mainstream VET or routes outside VET that lead to qualifications valued by education and training and the labour market have also expanded in recent years. Alternative VET routes are also in place in all candidate countries.

Since 2010, there has been some move towards modularising IVET programmes but countries are at different stages and, in most cases, implementation is not yet complete. In Bulgaria, proposed amendments to the VET act promote modularisation of IVET programmes. Latvia published official guidelines for modular VET in 2013 and started implementation. Luxembourg is developing modules as part of new curricula following the 2008 VET reform. An ESF project in Poland helps schools to implement modular VET curricula, making available training for experts, guides and manuals and an

Box 42. Early-school-leaving strategies: country highlights

- (a) As part of the overall Dutch VET strategy, (pre-)VET schools are encouraged to develop and pilot shorter and more attractive technology and craftsmanship routes to reduce early school leaving.
- (b) Examples of new initiatives that reinforce or expand existing strategies are the 2013 action plan against early school leaving in Belgium (Fl) and the national strategy to prevent and reduce early school leaving in Bulgaria.
- (c) The new Spanish law to improve the quality of education (2013) proposes several measures to reduce dropouts; within the education system 21, new basic VET diploma programmes have already been developed.
- (d) The new LLL strategy (2014-20) being discussed in Cyprus includes actions that support early school leavers and those at risk.

Source: ReferNet.

information technology support system. Introducing modules in post-secondary VET programmes is being discussed in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, while they are already being introduced in Montenegro and Serbia after pilots supported with EU funds.

Opportunities to obtain missed qualifications or to acquire underdeveloped key competences, and options for migrants to learn languages, are available in most countries (see also Section 2.3.4). Among recent measures are VET programmes helping students develop key competences that lead to a compulsory education certificate in Spain. In Iceland, six key competences are being integrated in the curricula and teaching/study materials of upper secondary schools. Malta offers part-time courses to help learners obtain missed qualifications. Learners in Sweden have these opportunities via new introductory programmes that were introduced in upper secondary education. Examples of recent initiatives promoting language learning are the language programme for foreigners in Croatia (adopted in 2011) and a free-of-charge Greek language training programme for migrants over 15 in Cyprus. In Montenegro regions, where a

large part of the population speaks Albanian, students can choose the language of instruction.

5.1.2. Giving financial incentives

Incentives to prevent early leaving targeted towards learners and their families were already present in two out of three EU+ countries in 2010. Few EU+ countries have recently introduced new incentives or started preparing for their implementation. Incentives for learners and their families also exist in various forms in the candidate countries.

In 2014 most countries have incentives for enterprises to provide training or employment, usually through schemes that incentivise employers to provide apprenticeship or other types of training (see also Chapter 2). There are also incentives for enterprises to hire the unemployed. Belgium has a national subsidy that reduces wage cost and social security contributions. Similar financial incentives for hiring the unemployed exist in Finland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia (for non-profit organisations), Spain, and the UK (Wales). Incentives to VET providers are less common, but several countries have taken steps after 2012 to introduce them.

5.1.3. Offering guidance and support and ensuring their quality

More than 10 EU+ countries have implemented new guidance and mentoring measures since 2010 to support better learners in IVET programmes (see also Section 3.4). In Belgium (FI, Fr) support for young apprentices has been strengthened. Greece recently updated guidance and mentoring and 30 career offices now offer a range of services to IVET students and graduates. In Lithuania, after the development of a career education services model in 2012, 55 VET institutions employed career coordinators. Offering support to learners throughout the year, Luxembourg piloted involving mentors from the business world on a voluntary basis. Several countries strengthened already existing guidance capacity, for instance by defining the roles of guidance and counsellors (e.g. Latvia, Poland, Portugal) or by stepping up training for guidance counsellors and VET teachers (e.g. Austria, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden).

Box 43. Using incentives in the fight against early school leaving: country highlights

- (a) Bulgaria is defining responsibilities and incentives for all stakeholders involved in early leaving in the context of its updated youth strategy 2014-20.
- (b) Ireland has started paying providers of training for the long-term unemployed in stages, implying that providers do not get fully paid for early leavers.
- (c) In the UK (England) 10% of the value of training can be paid to a provider if the learner enters work after training.
- (d) Iceland has increased funding to upper secondary schools to provide guidance and monitor those at risk of early leaving.
- (e) The Netherlands has introduced extra funding for VET providers to keep at-risk learners in school.
- (f) Denmark adopted new legislation that reduces unemployment benefits for young people to motivate them to stay in education or training.
- (g) The Spanish entrepreneurship and youth employment strategy (2013-16) includes financial incentives for those without an initial qualification to prevent early school leaving.
- (h) Germany combines financial support with targeted opportunities to eliminate language and practical skills deficits; also innovative paths towards education are funded and promoted with particular focus on the diversity of young people at pre-working age to support SMEs.
- (i) The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro offer free text books and support transportation and accommodation for out-of-region students. Scholarships and support for parents are available as well.
- (j) In Serbia, VET schools offering qualifications for unpopular sectors (engineering, construction and agriculture) offer scholarships.
- (k) Turkey has learning support schemes for families in need.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

In many countries, guidance is coupled with psychological and social services. Among the countries that recently strengthened learners' legal rights to these services are Estonia, Finland, Iceland and Poland. The Czech Republic and Hungary are increasing support capacity at local level. With eight countries implementing new

measures since 2010, training opportunities for VET teachers and trainers to enable them better to support disadvantaged learners are expanding. VET teachers in Greece participated in training courses to help them support Roma and Muslim minority students and other learners that face integration, cultural and learning challenges. In Poland, the 2012 regulation on teacher education standards includes working with special needs learners; corresponding in-service training options are available. Colleges in the UK (England) offer continuing professional development for teachers to support at-risk groups and disadvantaged learners. Candidate countries also offer a range of guidance and mentoring services. Mentoring helps IVET students in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia prepare for exams and competitions. These countries also have mentoring for Roma. Turkey offers guidance and counselling in IVET to make learners aware of their capabilities and opportunities through a network of job and career counsellors.

5.2. Helping the low-skilled and other at-risk groups learn

Low-skilled people and other groups with low participation in learning risk exclusion. Skills polarisation occurs when people with few skills have few learning opportunities while those with higher skill levels have more chances to update or expand their skills. With jobs becoming more knowledge-intensive at all levels, insufficient learning opportunities make groups that are engaged little in learning vulnerable to low employability and unemployment, and severely restricts opportunities for career advancement.

The adult education survey 2011 (Eurostat, 2011) on job-related and employer-sponsored training confirms earlier findings. Older workers, the unemployed, inactive and low-qualified adults participate less in adult learning. The average participation rates in the EU-28 countries are considerably lower for the inactive (15.4%) and unemployed (22.8%) compared to the employed (45.2%) adults ⁽⁵¹⁾. In 2011, the EU-28 average

participation rate in job-related non-formal education was 15.2% for the low-qualified, 28.6% for the medium-qualified and 48.8% for the high-qualified ⁽⁵²⁾. This means that the last group participate roughly three times as much than the low-qualified. These inequalities can have various causes (Cedefop, 2011c): for example, when it comes to training, employers tend to focus on younger employees and on those that are already highly qualified, often due to expectations of higher returns on investment in training (Cedefop, 2011c).

Figure 19 shows that most measures to widen the possibilities for skill development among the low-skilled and other at-risk groups that countries had in place by 2010 have been adjusted since then.

Box 44. Opening doors for less fortunate learners: country highlights

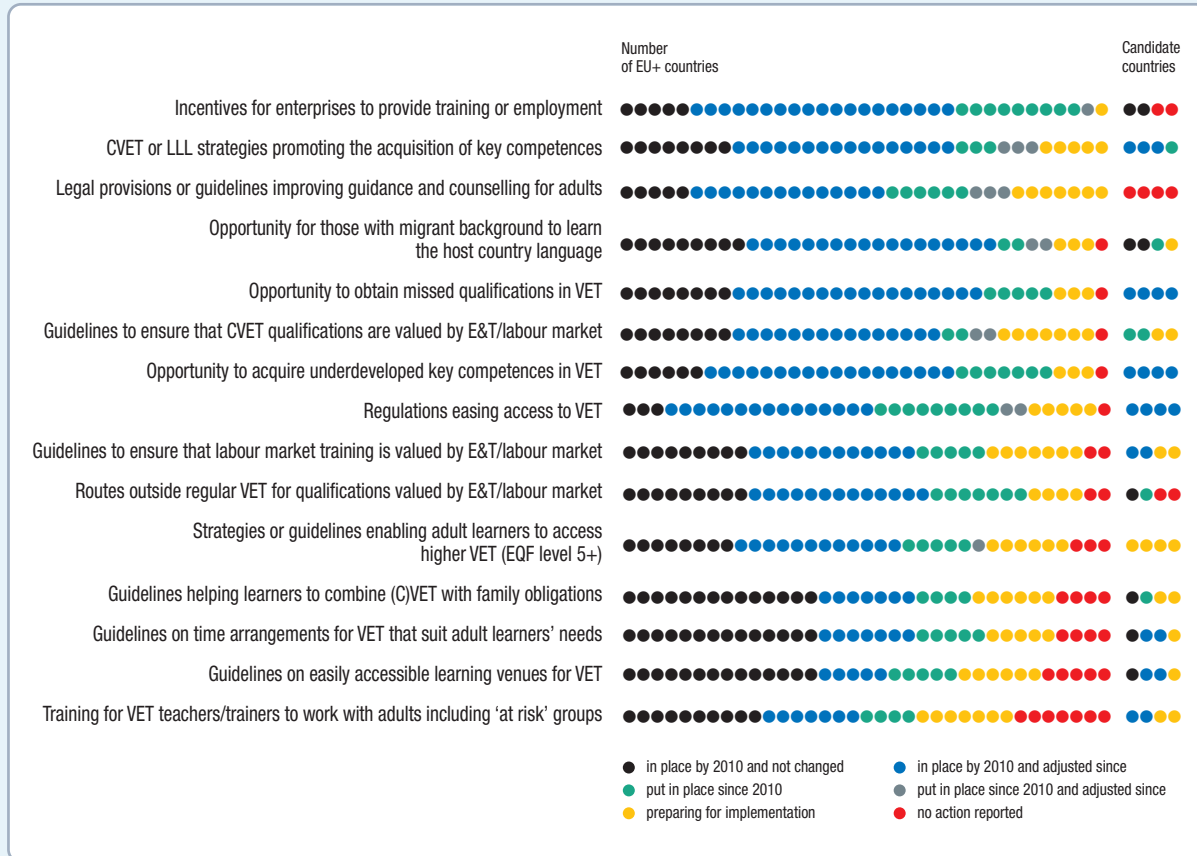
- (a) Estonia's new VET standard (2013) enables recognition of prior learning at entry and allows access to upper secondary VET for those over 22 years without completed lower secondary education if they have the right competences.
- (b) Targeting those at risk of early leaving and young people from disadvantaged social backgrounds, in 2014-15 Romania is planning to ease access to secondary VET by making entry possible after graduating from the eighth grade, one year earlier than was previously the case.
- (c) Belgium (Dg) established new classes for foreign newcomers and a service to integrate disabled adults into training.
- (d) Austria supports transition to VET for disadvantaged young people under 24 in one of its regions through social and cultural skills training.
- (e) Students without completed lower secondary education in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia can enter VET on the condition that they will complete the lower level in parallel; the low-skilled have second chance training options in less developed regions.
- (f) Turkey launched a large scale project to help people with disabilities, convicts, refugees and other at-risk groups develop vocational skills for employment.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

⁽⁵¹⁾ Eurostat, AES2 [trng_aes_103] [accessed 23.7.2014].

⁽⁵²⁾ Eurostat, AES2 [trng_aes_122] [accessed 5.6.2014].

Figure 19. State of play and progress towards STD17: raising participation of low-skilled and other at-risk groups in education and training



Source: ReferNet and ETF.

Progress since 2010 is pronounced in several key areas, but has slowed somewhat as most measures were taken before 2012. Next to new or changed incentives for enterprises to provide training or employment, there is also a clear trend towards new regulations to ease access to VET. Providing a training opportunities focus on key competences or missed qualifications for the low-skilled and other at-risk groups is another area where progress is clearly visible.

Opportunities for migrants to learn the host country language were already widespread in 2010. Most EU+ countries without measures in place by then have worked towards creating them since. Bulgaria's immigration and integration strategy creates the conditions for financing language training while Croatia adopted a language programme for foreigners in 2011. There is a regulation in Poland that obliges local authorities to provide free-of-charge language

classes. Education development guidelines in development support adult teachers in language instruction in Latvia.

Some countries strengthened their training for VET teachers and trainers to help them work better with adults and at-risk groups. In 2013, Spain introduced a formal training programme focused on working with adults that is compulsory for trainers. Austria mandates gender and diversity training for trainers that delivers training on behalf of the employment services. A 2011 regulation on admission requirements, training organisation and final exams sets a basic framework for adult trainer skills in Luxembourg. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, teachers were trained to help at-risk students take online external assessment tests. Despite some progress, however, seven EU+ countries do not have training for VET teachers/trainers to help them work with at-risk groups.

Box 45. **Focusing on key competences to fill the gaps: country highlights**

- (a) One of the initiatives for low- and unskilled people in Germany focuses on job-related literacy and basic skills; another scheme provides opportunities to acquire underdeveloped key competences within pre-VET/transition measures.
- (b) Key competence development for at-risk groups features prominently in the new Estonian LLL strategy for 2014-20 while strategies under development in Croatia, Lithuania and Romania (2014) outline steps to improve including adults in LLL through key competence development.
- (c) In France, the agency in charge of combatting illiteracy and social partners signed an agreement that helps develop key competences of vulnerable employees in the hotels and catering sector.
- (d) Second chance evening schools in Malta combine the development of literacy, languages and numeracy with vocational skills in courses leading to a formal qualification.

Source: ReferNet and ETF (see also Section 2.3).

Not all countries have measures in place to support learning, such as combining CVET with other family obligations, easily accessible learning venues and time arrangements that suit learner needs. These measures could support more low-skilled and other at-risk groups participating in learning. For other types of measure, more work is needed to achieve real progress. Many countries are preparing to (fully) implement strategies to enable adult learners to access higher VET, measures to ensure that labour market training will be valued by education and training and the labour market, training for teachers/trainers, and regulations for guidance of adults (see also Section 2.3).

5.3. **Using ICT to support groups at risk**

Using ICT to increase access to training and to promote active learning among at-risk groups can be a powerful way to support their participation in learning and the labour market. Figure 20 shows that many countries are preparing measures that

help use ICT to maximise access to training and promote active learning. The number of countries that have fully implemented measures since 2010 is lower, though, and for some options more than 10 countries reported no such measures.

Box 46. **Going digital to help more people learn: country highlights**

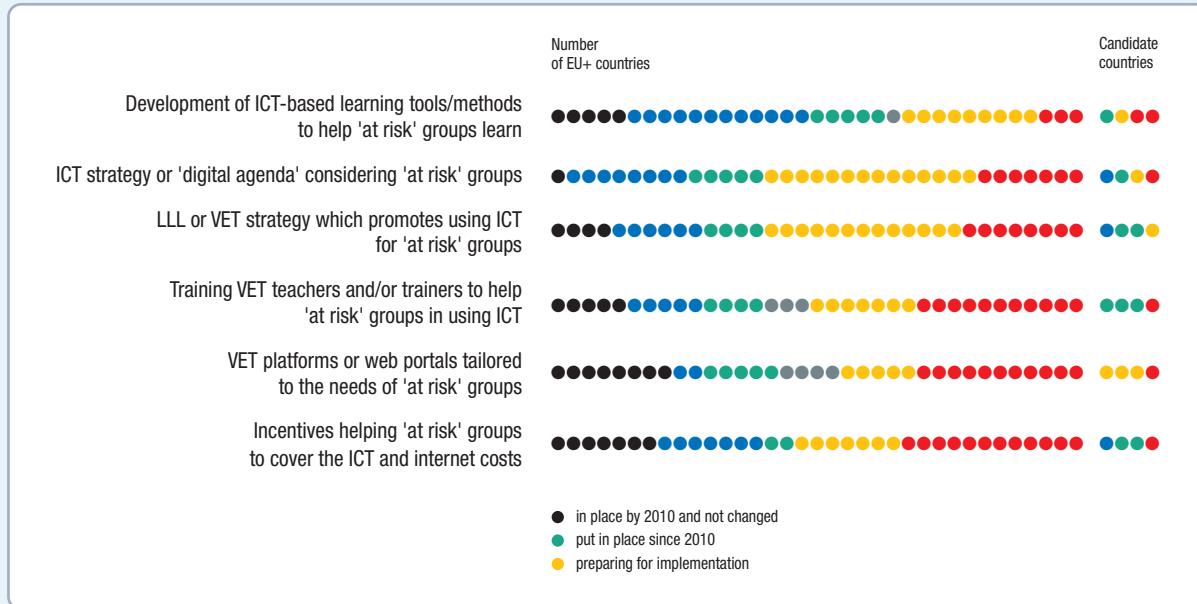
- (a) Planned digital agendas for Swedish counties will consider at-risk groups.
- (b) Spain's digital agenda plans to use e-learning spaces to promote internet accessibility. The agenda and the action plan (2013) consider access to training for disadvantaged groups.
- (c) The Luxembourg internet for all programme targets digital exclusion by increasing access possibilities and by offering internet training.
- (d) Austria and Slovakia pay specific attention to the ICT needs of older learners within their active ageing measures.
- (e) In Denmark, a regional network of technical schools created an ICT platform that helps psychologists who deal with students at risk to share good practices.

Source: ReferNet.

Some EU+ countries have an ICT strategy in place that takes the needs of at-risk groups into account, while others only intend to do so in the future. Some countries have ICT strategies that do not explicitly consider at-risk groups, but promote digital inclusion for all, as is the case in Italy and Cyprus. A growing number of countries address the inclusion of at-risk learners in their VET or LLL strategies and progress has been steady since 2010. Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia, Malta and Romania have recent LLL strategies that consider at-risk groups. Most candidate countries have strategic documents promoting ICT for at-risk groups.

With nine EU+ countries implementing them since 2010, significant progress has been made in developing VET platforms/portals tailored to the needs of at-risk groups. In most cases, new initiatives include websites that directly help at-risk groups learn (e.g. Belgium (Brussels), Ireland, Greece, Croatia, Lithuania, Luxembourg). In some cases, platforms help at-risk groups indirectly by supporting teachers and

Figure 20. **State of play and progress towards STD18: using ICT to maximise access to training and promote active learning**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

other staff dealing with them. Most candidate countries are still at the stage of preparing the launch of VET platforms for at-risk groups.

