



European cooperation in VET: one process, many stops

Developments in vocational education
and training policy 2015-17





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Europe 123, 570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE
PO Box 22427, 551 02 Thessaloniki, GREECE
Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020
Email: info@cedefop.europa.eu
www.cedefop.europa.eu

Mara Brugia, *Acting Director*
Tatjana Babrauskiene, *Chair of the Governing Board*

Foreword

Vocational education and training (VET) is changing. Until the early 2000s, VET was often seen as an alternative education and training route, providing medium level qualifications mainly in crafts and trades for labour market entry. Even at that time there were more shades of VET than perceived.

Shaped by country contexts and national or international developments, VET prepares for various sectors and occupations and awards qualifications at nearly all education levels. It aspires to cater for the most talented and those who otherwise risk being left behind: it offers technologically advanced top-notch learning options as well as reskilling and upskilling opportunities to help people find, maintain or change jobs. The close link to the world of work in its DNA leads to high expectations: VET is expected to help promote innovation, cater for changing skill needs, help reduce mismatch and unemployment, and integrate migrants.

Several countries have rebranded VET to reflect its broader scope and improve its image. In times when following different learning paths in various contexts throughout one's life becomes the norm, VET's profile is expanding – sometimes faster, sometimes less rapidly – to anticipate and reflect changes in the world of work, domestically and internationally. Despite the generally positive perception of its benefits, it still tends to be considered second choice in some countries compared to general education.

To keep pace with developments, the European Commission, Member States and social partners, European Economic Area and the candidate countries, at their meeting in Riga in June 2015, reinforced their commitment to cooperate on competitive and inclusive VET. Building on their long-standing cooperation and working towards their 2020 objectives, they agreed to work on five European-wide priority areas (medium-term deliverables) in line with domestic needs.

These focus on ensuring that VET offers paths to qualifications for all. It aims to provide relevant skills sets by reinforcing work-based learning, key competences and skills intelligence, and ensures high quality not only through dedicated frameworks but also by placing emphasis on teachers' and trainers' competence development.

Work to put the five policy priorities in place needs to be systemic, coherent and mutually reinforcing. This requires investment and broad partnerships. Social partner involvement – employer and employee organisations alike – is intrinsic to VET. For change to become practice also at local level, policy measures and instruments need to reach and support those who contribute to, use and work in, VET. Without their input, understanding and commitment, VET reform cannot

succeed. The renewed emphasis on teachers and trainers acknowledges their key role in making change happen.

This report paints a picture of change. It covers a significant amount of countries' work done over 2015-17 in these priority areas. It reflects the dynamics of change in VET and the wider European policy context. It builds a bridge to the joint work that started in Copenhagen in 2002, and continued with the Bruges communiqué in 2010 and its follow-up until 2014. This continuity is most evident in the top priority that all countries have given to promoting work-based learning in its different forms, a trend that started several years ago and has been reinforced by European policy initiatives.

Putting countries' policies and actions under the microscope, the report aims to indicate where they follow similar paths, not only within the EU but also beyond. However, what looks alike may vary, as the country examples illustrate. They paint a vivid picture of 'unity in diversity', demonstrating that there is not one solution for all, nor is there one common level of readiness.

This joint interim report is the outcome of the mandate given to Cedefop and the ETF to monitor and analyse progress in participating countries in their endeavour to modernise VET. This cross-country view is based on, and complemented by, short reports on developments within the participating countries. As we approach the end of the current strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) and the Bruges-Riga cycle, this exercise can be a useful compass for the remaining time until 2020. Cedefop and the ETF will continue to accompany and support this process on the way to 2020 within our different remits, and report on achievements in the policy priorities and objectives. Though in coordination, we will draw on our different strands of work and expertise to inform these reflections.

The report offers a timely contribution to a broader discussion on VET and cooperation beyond 2020. Discussing the future, we need to learn from the past. Reflections on changing skill needs and the potential implications of automation and digitisation for VET have commenced but may need to take more differentiated perspectives, as they are unlikely to be uniform. The past years have shown that VET has developed across education sector boundaries and that its links with sector, employment, immigration and social policies are increasingly acknowledged. Reflections on the future require breaking down the silo mentality and embracing change, keeping in mind that while there is no limit to change, there is limit to expectations of change.

Enjoy the reading.

Mara Brugia
Cedefop Acting Director

Cesare Onestini
ETF Director

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The thematic sections and accompanying country chapters were prepared and drafted by: Silke Gadji, George Kostakis, Dmitrijs Kulss, Jelena Letica, Vicky Oraiopoulou, Iraklis Pliakis, Anastasia Pouliou, Eleonora Schmid, Guy Tchibozo and Aristos Theocharous (Cedefop); and Georgios Zisimos, Evgenia Petkova and Mircea Badescu (ETF).

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Executive summary

On the road to 2020: what this report is about

The focus of this report is an overview of what European countries have done mid-way to 2020 to address five priority areas for VET agreed by their ministers in Riga in 2015. Rather than presenting these developments in isolation, it recalls the state of play at that time and puts them into a wider policy context. Looking back at countries' activities over 2015-17 also helps look ahead by linking its findings to the ongoing debate on the future of VET.

Covering the EU-28+ (Member States plus Iceland and Norway), and the candidate countries, this interim report can support European cooperation towards a common ambition for VET. Known as the Copenhagen process, this cooperation started some 15 years ago. Over the current decade, a long-term vision for high-quality competitive and inclusive VET has guided this joint work in two cycles of shorter-term actions until 2020.

The report flags common trends across the EU-28+ and candidate countries. At aggregate level, countries' policy measures may look rather similar but their VET does not start from the same point and policy actions need to suit their contexts. Purpose, speed and progress vary: country examples illustrate the diversity within this apparent unity. Complementary country chapters present more in-depth information ⁽¹⁾.

Fewer and broader priority areas than in the previous cycle up to 2014 form so-called medium-term deliverables (MTDs). This approach was agreed for the current period to give countries the chance to prioritise among the MTDs and/or address different aspects of these as needed.

When asked which MTD(s) they would assign high priority, a clear trend emerged across the EU-28+ and the candidate countries: work-based learning, with specific attention to apprenticeships.

Among the others the result was less clear, with up to three being ranked equally high in the EU-28+. While the sequence of the others between the EU-28+ and the candidate countries varied, overall, the following pattern emerged:

⁽¹⁾ Cedefop (2018c). *National policy developments in vocational education and training in 2015-17*. Country reports.
ETF (2018b-f). *Progress towards Riga conclusions medium-term deliverables*.
Country reports on: Albania; former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Montenegro; Serbia; Turkey.

- (a) access to VET and qualifications for all; and teacher and trainer development;
- (b) quality assurance and feedback loops; and key competences.

Building on progress to date

This picture is not surprising. Four of the five Riga MTDs build on priority areas of the first cycle and they all relate to the strategic and overarching objectives set for 2020. This sets a framework for continued policy developments in the countries. At the same time, complex and newly emerging challenges require acting on several fronts, as the unprecedented refugee crisis shortly after the decision on the five priorities demonstrated.

Promoting apprenticeships has already been high on the European policy agenda since the economic downturn. The duality of learning in schools and enterprises was then recognised as a possible way to ease young people's transition to the labour market. This and other forms of work-based learning have been expanded and become central to several EU-level initiatives. They have helped reinforce the momentum and sustain continued commitment (see Section 1.1). Work on this MTD is just one example testifying that countries' cooperation on VET has deepened within the Copenhagen process, not least through policy learning opportunities supported by Cedefop and ETF.

Bringing together and building on several of the 2011-14 deliverables, enhancing access to VET and qualifications, is a multidimensional deliverable. It interlinks with the apprenticeship and key competence MTDs as well as industry, employment and social policies, not least through its strong inclusive dimension. It is the work to improve education and training opportunities for the low-qualified that has made this MTD central to putting upskilling pathways in place, as recommended by the Council in 2016. Peer learning activities within this framework are also likely to support efforts in this area in the future.

Despite the evident continuity with previously devised initiatives, countries' policies and actions were often in an evolutionary and preparation stage. This applied specifically to initiatives proposed for support by the European Social Fund (ESF).

Continuity involves adjusting and complementing deliverables to meet the objectives set and reflect policy agenda developments. This is evident in the deliverable on quality assurance, which has been on the agenda for many years. The holistic perspective of quality assurance as a key building block in the development of VET systems has been gaining ground. The increased attention at EU level to strengthening information on labour market needs and outcomes

demonstrates this. The revised EU-level key competence framework is likely to lead to adjustments and add to the dynamics.

Competent teachers and trainers are essential for high quality and inclusive VET. Although professional development of teachers, trainers and mentors was not directly rooted in the 2011-14 deliverables, it was a prerequisite to achieving many of them. Different EU-level working groups have focused on competence profiles and how to professionalise teaching and training, so the current deliverable aims at developing systematic approaches.

Trends that emerged in previous reviews have been confirmed in this exercise. Borderlines between VET for youths and adults, initial and continuing training are becoming less clear cut. This manifests itself specifically in the MTD on access to VET and qualifications for all and will certainly also gain in importance in others.

Accessing EU funds, in the EU-28 mainly the ESF, not only for specific targeted projects but also longer-term system-level developments has continued. Increasingly, Erasmus+ has been used to support the work on the deliverables.

In most candidate countries, both the EU pre-accession assistance instrument (IPA) and international donor organisations (including bilateral donors) have been highly associated with VET systems reform. For this, the Riga process offered a common framework to boost reforms and set priorities.

Unity in diversity

For some countries, the work on VET is part of a natural evolution to strengthen its position in the overall education and training system and retain its role and relevance *vis-à-vis* the labour market. For others, this work is driven by the need to strengthen VET's role and its relevance.

Within work-based learning, most actions focused on apprenticeships at secondary level across all countries. Depending on a country's stage of development, it worked on preparing the grounds, legal frameworks or updating rules and principles and qualification structures. Many aimed at making apprenticeships more attractive for employers and learners. Expanding learning opportunities in enterprises was also at the centre of measures for school-based VET. Work on this MTD highlights countries' efforts to engage different stakeholders, share responsibilities and strengthen partnerships. While employer involvement is evident in many of the actions reported, that of trade unions is less visible.

While candidate countries focused on quality assurance approaches at system and provider level, making use of the EQAVET framework, the EU-28+

developed their approaches further. All worked to strengthen skills anticipation and feedback loops. Despite improvements, systematic use of outcome indicators and graduate tracking still seem to be weak spots.

Enhancing access to VET and qualifications by making education and training more flexible and permeable has been a challenge for many systems. Coordinated strategic approaches have not yet been frequent, although addressing this MTD entails longer-term coherent and coordinated policies and partnerships. At the same time it requires tailored approaches and flexibility to respond swiftly to target group needs and newly emerging challenges. Actions focused on structural changes in VET, youth and, in the EU-28, on improving training opportunities for the low-skilled, unemployed and newly arrived migrants. Continuous development of national qualification frameworks based on learning outcomes in all countries and reinforced work on validating non-formally and informally acquired skills support the objectives of this MTD. While all countries work to improve their guidance services and tools, comprehensive approaches remain an area for improvement.

The need to offer the right blend of skills to all learners is closely linked with strengthening key competences in learning-outcomes based IVET curricula. References to soft competences were scarce. Information on actions relates mainly to VET for young people.

Work on professional development of teachers and trainers focused on VET-school staff. In several countries attention was more on improving status and career opportunities to make the profession more attractive and improving initial training. With apprenticeships and other forms of in-company learning being expanded, training of trainers is moving to the fore.

While many actions were still in the pipeline, evidence suggests that countries have made considerable steps forward in the areas covered by the five MTDs. Progress will also be discussed in relation to specific recommendations countries may have received within EU-level economic coordination.

Table 1. **Addressing the deliverables: an overview**

MTD	Focus/fields of action in 2015-17	Measures targeting/addressing		
Work-based learning/apprenticeships	apprenticeships	systems (legal basis, rules/principles, qualification structure)	training organisations (incentives to engage in training)	learners
	school-based VET	expanding/extending internships/work placements/ simulated work-based learning, training/virtual firms, real firms in school		
	increasing stakeholder involvement (NB also included in the above)			
	bilateral/multilateral policy learning, including through EU support			
Quality assurance/EQAVET and feedback loops	continued improvement of quality approaches in line/compatible with EQAVET	VET providers	quality assurance of qualifications	cooperation of national reference points through EU support
	feedback loops and graduate tracking	tools, anticipation and monitoring mechanisms	collecting data on graduates	reporting on learner transitions and further learning
Access to VET and qualifications for all	permeability and/or flexibility	pathway structure, bridging routes, programmes	admission, programme duration, exams/certification	support measures
	training, reskilling upskilling	disadvantaged groups (wide range)		
	information and guidance	access and quality	web-based and self-help tools	

MTD	Focus/fields of action in 2015-17	Measures targeting/addressing		
	validation/recognition of learning	young people (youth guarantee)	migrants	links to NQF
Key competences	IVET	updating curricula	digital competences	languages/literacy
		developing/adjusting assessment approaches/tools	STEM competences	
	CVET		digital competences	literacy including for the disadvantaged
Teachers'/trainers'/mentors' professional development	teaching staff in VET schools: initial training	entry requirements to training/the profession	training programmes: upgrading/updating	attracting new teachers
	teaching staff in VET schools: continuing training	requirements; career progression	training programmes: introduction, updating	training in companies
	trainers/mentors in enterprises	entry requirements to the profession	training programmes: introduction, updating	

NB: Blue cells indicate where the EU-28+ and the candidate countries share common trends.

Source: Cedefop and ETF.

On the way to 2020 and beyond

VET is more differentiated and complex than other education sectors. It is interlinked, and needs to interact, within a pedagogical framework, with industry, employment and social policy. This calls for more comprehensive policy approaches, as previous reports pointed out.

It also makes understanding developments and reporting challenging. This is more so if conclusions of individual reporting processes do not take context factors and interdependencies with other policy domains into account. Statistical data, where they exist, cannot fully inform us on the current state of play, let alone the impact of measures that were only devised a few years ago. Thorough understanding of individual countries' VET, and its role within the specific socioeconomic country context and traditions, is paramount. This is even more important where monitoring and reporting is linked to funding, as in the candidate countries. While each process is important in its own right, these broader aspects, which are considered in individual country support, could also be considered in high-level stakeholder discussions.

Reflections on the future of VET, the framework for EU-level cooperation and the international dimension have commenced. Emerging trends, which confirm those arising from this report, indicate that work-based learning and VET at higher level will expand further; borderlines between different types and levels of education and training will become less clear-cut, internationalisation will increase; more and more hybrid qualifications and flexible reskilling and upskilling opportunities will be needed to meet rapid structural and technological changes.

This requires finding a balance between long-term strategies and quick responses, stability and flexibility, relevance to regional and local needs and to learners' further development. Perhaps most important is validating the skills people have and finding the right methods both to motivate them to develop these skills and help them to do so.

As this review demonstrates, the Riga deliverables and the EU-level framework have helped to reinforce cooperation across borders. VET has contributed to the overall education and training framework and EU-level initiatives have acknowledged VET's value for countries' economic and social developments. Political commitment and ownership have been the ingredients for significant action. These ingredients have given cooperation in VET its distinctive identity and, in several countries, helped to keep it on the policy agenda. What matters now is maintaining this momentum for even closer cooperation and taking it further, building on the 2020 vision for VET.

CHAPTER 1.

Policy brief: from Bruges to Riga and beyond

1.1. Policy context: key process relationships

2017 marked the EU's 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, which laid the foundation of today's European Union. It explicitly included VET, preparing the grounds for a common European vocational training policy. VET was seen as a social policy lever. The European Social Fund supported retraining of the unemployed, although only to a limited extent. While the term 'vocational training' was not defined, evidence suggests it comprised initial training, skills updating and retraining and addressed young people and adults.

Prior to the Treaty of Rome, measures taken within the European Coal and Steel Community already concerned issues that are topical today: anticipating and better matching skills supply and demand, removing mobility obstacles and informing on VET benefits. In the 1960s ensuring transition from general education to VET, progression to 'higher level activities', and career information and guidance also featured on the agenda.

What has changed considerably is the approach: the idea of harmonising training to ease mobility was ruled out. Since 2002, European cooperation in VET has been based on voluntary commitment and, increasingly, features policy learning. Inspired by the [Bologna process](#) for higher education, its main goals have been to improve lifelong learning and mobility and help create a single labour market through common objectives and principles for VET. This entailed making qualifications and competences more understandable and visible and promoting trust and recognition. Since 2004, within this so-called Copenhagen process ⁽²⁾, countries have also worked on common national priorities.

While, in the past, priorities had been adjusted every two years ⁽³⁾, a new approach was adopted in the 2010 Bruges communiqué. Ministers of the EU-28+ ⁽⁴⁾ (Council of the European Union and European Commission, 2010), candidate countries and European social partners set out objectives for 2020,

⁽²⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/eu-policy-in-the-field-of-vocational-education-and-training-vet_en [accessed 19.10.2018].

⁽³⁾ Communiqués of Maastricht (2004), Helsinki (2006), Bordeaux (2008) and Bruges (2010); see footnote 2.

⁽⁴⁾ EU Member States plus Iceland and Norway.

combining them with shorter-term priority areas. At their 2015 meeting in Riga, following a review of this first cycle, they decided to focus on five main areas in their work towards the 2020 objectives for VET. These are referred to as medium-term deliverables (MTDs) (Box 1; Table A4 in the annex).

Box 1. Riga Presidency conclusions: deliverables for 2015-20

With a view to developing high quality and labour market relevant vocational skills and qualifications, based on the learning outcomes approach:

1. Promote work-based learning in all its forms, with special attention to apprenticeships, by involving social partners, companies, chambers and VET providers, as well as by stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship.
2. Further develop quality assurance mechanisms in VET in line with the EQAVET recommendation and, as part of quality assurance systems, establish continuous information and feedback loops in I-VET and C-VET systems based on learning outcomes.

For people's informed choice of pathways and long-term employability and adaptability to evolving skills needs:

3. Enhance access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible and permeable systems, notably by offering efficient and integrated guidance services and making available validation of non-formal and informal learning.
4. Further strengthen key competences in VET curricula and provide more effective opportunities to acquire or develop those skills through I-VET and C-VET.

In support of successful implementation of reforms and to raise the overall quality and efficiency of VET:

5. Introduce systematic approaches to, and opportunities for, initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors in both school and work-based settings.

Due attention will be paid to transversal areas and principles which are crucial for achieving the deliverables and for modernising VET: strong partnerships with social partners and other relevant stakeholders such as chambers and various competent institutions; efficient funding and promotion of excellence and innovation in VET; consistent use of the learning outcomes approach and the commonly developed tools and principles. This includes: setting up comprehensive validation arrangements by 2018 as agreed in the 2012 Council recommendation. In addition, the European Commission and the Member States should also commit, in cooperation with all VET stakeholders, to targeted communication and appropriate visibility of the achievements of European cooperation in VET (Copenhagen process).

Source: Riga conclusions (Council of the European Union; European Commission, 2015a).

The Riga conclusions aim to build on the achievements of the long-standing cooperation within the Copenhagen process. Although there is no single European VET system, there is the notion of a single European VET ambition: to make VET a first class choice for all learners within a lifelong learning span. This entails increasing VET attractiveness and quality; ensuring that VET pathways reach into higher education levels in all countries participating in the Copenhagen process; and expanding mobility measures. Social partners and other stakeholders need to have an active role in development and implementation.

These principles are in line with the European Commission's communication on *Rethinking education* (European Commission, 2012). Reiterating the necessary political commitment, the Riga conclusions gave a new boost for developments at country level. The five MTDs are the outcome of a consensus aiming to strike a balance between what is feasible and what is expected of VET systems in the participating countries. Together with the adult learning agenda (Council of the European Union, 2011), the MTDs and their underpinning principles are also part of the overall European priorities for education and training (ET 2020) (Council of the European Union and European Commission, 2015b).

Cooperation within the Copenhagen process has become a catalyst for modernising VET in many EU Member States, EEA and candidate countries. Helping to achieve overall education and training objectives, it has supported work towards Europe's strategic goals: previously those set for 2010 ⁽⁵⁾ and now the [Europe 2020 targets](#).

Since 2010, in parallel to their joint work on VET, the EU-28 have been working on their national reform programmes, which the European Commission analyses annually to follow up their commitment to the European goals (European semester). For the candidate countries the EU's economic governance process, light European semester, is the key political framework for reforms. Progress under Riga is picked up when governments submit annual updates on their national economic reform programmes. As a result, Member States and candidate countries may receive recommendations to address VET-related challenges. Subsequently, they report on their measures and progress achieved. Such country-specific recommendations have, for instance, referred to apprenticeships, reducing early leaving from education and training, improving educational attainment of disadvantaged groups or reforming teacher and trainer training.

⁽⁵⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/archives/growthandjobs/european-councils/index_en.htm [accessed 31.1.2018].

Several other EU level policy initiatives and processes have also covered VET or related issues. Countries' youth guarantee implementation plans (Council of the European Union, 2013a), which the Commission follows up, are just one example. They aim to ensure that young people either find jobs or continue their education and training, often through apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning. Dedicated funds have been made available until 2020 to support these and the overall Youth employment initiative (European Council, 2013a and 2013b; European Commission, 2013a).

The European alliance for apprenticeships, launched in 2013 (European Commission et al., 2013) ⁽⁶⁾, aims to help strengthen quality, supply and image of apprenticeships and encourage countries and stakeholders to engage in this endeavour. For candidate countries, Riga served as a vehicle for all to join the alliance. It is underpinned by a joint declaration by the European Commission, the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU and the European social partners (European Commission et al., 2013) and supported by a Council declaration (Council of the European Union, 2013b). The 2014-15 working group on VET set up within the ET 2020 framework focused specifically on apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning ⁽⁷⁾. A European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships will also support work on this MTD (MTD 1) (European Commission, 2017a) ⁽⁸⁾. It demonstrates the crucial role of social partners and the importance of collaborative approaches.

Getting people (back) into work and promoting equality, inclusion and solidarity has been among the main threads of EU policy in recent years to counteract the effects of the economic crisis. The ET 2020 report stresses the need for inclusive education and training, intercultural and citizenship competences to support EU's core values in times of unprecedented challenges: terrorist attacks and the need to integrate large numbers of newly arriving people, from several countries and different cultural backgrounds, into education and training and the labour market.

The endeavour to recover from the economic slump that had hit Europe on the eve of the Bruges communiqué brought the strategic importance of skills to the fore. In response, in 2016, the European Commission launched a

⁽⁶⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1147> [accessed 31.1.2018].

⁽⁷⁾ Its members, i.e. social partners, representatives of the Member States, Cedefop and the ETF developed relevant guiding principles (European Commission, 2016a).

⁽⁸⁾ Subsequently, based on a joint opinion by the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT), the Council adopted a related recommendation (Council of the European Union, 2018).

comprehensive new skills agenda (European Commission, 2016b). This comes with a comprehensive policy package and aims to:

- (a) improve the quality and relevance of skills formation;
- (b) make skills and qualifications more visible and comparable;
- (c) improve skills intelligence and information for better career choices.

All members of the workforce, of all skills levels, need to be continuously updating their skills: this is one of the main messages and requires adequate pathways for Europe's nearly 64 million adults with a low level of education to improve their employability. It also means ensuring all young people and adults have the strong key competence base it takes to succeed in the 21st century across all sectors and occupations. In support, a revision of the key competences for lifelong learning (Council of the EU and European Parliament, 2006) was foreseen at the time of writing ⁽⁹⁾. It will have implications on the related Riga priority (MTD 4).

The related recommendation on upskilling pathways (Council of the European Union, 2016a) focuses on empowering low-skilled adults: they should get the chance to acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital competence and/or a qualification at EQF level 3 or 4. Learning offers should build on assessment and validation of their skills and competences supported by guidance, as with the long-term unemployed (Council of the European Union, 2016b) and within youth guarantee measures. The latter has increased emphasis on meeting the objectives of the recommendation on validating non-formal and informal learning (Council of the European Union, 2012). And the revised European qualifications framework (EQF) recommendation (Council of the European Union, 2017a) relates to both: it promotes using qualifications frameworks to visualise pathways to credentials and supporting validation of people's skills and competences.

Upskilling pathways specifically reinforces the Riga deliverable on access to VET and qualifications for all (MTD 3), especially as the upskilling pathways follow-up is supported by the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training and stock-taking is foreseen by the end of 2018.

Some of the trends predating the crisis have been accelerated by the downturn and led to faster structural changes in the economy and the labour market: globalisation, technological advances and digital transformation. To ensure the competence base for the latter, the European Commission has invited

⁽⁹⁾ In early 2018, the European Commission adopted a proposal revising this recommendation based on findings of a broad consultation process (European Commission, 2018). It was adopted by the Council in May 2018.

Member States to develop national skills strategies and monitors progress ⁽¹⁰⁾. As part of the new skills agenda, this initiative also relates to MTD 4.

Concerns that skills mismatch, which has increased since the outbreak of the crisis, prevails in European labour markets have become stronger. Demographic ageing is expected to lead to a progressive – and in some countries sharp – reduction in labour supply. This requires a better understanding of how graduates fare on the labour market. A recommendation on tracking graduates (Council of the European Union, 2017b), as proposed by the skills agenda, aims not only to ensure better qualitative and quantitative data but also to feed them back to VET policy and provision, guidance services and learners. This reinforces the work on feedback loops and is closely linked to the use of EQAVET outcome indicators (MTD 2). This makes tracking of graduates one of the key tools for ensuring the quality of vocational education (ETF, 2018a).

The [European pillar of social rights](#) proposed by the Commission in 2016, and endorsed at the 2017 social summit for fair jobs and growth, stresses the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning for all (European Commission, 2016b; European Commission, 2017b; European Commission 2017c; Council of the European Union, European Parliament, and European Commission, 2017). It refers explicitly to continuing education, apprenticeships or traineeships for young people ⁽¹¹⁾. The ‘social scoreboard’ to track Member States’ performance includes the early leaving and NEET indicators and will inform the European Semester of economic policy coordination ⁽¹²⁾.

More work-based learning and apprenticeships, more emphasis on key competences, new and more heterogeneous target groups and digitalisation are all putting more demands on teachers and trainers. A current and a previous ET 2020 working group aim to support countries’ work on professional development of teachers and trainers (MTD 5).

1.2. [Scope: what’s in it](#)

As in the past, Cedefop and the ETF have been entrusted with monitoring and analysing progress as part of the EU support to the implementation of the agreed priorities.

⁽¹⁰⁾ [European Commission website: the digital skills and jobs coalition](#).

⁽¹¹⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1226&langId=en> [accessed 31.1.2018].

⁽¹²⁾ <https://composite-indicators.jrc.ec.europa.eu/social-scoreboard/> [accessed 31.1.2018].

This report covers the period spring 2015 to spring 2017. It aims to display, midway to 2020, developments in the countries regarding the five MTDs agreed in Riga using a monitoring framework and available statistical data adapted to the MTDs.

The monitoring approach builds on the lessons learned in the 2011-14 Bruges cycle and considers the different nature of the 2015-20 deliverables. It focuses on countries' priorities in terms of MTDs and the policy measures they select to address these, rather than relating them to all potential options. To guide information collection, Directors General for VET were invited in early 2016 to indicate deliverables and areas their countries were prioritising/intended to focus on.

A more comprehensive analysis of achievements for 2015-20 will follow in the 2020 Bruges-Riga final report, which will also aim at linking these more closely to the long-term objectives endorsed in 2010.

The current report highlights the range of reforms shaped by their national contexts; it reflects on possible gaps in continuity regarding the objectives set in Bruges and identifies areas for further attention, where collective response may have an added value.

It is not a static, stock-taking report. It also includes a forward-looking perspective: it attempts to identify future trends, make proposals and inform the discussion on VET's future up until 2020 and beyond.

To fulfil these tasks and to do justice to the complexity of the different VET systems, this interim report comprises two parts ⁽¹³⁾:

- (a) a stand-alone cross country synthesis report;
- (b) individual country chapters which are presented separately.

To contextualise the developments, this cross-country synthesis starts with a reflection on recent developments in EU VET policies also includes references to the 2015 starting point.

Cedefop is responsible for information and analysis on EU Member States, Iceland and Norway (EU-28+); the ETF is responsible for information and analysis on the candidate countries. Some parts of the report are common, reflecting trends that have been identified across all participating countries, while others clearly separate the information provided by the two agencies.

Chapter 2 highlights the developments in countries' VET policies during 2015-17. In doing so it looks into continuity between Bruges and Riga. It discusses how EU-level employment initiatives endorsed before and since the Riga conclusions relate to these and the objectives.

⁽¹³⁾ Both parts are published online.

Chapter 3 focuses on major developments by individual MTD. Information was collected through a common questionnaire addressed to all participating countries. Cedefop's ReferNet partners provided the information for the EU-28+; for the candidate countries, the respondents are the Directors General for VET. The information on the EU-28+, also drew on other sources: the EQAVET Secretariat survey 2016-17; the 2016 validation inventory; Cedefop's country reviews on apprenticeship; its work on statistical data; and other relevant sources. The analysis of findings aims to reflect on the achievements within the reporting period.

Chapter 4 reflects on common trends emerging from the review and continuing work and discussions on VET development over time. This chapter proposes points for further consideration in the remaining period until 2020.

1.3. The Riga stop: the situation in 2015

Section 1.3.1 summarises the information on progress in the 2011-14 Bruges deliverables to indicate roughly where countries stood in 2015 in terms of the Riga MTDs (Cedefop, 2015a and b). It includes Cedefop's and ETF's own statistical information on VET, including country performance on the ET 2020 targets.

1.3.1. EU-28+ (Member States, Norway and Iceland)

At the beginning of the reporting period, Member States were in the course of carrying out the VET reform engaged at Copenhagen and reinforced in Bruges, especially in the wake of the economic crisis. Cedefop's report on the 2010-14 Bruges cycle (Cedefop, 2015a) detailed how the Copenhagen/Bruges process, had an impact on national VET policy and strategy in all countries, though depending on their starting points. More than 20 countries had introduced legislative or policy changes to adapt or introduce new programmes, pathways and qualifications (Figure 1). For some countries the Bruges communiqué provided a menu to prioritise or choose the most relevant themes. In those with strong VET traditions Bruges had stimulated cooperation and encouraged policy learning.

Reinforcing a trend that preceded 2010, countries had undertaken great efforts to make VET a more attractive learning option. Growing recognition that work-based learning can ease integration into the labour market had led to a revival of apprenticeships (MTD 1). Many countries were preparing, introducing or reforming such schemes, building on international cooperation, bilaterally and within the European alliance for apprenticeships, established in 2013 (European

Commission et al., 2013). A few countries were introducing apprenticeships in non-traditional sectors or set up similar schemes in higher education. However, involving small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in apprenticeships was proving a challenge and ensuring the quality of work-based learning was considered an area for improvement. Image problems prevailed.

Figure 1. **Focus of VET policy reform 2010-14**



NB: The figures indicate the number of countries indicating reforms and developments in the specific field.

Source: Cedefop (2015b). *Stronger vocational education and training for better lives*. Briefing note, March 2015.

Countries were also expanding the shares of work-based learning in other forms of VET. In the EU, on average, the proportion of upper secondary students in work-based VET ⁽¹⁴⁾ amounted to 34% (Table 2). However, data available at EU level did not necessarily convey the full picture.

In several countries, initiatives were being taken to set up closer and more regular relationships between public authorities, education institutions and

⁽¹⁴⁾ For statistical purposes, work-based IVET considers enrolments in combined work- and school-based VET as opposed to mainly school-based VET (UOE, 2016). A programme is classified as 'combined work- and school-based' if 25% or more of the curriculum is presented outside the school environment. Programmes where the work-based component accounts for 90% or more of the curriculum are excluded from the UOE data collection. Under these conditions, apprenticeships are included in work-based IVET (Cedefop, 2017a).

enterprises, particularly for the design of VET qualifications and programmes. At a more general level, cooperation between VET and employment stakeholders was strengthened and broadened.

Quality and relevance of VET (MTD 2) was high on countries' agendas in the light of high youth unemployment, increasing skill mismatch and the results of the OECD's adult skills survey (PIAAC) (OECD, 2013). The Council had originally recommended that countries have national quality assurance approaches for VET in place by 2011 (Council of the European Union, 2009). At the time of the Riga conclusions, some were still at an early stage (EQAVET Secretariat, 2014). In their follow-up to the EQAVET recommendation, countries were focusing on quality assurance frameworks for VET providers. Many had introduced schemes for monitoring VET graduate transitions, employability and labour market outcomes. However, obstacles of privacy protection legislation remained high. The use of collected data for assisting the design of VET provision or helping at-risk groups was limited.

On the inclusiveness front – given the high youth unemployment – measures tended to focus on young people in transition to the labour market. Reducing early leavers from education and training or helping them reintegrate was a top priority. Incentives for learners, enterprises and VET institutions were used to tackling this challenge. Apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning became main pillars of youth guarantees. Initiatives to make VET more flexible and permeable (MTD 3) included, modular programmes, higher VET qualifications and new short VET courses for the unemployed. Measures to raise training participation among the low-skilled and other at risk groups were being expanded, also involving guidance. Adult participation in lifelong learning reached 10.7% in 2014 and 2015, while the EU goal for 2020 is 15% (see framework data in Table 1).

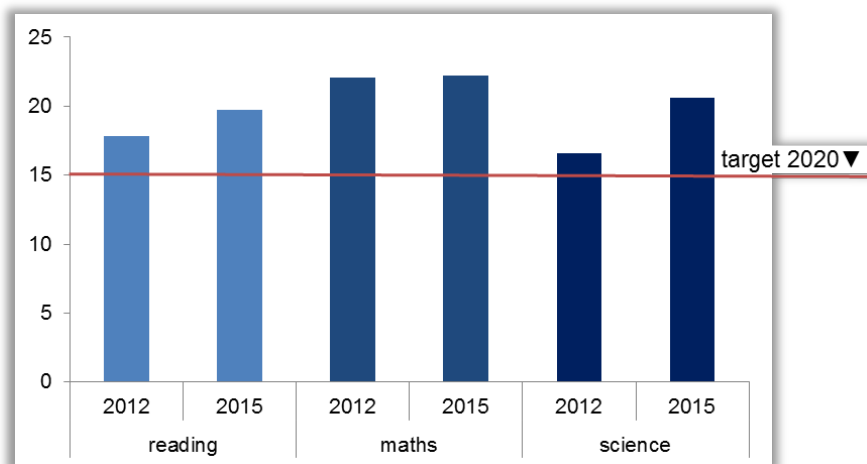
Work on national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) was progressing although some were still at an early stage. The focus on learning outcomes had triggered revision of standards and curricula in several countries. Most NQFs were designed to address all levels and types of qualifications. Gradually, more countries were indicating NQF and EQF levels on certificates and diplomas; some had started to work on ways to include those awarded outside formal education and training, important features in supporting lifelong learning and mobility. Validation arrangements tended to cover only a specific part of education and training, and were, generally, most advanced in VET. However, priority was given to linking them to NQFs, as proposed in the related Council recommendation (Council of the European Union, 2012). Nevertheless, validation opportunities were still little known among citizens, particularly those who they could benefit most.

Key competences (MTD 4) are essential for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion, lifelong learning and employment. Key competences had received increasing attention during 2011-14, particularly basic skills and opportunities allowing the young and adults to acquire, complement or upgrade them outside formal education and training. Lifelong learning and other strategies tended to promote them. Most countries also included them in their NQF level descriptors.

In formal upper secondary VET, key competences were being promoted through stand-alone subject areas or cross-curricular learning outcomes. Reports by Cedefop's ReferNet (Cedefop ReferNet, 2016a) confirmed these findings. Most commonly, key competences were included in curricula; around two thirds promoted them through national/regional strategies and plans.

However, the 2015 PISA results pointed to a challenge for VET at entry level (OECD, 2016a). The share of 15-year olds with low performance in reading, maths and science was not only above the 2020 EU target of 15%; compared with 2012 (OECD, 2014) it had also increased.

Figure 2. **Share of 15-year-olds with low achievement in reading, maths and science in EU-28**



NB: Low achievement means failing level 2 on the PISA scale.
 Source: OECD PISA 2012 (OECD, 2014) and 2015 (OECD, 2016a).

PIAAC results (OECD, 2013) – though very different across countries, even among people with similar qualifications – signalled that information-processing skills, like literacy and numeracy, require more attention in VET. As skills also need to be used to avoid losing them, working environments that help maintain, refresh and stretch them were also called for.

Cedefop's European skills and jobs survey revealed that more than 70% of adult employees in the EU need at least some fundamental ICT skill level; yet,

about one in three of those employees were at risk of digital skill gaps (Cedefop, 2015c). According to the European Commission's 2016 digital progress report (European Commission, 2016d), one in five EU citizens had no digital skills in the preceding year; 45% had insufficient skills.

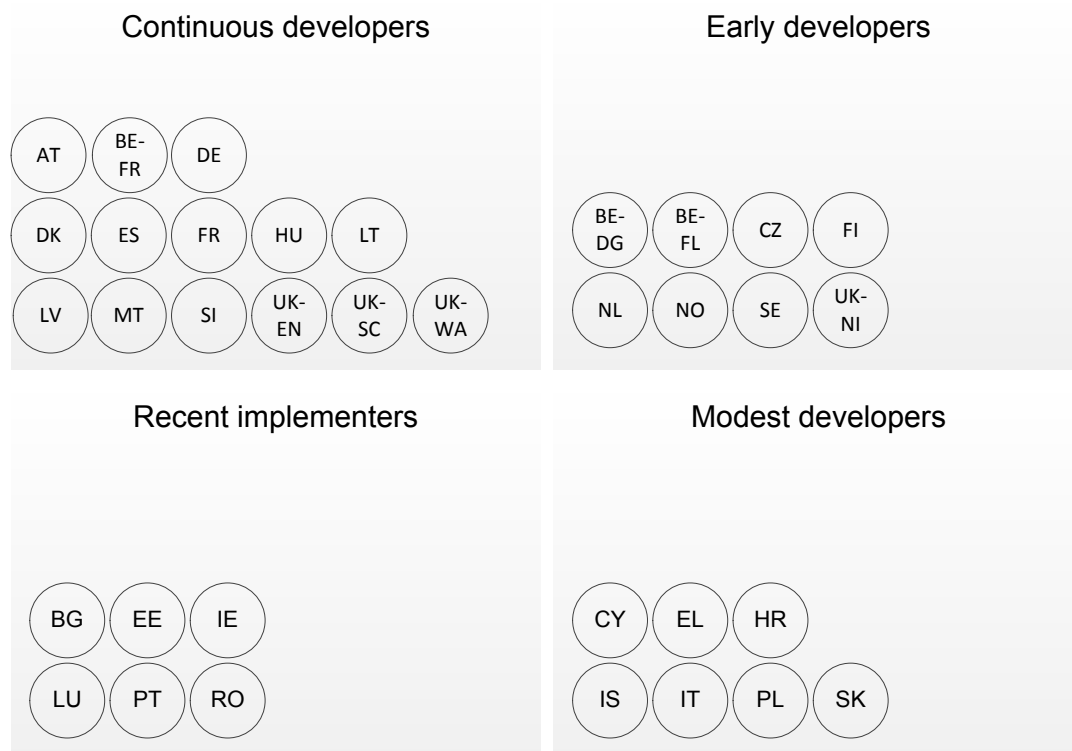
The Bruges communiqué had invited countries to invest in and improve teacher and trainer training, acknowledging their key role in ensuring high quality IVET and CVET. Many of the countries' 2011-14 deliverables implied developing, updating or upgrading their skills and competences. An EU-level working group supported by Cedefop collected examples and provided guiding principles (Cedefop, European Commission, 2014). However, none of the 'national' deliverables was specifically dedicated to teacher and trainer professional development (MTD 5), though Cedefop's analysis showed that updating and upgrading of their competences was being discussed. If professional development, for instance related to key competences, was provided systematically, it was not evident from the information available.

Countries recognised the need to prepare teaching/training staff to cope with expanding apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning. Nevertheless, teacher training in enterprises and entrepreneurship skill development, for instance, were scarce. Drawing on the work done by countries to support in-company trainers' professional development, one of the ET 2020 working groups had developed guiding principles as a contribution to the Bruges objective (Cedefop and European Commission, 2014).

By 2015, taking the situation in 2010 as a baseline for their way towards the Bruges/ET 2020 objectives, Cedefop could distinguish four clusters of countries:

- (a) continuous developers, with many measures of the Bruges package already in place by 2010, followed by significant developments in the 2010-14 period;
- (b) early developers, with many measures already in place by 2010 and some developments afterwards;
- (c) recent implementers, with some measures already in place by 2010 and significant developments in 2010-14;
- (d) modest developers, showing slow progress.

Figure 3. The EU-28+ at the 2015 Riga stop



Source: Cedefop based on its report *Stronger VET for better lives* (Cedefop, 2015a).

Table 2. Framework data: EU on average last available years (2014, 2015)

Access, attractiveness and flexibility	Year	%
IVET students as % of all upper secondary students	2014	48.0
IVET work-based students as % of all upper secondary IVET	2014	34.0
IVET students with direct access to tertiary education as % of all upper secondary IVET	2014	69.2
Adults in lifelong learning (%)	2015	10.7
Female IVET students as % of all female upper secondary students	2014	42.7
Young VET graduates in further education and training (%)	2015	33.0
Older adults in lifelong learning (%)	2015	6.9
Low-educated adults in lifelong learning (%)	2015	4.3
Unemployed adults in lifelong learning (%)	2015	9.5
Skill development and labour market relevance		
Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET	2014	1.0
STEM graduates from upper secondary IVET (% of total)	2014	30.0

Access, attractiveness and flexibility	Year	%
Short-cycle VET graduates as % of first-time tertiary education graduates	2014	9.3
Employment rate for IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds)	2015	77.2
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over general stream)	2015	5.3
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over low-educated)	2015	23.7
Workers helped to improve their work by training (%)	2015	83.7
Workers with skills matched to their duties (%)	2015	57.3
Overall transitions and labour market trends		
Early leavers from education and training (%)	2015	11.0
30-34 year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)	2015	38.7
NEET rate for 18-24 year-olds (%)	2015	15.8
Unemployment rate for 20-34 year-olds (%)	2015	12.9
Employment rate of recent graduates (%)	2015	76.9
Adults with lower level of educational attainment (%)	2015	23.5
Employment rate for 20-64 year-olds (%)	2015	70.0
Employment rate for 20-64 year-olds with lower level of educational attainment (%)	2015	52.6

Source: Cedefop (2017a). *On the way to 2020: data for vocational education and training policies. Country statistical overviews – 2016 update*. Annex Masterfile indicators.

1.3.2. Candidate countries

This section is largely based on the ETF analysis of the progress made towards the Bruges deliverables in 2012-14 by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey (Cedefop, 2015a); it is enriched by/combined with findings from other (ETF) work in the assessment rounds of the Torino process ⁽¹⁵⁾ in 2010-14 and the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA) ⁽¹⁶⁾. Albania was awarded candidate status in June 2014. As it did not take part in the 2014 Bruges review, the analysis below draws on the information available from ETF's work and support provided to this country in recent years within ETF's

⁽¹⁵⁾ The Torino process is a participatory exercise leading to an evidence-based analysis of VET policies in a given country; promoted in 29 ETF partner countries, four rounds (in 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016) conducted so far. The executive summaries of the 2016 Torino process national reports for the candidate countries are available on the ETF web page (ETF 2017a-f) and the full reports are on the [Torino process platform library](#).

⁽¹⁶⁾ OECD; EC; ETF (2014). *SME policy index: the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa 2014: implementation of the Small Business Act for Europe*.

mandate to contribute – in the context of EU external relations policies – to improving human capital development in the partner countries.

Candidate countries underwent a process of profound systemic reform in the period up to 2014-15 as part of the overall political, economic and social transformations on their way to EU membership. The Copenhagen process had inspired the national VET reforms in these countries, especially after 2010, helped to structure VET policy better and eased identifying national priorities for the development of VET.

Following the Bruges communiqué, the candidate countries had been paying increasing attention to the importance of work-based learning (MTD 1) and to cooperation between VET institutions and enterprises on enhancing the relevance and quality of skills. Yet this was taking place in two very different institutional and cultural contexts: one of well-developed crafts/trades and strong work-based learning (in Turkey); and another of State-led, school-based VET, with elements of work-based learning (in the four western Balkan candidate countries).

Work-based learning has a long tradition in Turkey and was occurring widely and regularly. In 2015, 1.7 million students were enrolled in secondary VET programmes, including a 300-hour compulsory work-based learning component in the last year. Around 75 000 young people were enrolled in apprenticeships.

The provision of practical skills in the western Balkan candidate countries in 2010-14 was taking place predominantly in school workshops. Some good examples of on-the-job training periods in companies and internship schemes were reported in well-performing sectors of the national economies, such as catering and tourism, construction and transportation sectors; yet these remained exceptions, rather than a common occurrence for the VET systems as a whole. Simulation of business activities through virtual or training firms was a widespread form of work-based learning for students in business VET programmes in the western Balkan countries.

Apprenticeships, as 'dual' programmes, allowing students to get a job in an enterprise and to alternate periods of work with studying in a school environment, existed in a structured, country-wide format only in Turkey. The western Balkan countries had only informal apprenticeships, usually arranged in the crafts occupations and supported by donors. Frequently, once the donor project had expired, these more practice-oriented types of VET provision were discontinued due to the lack of funding for engaging qualified trainers and for purchasing materials.

In 2010-14, the candidate countries were making efforts to improve their approach to assuring VET quality at system and provider level, and making use of the EQAVET reference framework (MTD 2). Progress achieved until 2015 had

been modest: some results were of systemic character, while others were pilot experience in need of evaluation and mainstreaming as appropriate. The 2014 Bruges reporting showed that Montenegro and Turkey were more advanced with national quality assurance approaches developed and based on stakeholder involvement, national reference points established, and EQAVET indicators partially introduced. However, even these two countries had a lot yet to do, especially regarding full harmonisation and alignment of their national quality assurance indicators with the EQAVET ones.

MTD 2 looks for continuous information and feedback loops in IVET and CVET based on learning outcomes as part of quality assurance systems. The situation in the candidate countries in 2015 suggested that this process would need considerable strengthening, especially in CVET. Statistical offices in the candidate countries regularly collected data on employment and unemployment rates by level of education within labour force surveys, but systematic data collection on VET graduate employability and tracer studies of graduates existed only in Turkey. This hampered the analysis of VET labour market outcomes, especially from an employer viewpoint. Monitoring systems on the learning-to-work transition were at various stages of development and were mainly funded through regular public budgets. In most countries, the legal basis for collecting information on the employment status of VET graduates had not been clearly defined and remained difficult to implement. Transition monitoring systems were operational only in Turkey and Montenegro but still in need of upgrading. Little use was made of the data produced by these systems as evidence for improving VET policies and for evaluation.

The MTD 3 concern for access to VET and qualifications for all was seen in the considerable effort and commitment candidate countries gave to dealing with the EQF recommendation.

Legislation in all candidate countries provided 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. In 2015, comprehensive NQFs had not yet been introduced. An NQF was fully developed only in Turkey but not yet legislated at that time. Montenegro referenced its NQF to EQF in November 2014 and referencing activities were advancing in Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Closely linked to the approaches adopted for the NQF and its operational development, work on validation of non-formal and informal learning in the candidate countries was generally at an early stage of development. In Albania there was no specific legislation and the country was reflecting on its conceptual approach. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the NQF law (2013) explicitly recognised the place of qualifications

acquired non-formally and informally, as did the Law on Adult Education. Building on this legal base, the country developed a validation concept paper and a roadmap for non-formal learning in 2014 with the support of the ETF. In Serbia, validation was highlighted in the Law on Adult Education (adopted in June 2013) but the concrete procedures remained to be developed. Turkey and Montenegro had some procedures and practices already in place. Both had adopted relevant legislation, based on which they had developed procedures and identified institutions to conduct validation for qualifications levels 1 to 5.

The candidate countries were keen to promote key competences in their VET curricula (MTD 4), as evidenced by their VET strategies (Strategy for education development in Serbia 2020, VET strategy 2013-20 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). Underachievement in basic skills remained high: PISA 2012 results showed that over 30% of students aged 15 were functionally illiterate in all three tested subject areas in the western Balkan countries⁽¹⁷⁾ and in mathematics in Turkey (OECD 2014). Actions taken to address MTD 4 focused primarily on including key competences in VET curricula and qualifications. Apart from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, further efforts were still needed on teaching and learning methods and centralised external assessment which was also in place in Montenegro. The Bruges communiqué had played a prominent role in focusing the attention of the western Balkan countries on the need to promote through VET programmes the so-called transversal key competences, such as entrepreneurship skills, digital competences, learning to learn.

Initial teacher education and professional development for vocational teachers and trainers (MTD 5) were addressed by national policy and strategy in all candidate countries. In 2015, the countries had established systems for recruiting teachers, yet status and attractiveness of the teaching profession in the western Balkans remained low. An alarming trend emerged of smaller numbers entering the profession, with teaching staff ageing generally, and particularly in VET, except in Albania. ETF data (ETF, 2016) show that participation of teachers in continuing professional development remained low in most countries⁽¹⁸⁾. A major issue related to the pre-service preparation of VET staff in vocational

⁽¹⁷⁾ The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia did not take part in the 2012 PISA round.

⁽¹⁸⁾ ETF (2016). *Continuing professional development for vocational teachers in south-eastern Europe*.

ETF (2016b-f). *National reports on the continuing professional development of vocational teachers in the candidate countries*.

schools in the western Balkans continued to be the poor quality of their pedagogical skills. All had taken actions to address this gap by 2015.

Another big issue in pre-service teacher education in the western Balkan countries was the gap between theory and practice. Cooperation between teacher training faculties and schools was reported to be weak, preventing student teachers from gaining satisfactory teaching practice and hands-on experience prior to employment as teachers. With the exception of Turkey, professional development supply favoured the needs of teachers in general education. On-the-job and in-company teacher training continued to be an exception rather than common practice. Professional development opportunities for VET teachers in the western Balkan countries were not only few in number, but also the skills and competences they offered had limited relevance and applicability.

1.4. The next part of the journey: priorities for 2016-20

1.4.1. EU-28+ (Member States plus Norway and Iceland)

A survey among Directors General for VET in early 2016 (Cedefop, 2016a) highlighted that, from among the responding countries:

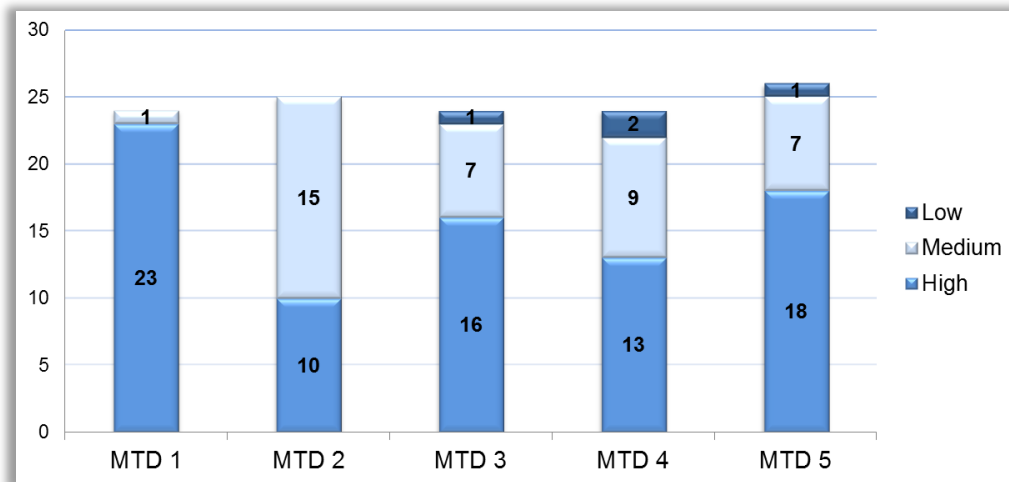
- (a) all but one country gave high priority to work-based learning (MTD 1);
- (b) more than half assigned medium-level priority to quality assurance and feedback loops (MTD 2).

About a third prioritised only one or two deliverables; on average, three were given equally high priority. Only few countries assigned low priority to one of the MTDs. Professional development of teachers, trainers and mentors (MTD 5), which had not been a specific deliverable in the previous Bruges cycle, was given high priority by about two thirds of the respondents (Figure 4).

The survey also explored how the EU-28+ intended to address the MTDs and their specific focus areas (Figure 5; Table A2 and Table A3 in annex).

In MTD 1, nearly all of the responding countries were already working on or aimed to address both apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning in school-based VET. Many were aiming to make apprenticeships more attractive for learners and employers, using incentives they had in the past. Some referred to strengthening social partner involvement or saw apprenticeships as a means to promote entrepreneurial culture. It should be noted, however, that national concepts and understanding of the terms apprenticeships and work-based learning, which may differ from the definitions used at EU level, may have guided the responses in some cases.

Figure 4. **MTD priorities for 2016-20 in the EU-28+**



NB: 26 responses.

Source: Cedefop based on a survey among the Director Generals for VET in the Member States in early 2016 (Cedefop, 2016a).

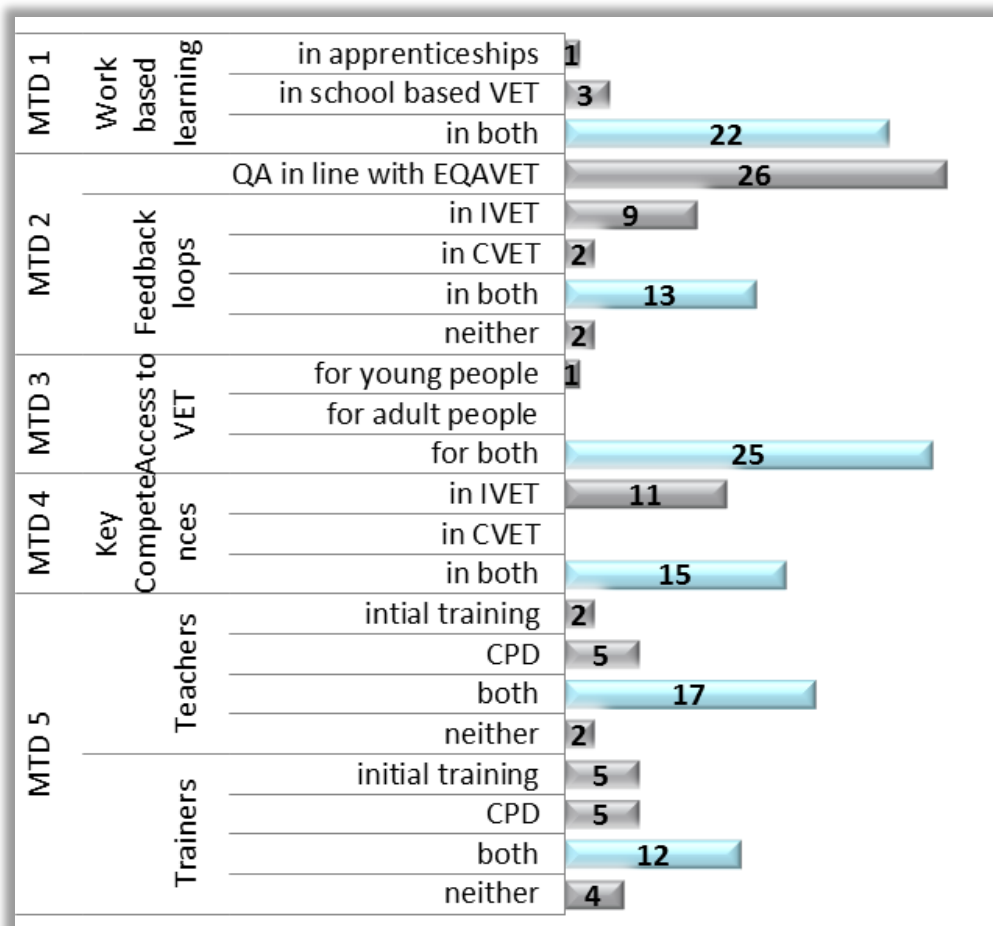
Under MTD 2, work on EQAVET was generally continuing. Most indicated work on feedback loops in IVET, and more than half of the respondents referred to a (future) focus on strengthening these in CVET. Overall, however, the links between the (intended) measures and feedback loops were not made fully explicit.

Under MTD 3, all were working to improve access to VET and qualifications for young people and all but one for adults. Germany, Greece, Austria and Slovenia referred to current or planned actions to integrate the large numbers of refugees and migrants who had arrived in their countries in 2015 and 2016 into VET and/or the labour market: this new challenge had emerged a few months after endorsement of the Riga conclusions. Some were also referring to apprenticeships (MTD 1, Austria) and initiatives to acquire key competences (MTD 4, Greece, France and Italy) for these target groups.

While work on key competences (MTD 4) for IVET was on the agenda in all countries, just over half reported on promoting them in CVET; in most cases the aim was to strengthen their visibility, importance and recognition with a focus on learning outcomes. Actions tended to relate to language, digital and entrepreneurial skills.

Most (planned) initiatives under MTD 5 appeared to focus on continuing professional development for staff in VET schools followed by initial teacher training. Around two-thirds indicated work on initial and continuing professional developments for trainers in enterprises.

Figure 5. Addressing the areas within the MTDs: plans in the EU-28+ for 2016-20



NB: 26 responses.

Source: Cedefop 2016 DGVT survey (Cedefop, 2016a).

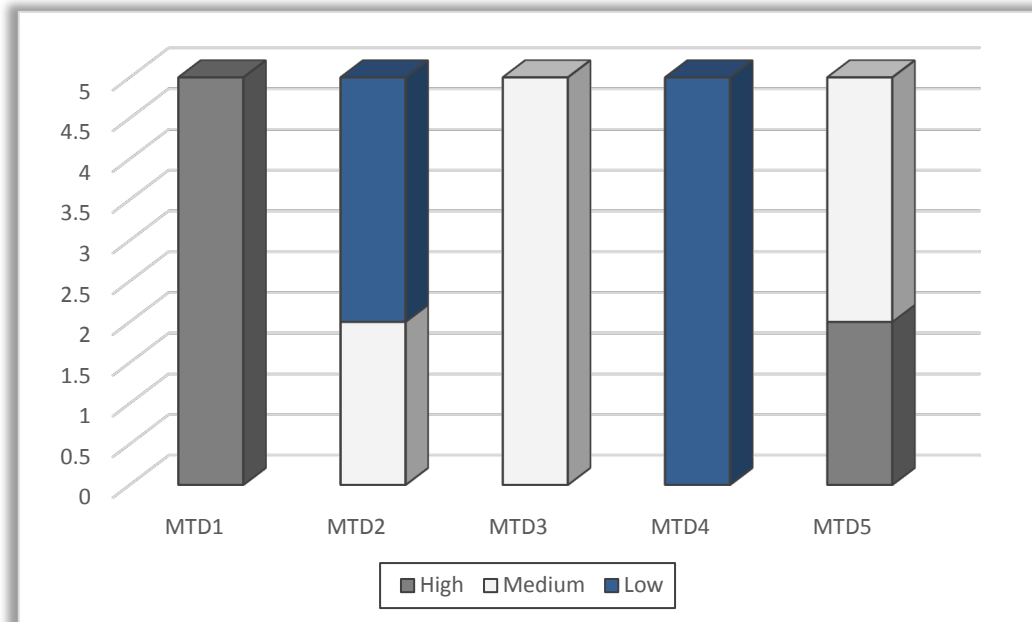
1.4.2. Candidate countries

Candidate countries classified the five MTDs according to the urgency for action based on evidence consistent with relevant reporting exercises (economic reform programmes, Small Business Act). Subsequently they identified one priority MTD, to be followed up through the ETF supported *ex-ante* impact assessment. Based on the impactful option(s) identified, the countries planned their intervention and took action. For the remaining four MTDs, the countries identified the best policy options and then took action.

Throughout this process, the candidate countries were encouraged to collaborate at cross-country level to exchange experiences and analysis to support further planning and implementation of all MTDs. Participation in EU platforms, such as the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training, promotes fruitful discussions and aids future collaboration.

As shown in Figure 6, all candidate countries selected MTD 1 as their top priority.

Figure 6. **Candidate countries' MTD priorities**



Source: Based on ETF section in *Delivering on Riga deliverables: preliminary findings, background note for DGVT meeting October 2016* (Cedefop, ETF; 2016).

MTD 1 work-based learning is a high priority, MTD 3 access to VET and qualifications for all is a medium priority, and MTD 4 key competences is a low priority for all five countries.

MTD 5 teachers, trainers and mentors is a high priority for Albania and Turkey and a medium priority for the rest.

MTD 2 quality assurance and feedback loops is considered a medium-level priority for Montenegro and Serbia and a low-level priority for the other three countries.

1.4.2.1. *Process/methodology followed*

The ETF proposed to the candidate countries to use *ex-ante* impact assessment to identify the most effective options for their selected priority MTD.

In the European Union, *ex-ante* impact assessment is seen as a major part of the drive for better regulation and smart regulation (European Commission 2010, OECD 2012). It uses systematic consultation, criteria for policy choice and economic analysis of how the costs and benefits of proposed regulations – but also non-regulatory options – affect a wide range of actors. In terms of the nature and purpose of the tool it is rational, evidence-based, participatory, transparent, looking at options and bringing stakeholder views. Such impact assessment is

conducted before the actual measure is taken, to understand better what the problem is, what kind of solutions exist, whether the solution can actually achieve the objective, and what effects it brings. It provides decision-makers with valuable empirical data and evidence, as well as with a comprehensive framework in which they can assess their options and the possible consequences of their decisions.

In this case, it served the decision-making process in the country in assessing the possible options related to MTD 1: it was not to be a lengthy process to allow sufficient time to implement policy choices. The *ex-ante* impact assessment helped identify a limited number of policy options under MTD 1, which were then to be implemented by the countries.

The analysis of two criteria – relevance and effectiveness – helped identify the options most likely to have a significant impact on meeting the MTD 1 objectives. The results were summarised and presented in a report.

1.4.2.2. *Ex-ante impact assessment findings: state of play in MTD 1 in 2016*

- (a) Internships: the most common form of work-based learning in all candidate countries (mostly three- and four-year programmes).
- (b) Social partners are now more active at different levels of the VET systems.
- (c) Work-based learning now anchored in many VET programmes:
 - (i) Albania has 98 VET qualifications that are based on occupational standards;
 - (ii) Montenegro has developed 220 occupational standards and 53 qualification standards;
 - (iii) Serbia has 69 VET qualifications that are based on qualification standards.
- (d) Legislation is under review in most cases.
- (e) Capacities in VET schools (work-based learning coordinators, awareness, etc.) have improved.
- (f) Several excellent pilot projects in place.

1.4.2.3. *Common challenges identified through the ex-ante impact assessment*

- (a) Quality of VET (compared to general secondary education).
- (b) Data on work-based learning are missing, particularly on quality.
- (c) Lack of a clearly articulated vision for work-based learning.
- (d) Roles and responsibilities of the different partners in work-based learning are not clearly defined.
- (e) Implementation of work-based learning is struggling: in need of clear regulations.
- (f) Training of in-company trainers.
- (g) Assessment of work-based learning.

- (h) Financing work-based learning.
- (i) Scaling up successful pilot projects.

CHAPTER 2.

National VET policies: 2015-17 developments at a glance

2.1. Continuity towards the Bruges objectives

Addressing the Riga deliverables is not an end in itself. Reinforcing the 2020 vision for VET, the deliverables, like those in the previous cycle, are meant to help achieve the Bruges communiqué's 11 strategic and four overarching objectives for 2020.

The 22 deliverables in the first Bruges cycle comprised several with a narrow focus and others that were much broader. Bruges also aimed to demonstrate which deliverables help achieve which strategic objectives and which EU level support actions would accompany them. However, several deliverables contributed to more than one strategic and also to the overall objective; and many deliverables were interrelated.

The five Riga MTDs, although much broader in scope, relate to most of the strategic objectives and embrace many of the issues addressed by the 2011-14 deliverables. They provide a framework for continuity in countries' policy developments. The transversal strategic Bruges objectives have been taken on board as actions to support national VET developments and reforms. This way, the Riga conclusions have provided more space and flexibility for cooperation and supporting activities. Table A5 in the annex shows this correlation.