Tools and methods to support at-risk groups in learning have been newly developed in several countries, while others have adapted the initiatives they already had in place by 2010. Estonia and Cyprus introduced new e-learning materials. France created a digital experience and skills portfolio to aid guidance and returning to learning which also showcases training and career pathways. Through a 2011 project providing liquid-crystal display smart boards and tablet computers, Turkey improved access to technology in schools.

More than half the EU+ countries have not yet implemented incentives to help at-risk groups cover ICT or internet costs. In this area, progress has been limited, as most of the countries that took action after 2010 did not move beyond the preparation stage. Some countries have put in place training for VET teachers/trainers to help at-risk learners use ICT, but half of the countries either do not yet have such training in place or are still at the preparation stage. Among countries without initiatives in place in 2010, several have developed content or modules for teachers (e.g. Bulgaria, Denmark, Spain, Hungary, the UK

(England)) while others have started to train their teachers to work better with at-risk learners (e.g. Estonia, Croatia, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Slovakia). In Montenegro, ICT coordinators in VET schools assist teachers in applying ICT in the classroom.

Box 47. Helping learners get connected: country highlights

- (a) In France, there are agreements between the Ministry of Education and regional authorities to widen ICT access.
- (b) Projects in the countries of the UK promote the use and production of open educational resources.
- (c) The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is currently implementing the computer for each student project, supports low income families to buy a computer, and promotes free access to the internet.
- (d) Vulnerable groups in Montenegro benefit from reduced prices for ICT equipment and pay less for internet access.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

5.4. Monitor groups at risk to support VET participation

Monitoring is an important tool to support VET participation for groups at risk. It not only identifies which groups are lagging in terms of participation, but can also give more insight on the underlying causes for this, in terms of learning problems or bottlenecks that groups at risk face. Measures to monitor at-risk groups have been put in place at a slower pace than most monitoring measures in general. Figure 21 shows that all of them have not been (fully) implemented in more than half of the countries.

In 2014, several countries' legislation already requires monitoring systems to consider at-risk groups while others plan to adopt such legislation. Recent initiatives include the permanent monitoring of truants, one of the measures of the Belgian (FI) anti-truancy plan, and the set-up of an interministerial data exchange system to prevent early leaving in France. Countries not taking measures are, in many cases, constrained by privacy legislation. In more than half of the countries, legislation that allows combining data on learning, labour market entry and careers is not yet in place (see also Section 2.6).

Many of the benefits of monitoring at-risk groups can only materialise when the outcomes of monitoring feed into VET provision. Less than half of the EU+ countries base preventive or remedial VET responses for groups at risk on monitoring data. With some countries implementing remedial VET responses for groups at risk taking monitoring data into account since 2010, progress is visible, but slow. Candidate countries are exploring using monitoring systems to support the participation of at-risk groups in VET. In Montenegro, for example, monitoring directly informs policy-making and drives adjustments in VET and second chance programmes and guidance schemes.

Box 48. Monitoring at-risk groups: country highlights

- (a) In Denmark, the national council for VET monitors groups at risk in the VET system.
- (b) A study formed the basis for a new programme on workplace-oriented literacy and basic skills offered by the Ministry of Education and social partners in Germany.
- (c) In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, legislation on employment provides the legal basis to collect data on groups at risk.
- (d) Turkey combines its e-school data system with the population registry for information on school attendance and learning achievements of at-risk groups.
- (e) In the countries of the UK, monitoring data are used in various ways to inform training programmes in terms of funding (England) and progression opportunities (Wales and Scotland) and could support NEET prevention in the future (Northern Ireland).
- (f) In the Czech Republic, monitoring is not only used to inform remedial VET, but also forms the basis for support given by counsellors, teachers and psychologists.
- (g) Ireland developed a new profiling model that helps target VET activation measures at those groups most at risk of long-term unemployment by giving them priority access and higher levels of support.

Source: ReferNet and ETF.

Figure 21. **State of play and progress towards STD19: using existing monitoring systems to support participation of at-risk groups in VET**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

PART II

Working together to reach the 2020 objectives

This part of the report presents a synthesised overview of policy developments in VET in European countries in recent years, with a focus on long-term strategic objectives as defined in the Bruges communiqué. Chapter 6 provides an assessment of the impact of the Copenhagen/Bruges process at national level and indicates the priorities that countries have pursued in their VET policies. The chapter also reflects on the role of stakeholders in implementing reforms and presents indications of progress towards the Bruges strategic objectives by country, using policy priority profiles. These profiles are the basis for a discussion on where countries stand with respect to the Bruges strategic objectives. Chapter 7 reviews developments in the candidate countries.

On track towards 2020: a synthesis

6.1. Introduction

In contrast to the analysis presented in Part 1 of this report, which looked in detail at the Bruges STDs, this chapter looks at the impact of the Bruges process in synthesised terms to summarise the achievements between 2010 and 2014 in the context of the Bruges strategic objectives. The long-term objectives have been aligned to Europe's 2020 strategy and the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) (see Box 49).

In most countries, the Bruges strategic objectives are drivers of national policies for a more attractive, relevant, open, modern and inclusive VET. Sustainable and inclusive growth requires continuous investment in people's skills and LLL: VET is an important part of that investment. Today, about half of all jobs in Europe require medium level qualifications, many of which are acquired through VET⁽⁵³⁾. To have a labour-market-relevant qualification largely defines the employability of the individual and contributes to economic development and competitiveness. This is even more important in many Member States as unemployment has soared during the economic crisis and has remained high since then. This concerns not only the young, but also adults and particularly the low-skilled. Employability is not only a matter of a relevant initial qualification, but also requires CVET during working life, which becomes the more important the fewer job opportunities exist.

The chapter attempts to discern the impact of the Copenhagen/Bruges process on VET policy at national level and examines VET policies that countries have pursued. It analyses the focus of the policy measures and reforms of the past years in terms of the strategic objectives.

The structure of the chapter follows the logic of the policy-making and implementation process. It starts by discussing how the Copenhagen/Bruges process on VET has influenced policy-making and national strategic priorities. Next, the chapter looks at VET policy implementation, by considering the focus of reforms, initiators, approaches used to achieve policy aims, and the cooperation of governments, social partners and other stakeholders, which is widely viewed as indispensable to successful VET. This is followed by a review of how the developments in recent years contribute to achieving the Bruges strategic objectives based on policy priority profiles that visualise the focus of policy measures. Using these profiles, countries have been grouped in four clusters. While their classification as 'continuous developers, early developers, recent implementers and modest developers' reflects their recent achievements towards the Bruges priorities, such a clustering is a rough indication of where countries stand. The final section reflects on main achievements and challenges in implementing VET policies.

The analysis uses the same sources as used in Part 1 but complements these with information collected in interviews and focus groups with the main stakeholders of the Copenhagen/Bruges process, i.e. the DGVTs and the ACVT. The analysis is informed by statistics and the work Cedefop has done in regard to the European tools and principles as well as studies on other issues.

⁽⁵³⁾ See www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/projects/forecasting-skill-demand-and-supply/skills-forecasts.aspx [accessed 28.11.2014].

Box 49. ET 2020 objectives and Bruges strategic objectives

ET 2020 objective 1: making LLL and mobility a reality

Bruges communiqué strategic objectives (SO) 3 and 4

S03 Enabling flexible access to training and qualifications.

S04 Developing a strategic approach to the internationalisation of IVET and CVET and promoting international mobility.

ET 2020 objective 2 as adapted for the Bruges communiqué: improving the quality and efficiency of VET and enhancing its attractiveness and relevance ^(*)

Bruges communiqué strategic objectives (SO) 1 and 2

S01 Making I-VET an attractive learning option.

S02 Fostering the excellence, quality and relevance of both IVET and CVET.

ET 2020 objective 3: promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship

Bruges communiqué strategic objectives (SO) 6

S06 Realising inclusive IVET and CVET.

ET 2020 objective 4: enhancing creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship

Bruges communiqué strategic objectives (SO) 5

S05 Fostering innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, as well as the use of ICT (in both IVET and CVET).

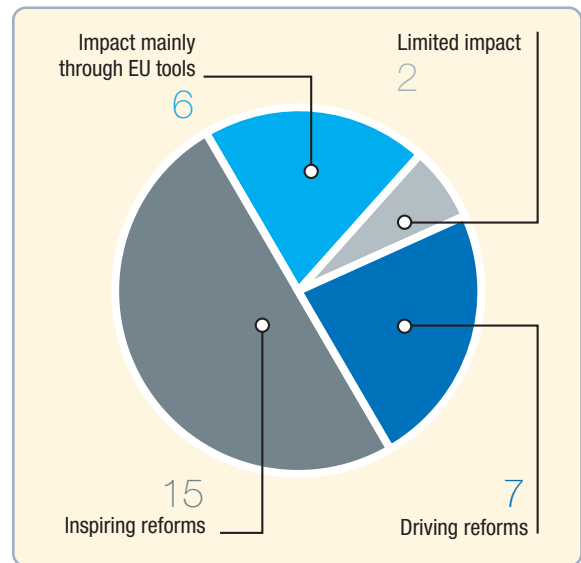
(*) Original wording in ET 2020 (Council of the EU, 2009): 'improving the quality and efficiency of education and training'.

Source: Council of the EU; European Commission, 2010.

6.2. Impact of Copenhagen/Bruges on VET policy at national level ⁽⁵⁴⁾

DGVT agree that the Copenhagen process and Bruges communiqué have had a real impact on national VET reforms (see Figure 22). However, the type and magnitude of impact differs by country and is influenced by countries' different starting points. The objectives and STDs of the Bruges communiqué reflected issues that some countries had already been working on for a long time; for other countries, these issues were new.

Figure 22. Impact of the Copenhagen/Bruges process on national VET policy and strategy (number of countries)



Source: Cedefop interviews with DGVT, 2013-14.

The fact that the process drove or inspired comprehensive or partial reforms of VET systems or VET policy measures in more than two thirds (22 of 30) of countries is a significant impact.

In seven countries, European cooperation drove national reforms, meaning that all Bruges priorities became issues on national policy agendas. This group of countries comprises newer Member States and countries from southern Europe.

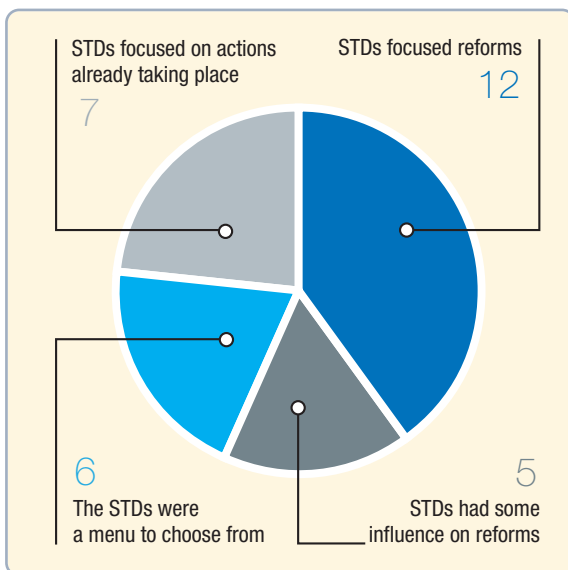
⁽⁵⁴⁾ This section is based on the outcomes of Cedefop's interviews with the DGVTs.

In six of the remaining eight countries the impact focused on (national) implementation of the European tools and principles. Only two countries reported a limited impact overall. All of the eight countries with lesser impact are Member States with well-established VET systems which obviously saw no urgent need for extensive reforms.

Replies to the question of whether and how the 22 Bruges STDs focused attention on key national issues requiring reforms also indicate substantial policy impact (see Figure 23).

Despite the large number of STDs, 12 countries considered all STDs relevant and five countries indicated that the STDs had some influence. Six countries understand the Bruges deliverables as a ‘menu’ for policy-makers to choose from, based on their country’s specific needs. But even countries saying that STDs have had limited influence consider them useful. These countries, which are mostly Member States with well-developed VET systems, acknowledge that the STDs stimulated discussion, experience exchange and cooperation between countries and so encouraged policy learning.

Figure 23. **Impact of STDs on key national issues requiring reforms (number of countries)**



Source: Cedefop interviews with DGVT, 2013-14.

6.3. From ideas to action: implementing VET policies

6.3.1. Where to go: focus of national VET policy developments and reforms

When asked about the main national strategic policy changes in VET since 2010, most (23) countries’ DGVTs emphasise systemic improvements as overall priority (see Figure 24). This group includes countries with well-established VET systems as well as Member States where VET is not yet very well developed.

Box 50. Implementing STDs: how do they interact?

The STDs have been established as subobjectives and, thus, as means to achieve the strategic objectives of the Copenhagen process and the Bruges communiqué. In consequence, they are interrelated. This is confirmed by a correlation analysis of the measures countries have implemented since 2010 or are preparing to implement. Taking into account all the areas that countries have worked on, such an analysis indicates policies that complement each other. Such links should not be over interpreted; correlations of this kind do not prove causal relationships.

- (a) There is a clear link between progress towards developing entrepreneurship in VET (STD15), and ensuring good cooperation between VET institutions and enterprises (STD5b). This correlation is not a surprise as the development of entrepreneurship education and the teaching of entrepreneurial skills is highly supported by the business community and benefits from the cooperation between VET providers and companies.
- (b) Countries that develop monitoring systems on transitions from learning to work (STD6) are actively using them to support participation of at-risk groups in VET (STD19). Legislation and availability of data that allow monitoring learning paths and labour market outcomes are important elements of such systems. Feedback on the employability of VET graduates for VET institutions (STD5c) is linked to both development of monitoring systems and to their use to address the problems of at-risk groups through VET.
- (c) Efforts in combating early leaving from education (STD16) are linked to the development of basic





skills/key competences and career management skills (STD4) and to measures acquainting young people with VET in compulsory (general) education (STD2). To prevent early leaving, national core curricula often include skills that allow young people to manage their careers from an early age. VET and work-experience ‘tasters’ in compulsory education help them choose a suitable learning/career pathway which prevents wrong choices and lowers the risk of early leaving later on.

- (d) Efforts to reduce early leaving from education and training (STD16) (work-based learning, youth guarantees) are also linked to measures increasing training participation of the low-skilled and other at-risk groups (STD17) and participation in CVET (STD7). Guidelines and strategies for CVET and LLL are usually complemented by policy measures specifically supporting at-risk groups.
- (e) Measures for VET attractiveness and excellence (campaigns, fairs) (STD1 and STD2) are linked to measures that help to develop key competences (STD4). This suggests that measures for VET attractiveness often go together with a strong focus on key competences, to make VET a more natural and modern choice for young people.
- (f) Measures to ensure effective and innovative, quality-assured use of technology in VET (STD14) frequently go together with policies to encourage partnerships for creativity and innovation (STD13). This often involves knowledge exchange platforms and the development of new learning methods. There are also links between creating innovation and creativity partnerships and increasing training participation of low-skilled and other at-risk groups (STD17) and strengthening the role of ICT in promoting active learning (STD18).

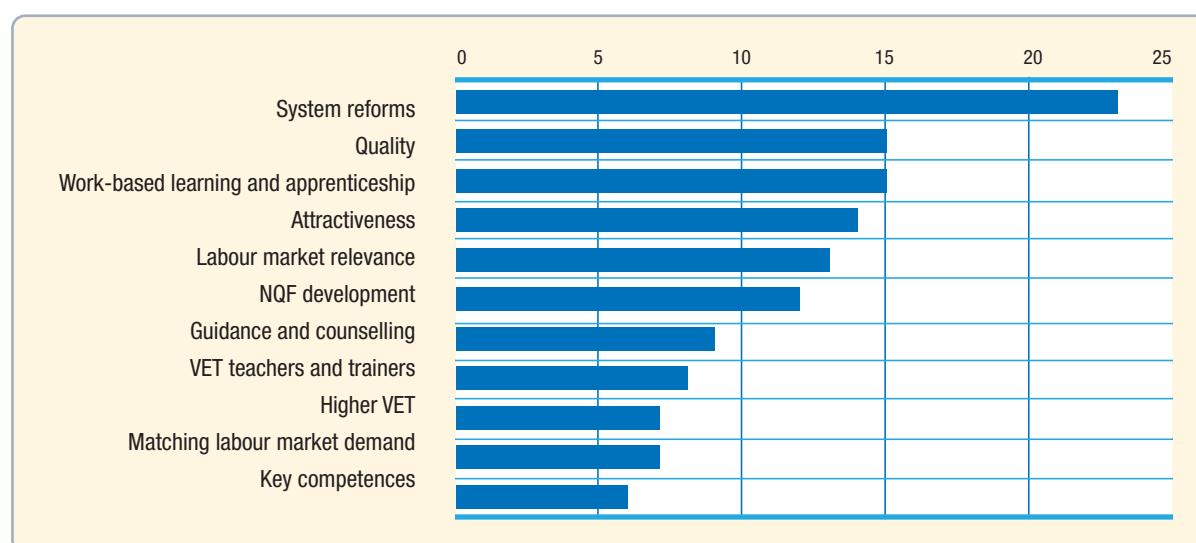
NB: Only significant moderate to strong correlations ($r > 0.5$) are reported on. The correlations have been estimated on the basis of the number of policy options countries have worked on under each STD. When the same policy is part of several STDs, the correlations have been estimated without the overlapping policy options.

Systemic improvements in most countries entail a combination of legislative reform, review and adaptation of existing programmes or pathways and qualifications and introduction of new ones, strengthening work-based learning, curriculum reform, restructuring provision and increasing stakeholder involvement. Improving quality and strengthening quality assurance has been a strategic priority for 15 countries, as was promoting work-based learning and apprenticeship. Both areas have been a priority in north and south European countries. More than 10 countries prioritised VET attractiveness, labour market relevance or the development of NQFs.

Guidance and counselling, investing in VET teacher and trainer training, establishing VET at higher levels, matching labour market demand and key competences, have each been priority areas for six to nine countries.

It may seem surprising that NQF development does not top the list even though NQFs are the most tangible outcomes of the Copenhagen process. However, DGVTs’ emphasis on VET systems reform masks the fact that the work on EQF/NQFs has been triggering many systemic reforms, aiming at improving system coherence, relevance and quality of qualifications, developing new pathways and programmes or increasing accountability of ET institutions. What started as a process within VET to make qualifications easier to understand and compare, has developed into a tool that does more than shedding better light on VET qualifications. Development of NQFs, including all levels and types of qualifications, places VET in the wider context of the overall education and training system and helps link programmes and qualifications across education sectors into learning pathways visible to individuals; this aids access, participation and progression of individuals. Implementation of NQFs based on learning outcomes is still at an early stage, but their impact is becoming visible, as several countries are redesigning their qualifications, standards and curricula based on learning outcomes. When linking qualifications to the EQF, countries like the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania and Poland identified gaps in their qualifications structure at EQF/NQF level 5. Subsequently, the Czech Republic and Estonia have established a basis to develop initial

Figure 24. Focus of VET policy reform since 2010 (number of countries)



NB: Data refer to highlights, other initiatives were also mentioned.
Source: Cedefop interviews with DGVT, 2013-14.

education and training qualifications at this level, while Lithuania and Poland are still discussing this option. A recent Cedefop study (Cedefop, 2014f) points out that qualifications at this level are diverse in function and purpose and develop dynamically. As they develop specialist knowledge directly relevant for the labour market, EQF level 5 qualifications can serve as a bridge between education sectors and so contribute to making education and training systems more flexible.

The value of different qualification types has been discussed further in the development of frameworks that link qualifications of different types and levels in a coherent and consistent way.

Developments illustrate a dynamic process, in many cases also a step by step approach, where the focus has been on NQF which then triggered work on validation, quality assurance and ECVET.

Attempts to include qualifications acquired outside formal education and training, as for instance in Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden, shifts the attention to methodological questions of how to assure the quality of VET qualifications and certification processes. As qualification levels, qualifications and standards are described in terms of expected learning outcomes, quality assurance arrangements are

required to verify whether learners' achievements actually meet these.

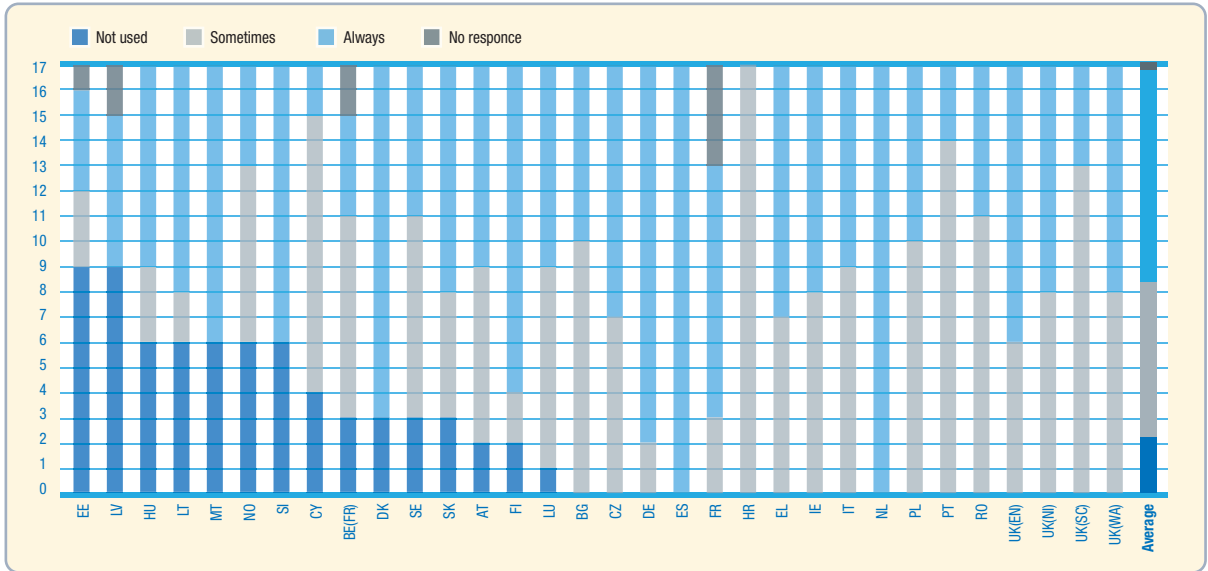
Further, quality assurance indicators, as foreseen in the EQAVET recommendation, aim to help understand the relevance of the learning outcomes, for entry into the labour market.

Outcome indicators, notably those on destination, employability and occupation of VET learners, as well as satisfaction of individuals and employers with the acquired skills/competences, are, however, not often used. This coincides with the Cedefop findings on countries' attainment of STDs related to monitoring transition and employability, which indicate comparatively little progress to date (see also Section 2.6).

For CVET, 'effectiveness of mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market' and 'effectiveness of schemes used to promote better access to VET' are among those that countries use the least.

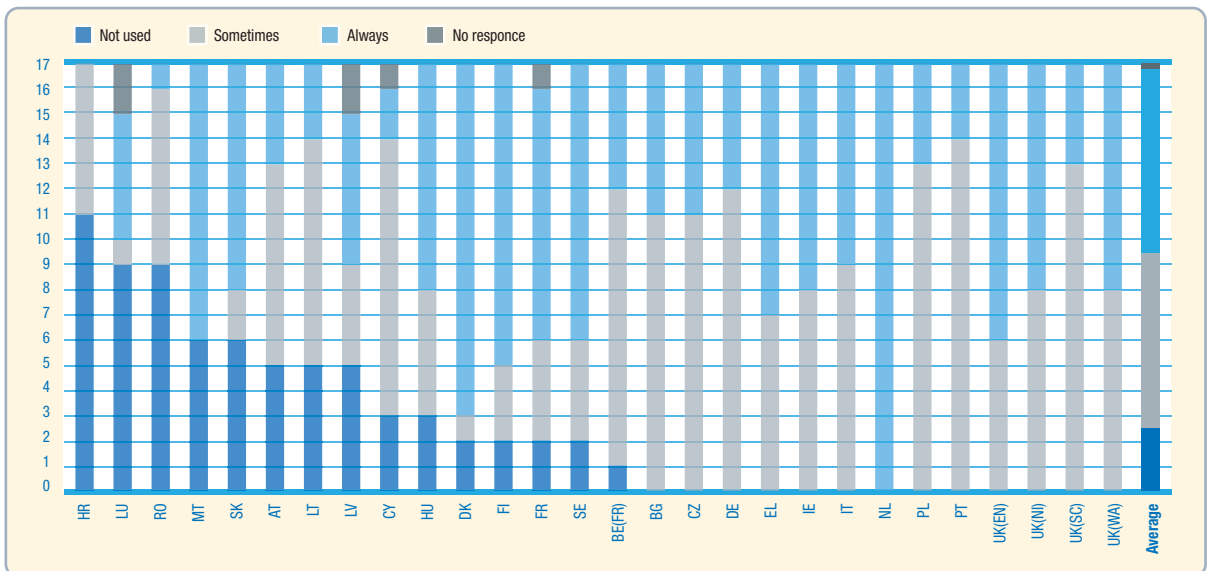
Capitalising on the potential of EU tools and principles requires awareness of citizens and stakeholders but information from ReferNet suggests that strategies to communicate the implementation and the value of these tools are still missing in many countries. Most countries do not have comprehensive communication strategies. Exceptions are Denmark, Sweden and the UK (Scotland), that do comprehensively communicate value and synergy of the different tools.

Figure 25. Use of EQAVET indicators in IVET



NB: BE (FI) did not provide data on the use of indicators for IVET. Iceland did not participate in the survey.
 Source: Cedefop based on 2013 EQAVET survey (EQAVET, 2013).

Figure 26. Use of EQAVET indicators in CVET



NB: Belgium (FI), Estonia, Spain, Norway and Slovenia did not provide data on the use of indicators for CVET. Iceland did not participate in the survey.
 Source: Cedefop based on 2013 EQAVET Secretariat survey (EQAVET, 2013).

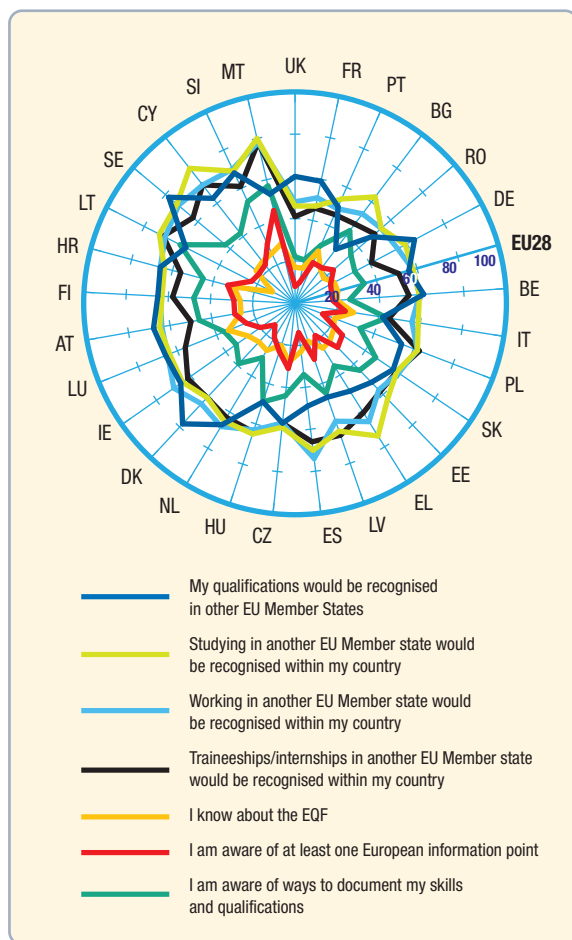
Many countries also limit their communication efforts to stakeholders closely involved in education and training and have made little progress in raising the awareness of end-users.

This is also visible in the results of the recent Eurobarometer on the European area of skills and qualifications (see Figure 27). Only a minority

of citizens know about the EQF, though there are considerable variations across countries. More citizens are aware of ways to document their qualifications, but there are several countries where most citizens are not aware of such tools (e.g. Belgium, Ireland, France, the UK). Despite limited awareness of EU tools, many citizens

think positively about the recognition of their qualifications internationally. In most countries, more than half of the respondents to the Eurobarometer survey think that their qualifications would be recognised in another EU country and that studies, work experience and trainee- or internships would be recognised in their own country. This is a surprising result as recognition of qualifications across borders can be difficult in practice.

Figure 27. **Citizens responding positively (%) to statements on EU tools and transferability of qualifications (%)**



Source: European Commission, 2014a.

If the tools are to benefit end-users, they need to be aware how these tools can support them and what their added value is. This requires more attention to the target groups, effective communication and guidance, as the consultation on a potential EASQ confirms (European Commission, 2014a).

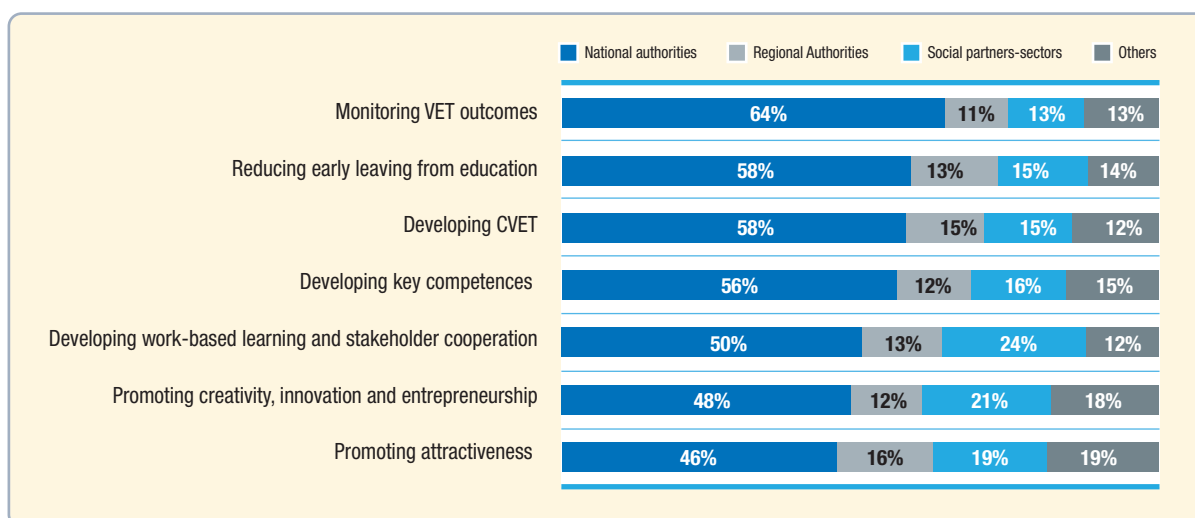
Until now, European tools and principles have predominantly been taken forward as separate initiatives which are only partly linked. While this was necessary at the initial and developmental stages, this ‘tool-by-tool’ approach has now reached its limit. As recent Cedefop studies (Cedefop, forthcoming c; forthcoming d; forthcoming e; forthcoming f; forthcoming g) point out, a more comprehensive and long-term strategy is needed. The tools should no longer be objectives in themselves but focus on the needs of the end-users in education and training and the labour market.

6.3.2. Who takes the lead?

VET relevance requires strong connections to the labour market and occupations, which can be established best if stakeholders are involved in VET and its development. To understand better the different roles of stakeholders in the process of adapting policies and measures, or introducing new ones, the ReferNet questionnaires that formed the basis for the progress analysis in Part 1 of this report also included questions on who initiated policies at national level ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

Figure 28 presents a synthesis of findings arranged by policy aim. In most cases, national authorities have taken the lead in reforms: national governments have been responsible for initiating more than half of all policy measures and initiatives since 2010. Social partner actions accounted for between 13% and 24% and have been most significant for the development of work-based learning/apprenticeship, promoting creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship and raising the attractiveness of VET. Especially in countries with low social partner involvement, VET reforms and raising awareness of their importance would benefit from wider participation of social partners, which not only requires an open attitude from national or regional authorities, or even legislative provisions, but also proactive and competent inputs.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ The questionnaires did not systematically cover regional initiatives, which are important in countries where the competence for VET lies at regional level.

Figure 28. **Initiators of VET policies and measures by policy aim (%)**

Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

6.3.3. The role of social partners

The role of social partners is more important than analysis of initiating policies and measures suggests. Because of national specificities such as the institutional context, the organisation of the education and training system, the industrial relations context, and country-specific political and economic issues (Cedefop, 2010), there are substantial differences between countries.

Focus groups with national social partner representatives in the ACVT are the main source used to reflect on the role of social partners. These groups have discussed social partner roles and responsibilities for measures and policies in the specific context of countries and recent trends ⁽⁵⁶⁾. The following gives an impression of the arrangements and developments in the countries in the focus groups.

In many countries, trade unions have an advisory or consulting role (e.g. in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Italy, Cyprus, Poland, the UK). In some, this is combined with joint responsibility for curricula and implementing measures. In Germany and Austria, for instance, they have shared responsibility for quality of occupational standards and in Denmark and Latvia for skills development.

Trade unions take responsibility for pro-

gramme content in Denmark and Lithuania and influence the design and implementation of apprenticeship schemes in the Netherlands. Being involved from the planning until the implementation phase, Lithuanian and Turkish social partners see themselves as full partners in the VET reforms. In Finland, although the role of trade unions is formally only advisory, their knowledge and understanding of VET makes them sometimes the de facto policy-makers together with the government.

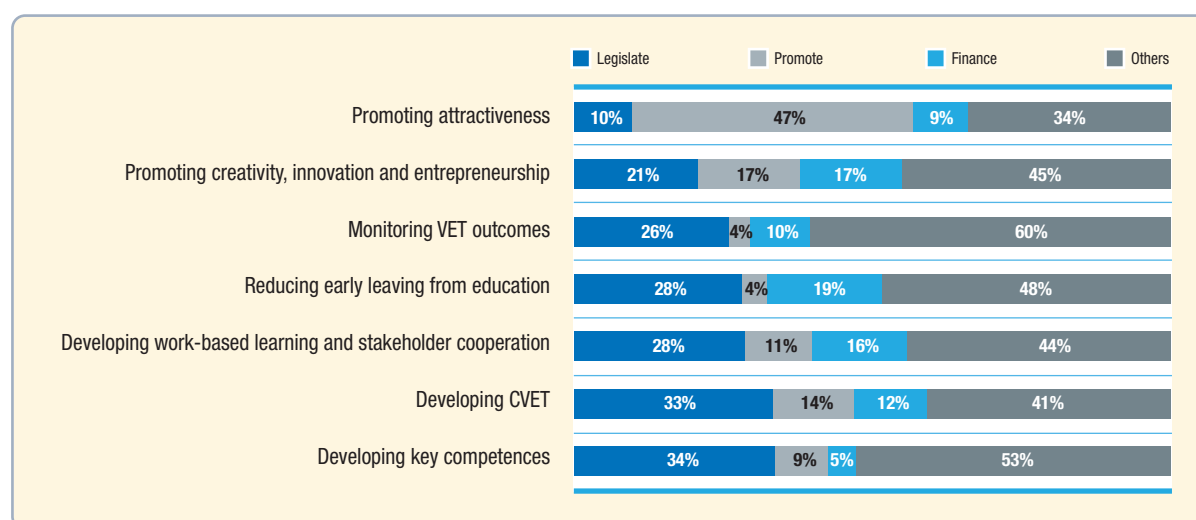
Employer organisations and chambers play a major role in some countries. The Austrian federation of industry initiated a platform to discuss emerging skill needs and employers propose VET policies and measures based on skills analysis. The Greek employer organisation has launched studies to map future skill needs in the most important economic sectors and supported entrepreneurship and innovation programmes.

Swedish employers have developed materials for schools, with the aim of strengthening links with business. Employers in Latvia contribute to planning student enrolment. In other countries (such as the Czech Republic) the role of employers has remained limited to advising.

The role of social partners in VET policy and implementation in the past four years has been increasing, especially in countries with a long tradition of social partner involvement in education and training. This trend towards

⁽⁵⁶⁾ As fewer than half the countries' ACVT trade union and employer representatives participated in the focus groups, the following cannot be comprehensive.

Figure 29. Approaches used to implement VET policies and measures by policy aim (%)



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

increased participation in the development and implementation of VET policies is welcomed by the social partners themselves. In countries where their role has remained mostly consultative, public authorities dominate the process and the possibilities for social partner involvement remain limited.

6.3.4. Approaches to achieving policy aims

Countries have various approaches to implementing policies and measures. The initiatives reported by ReferNet, according to the policy options defined by Cedefop, have been clustered into four different categories representing different approaches: legislate, finance, promote and other⁽⁵⁷⁾.

Adopting new laws, regulations or other forms of legislation is most common for measures to promote CVET and key competences. Regulating curriculum reforms or development of standards and laws establishing entitlements to CVET are often used. An example is the Luxembourg law establishing a right to 80 training days during a career in the private sector.