The European Commission's new skills agenda (European Commission, 2016b) and its initiatives have complemented and contributed to the deliverables, aiming to reinforce national efforts. Initiatives like the [European vocational skills week](#) have helped to showcase VET's achievements to a wider audience, strengthening national and regional initiatives to make VET more attractive and highlighting the importance of continuous innovation.

Continuity in the relationship between deliverables and strategic objectives means to revise, adapt and complement deliverables, considering the evolution of the VET-related policy agenda. Riga included a deliverable that was not part of the previous cycle, but is essential to achieve the others: systematic professional development of teachers, trainers and mentors (MTD 5).

Continuity within the Copenhagen process should not just be seen in terms of deliverables (actions) and their numbers. What matters is maintaining the momentum of what started in 2002 (Copenhagen) as a strategy for closer cooperation in VET and taking it further, building on the 2020 vision. Evidence

suggests that cooperation has gone deeper across the Member States, EEA and candidate countries.

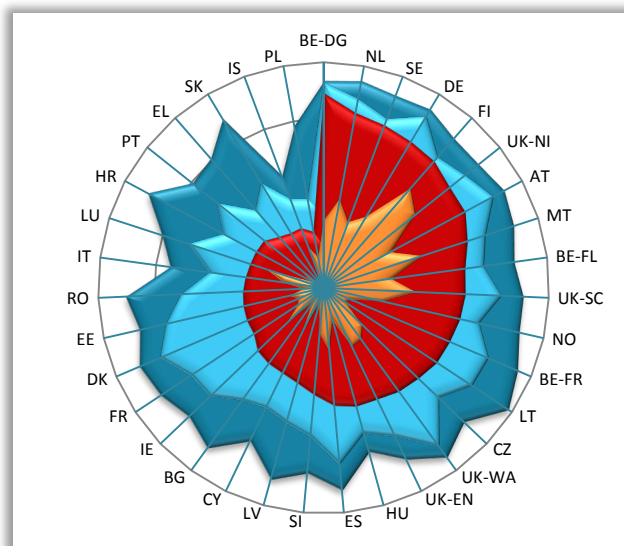
Reviews over time signal continuity in several national priority and policy development areas, although not necessarily with the same emphasis on adults as on young people.

2.2. Policy developments

2.2.1. EU-28+ (Member States, Iceland and Norway)

In the reporting period, Member States continued the reform process they had previously engaged in, expanding and complementing measures and devising new types of initiatives.

Figure 7. Focus of VET policy reform activity 2010-14



- New measures in preparation
- Implementation: new measures introduced since 2010
- Baseline 2010 adjusted: modification of existing policies
- Baseline 2010: where countries started in 2010 with their VET policy mix relating to the Bruges priorities

NB: Belgium is divided into Belgium Flemish (BE-FL), French (BE-FR) and German (BD-DG) communities. The UK is divided into England (UK-EN), Scotland (UK-SC), Wales (UK-WA) and Northern Ireland (UK-NI).

Source: Cedefop (2015b). *Stronger vocational education and training for better lives*. Briefing note, March 2015.

Some reform strands have become more prominent: apprenticeship, school self-assessment, VET graduate tracking, anticipating skill needs, promoting

permeability and flexibility, developing systematic approaches for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, modernising and systematising guidance systems, and providing a wider range of disadvantaged groups with training opportunities.

International support has often been mobilised for funding, usually from the European Social Fund. Erasmus+, bilateral and multilateral agreements have also supported initiatives, financially as well as through exchange of experience in designing and carrying out actions.

At the time of reporting, actions were mostly still at a preparatory stage, whether design, legislative or pilot. This is partly linked to the expiry of multiannual strategies and the start of new programming periods just before or after Riga and applies specifically to ESF-supported policy initiatives which were often adopted in 2015 or 2016. Such strategies and initiatives tend to cover more than one or all Riga deliverables and include a range of different actions where the scope is not always clear. ESF-supported initiatives often appear to be a continuation of the past.

While preparing these actions, the EU-28+ took the Riga principles into account, although to varying extents. It was almost systematically reported that relevant stakeholders were being involved, such as: public education and training and labour market authorities; regions and municipalities; VET institutions; teachers' unions; enterprises; employer associations, sectoral organisations, chambers, professional and trade associations; research organisations; experts; and learners.

Some MTDs also featured specific trends. Apprenticeship attracted 54% of all identified actions in MTD 1, although it also covers other forms of work-based learning⁽¹⁹⁾ and their contributions to developing entrepreneurial spirit and an innovation culture. Countries that had worked more on VET attractiveness, relevance and efficiency in 2011-14 tended to have a wider policy scope to

⁽¹⁹⁾ The Riga conclusions define work-based learning as follows: 'According to Cedefop, work-based learning refers to knowledge and skills acquired through carrying out – and reflecting on – tasks in a vocational context, either at the workplace [...] or in a VET institution'. For IVET, they use those provided in *Work-based learning in Europe: practices and policy pointers* (European Commission, 2013b): '[...] there are three forms of work-based learning: (1) alternance schemes or apprenticeships typically known as the 'dual system', (2) work-based learning in school-based VET which includes on-the-job training periods in companies and (3) work-based learning integrated in a school-based programme, through on-site labs, workshops, kitchens, restaurants, junior or practice firms, simulations or real business/industry project assignments'. As school-based VET often features types (2) and (3), they were merged into one category for the purpose of the survey among DGVT and the information collection.

reform or amend work-based learning: they have continued the work started earlier.

Incentives are increasingly being used to encourage enterprises to offer training places. While most of these are financial subsidies or tax exemptions, some countries have started designing non-financial ones. These can take the form of labels/logos intended to demonstrate training enterprise value for learners and the world of education, and also to highlight their civic contribution as a marketing argument towards their own customers.

In MTD 2, half of the actions were devoted to continuous information and feedback loops in IVET and CVET by developing systems for anticipating skill needs and monitoring graduate outcomes. The other half focused on taking national quality assurance approaches further. This included underpinning qualifications by quality assurance and strengthening the capacity of VET providers to assess themselves and improve continuously. Systematic collection and use of the indicators on graduate employability and labour market relevance of training, however, still seems an area for improvement.

MTD 3 is multifaceted, embracing many of the 2011-14 deliverables. It unites and interlinks with several other policy strands governed by various different actors, requiring comprehensive coordinated policy responses, which some countries have devised. Actions in the reporting period focused on easing entry, completion and progression, upskilling and reskilling. They relate to structural changes in VET pathways and improving education and training opportunities for different target groups, not least through (some steps of) validation of non-formal and informal learning. Work on making information and guidance tools and services more widely available has continued, with a view to ensuring quality.

As a general trend, Member States have continued their work on comprehensive NQFs, aiming to cover all levels and types of qualification and, to some extent, also non-formal qualifications awarded by private and international bodies. Actions for vulnerable groups reflect the recent focus on youth guarantees. Priority target groups emerging include low-skilled adults, newly arrived migrants and long-term unemployed. Again, many initiatives continued work started in the past. Some of the new developments aim at ensuring people's rights to complete or progress to certain education levels.

Priorities in MTD 4 do not show a clear trend across countries. They mainly relate to embedding key competences in learning-outcomes based curricula, not least ensuring that they enable progression and even defining a minimum share. They are also included to provide flexible learning solutions. Where countries decided to focus on individual key competences, these were mainly foreign language, digital and entrepreneurship skills and numeracy. References to soft

competences, such as learning-to-learn, were scarce. Professional development for teachers, to help learners acquire key competences, was sometimes referred to in the context of other deliverables, such as MTD 3.

In MTD 5, 60% of actions were oriented towards VET school teachers. These include building career systems in some countries, and work-placements in companies for teachers in others. With the increasing trend towards combining/alternating school-based and enterprise-based learning, training of in-company trainers has received more attention in countries that introduced or upscaled such schemes.

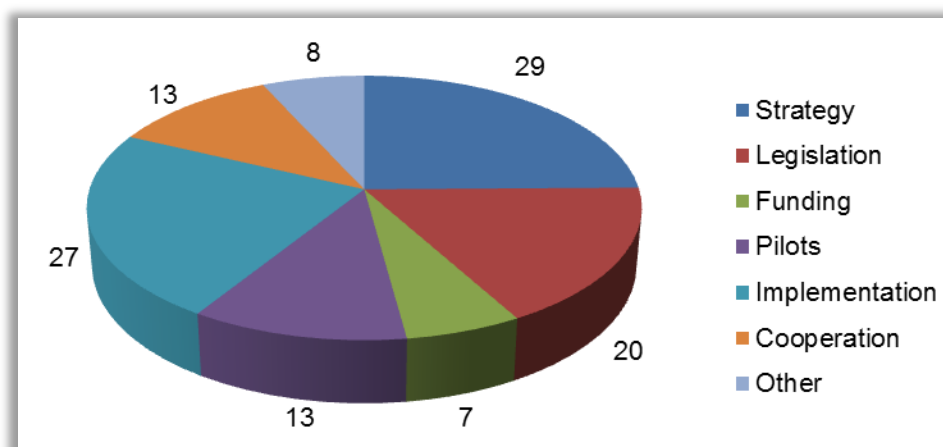
Stakeholders have been involved at various levels in many of the reported actions. This involvement frequently relates to participating in governance, contributing to decision-making and efforts to anticipate skill needs. When it comes to individual stakeholder contributions, those of employers and their organisations are frequently referred to. These are mainly related to the work on apprenticeships and work-based learning more generally. Those of trade unions remain more hidden.

2.2.2. Candidate countries

Skills development in support of economic growth and social inclusion is a priority of VET policy-making in the candidate countries. Driven by national demands, supported by the EU pre-accession funds and inspired by EU cooperation in VET, particularly the Riga conclusions, they have continued to dedicate efforts in 2015-17 to reforming and further developing their VET systems.

An overview of the main developments by category, as reported by each country is presented in Figure 8.

Figure 8. **Developments in candidate countries by category**



Source: ETF section in Riga monitoring 2017 – Preliminary findings (Cedefop, ETF 2017), background note for DGVT, May 2017.

The main focus of recent VET reforms in the candidate countries has been to strengthen responsiveness to the employment trends and demands of the economy in a context of lagging employment and high unemployment, especially among the young. Though further steps towards this objective were recently taken, the results have been mixed.

New pieces of VET legislation have been adopted. A new VET Law in Albania has provided for demand-driven VET delivery. New/amended legal acts have promoted apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning in Turkey, Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Curricula, new occupational profiles and qualification standards have been developed with the involvement of employers, currently at different stages of upscaling and mainstreaming. Efforts are being made to adjust enrolments and offers of public VET providers in line with identified needs. Yet skills mismatches persist, some of them inherited from the past; this is especially so in the western Balkans, while others are new, 'produced' in the present times.

All candidate countries make use of instruments for skills identification and anticipation and apply them with various degrees of regularity. They range from surveys to collecting administrative data on education, vacancies, labour market policies and unemployment issues. Since 2015, efforts have been made to establish mechanisms for systematic collection of data on VET learner transition to work and employability⁽²⁰⁾. Tracer systems were introduced in Albania, are being prepared in Montenegro and planned in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Their aim is to provide a feedback loop in designing and updating qualifications, occupational profiles, standards, programmes and curricula. Further concerted actions are needed to adjust enrolments and VET provider offers in line with identified needs and to ensure the delivery of skills that are relevant and required by the national labour markets and economies.

NQFs continue to act as a major driver of VET reform in the enlargement region as they have the capacity to transform the inherent logic and essential building blocks of education systems by centring them all on learning outcomes. All candidate countries have advanced their NQFs in 2015-17. Turkey and Montenegro have already settled most legal, institutional and governance arrangements; recent progress has mainly been in placing qualifications in their framework and establishing validation of non-formal and informal learning systems. Since 2015, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has reinforced its institutional framework for NQF implementation. Albania and Serbia have progressed development of comprehensive NQFs, preparing or updating laws,

⁽²⁰⁾ Turkey has such an information system already in place.

setting up working groups, and surveying and revising qualifications. Referencing the NQFs of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey to the EQF was successfully accomplished in February 2016 and March 2017, respectively, enabling international comparison of their qualifications.

Quality remains a common concern and an overarching goal of VET reform in the candidate countries. In recent years they have been making efforts to improve their quality assurance mechanisms, using the EQAVET recommendation as a point of reference and a framework to guide domestic reforms. Albania is currently focusing on defining a national model for quality assurance with a special focus on accreditation of public and private VET providers. Turkey adopted a national education quality framework in 2015, while Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have been trying to improve different tools and procedures in their quality assurance mechanisms. All countries need to continue their work in this area and to involve a wider range of stakeholders, particularly social partners, in VET quality assurance processes.

As key determinants of education and training quality, teachers and trainers in VET are at the heart of national VET reforms. The candidate countries have provided information about a considerable number of actions taken that concern teacher and trainer recruitment, induction, career paths and professional development with varied results attained. The alarming trend identified in 2010-14 for fewer people entering the teaching profession in the western Balkan candidates and, consequently, ageing of teaching staff in formal education, particularly in VET, remains. This might result in teacher shortages in a mid- to long-term perspective. Recent developments have focused primarily on the competences and roles of teachers and trainers in IVET, and less in CVET; on in-service rather than pre-service teacher training, and more on the professional development of VET teachers and trainers in schools than in enterprises.

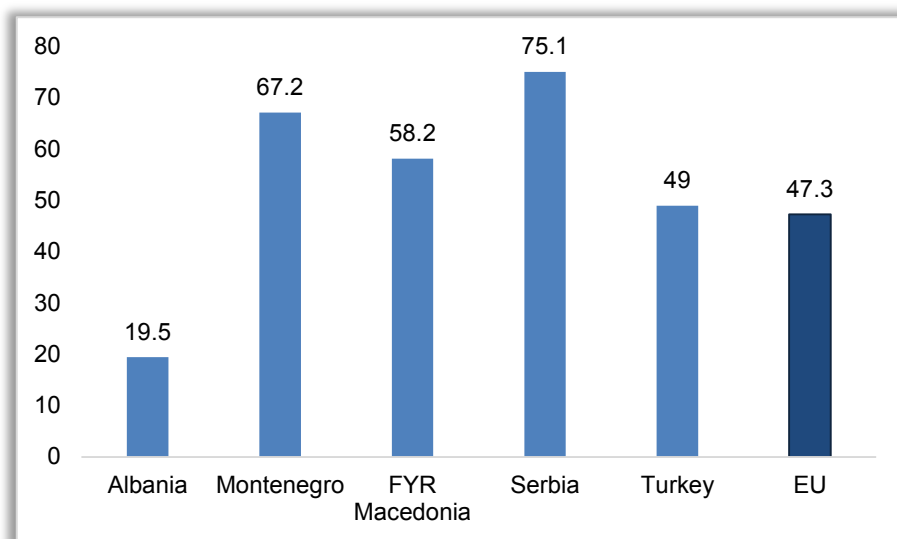
Turkey has been performing better, but in the western Balkans the essential problem with continuing professional development (CPD) of VET teachers persists: most of the CPD activities are of general nature, more adapted to the needs of teachers in general education than to those of vocational teachers. Specialised CPD, allowing for upgrading and further development of the vocational specialism of VET teachers, is much less on offer in the western Balkan candidates, so few have participated in it. Most of the organisations providing CPD have limited know-how and capacity to design or deliver training that addresses the specific needs of VET teachers and trainers, such as up-to-date knowledge of current industrial practice and understanding of how to develop practical skills. With few exceptions, western Balkan universities and companies are not involved in CPD for VET teachers. Company-based teacher

training continues to be exceptional, donor-driven rather than common practice. Some positive developments are emerging from the reports by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro: pilot activities targeting VET teacher training in enterprises and the intention to mainstream them.

The candidate countries have committed to increasing the opportunities for work-based learning. Since 2015, they have focused their efforts mainly on introducing or expanding apprenticeship schemes. The western Balkan candidate countries have recently taken serious steps to make formal apprenticeships part of their VET systems: building national visions or concepts for the implementation of apprenticeships, setting the legal basis for apprenticeship schemes, and making budget allocations for the first phases of the forthcoming implementation. Turkey, where apprenticeships have existed in a structured, countrywide format for years, has seen a steady fall in the number of apprentices over the past 10 years, especially in crafts and small enterprises. Changes have been made in the legislation to enable more learners or VET providers to find apprenticeship places and more companies to find apprentices. All five candidate countries have joined the European alliance for apprenticeships.

Turning more people into VET learners is a strategic objective for Europe's VET systems, including those of the enlargement countries. The proportion of students enrolled in upper secondary VET at the beginning of the reporting period was high in all countries except Albania, as Figure 9 illustrates, ranging from approximately half to three quarters of all upper secondary education students; the share in Albania in 2015 was close to 20%.

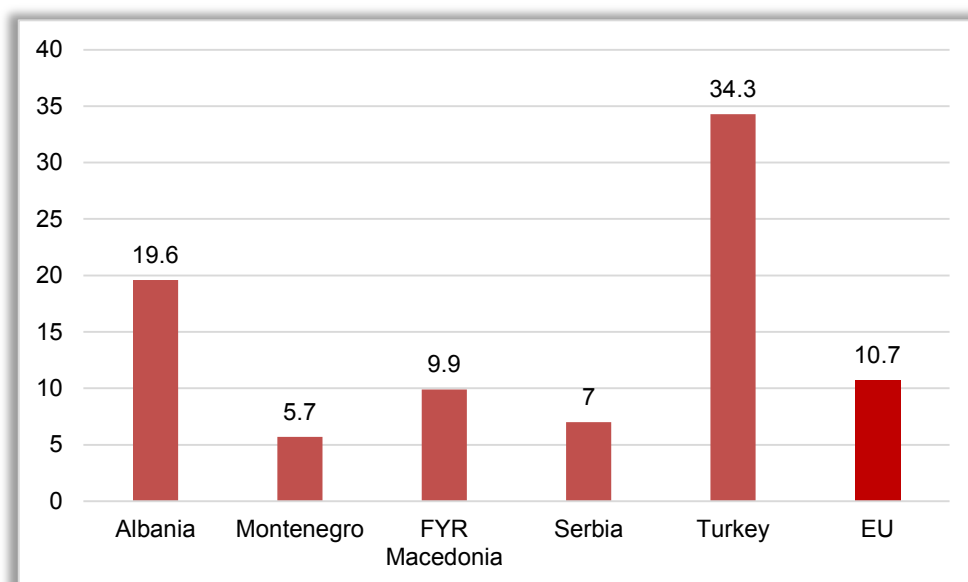
Figure 9. **Share of VET enrolment in upper secondary education (%), 2015**



Source: National Statistical Offices, Eurostat.

The objective of engaging more people in VET can be achieved not only by attracting new learners, but also by keeping VET learners within the system. Having them participate, learn and graduate with a proper qualification maximises the contribution of VET to combating early leaving from education and training. The performance of the region on this indicator in 2015 was 'polarised': Montenegro and Serbia were already below the EU 2020 benchmark of 10%, scoring 5.7% and 7.4% respectively; at 11.4% the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was close to the EU average (11%), while Turkey and Albania lagged far behind, recording rates of 36.4% and 21.3% respectively. The data available for 2016 (Figure 10) show further improvement in all candidate countries.

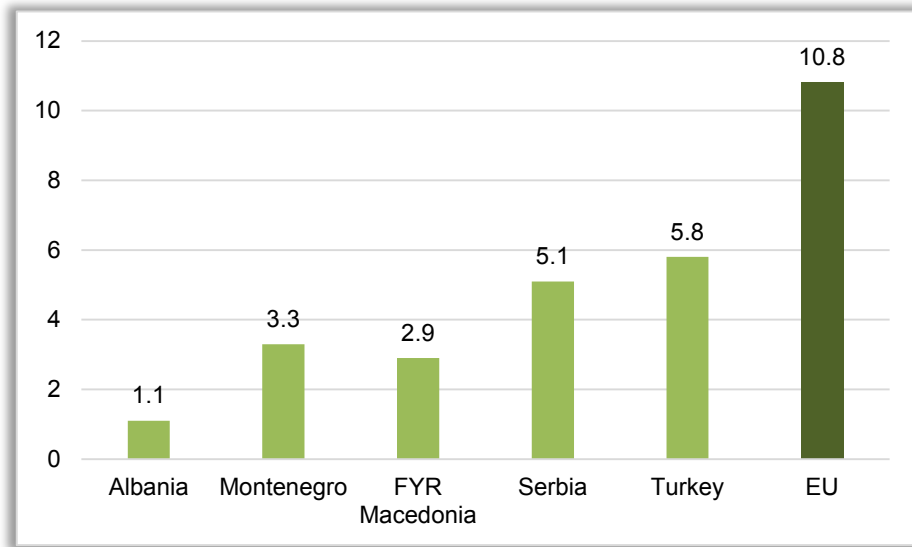
Figure 10. **Early leavers from education and training (%), 2016**



Source: National Statistical Offices, Eurostat.

While the attractiveness of IVET in the candidate countries is generally high, participation in CVET continues to face considerable problems: the countries seriously underperform with regard to adult participation in lifelong learning, with the respective rates in 2015 ranging between 1% and 5.5%, and the 2016 data showing slight improvement in all countries (Figure 11). The candidate countries need to continue their efforts to build equitable and accessible VET systems, develop adult learning and validation of non-formal and informal learning procedures and mechanisms.

Figure 11. **Adult participation in lifelong learning (%), 2016**



Source: National Statistical Offices, Eurostat.

The countries have continued to devote a great deal of effort and resources to improving the governance of their VET systems to ensure multi-stakeholder engagement and participatory approaches in the design, implementation and monitoring of VET policies. All western Balkan countries are dissatisfied with the level of commitment of social partners and businesses, particularly to VET system governance, and wish to change the situation. Involving social partners mainly in consultation procedures is no longer enough. National authorities want to share with them decision-making, financing and implementation of VET. Turkey also aims to improve the involvement of the economic sector in VET governance and has been working on a new vocational and technical education management model to ensure the participation of the business world in VET decision-making.

CHAPTER 3.

National policy developments by MTD

3.1. EU-28+

3.1.1. MTD 1 – All forms of work-based learning with special attention to apprenticeships

Work on apprenticeships and expanding work-based learning more generally, has been continuously high on national agendas in recent years. Challenges in this endeavour have been discussed at meetings of the Advisory Committee and Directors General for VET and at various events.

While an overview of mainstream apprenticeship schemes in the EU-28+ will be made available in 2018 (Cedefop, 2018d)⁽²¹⁾, this section focuses on developments in 2015-17 as reported by Cedefop's ReferNet⁽²²⁾. It also draws on some of the information gained while Cedefop was supporting countries in their efforts to establish or improve apprenticeships.

Countries' actions are as manifold as their contexts and developments prior to 2015. At aggregate level, we can identify common objectives, policies and measures. However, similar measures often serve different purposes: this chapter aims to demonstrate both aspects.

Member State initiatives during the reporting period developed along four major lines:

- (a) introducing or reforming apprenticeship, in alternance schemes;/dual VET;
- (b) reforming work-based learning elements – often referred to as practical training – in school-based VET, with training periods/internships in companies and/or practice in school facilities⁽²³⁾;

⁽²¹⁾ The study *Apprenticeships: a cross-national overview* was conducted between January 2016 and June 2017. The study maps system-level or mainstream apprenticeship schemes –considered as such in the national context – which have a stable/valid legal basis. Pilot schemes, even if underpinned by a legal basis, were outside the scope of the study. At the time of writing, Cedefop was also preparing an overview on financing apprenticeships/dual VET.

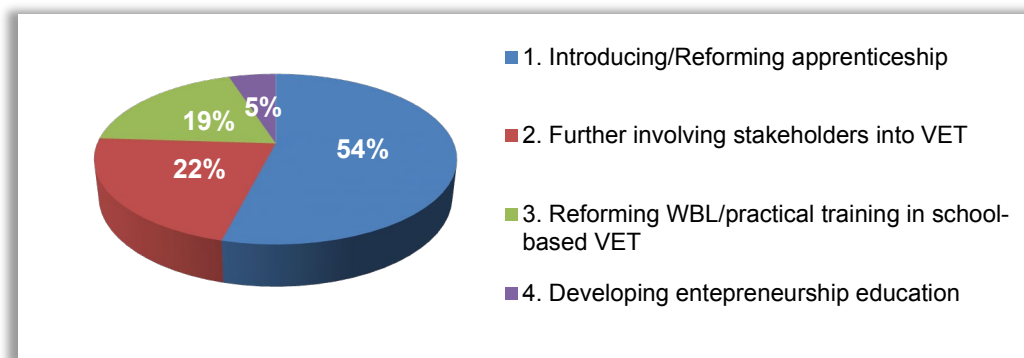
⁽²²⁾ References to countries are exemplary and not necessarily exhaustive; also, apprenticeships in other countries may already have had these features in place before 2015.

⁽²³⁾ Many countries use the term 'practical training' in English when they refer to practice in school workshops, labs, etc. but also training periods/internships in enterprises. School-based VET programmes may feature both these types of work-based learning (see also footnote 19.).

- (c) further involving stakeholders into VET;
- (d) promoting entrepreneurship.

Actions in relation to apprenticeships ⁽²⁴⁾ have been the most popular (Figure 12).

Figure 12. **Major policies related to work-based learning, EU-28+**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

3.1.1.1. *Introducing/reforming apprenticeship*

All Member States currently have apprenticeships or other alternance schemes in place. In the reporting period, apprenticeships/dual VET schemes were introduced in Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia; the scheme introduced in Latvia referred to 'work-based learning'. These countries and others had received related recommendations in the context of the EU-level economic policy coordination. Greece piloted apprenticeships in 2016/17.

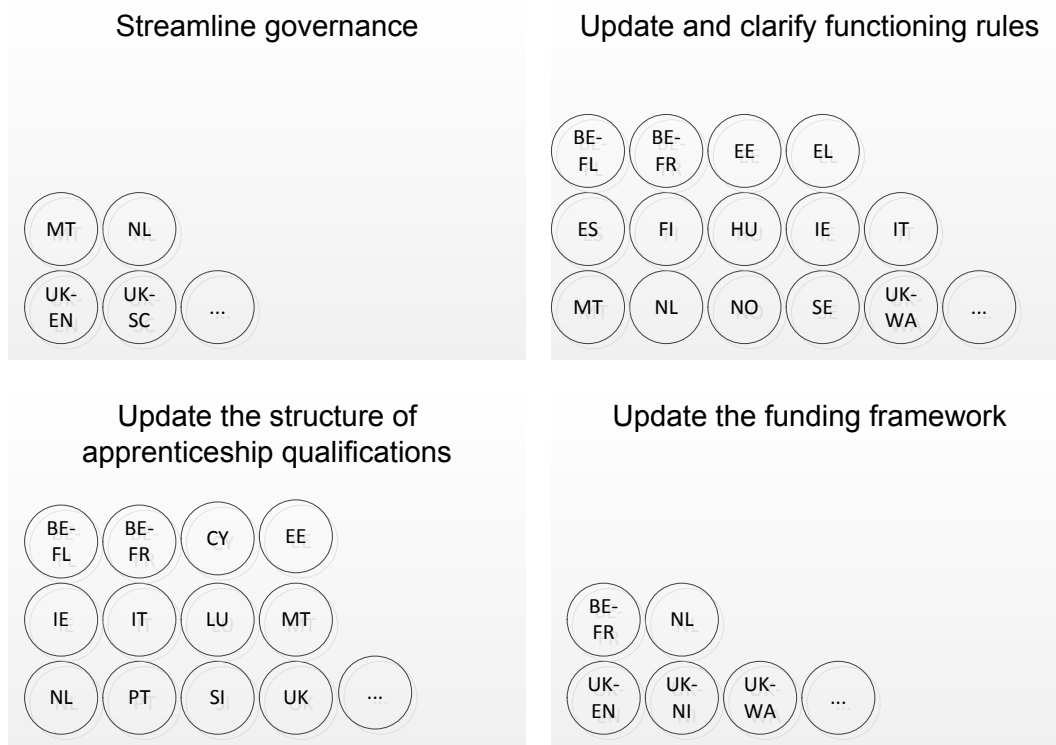
In most countries that already had apprenticeships, they were adjusted or reformed. Such reforms or adjustments, which varied in character and scope, targeted the apprenticeship system as a whole, training organisations, and learners.

(a) System-level reforms

Taking a closer look at national reforms, we can cluster them into the following main categories.

⁽²⁴⁾ As national concepts and use of terms may differ from those at EU level, examples grouped under apprenticeship may not always fully fit the latter.

Figure 13. **Reforming apprenticeships**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

Reforms related to governance include: work to set up strategic and technical national bodies in Greece; a change in the overall responsibility and coordination of apprenticeships in Cyprus, where now the education ministry is in charge; coordination of apprenticeship practices and processes in Belgium (fr); and setting up coordinators for school-business cooperation in Estonia and Sweden. In Denmark, employers committed to supply an additional 8 000 to 10 000 apprenticeship places by 2025, to encourage young people to take up VET and contribute to the anticipated future skill needs and the national 2025 target that 30% of a youth cohort move into VET after compulsory schooling (see MTD 3 below).

(b) Reforms targeted to training organisations aimed to:

- (a) push companies to upgrade their apprenticeship-related practices (in Greece, Spain);
- (b) stimulate companies' supply of apprenticeships through financial incentives (as in Hungary, Italy, Norway, Romania, Slovakia), non-financial stimuli (Belgium (fr), Estonia, Malta, Norway), or via legal requirements (Norway);
- (c) provide training enterprises with support (as in Cyprus, Poland);
- (d) involve the public sector in taking on apprentices (France, Norway, UK-EN);

- (e) set up incentives to push VET schools to propose programmes that are relevant to labour market needs (Slovakia);
- (f) introduce apprenticeship in higher education (Belgium (fl), Belgium (fr), Estonia, UK-NI, UK-SC, UK-WA).

Box 2. System-level apprenticeship reforms: examples

Updating and clarifying functioning rules

In Spain, since January 2016, apprenticeship contracts must be linked to a VET programme leading to an official qualification issued either by the education authorities (VET diplomas) or the employment authorities (occupational certificates). Training not leading to qualifications/certificates has been discontinued.

In Malta, since 2015, the duration of apprenticeship programmes has been restricted to two years (instead of the three- or four-year programmes previously offered) and is more compact in nature, incorporating the summer period as an integral part of the training programme.

In Italy, a decree in 2015 introduced clear specifications of the framework components for apprenticeship contracts: the duties and responsibilities of the signatory parties, requirements that employers need to fulfil, the training standards, the apprentice's rights and obligations, the tasks assigned to the company and workplace tutor and to the tutor at the training institution, skills assessment and certification modalities.

Similar initiatives were taken in Estonia and Finland. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, a decree on the learner status in the dual system was adopted and implemented in 2016, clarifying and harmonising the status of all apprentices: social security, rights and obligations, remuneration, etc.

Coordinating apprenticeship practices and processes

In the French Community of Belgium, the *Office Francophone de la Formation en Alternance* (OFFA) was established in September 2015, and mandated for steering, promoting, developing and coordinating apprenticeships. OFFA's purposes include harmonising practices in the framework of the apprenticeship contract; centralising accreditation of companies; and centralising and processing applications from companies for incentives.

Introducing new apprenticeship degrees

In Scotland, graduate level apprenticeships (GLAs) were introduced in 2015-16, allowing learners to obtain higher education level vocational qualifications as part of the apprenticeship programme. Greece has piloted apprenticeships at EQF level 5.

Reforming the funding framework

In the Netherlands, performance-based funding was introduced in 2015. In the United Kingdom, an apprenticeship levy was introduced in 2017. Employers with a pay bill in excess of GBP 3 million (EUR 3.38 million) have to pay 0.5% of the latter to supplement government apprenticeship funding.

Source: ReferNet.

Box 3. **Apprenticeship reforms targeted at training organisations: examples**

Encouraging companies to upgrade apprenticeship-related practices

In Spain, the Alliance for dual training was created in 2015. It is a network of companies, VET institutions and research centres to support the development of dual VET through creating a quality dual training model, assisting SMEs participating in dual VET, and contributing in improving legislation. To be admitted to the alliance, companies must have remuneration systems for their apprentices, ensure that trainers and tutors are properly trained, and involve higher level managers in dual VET.