Using financial incentives for learners, enterprises or VET institutions is most common in measures to reduce early leaving. In many

cases these financial incentives stimulate enterprises to offer training or employment, help learners at risk of leaving early to remain in education and training, or assist early leavers to access second chance options. Examples are scholarships for VET learners in Lithuania, encouraging them to remain in VET, and VET institutes in Cyprus offering free of charge training for those who want to acquire or complete a qualification.

Financial incentives are also used in measures promoting creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship or work-based learning and cooperation. Examples are EU funds for innovation partnerships between VET providers and other stakeholders in Croatia, and linking funding for VET providers to employment outcomes to encourage cooperation with employment services in the UK (England).

Measures and policies that focus on promoting VET (such as through awareness campaigns or skills competitions) are not very common, except for measures to support attractiveness, which are, in some cases, part of work-based learning or CVET measures. Some creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship policies and measures to support CVET participation have, however, also been supported by promotional activities. Examples include local development agencies in Belgium (Dg) promoting entrepreneurship schools and the adult education festival in Montenegro.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ The categories legislate, finance and promote represent the dominating approach that countries have used to implement policies or measures. Policies and measures without a dominant approach were assigned to the 'other' category.

6.4. Understanding progress towards Bruges strategic objectives

The policy measures that countries have undertaken to pursue the STDs ultimately serve the Bruges' strategic objectives. It is, however, difficult to quantify their impact. Not all measures have the same level of systemic impact and the effects of education and training policies and reforms take time to materialise.

Nevertheless, policy measures reflect countries' efforts to achieve the strategic objectives and, thus, more relevant and inclusive VET; this improves citizens' chances to find and sustain employment and contributes to economic development.

To provide a synthesised overview, Cedefop uses policy priority profiles. They visualise the focus of policy measures in terms of the ET 2020 objectives:

- (a) attractiveness, relevance and efficiency;
- (b) LLL and mobility;
- (c) creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship;
- (d) equity, social cohesion and active citizenship.

The different colour shades indicate status of implementation: in place by 2010, implemented or planned. These profiles help to understand better progress towards the Bruges strategic objectives.

Based on the patterns of the policy priority profiles, countries have been grouped in four clusters. Such clusters are necessary to aid interpretation and detect patterns of development. However, they do not do justice to the very specific situation of each individual country. In consequence, and even though the following clusters represent groups of countries with similar policy dynamics, they do not represent homogeneous groups:

- (a) continuous developers: countries with many measures already in place by 2010 and significant developments since then;
- (b) early developers: countries with many measures already in place by 2010 and some developments since then;
- (c) recent implementers: countries with some measures already in place by 2010 and significant developments since then;
- (d) modest developers: countries with slow

progress on at least one strategic objective.

By reflecting on trends and patterns in VET policy implementation, and by linking the findings to several important socioeconomic characteristics, the analysis contributes to a better understanding of recent developments.

6.4.1. Cluster 1: continuous developers

Countries that can be considered continuous developers are Austria, Belgium (Fr), Denmark, Germany, Spain, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Slovenia, and the UK (England, Wales and Scotland). Although these countries appear in the same cluster due to similar patterns of VET policy developments, there are significant differences between them, both in terms of their VET systems and their socioeconomic performance.

Countries with traditionally strong VET systems with well-developed work-based learning such as Denmark, Germany and Austria have low unemployment and youth unemployment, good innovation performance and an average or high participation in LLL and continuing vocational training⁽⁵⁸⁾. The French-speaking community of Belgium shows similar characteristics, although here unemployment is higher and work-based learning is less developed.

France illustrates the heterogeneity of this cluster as it combines tertiary VET provision with well-developed systems for work-based learning in school-based VET and in apprenticeship and continuing vocational training.

In the countries of the UK (England, Wales and Scotland) unemployment is low and the share of highly qualified employment is high. So is participation in LLL and innovation performance. While VET at upper secondary level and work-based learning is less developed, there is significant VET provision at tertiary (international standard classification of education (ISCED) 5B) level.

Latvia, Lithuania and Hungary, and also Malta, have a low share of VET participation at upper secondary level, modest participation in LLL and continuing vocational training, and low

⁽⁵⁸⁾ Although these countries are traditionally considered to have strong VET systems, they are different in terms of the shares of learners in apprenticeship, the prevalence of school-based VET and age groups in VET.

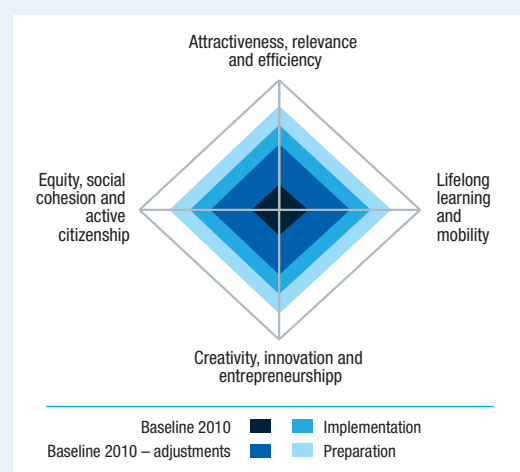
Box 51. Visualising VET reform in policy priority profiles

Indicating the strategic focus of national policy reforms and measures, policy priority profiles visualise developments and progress towards the four ET 2020 objectives. The profiles basically show actions at different levels of implementation in pursuing these objectives. They are based on predefined policy options (developed by Cedefop) that also underlie the analysis in Part 1 of this report. Using the policy option framework, countries' actions towards achieving the STDs have been grouped according to the four ET 2020 objectives.

As many of the deliverables defined in the Bruges communiqué overlap, particular policies can serve several objectives simultaneously, and are reflected as such in multiple dimensions of the profile.

The profiles show four types of information. Different colours show the number of policies and measures a country:

- (a) had in place by 2010 that were not adjusted afterwards (black);
- (b) had in place by 2010 that were adjusted since then (dark blue);
- (c) has implemented since 2010 (blue);
- (d) is preparing to implement (light blue).



It is important to emphasise that while the profiles indicate progress, they are not strict measures of impact. Not all policy measures generate the same level of systemic impact; the effect of reforms in education and training takes time to become visible. But they show the emphasis of VET policies until early 2014, taking into account the (baseline) situation in 2010.

Source: Cedefop.

innovation performance. These countries realised early that there is a need for VET reform and they are in the process of dealing with their challenges.

This also is true for Spain, where many new initiatives to strengthen VET have been taken in recent years, also at regional level. In the follow-up to the economic crisis and depression, which has caused very high levels of unemployment, deep imbalances between labour market needs and qualifications have become apparent and required drastic and rapid reforms, especially of their VET systems.

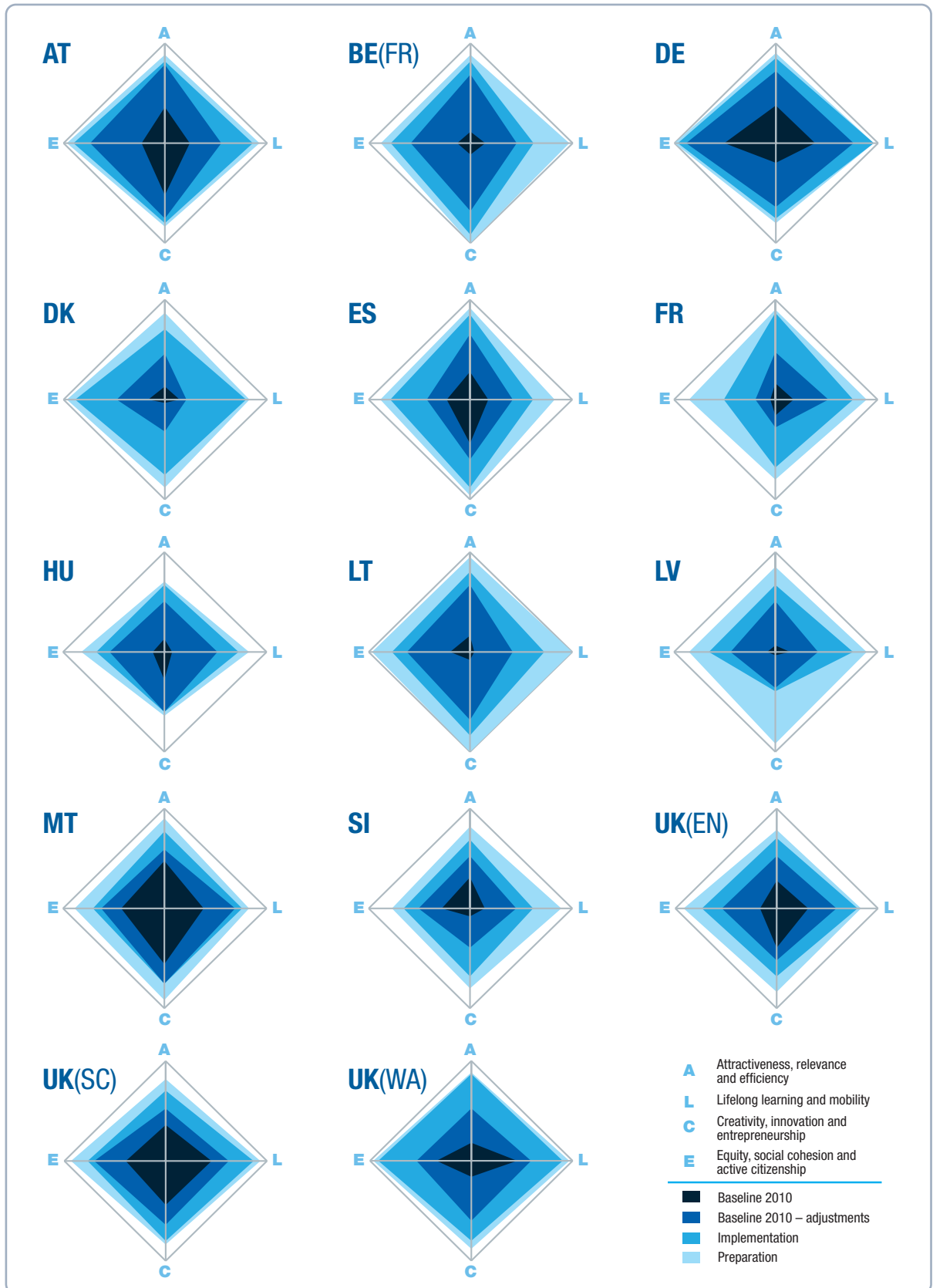
This cluster combines countries which have been consistently, meaning before 2010 and after, pursuing policies to improve and adapt their VET systems. Most of the countries that started out with well-developed systems (Denmark, Germany, Austria, the UK and Malta) have lower than average youth unemployment. Spain, Latvia, Lithuania and Hungary have been responding to new challenges but started out on a weaker basis and have average to high youth unemployment. This also includes France, which has moderate youth unemployment. The policy priority profiles are presented in Figure 30.

With many changes in policies and measures already in place, Austria has continued to develop its VET system. New initiatives have mainly focused on equity, social cohesion and active citizenship and in particular promoting LLL and mobility to address average participation in LLL and continuing vocational training. Its lower share of tertiary graduates is a characteristic of the Austrian system; this is not perceived as a weakness⁽⁵⁹⁾.

Starting from a favourable position in 2010, Germany has been active in updating and adapting existing measures to sustain the strengths of its VET system. Targeting all the long-term objectives, the country has introduced

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Tertiary attainment is 27.3%, low in comparison to the EU average of 36.9% (ISCED 97 levels 5 and 6). It has to be noted, however, that Austria has traditionally obtained a large part of its higher-skilled labour force from VET colleges that grant ISCED 4a/EQF level 5 level qualifications. This is also why the government included this qualification level in its national target (38%). Nevertheless, the government is aware that more tertiary qualifications are necessary, and reaching the target by 2020 would represent an improvement on the current situation (see also European Commission, 2011c).

Figure 30. Policy priority profiles for countries in cluster 1: continuous developers, 2010-14



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

many new measures to respond to the challenges of low LLL participation, plus an ageing labour force a programme for continuous education and training.

Most of the recent actions in Denmark, a country currently working on reform of its VET system, have been new measures. Examples are new initiatives to strengthen creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET and in support of CVET and LLL. Some of the measures to stimulate VET attractiveness, relevance or efficiency remain to be implemented.

In the French-speaking community of Belgium, all objectives have been targeted through new VET policies/measures or the adaptation of existing initiatives. Most of the new measures have been implemented, except for the policies that stimulate LLL and mobility, which are still in preparation.

France has also implemented a range of new initiatives to strengthen VET. Objectives for which a range of measures was already in place in 2010 (attractiveness, relevance and efficiency and LLL and mobility), have been reinforced through coherent policies and tools for LLL and an integrated system of validation and recognition of learning outcomes. Many new measures have helped to support equity, social cohesion and active citizenship and to strengthen creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship.

The countries of the UK (England, Scotland and Wales) have been quite active in recent years to strengthen VET by introducing measures that contribute to all the long-term objectives. There are slight differences between them. England and Scotland, which both had a good starting position in 2010, have changed some of their existing policies and introduced several new measures. In Wales, the focus has been on introducing new policies and initiatives to work towards the long-term objectives. Great efforts have been made particularly to introduce new apprenticeship schemes, which are not yet reflected in statistics on work-based learning.

Malta has taken action to address its low innovation performance and its high share of low-skilled employment, predominantly by adapting measures already in place by 2010. Some new measures to increase VET attractiveness, relevance and efficiency and to support equity, social cohesion and active citizenship have been

implemented but most new initiatives after 2010 remain to be fully implemented.

Facing high unemployment and youth unemployment, a high share of low employed and a significant rate of overqualification, Spain has, both before and after 2010, undertaken a range of efforts and reforms to strengthen its VET system. Supporting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship, and strengthening creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship have been priorities. The country is also expanding opportunities for work-based learning and apprenticeship-type schemes. Although progress has been made in supporting LLL and mobility, more work is needed, as several initiatives to engage more people in learning remain to be fully implemented.

For all four strategic objectives, Slovenia has combined updating existing initiatives with the introduction of new measures. Most of the country's recent efforts have focused on strengthening creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET. Despite recent progress, more work is still needed to make VET more attractive and responsive to the needs of the labour market and to increase LLL participation. A range of initiatives started in recent years to achieve this are not yet (fully) implemented.

Hungary has taken action to address low participation in LLL and continuing vocational training, but there is scope to expand the efforts. It will take some time before the process set in motion by recent VET reforms will lead to stronger VET provision at upper secondary and tertiary level. For all strategic objectives, the country has focused on updating the measures it already had in place by 2010. While there are signs of progress in addressing the long-term objectives, tackling high youth unemployment and low innovation performance will require more action and, given the present weak economic situation, long-term commitments.

Low innovation performance is also an area of concern for Latvia. Most recent VET policies targeted towards creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship remain to be fully implemented. LLL and mobility have been on the agenda, as well as equity, social cohesion and active citizenship. Several new measures implemented after 2010 address these long-term objectives.

Lithuania has worked to increase LLL and mobility, but several initiatives are yet to be fully implemented; this is true to a lesser extent for the actions addressing the other long-term objectives. Fully implementing current reform should help to strengthen VET provision at upper secondary level, reduce the rate of overqualification, and support innovation performance. Attempts to increase apprenticeship and work-based learning may play an important role in this context.

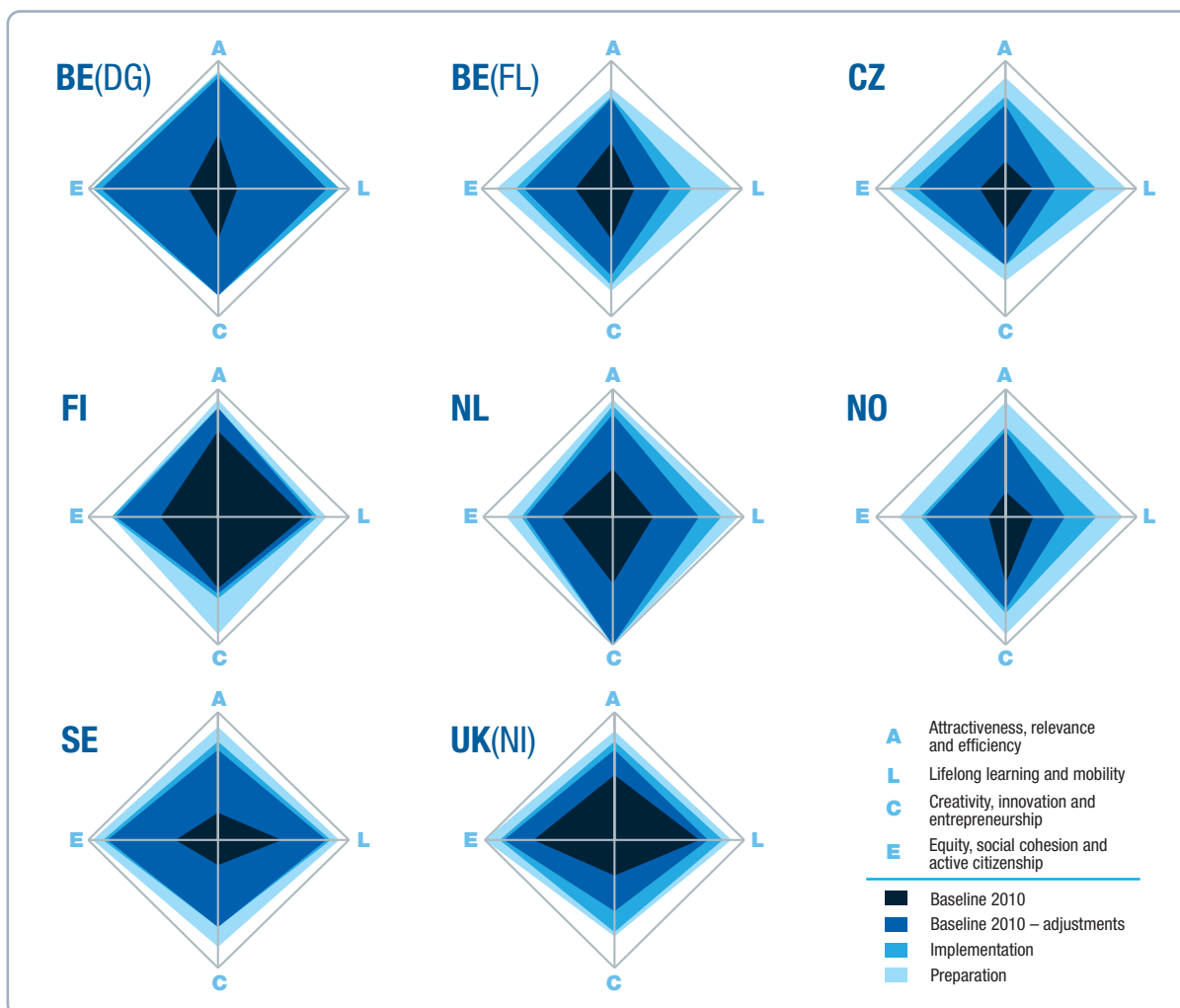
6.4.2. Cluster 2: early developers

Countries belonging to this cluster are Belgium (Dg and Fl), the Czech Republic, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK (Northern Ireland). The countries in this group share several characteristics. They have

comparatively low youth unemployment and overall unemployment is also low. Participation in LLL is average to high and participation in continuing vocational training is high. Most of the countries in the cluster have high participation in VET at upper secondary level and a less frequent incidence of overqualification or low innovation performance.