Financial incentives for companies to offer apprenticeships

Subsidies were introduced in Romania in 2015; in Norway, the economic incentives that the State provides for companies taking up apprentices or interns were strengthened during 2015-17. Danish companies also receive a bonus but if they take on fewer apprentices than the required share (in relation to the number of employees), they have to pay an extra contribution to the employers' reimbursement system.

In Italy, social security exemption was introduced in 2016 for enterprises with fewer than 10 employees during the first three years of employing an apprentice.

In Slovakia, the 2015 VET Act introduced tax exemption for enterprises taking on apprentices, reducing training costs by 22%; tax bonuses of EUR 1 600 for 200 hours of practical training and EUR 3 200 for 400 hours of practical training within a tax period. Remuneration for learners' productive work is also exempted from levies. Similar measures were adopted in Hungary in 2016, reducing gross levy and labour costs of employees in SMEs involved in training.

Recognition as stimuli for companies to offer apprenticeships

In the French Community of Belgium, the Government of the Brussels Region adopted in December 2016 its 2020 training plan which provides for – among others – attracting companies to training by creating a 'training company' label to signal quality training offers.

In Malta, companies that participate in apprenticeship receive an MCAST (*) certificate and can use a logo to promote themselves.

In Norway, a special emblem distinguishing training companies was set up in 2015. The emblem is intended to be a mark of quality and professionalism, signalling to customers that the company is an approved training establishment.

Legal requirements obliging companies to offer apprenticeships

Starting 2017, Norwegian domestic and international companies that participate in public service contracts are required to use apprentices. Foreign companies bidding for public procurement must be approved as training establishments in the country and have Norwegian apprentices, or apprentices/learners on practical training from corresponding apprenticeship schemes in their home country.

Providing support to training enterprises

Within the framework of the 2016-18 Erasmus+ project *Apprenticeship helpdesk for small and medium-size enterprises*, Cyprus and Poland support training SMEs with staff acting as apprenticeship facilitators. A national online apprenticeship resource centre acts as a central support office for facilitators. This project is rooted in past

experience, when the lack of support structures for enterprises deterred SMEs from offering apprenticeships.

Involving the public sector in providing apprenticeships

In France, a 2015 circular set up conditions for apprenticeship contracts in the non-industrial and non-commercial public sector.

In England, the 2016 Enterprise Act set out that at least 2.3% of workers starting each year in public sector bodies with 250 or more employees should be apprentices.

Incentivising VET schools to propose programmes that are relevant to labour market needs

In Slovakia, following the 2015 VET Act, dual VET programmes of high labour market relevance benefit from 10% increase in the funding which VET schools usually receive per student enrolled.

(*) The Malta College of Art, Science and Technology, one of the two major VET providers in the country.

Source: ReferNet.

(c) Reforms targeted at learners

These comprised incentives for learners to enrol in apprenticeship programmes through award of specific scholarships (Denmark, Hungary) and increasing apprentices' remuneration (Malta). Efforts were also made to open up apprenticeship to disadvantaged groups of learners (as in Austria, Belgium (fr), Estonia, Finland, Norway, Sweden, UK-SC).

The 'chamber guarantee' in Hungary since 2015/16 appears to have helped entice more enterprises to engage in VET and increase the number of apprenticeship contracts. The chamber commits to encouraging companies to train, match learners with companies and assist with the contract procedure. Where this is not successful, the chamber issues a certificate for the VET school which then can provide the practical training. This action benefits enterprises and students.

Box 4. **Apprenticeship reforms targeted at learners: examples**

Incentives for learners to enrol in apprenticeships

In Hungary, specific scholarships were introduced in September 2016 for 20 apprenticeship programmes which provide qualifications in high demand on the labour market.

In Malta, an initiative introduced during summer 2015 grants apprentices EUR 200 on top of their remuneration for every four weeks spent on the job.

Denmark has a negative incentive system: if a student fails to apply for an apprenticeship, the school can reduce his/her grant and even exclude him/her.

Opening up apprenticeships to disadvantaged groups

In Scotland, the 2015 Equalities action plan for modern apprenticeships addresses young people from ethnic minority backgrounds; young disabled people and care leavers entering modern apprenticeships; and gender imbalances, such as females in STEM related apprenticeships.

Austria's actions to integrate refugees since 2015 include apprenticeships for those who have been granted asylum: the public employment service helps match companies and applicants and coaching is also provided. In shortage occupations, particularly in the technology and health sectors, asylum status is no prerequisite but may be accelerated for those who have an apprenticeship contract.

Source: ReferNet and VET for young third country nationals, background note by the Austrian ministries for education and economic affairs for the DGVT meeting in October 2016.

3.1.1.2. *Reforming practical training in school-based VET*

Four major forms of action could be observed in this strand, mainly aiming at:

- (a) increasing the duration of practical training in school-based VET (Cyprus, Czech Republic);
- (b) expanding practical training in school-based VET other than through increasing duration, such as requiring more VET programmes to include practical training (Belgium (fl), Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, UK-NI, UK-SC);
- (c) setting up coordinators to aid cooperation between schools and businesses (Czech Republic);
- (d) setting up incentives for greater participation of learners in school-based VET (Estonia, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia).

Box 5. Reforming practical training in school-based VET: examples

Making workplace learning and other forms of practical training more systematic

In Italy, the 2015 reform of the national education and training system called *La Buona Scuola* (The good school) made it compulsory for all students attending the last three years of upper secondary schools to take part in a school-work alternance scheme for at least 200 hours in general education schools and 400 hours in technical and vocational schools. Practical training may take place in enterprise, or through a virtual training enterprise, or through apprenticeship. Companies that have training capacity are listed on a national repository held by the Chamber of Commerce. A pedagogical design of school-work alternance activities and pathways is set and tutorship provided for. Competences acquired in school-work alternance can be assessed and certified.

In Poland, the 2015 amendment of the regulation on practical vocational training obliges vocational schools to ensure provision of work-based learning in their VET programmes to an extent which varies by education level (basic, upper-secondary, post-secondary).

In Scotland, the 2016 work placement standard for VET students recommends that school-based VET programmes (EQF 2-4) should include at least one work placement relevant to the programme training pathway, to enable young people to gain real work experience and make informed decisions about their future careers.

In Denmark, the 2015 VET reform requires schools to integrate work-based learning (including case-based and problem-oriented projects) in the new education plans that are being set for different basic courses.

Increasing the duration of practical training within programmes/curricula

In Cyprus, following consultation with employers' organisations, the government decided in December 2015 to increase the duration of industrial placements of secondary technical and vocational education (STVE) programmes. The decision was implemented as of the school year 2016-17.

Supporting cooperation between schools and businesses

In the Czech Republic, since December 2016, secondary and tertiary professional schools have been able to apply for funding to engage a coordinator aiding cooperation between schools and companies. The coordinator is responsible for getting in contact with employers and discussing with them their interest in possible cooperation with schools and their conditions. The coordinator also evaluates the cooperation, works on the feedback received from companies, involves schools in new forms of cooperation, organises internships of teachers in companies, and keeps close contact with stakeholders, such as representatives from chambers of commerce and sector councils.

Source: ReferNet.

3.1.1.3. *Increasing stakeholder involvement in VET*

Main actions in this strand focused on strengthening cooperation between schools and businesses through:

- (a) setting up a national/regional education-economy council (as on Belgium (fr), Ireland, Slovakia, UK-SC);
- (b) participation of enterprises/the business world in programme design (Czech Republic, Croatia, Ireland, Poland);
- (c) participation of experts from enterprises in teaching (as in Czech Republic, Estonia).

Box 6. **Actions to increase stakeholder involvement in VET: examples**

Setting up a national/regional/local education-economy council

A Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) was put in place in 2016. It is composed of employers, employer and trade union representatives, Scottish authorities at central and regional level, training providers and schools. The SAAB oversees the development of apprenticeship frameworks and standards. It aims to ensure that apprenticeships will be closely linked to areas of economic growth and job opportunities and assist apprenticeship leading to sustainable employment. The SAAB liaises with and supports employers, and provides advice and makes recommendations.

In the French Community of Belgium, the Government of the Brussels Region set up an Education-Training-Employment task force, steered by the Economic and Social Council of the Brussels region, to support its 2015 strategy for 2025.

In Ireland, the Department of Education and Skills set up and funded nine regional skills forums in May 2016 to focus on skill needs at regional level. The forums are part of the national skills strategy. Their main purpose is to support cooperation and engagement between employers and education and training providers to make sure that the content of programmes is aligned to labour market needs. Each forum is guided by a steering group and a manager who liaise with employers and education/training providers. The National Skills Council oversees and advises on identified skill needs and how to ensure delivery of the corresponding skills.

In Latvia, sector expert councils, whose role was defined in 2016, participate in occupational standard development, support the design of VET programmes and exams and support work-based learning and career guidance. They include representatives from social partners, professional organisations, VET institutions and independent experts. A collegial advisory body ('convent') is created at each Latvian VET institution to ensure cooperation with local businesses, closeness to labour market needs and practice placements in companies. It is composed of the head of institution and representatives of ministry, local government and employers.

Promoting participation of enterprises/the business world in programme design

In its 2016 action plan for the 2016-20 VET system development programme, Croatia strengthened employer involvement in the planning and design of VET programmes.

In Ireland, the 2016-20 action plan to expand apprenticeship and traineeship provides for networks of employers to take part in identifying training needs and designing training programmes.

The 2016 amendment of the School Act in the Czech Republic, obliged schools to develop cooperation with employers in related study fields. Schools will have to consult employers when drafting curricula and shaping conceptual plans for school development.

In Poland, employers are entitled to recommend changes in the study programme to school directors; this follows the 2015 amendment of the regulation on practical vocational training.

Promoting participation of practice experts from enterprises in teaching

In the Czech Republic, the 2016 amendment of the School Act, obligating schools to develop cooperation with employers, allows experts from practice to participate in theoretical training at school and in the practice part of final examination.

In Estonia, a regulation was set up in 2016 to specify the conditions for supporting cooperation between employers and education institutions in developing WBL. It covers the involvement of business world representatives in teaching.

Source: ReferNet.

3.1.1.4. International peer learning and support

Most countries tried to secure international support for their reforms. This was most often in the form of ESF funding and Erasmus+ projects supporting, for instance, national authorities for apprenticeships (2014), SMEs engaging in apprenticeships (2016) or VET-business partnerships on work-based learning and apprenticeships (2017). Bilateral and multilateral cooperation also helped to inform their policies and measures on apprenticeships and work-based learning, mostly through sharing expertise and exchange of experience (Box 7). Latvia together with Estonia and Lithuania, launched the Baltic alliance for apprenticeship and work-based learning in 2015, which aimed to involve social partners and VET providers in promote work-based learning/apprenticeships and make VET more attractive.

Box 7. Informing policy by learning from others: examples

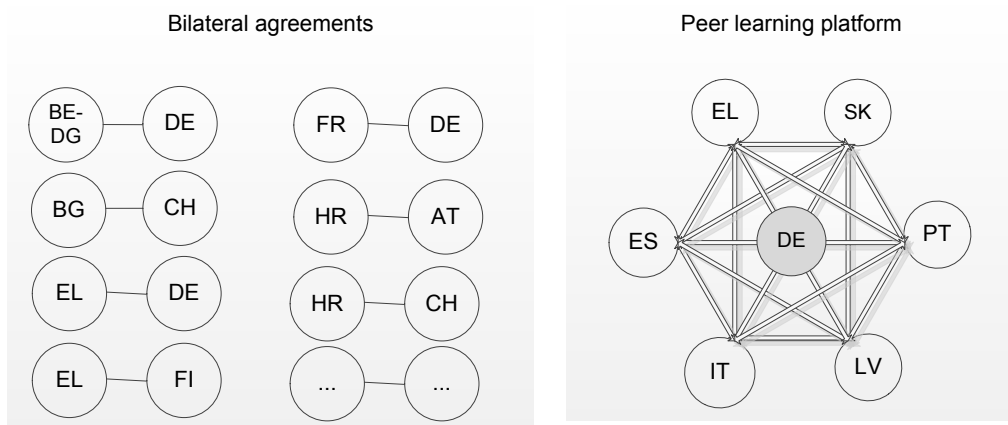
In 2015-16, the Education and Employment Ministry in Malta and MCAST worked towards the amendment of the legal act governing apprenticeship. Proposed changes to the apprenticeship system and governance took account of recommendations included in the review carried out by Cedefop in 2015, international research, and best practices from other countries. Following a consultation in 2016, a draft act has been proposed by the ministry on a framework for developing quality work placements, apprenticeships and internships. It introduces:

- the status of employee for the duration of the training spent in the company and financial incentives for learners, as in wage/hour payed by the employer complemented by a government subsidy to reach the national minimum wage;
- a governance structure to guarantee the rights and obligations of trainees and employers.

In Slovenia, apprenticeship had been a typical route to occupations for generations up to the late 1970s when it was discontinued. An attempt to reintroduce it in the 1990s proved unsuccessful. Since 2012, with renewed attention in EU policies and national developments, apprenticeship has been a policy priority for the Slovenian government and the social partners. Their continuing dialogue and work resulted in the adoption of a law in 2017 setting the legal basis for apprenticeships for young people and adults. Implementing apprenticeships and getting employers and schools on board may prove challenging. At the time when the law was in the making, Cedefop carried out a review on the organisation of training at the workplace (about 25% of the curriculum) in three-year, school-based VET programmes. It involved a broad range of VET stakeholders: directors of VET schools, students, recent graduates in employment, providers of in-company training, directors of intercompany training centres, company directors and in-company mentors. As, according to the new law, apprenticeships can be introduced in these programmes, the review findings may not only help to improve workplace training in school-based VET but also inform the next steps in putting apprenticeships in place.

Source: ReferNet and Cedefop (2017b) *Apprenticeship review Slovenia*.

Figure 14. **International policy learning and support: examples**



Erasmus + projects

Support for small and medium sized enterprises engaging in apprenticeships



VET-Business Partnerships on Work-based learning and Apprenticeships



Source: Cedefop and Cedefop based on ReferNet.

3.1.1.5. *Promoting entrepreneurship*

Entrepreneurship skills come from practical experience in enterprises and other contexts, problem-based learning, business simulations and involving business experts in VET provision. Promoting entrepreneurship skills is usually seen as inherent in apprenticeship in countries that have traditionally strong systems. More than 70% of 16 to 21 year-old upper secondary VET graduates/learners responding to Cedefop’s opinion survey (Cedefop, 2017) believed that they developed a sense of entrepreneurship and the ability to be creative during their training (Section 3.1.4).

MTD 1 aims at promoting entrepreneurship and innovation through apprenticeships and work-based learning. Besides reinforcing entrepreneurship as a basic principle of VET, countries also use dedicated learning domains or modules.

Main actions in the reporting period here were in the form of:

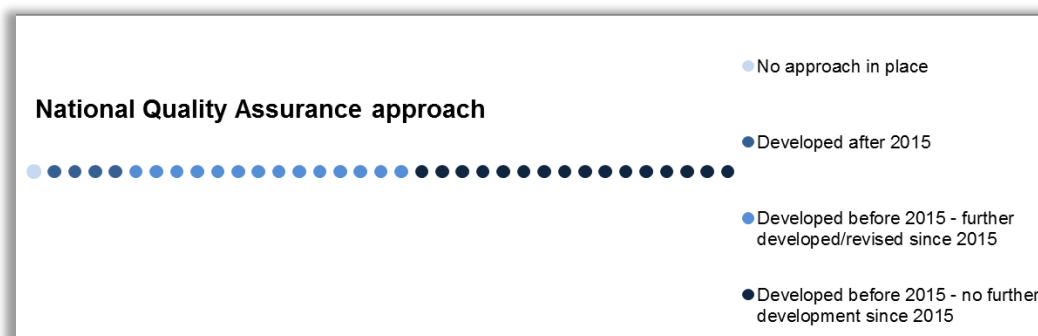
- (a) developing new initiatives and programmes (EE, PT);
- (b) curriculum reform, putting more emphasis on entrepreneurship (AT, HR);
- (c) supporting projects targeted at developing entrepreneurial spirit (FR).

3.1.2. **MTD 2 – Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET and continuous information and feedback loops to IVET and CVET**

3.1.2.1. *Progress in quality assurance overall and in IVET*

In the Riga conclusions all partners reiterated their commitment to developing quality assurance mechanisms in VET as recommended by the Council (Council of the EU, 2009). Since then, work has advanced.

Figure 15. **State of play and progress in national quality assurance approaches**



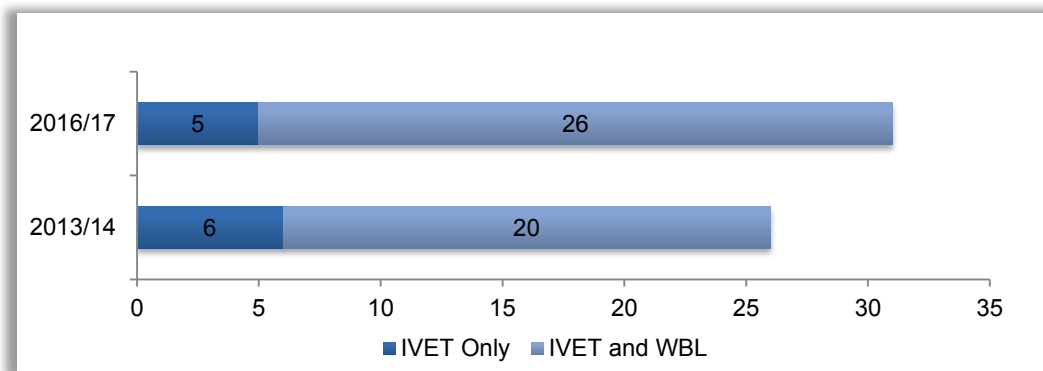
Source: Cedefop based on EQAVET survey 2016/17 and ReferNet.

From the five countries that were still at an early stage in 2014/15 (see Section 1.3), the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Portugal have devised national

quality assurance approaches using EQAVET as a reference; Norway has focused on implementation. They expect to have their approaches fully in place by 2020. The French Community in Belgium still needs time to devise its approach. In Portugal, Slovakia and Norway the approaches apply only to IVET and associated work-based learning; in the Czech Republic CVET is also covered.

The new quality arrangements in Slovakia complement the mechanisms that apply to all schools by defining the role of stakeholders and the use of quality indicators in VET. The latter is supported by the 2016-20 ESF project *Dual education and increasing the attractiveness and quality of VET*.

Figure 16. **Number of VET systems developing quality assurance approaches for IVET**



NB: UK counts as four countries but UK-England did not respond to the EQAVET survey in 2016, hence the 2013 data were used. Iceland did not respond to the EQAVET survey. Belgium (de) does not participate in EQAVET.

Source: Cedefop calculations based on data from EQAVET Secretariat surveys 2013/14 and 2016/17.

3.1.2.2. *Continued improvement of quality approaches*

Although many Member States had implemented a quality assurance approach by 2015, several – Belgium (fl), Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Spain, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, UK-Scotland – have developed systems and frameworks to improve their quality approaches for VET:

- (a) reviewing legislation that stipulates the main requirements to ensure quality: examples are the VET Law in Luxemburg, the Vocational Training Act in Germany and the Bulgarian ordinance for management of quality in education;
- (b) developing the frameworks that address quality assurance arrangements in VET, such as: the Irish quality assurance policy for all post compulsory VET provision; revision of the quality assurance framework in Scotland due to the recent creation of regional colleges; a new inspection framework for Dutch

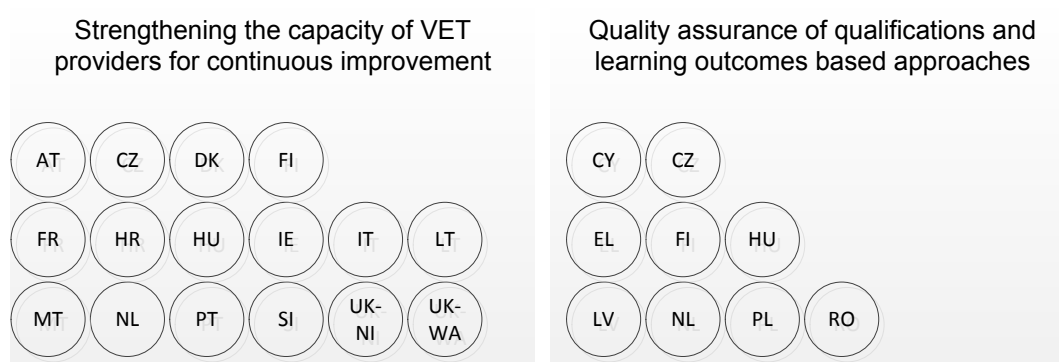
- VET providers; criteria used for accrediting VET programmes, VET institutions or examination centres as in Estonia, Italy or Latvia;
- (c) setting up a common external quality control system for all programmes leading to professional qualifications in IVET and CVET, as in BE(fl);
 - (d) developing quality criteria for planning, implementation, evaluation and review; and indicators to monitor the performance of VET providers and student outcomes inspired by EQAVET, as in Latvia and Luxembourg;
 - (e) involving employer and employee organisations, VET schools, teachers and students in the review process, as in Estonia and Scotland.

Taking a closer look, we observe that most attention was paid to:

- (a) promoting a culture of continuous improvement;
- (b) supporting VET providers to improve their quality management systems.

This is in line with the Bruges communiqué which explicitly asked countries to develop quality assurance frameworks for their VET providers.

Figure 17. **Improving quality assurance approaches**



Source: Cedefop based on EQAVET Secretariat survey 2016/17 and ReferNet.

3.1.2.3. *Culture of continuous improvement: supporting VET providers*

National projects aimed to strengthen providers' capacity to carry out self-assessment, monitor their performance and use data to improve provision. To this end, the projects supported development of online tools, helped design methodological guides, and produced catalogues of good practice examples and training events. Some countries also worked on quality labels for VET providers.

Box 8. **Helping VET providers develop a culture of continuous improvement: examples**

Czech Republic: a national project to support regional action planning, cofinanced by the ESF and launched in 2016, aims to assist mainly secondary and higher VET schools. It included a nationwide survey on improving school management, education and training quality and long-term planning. Action plans were developed based on a needs analysis by the National Education Institute to which 96% of the schools responded.

Denmark: to help VET colleges develop their 2017 action plans in line with the objectives of the 2014 VET reform the education ministry has prepared a catalogue of ideas with specific focus on: vocational learning environments for both young and adult learners; transition between school periods and in-company training placements; using assessment of prior learning in VET for adults.

France: in 2016, an online tool, Qualéduc, was made available to education establishments and inspectorates to help them develop a quality assurance system that promotes continuous improvement. Its use was promoted through national conferences. Following a piloting phase, 25 out of 30 education districts (academies) were engaged in *Qualéduc* in spring 2017. The tool information and the underlying approach also relate it to the European context of the EQAVET recommendation and the Riga conclusions.

<http://eduscol.education.fr/cid59929/quaeduc.html>

Quality labels

In 2016, France announced revised criteria and lighter procedures for providers that want to acquire the label *Lycée des métiers* (vocational high school) which is awarded for five years and encourages continuous improvement, for instance by engaging in *Qualéduc* (see above). Hungary and Portugal are working on methodology for a quality label based on the principles and requirements set in the EQAVET recommendation.

Source: ReferNet.

3.1.2.4. *Assuring the quality of qualifications*

Another noticeable trend in the reporting period is linked to the work on national qualification frameworks, particularly ensuring the quality of learning-outcomes-based approaches. In Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Latvia and Finland, for instance, this included developing criteria and methods for:

- (a) setting quality-assured qualification standards;
- (a) revising assessment and certification standards based on learning outcomes;
- (b) raising awareness of the fact that quality assurance promotes reliability of qualifications systems.

Other developments related to ensuring the quality of exams.

Box 9. Assuring the quality of qualifications: examples

Czech Republic: the national quality assurance reference point cooperates with employers (sector councils) to revise the qualification and assessment standards of vocational qualifications. Activities planned for 2016-17 were to support synergy with EQF and ECVET.

Greece: during the reporting period, work focused on assisting realisation of the NQF and, more specifically, on ensuring quality of the certification process based on learning outcomes. The aim is to assist embedding the learning outcomes approach into the VET qualifications systems, elaborating methods and criteria for setting quality assured qualification standards, designing curricula with close links to the respective occupational profiles, and agreeing on assessment standards.

Latvia: the National Centre for Education runs a 2016-21 ESF project to elaborate a sectoral qualifications system for vocational education and quality assurance based on learning outcomes. It includes developing occupational standards, vocational education content, modular programmes, teaching/learning aids and assessment methods.

Romania: the revision of training standards included assessment and certification of learning outcomes.

Improving exam quality

Reviewing VET exam systems in the Czech Republic and Hungary; setting clear requirements for exam committee members in the Netherlands, thus raising their competences and their independence; and strengthening employer participation in the examination process in Poland.

Source: ReferNet.

3.1.2.5. Progress in quality assurance in CVET

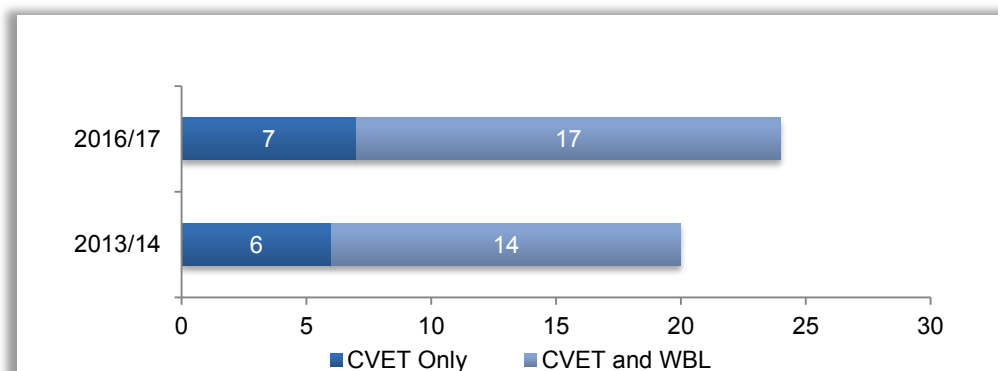
Initiatives to develop quality assurance approaches in CVET have differed in content and scope:

- (a) part of an overall quality assurance framework that covers IVET and CVET;
- (b) explicitly addressing CVET providers.

In most cases they include work-based learning.

Countries' responses to the 2016-17 EQAVET survey (EQAVET Secretariat, 2017) compared to the previous one in 2013-14 (EQAVET Secretariat, 2014), which served as the 2015 baseline, suggest progress in four countries: while the Czech Republic's approach only relates to CVET, those developed by Estonia, Spain and Malta cover CVET and associated work-based learning.

Figure 18. **Number of VET systems developing quality assurance approaches for CVET**



NB: UK counts as four countries but UK-England did not respond to the EQAVET survey in 2016, hence the 2013 data were used. Iceland did not respond to the EQAVET survey. BE (de) does not participate in EQAVET.

Source: Cedefop calculations based on data from EQAVET Secretariat surveys 2013-14 and 2016-17.

3.1.2.6. *Assessing and supporting VET providers*

Information available to Cedefop suggests that, during the reporting period, more attention was paid to assessing CVET providers. This was seen in 2017, for example, through the mandatory requirement in Bulgaria to submit self-assessment reports to the National Agency for VET, and in the quality in continuing education initiative (KVALITA DV) of the Czech National Institute for Education to evaluate the quality of providers.

Similar to IVET are the quality label for CVET providers *Eduform* established in 2016 by the French education ministry and a tool developed by the International University Institute of Luxembourg to analyse the quality of training within companies.

3.1.2.7. *The role of national reference points*

All countries apart from Estonia and the French Community in Belgium ⁽²⁵⁾ had a national reference point (QANRP) in place in 2014 to promote the EU-level framework nationally and support related activities (Council of the EU, 2009). In the reporting period, QANRPs contributed to implementing the EQAVET recommendation and further developing national level quality assurance.

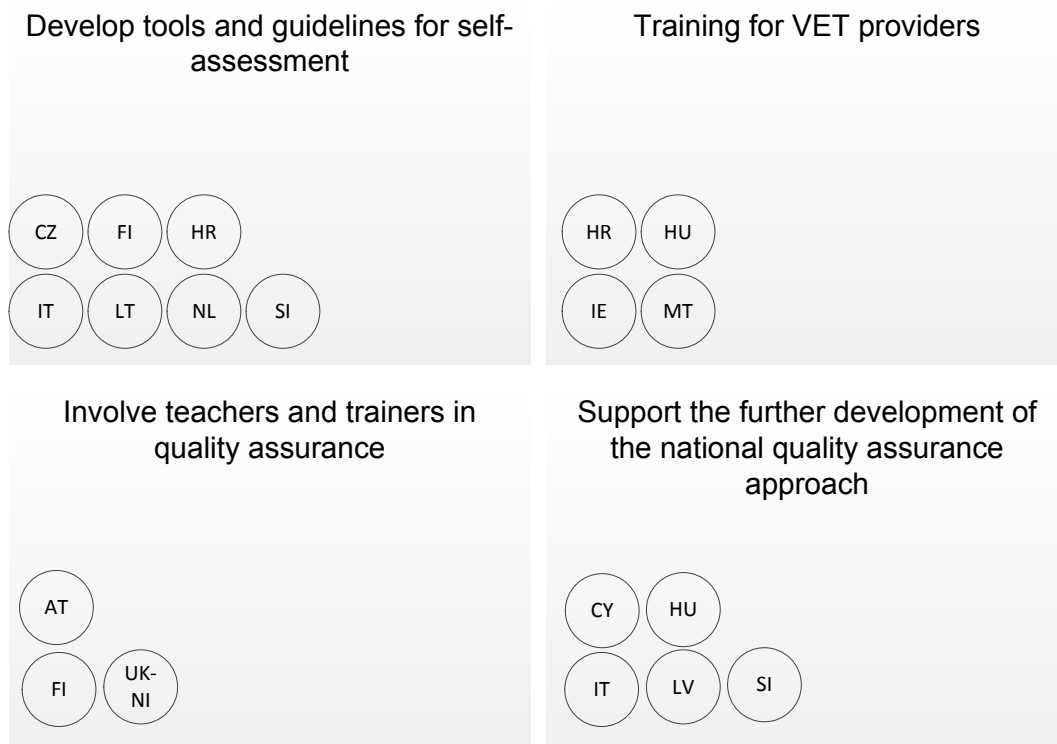
In 2016/17 QANRPs were supported for the first time by Erasmus + under Key action 3: support for policy reform, to help them fulfil the tasks set out in the

⁽²⁵⁾ In the 2016/17 EQAVET survey the German-speaking Community of Belgium and Iceland did not participate; the UK counts as four countries.

recommendation. A total of 18 QANRPs ⁽²⁶⁾ in EU Member States received grants from EUR 16 000 to EUR 65 000 depending on the size of the country and the activities they proposed. Most of the Erasmus+ funding was used to support VET providers in developing their quality management capacity (see findings of EQAVET survey above). Countries also focused on reinforcing quality assurance of work-based learning.

The Erasmus+ funding also supported joint events and participation in peer learning activities, study visits and cooperation of QANRPs on issues of common interest: for instance, an 'exchange and development group' to involve teachers and trainers in quality management or more generally by Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Romania, Finland and UK-Scotland.