There seems to be no common or clear pattern for implementation of apprenticeship-type training, but it appears to be less common in Belgium, Sweden and the UK (Northern Ireland) than in the other countries in this group. However, the effects of new policies supporting apprenticeship-type training cannot be immediately successful and may not yet be reflected in statistical data.

Figure 31. Policy priority profiles for countries in cluster 2: early developers, 2010-14



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

As indicated by the name ‘early developers’, this group had reached a fairly mature state of policy implementation in 2010, but fewer new policies have been put in place since then. The group is fairly homogeneous. From a policy point of view one general concern remains: continuous efforts in all areas are necessary in all the countries to secure and sustain their well-developed VET systems. The policy priority profiles are presented in Figure 31.

Finland had a good starting position in 2010 and has continued the work to make VET more attractive, relevant and efficient. It supports equity, social cohesion and active citizenship, mostly by adapting measures that were already in place by 2010. The country has high participation in LLL and continuing vocational training, low unemployment, and relatively low youth unemployment. A limited number of new initiatives have been implemented to strengthen LLL and mobility further. Building on several measures already in place, Finland has also stepped up its efforts to encourage creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET. Some new initiatives have been implemented and several are being prepared for (full) implementation.

Actions in Sweden in the past few years have focused on adapting existing measures with some new ones implemented. Further measures for all strategic objectives are being prepared for implementation. To supplement a well-developed school-based VET system, reform has been undertaken to promote apprenticeship training.

Norway has introduced several new measures to increase LLL and mobility to strengthen its already high participation in continuous learning and training. For the other strategic objectives, the focus has been on preparing new measures for future implementation and on adapting measures already in place by 2010.

Starting from a favourable situation in 2010, adjustments to existing measures have also dominated recent VET policies in the Netherlands. For all strategic objectives, many initiatives have been updated or changed. The new measures taken mostly focused on promoting LLL and mobility.

The German-speaking community of Belgium has adapted most of the measures it already had in place by 2010. Since then, few new measures

have been implemented. The Flemish community of Belgium has also adapted or changed a range of its initiatives already in place in 2010 and several new measures to support LLL and mobility have been implemented since. Several other actions are under preparation but have not yet reached the status of implementation.

The UK (Northern Ireland) has taken action to increase LLL and mobility and to encourage creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET. To work towards these strategic objectives, the country has combined adaptation of some policies and programmes with the introduction of new measures. Increasing VET attractiveness and supporting its relevance and efficiency, and encouraging equity, social cohesion and citizenship have also been on the agenda, but most of the new initiatives introduced after 2010 to address these strategic objectives are not yet (fully) implemented.

The Czech Republic, which has moderate participation in LLL, has focused on increasing LLL and mobility by introducing new measures. It has also worked on the other strategic objectives, mostly by changing or aligning initiatives the country already had in place by 2010.

6.4.3. Cluster 3: recent implementers

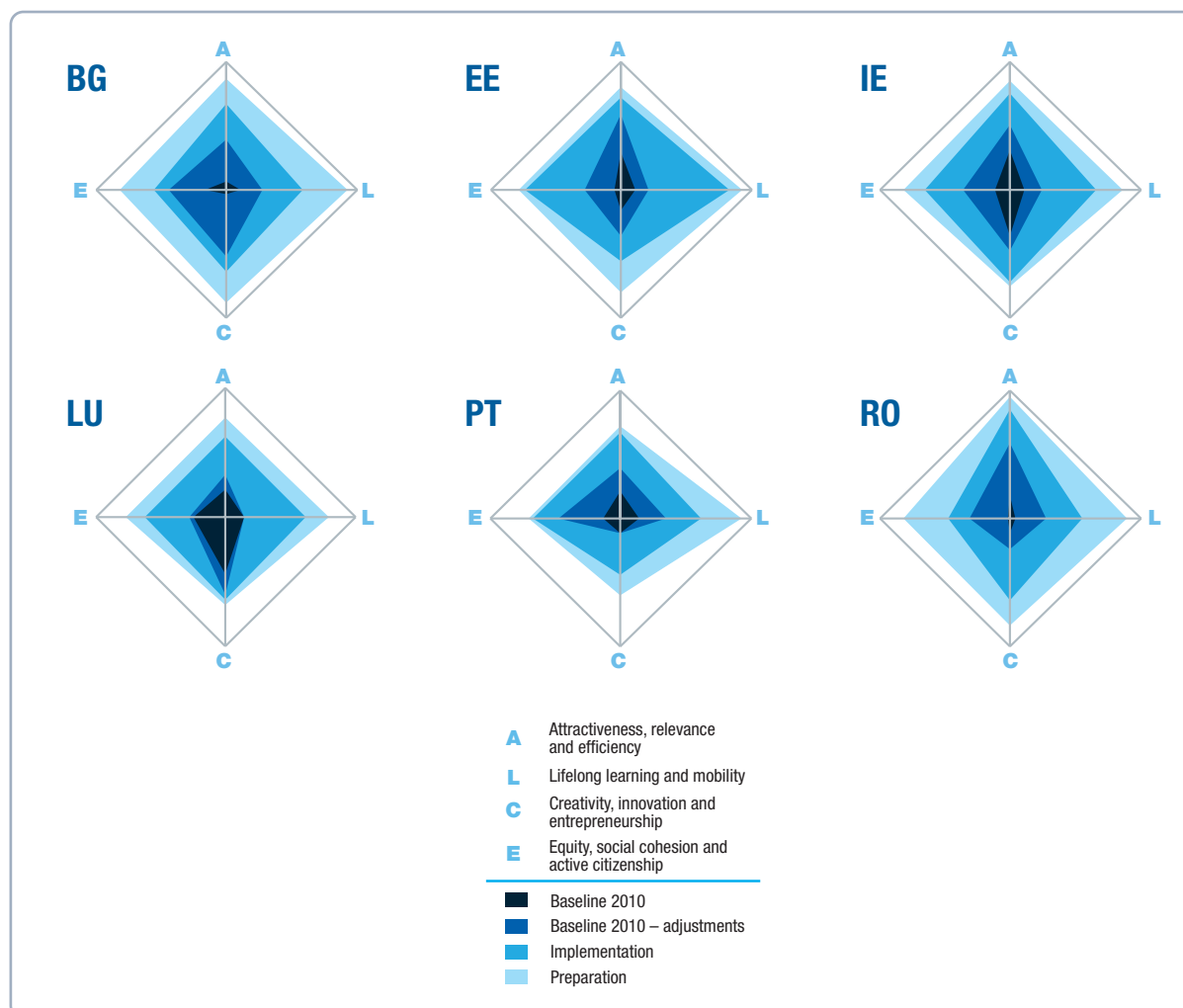
Bulgaria, Estonia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Romania can be considered recent implementers.

The group is heterogeneous. Ireland and Luxembourg are countries which have long VET traditions and institutions; this has not been the case for Bulgaria, Estonia and Romania.

Economic performance and the employment situation in the countries is also different: Ireland and Bulgaria and Portugal suffer from especially high levels of youth unemployment.

The countries in this cluster have been grouped together as actions and policy measures have considerably increased after 2010. It is not surprising that, from a policy perspective, the focus in these countries should be on (successful) implementation, which will require persistence and flexible adaptation. Bulgaria, Ireland and Romania need to address low LLL participation and to develop a systematic approach for the upskilling and continuous training of those already in the labour force. Figure 32 presents the policy priority profiles.

Figure 32. Policy priority profiles for countries in cluster 3: recent implementers, 2010-14



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

Luxembourg stands out from countries in the cluster as it has low youth unemployment, a high share of highly qualified employment, high share of VET participation at upper secondary level, and high provision of VET at tertiary (ISCED 5B) level. The country has complemented VET policies and actions existing in 2010 with a range of new initiatives for all strategic objectives except for creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, where recent action appears limited. Innovation is an area where the country already performs relatively well and it is a strategic objective for which it already had several measures in place by 2010.

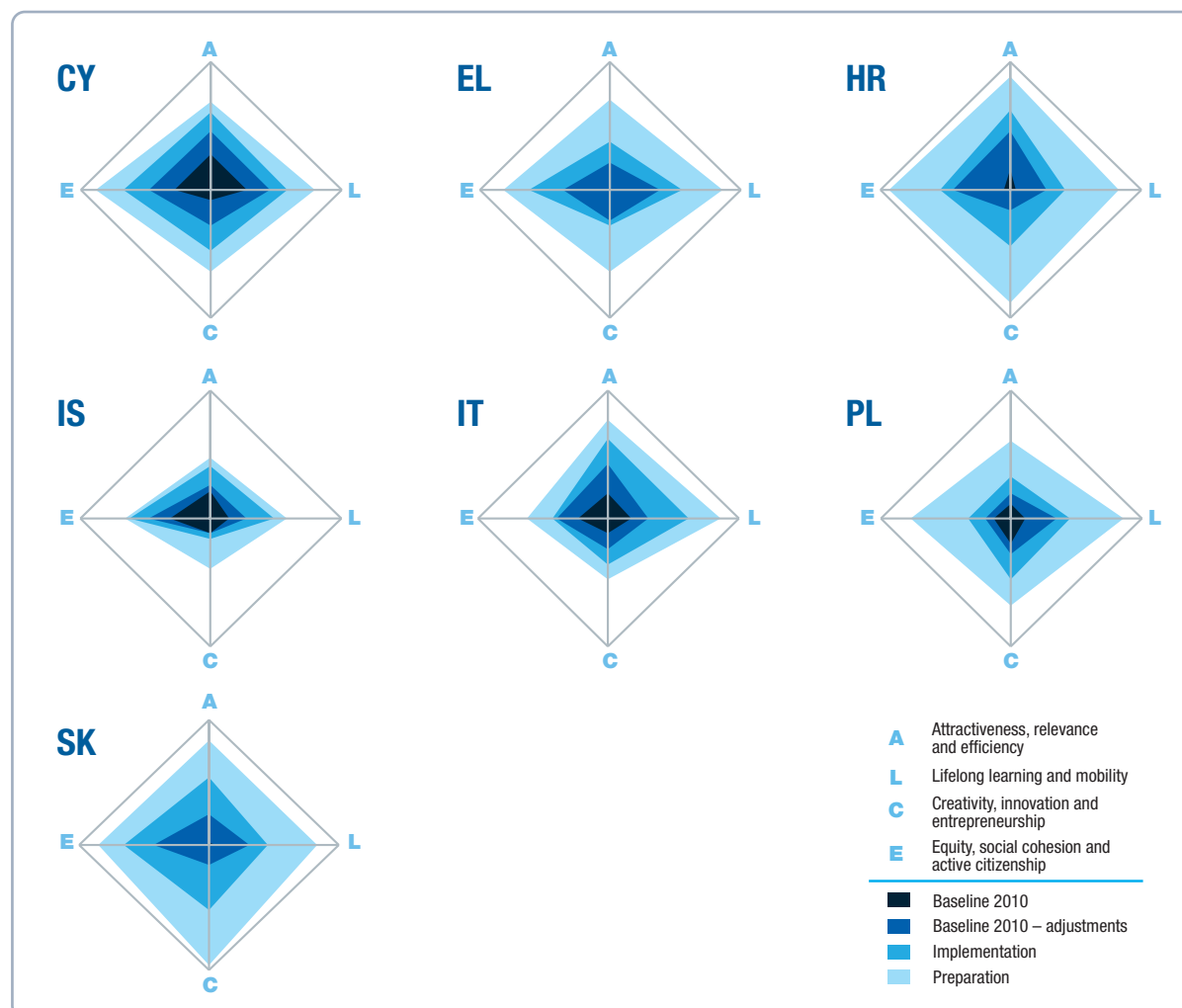
Ireland has average participation in LLL, high youth unemployment and relatively low VET participation at upper secondary level.

Encouraging LLL and mobility has been a priority for the country and has also focused attention on promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship.

Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship and encouraging LLL and mobility has been a clear focus of recent VET developments in Estonia. Less prominent are new initiatives to promote VET attractiveness, relevance and efficiency, and new measures supporting creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship; these are strategic objectives which had already been targeted by a range of measures before 2010.

Bulgaria has focused most of its recent efforts on making VET more relevant, attractive and efficient, and on stimulating LLL and mobility. The country has taken action to address its low

Figure 33. Policy priority profiles for countries in cluster 4: modest developers, 2010-14



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

participation in LLL and continuing vocational training. Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship and encouraging creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship have also been on the agenda, but to a lesser extent. Actions and reforms for all strategic objectives have not yet been (fully) implemented.

Portugal faces high unemployment and youth unemployment and a relatively high share of low-skilled employment. Starting from a relatively weak position, the country has progressed towards all strategic objectives and, apart from actions taken to support LLL and mobility, most have also been implemented. Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, however, remain an area needing further attention, in particular because of the relatively unfavourable

starting position in 2010. Although a range of measures supporting creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship have been taken in recent years, more work remains to be done in support.

With many initiatives not yet fully implemented, the same holds for Romania. The country has focused its efforts on making VET more attractive, relevant and efficient and on encouraging creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET. Romania also implemented several new initiatives promoting LLL to target low participation rates.

6.4.4. Cluster 4: modest developers

The countries in this cluster are Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Poland and Slovakia. They have fairly high unemployment and especially

high youth unemployment, low or moderate participation in LLL, and, typically, low innovation performance. Iceland, however, with lower unemployment figures and higher participation rates in LLL, is something of an outlier but has, like Greece and Italy, an above average share of low qualified. Greece also has, at the same time, an above average share of tertiary graduates.

Most of the modest developers have low or average shares of students in VET at upper secondary level; none appears to be strong in providing VET at tertiary (ISCED 5B) level. Although progress has been made, work-based learning is not very well developed in these countries. From a geopolitical viewpoint, the Mediterranean countries – Greece, Italy and Cyprus – share some common characteristics and differ from the (sub)group of Croatia, Poland and Slovakia.

From a policy point of view, modest developers need to speed up reforms in at least one policy area and would, in most cases, benefit from a more comprehensive approach; some, such as Croatia, Iceland, Italy, Poland and Slovakia, are already addressing these shortcomings systematically. For those countries with high youth unemployment, further efforts towards work-based learning and renewing apprenticeships and similar schemes may provide some short-term relief and are necessary to achieve long-term improvements.

Figure 33 presents the policy priority profiles.

Iceland is the only country in the cluster with high LLL participation, low unemployment and youth unemployment, and a favourable innovation performance. However, it has low participation in VET at upper secondary level and an above average share of low-skilled employment. Despite some recent policies to make VET more attractive, relevant and efficient, this is an area with limited progress.

Increasing VET attractiveness and making it more relevant and efficient is also at an early stage in Poland, but there are challenges for the other strategic objectives. Facing low participation rates in LLL, high youth unemployment and low innovation performance, the country has worked on all of these, but many of the measures remain to be fully implemented.

Implementing or mainstreaming initiatives is also an issue for Croatia, with most measures still

in preparation. The country scores below average in terms of policies to support LLL and mobility. VET at secondary level and work-based learning (apprenticeship training) is more developed than in several other countries in cluster 4, but LLL participation, continuing vocational training in enterprises, and overall innovation performance are low.

Slovakia has worked to encourage LLL and mobility, but it remains an area where more efforts are needed, as many of the actions remain to be fully implemented. There has been significant attention to equity, social cohesion and active citizenship. Starting from a relatively unfavourable position in 2010, the country has also worked on making VET more attractive, relevant and efficient and stimulating creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Italy has made progress towards increasing LLL and mobility, but has not advanced greatly in terms of promoting equity, social cohesion and citizenship. Participation in LLL and continuing vocational training in enterprises is around the average, but both youth unemployment and overqualification among young workers are relatively high, indicating that there are significant mismatches on the labour market. There are also significant regional disparities. The country is addressing challenges by reforming apprenticeship and introducing it at tertiary level. Action has also been taken to strengthen validation mechanisms and guidance and counselling.

Cyprus scores low in terms of attractiveness, relevance and efficiency of VET. Both the country's 2010 baseline and the developments until 2014 are below average. Overall, progress towards the strategic objectives appears limited and many planned measures remain to be fully implemented. Mismatch on the labour market is pervasive; the large share of highly qualified workers does not match labour market demand, resulting in significant overqualification.

In Greece, most of the measures taken in the past few years are still in preparation. Many policies and actions have been agreed or legislated, but have not yet been (fully) implemented. Although there have been moves towards strengthening apprenticeship, progress has been limited in increasing VET attractiveness, relevance and efficiency. Because of very high

unemployment, especially youth unemployment, relatively low participation in VET at secondary level, and low LLL and continuing vocational training participation, there is urgent need for effective implementation and further reforms.

6.5. Achievements, challenges and lessons learned

The Copenhagen/Bruges process has been a major factor in promoting VET reform in European countries. VET has taken a more prominent position on national policy agendas and, for many national policy-makers, the Bruges communiqué has become both an inspiration and a catalyst for reform. The Bruges STDs helped to focus reforms on key issues. In many countries, the deliverables and their implications for VET systems and policies have also set in motion discussions on how to organise cooperation and how to share responsibilities between stakeholders. Implementation of European tools, notably EQF and NQFs including all levels and types of qualifications, has required involvement of a broad range of stakeholders from all education sectors, labour market and social partners.