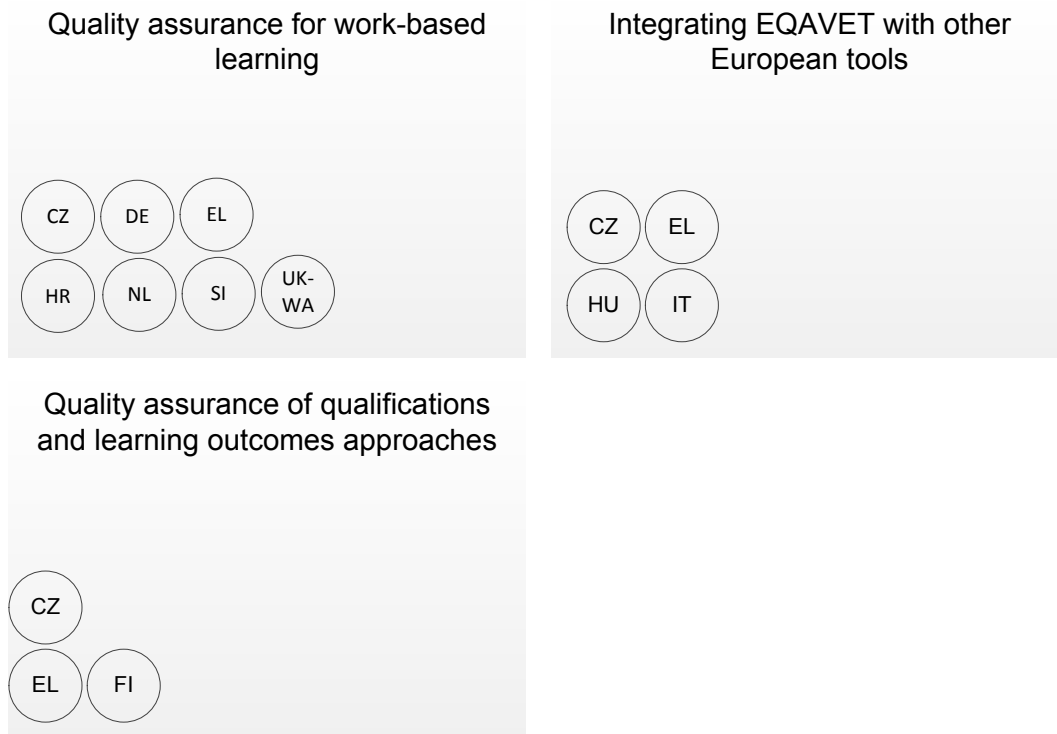
Figure 19. **Use of Erasmus+ funding by QANRP to develop VET providers' quality management capacity**



Source: Cedefop based on Study of the work programmes of the EQAVET national reference points (EQAVET Secretariat and Allulli, 2017).

⁽²⁶⁾ Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Greece, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Romania, Slovenia, Finland, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Wales; Turkey also received support.

Figure 20. Themes addressed by QANRP Erasmus+ projects



Source: Cedefop based on study of the work programmes of the EQAVET national reference points (EQAVET 2017b).

3.1.2.8. Use of indicators

The EQAVET recommendation includes a set of 17 indicators to support evaluation and quality improvement of VET systems and providers. Some countries use them as a toolbox to develop their own indicators. Latvia, Lithuania and Northern Ireland, for instance, link data from different registers/sources to identify and collect information on graduate progression either to further training or employment.

Cedefop's 2014 monitoring report on VET policies pointed to the relatively low use of indicators on outcomes and effectiveness of mechanisms to identify training needs at the workplace. Analysis of the 2016/17 EQAVET survey, which shows similar trends for IVET and CVET, suggests:

- (a) lack of progress in using the indicator on placement rates (EQAVET indicator 5) systematically, although countries consider these data crucial to understanding the effectiveness of publicly funded VET. Some use them for performance-based funding, others point to the challenge posed by gathering these data from different sources and for different VET programmes;

- (b) progress in applying the indicator on utilising acquired skills at the workplace, especially individual and employer satisfaction with the acquired skills and competences (EQAVET indicator 6b). These data are used to understand more about the transition from VET to employment and VET's relevance to the labour market. According to the EQAVET survey, in countries that use this information it helps VET providers to compare their performance and drive internal improvement. Some countries also use ESF funds to collect such data;
- (c) that the qualitative indicator on mechanisms to identify training needs at the workplace (EQAVET indicator 9) is mostly used to review and develop new qualifications and curricula and to inform VET provision. Identifying training needs to ensure VET relevance is one of the most commonly discussed. In the reporting period, countries seem to have been increasingly looking at the effectiveness of these mechanisms, though not necessarily systematically (EQAVET indicator 9b). These findings also confirm the qualitative analysis on continuous information and feedback loops in IVET and CVET (see Section 3.2.1.9).

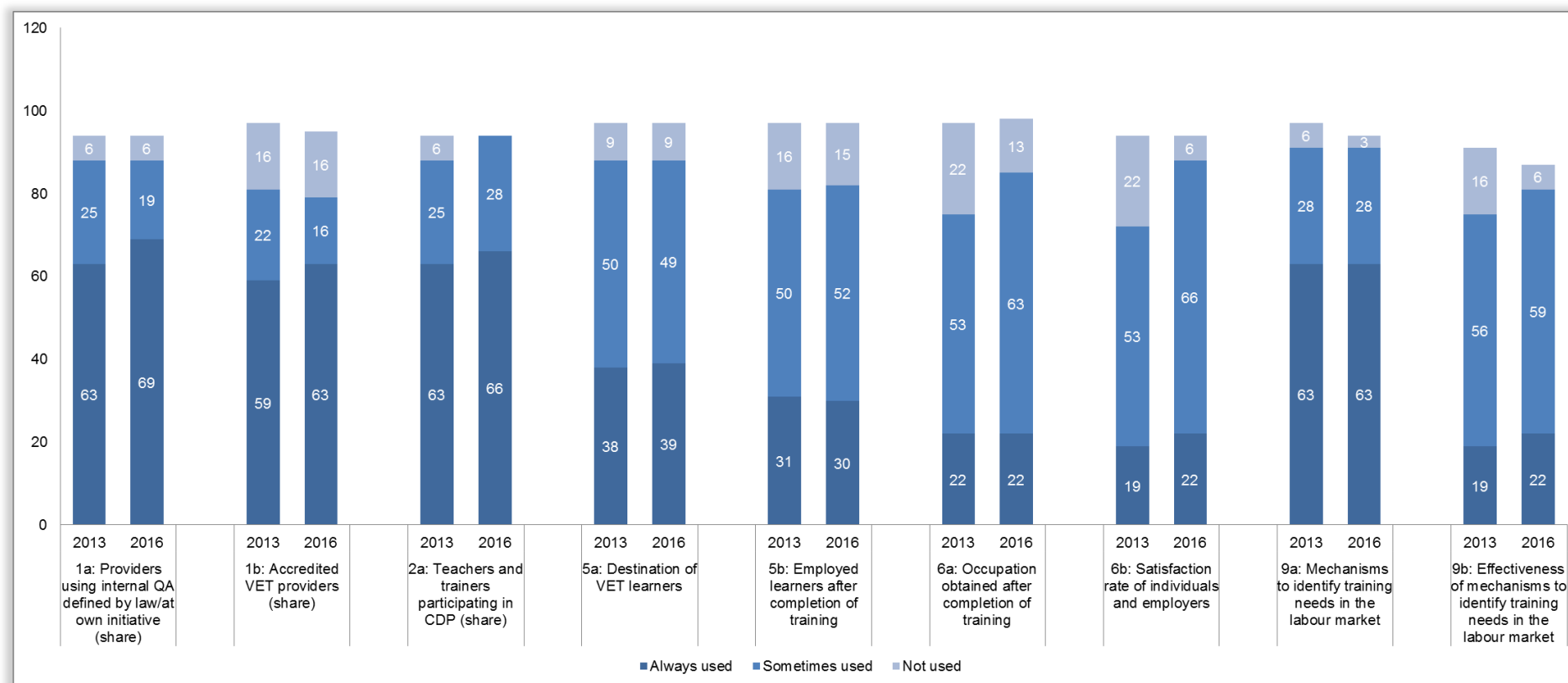
3.1.2.9. *Continuous information and feedback loops*

To be relevant to the world of work, IVET and CVET need to embrace new economic and technological demands and other labour market trends. Feedback loops are necessary to inform design and renewal of VET qualifications, programmes, curricula and teaching methods. This requires systematic labour market research and effective skills anticipation but along with information on how VET graduates fare on the labour market.

During 2010-14, data collection in these fields received increasing attention but the use of such data remained an area for improvement. Work on feedback loops was consequently included in the Riga deliverables and Directors General discussed related challenges and advocated exchange of information and policy learning ⁽²⁷⁾. Subsequently, most countries expressed their intention to work on this issue.

⁽²⁷⁾ Meetings of Directors General for VET in Luxembourg, 16 and 17 November 2015. Workshop 'Quality assurance in VET: feedback loops and learner-centred approach in vocational pedagogies'.

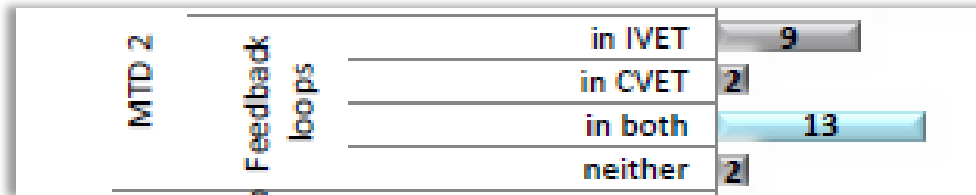
Figure 21. Use of EQAVET indicators in IVET 2013 and 2016 (%)



NB: The UK counts as four countries but UK-England did not respond to the EQAVET survey in 2016, hence the 2013 data were used. IS did not respond to the EQAVET survey. BE (de) does not participate in EQAVET.

Source: Cedefop calculations based on data from EQAVET Secretariat survey 2016/17.

Figure 22. Countries' intentions to work on feedback loops in 2015-20



Source: Cedefop based on survey among Directors General for VET in early 2016.

- Since then, evidence suggests that work has focused on
- formal feedback mechanisms with representatives of ministries, employers, employees, VET providers, teachers and trainers, researchers and learners, to strengthen cooperation between education and training and the world of work;
 - legislation setting the framework for anticipation and monitoring systems and the establishment of specialised bodies to collect and analyse data;
 - devising and/or adopting strategic plans up to 2020 that include anticipation and monitoring systems to review qualifications and update VET programmes and curricula.

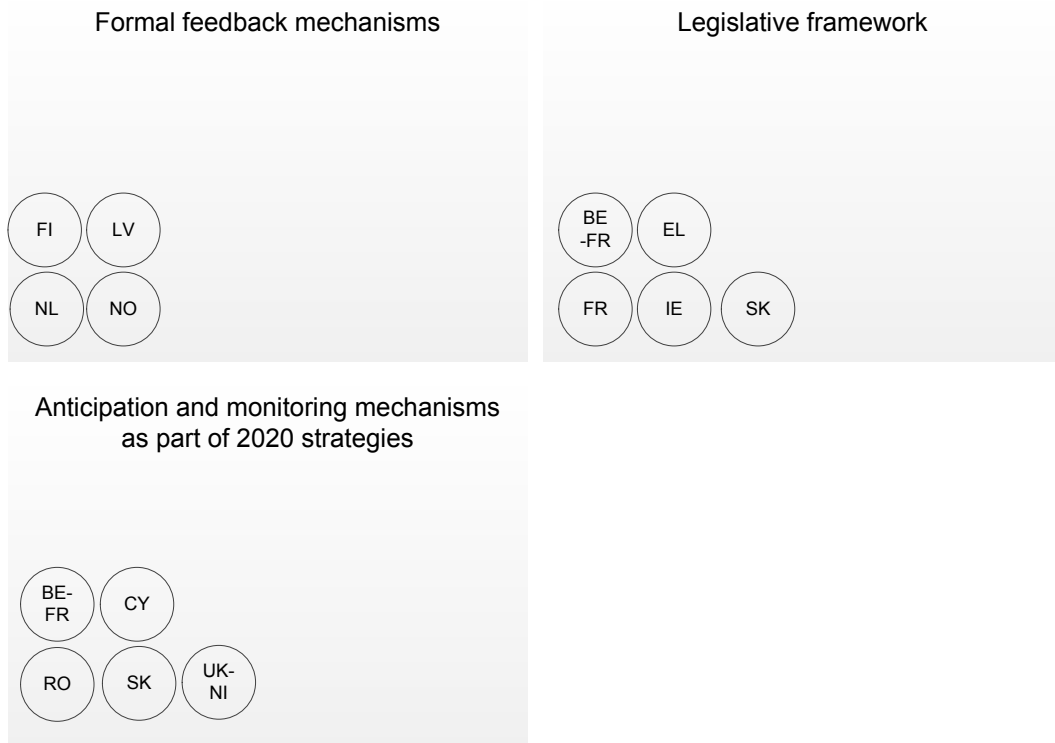
Box 10. **Formal feedback mechanisms: examples**

In 2017 Finland replaced its national education and training committees with nine anticipating groups representing the different vocational fields; the Netherlands established more than 60 public-private partnerships; and Norway was discussing new mandates for its national VET council.

Strategic plans up to 2020 include, for instance, the development of national systems to monitor IVET and CVET graduates in BE(fr), Cyprus and UK- NI; the development of skills anticipation and forecasting mechanisms in Slovakia; or both in Romania.

Source: ReferNet.

Figure 23. **Setting the framework for feedback loops**

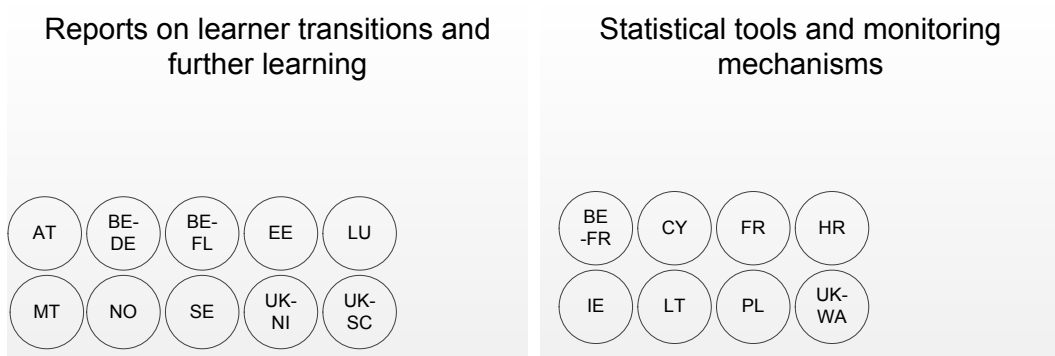


Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

3.1.2.10. Graduate tracking

According to information available to Cedefop, emphasis has been given to monitoring graduate outcomes by developing statistical tools, putting relevant mechanisms in place and analysing and disseminating data.

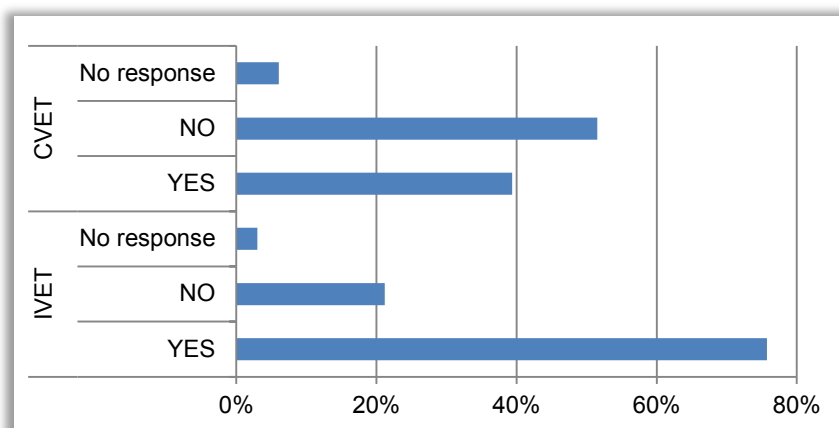
Figure 24. **Monitoring graduate outcomes**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

Analysis of the 2016 EQAVET Secretariat survey confirms these findings, although only 50% of the responding countries stated they use it to improve or modify VET provision.

Figure 25. **National quality assurance approach includes collecting information on graduates who complete IVET and CVET, 2016**



Source: Cedefop based on EQAVET survey 2016-17.

Cedefop's report on the period 2010-14 and discussions by Directors General for VET highlighted that the lack of systematic feedback loops in many countries is linked to data protection or other legal restrictions. This makes it difficult to combine data on learning, labour market entry and career. During 2015-17, some countries provided information on initiatives to overcome this challenge through specific agreements, frameworks or research/pilot projects.

Box 11. Combining data on learning, labour market entry and careers: examples

Ireland: the Department of Social Protection and the Further Education and Training Authority (SOLAS) in Ireland agreed on a data sharing protocol to develop and implement a data infrastructure to support VET provision and policy.

UK: the Welsh government and the UK Department for Work and Pensions agreed to link data through a longitudinal education outcomes study; the inspectorate of education and training providers in England (Ofsted) and the Department of Education agreed to share sensitive data.

Poland: the Education Research Institute launched a project to link administrative data from social security and education resources – professional and educational trajectories – to monitor the paths VET graduates are taking.

Latvia: setting up a national human resources monitoring framework which allows linking data from different registers.

Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

The Council recommendation on graduate tracking adopted in November 2017 (Council of the EU, 2017) may reinforce this specific Riga deliverable. It calls for improving availability and quality of respective data and using them to inform higher education and VET.

3.1.2.11. *Anticipating training needs*

Assessing, anticipating and responding to skill needs is not enough; to be able to translate labour market intelligence into effective policies requires collaboration and interaction between different stakeholders. Countries' information suggests that they have worked to strengthen this capacity, mainly through specialised committees and advisory bodies and by developing systematic cooperation between ministries, public employment services, social partners and experts locally, regionally and nationally (examples being Belgium (fr), Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Poland, Portugal and UK-NI).

Several countries pointed to the importance of EU support:

- (a) EU funding – either ESF or Erasmus+ – in helping countries establish their anticipation mechanisms was underlined by Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Finland and UK-Wales;
- (b) following Malta and Iceland, Bulgaria, Greece, Estonia and Slovakia are collaborating with Cedefop in their efforts to improve anticipation methods, build their skills and labour market intelligence capacity, and design and put in place effective policies and actions to tackle skills mismatch.

As Cedefop's 2010-14 report pointed out, the question is to what extent labour market intelligence and information on graduates is systematically taken into account in renewing qualifications, standards, VET policies and provision. In the current reporting period, several countries stated they had done so when designing and reviewing qualification and curricula. Most countries said they had used information on graduates to inform VET provision. In Norway, for instance, data on transitions and employability have informed the development of new VET subjects. Slovakia and Latvia use results from their anticipation mechanisms to inform VET programme offers and funding. Germany, Greece and Luxembourg referred specifically to using their analysis to inform the selection and design of training regulations for their apprenticeship programmes. Countries' different governance approaches and levels of decentralised decision-making make it difficult to gain a clear picture of whether such feedback loops are used systematically and have proved effective.

Box 12. Identifying and anticipating training needs: examples

Poland: in 2016, the Centre for Educational Development launched a project partly funded by the ESF to adjust VET to labour market needs, engaging with employers. 25 sectoral teams of social partners (600 representatives of sectoral associations, employer organisations and trade unions) were set up to recommend changes in vocational curricula and classification of occupations. By March 2017, stakeholder teams modernised 148 curricula for more than 50 occupations. Teaching plans and programmes were also designed.

Estonia: the Ministries of Education, Economic Affairs and Social Affairs, in cooperation with employers and representatives from other ministries, launched a system for regular forecasting, monitoring, and feedback on labour market needs (OSKA). OSKA's surveys on sectoral needs for labour and skills use a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods and analyse professional qualifications across all education levels. Results of this analysis and projections form the basis for several activities: establishing qualifications; career guidance services; curriculum design by education institutions; aiding authorities that finance learning activities. Active and content-driven participation by employers in the lifelong learning system is a prerequisite to making this approach a success. The first OSKA reports in 2016-17 focused on ICT, accounting, forestry and the timber industry, metal products, machinery, social work, healthcare, production of chemicals, rubber, plastic and construction materials, energy and mining. An overview of global and domestic trends influencing labour supply and demand in the country was also published. The first labour market overview, conclusions and proposals based on the surveys were presented to the Estonian Government in spring 2017. In the future, the government will receive a summary of OSKA results every year.

Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

3.1.2.12. Developments on feedback loops specific to CVET

Information on developments that relate specifically to CVET was scarce. It includes studies and reports which look at issues such as:

- (a) financing CVET provision for refugees and migrants in Germany;
- (b) what learners in Sweden do after completing CVET;
- (c) how to meet skill needs in Norway by taking advantage of non-formal learning and skills of immigrants.

Countries also referred to surveys on recruitment needs and employer satisfaction, using these to inform reviews of occupational standards (Croatia) or ease (re)integration of unemployed people in the labour market (Luxembourg). Spain's State Foundation for Training in Employment has been exploring big data techniques to improve its training programmes, while Croatia has been working to develop a tracking system for NEETs.

A few countries also pointed to the work of specific bodies that include social partners, such as: the sectoral committees in Spain that have set training

priorities mainly for employed workers; the new network of regional skills forums in Ireland which give to employers and training providers the opportunity to meet emerging skill needs for their regions; and the adult education management board in Latvia which is expected to define learning areas in line with market needs.

3.1.3. MTD 3 – Access to VET and qualifications for all though more flexible/permeable systems, guidance and validation of non-formal and informal learning

MTD 3 has many dimensions and facets that are inter-related. Even though it focuses on VET, it has a broader perspective: it is not only about routes to and within different types and levels of formal VET but also from VET to general/academic education and vice versa. It is about links with training offers and the skills and qualifications acquired outside formal education and training; it is also about the information and support people need to find their way into and navigate through these routes. At the same time, MTD 3 has close links with other MTDs, for instance with apprenticeships and key competences.

Combining systems and people perspectives, its aim is to ensure that:

- (a) young people and adults can develop, complement, update and upgrade the skills that empower them to find and maintain jobs and succeed in their lives;
- (b) a variety of education and training options and progression routes are available at different points in their lives to build their own skills sets and pathways;
- (c) individuals can acquire qualifications that are valued in education and training and on the labour market;
- (d) they receive information and guidance that helps them to select education and training and career opportunities that suit their own needs and talents and offer them career prospects;
- (e) their learning outcomes are 'portable' and they can get the skills that they have acquired outside formal learning assessed and validated.

MTD 3 has been reinforced by the recommendation on upskilling pathways and the European pillar of social rights. As the recommendation was endorsed at the end of 2016, many policy actions reported by countries contribute to its objectives but have not been devised in response to it.

Information on implementation or roll-out of strategies and actions suggests continuity with earlier work to make VET more flexible and improve progression across education and training systems developments. These may date back to the pre-Riga period or have been devised since then.

Some countries have devised multidimensional approaches promoting equal opportunities for all but these are less frequent than sets of individual actions. This reflects different responsibilities and governance models within the countries, including education and employment ministries, education authorities and providers, and employment services. Reports comprise a range of strategies, legislation, policy measures and projects, for instance within operational programmes supported by the ESF or Erasmus+. Several countries have introduced new strategies or actions in line with the ESF financial programming period.

Actions often focus on improved information and guidance and validating non-formal and informal learning or recognition of prior formal learning. They may also combine work-based learning with key competence acquisition, as with literacy and host country language skills to support the integration of newly arrived migrants and refugees. Where actions aim at improving digital skills these are usually linked to national digital strategies. Although such actions tend to include quantitative targets, the use of absolute figures, rather than indicating a planned increase in percentages, makes it difficult to judge their scope; in several cases, a series of projects or small-scale initiatives are reported.

Though often inter-related, action supporting access for all to VET and qualifications have mainly focused on:

- (a) increased permeability and/or flexibility;
- (b) education and training opportunities for diverse target groups;
- (c) information and guidance;
- (d) validation of non-formal and informal learning and recognition of prior formal learning.

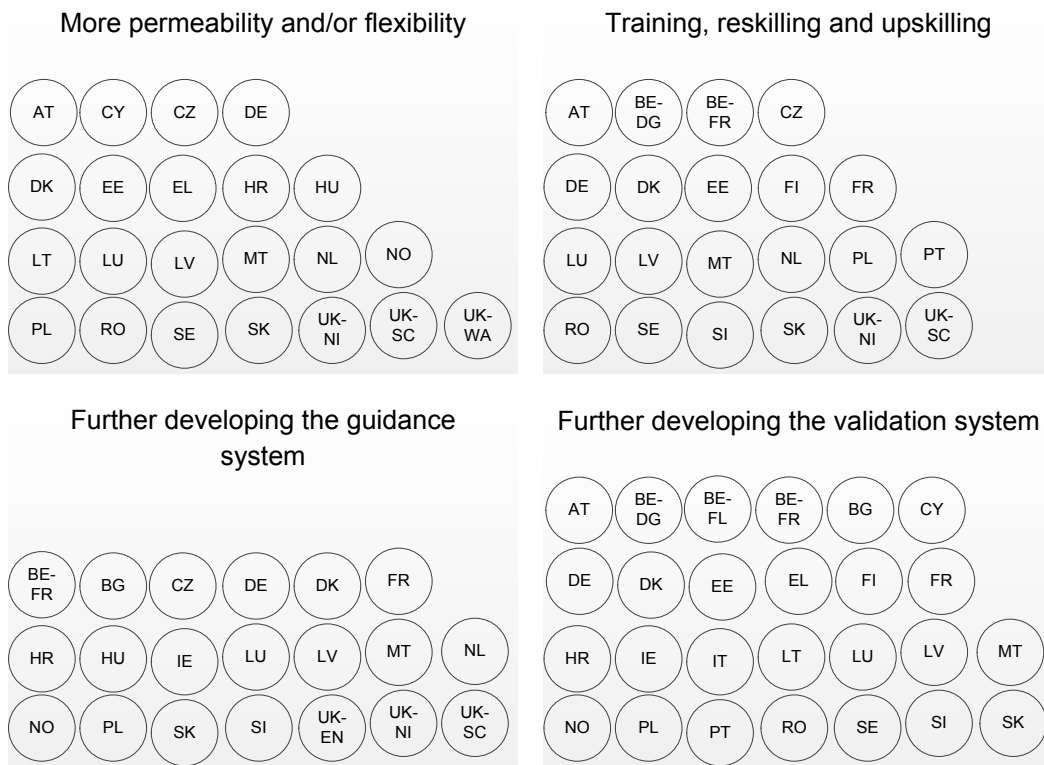
3.1.3.1. *Increased permeability and/or flexibility*

Developments in the reporting period can be grouped as follows:

- (a) structural changes in VET pathways, new programmes or bridging routes;
- (b) changes in admission, duration and/or exams;
- (c) improving flexibility;
- (d) support measures.

Structural reforms in the reporting period were mainly geared to easing entry and opening up or easing progression paths. Changes in admission requirements and/or exams mostly aimed to support learners to achieve the requested competences or standard for enter to upper secondary VET or higher education.

Figure 26. **Enhancing access to VET and qualifications for all**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

The trend to supporting learners at transition points through bridge programmes, guidance coaching and other support structures has continued. Similarly, modularisation of qualifications and more options and choices for learners have been seen as ways of making VET, or overall education and training systems, more flexible. Initiatives have been extended in scope and duration. Some recent measures are oriented towards equal rights and opening programmes up to wider groups of learners.

Some countries introduced major structural reforms and comprehensive approaches to offer more entry and progression opportunities and rights. Depending on the country, these reforms combined a variety of actions including outreach to youth, guidance, financial and other types of support.

Box 13. **Making systems more flexible and permeable: examples**

Comprehensive approaches and major reforms

In the Netherlands – almost parallel to the introduction of the Action plan for equal opportunities – new legislation to ‘ensure the right of enrolment in VET for all’ came into force in summer 2017. This legislation aims to tackle problems in the transition from pre-vocational secondary education (VBMO) to upper secondary VET (MBO). The law paves the way for better guidance before and during transition. It brings the registration date at MBO forward to give schools more time to support learners in their VET choice. If learners do not register in MBO, schools have a chance to reduce the risk of early school leaving. The legislation grants learners the right to enrol in a programme according to their preference. It also describes the responsibilities of VBMO and MBO, students and municipalities. Schools and municipalities have the obligation to exchange information about students who are moving towards upper secondary VET. Following amendments to the Secondary Education Act, in force since 2016, new VMBO programmes have been introduced with revised content and structure: 10 flexible profiles instead of 30 programmes; content aligned to modern occupational practice and MBO curricula. Each programme consists of a general core part, a profile part (*profieldeel*) and optional modules, and offers career orientation and guidance. The reform aims to help VMBO respond to changes and needs in further education and the regional labour market and to counteract the decline in student numbers and fragmentation. The 2016 Action plan for equal opportunities in education also aims to smooth transition within education and training by establishing ‘in-between years’ (*schakelklassen*) from VMBO to MBO or to general education, and from MBO to higher professional education. Additional budget has been made available for activities assisting MBO graduates to complete their first year of higher professional education. Schools can apply for this grant partly based on plans developed by students. So-called student labs are organised where learners design approaches for successful transition.

In Denmark, the VET system was restructured and made simpler. The 12 existing access channels were merged into four: care, health and pedagogy; office, trade and business service; food, agriculture and experiences; and technology, construction and transportation. A new study strand was established in the 10th grade of compulsory school (EUD 10) to help learners prepare for VET admission requirements, passing grades in Danish and maths and access criteria set by the trade committees. It addresses learners who are motivated for VET, but either do not meet the entry requirements or are uncertain whether it is the right choice for them. A minimum of 30% must be organised in cooperation with a VET college. These changes are linked to the target of the 2015 VET reform, that by 2025, 30% of a youth cohort should take up VET directly after compulsory schooling.

Hungary has transformed the VET training structure and moved barriers to open progression opportunities for three-year VET graduates. They can continue their studies automatically in the same school for the additional two years needed to take the upper secondary school leaving exam, which is the entry requirement for higher education. There is now also the possibility of obtaining two state-recognised VET qualifications free of charge in VET schools instead of only one. Also, in 2016, the bridging programme was relaunched to provide early school leavers with an alternative route to return to VET and ensures the grants for them.

Poland has introduced structural reform influencing structure, length and progression routes within the education and training system. Some of the main changes at upper secondary VET level are that four-year programmes will be prolonged to five years from 2019/20, and three-year basic VET will be replaced by so-called two-stage sectoral schools. The first stage of these lasts three years; on completion, learners can move to the second stage that will offer a two-year programme as of 2020/21 and grant higher education access after passing the secondary school *matura* exam.

New programmes and pathways

In Malta, to enable students exploring different vocational areas, the Malta College of Art, Science and Technology (MCAST) launched in 2016 the Skills kits programme, an introductory level programme at MQF (*) /EQF level 1. The kits cover various vocational areas (such as art, hairdressing, beauty, basic web design, caring for others, animal care, sport, installation of low voltage devices and cultures) as well as personal and employability skills. Each kit comprises 20 hours of instruction. Students can choose the number of kits to study (up to 30 per year) and their own combination. Students who successfully complete 30 kits obtain the MCAST introductory skills certificate and are eligible to progress to level 2.

In Denmark, EUV is a new VET programme for unskilled adults; it builds on the work experience and prior learning which the adult already possesses. EUV gives adults with at least two years of relevant work experience the option to take part in VET equivalent education without having to follow a basic programme or undertaking an internship. The programme is state-funded. Its cost was DK 26 million in 2015 (EUR 3.5 million) and DK 70 million in 2016 (EUR 9.4 million).

Improving flexibility

In Norway, a certificate of practice (*Praksisbrev*) was introduced in 2016, after having been piloted and evaluated since 2008. These two-year practical training programmes are carried out in companies. Subjects comprise core components (work-oriented Norwegian, maths and social science) along with components geared towards local labour demand. The programmes are offered by counties: each county is obliged to offer at least one. Certificates of practice primarily target upper secondary school students who have low motivation for ordinary school and greater interest in practical work, and who are at risk of underperforming/failing in regular programmes; for instance those with poor grades and/or high absenteeism although they neither have learning difficulties nor special education needs. However, the Certificate of Practice is also available for adults, for example immigrants or low-qualified people who, at the time, were unable to complete a trade or journeyman's certificate. After achieving the certificate of practice, candidates can proceed towards a trade or journeyman's certificate.

Since 2016, learners in France who made a wrong choice of VET programme can move to another programme, either in VET or general or technological education. France is also piloting a new scheme allowing upper secondary VET graduates holding a *baccalauréat professionnel* to higher technological education (in *section de technicien supérieur*). Admission was previously preferably granted to holders of *baccalauréat* obtained in technological education. Normally, the higher technological education institutions select their students. In the new scheme, responsibility for this decision is being transferred to the students' VET school: admission is turned from a

selection process into orientation/guidance. The overall intention is to support students who have achieved a sufficient standard, as certified by the teaching team in the final school year, to continue studying. An additional 2000 places in STSs will be created every year up until 2022

France is developing skills set certification in adult education. Three 2016 decrees reorganised vocational diplomas by dividing them into skills sets. An adult candidate who has successfully completed training relating to a set will receive the corresponding certificate. The change already applies to the vocational aptitude certificate (*Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle* – CAP) and the vocational *baccalauréat* since 2016, and the advanced technical diploma (*Brevet de technicien supérieur* – BTS) since 2017. Work to cover other qualifications with high numbers of adult applicants is in progress.