Countries did not start from scratch when they started working towards the Bruges STDs, but they did start from very different positions in terms of the maturity, competitiveness and effectiveness of their VET systems. Especially for countries where the VET system was not well developed, this has been a challenge. Addressing 22 different STDs in a four year period is not easy, especially if resources are scarce or even reduced because of austerity measures in a lasting economic crisis. Despite the fact that EU funding has helped reforms in countries severely affected by the economic downturn, it is not a surprise that countries had to prioritise and concentrate their efforts on some of the areas covered by the STDs. Resource constraints also made countries use project-based approaches with less systemic impact. Although such initiatives may provide stakeholders with good examples of practice, to embed them into VET systems requires further upscaling and mainstreaming measures.

Cedefop's analysis shows that there are several common patterns in VET policy development across Europe. This section reviews the most important trends and highlights the achievements of the past years while also pointing out some of the challenges. The analysis builds on several sources of information. Findings presented earlier in this report have been complemented with others emerging from ACVT focus group discussions⁽⁶⁰⁾.

Work-based learning, measures to make VET more inclusive (reducing early school leaving and promoting LLL for groups at risk) and the development of NQFs have been high on national policy agendas. In most countries, encouraging creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship has been less prominent. Monitoring and feedback to inform VET provision and continuing professional development for VET teachers and trainers are also areas with limited progress.

6.5.1. Strengthening work-based learning

Work-based learning is becoming increasingly popular in Europe. It has been part of the response to alleviating the impact of the economic crisis; this made labour market mismatches more visible, with increasing unemployment and overqualification that disproportionately affected young people in many countries. Despite this increasing unemployment, in some countries skills shortages in particular sectors remained high, limiting growth potential and curtailing opportunities for economic recovery.

Increasing work-based learning is not a magic solution to resolve high youth unemployment, but it contributes to a better functioning labour market. Countries with strong VET and apprenticeship systems tend to have lower youth unemployment rates. Studies have shown that work-based learning has important positive labour market outcomes.

Increasing recognition of the benefits of work-based learning has led to a renaissance of

⁽⁶⁰⁾ The starting points for the discussions in the focus groups were two main areas of reform: one area where progress has been quite pronounced, the labour market relevance of VET; and one area where developments are less visible, learning in VET for creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. During the discussions, however, several other policy areas were mentioned.

apprenticeship. Several countries have started to implement or prepare the introduction of new schemes, a process that requires extensive effort and time to convince companies to invest time and money in young learners. A long-term perspective is important. Quickly raising the number of apprenticeship places or adapting them continuously by trying to follow every move of the labour market do not serve long-term goals.

It is important to get SMEs involved and committed, and recent policy measures explicitly target them. Information outlining the benefits of training apprentices, combined with appropriate (financial) incentives, helps to get small and medium-sized businesses on board. But this is not sufficient. When learners prefer doing apprenticeships in big rather than small companies, SMEs that do not find trainees for one or two years stop offering apprenticeships. Other challenges are particularly relevant for SMEs: securing sufficient availability of qualified trainers; establishing and implementing proper quality assurance systems; and attracting/organising funding and other types of support for cooperation arrangements with VET institutions.

It is not only countries that are currently creating or expanding their work-based learning opportunities that face challenges and constantly need to update and develop their programmes, but also countries with well-established systems. Even VET systems with long-standing apprenticeship traditions have faced a lack of good quality apprenticeship places during the economic downturn. A shortage of apprenticeship places may push those who cannot find a place in a company to leave education and training early. Lack of apprenticeship places also affects the newly introduced youth guarantees. Strong links between VET and business are, therefore, a precondition for sufficient supply of training places. Several countries have also taken specific measures to avoid shortages of learning places, involving schemes in the public sector.

It is widely recognised that exporting successful apprenticeship schemes is unlikely to be effective because of the different institutional contexts, education systems and socioeconomic conditions. However, cooperation can stimulate policy learning and the European alliance for apprenticeship, established in 2013, has gathered the main stakeholders to promote

apprenticeship schemes and initiatives across Europe. The alliance encourages reforming apprenticeship systems and promotes the benefits of apprenticeships and smart use of funding and resources; it also stimulates important players, large companies as well as associations and social partners, to commit themselves to the theme. Developing cooperation to set up or reform apprenticeship schemes that lead to tangible results is a time-consuming process; this is illustrated by the experiences of the German alliances of apprenticeships, which started at the end of 2012 with formal memoranda with six other EU Member States. It takes time to change perceptions and mindsets, raise awareness, adapt existing education and training institutions, obtain commitment and support from employers, ensure that teachers and trainers have adequate training opportunities to help them support apprentices, and inform the choices of potential learners and their families.

Effective work-based learning demands strong links with the world of work, and such links can serve several other important goals. Cooperating with business increases VET attractiveness for learners because of the better employability of graduates. For example, involving volunteers from business to talk about real life requirements in the classroom can help make VET more attractive as it gives students a sense of trust and support for their training and career decisions. Such initiatives help communicate the benefits of VET and its progression potential and changes mindsets, particularly in contexts where university education has become the preferred route for learners and their parents, as has been the case in some countries in the recent past, such as Greece and Spain.

Strong links with business also create (flexible) opportunities for teacher training in enterprises and aid timely adoption of curricula in response to changing skill needs. Finally, strong VET business links help stimulate entrepreneurial spirit, which can increase employment options for VET learners. VET stakeholders see talent development programmes and incubators as successful ways to develop entrepreneurial attitudes.

It is not only work-based learning and the renewed interest in apprenticeship that have made the links to the world of work stronger. The

increased visibility of VET has also led the employment and education sectors, including national authorities, to cooperate regularly compared to the situation before 2010. The range of participating stakeholders has become wider and brings more transparency to VET policy and its implementation. Employers' representatives now engage in developing qualifications and other activities more regularly and intensively. They often take full or partial responsibility for the design of VET qualifications and programmes. Sharing responsibility for VET quality assurance or accreditation of institutions are factors driving employer participation in the development of VET and cooperation. Only in a few countries has no substantial progress has been made in this direction.

6.5.2. Making VET more inclusive

The aim to reduce the number of low-skilled people has been a driving force behind measures to reduce or alleviate early leaving from education and training and increase LLL participation, in particular through measures targeting groups at risk. Providing tailored VET opportunities, in line with their learning needs, requires flexible provision and greater permeability between different education pathways. Making VET more flexible has been a trend in recent years, as seen in new modular programmes, the introduction of higher VET qualifications, measures to open up access and new short VET courses for training the unemployed.

Measures for groups at risk, such as the low-skilled and early leavers from education or training or those at risk of leaving early, have not only expanded but, as the analysis in Part 1 of this report shows, are also becoming more comprehensive. Typical measures have been, for instance, increasing guidance, counselling and coaching and offering financial and non-financial incentives. VET stakeholders described the trends as a shift to a more medium to long-term perspective and see the combination of long-term commitment, financial help and tailored support as a success factor for measures to help disadvantaged youth. As a result, many have a better chance to obtain a qualification and integrate into the labour market.

According to VET stakeholders, another factor driving success has been the setting of

performance targets, without focusing too much on systems, instruments, institutions or procedures, and decentralising, with delegation of decision-making. This allows VET providers and other stakeholders to choose solutions better tailored to the needs of specific beneficiaries. In some north European countries, such approaches has been accompanied by introducing or upscaling financial incentives such as (partly) performance-based funding for VET institutions and providers, but these incentives, as the analysis in Part 1 of this report shows, are not yet common.

Participation of adults in VET has not developed as well as hoped: the EU 2020 target of 15% adults participating in LLL has not yet been reached in most countries. It obviously is a challenge to find ways of financing different forms of adult learning, especially for the low-skilled employed. Participation in LLL is inevitable in a fast-changing world, and insufficient learning opportunities for those who need it most, who are most vulnerable to unemployment or highly insecure employment, will create high cost for societies in the future. The way participation in LLL is measured also needs to be reconsidered in view of the many and very diverse forms of adult learning, which may not be sufficiently captured by the indicator we presently use.

6.5.3. Implementing NQFs and promoting synergies with other European tools and principles

Several VET stakeholders see the development of NQFs, including all level and types of qualifications, as a trend that eases VET policy implementation and reform. Placing VET in a comprehensive system structuring all qualifications, NQFs help understand those acquired through VET better and aid comparisons, for instance with those from higher education. NQFs have developed dynamically in recent years, but a range of countries still needs to move from the development stage or formal adoption to the operational stage. Just as with other European tools and principles, including validation, Member States' agreements to specific implementation targets and deadlines have increased the pressure on governments to implement NQFs and make them visible and useful to citizens.

Although NQF implementation is still at an early stage, VET policies have clearly benefited from the development of qualification frameworks. They have helped educators, employers and learners better understand, compare and use qualifications. They have also stimulated discussion on the value of qualifications and supported the work on validation, ECVET and quality. Through their focus on learning outcomes, EQF/NQFs have triggered discussions on permeability and equivalence of qualifications across sectors and helped identify gaps and imbalances in the system. This has also increased the value of qualifications awarded outside formal education and training, and stimulated countries to start including them in the NQFs. NQFs are increasingly used as a reference point for revising or developing new qualifications, modernising curricula and assessment methodologies. Some VET stakeholders highlighted the role of national coordination points. The NCPs assist in implementing qualification frameworks and other European tools and principles, by providing a forum for cooperation and debate. This helps with permeability, transparency of qualifications, attractiveness, mobility and employability. Achieved progress in establishing NQFs provides a good basis for applying other European tools and principles. Exploiting synergies between frameworks, credit systems, validation arrangements, and quality assurance can make VET systems stronger, more flexible, transparent and relevant. This will ultimately benefit learners.

To progress in learning and work, citizens must be able to move within and between the different sectors of education and training and employment. Together, the European tools should assist people by making it easier for them to transfer learning outcomes and work experiences and get them recognised. They need to take on a 'bridging function', allowing learners and employees to move across institutional, sectoral and geographic borders. In times of considerable skill mismatch and high unemployment, it is essential to use this service function of the European tools in the best way possible.

6.5.4. Areas for further development

Monitoring transitions, employability and other labour market outcomes of VET graduates have received more attention. The analysis in Part 1 of

this report shows that many countries have introduced new schemes in recent years. However, this information is not commonly used for adaptations or designs of VET provision and support for reasons related to data or privacy protection legislation and lack of funding for actions that could encourage VET providers to use the information. The situation is improving with the introduction of new data-sharing agreements and laws, but it has been a slow process. In some countries, data collection problems prevent obtaining valid results. VET stakeholders also mentioned difficulties in monitoring transitions from learning or training to work or transitions between different learning pathways, especially in countries where learners are highly mobile (such as go abroad). Using monitoring systems to help at-risk groups to participate in VET should be of particular concern, but is not yet happening in most countries.

The policy priority profiles presented earlier show that, in most countries, creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship has been less prominent in shaping national policies than the other Bruges strategic objectives. This can partly be explained by the fact that countries had to prioritise their actions, and focused a lot of their effort on work-based learning and reducing early leaving from education and training. Including all types and levels of VET in innovation and creativity partnerships or clusters appears not to have led national policy agenda in many countries. This also holds for incentives to promote using state-of-the-art technology in VET. Entrepreneurship has been strengthened in some countries, but more work remains to be done to support learners through guidance and counselling and VET institutions.

ICT can play a major role in promoting creativity and innovation in VET. But while the review of developments since 2010 shows that countries are working towards increasing the role of ICT in VET, there is much scope for progress. VET reforms in different areas can strongly benefit in terms of impact and effectiveness when they have a clear focus on capitalising on the potential of ICT.

Providing professional development opportunities for VET staff is another challenge. Expansion of work-based learning in enterprises, in particular apprenticeships, requires not only

enterprises that have the technical capacity to train young people, but also more trainers that have the necessary skills and competences. While quality assurance frameworks for VET providers tend to cover work-based learning within the institutions, there is less evidence that they will also cover in-company learning by 2015 as foreseen by the Bruges communiqué.

Introducing new elements into VET in view of an increasingly heterogeneous learner population (age, learning objectives), the need to use new learning methods and addressing the substantial ageing of the VET teaching workforce, requires investments in teacher and trainer skills. Discussions about the modernisation of teacher training, both in terms of the required initial qualification (e.g. mandatory bachelor degree) and professional experience, as well as their continuing professional development opportunities, are continuing.

Offering professional development to VET teachers and trainers to help them teach entrepreneurship skills or key competences, and opening up opportunities for them to be trained in enterprises, are not yet widespread practices. Some VET stakeholders view the limited opportunities for teacher professional development in enterprises as problematic. This is a particular challenge for predominantly school-based VET systems. These stakeholders emphasised that formal training courses are not the only mechanism for continuous professional development. Creating space for innovation and creativity, for instance, through experiments in VET schools and possibilities to work outside the limits of a 'normal' programme, supports teacher and trainer development.

For compulsory education teachers, training which helps integrate work experience in the classroom is important. As the analysis in Part 1 of this report shows, no such training is offered in about half of the countries. VET stakeholders confirm this and highlight that this training is crucial, as it enables compulsory education teachers to assist their learners in gathering more accurate information about VET and employment opportunities to students. Indirectly, this is also a way to promote VET attractiveness.

Towards the end of the first phase of the Copenhagen process, VET for adults received increasing attention. This may have been linked

to the measures countries devised to prevent structural unemployment just after the crisis had hit Europe. In recent years, attention has focused on attracting more young people and helping them manage the transition into VET and remain there. However, in the longer-term perspective VET for adults should not be neglected, as increasing demand for skills, irrespective of qualification levels, demographic developments and the need for a skilled work force that adapts to rapid change, requires adequate opportunities for people to update and improve their skills and competences.

This also requires continued work on developing comprehensive strategies or approaches for validating non-formal learning by 2018, in line with the recommendation. So far, validation arrangements, which can help learners progress and combine different types of education and training more easily to suit their needs, tend to relate to specific parts of education and training and are not widely known. In several countries there is a risk that qualifications awarded through validation are not equally valued as those obtained within formal learning, as they are not based on the same standards.

ECVET as a tool to ease mobility within national VET systems, which could also support validation, is not developing dynamically, as most countries see it mainly as an instrument to ease cross-border mobility. Most mobility in VET is supported by EU funds, but tighter personal and national budgets may limit the chances for VET learners, and in particular those in apprenticeships, to benefit from learning abroad.

To help European citizens move easily between different types of education and training, within and across countries and between education and employment, European tools will need to become more visible and interact better. So far, only a few countries show NQF and EQF levels on certificates and diplomas. While the national coordination points provide information and guidance on the different tools and principles, hardly any country has comprehensive strategies or campaigns in place to communicate the benefit of the EU tools, and how they complement each other, to end-users. Ensuring that work on the tools does not continue in silos, but focuses on their complementarity and their use for citizens, is a challenge to be tackled.

Another issue raised by VET stakeholders is the speed of reform. Using the outcomes of monitoring successfully requires time. Rushing reforms affects their effectiveness and efficiency ('speed kills'). It is important, even if time consuming, to assess evidence of how successful an intervention has been, before new initiatives are rolled out.

6.5.5. Setting priorities and monitoring progress: lessons of 2010-14

Now, as the first period for which STDs have been set comes to an end, and as new deliverables and objectives are being considered, it is important to reflect critically on their design and set-up and the implications this has for monitoring progress.

One of the fundamental issues is to set policy objectives that countries can identify with and make their own, which is a challenge as countries start from different positions and move at different speeds. A second issue is to devise an approach that supports monitoring the achievements and the outcomes of the measures taken to address the priorities set.

Most progress monitoring in the current setting relies on policy options, which indicate the frequency and aim of policies, either in place, recently implemented, or planned. While the policy options approach helps establish cross-country trends and areas that need more attention, it often cannot reflect the quality of actions, their outcomes or impact.

Developing an approach to allow understanding the impact of policy measures is not easy, given the number of countries included in the Copenhagen process and the range of different STDs considered. Interlinking policy progress with statistical indicators that are proxies for impact is an option for some deliverables, though not for all. In the short-term, this is difficult. Statistical data frequently become available with time lags and cannot reflect short-term developments.

In the next phase, when more information covering longer periods will be available, it will be easier to link policy objectives to information on policy implementation and performance, and compare them to impact indicators. Nonetheless, VET-specific or VET-related data are not always available (for all countries), not sufficiently

detailed or reliable, e.g. for apprenticeship, fields of study in VET.

Establishing causal relationships between VET policy measures and indicators will remain unrealistic given VET's interrelation with several other policy areas, such as employment, which makes it difficult to identify the contribution of VET policies in real terms. To be able to understand cause-effect relationships and measure impact would also require comparison to control groups.

Relying on statistical data alone is not enough. A thorough understanding of the developments and their impact requires linking quantitative data to qualitative analysis and information on systems. Combining different information sources in innovative ways will strengthen the monitoring process and increase its policy relevance.

Although fewer and more streamlined STDs in the future might appear to reduce overlap between them, they will continue to be interdependent. Future monitoring will need to take this into account.

However, the fundamental issue remains: how to devise a framework to monitor progress, in countries which differ substantially in terms of their education and training systems and socioeconomic conditions, using a common yardstick. The monitoring approach for the next cycle of STDs needs to incorporate this in a satisfactory manner while taking into account the positive experience from the approach applied so far and including, where possible, elements of assessing impact.

6.5.6. Conclusion

The considerable progress that countries have made towards reforming their VET systems and adapting existing policies clearly showcase the positive impact of the Copenhagen/Bruges process. Pursuing common priorities within a voluntary framework has made European VET stronger.

Progress is more visible in some areas, such as expanding work-based learning or establishing NQFs, than in others. It is also important to understand that a considerable share of the measures that countries have taken is not yet fully implemented. That Member States are at different levels of development is natural given the variety of systems, their socioeconomic

contexts and starting points. In education and training, implementation of wider developments takes time. Work on these will (need to) continue beyond the current Bruges ‘cycle’. Progress will become more visible over time.

The process has helped portray the value of VET for regional and national skills strategies. With high unemployment, in particular among youth, in several countries, VET in general, and apprenticeship in particular, has moved centre stage as a way to ease young people’s transition into the labour market and prepare for tomorrow’s work places. While VET is not a panacea, it can help respond to challenges in the labour market, but it should not be seen simply as an instrument to address structural problems.

The findings in this report also clearly confirm the integrated nature of VET, which comprises many forms of learning in schools, in enterprises, in higher education and in adult learning, and the interlinkages between them. Opportunities to acquire VET qualifications at higher education level are expanding and modern technology allows using learning offers both across geographic and institutional boundaries. This demands cooperation on quality assurance. Ensuring a common language between different types of VET, general and academic higher education is as important as developing a common language between VET and the world of work. The remaining part of the overall ET 2020 strategic framework continues to be of key importance for the development of VET policies and the quality, coherence and synergies of education and training systems throughout Europe.