In the Netherlands, ECVET had been piloted in cross-border mobility projects. In 2015, 10 new pilot projects were run with the objective of supporting adult transition from work to work, reintegration into the labour market, and updating skills and competences in an efficient and cost-effective way. The projects were carried out in health care, social services, pedicure, and the army. On completion, the projects informed a handbook which has been disseminated. Two new projects in disability care at secondary and higher professional VET levels started in 2016-17 and aim at the recognition of certification units in the Dutch healthcare and welfare sector.

In 2015, Finland revised its qualification systems and national VET qualifications requirements. It aimed to strengthen the learning-outcomes approach in the latter, the modular structure of qualifications, flexibility and individualisation in learning paths, and validation of prior learning. The scope of vocational upper secondary qualifications was set to 180 ECVET credits. The core subjects were regrouped into four larger sets: communication and interactive ability; mathematical and scientific competences; competences needed in society and world of work; and social and cultural competences. The credit points for IVET were replaced by 'competence points', which show the relative importance of the unit of learning outcomes to the overall qualification, for instance based on relevance for the labour market and social integration as well as complexity, scope and volume of the unit of learning outcomes. In 2017 the education ministry confirmed that vocational qualifications will be restructured as part of the VET reform planned for 2018: the current 351 are expected to be reduced to 164 broader qualifications (43 vocational qualifications, 65 further vocational qualifications and 56 specialist vocational qualifications) to allow learners organise their competence development in a better and more flexible way and in line with changing demands in working life. The 2018 reform is expected to merge IVET and CVET and parts of the labour market training into one uniform system.

Recent legislation in Portugal aims to ensure that secondary education attainment will be the minimum qualification level for all. Qualification of adults is currently top priority: by 2020, 50% of the active population should have accomplished secondary education and participation of adults in lifelong learning (2020 target 15%) should reach 25% by 2025. *Qualifica* centres aim to guide adults (18+) towards achieving a qualification through training and/or through recognition of prior formal learning or validation of non-formal and informal learning. *Qualifica* passports, a document to record training pathways and a VET credit system introduced in 2017 are expected to encourage more adults to take up learning. The credit system is in line with ECVET

principles and expected to promote permeability between VET pathways and higher education and mobility within Europe.

Other initiatives

An increasing number of university applications are based on vocational qualifications, which poses a challenge for university admissions staff, who often lack in-depth knowledge of these qualifications. From 2015 to 2017, the Progression pathways project of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service in England has provided learners, parents, university admissions staff and academic staff with information and advice tools to improve this understanding and ensure candidates are admitted to appropriate programmes.

(*) Malta qualifications framework.

Source: ReferNet.

3.1.3.2. *Education and training opportunities for diverse target groups*

Actions tend to address a variety of target groups: from young people to low-skilled adults, older workers, refugees and other migrants, and other groups in vulnerable position needing upskilling. These include the young from disadvantaged urban areas or with learning difficulties, people with disabilities, single parents, and senior workers. In several cases they target unemployed and employed people at risk of becoming jobless alike.

However, the reports also include actions specifically designed for the long-term unemployed, which may be linked to the recently endorsed respective Council recommendation. Many focus on young people at risk of leaving education and training early and NEETs, reflecting youth guarantee measures which often target people up to the age of 25 or 30. Some countries link skills shortages in specific occupations and sectors with training for the unemployed and low-skilled.

3.1.3.3. *Information and guidance to support access to VET and qualifications*

Information, guidance and advice/counselling have a specific role to play in developing people's flexible learning and career paths. They are critical at any transition points from education to work and within both. Effective guidance assists learners in finding the 'right' individual pathway and can help prevent early leaving. Guidance can also help in matching people's needs and talents with the economy's skills demand.

Box 14. Addressing vulnerable groups: examples

In the Czech Republic, the *Education through practice* project runs from 2016 to 2019 and aims to provide an opportunity to undergo an internship in an enterprise. Internships last from one to six months. Eligible groups include: jobseekers registered at the labour office (except graduates); parents on (or after) parental leave; those aged over 50; and those with no qualification or only lower level of vocational qualification (up to two years of vocational training). Some companies who have expressed their interest in interns. Individuals may apply. The further education fund matches interns and companies and provides related guidance to both parties. The company assigns a mentor to the intern. Mentors must first undergo training via e-learning, and then support the interns during the whole process, providing them with the knowledge and skills related to the assigned job. The training costs of the company are refunded. The trainees have their travel and accommodation costs refunded as well. In the end, the company may offer a job to the intern.

During 2015-21, Latvia's public employment service is carrying out a national ESF project on support for the education of the unemployed. Activities include retraining and improvement of professional qualifications and skills in line with changing labour market requirements.

In Slovenia, an action plan for the elderly and the labour market was adopted by the government at the end of 2016. It provides for measures in support to lifelong learning and validation of non-formal skills for people aged 50+. A 2016-22 project on non-formal education and training for the low-qualified long-term unemployed in this age group was also endorsed, seeking to improve employability through programmes training for competences in demand in the labour market. *Comprehensive support to companies for active ageing of employees* is a project that targets employed people over 45, focusing mainly on those older than 50. Its objective is to encourage delayed retirement and increase the employability of older workers. By providing support to employers, it aims to raise awareness of challenges that the ageing workforce is facing and encourage skills upgrading.

In Austria, legislation introducing a training obligation until the age of 18 entered into force in 2017. Young people who would otherwise not continue education and training beyond compulsory schooling (age 15) or discontinue a programme, have to undertake some form of training: either in a school, an apprenticeship, a VET training centre (*überbetriebliche Lehrlingsausbildung*), a so-called production school, or another suitable labour market policy measure. As a last resort, the law provides for fines for parents should their sons/daughters not comply with this obligation and not attend any programme. The aim is to reduce the number of early leavers from education and training and NEETs. Implementation will build on coordination and coaching services targeted at supporting and guiding young people and their parents. A monitoring system will be established. The budget amounts to EUR 221 million for 2016-20. The measure will be evaluated in 2021. In 2016, the age group targeted by the training guarantee (introduced prior to the youth guarantee at EU level) was extended to include 19-25 year-olds. It offers unemployed young people who have only attained compulsory education the chance to acquire VET qualifications by attending programmes supported by the employment service.

The Austrian education ministry set up a programme at VET schools for 16-24 year old non-German-speaking refugees to help them move into VET. It combines learning the host country language, with a general education component, vocational orientation/career counselling, vocational training and personality development. On completion, the young refugees can attend one of the school-based VET programmes or an apprenticeship.

In Germany, since a 2016 amendment to the social code, young refugees with tolerated residence status who participate in dual VET are entitled to financial support after 15 months in Germany instead of the previously required four years. Support is in the form of training loans, vocational training support grant, and the so-called assisted training scheme. More generally, the Integration Act adopted in 2016 intends to aid refugee integration into society through a 'support and challenge' approach. Refugees with prospects to stay permanently will be offered integration courses at an early stage, and have legal certainty while undergoing VET: exceptional leave to remain in the country while undergoing training and two-year right to residency for those in training enterprises. They get a chance of meaningful employment while their asylum claim is being processed (such as serving meals in a refugee shelter). Asylum seekers will be granted residency permits along with their arrival certificate, so they have a legal certainty and early access to integration courses and the labour market.

In 2015, the Swedish government started consultations with the social partners, the public employment service and other government agencies to create 'fast tracks' for newly arrived immigrants to reduce time from arrival to entry in occupations that face skills shortages. An agreement involving employer and employee organisations assigned the public employment service the responsibility for these 'fast tracks'. Employment services at local and regional levels managed the programme, including training in vocationally oriented Swedish, speedy validation of skills and competences, assessment/recognition of foreign qualifications, and supplementary training with focus on occupations that face skills shortages. The public employment service also provided enterprises/organisations with support. By May 2016, 22 professions/occupations/sectors were involved. Regulations adopted in spring 2016 allowed for financial support to enterprises/organisations employing newly arrived migrants.

Source: ReferNet and VET for *Young third country nationals* background note by the Austrian ministries of education and economic affairs for the DGVET meeting in October 2016.

In its report on the 2011-14 Bruges deliverables, Cedefop pointed to the wide range of national, regional and/or local actors in guidance. An increasing range of web-based services was becoming available. However, despite a growing trend towards stakeholder cooperation, a holistic approach to guidance and counselling was evident only in a few countries.

During 2015-17, efforts have been made to increase quality of, and free access to, career guidance in schools and through online platforms. Developments range from revising procedures, to training of teachers who have guidance tasks; from extending services to broader age and social groups, to

choosing VET and making guidance mandatory for certain groups. Many initiatives in this area have been partly funded by the ESF. The trend towards web-based portals with integrated matching and self-help tools, as in self-assessment and e-guidance, has continued. As pointed out in the previous report, an increased offer per se may not be enough: without adequate support, people may find it difficult to identify a solution that fits their strengths and needs.

Box 15. Information and guidance: examples

Estonia set up mobile workshops in spring 2017. These workshops are equipped with modern technology and tools, and go to the young people aged 10 to 15, offering them fascinating activities and directing them towards more informed career choices. The focus of the first mobile workshops is on the professions in the metal and timber industry sectors and the main idea is to give hands-on experience of state-of-the-art technologies. The workshop for health care is under preparation. Local timber and metal industry entrepreneurs will be involved to showcase the career possibilities in their sectors and to present success stories.

In the United Kingdom, Skills Development Scotland's career information, advice and guidance service includes the career education standard that has been made available to all schools since 2016-2017. The standard for the 3 to 18 age range, published in 2015, sets out what children and young people will learn and what parents/carers, teachers/practitioners, employers and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) will do to: support their learning, building on what had been achieved by them; reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and complexity; address concerns about workload through the provision of support and resources. Prior to implementation of the expanded offer, SDS worked with 35 demonstrator schools across Scotland during 2015-16 to evaluate the service offer and develop it further. SDS assessed the effectiveness of delivery and partnership working, usefulness of services with key audiences, outcomes, benefits and challenges of the expanded offer, and developed it further in advance of its introduction. Young people, teachers, parents and carers and SDS staff were an integral part of the process of developing the offer.

Belgium, the Czech Republic, Iceland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Slovenia and Turkey participate in the Erasmus+ K3 project *GOAL* to upgrade guidance for adults and increase participation of the less-qualified in learning. The project started in 2015. Following initial analyses and work to guide advisory processes, Slovenia is evaluating guidance and counselling for those aged 50+, immigrants and low-qualified employees and jobseekers.

Source: ReferNet.

Information that Cedefop gathered from ReferNet, specifically on outreach and guidance in upskilling policies, confirms the wide variety of initiatives and a focus on young people, frequently in the framework of youth guarantees. A trend towards coordinated initiatives at municipal level can be seen. Outreach to adults

often focuses on people with minimum income. Support to the unemployed is limited, mainly offered to those who are registered with employment services. Advanced practices are seen mainly in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands (Cedefop, 2018a) ⁽²⁸⁾.

3.1.3.4. *Access to VET and qualifications through validation of non-formal and informal learning*

Encouraging people to update, complement or upgrade their skills and qualifications, is closely linked to valuing those they have acquired elsewhere: on the job, through volunteering, during their leisure time, through caring tasks in family life and other situations. They may be more motivated to take up learning, if they could return to education and training easily and acquire formal qualifications without or with reduced study time and without having to redo courses already done previously. Validation helps to make people's skills and competences visible and gives value to them. Identify – record – assess – certify: these are the basic features of validation. The youth guarantee, the Council recommendations on upskilling pathways, and measures for long-term unemployed have embraced (elements of) the validation process.

Countries have been working to set up comprehensive arrangements to validate people's non-formally and informally acquired skills and competences in line with the 2012 Council recommendation. According to the 2016 update of the European validation inventory (Cedefop, European Commission, ICF 2017) ⁽²⁹⁾, validation arrangements are planned or in place in the EU-28+, although not all have comprehensive national approaches. Opportunities for validation exist across the different sectors of education and extend into the labour market and third sector to varying degrees. However, provision for professional development of staff and prioritisation of disadvantaged groups are suggested.

Disadvantaged groups, including low-skilled individuals, early school leavers, jobseekers/unemployed, individuals at risk of unemployment, older workers, migrants/refugees and people with disabilities, had benefited least from validation. However, the inventory referred to some developments in using validation for the low-qualified and low-skilled jobseekers. Skills audits have become more common though not yet standard practice for people who are

⁽²⁸⁾ See also Cedefop's [country reports on guidance and outreach for the inactive and the unemployed](#).

⁽²⁹⁾ See also Cedefop (2018b). *Analysis and overview of national qualifications frameworks developments in European countries: developments 2015-16*.

unemployed or at risk of unemployment. Around half of the countries integrate them within existing validation arrangements.

Information available to Cedefop on countries' actions addressing MTD 3 suggest that the youth guarantee and the large inflow of migrants in recent years may have contributed to using validation more widely.

Box 16. Validating non-formal and informal learning: examples

In the Netherlands, a new system for the validation of prior learning has been in development since 2016. It distinguishes two different validation paths: the labour market route, where validation is aimed at career guidance for adults and prior individual learning outcomes are validated against sector/industry standards; and the education route, where individual learning and competences are validated against a national qualification standard to obtain a formal VET or higher education qualification. Validation tools include intake-assessment, e-portfolio, competence tests, ECVET-methods. If a formal validation procedure is followed, the result can also be an *ervaringscertificaat* (experience certificate). Since January 2016, *Servicepunt Examinering* (examination support body) has supported VET schools in validating competences.

In Norway, measures have been taken to speed up the mapping and validation of skills and competences of refugees and other recent immigrants. The education ministry allocated extra funding from the 2016 budget. NOKUT, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, has been working on possible ways for fast track assessment of higher education qualifications and is participating in a pilot project with similar methodology, the European qualification passport for refugees. This passport provides an assessment of higher education qualifications, upper secondary VET qualifications and post-secondary vocational qualifications based on available documentation and a structured interview.

In Belgium (fr) validation has remained high on the agenda in the reporting period featuring prominently in the governments' strategies. Increasing the number of beneficiaries and returners to education and training has been among the main aims. Prior to the reporting period steps had been made to ensure coordination and cooperation between its different validation systems. Validation of competences focuses on new occupations and additional funding has been made available. Within adult education (*enseignement de promotion sociale*) legislation has led to a unified approach, better coordination and more transparent validation procedures. The 2015 agreement between the three francophone governments on creating a francophone qualification framework (*Cadre francophone des certifications*) aims to support validation.

Source: Progress report on Riga deliverables: country chapters based on ReferNet.

According to the inventory, within education validation is mostly used to acquire modules or part of a qualification. The link between validation and NQFs is more common in IVET, CVET and higher education than it is in adult or

general education. Labour market validation initiatives are linked to the NQF in 80% of the countries where there are validation arrangements; in the third sector few countries were reported to have validation arrangements linked to formal education.

NQFs can act as tools for strengthening the links between different education and training sectors and help reduce barriers to progression. They can also be used to support human resource development, such as recruitment, professional development of employees or recognising transferable skills.

Apart from Italy and Spain, where work on formal adoption of an NQF continues, all countries have developed a qualifications framework or have revised it (Ireland, France, UK). Most NQFs have reached operational stage, which means that they include a significant number of qualifications, and the related databases and other tools are accessible to stakeholders and end-users. As a general trend, Member States have developed comprehensive NQFs aiming to cover all levels and types of qualifications, including those awarded by private and international organisations and companies. Countries like the Netherlands, Slovenia and Sweden have started developing criteria and procedures for inclusion of qualifications awarded outside formal education and training or have already included an important number of those qualifications, as in the Netherlands.

3.1.4. MTD 4 – Key competences in both IVET and CVET

For VET learners to adapt to new life situations and career shifts, manage change, take initiative and risk, innovate, and engage in further learning, purely occupation-specific skills are not enough; they also require key competences.

At European level, eight key competences for lifelong learning were endorsed more than a decade ago (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2006). They complement or (partly) overlap with other approaches: basic (Cedefop, 2014) and new basic (Council of the European Union, 2002) skills needed to live in today's knowledge society; 'fundamental basic skills' (language, literacy, numeracy and ICT) and 'transversal key competences' such as initiative-taking and cultural awareness (Council of the European Union, 2010); OECD's key competences (OECD 2005), ILO's core competences (ILO 2009), and 21st century skills (Dede, 2009). At the time of drafting this report, the European key competence framework was about to be revised to 'reflect political, social,

economic, ecological and technological developments since 2006' (European Commission, 2017) ⁽³⁰⁾.

National definitions often differ from those used at EU level (Table A4 in the annex). They may combine several key competences in one or split one competence into several. This is also evident from countries' NQF level descriptors.

In VET, unlike occupational skills, key competences are not necessarily directly related to a certain qualification; they are transversal and can be used flexibly in different situations (European Commission, 2011), for further learning and in the labour market. Nevertheless, they often overlap with sector/occupation-specific skills: for example, using foreign languages may not be routine for road construction technicians, while in tourism being able to converse in one or two of them is a prerequisite. For the former, a foreign language is a key competence in *stricto sensu*; for the latter, it may be a key competence as well as an occupational one.

According to a Eurobarometer in 2014 the majority of respondents with upper secondary VET background considered basic skills – which overlap with key competences – as the most important skills that education provides. In a 2011 Eurobarometer on VET, the majority of respondents believed that VET promotes communication and teamwork skills. Cedefop's 2016 opinion survey on VET (Cedefop, 2017c) showed similar results. Interviewees were asked if they had developed key competences at upper secondary education at some point of their life. Figure 27 compares the self-reported competences of recent upper secondary VET and general education learners/graduates ⁽³¹⁾.

Several of the soft skills often not associated with VET, like communication skills or ability to be creative, were believed by a large majority of recent learners/graduates to have been gained in VET. However, more than a third thought they did not (sufficiently) develop their social and civic competences, foreign languages, and science and technology skills. More than half felt VET did not (really) help them develop cultural awareness.

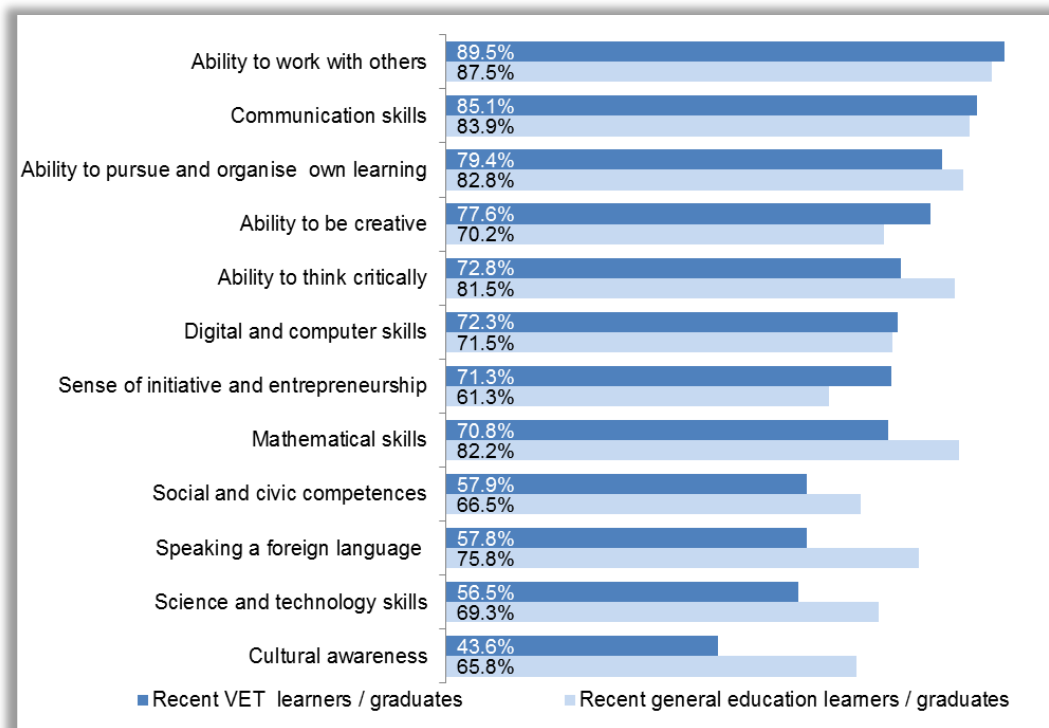
Comparing the responses with those of recent general education learners/graduates, recent VET learners/graduates were more likely to say that they developed entrepreneurship, creativity, communication and team-working skills. The opposite was the case for foreign language skills, maths, science and

⁽³⁰⁾ The revised recommendation was adopted in May 2018.
https://ec.europa.eu/education/initiatives/key-competences-framework-review-2017_en

⁽³¹⁾ Recent learners/graduates are those who enrolled in upper secondary education in 2011 or later.

technology skills, as well as cultural awareness, critical thinking and social/civic competences. The lower scores signal areas of concern, as all Europeans should acquire key competences regardless of their education path. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as they reflect personal beliefs and, in some cases, the meaning of terms may not have been fully clear to the respondents.

Figure 27. **Perceived acquisition of key competences in upper secondary VET and general education of recent learners/graduates in EU-28**



NB: Recent learners/graduates are those who enrolled in upper secondary education in 2011 or later. At the time of the survey, they were 16 to 21 and 22 to 27 years old respectively.

Source: Cedefop opinion survey on VET (Cedefop, 2017c).

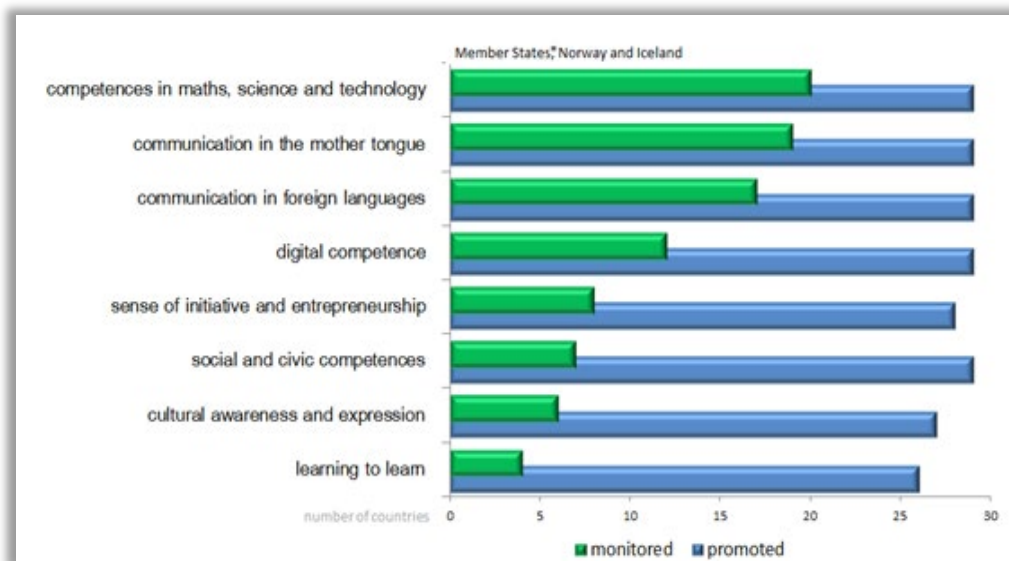
Reports by Cedefop's ReferNet providing a 2015 snapshot of how key competences were promoted in upper secondary VET in the EU-28+ (Cedefop ReferNet, 2016a) demonstrated that key competences, such as mother tongue, were mostly included in *curricula* as mandatory stand-alone subjects, cross-curricular learning outcomes or specific modules and or in education/VET standards. Promoting key competences was often included in the relevant legislation, establishing a legal right for learners to acquire, or a requirement for VET providers to offer them.

Digital competence was the only one that was promoted mostly through strategies rather than through specific curriculum design. This might be linked to speedy changes in skill demands and software applications and tools. Digital skills that were considered advanced 10 years ago may now be regarded as basic.

Almost half the countries assessed key competences in upper secondary VET centrally. Mother tongue, foreign languages and maths were largely assessed nationally/regionally or through international assessment tools, such as OECD PISA surveys (OECD, 2014). Monitoring achievements in other key competences was less common, especially those concerning horizontal skills, such as learning to learn, cultural awareness and expression, social and civic competences, and entrepreneurship. However, the objective may not always be to measure competence levels but to expand the coverage of target groups and programmes.

Countries also underlined the importance of teacher training to help learners develop key competences, though this is not mirrored in countries' priorities for 2016-20.

Figure 28. Promoting key competences through upper secondary VET



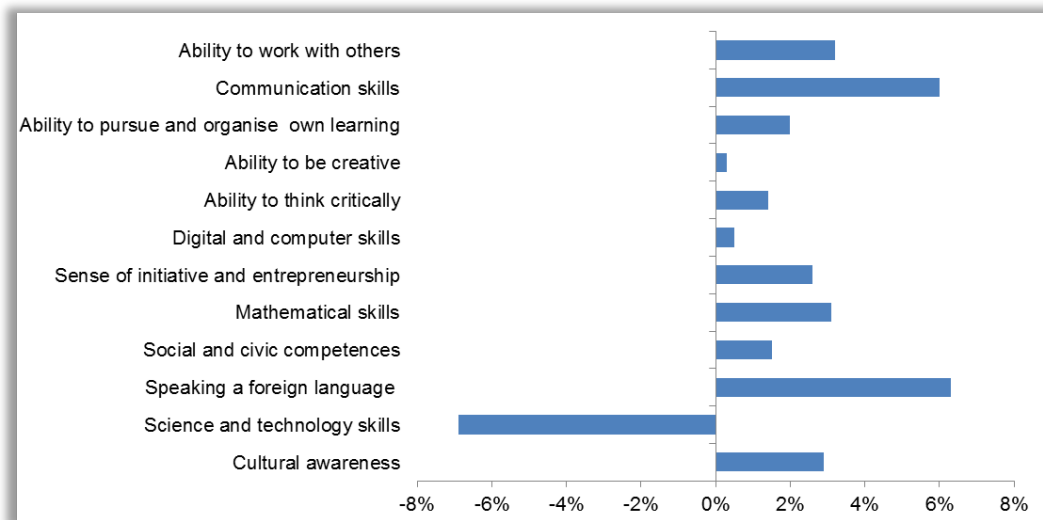
NB: No data for Greece.

Source: Cedefop ReferNet reports on key competences in VET (Cedefop ReferNet, 2016a).

The effectiveness of policies that aim at promoting key competences in VET can be best assessed by learner performance. However, such measurements are rare at national level. Instead, the difference between the perceived key competences of recent and the preceding generation of VET learners/graduates

can be used as a proxy revealing trends of policy implementation outcomes (Figure 29).

Figure 29. **Changes in perception of acquired key competences in EU-28: recent upper secondary VET learners/graduates compared with the older (preceding) generation**



NB: Recent learners/graduates are those who enrolled in upper secondary education in 2011 or later; preceding generation learners/graduates are those who enrolled in upper secondary education in 2005 or later.

Source: Cedefop opinion survey on VET (Cedefop, 2017c).

Positive changes indicate that recent VET learners/graduates consider themselves better equipped with key competences compared with the preceding generation ⁽³²⁾. However, while most developments seem to be positive, they are influenced by various factors and not exclusively by policy implementation.

It can be difficult to distinguish which of the present competences had been acquired at upper secondary education and which at a later stage in life, including informal learning and work experience. The older generation is usually more critical in self-evaluation due to their work/life experience. For example, recent graduates may consider their English as excellent until they actually apply it at work. People may also have acquired skills without realising it. Older generations' skills that have become obsolete, perhaps due to development in technology, may also influence the results of the survey.

A negative change in science and technology competence may signal increased and rapidly advancing demand over time and/or inability of VET

⁽³²⁾ In this report, the preceding generation are VET learners/graduates who enrolled in upper secondary education in 2005 or later and who were 22 to 27 years old at the time of survey.

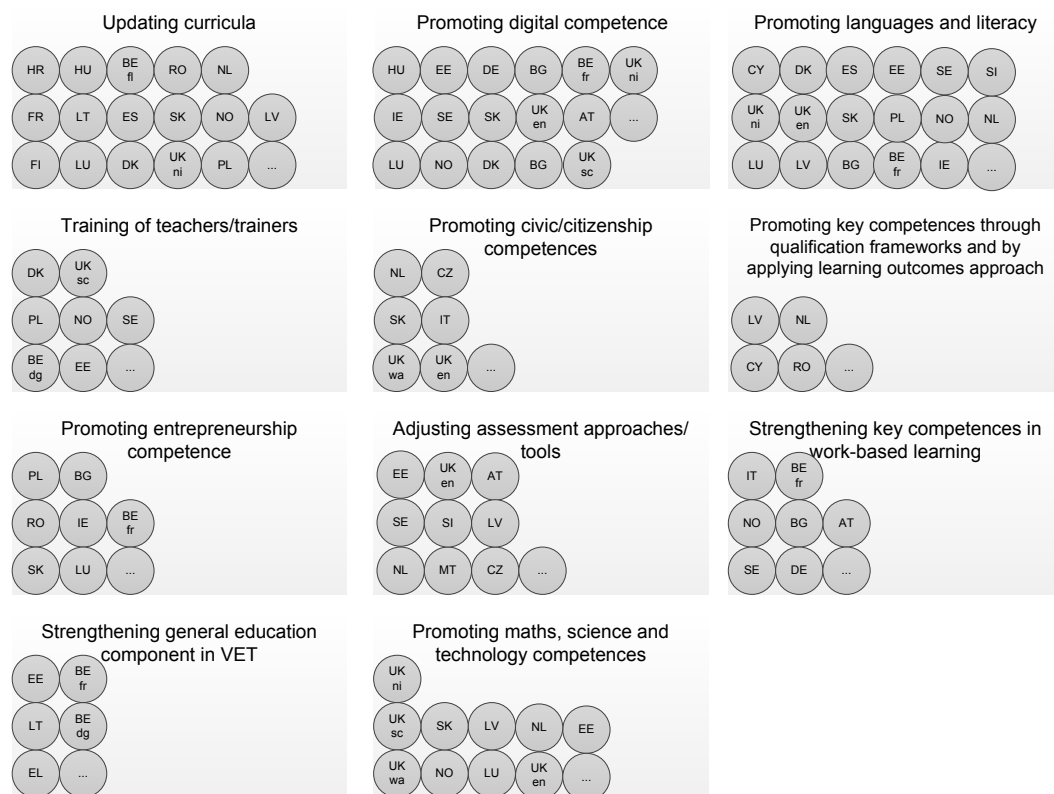
providers to meet this demand fully, as in the lack of costly cutting-edge equipment in schools.

Survey results reveal that the pace of change between generations in VET compared with general education is heterogeneous for different competences. According to respondents, there were more rapid improvements in VET provision of the following key competences:

- (a) communication skills;
- (b) cultural awareness;
- (c) speaking a foreign language;
- (d) social and civic competences.

The reasons for more rapid progress include policy developments but also lower starting points compared with general education (as with foreign languages).

Figure 30. Initial VET policy clusters in 2015-17



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

3.1.4.1. *Main policy developments*

In this section, the 2015-17 policy developments are grouped into major clusters. The clusters focus on completed, (fully implemented) actions and those that were launched or were in progress in the reporting period. They do not include forward-looking strategies and measures that were being prepared, so they are not exhaustive. Figure 30 groups countries in clusters based on policy developments in IVET reported by ReferNet in 2015-17 (Cedefop, 2018c).

Promoting languages (including foreign languages) and literacy in IVET has been the most popular measure in the reporting period, followed by actions promoting digital, maths, science and technology, entrepreneurship and civic/citizenship competences. The most popular approach in reaching these objectives has been curriculum revision, which often related to introducing a stronger general education component in VET or even minimum quotas for key competences in the curricula. Several countries worked on better assessment mechanisms for key competences, invested in teacher training and through introducing the learning outcomes approach supported by work on qualification frameworks. Several countries have been promoting key competences in work-based learning, including dual VET. Two countries did not report any major developments: this may indicate low priority or that substantial progress had already been achieved before the reporting period.

Box 17. **Promoting key competences in IVET: examples**

Digitalisation strategy in Austria

In 2017, the education ministry presented its EUR 2.4 million strategy *School 4.0. – Now we are going digital* for general education and VET. It has the following aims: promote digital and critical thinking competences from primary level onwards; help teachers acquire digital skills through a new programme as of 2017/18, a national digital learning centre and future learning labs in colleges, where they can experiment with digital tools; modernise infrastructure and equipment, including tablets and laptops for learners; and provide digital learning tools, including open education resources.

A new competence-based curriculum in Cyprus

Since 2016/17, a new competence-based national curriculum has been put in place for the first year of VET studies, with more emphasis on key competences. The curriculum includes career management skills next to entrepreneurship, practical training in industry and language learning.

Public benchmarking tool includes key competences in the Czech Republic

In 2017, centralised (unified) entry exams were introduced to four-year secondary general education and VET programmes leading to *maturita*. They test knowledge and skills in maths, Czech language and literature. However, admission scores are set independently by the schools. They can also add programme-specific exams and

other criteria, not exceeding 40%, in the overall assessment. The aim is to increase education quality by setting up a unified benchmarking tool. Schools are obliged to publish the lowest score of an accepted applicant (anonymously). Authorities provide analytical feedback to schools and regional authorities.

VET reform promotes key competences in Denmark

The 2015 reform established two 20-week basic programmes which focus on key competences but in different ways: *Grundforløb 1* for learners entering VET directly from compulsory school provides basic introduction to the vocational field, including workplace culture, processes and methods, society and health, Danish and various elective subjects. *Grundforløb 2* offers specific training depending on the VET field the learner has chosen. It comprises basic and elective subjects; basic subjects, which include key competences, play a more significant role.

Stronger general education component in VET in Greece

In 2016/17, upper secondary VET (*EPAL*) was reshaped. The first of the three-year programmes is now fully devoted to general education, allowing more emphasis on key competences. Since 2017, two ESF programmes have supported adjusting VET curricula to this new setting, especially for literacy and numeracy.

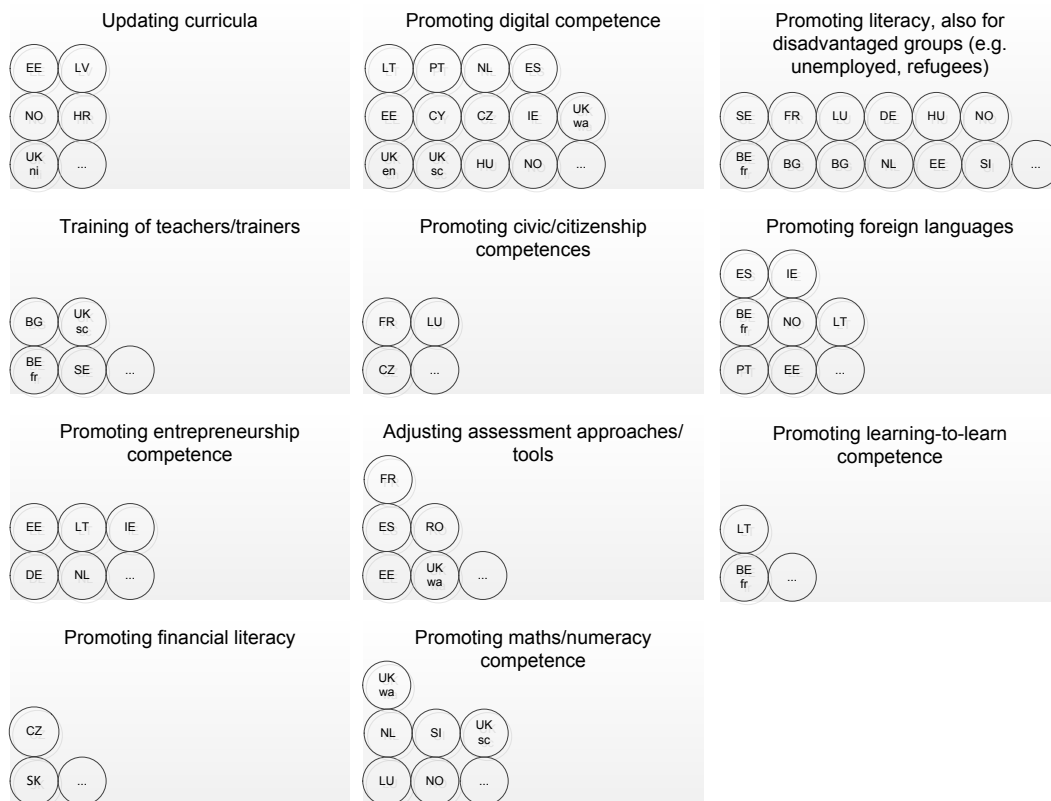
Updated VET curricula support key competences in Latvia

The 2016 amendments to national VET standards promote acquisition of maths, science and technology, communication in foreign languages, and social and civic competences. They also introduced a so-called technical direction of general subjects: 45% of the content is devoted to maths, natural sciences and technologies; 33% to languages and communicative sciences; and 22% to social sciences and culture. Compulsory general subjects in all VET programmes have been complemented by natural sciences, second foreign language and literature.

Source: ReferNet.

Compared with IVET, more countries have opted in CVET for not having additional actions to promote key competences. Also, for many initiatives reported, the role of VET was often insignificant. For example, VET providers could offer language training through public calls but their participation was marginal compared with other providers. Most countries have invested effort in promoting digital competence and literacy, including for those adults who are at risk of exclusion: refugees, unemployed and Roma. These are followed by measures promoting foreign languages, numeracy and entrepreneurship competences. Compared with IVET, two new clusters have more importance in national policies: promoting financial literacy and learning-to-learn competences. Also, most initiatives are project-based, meaning they are of definite duration, usually not exceeding the 2020 horizon.

Figure 31. Continuing VET policy clusters in 2015-17



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

Box 18. Promoting key competences in CVET: examples

Basic digital skills in Cyprus

Since 2017, the acquisition of basic digital skills for employees above age 35 has been included in the so-called single and multi-company training programmes that are subsidised by the State.

Amended adult policy promotes digital skills in Estonia

In 2016, a new measure was added to the *Adult education programme* under the *Lifelong learning strategy 2020*. It stipulates updating professional standards to promote digital skills. These changes will influence curricula in both initial and continuing VET that will include sector-specific digital competences.

New institution to help tackle illiteracy in Germany

In 2016, a new office supporting literacy was opened at the Federal Institute for VET (BIBB) to help the growing number of functionally illiterate people. Its main tasks are to promote communication and cooperation with and between stakeholders, and provide academic support for basic education and literacy projects funded by the education ministry. Most projects are conducted by adult education providers many of

which are VET providers. Its mission also includes identifying future research requirements and developing recommendations for policy-making.

Key competence certificate for adults in France

In 2015, the national cross-sector jobs and training committee introduced the vocational knowledge and skills base certificate (CléA) for adults. By certifying their key competences it aims to improve their employability and ease access to further learning. A nationwide publicity campaign and a call for training providers to obtain the licence for providing training towards this qualification were organised. CléA, which is based on a social partner initiative, has been the number one certification chosen by jobseekers and employees, and paid for through their personal training accounts.

Key competences for the newly arrived in Luxembourg

Luxembourgish and citizenship training are part of the so called 'foreigners package'. The centre for integration and social cohesion established in 2016 is responsible for supporting integration of refugees into society.

Source: Progress report on Riga deliverables: country chapters based on ReferNet.

3.1.5. MTD 5 – Systematic initial and continuous professional developments of VET teachers, trainers and mentors

High quality professional development is essential for teachers and trainers to keep pace with the rapidly developing demands of their job: technological advancements in their specific field; digital tools for teaching and learning; helping learners develop key competences; providing more individualised support to ever more heterogeneous groups of learners. Teachers and trainers also need to design and/or apply new curricula, respond quickly to emerging individual and labour market needs and ensure close links between the different learning venues in VET. They are also expected to use the European tools that help make people's skills better visible.

Committed and competent teachers, trainers and other VET professionals are acknowledged as key agents for high quality IVET and CVET in the Bruges communiqué. Although there was no deliverable focusing on their professional development in the first cycle, Cedefop's report on that period (Cedefop, 2015a) indicated some developments as well as highlighting challenges.

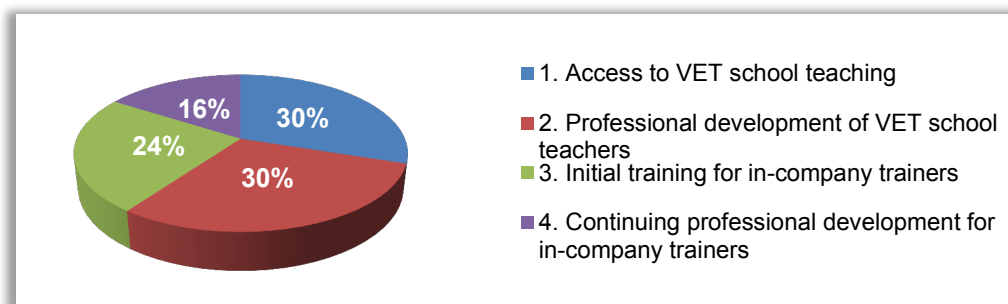
Teacher and trainer professional development has been discussed in different EU-level working groups⁽³³⁾ and investigated by Cedefop (Cedefop, 2015d) and the European Commission. The Commission's most recent study provides a comprehensive overview on governance and professionalisation arrangements for teachers and trainers in work-based learning/apprenticeships

⁽³³⁾ Currently in the working group on VET (2016-18 mandate); see also Section 1.3.1.

(European Commission, 2017d). This section, however, focuses on developments in 2015-17 as reported by Cedefop's ReferNet.

These developments largely mirror the findings of recent studies. As can be seen from Figure 32, measures in support to the development of VET teaching and training professions have addressed teachers more (60%) than trainers. Evidence suggests that there are more CPD opportunities available for VET teaching staff in schools than for trainers in companies.

Figure 32. **Respective shares of main actions supporting the development of VET teaching and training professions, EU-28+**



Source: Cedefop.

The borderlines between initial and continuing professional development are not that clear cut. Information on initial teacher training, for instance also relates to access requirements for those who want to take up teaching or the induction phase; a few countries have referred to the latter as continuing professional development (CPD). Overall, the most common measures taken in the reporting period relate to teachers' CPD.

3.1.5.1. *Professional development of teaching staff in VET schools*

A significant number of countries have either changed/are changing the requirements to become a teacher or upgraded/updated teachers' pre-service/induction programmes. At the same time some countries are promoting measures to attract new teachers.

Several countries are facing teacher shortages as many teachers will soon retire: in some, salaries in VET teaching cannot compete with those in other economic sectors. Along with recommendations on status and remuneration of teachers, made to some countries in the context of EU-level economic coordination in recent years, others pointed to teaching quality, work with disadvantaged learners or CPD. These recommendations usually refer to teachers more generally, not specifically to VET.

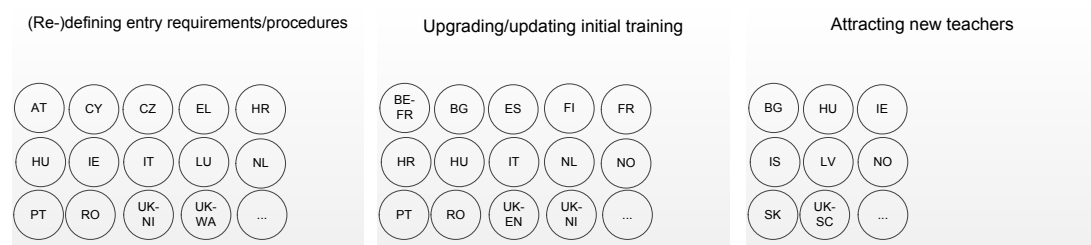
Slovakia, for instance, is among the countries that have received a recommendation and recently raised teachers' salaries to make the teaching profession more attractive. Aiming to improve VET's relevance, some countries have also taken action to make it easier for professionals from enterprises to move (partly) into teaching. At the same time, some countries have upgraded entry requirements and, linked to these, training for future staff teaching vocational theory or practice. This relates, particularly, to requirements in pedagogical/didactical competences.

Several countries have pointed out that study programmes to become teachers for general education subjects in VET schools do not take sufficient account of the characteristic features and demands of VET. Where this has not already been the case, induction phases in schools increasingly combine theory and practice through training on the job.

Actions on VET school teaching access include:

- (a) (re)defining entry requirements and/or procedures which may be closely linked to them;
- (b) upgrading/updating initial teacher training programmes;
- (c) introducing/upgrading measures to attract new teachers, including attracting experts from the world of work.

Figure 33. **Access to VET school teaching**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

Most countries have focused on teaching staff CPD in VET schools. Governance, CPD providers and programmes are diverse across the EU-28+ and responsibility for CPD is frequently decentralised to regional or school-level. In these cases, heads are required to ensure offers and take-up are in line with school development plans as well as individual staff needs, for instance within the framework of quality assurance and self-assessment exercises.

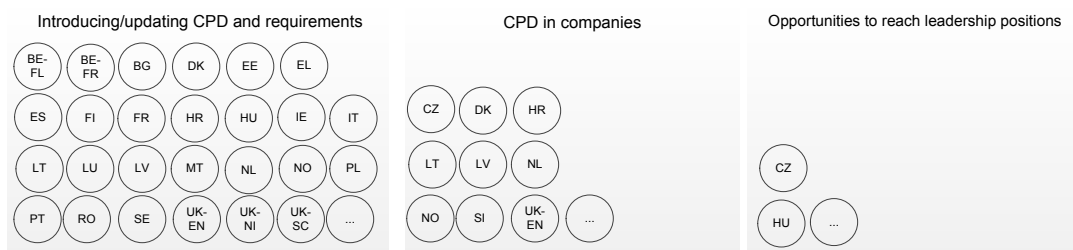
Aiming to increase participation in CPD but also to make teaching in VET/the teaching profession more attractive, some countries have worked to establish a career scheme or revise and complement current opportunities, as in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. This includes designing a continuum from initial to

continuing professional development, and/or preparing for specific positions, like school leaders.

CPD for VET teaching staff in schools covers:

- (a) introducing/updating requirements and incentives for and/or programmes for teacher CPD;
- (b) introducing teacher visits/placements in companies;
- (c) introducing career opportunities for teachers, including to reach leadership positions.

Figure 34. **CPD of VET school teachers**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

However, providing sufficient and relevant occupational content-related training for staff in VET schools in charge of theory and practice appears to be a challenge in some cases. The trend towards more practical training in companies also seems to have stimulated teacher work placements or job shadowing in enterprises in several countries. Some reports refer to sectoral organisations offering places to teachers in the courses they provide to business employees.

The information available to Cedefop also suggests that Erasmus+ and the ESF are important funding sources for countries, particularly those with limited CPD budgets, to help teachers keep up with the technical developments and working methods in their fields; this is more so if state-of-the-art facilities are not available in local companies.

Box 19. Initial and continuing training of teaching staff in VET schools: examples

(Re)defining entry requirements and/or procedures to become a (VET) school teacher

In 2015, Luxembourg reformed legislation on access to the teaching profession, aligning the induction phase with that in use for all public servants. In the new system, teacher candidates first have to take preliminary tests in the three national languages (Luxembourgish, French and German) and then a competitive exam (*concours*) organised by the education ministry. During the three-year mandatory induction phase, which combines theory and practice, participants already work as teachers. At

the end of the programme they receive a certificate based on assessment of their portfolios.

Upgrading/updating initial teacher training

In Bulgaria, an ordinance for State education standards for acquiring a professional qualification as teacher was adopted in 2016. It increases the number of learning hours for teacher initial training by 30%-50%. It also introduces new subject areas, such as conflict management, violence prevention, ICT in education and inclusive education. New training methods also include distance learning. In 2017, initial teacher training programmes and pedagogy were added to the list of priority professional areas in higher education. These programmes/acquisition of a teaching certificate will be supported by subsidies from the State budget to universities and students. Additional ESF support has been earmarked.

Reinforcing the attractiveness of the teaching profession

In Slovakia, the 2015 legislation amending the 2009 Pedagogical Staff Act has made qualification requirements more flexible to attract (more) people from business and industry to teaching. Specialists in occupation-oriented areas are not required to comply with qualification requirements in pedagogy provided that they teach at most 10 hours per week. Ensuring/assessing their teaching competences is the school principals' task.

In Latvia, a new model for teachers' wage calculation was adopted in July 2016. It takes into account the workload, extra duties, excellence, and, in the case of VET teachers, an additional payment of up to 20% of monthly salary.

Introducing/updating requirements and/or programmes for teachers' continuing professional development

To accommodate the goals of the 2015 VET reform, Denmark is reinforcing the pedagogical competence of VET teachers by requiring them to obtain 10 ECTS VET pedagogical qualifications at diploma level (NQF 5) by 2020. Training focuses on: learning processes and progression of learners; related classroom management; planning; differentiated teaching; practice-related teaching and helping learners to link college-based and company-based learning; activating learners; use of ICT in teaching and learning. More recently the programme has been complemented by a module on entrepreneurship and an elective on practice-based teaching. It also includes training to support disadvantaged learners. Teachers can also complete a qualification in teaching Danish as a second language.

In Italy, Law 107/2015 has made CPD compulsory for VET teachers. It introduced a national two-level training and development plan at (a) national and (b) school/schools network level:

(a) the education ministry adopts a national development plan after consultation with the trade unions; it is to be renewed every three years. Strategic areas are set out for 2016-19: digital skills for didactic and methodological innovation; language skills; school-enterprise alternance and entrepreneurship; active learning methods; social inclusion, integration, solidarity, intercultural, global citizenship skills; improvement of basic skills, particularly reading and comprehension, logical-argumentative and maths skills; assessment and evaluation skills.

(b) CPD initiatives organised by the school or a network of schools in line with: the priorities outlined in the school's three-year educational plan and those of the national

plan; the teachers' needs and those indicated in the school's improvement plan; and the innovation measures that the school is taking.

The law also established a 'teacher training card', an electronic card with a voucher of EUR 500 per school year for each teacher from 2015 onward. The card can be used to purchase books, digital tools, training courses and cultural events.

The agency for VET and adult education in Croatia has included a project to support modernising VET teacher and adult education trainer CPD as part of an ESF-cofunded initiative. It includes analysis of the CPD arrangements in place, comprehensive research of skill and competence needs, design of a new approach, an open programme and an online portal for VET teacher CPD. A promotional campaign to improve VET teachers' reputation in society and raise awareness of the fact that CPD is crucial is also part of this work. Among the main objectives of these activities is to ensure teachers can get access to state-of-the-art technology/methods.

A 2016 regulation in Spain focuses on the recognition and accreditation of professional competences and new training modalities based on DigComp 2.0, the European framework for digital competence for citizens. Teachers can create a digital competence biography or passport, continuously self-assess their skills and showcase evidence and improvement.

Introducing teacher visits/work placements in companies

In Norway, the 2015 VET teacher promotion initiative supported developing links between VET and the business world through work exchange and work experience schemes, and schemes that allow participation in CPD courses organised by enterprises. Work exchange allows teachers and trainers to take part in professional work in contexts others than their own to obtain experience relevant for their regular work.

Slovenia's 2016-22 programme to improve teachers' professional competences, partly funded by the ESF, gives teachers and mentors the opportunity to participate in a job rotation exercise: teachers of vocational modules and organisers of work-based learning spend two to four months in a company; they are replaced by suitably qualified and trained experts from the host companies or previously unemployed teachers. A similar 'swapping job' project was carried out in 2014/15

Introducing opportunities for reaching leadership position

In Hungary, to expand career opportunities, the 2015 'VET in service of the economy' Decree suggested alternative pathways for teachers to reach higher levels of the teaching career, such as through introducing a VET school leader postgraduate examination.

Online CPD

The National Institute of Education Technologies and Teacher Training (INTEF) in Spain is developing interactive and multimedia digital education and CDP resources and makes them available on its portal. It also promotes networking among teachers to exchange resources and experience. INTEF collaborates with the autonomous communities. Developments in the reporting period include massive open online courses (MOOC) and social learning activities in virtual communities of practice: for instance, since 2016, a specific MOOC for entrepreneurship that focuses on VET; a nano MOOC to explore, acquire and be assessed either in a key competence

element, or a skill or knowledge area over a period of time, from one up to a maximum of 20 hours; a self-paced open online course on, for example, autonomous management of learning. These courses allow participants to attain their own learning objectives in the rhythm that suits them, improve their digital competence and demonstrate it in an aggregated format.

Source: Progress report on Riga deliverables: country chapters based on ReferNet.

3.1.5.2. *Professional development of trainers/mentors in enterprises*

With more apprenticeships and other schemes that include considerable shares of practical training in companies, around half of the countries have worked to define access requirements and design training programmes for employees who (intend to) work with young people. They have focused on actions to ensure those who work with learners in companies are competent and adequately prepared; whether these are meant to reach out to employees who have not yet acted as trainers or target people who have already worked with young people in some form, is not always clear. What may be seen as an induction into a new kind of job, in other words as initial training, is CPD activity from an employee's perspective. Nevertheless, information provided on training courses that countries are designing, suggests that these are comparatively short.

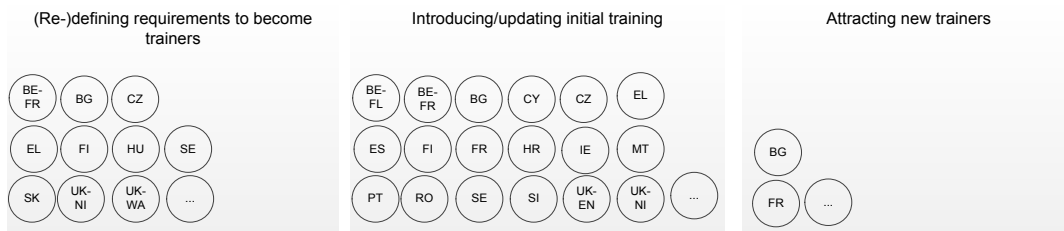
Actions for in-company trainers comprise:

- (a) (re)defining requirements to become trainers/mentors in companies;
- (b) introducing/updating (initial) training to become trainers/mentors in companies;
- (c) introducing/updating measures to increase the availability of qualified mentors/trainers in companies;
- (d) in some cases, also upgrading skills or qualifications.

In several cases, as the Commission study pointed out, responsibility for training in-company trainers has been given to chambers of commerce or the relevant sectors and/or affiliated training centres. Where companies themselves are responsible, the information reported does not include data on actions set in the reporting period.

As apprenticeships and other schemes combining school-based learning and practical training in companies are expanding, some countries have tasked schools with introducing enterprise staff to their training jobs. This promotes closer school-enterprise cooperation and partnerships and is paving the way for VET teacher CPD in enterprises. In countries where in-company learning has traditionally taken place on a larger scale, web platforms are often available for trainers to help develop their competences or support on specific issues.

Figure 35. Initial training and CPD for in-company trainers



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

Box 20. Initial and continuing training of trainers in enterprises: examples

(Re)defining requirements to become in-company trainers

In the French Community of Belgium, the Competence Validation Consortium defined the ‘in-company tutor’ profession, its key activities, the skills required and the certification profile. In cooperation with VET providers, a validation reference frame was adopted, indicating how to establish and verify that the skills have been mastered. The first candidates were assessed in 2016.

In the Czech Republic, the education ministry recommended in 2016 that agreements between VET schools and enterprises on in-company training of learners include the professional qualification requirements and necessary experience of in-company trainers as mandatory features. Suggested qualification requirements relate to completed VET in the relevant field, a vocational qualification listed in the national qualifications register, or completed training courses.

Introducing/updating training to become in-company trainers

In the Czech Republic, schools have a contractual obligation to ensure training of enterprise staff in pedagogy, psychology and safety at work. A 40-hour training course for in-company trainers was designed and piloted in 2015 within an ESF-supported project (*Pospolu*). It focused on: familiarising them with the relevant VET programmes; pedagogy and teaching methods; psychology and learner guidance; training organisation and work with curricula; health and safety requirements during workplace training and legislation/regulations. As part of the project, an EQF level 4 qualification for trainers was designed.

The Employers’ Confederation of Latvia was involved in the 2015-17 Erasmus+ project *Developing apprenticeship: in-company trainer training and apprenticeship promotion* together with partners in Belgium, Estonia, Lithuania and Finland. The purpose was to design a training programme model enabling in-company trainers to train apprentices in the most effective way, with the ultimate aim of helping the businesses get qualified workers. A survey of 30 enterprises was carried out on in-company trainer qualifications, use of training in the workplace, and needs of enterprises regarding employee training. The required knowledge and skills for course modules were defined and online training material was prepared.

Introducing/updating measures to attract new in-company trainers

In France there are initiatives within professional sectors to demonstrate the merits of the apprenticeship mentor role and so increase the number of in-company trainers. For example, the craft industry now has a national competition to increase the value

of apprenticeship mentors; the first competition took place in 2015 and a second was organised in 2016.

In Bulgaria, the 2016 national employment action plan aimed to stimulate interest in becoming in-company mentors through additional payments from the State budget, in compliance with the employment promotion act. However, the financial support covers only additional remuneration; it does not include training.

In Finland, all VET programmes provide a dedicated optional module that learners can follow to become workplace trainers ('instructors'). In 2015 skills requirements for their training were amended to include further elements, such as: identifying and planning tasks suitable for on-the-job learning; providing induction training on duties, practices and rules in the workplace; working with different learners and colleagues, receiving and giving feedback. Training of trainers is implemented flexibly by VET providers, taking into account their competence needs based on skills assessment and recognition. Achieving the training objectives takes an average of three weeks. The three modules may be completed individually and in an order that suits participants: planning workplace training, vocational skills demonstrations and competence tests (1 credit); 'teaching' and assessing learning (1 credit); assessing learner competences (1 credit). Instructors may also complete only parts of the training.

Introducing/updating measures for CPD of in-company trainers

In **Hungary**, the chamber of commerce has organised training programmes to prepare in-company trainers for the master craftsperson exam, one of the priorities for the period 2016-20.

In UK-England, in 2017, a trailblazer for the learning and development (L&D) sector started the process of developing a new level 3 (EQF level 4) and level 5 (EQF level 5) apprenticeship for L&D practitioners and managers. It is to be ready for delivery in January 2018. This work has been supported by the Chartered Institute for Personnel Development, British Telecom, Jaguar Land Rover and Specsavers. L&D staff typically operates in medium to large 'commercial' organisations in the private, public and third sector. Their tasks include identifying learning/training needs, designing/sourcing, delivering training and evaluating training. Their role could also be more specialist with a focus on and requiring in-depth expertise in areas such as learning design, e-learning, digital/blended learning.

Germany has new funding guidelines in 2016, also relevant for CPD of trainers, with specific focus: promoting critical media competence in vocational qualifications; promoting the use of open educational resources; training multipliers; promoting digital learning networks in VET, especially among SMEs. A 'competence workshop' toolbox also contributes to in-company trainer CPD. A dedicated platform, Qualiboxx, within the portal uberaus.de, aims to reinforce intercultural competence in in-company training and provide information and material for trainers working with refugees/newly arrived migrants.

Source: Progress report on Riga deliverables: country chapters based on ReferNet.

The information gathered for this review confirms Cedefop's earlier findings on professional development of teachers and trainers (Cedefop, 2016; Cedefop ReferNet, 2016b): a large number of CPD actions for teachers in VET were/are part of or specifically dedicated initiatives partly funded by the ESF. They often

focus on developing training programmes/modules or material for specific purposes or themes, such as helping learners to develop key competences or, specifically, entrepreneurship skills. Apart from dedicated web portals and digital resources being developed, actions may only reach a limited number of teachers, trainers and mentors. From the information available to Cedefop it is not evident whether, and to what extent, potential outputs are mainstreamed or outcomes shared or used to inform systematic national activities. References to actions that build on previous ESF, Erasmus+ or bilateral project outcomes are scarce.

3.2. Candidate countries

3.2.1. MTD 1 – Work-based learning/apprenticeships

Analysis of the MTD 1 reports submitted by the EU candidate countries reveals that their efforts during 2015-17 have focused mainly on introducing or improving apprenticeship schemes. Work-based learning in school-based VET has received less attention. The actions of all candidate countries mainly concern apprenticeships in secondary VET. Preferred policy options were drafting and/or adopting relevant legal provisions and strategic policy documents, as well as launching measures to prepare and/or support implementation such as feasibility studies, roadmaps and pilots. Many new legal provisions aim to offer incentives to employers to get them on board, since the involvement of companies in VET in the western Balkans is relatively low.

3.2.1.1. *Introducing/reforming apprenticeships*

[Preparing the ground for introducing formal apprenticeships in the western Balkan candidate countries](#)

The western Balkan candidate countries – Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia – currently have only informal apprenticeships, usually in crafts and supported by donors. Following the prioritisation of Riga MTD 1, and apprenticeships in particular, during the *ex-ante* impact assessments, they have made serious efforts to deliver their commitments. Actions taken since mid-2015 cover the whole range from policy analysis to pilot initiatives.

To introduce apprenticeships in their VET systems, the western Balkan candidate countries carried out stocktaking research and prepared appropriate concepts or strategies. Examples are the analysis of work-based learning in Albania's secondary and post-secondary VET system and a study on costing the required legal support and the sectoral approaches to work-based learning. Similarly, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia developed a national

vision for work-based learning and apprenticeships in its draft comprehensive education strategy for 2016-20, together with an action plan and a technical VET concept paper. Serbia has elaborated a concept for introducing dual education.

New laws on craftsmanship were adopted in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (December 2015) and in Albania (June 2016), enabling apprenticeship schemes in handicrafts and for adults with a special focus on unemployed. A new VET Law in Albania (February 2017) allows for the introduction of dual VET elements and recruitment of school-business liaison personnel in all major VET institutions. Amendments to the laws on foundations of the education system and secondary education, containing stronger references to apprenticeship and dual VET, were prepared in Serbia. At the time of writing, adoption by the Parliament was expected for the second half of 2017 and new legislation on dual education was being prepared. Amendments to different laws in education, including on VET, were prepared in the first quarter of 2017 in Montenegro, all promoting apprenticeships. For example, the changes foresee health and pension contributions for apprentices to be paid by the State budget in the first two years of apprenticeships, so that the schemes become more attractive to employers and involve them more broadly.

With regard to preparing future implementation, Albania developed a roadmap for the introduction of wider scale work-based learning. A feasibility study by United Nations Development Programme defines strategies for private sector involvement in VET/work-based learning, following consultations with numerous employers. Serbia made budget allocations for the first phases of the forthcoming implementation of apprenticeships. All candidate countries joined the European alliance for apprenticeships.

[Making existing apprenticeships more attractive and accessible, promoting entrepreneurship through apprenticeships in Turkey](#)

Apprenticeships in Turkey have recently been losing attractiveness and the number of apprentices has been steadily decreasing over the past 10 years, especially in crafts and small enterprises. To address this issue, Turkey has amended its work-based learning legislation. The Active labour market services regulation (February 2016) increased the duration of and access to publicly funded work-based learning; an amendment to the Apprenticeship Law was passed (2 December 2016) enabling more learners/VET providers to find apprenticeship places and more companies to find apprentices (see Box 21).

Box 21. **New approaches to apprenticeships in Turkey**

The recent amendments to the Apprenticeship Law (adopted on 2 December 2016) in Turkey will start implementation in the school year 2017-18:

- apprenticeships will be included in compulsory education to give the opportunity to more young people to follow this VET pathway, while helping crafts and the small businesses to find more apprentices;
- State support to eliminate wage differences among apprentices in companies of different sizes and to reduce the burden to enterprises. The wages received by students from all enterprises (small and large) will not be lower than 30% of the minimum wage in Turkey. Two thirds of the training and internship fees paid to the apprentices and vocational high school students by the employer will be covered by the State;
- students who have successfully completed apprenticeship training will be given the opportunity to set up their own business by issuing a master craftsman certificate and a job-opening certificate. Turkey's SME development agency (KOSGEB) will provide a TL 50 000 grant (approximately EUR 12 500) and a TL 100 000 (approximately EUR 25 000) ⁽³⁴⁾ interest free loan to graduates who open their own business, promoting entrepreneurship through apprenticeships.