European citizens as learners are at the heart of this process. Expanding the service function of European tools and principles for the end-user will need to guide future work. Their focus on learning outcomes is acknowledged as a basis for better communication and cooperation within education and training, and between education and the labour market. The consistent use of the learning outcomes principle is directly relevant to end-users. Guidance and counselling should inform and support people at various transition points between different types of education and training, jobs and periods in between, and also during their learning throughout their lives.

To ensure measures are sustainable, all actors need to be on board and committed to making them work. The key role of social partners has become more evident in recent years. Developments have also pointed to a need for wider cooperation and partnerships between education and training providers, enterprises, employment services and other institutions. This requires continued efforts to build the necessary capacities, and ensure high quality initial training and continuing development opportunities for all staff involved.

This report aims to contribute to the evidence base necessary to set meaningful policy goals, promote the potential of policy learning, and help countries in their efforts to ensure VET contributes to the competitiveness of European enterprises, becomes more attractive to the highly talented and creates an inclusive learning environment which empowers citizens of all ages and backgrounds to tap their potential to secure employability. Ultimately, VET and VET policies, which put European citizens centre stage, will contribute to better lives.

Developments in candidate countries

7.1. Introduction

This chapter ⁽⁶¹⁾ provides an overview of progress towards the agreements of the Bruges communiqué made by four EU candidate countries – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey – from 2010 to early 2014. It is largely based on analysis of answers to the 2012, 2013 and 2014 Cedefop Refernet questionnaires (STDs1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 12 to 22) and the 2012 ETF questionnaire (3, 4, 8 to 11). The emphasis of these questionnaires is on reporting progress in relation to the 22 STDs. Information from questionnaires is complemented with results from a focus group discussion with candidate country ACVT representatives (December 2013) and telephone interviews with the four DGVT representatives (January-February 2014), as well as by other relevant studies.

The chapter focuses on national policy developments since 2011; in some cases, actions implemented before 2010 are also considered to provide a better understanding of the state of play. It should be noted that the actions reported do not always cover the full scope of the STDs. Also, most of the information provided refers explicitly to IVET while less attention has been given to CVET, except in those STDs which refer directly to CVET. For this reason, it is possible that not all CVET-related actions have been fully captured.

As the first part of this report already included much detailed information, this chapter focuses on outlining overall trends in the candidate countries.

7.2. The Copenhagen/Bruges process: inspiring national reforms

The candidate countries are preparing for accession to the EU and are influenced by medium- to long-term EU policy objectives and targets to improve the performance, quality and attractiveness of VET expressed in the Copenhagen/Bruges process. Therefore, EU developments in VET have an influence on perspectives for the long-term evolution of education and training in these countries, including development of strategies, concrete initiatives and actions.

All candidate countries report that the Copenhagen process and the Bruges communiqué inspired national VET reforms after 2010, helped to structure VET policy better and supported identifying national priorities for developing VET. Education and training in the candidate countries have been through profound systemic reforms during the past decade as part of the overall political, economic and social transformations of the countries on their way to EU membership. The main drive behind these reforms in VET, substantially supported by the EU pre-accession assistance funds, has been the need to move away from the supply-driven model and to develop VET systems that are more sensitive and responsive to labour market needs. The results achieved are mixed: new VET legislation has been adopted but its enforcement is delayed or not effective enough despite the new governance institutions and/or bodies set up for its execution (such as VET centres, VET and adult education councils); improved curricula, new occupation profiles, and qualification standards have been developed (often with the involvement of employers) and piloted, but are at different stages of upscaling and mainstreaming; efforts have been made to modernise and better equip VET schools, often combining scarce public

⁽⁶¹⁾ This chapter was drafted by ETF and edited by Cedefop.

funding (public education expenditure remains under 4% of GDP in all candidate countries, compared to the EU average of 5.4% in 2009) with donor assistance. Overall, despite the progress achieved, implementation of VET strategies and policy intentions remains a challenge for the candidate countries and needs serious improvement. One reason is that VET reforms have been heavily donor-driven, leading to insufficient national ownership and sustainability, as well as to systemic fragmentation; often donor interventions have been designed and accepted in the absence of clear national strategies for economic and human resource development. Limited ownership of VET reform processes is also due to the lack of political stability and continuity in the candidate countries (where governments would rarely serve a full term in office) which, coupled with insufficient institutional capacities and the lack of relevant monitoring systems, account for the tardy implementation.

It is against this backdrop of VET reform in progress that the candidate countries have addressed the Copenhagen/Bruges objectives and policy lines. The countries report that the Bruges communiqué STDs have helped them identify and prioritise key activities for VET reforms.

7.3. Developing skills

The issue of skills development is of paramount importance for the candidate countries and their VET systems. While Turkey has a functioning market economy, the three western Balkan countries – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia – have spent the past decade in a transition from closed, state-regulated to open, market-based service-driven economies that, despite great progress, is incomplete. The transition in the three western Balkan countries changed the demand for skills, resulting in skills and qualifications mismatches and shortages, as education and training systems failed to respond effectively.

The priority of recent VET reforms in the candidate countries has been to strengthen the responsiveness to employment trends and demands of the economy in a context of lagging

employment and high unemployment, especially among the young. Skills development systems in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey vary and are at different stages of reform. However, ETF analysis reveals that there are several challenges which are common to all countries, such as effective key competences development, adequate and good quality practical training, and innovation (see ETF, 2013). These challenges are targeted in the Bruges strategic objectives and STDs.

New VET strategies show that candidate countries are aware of the need to promote key competences in their VET systems. In view of the economic transition of the three western Balkan countries, it is important to concentrate on developing broader skills to support flexibility and the transferability of competences, ensuring better employability of VET graduates or their progression to higher education. Another reason for the strong support of key competences in VET is that their acquisition in primary education in the candidate countries has not been very successful, so that learners entering IVET or CVET programmes need to catch up. Despite some positive recent trends, PISA data show that the shares of 15-year-old students from Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey with low performance in reading, mathematics and science are higher than the respective EU averages and much above the ET 2020 benchmark.

The candidate countries report good overall progress in developing policies aiming to promote key competences in VET. Actions taken to address this STD have focused primarily on including key competences in VET curricula and qualifications. Further efforts are needed in teaching and learning methods in VET, facilitating the acquisition of key competences (only the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has taken this into consideration) and their centralised external assessment (in place in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro, no action taken in Serbia and Turkey). The results from these policies remain to be seen and will largely rely on the continuing reforms of teacher education and training and on successful efforts to improve the acquisition of key competences in primary/lower secondary education.

In career management skills – the second component of STD4 – the candidate countries have shown lack of or negligible progress. These skills have not been introduced yet in curricula, standards or qualifications and teachers are not adequately prepared to promote them.

The Bruges communiqué highlights the importance of entrepreneurship (STD15) for VET learners, both as a key competence and a specific business skill. Entrepreneurship has been operationalised as a key competence and integrated in curricula. Teachers in all countries have been trained in the delivery of the subjects and teachers in Montenegro and Turkey benefit from assistance provided by businesspeople and experts from the world of work. Innovative learning methods, including simulated business experience, have been widely used in Montenegro and in Serbia, while funding schemes and incentives to promote entrepreneurship are hardly used at all.

With a great deal of the policy options already in place, and special focus given to training VET teachers and trainers and on learning methods including simulated or real business experience, the candidate countries report good implementation of the STD. Its completion will require reinforced action to support the promotion of entrepreneurship in VET through incentives and funding schemes.

The candidate countries have been paying increasing attention to the importance of work-based learning (STD5a) and cooperation between VET institutions and enterprises (STD5b) for enhancing the relevance and quality of skills. The institutional and cultural contexts in which this takes place differ substantially between Turkey (with strong work-based learning) and the state-led school-based systems in the other candidate countries.

Apprenticeships, as ‘dual’ programmes, allowing students to get a job in an enterprise and to alternate periods of studying in a school environment with periods of work in companies, exist in a structured, country-wide format only in Turkey. In Montenegro and Serbia, apprenticeship schemes are not currently in place, while their introduction is under preparation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Another modality for cooperation between VET institutions and businesses is exchanging

staff and organising enterprise traineeships for teachers. The need to develop VET teachers professionally through short-term stays in enterprises and companies is generally recognised in the candidate countries. However, implementation arrangements are not yet thoroughly developed and traditional provision of teacher training, formalised in training catalogues, prevails.

Implementation of STDs 5a and 5b seems modest in the candidate countries. Positive results are related to strengthening work-based elements in VET (in school-based programmes and simulated or real business experience as learning methods). However, many policy options have remained unaddressed in 2010-14 and will require action. For example, none of the candidate countries has taken any action to establish services for finding training places for VET teachers in enterprises.

Closely related to the cooperation between VET institutions and businesses is effective and innovative, quality-assured use of technology by all VET providers (STD14). While the use of technology in teaching and learning in VET is mentioned in most strategic documents developed by the candidate countries after 2010, little or no information has been reported on putting this in practice or measures to increase effectiveness; implementation remains modest. The countries report some cases where employers equip schools’ workshops with state-of-the-art technology. Providing incentives for cost-effective use of technology or for establishing public-private partnerships, ensuring access of students to modern technological facilities, appears limited.

Creativity and innovation (STD13) are believed not only to make VET more attractive for learners but also to prepare them to react in a more flexible and resourceful way in situations when skills requirements get more volatile and unpredictable over time. Activities promoting creativity and innovation started in all candidate countries before 2010 and continue to be fine-tuned, but little impact has been reported and initiatives seem fragmented. The modest implementation of STD13 in the candidate countries is also related to the type of actions undertaken: most activities are short-term and involve promotion (such as fairs, competitions),

while long-term partnerships (innovation or creativity clusters, knowledge exchange platforms involving VET providers) are absent. Despite some good examples, the candidate countries have not been able so far to aid the establishment of strategic alliances of VET providers with innovative enterprises and higher education institutions, to keep VET systems in line with new developments and competence needs, to enhance their professional excellence and foster their innovation capacities. Guidelines and incentives for creating such partnerships are not yet in place.

7.4. Strengthening VET systems

The Bruges communiqué calls for the establishment of strong VET systems in Europe, capable of guaranteeing improved quality, increased transparency, mutual trust, the mobility of workers and learners, and LLL. A prerequisite for this is the setting up of quality assurance frameworks in accordance with the EQAVET recommendation (STD3). Since 2010, the candidate countries have been making efforts to improve their approaches to managing quality in VET at system and provider level, using EQAVET as a frame of reference. To date there are many examples of progress achieved: while some are systemic, others remain pilot experience in need of mainstreaming.

The reported implementation of STD3 has been generally modest in the candidate countries. Montenegro and Turkey are more advanced (with national QA approaches developed and based on stakeholder involvement, quality assurance NRPs established, partial introduction of EQAVET indicators) but even these two countries have a lot to do, especially in the full harmonisation and alignment of their national QA indicators with the EQAVET ones.

Qualifications have the potential to change the intrinsic logic of education systems towards a competence or learning outcomes-based logic, acting as a strong driver for overriding reforms and profound changes (ETF, 2014b). The establishment of comprehensive NQFs based on the learning outcomes approach linked to EQF (STD8) is another condition for and/or feature of strong VET systems.

Most NQF activities in the candidate countries started before 2010, but there have been significant initiatives recently. NQF developments are in very different stages, from conceptual approaches to preparatory work, to formal adoption, not having reached yet an operational stage in any of the countries. However, in all the countries, the EQF functions as a lever of progress. Legislation in all candidate countries provides for the development of comprehensive NQFs, encompassing all types and qualification levels for general, vocational and higher education, based on learning outcomes and referring to the eight EQF levels.

The EQF recommendation has not yet been implemented in the candidate countries: comprehensive NQFs are not yet introduced (fully developed only in Turkey but not legislated yet), reference to NQF and EQF levels in certificates and diplomas is not a practice and referencing NQF levels to EQF levels has not been accomplished as required by the Bruges communiqué. This is planned to be finished by 2015 in Montenegro and Turkey, by 2016 in Serbia, while the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has not set any deadline. While the implementation of the STD achieved so far is weak, it should be noted that the candidate countries have invested much effort and commitment in dealing with the EQF recommendation and have addressed the whole range of policy options. With nearly 4/5 of them currently in preparation, further progress might be expected soon.

Closely associated with the EQF is the ECVET (STD11), intended to aid the transfer, recognition and accumulation of assessed learning outcomes of individuals who are aiming to achieve a qualification. The development of a credit system is legislated in Montenegro and Turkey, ECVET being the guiding principle and closely related to NQFs. Serbia plans to launch a project for piloting ECVET in near future, while the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia does not intend to develop a credit system for VET, even though the ECTS has been adopted in higher education. Overall, the countries have reported weak implementation of STD11.

EQAVET, EQF, ECVET serve as tools for internationalisation of VET and transnational mobility of VET learners and professionals

(STD12), i.e. tools for opening up of VET systems and for their 'relevant' behaviour in today's globalised world. This STD has not been high on the policy agenda of the candidate countries and its reported implementation is weak. Apart from Turkey, which has participated in the Leonardo da Vinci programme for 10 years, transnational mobility in VET in the candidate countries still lacks the relevant legal and administrative basis and appropriate financial resources. It is currently mainly shaped by bilateral agreements with regional or local institutions. However, the progressive participation of the candidate countries in the LLL programme functions as a crucial lever for developing transnational mobility in VET.

The Bruges communiqué highlights the importance of regular feedback on employability and on VET graduate transitions from learning to work (STD5c and 6) for VET policy development and VET system governance. Implementation of these STDs is reported to have been weak to modest and focused around pre-2010 actions, with little progress made during 2010-14. Statistical offices in the candidate countries regularly collect data on employment and unemployment rates by level of education within labour force surveys, but there is no systematic data collection on VET graduate employability and graduate tracer studies. There is little evidence that the limited ad hoc feedback on the employability of VET graduates that exists, or has recently been collected, is used strategically by VET institutions.

Monitoring systems on the learning-to-work transition are at various stages of development and are mainly funded through regular public budgets. Pre-2010 initiatives to strengthen data collection and monitoring have not been fully implemented; in most countries, the legal basis to collect information on the employment status of VET graduates has not been clearly defined. Transition monitoring systems are currently operational only in Montenegro and Turkey, but are in need of upgrading. Little use is made of the data produced by these systems as evidence for improving VET policies. Plausible explanations are that data collection methods are not robust enough, that the capacities for evidence-based policy-making are still limited, and that the decisions that have to be made are sensitive

(implying restructuring of VET schools, lay-offs of teachers). The fact that, despite this, candidate countries are exploring using monitoring (systems) to support the participation of at-risk groups in VET (STD19) is a positive development.

The implementation of STD19 is quite polar among the countries: while the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey report full implementation (all policy options delivered), Serbia reports no specific actions taken. The implementation in the first three countries is based on actions put in place by 2010 and adjusted in 2010-14; no new post-2010 actions have been launched. Given the fact that the participation of certain at-risk groups in VET is still unsatisfactory in the candidate countries (see ETF, 2013), their monitoring systems and the way these are being used are in need of further improvement.

All candidate countries publish general VET statistics and provide inputs to EU-level data collection (STD22) and Eurostat. With the exception of Turkey, which already had a system in place, most countries have launched advanced data collection and processing systems after 2010. While the current implementation of the STD is still weak (only 1/3 of the policy options put in place), all recommended measures have been addressed and are under preparation, which raises the expectations for better delivery.

Structured cooperation between the VET sector and the employment services (STD21) was in place in most candidate countries before 2010. Operational mechanisms vary from country to country, in terms of governance, types of partnership and degree of formalisation. The reported implementation of the STD has been significant (93% of the policy measures put in place, the rest under preparation). While the mechanisms for structured cooperation have been established and are operational, the ETF analyses (such as Torino process reports) show that only a small part of VET policies (mainly those in Turkey) emerge from the consultations with employment services and the social partners. The proceedings and impact of the structured dialogue on overall VET policy-making cycle, therefore, needs improvement.

7.5. Engaging more people in VET

As emphasised by the Bruges communiqué, IVET and CVET share the dual objective of contributing to employability and economic growth they also respond to the needs and aspirations of individual learners, as well as to broader societal challenges, in particular promoting social inclusion. Both should offer young people and adults attractive and challenging career opportunities, and should appeal equally to women and men, to people with high potential and to those who, for whatever reason, face the risk of exclusion from the labour market. VET should play its part in achieving the two Europe 2020 headline targets set for education: by 2020, to reduce the rate of early leavers from education to less than 10% and to increase the share of 30 to 34 year-olds having completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40%. Turning more people into VET learners has become a strategic objective for Europe's VET systems, including those of the candidate countries.

Measures at national level recommended for progressing towards this objective – promoting VET attractiveness and excellence (STD1) and supporting activities, which enable young pupils in compulsory education to become acquainted with vocational trades and career possibilities (STD2) – have been closely followed and implemented by the candidate countries.

Most countries had put in place actions to promote VET before 2010, mainly initiated by national authorities and supported by regional authorities, social partners and, increasingly, with the involvement of chambers of commerce or trade. Enrolment in VET has always been high in the three western Balkan countries: in 2012 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia it was 59.8% (Eurostat, 2014); in Montenegro, 67.3% (Unesco, 2014); and in Serbia: 75.9% of upper secondary enrolment (Unesco, 2014). These countries have two different VET pathways at upper secondary level (three-year vocational and four-year technical) and although the global enrolment in VET is stable overall, it is shifting steadily towards four-year pathways. One of the main reasons is that technical pathways allow the

continuation of studies in higher education. Faced with high unemployment and difficult transition from school to work, graduates from four year VET programmes tend to seek the continuation of studies at higher level. As a consequence, in the western Balkan countries there are increasingly fewer secondary vocational graduates entering the labour market directly. While this situation needs to be addressed, the transition from VET-4 to higher education is expected to increase the share of adult population with tertiary education, which is currently low.

In Turkey, with VET standing at 43.9% of upper secondary enrolment in 2012 (Eurostat, 2014c), the explicit goal is to involve 50% of upper secondary students in VET by 2014. Attractiveness is of particular importance.

Most initiatives in the candidate countries include campaigns. The practice of 'open doors' is widely implemented by VET schools in the western Balkans, when students from primary schools not only visit VET schools and meet VET teachers and students, but also meet business representatives. Skills competitions and careers fairs are regularly organised at national and regional level in all countries and the events are often supported by sectoral organisations and/or donors. Most efforts and investments in campaigns and promotional activities aim to attract young people to IVET. While there is less focus on promoting CVET among adults, some measures exist. They promote the attractiveness of VET for adults through active labour market policy measures, offering a wide range of programmes or awareness campaigns. Campaigns encouraging enterprises to invest in VET are still at an early stage of development everywhere. Despite the significant implementation of STD1 reported by the candidate countries, the real challenge for VET in these countries is, in cooperation with businesses, to provide skills that have high labour market relevance.

The scope of compulsory education differs between the candidate countries. To ensure consistency with analysis of EU Member States, where compulsory education mostly addresses learners from five/six to 15/16 years of age, information about the candidate countries under STD2 (acquainting young people in compulsory

education with VET) focuses on activities informing young students from primary and lower secondary education on vocational trades and career possibilities to support education choice.

Inclusion of VET elements in primary and lower secondary education varies substantially, ranging from mandatory elements in education programmes to pilot initiatives in individual schools. There is a range of education and career fairs, fully or partially devoted to VET. Simulated or real business experience for young learners in primary and lower secondary education is still underdeveloped. No specific training to integrate work experience for primary or lower secondary teachers has been reported apart from Montenegro. The countries have not reported any actions related to providing work-experience/‘tasters’ before VET, nor about existing services to organise work experience for students at ISCED 1 to 2 levels.

The reported implementation of the STD is weak. The share of policy measures that have not been addressed is significant and they are all related to organising work experience before VET. This common deficit needs to be targeted in the future. Another challenge is to attract to IVET high-achieving students.

The objective of turning more people into VET learners can be achieved not only by means of attracting new learners, but also through keeping VET learners within the system; getting them to participate, learn and graduate with a proper qualification, contributes to maximising the contribution of VET to combating early leaving from education (STD16). Performance regarding early leaving from education varies widely: while Montenegro and Serbia are already below the EU 2020 benchmark, scoring respectively 6.0% (in 2013) and 8.1% (in 2012), and early school leaving in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2013 (11.2%) was lower than the EU average (11.9%), Turkey lags far behind, recording a rate of 37.5%. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey also have the highest NEET rates among the candidate countries (ETF, 2014c) confirming that early school leavers are the most consistently dominant NEET subgroup. All candidate countries have made preventing students from leaving education early a top priority and intensified their efforts after 2010, in combination

with targeted poverty alleviation initiatives and linguistic policies. Important reforms have been carried out, ranging from the revision of legal frameworks and strategic policy documents to the use of monitoring and information systems (Montenegro and Turkey) and tailor-made psychological and/or financial support to families in need. Large scale public awareness campaigns have been organised everywhere to inform the public of the importance of completing education. Further, flexible linguistic policies (targeting students from ethnic groups) and specific programmes or work-based learning schemes are offered to provide a second chance to individuals who could not attend or complete formal education. The countries have put into practice a wide range of actions and have reported good implementation of the STD. The measures undertaken must have contributed to reducing the early leaving rates in all countries in 2010-14, with the highest falls from 15.5% (2010) to 11.2% (2013) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and from 43.1% (2010) to 37.5% (2013) in Turkey.

Increasing participation in CVET in line with ET 2020 15% benchmark (STD7) is another way of attracting more VET learners. The participation rates of the candidate countries in LLL range from 3% in Montenegro to 4% in Turkey in 2013 and lag far below the EU average and the ET 2020 objective. There is vast room for improvement and the candidate countries have recently been trying to improve their adult learning policy measures in VET. The implementation reported to-date is modest. Awareness campaigns and career fairs to promote VET have been widely used in all countries, but only a small share of them target adult learners. Making learning arrangements suitable to the needs of adult learners and making learning venues easily accessible have been priorities since 2010, but little action has been reported on helping adult learners combine (C) VET with family obligations.

More effort is needed in several other areas. Special attention needs to be paid to improving guidance and counselling services for adults, currently unaddressed in all candidate countries. Strategies and policy documents in all the countries highlight the possibility for adult learners to access higher level VET but, so far, adults are in the same position as other students

who have completed secondary education in the same year. Guidance to the unemployed is provided in all countries by the public employment services but it is recognised that the caseload is too high and advisors have limited opportunities to provide proper guidance to the unemployed.

The candidate countries have invested energy in raising the participation of low-skilled and other at-risk groups in education and training (STD17). All countries have made an effort to ease access of adults and at-risk learners to formal education by offering flexible training programmes and other arrangements. National employment services in all countries design special programmes and offer training to low-skilled persons and, to a lesser extent, to other at-risk groups. These are complemented by donor-, government- or civil society-led initiatives. Montenegro and Turkey offer incentives for enterprises to provide training or employment to at-risk groups: good implementation has been described, but with significant room for improvement.

All candidate countries actively promote the use of ICT to increase access and support active learning (STD18). Three – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey – have LLL or VET strategies which promote using ICT for at-risk groups, as well as incentives helping them to cover ICT and internet costs. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro have put in place training for VET teachers/trainers to help at-risk learners use ICT. The modest degree of implementation of the STD claimed by the candidate countries reveals serious gaps in ICT-based learning tools/methods to help at-risk groups learn (in place only in Turkey) and VET platforms or web portals tailored to their needs.

Flexible VET systems, based on a learning outcomes approach catering for validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) (STD9), including competences acquired in the workplace, attract both young and adult learners. The concept of non-formal and informal learning is relatively new in the candidate countries and so is VNFIL. The acceptance and promotion of VNFIL principles has been closely linked to the approaches adopted for the NQF and its operational development, in particular with

respect to learning outcomes. None of the candidate countries has a national strategy on VNFIL. Montenegro and Turkey have some procedures and practices already in place, but, elsewhere, procedures remain to be developed. None of the policy options have been implemented in any of the countries.

Career guidance (STD10) is confirmed as an important orientation tool in all candidate countries. Most launched initiatives before 2010 and continue to adjust and innovate them; all have ensured guidance and mentoring for IVET learners in different ways. Specific support for at-risk groups is available in some branches of the national employment service in all countries, but is not satisfactory and needs improvement.

The implementation of the STD is characterised by modest delivery in the candidate countries (half of the policy options reported in place) and many measures that have remained unaddressed. Among these are support for cross-sectoral services, for career management skills and for guidance and counselling for adults.

7.6. Conclusions

Candidate countries have prioritised the Bruges strategic objectives and deliverables according to their national agendas and have attached varying degrees of importance to them. They have made considerable progress since 2010, but much remains to be done. A significant degree of policy implementation has been reported only with regard to two STDs: STD1 (VET attractiveness) and 21 (structured cooperation mechanisms between VET and employment services) which corresponds to traditionally high VET enrolments in the western Balkan countries and to current demand in all candidate countries to make VET delivery relevant to the economic and labour market needs. Progress on most STDs has been modest, with much still to be done.

This stock-taking of implementation of the STDs might suggest that the candidate countries have dedicated a great deal of effort to making IVET an attractive learning option (strategic objective 1), to fostering the excellence, quality and relevance of both I(VET) and C(VET) (strategic objective 2) and to promoting innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship

(strategic objective 5). While the contribution of the STDs to progress towards the respective strategic objectives is difficult to assess (due to overlapping of deliverables addressing several objectives, lack of proper indicators and data), it is clear that the candidate countries have addressed all STDs belonging to strategic objectives 1, 2 and 5 and have reported progress with all of them. The way they addressed other objectives is more controversial and uneven, with progress on some STDs within a given objective significant while on others there is little or none. A plausible explanation is that these objectives have a lower degree of congruence with priorities on national policy agendas in the candidate countries and so the countries have addressed only some isolated policy aspects/dimensions.

In-depth policy analysis is needed to understand better how progress made under the STDs relates to the progress towards achieving the broader Bruges objectives, as well to capture the dynamics and the drivers behind these processes. The review of national progress needs to be complemented with an analysis at subnational level, especially with regard to the larger candidate countries (such as Turkey), or to some STDs that are prone to urban-rural and regional disparities (including early leaving from school). However, not all policy options under the Bruges STDs have produced a similar added-value or impact on national VET reforms, the contribution being reliant on factors such as the overall process of VET transformation, the maturity of the institutional capacities involved, the specific context and traditions.

The ETF analysis shows that the candidate countries have been relatively quick and successful in transposing Bruges communiqué strategic objectives and STDs into national policy documents (strategies, plans, vision papers), as well as in national legislation (laws, by-laws, regulations). Implementation of the policy and legal frameworks, however, has lagged, as has monitoring and evaluation of measures undertaken. Analysis of progress by the candidate countries toward the Bruges STDs indicates clear limitations in capacities with regard to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of the policy cycle. Overcoming these deficits, and prioritising the implementation of the policy lines that have been already defined and adopted, are key levers for the countries to deliver better, not only on the Copenhagen/Bruges objectives but also on their national VET reform efforts and aspirations. Policy-makers and practitioners in the candidate countries must develop the capacity to become 'policy interpreters', since there are various models, measures and practices available for achieving the same goal. Over the coming years, the candidate countries will need further support to build capacity to 'shape' better their own policies and, most important, to overcome barriers to implementation.

Acronyms and definitions

Country codes

AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
	-Fr French-speaking community
	-FI Flemish-speaking community
	-Dg German-speaking community
BG	Bulgaria
CZ	Czech Republic
CY	Cyprus
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FI	Finland
FR	France
HR	Croatia
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
NL	Netherlands
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SE	Sweden
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
UK	United Kingdom
CH	Switzerland
HU	Hungary
IS	Iceland
ME	Montenegro
MT	Malta
NO	Norway
RS	Serbia
TR	Turkey
—	the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (to be defined)

Institutions and organisations

ESF	European social funds
ETF	European Training Foundation
Eurostat	statistical authority of the European Union
Eurydice	European network to inform on education systems and policies in Europe
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ReferNet	Cedefop's European network of reference and expertise in VET
Unesco	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Others

ACVT	Advisory Committee for Vocational Training
CQAF	common quality assurance framework
CQFW	credit and qualifications framework for Wales
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
CVTS	continuing vocational training survey
DGVT	directors general for vocational education and training
EASQ	European area of skills and qualifications
ECVET	European credit system for vocational education and training
ECTS	European credit transfer and accumulation system
EEA	European economic area
EFTA	European free trade area
EHEA	European higher education area
ELGPN	European lifelong guidance policy network

EQAVET	European quality assurance reference framework for vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
ERDF	European regional development fund
EU+	EU Member States, Norway and Iceland
ICT	information and communications technology
ISCED	international standard classification of education
IVET	initial vocational education and training
LLL	lifelong learning
NEET	youth not in education, employment or training
NQF	national qualifications framework
NRP	national reference points
NVQ	national vocational qualifications
PIAAC	programme for the international assessment of adult competences
QCF	qualifications and credit framework
SME	small and medium-sized enterprise
STD	short-term deliverable
STEM	science, technology, engineering and maths
VNFIL	validation of non-formal and informal learning

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ANNEX 1

Short overview of NQF developments

Country	Scope of the framework
Austria	Designed as comprehensive NQF; currently, includes qualifications awarded in higher education, selected 'reference qualifications' from VET and a pre-VET qualification.
Belgium (Fl)	Comprehensive NQF, including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training and from the professional qualifications system.
Belgium (Fr)	Designed as comprehensive framework; will include all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training and from the professional qualifications system.
Belgium (Dg)	Comprehensive NQF.
Bulgaria	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training.
Croatia	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training.
Cyprus	Comprehensive NQF, including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training and from the system of vocational qualifications.
Czech Republic	Partial national frameworks for vocational and for higher education qualifications.
Denmark	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training.
Estonia	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training and from the system of occupational qualifications.
Finland	Designed as comprehensive NQF; it will include all state recognised qualifications.
former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training and from the professional qualifications system.
France	NQF covers all levels and types of vocationally or professionally oriented qualifications; general education qualifications are not included.
Germany	Designed as comprehensive NQF; currently includes qualifications from VET and higher education; general education qualifications are not yet included.

Number of levels	Stage of development	NQF linked to EQF
Eight	Formally adopted	2012
Eight	Operational	2011
Eight proposed	Advanced development stage. Formal adoption pending	2013
Eight	(Early) operational stage	
Eight and a preparatory level	Formally adopted	2013
Eight with sublevels at levels 4 and 8	(Early) operational stage	2012
Eight proposed	Advanced development stage Formal adoption pending	
Eight in the QF for VET	The QF for VET is operational	2011
Eight	Operational	2011
Eight	(Early) operational stage	2011
Eight	Advanced development stage Formal adoption pending	
Eight with several sublevels	Formally adopted	
Five	Operational	2010
Eight	(Early) operational stage	2012

Country	Scope of the framework
Greece	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training.
Hungary	Designed as comprehensive NQF; will include all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training and open up to non-formal and informal learning.
Iceland	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training.
Ireland	Comprehensive NQF including all types and levels of qualifications from formal education and training; is open to those awarded by professional and international organisations.
Italy	Technical work pointing towards an NQF carried out.
Latvia	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training.
Lithuania	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training.
Luxembourg	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training.
Malta	Comprehensive NQF, including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training.
Montenegro	Comprehensive NQF, including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training and from the professional qualifications system.
Netherlands	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training; opens up towards qualifications offered outside formal education system.
Norway	Comprehensive NQF including all including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training;
Poland	Designed as comprehensive NQF; will include all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training and open up to non-formal and informal learning.

Number of levels	Stage of development	NQF linked to EQF
Eight	Formally adopted	
Eight	Formally adopted	
Seven	(Early) Operational	2013
10 and four award types: major, minor, special-purpose and supplemental ⁽⁶²⁾	Operational	2009
Not yet been decided	Development/ design stage	2013 major national qualifications from formal education and training linked directly to EQF
Eight	(Early) operational stage	2011
Eight	(Early) operational stage	2011
Eight	(Early) operational stage	2012
Eight	Operational	2009 and 2012 update
Eight with sublevels at levels 1, and 7	(Early) operational stage	
Eight levels and an entry level	Advanced operational stage	2011
Seven; no descriptor or qualification at level 1	(Early) operational stage	2014
Eight proposed	Advanced development stage Formal adoption pending	2013

⁽⁶²⁾ Major awards are the main qualifications at a level usually acquired through formal education and training, e.g. the leaving certificate at the end of secondary education. Minor awards recognise a range of learning outcomes with relevance in their own right and at the same level but not the specific combination required for a major award. These awards allow learners to build up units of learning at their own pace to meet their own needs. Special purpose awards have a rather narrow focus and certify specialisations. Supplemental awards may complement/update a previous award at the same level.
See http://www.nfq.ie/nfq/en/about_NFQ/framework_levels_award_types.html [accessed 1.12.2014].

Country	Scope of the framework
Portugal	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training and from the national system for the recognition, validation and certification of competences.
Romania	Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training.
Serbia	Comprehensive NQF being designed, aiming to bring together frameworks for higher education and VET.
Slovakia	Designed as comprehensive NQF; will include all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training and open up to non-formal and informal learning.
Slovenia	Comprehensive NQF, including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training and from system of NVQ.
Spain	Designed as comprehensive NQF; will include all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training.
Sweden	Comprehensive NQF, including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training; long-term aim to integrate certificates awarded outside the public system.
Switzerland	NQF for vocational and professional qualifications. Qualifications frameworks for higher education adopted and being implemented.
Turkey	Designed as comprehensive NQF developed; will bring together: NVQS; qualifications frameworks for higher education and qualifications awarded by Education Ministry.
UK – England and Northern Ireland	Three frameworks: (A) a QCF including vocational qualifications; (B) general education qualifications continue to be located in the NQF; (C) a higher education framework.
UK – Scotland	Comprehensive credit and qualifications framework (Scottish credit and qualifications framework) including all level and types of qualifications.
UK – Wales	Comprehensive credit and qualifications framework (credit and qualifications framework for Wales (CQFW)) including all level and types of qualifications.

Number of levels	Stage of development	NQF linked to EQF
Eight	(Early) operational stage	2011
Eight	Formally adopted	
Eight proposed	Design/ development stage	
Eight	Adopted, set of level descriptors being revised	
Ten proposed	Advanced development stage Formal adoption pending	2013
Eight proposed	Advanced development stage Formal adoption pending	
Eight proposed	Advanced development stage Formal adoption pending	
Eight proposed	Advanced development stage Formal adoption pending	
Eight proposed	Advanced development stage Formal adoption pending	
QCF: nine including entry levels	Operational	2010 Joined UK referencing report
12 including entry levels	Operational	2010
CQFW: nine including entry levels	Operational	2010

ANNEX 2

ECVET coordination points, EQF coordination points, EQAVET national reference points

Country	ECVET coordination points	EQF coordination points	EQAVET national refer. points
AT	tbc	● (*)	● (*)
BE (Fl)	●	■	■
BE (Fr)	●	●	To be appointed
BE (Dg)	●	●	To be appointed
BG	●	■	■
CH	■	●	■
CY	■	■	■
CZ	■	■	●
DE	● (*)	●	● (*)
DK	● (*)	●	● (*)
EE	●	●	To be appointed
EL	■	■	■
ES	■	■	■
FI	tbc	■	■
FR	●	●	●
HR	tbc	●	●
HU	■	●	■
IE	■	■	■
IS	■	■	To be appointed
IT	tbc	■	■
LT	■	■	■
LU	■	■	■
LV	tbc	●	●
MT	■	■	■
NL	■ (*)	■ (*)	■ (*)
NO	tbc	●	●
PL	tbc	●	●
PT	■	■	●
RO	■	●	■
SE	■	●	■
SI	■	■	■
SK	■	●	■
TR	tbc	●	●
UK (England)	●	●	●
UK (N. Ireland)	■	■	●
UK (Scotland)	■	■	●
UK (Wales)	■	●	■

● National coordination or reference point.

■ Same institution acts as national coordination/reference point.

(*) Different institution, but under the same roof.

Source: Cedefop ECVET monitoring 2013, EQAVET Secretariat survey 2013, EQF European Commission.

Stronger VET for better lives



European countries' joint work on vocational education and training (VET) shows clear signs of progress but there is more to do. In many countries, the Bruges communiqué of 2010 has inspired systemic reforms focusing on learning-outcomes-oriented standards and curricula. In several cases, these were triggered by the work on qualifications frameworks. In other countries, the main impact of the communiqué is reflected in their work on apprenticeships but there are challenges in securing its quality. The development of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs), measures to reduce early leaving, and policies to promote lifelong learning for low-skilled and other groups at risk have also been high on national policy agendas. Work on the European tools will need to ensure they interact better with and focus more on European citizens and employers to produce the intended benefit. Other challenges include better use of information on labour market outcomes of VET graduates, strengthening efforts to promote creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET, and ensuring professional development opportunities for VET teachers and trainers.

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