3.2.1.2. *Work-based learning in school-based VET; focus on practical learning in enterprises*

The candidate countries have reported fewer developments as regards work-based learning in school-based VET, the common denominator of the latter being improved practical training of VET learners in companies. A few examples:

- (a) 54 grants were awarded in 2016 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to support joint projects between secondary vocational schools and enterprises aimed at improving students' practical training through internships, training in companies and other forms of work-based learning; activities to be finalised by June-July 2017;
- (b) a website to aid contacts between VET schools and employers in Montenegro was established and a draft handbook for organisers of practical learning was developed within the framework of a regional project supported by the Austrian organisation *KulturKontakt* (Strengthening cooperation between schools and businesses);
- (c) the Serbian Employers' Union published a guide for professional practice within the project *Practice, my chance* supported by *Solidar* Switzerland ⁽³⁵⁾.

⁽³⁴⁾ Currency conversion based on 2017 exchange rates.

⁽³⁵⁾ A Swiss organisation created in 1936 and promoting decent work and democratic participation. As a part of the European *Solidar* Network, *Solidar* Switzerland works with over 50 aid agencies and charitable organisations as well as NGOs.

The publication informs employers on how they can organise practice in a company, what to pay attention to during such practice, and which State incentives they can count on when providing these programmes.

Virtual and training companies in business, law and administration continue to be the most widespread form of work-based learning in VET in the western Balkan countries.

3.2.2. MTD 2 – Quality assurance/feedback loops

The candidate countries have increasingly been using the EQAVET recommendation (Council of the European Union, 2009) as a point of reference and a framework to guide domestic reform in quality assurance in VET. There are many examples of progress in this area. Some initiatives are systemic in nature, while others are still at the pilot stage.

The information below is mainly based on data and results derived from the 2016 EQAVET survey (EQAVET Secretariat, 2017) – completed by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey only – and supplemented by the annual Riga reports of the candidate countries, as well as by ETF's quality assurance research. The ETF promotes EU-level quality assurance policy and EQAVET in all its support services for candidate countries, linking activities with the EQAVET network where possible. It also helps to ensure that instruments are compatible with, and supportive of, alignment with the EQAVET reference framework.

3.2.2.1. Continuing work on developing quality assurance mechanisms in VET in line with the EQAVET recommendation

Four of the candidate countries report that they have devised national quality assurance approaches that are compatible with the EQAVET framework: Turkey states it has used the EQAVET framework; Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia say that their national approaches, though developed independently, are compatible with it. The national approaches in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia were developed in 2015-16, Turkey adopted its national education quality framework, of which VET is a part, in 2015. Albania recently had a working group in place, which focused on standards and criteria for accreditation as a quality assurance mechanism of VET providers; yet a holistic, national approach to QA in VET is still absent.

All national approaches share an emphasis on achieving learner employability. The ultimate indicator of good-quality VET provision is that the acquired skills are relevant to the labour market. The quality assurance approaches in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey

apply to IVET and CVET. However, the candidate countries state that their approaches do not address work-based learning associated with either IVET or CVET, highlighting room for improvement and for making them more comprehensive.

The quality assurance approaches have been devised involving a wide number of stakeholders: public authorities, regional/local authorities, industry/companies, employer and employee associations, VET providers, students/learners, teachers/trainers, and the higher education sector. The EQAVET survey differentiates between two types of stakeholder involvement in the process: a consultative one, where the stakeholders are asked, at different stages, to state their opinions; and a deliberative one, where the stakeholders actively participate in the decision-making process. The survey shows that more stakeholders have played a consultative than a deliberative role in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey.

In some countries the deliberative involvement in IVET is by default reserved for the public authorities. However, it has also been delegated to VET providers in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; to teachers/trainers in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and to regional/local authorities and the higher education sector in Turkey.

The division of roles in devising the CVET national quality assurance approach has been the same with one additional stakeholder – industry/companies – occupying a deliberative role in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Overall, Serbia reports only public authorities having a deliberative involvement in both IVET and CVET, while Turkey reports the highest number of stakeholders.

Serbia's national quality assurance approach is still at development stage and expected to be implemented in 2020. However, all approaches have been formally agreed – in relevant strategies in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey, in laws in Montenegro and Serbia – and were partially implemented in 2016. Turkey is planning to finalise the piloting of its quality monitoring and evaluation system with a view to mainstreaming in the near future.

The recommendation underlines that the EQAVET framework should also be applied to VET providers. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey report that such common national approaches for VET providers have been already devised and are compatible with EQAVET. All have been formally approved and partially implemented. In the case of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia, the provider frameworks are compatible but not based on EQAVET, presumably to suit better the national and institutional

contexts. All approaches address both IVET and CVET providers; the Serbian approach also covers associated work-based learning.

3.2.2.2. *Evaluation and alignment with EQAVET indicators*

In line with the EQAVET recommendation, candidate countries increasingly combine internal and external evaluations to improve VET quality. The national approaches in Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia foresee external reviews for both IVET and CVET institutions. External assessments in IVET are conducted by formal education bodies and agencies, such as education inspectorates, education services bureaus and (pedagogical) institutes or VET centres. They formulate recommendations on how to improve quality in each school.

Internal evaluations or self-assessments, – conducted primarily in initial VET – are well established in Montenegro (since 2010), in Serbia and in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In Turkey self-assessments are not obligatory, yet many schools conduct them. In Albania several pilots have been undertaken to introduce self-assessments and the design of development plans in specific, donor-supported VET schools or centres; further efforts are needed to sustain and mainstream these practices.

There are differences across the candidate countries in application of the EQAVET indicators and/or proxies. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia always apply three to four indicators out of 17 in total to assess quality in IVET, while Turkey uses all, but only occasionally (“sometimes”). In CVET, Turkey uses only two indicators systematically, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia use none. The indicators that the candidate countries use most frequently include: share of VET providers, applying internal quality assurance systems defined by law/at own initiative and share of accredited VET providers in both IVET and CVET; number of participants in VET programmes in IVET; and completion rates in VET programmes in CVET. Outcome indicators are less used.

3.2.2.3. *National reference points*

The recommendation proposes the establishment of national reference points (NRP) to promote the EQAVET framework and support related activities. By 2016, Montenegro (2012), Turkey (2013) and Serbia (2014) had appointed their NRPs, while the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania have not yet done so.

Formal appointment of an EQAVET NRP is not straightforward. The Member States decide how, and by what entity, its functions will be performed.

Sometimes the NRP is a person in the ministry who performs the functions as part of her/his duties. The NRP can be a unit in an agency and, in some cases, NRPs have been established as 'stand-alone' agencies. What is important is that the functions are performed and they include engaging in network activities. The candidate countries are carrying out, or have done so, some of the actions, with Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia more engaged. Serbia has activities promoting the EQAVET recommendation in the national context and supporting training providers in identifying areas for improvement in line with the recommendation. Turkey is engaged in a broader scope of activities that bring together the social partners and other key players to support quality assurance developments at national level and ensure efficient dissemination of information.

An important factor is the EU funding of NRPs, which comes through ERASMUS +. In 2015-16 Turkey applied successfully, but it did not apply for the 2017-19 period.

3.2.2.4. *Building tracking systems in VET*

The candidate countries have reported activities related to the improvement of data on transitions and employability of VET graduates. Those in the western Balkans made serious steps towards establishing mechanisms to collect data systematically. Turkey has such an information system already in place.

Tracer systems for VET graduates were introduced in Albania (end 2016) and are under preparation in Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The tracer system in Albania will track graduates from both IVET and CVET, while the systems in Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will collect data about IVET graduates only.

The reported developments in 2015-17 focused on creating appropriate tools and procedures for collecting information on VET graduate labour market entry and careers, rather than on their effective use: continuous collection of data, monitoring, evaluation and its analysis to feed back into and modify VET provision. Turkey reports that it uses the information on VET graduates to monitor and improve the quality of IVET provision only.

3.2.3. MTD 3 – Access to VET and qualifications for all

The candidate countries addressed the issue of access to and participation in VET in 2015-17 by a diversity of actions.

3.2.3.1. *New strategic approaches and legal measures to improve access to VET*

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia developed a draft comprehensive education strategy 2016-20 that envisages the elaboration of a new concept for admission to secondary VET and relevant amendments to the legislation. A draft adult education strategy 2016-20 was also developed; this aims to attract broader participation of adults to education and training. Legal provisions were adopted in Turkey to increase private VET provision: with a new regulation (March 2016) the private sector has the right to set up private VET upper secondary schools not only the organised industrial zones ⁽³⁶⁾, but also in other areas.

3.2.3.2. *Designing programmes and learning modes to meet the specific needs of different groups of learners*

The candidate countries reported on pilot project activities providing vocational training and improving the employability of vulnerable groups. These include Roma, young people with disabilities, young people from rural areas, and convicts after serving their sentences. Montenegro is improving access to VET through the introduction of individual transition plans in secondary schools and developing more modularised programmes for adults. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is improving interethnic integration in schools. The vocational skills development project (MESGEP) in Turkey that started in 2013 as a pilot initiative, extended to the whole country (81 provinces) in 2017 catering for groups with special needs. Turkey has had to cater for the needs of an unprecedented and continuously increasing influx of people seeking refuge from Syria, which had exceeded 2.7 million by the time of writing. All refugees are entitled to free enrolment in Turkish language and skills-training courses, offered by the education ministry's public education centres, that do not lead to formal vocational qualifications but allow graduates to use their skills in ways that support income generation.

Albania invested effort in improving the physical infrastructure of VET institutions to ensure better access and participation: the country reported continuing activities such as building facilities for girls/women, for instance safe

⁽³⁶⁾ In Turkey, the organised industrial zones are defined as goods and services production areas equipped with necessary infrastructure services as well as social facilities and techno parks meant to prevent unplanned urbanisation and accompanying environmental problems, while settling and developing types of manufacturing industry within a defined plan. Some 235 zones have been established.

dormitories, and making learning venues wheelchair accessible with funds from the State budget and donors.

3.2.3.3. *Measures addressing dropping out and early leaving from education and training*

A dropout prevention model was developed and tested in 10 primary and secondary vocational schools in Serbia. It will be mainstreamed, including in VET, and is expected to help more students finish their formal education and training. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia implemented actions to prevent early school leaving.

3.2.3.4. *Making VET systems and pathways permeable, easing transfer of learning within VET and to/from other education and training programmes*

Legal provisions were developed in Albania making VET permeable, allowing horizontal transfers from general secondary education to VET or vice versa, and vertical progression from VET to higher education by sitting the State *matura* exam. The new VET Law was adopted in February 2017; amendments to the 2010 Law on the Albanian Qualifications Framework were drafted.

Following the amendments to the legislation on work-based learning (December 2016) in Turkey, apprenticeships are no longer excluded from formal education, nor are they a dead-end pathway: apprentices have the right to continue to higher education by completing the difference courses in the relevant subject area.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's TVET concept paper (December 2016) foresees a methodology for developing VET standards, modularisation of VET curricula and implementation of ECVET.

In June 2016, amendments to the law on national vocational qualifications were adopted in Montenegro, introducing the possibility of gaining partial qualifications. This offers more flexibility as adults may obtain vocational qualifications over a longer period of time to suit better their needs, interests and availability or time constraints.

3.2.3.5. *Setting up/improving the systems for validating non-formal and informal learning as an alternative route to formal qualifications*

The candidate countries reported a number of activities aimed at establishing or improving their national validation systems. Albania set the legal basis of its validation system through the provisions of the newly adopted VET Law (Feb 2017) and the draft amendments to the 2010 Law on the Albanian Qualifications Framework. Serbia developed a concept of recognition and validation of prior

learning in accordance with its adult education law. In 2016, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia developed a roadmap for establishing a validation system by 2018.

Turkey and Montenegro have already moved beyond planning to implementing validation of non-formal and informal learning. Both these countries have adopted relevant legislation and developed procedures and identified institutions to conduct validation for qualification levels 1–5. This is currently not possible for higher education degrees. Turkey already has a functioning validation system; by the time of writing, 85 000 certificates for VET qualifications had been issued. In June 2016, Montenegro adopted amendments to the law on national vocational qualifications governing the recognition of non-formal and informal learning: the responsibility of the verification process in order to acquire national vocational qualifications (testing and certification) has been transferred from the examination centre to licensed training providers.

3.2.3.6. *Reinforcing counselling services to guide young people towards suitable and labour market relevant VET and qualifications*

Albania and Montenegro took steps in this reporting period to strengthen the guidance and counselling services in VET schools. The new VET Law in Albania foresees the establishment of career guidance in all schools. Montenegro implemented a training programme for teachers from 23 vocational and mixed schools on career guidance.

Montenegro also adopted a strategy for lifelong career development 2016-20, together with action plans for 2016, 2017 and 2018. A coordinating body to monitor the implementation of the action plan 2017/18 was established, including representatives of line ministries, employers, universities and schools. Turkey has the most developed counselling system among the candidate countries, with services provided in both the education and employment sectors. The education ministry developed a web-based career information system ⁽³⁷⁾ comprising self-assessment tools, education and training opportunities and labour market information.

3.2.4. MTD 4 – Key competences in VET curricula

Candidate countries actively promote key competences in VET: given their economic transition and post-crisis vulnerabilities, it is important to concentrate on developing broader skills to support flexibility and transferability of

⁽³⁷⁾ <http://mbs.meb.gov.tr/> (website in Turkish).

competences and ensure better employability for VET graduates or their progression to higher education.

3.2.4.1. *Promotion of key competences through new strategic documents and new teacher standards*

The candidate countries use curricula as the main tool for promoting key competences. Their upper secondary VET curricula promote all key competences, except 'learning to learn' in Albania. In Turkey, all eight key competences have been included in the national curriculum as the basis for general education and VET since 2004. Mother tongue, foreign languages, maths and science were already part of the upper secondary VET curriculum in the western Balkans long before 2006 and their place has been preserved, or even strengthened, when developing new curricula. Key competences are often part of both general and vocational subjects. They are also often promoted through the national qualifications frameworks, the legal framework and teacher training.

The promotion and acquisition of key competences in the candidate countries is not comprehensively and systematically monitored. All candidate countries report gaps and lack of data. Mother tongue, foreign languages and mathematics are assessed nationally through *matura* examinations or through international surveys, such as OECD PISA. The least monitored key competences are those concerning horizontal skills: learning to learn (particularly), cultural awareness and expression, social and civic competences, and entrepreneurship.

The most recent Small Business Act assessment⁽³⁸⁾ underlines that all candidate countries have a good understanding of entrepreneurship as a key competence. However, the readiness and capacity of teachers and schools to accommodate ethos and practice implications is a challenge (OECD et al., 2016). The European entrepreneurship competence framework report provides a useful reference for all countries to determine curriculum and teacher training options to move forward with the developments of this key competence (Bacigalupo et al., 2016.)

In 2015-17, few developments were reported in the area of key competences; most activity related to their promotion. Some strategic documents adopted during the reporting period in the former Yugoslav Republic of

⁽³⁸⁾ The [Small Business Act](#) is an overarching framework for the EU policy on small and medium-sized enterprises. One of its priorities is to promote entrepreneurship. Based on its 10 principles, the OECD, the European Commission, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the ETF developed an SME policy index.

Macedonia reiterate the importance of acquiring key competences: the TVET concept paper (2016), the Competitiveness strategy and action plan 2016-20, and the Strategic plan of the Ministry for Information Society and Administration (2016-18). While key competences are interpreted as they are defined in the 2006 EU recommendation (Council of the European Union, 2006), the strategic papers underscore the need to promote soft skills such as innovative thinking, creativity, attitudes towards risk taking and openness to change in all types of education (formal and non-formal).

Recently adopted national competence standards for teachers and principals across schools in Montenegro (Bureau for Education Services, 2016) require that teachers promote student acquisition of key competences and soft skills, including critical thinking and decision-making, cooperation, problem solving, creativity, adaptability, persistence, empathy and solidarity.

3.2.4.2. *Monitoring of key competences remains a challenge*

The Institute for Evaluation of Education Quality in Serbia was reported to be in the process of developing evaluation instruments for the key competences without specific reference to any of the eight included in the EU recommendation.

3.2.5. **MTD 5 – Professional development of teachers and trainers**

3.2.5.1. *Initial training for teachers in VET ‘schools’ – Changing models in the western Balkans to address existing gaps*

Developments reported during 2015-17 reveal changes in initial training of VET teaching staff launched or under preparation in three of the western Balkan candidate countries. They aim to address existing deficiencies in the study programmes of student teachers.

In 2016, a revision was launched of the study programmes educating teachers for vocational education in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It aimed to align the programmes with the requirements of the laws on teachers for primary and secondary education and higher education adopted in 2014 and 2015. The focus of change is on strengthening practical training and increasing choice within modularised study programmes. In 2017, a university level study programme for andragogy was accredited in Skopje University.

In September 2017, the University of Montenegro introduced a master programme for teachers to address the existing lack of pedagogic, didactic and psychological training of VET subject teachers.

In July 2016, a working group was established from representatives of the six State universities in Serbia, which provide initial teacher education. This working group will propose new models of initial teacher education.

3.2.5.2. *CPD for teachers in VET 'schools' – new regulations, piloting new modalities*

Montenegro developed in 2016 a comprehensive mid-term teacher training strategy (2017-24) with an action plan for 2017 and 2018. Turkey approved in 2017 a teacher strategy paper (2017-23) that sets specific goals and priorities in relation to professional development of teachers. A competence-based and integrated system for needs assessment, monitoring, orientation and evaluation is recommended at provincial/sub-provincial level, with expansion of the school-based professional development model. A competence-based career progression and reward system is also envisaged. The 2016 TVET concept paper of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia highlights the importance of design and quality assurance measures for continuing professional development (CPD) for TVET teachers and trainers based on training needs assessment and strengthening the capacities of training providers. The new VET Law in Albania envisages school development units that will be in charge of VET teacher and instructor CPD, among other functions.

The VET Centre in Skopje has developed a programme for company-based training of teachers who teach vocational theory and practical training; the programme is currently a pilot. Montenegro also developed in 2016 a small pilot project for training teachers of vocational subjects and of practical training in enterprises: 20 teachers were trained in this pilot project managed by the education ministry in cooperation with the VET centre and the chamber of commerce with ETF's support. Turkey, in contrast, reports placing greater focus on distant and online training for VET teachers.

3.2.5.3. *Initial training and CPD of trainers/mentors in companies – A new challenge on the horizon?*

Formal training of in-company trainers and mentors is a new issue for VET policy-makers in the western Balkans. There are no strategies or structured approaches towards initial and continuing professional development of instructors/trainers or mentors in enterprises, mainly due to the limited scale of apprenticeships and workplace learning.

While none of the candidate countries reported any developments in initial training of trainers/mentors in companies, they gained some experience in the reporting period with CPD activities within pilot donor-supported projects:

- (a) the *YES* project in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, implemented from 2010 to June 2016, trained mentors from companies; the training included a module for working with students with special education needs to enable them also to be included in company-based practical training;
- (b) instructor training pilot activities were implemented in Serbia within the process of introducing dual VET models, supported by the German provider of international cooperation services for sustainable development and international education work (GIZ) ⁽³⁹⁾.

Initial and continuing training of trainers and mentors in enterprises is becoming increasingly important as the western Balkan countries are determined to develop work-based learning and introduce formal apprenticeships. It is necessary to work on strengthening capacities of mentors in enterprises, particularly their pedagogical competences.

⁽³⁹⁾ <https://www.giz.de/en/aboutgiz/profile.html>

CHAPTER 4.

EU-28+ and candidate countries: common trends and messages for the future

4.1. Riga as a point of transition on the way towards the Bruges objectives

Evidence shows that participating countries have taken considerable action on all MTDs in the reporting period 2015-17. Type and speed of action vary by MTD and from one VET system to another, depending on country context and starting point. This evidence also signals continuity in countries' work. The Bruges momentum has been maintained, and not only because the Riga deliverables build on its objectives and the previous deliverables. Countries' priorities among the deliverables, policy actions and focus to address them demonstrate continuity over a longer period. Their work on apprenticeships and work-based learning, which often pre-dates Bruges, is just one example. It also reflects long-term commitment, strengthened cooperation and peer learning for individual solutions. The 'starting point' in 2015 is de facto a point of transition.

Countries are approaching developments and reforms under the Copenhagen process from different perspectives: in some countries, improving VET quality is part of a natural 'evolution' seeking to strengthen VET's position even further in the overall education and training system; in others, the process is led by an urgent need to strengthen VET's responsiveness to the needs of the economy and the labour market.

2015-17 has also been a period of transition in several national policies. Longer-term strategies and initiatives came to an end and new ones were being devised. In the Member States this is also evident in ESF-supported initiatives: in several cases, programming and adoption took place in 2016. Many of the current initiatives build on previous projects or are related to them. Some Member State strategy papers include comprehensive lists of intended measures and actions still in the pipeline. Implementation and outcomes of strategies and achievements of longer-term quantitative and qualitative targets, that several countries have set, may go beyond 2020.

We observe an increasingly blurred dividing line between IVET and CVET. In the first reporting cycle, some Member States already found it challenging to distinguish between IVET and CVET measures. In MTD 3 – access to VET and qualifications for all through flexible pathways – countries pointed to new

progression routes and initiatives to increase overall permeability. This reflects the complexity and richness of VET and the increasing variety of actors. It also shows that much of VET takes place as upskilling or reskilling within active labour market measures; it signals that work on NQFs and validation arrangements may help to bridge the boundaries. In other deliverables such as key competences, however, boundaries and administrative divisions between IVET and CVET seem clear cut. Taking a closer look at the information provided under the different MTDs – apart from continuing professional development for teachers – we still see an emphasis on measures for young people. Especially in candidate countries, CVET still lacks attention.

As in the past, Member States have used EU funding to support a wide range of VET-related measures. This includes using ESF shared funding not only for specific targeted projects but also to realise important reform agendas: longer-term VET development programmes, establishing and implementing learning-outcomes based NQFs and/or revising vocational or educational standards or curricula, developing web-based information and guidance portals, or initiatives that support upskilling of specific target groups.

4.2. The challenges of prioritisation

A strong common trend is evident among all participating countries: apprenticeships and work-based learning have been high on their agendas. In the previous cycle, this was supported by the European alliance for apprenticeships (2013) and reinforced by Member State work on youth guarantees and country specific recommendations. Policy support has become even stronger since then (see this section and Section 1.1. on policy context).

Overall, with small variations, participating countries had selected apprenticeships and work-based learning (MTD 1) as the top priority under Riga followed by access to VET and qualifications for all (MTD 3) and teacher and trainer training (MTD 5); key competences (MTD 4) and quality and feedback loops (MTD 2) followed to lesser extent. This more or less common priority sequence offers fertile ground for further cooperation, even though the nature of actions differs across systems.

Setting priorities when faced with complex challenges is not easy, especially when new challenges arise or other deliverables move up the national or EU policy agenda. Shortly after the Riga deliverables had been decided, new challenges seemed to override them, such as the need to integrate an unprecedented number of newly arrived migrants and refugees into VET and the labour market in several countries. Although there is no specific deliverable

dedicated to this challenge, it is closely linked to at least two or three. Whether, and in what way, this new priority may have requested countries to redirect funds and reprioritise other actions they had planned, is not evident from the information currently available. However, this example illustrates that the deliverables are no silos and reporting by deliverable may not always be suitable where challenges require comprehensive policy approaches.

Member States, and candidate countries to a lesser degree, have reported stakeholder involvement for each action. While this is a positive development in the governance of VET actions, trade union involvement and activities are less evident in the information provided, than those of employers and their interest groups.

The information provided under the specific MTDs by all participating countries reveals convergence as well as divergence:

- (a) in their work on MTD 1, many countries aimed at making apprenticeships more attractive for learners and employers. Some referred to strengthening employer and social partner involvement or saw apprenticeships as a means to promote entrepreneurial culture. However, in the Member States, information on social partner contributions focused on employer organisations and less so on trade unions;
- (b) common features in MTD 3 include structural changes to make VET pathways more flexible, broaden access to VET and improve progression opportunities. Countries have also reinforced their work on validating non-formally and informally acquired skills and recognition of qualifications or prior formal learning. In the Member States, this may be linked to the recommendations on validation, youth guarantees and supporting long-term unemployed. It also indicates the growing focus on learning outcomes and including qualifications from the non-formal sector in NQFs. In some countries this work may have gained momentum following the arrival of large numbers of refugees and other third country nationals from 2015 onward. Addressing diversified and vulnerable target groups, countries have worked to improve or step up their guidance services;
- (c) MTD 4 – key competences – functions more behind the scenes. Though key to every VET reform, curricula are a sensitive political area, as they come under the subsidiarity principle. MTD 4 has only been captured to a limited extent by the EU-level reporting radar ⁽⁴⁰⁾. Increasing the autonomy of VET schools/providers in shaping their *curricula* makes the picture foggier.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ [Information on key competences in upper secondary VET in the EU-28+.](#)

- Nevertheless, countries appear to strengthen the visibility, importance and recognition of key competences. In most cases they focus on language and digital skills;
- (d) MTD 5 appears to focus on continuing professional development for teaching staff in VET schools followed by initial teacher training. Several countries face the challenge of an ageing teaching staff and future shortages. Improving status and career progression as a driver for motivation does not appear to have become widespread practice across countries in the reporting period; it appears in many strategy documents as objective or intention but it seems difficult to identify concrete actions. In countries that introduce or expand apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning more company staff need training to work with young people. Countries have been working to enable placements in companies for teachers, a trend that may develop further with increasing school-enterprise collaboration;
- (e) In MTD 2, convergence seems to be lowest. Member States have continued their work on EQAVET. Many indicated work on strengthening feedback loops and skills anticipation to inform formal VET, labour market training and guidance. The systematic use of outcome indicators and graduate tracking still seems to be facing obstacles.

The candidate countries focused efforts to improve their approach to assuring VET quality at system and provider level, and making use of the EQAVET reference framework. Progress achieved until 2015 had been modest, with some results systemic while others remain pilot experience in need of evaluation and mainstreaming as appropriate.

4.3. Past reflections, future lessons

4.3.1. Monitoring European cooperation in VET and progress is not easy

Terminology matters: considering the five MTDs, 'work-based learning' and 'apprenticeships', 'non-formal' education/training, 'qualifications' and 'trainer' are good examples where EU-level and national concepts and understanding may differ.

VET is more differentiated and complex than other education sectors; policy-making, governance and provision involve a variety of different authorities, governance levels and actors. This makes understanding developments and achievements a challenge, as reporting may cover only the national level and/or information may not be consistent, especially when different monitoring and

reporting activities are carried out in parallel. Parallel processes may lead to conclusions that do not consider interlinkages or crucial context factors.

The different processes use different sets of indicators, with some – such as those on early leaving, NEETs or lifelong learning – used across several policy areas. Statistical data only allow us to see developments retrospectively. Where they exist, aggregate EU-level data related to VET may be misleading or not be sufficient to give the full picture. Caution needs to be applied when drawing conclusions on cause-effect relationships between policy measures and the picture provided by figures. This is also valid for the candidate countries.

To comprehend progress, or its absence, requires thorough understanding of individual countries' VET, its role within their education and training systems more generally, and the specific socioeconomic country context and traditions. This picture is even more complicated for the candidate countries, which are additionally committed to processes linked to their EU accession. In their case, monitoring and reporting is often linked to EU financing. Promoting discussions among stakeholders involved at high level meetings in these, may be worthwhile. The multidimensional Riga deliverable MTD 3, underpinned by the upskilling pathway recommendation, is a good example of processes interlinking.

4.3.2. Maintaining positive momentum

The Riga deliverables have helped trigger cooperation across borders. This is particularly evident in work on apprenticeships and partly linked to the comprehensive policy framework and complementary and supportive measures, like the European alliance for apprenticeships, or policy learning conferences and forums organised by Cedefop and ETF. The proposed European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships, based on a European social partner initiative, can complement the policy package for the Member States and make a useful tool for the candidate countries. Peer review sessions and structured discussions at meetings of Directors General and the Advisory Committee for VET have proved beneficial. This positive momentum towards peer and policy learning would be worth keeping up to cover all deliverables systematically.

As is evident from developments in apprenticeships and work-based learning, collaborative approaches across borders and EU-level policy packages, with initiatives in various policy domains, may help sustain efforts. The policy package linked to the skills agenda may help boost developments in its focus areas. However, depending on the context, countries may need to prioritise among these.

One of the Riga deliverables stresses the need for strong feedback loops to maintain or improve VET's relevance and inform people's education and career

choices. Improving labour market and skills intelligence is also one of the priorities of the EU's new skills agenda and in UNESCO's work on VET. Countries are taking steps to improving their labour market and skills intelligence. To ensure this intelligence can be translated into effective policies takes more than setting up institutional structures and ensuring funding; it requires good skills governance. Coordination and dissemination of findings are key. It also entails adjusting and adapting to new socioeconomic realities. While effective skills governance strongly depends on its national and regional context, peer and policy learning can prove beneficial as shown by Cedefop and ETF support in this field.

4.3.3. Looking ahead

Consistent use of the learning outcomes approach, supported by the implementation of comprehensive NQFs, is an underlying principle of developments in national VET systems. This applies particularly to MTD 3, access to qualification for all and flexible pathways, which has been reinforced by the Council recommendation on upskilling pathways. The latter advocates giving low-skilled adults the opportunity to progress towards qualifications at EQF level 3 or 4. All parties to this process need to be familiar with these levels and understand how qualification frameworks can help people navigate through an increasingly complex education and training landscape. While many countries already indicate the corresponding NQF/EQF levels in their qualification databases and on VET qualifications, evidence suggests that NQFs still need to reach individual citizens, learners, students and employers ⁽⁴¹⁾.

The interim report on progress towards the Riga deliverables coincides with initial reflections on the future of VET among ministers as well as Directors General for VET. Reflecting on the past to learn for the future is also the principle that underpins a comprehensive [Cedefop study on the changing nature and role of VET](#). The ETF's information and reflections on the emancipation of VET in its partner countries offers food for thought on the international dimension of future EU policies and the framework of cooperation for the period after 2020.

Linking these reflections and preliminary findings to the analysis of the Bruges/Riga deliverables, some common trends emerge:

- (a) work-based learning is being strengthened and expanding to different types and levels of VET;

⁽⁴¹⁾ Cedefop website. [Peer learning conference on the impact of NQFs. Do national qualifications frameworks make a difference?](#)

- (b) vocationally oriented education and training at higher levels is expanding and borderlines between 'academic' higher education are blurring; at upper secondary level VET is providing more key competences, and general education more vocationally oriented skills; initial and continuing VET are increasingly blurring; VET is differentiating further, as new stakeholders and providers enter the sector;
- (c) rapid structural changes require flexible responses to meet new sector-specific, and sufficient basic and transversal, skills to allow reskilling and upskilling;
- (d) the influence that internationalisation has on VET is becoming faster and stronger.

This underlines the need for increased flexibility and permeability. It also entails reflection on how IVET and CVET are connected in the lifelong learning perspective to support learning and occupational careers. Effective interaction between different education and training institutions, labour market actors and stakeholders will be crucial.

Depending on the country contexts, this may require broadening the concept of VET. It also means finding a balance between quick responses and long-term strategies that ensure stability and incremental improvements, both ensuring high quality offers. VET must be relevant to regional or local needs and broad enough to keep learners' options open.

Motivating people to continue learning, validating their skills and guidance will be essential. This also means more focus on how people learn and which methods can help them best.

In terms of the Riga deliverables, it is in MTD 3 where most of these aspects come together, with the other MTDs contributing to its objectives. This may point towards increasing future attention to key competences (MTD 4) and continuing professional development of teachers and trainers (MTD 5).

Since the adoption of Copenhagen in 2002, VET developments and reforms have not only seen unprecedented growth but also gained political visibility. Monitoring and reporting countries' developments has helped to take stock of achievements; in several countries, it has helped to keep VET on the agenda when it did not feature that prominently in overall EU level policy-making and/or nationally. As the work on qualifications frameworks for lifelong learning demonstrates, cooperation in VET has contributed to, and been part of, the overall ET 2020 framework. However, political commitment and ownership have not only boosted significant action, but also given the process its distinctive identity.

At the same time, EU-level initiatives to address challenges for employment and economic policies have acknowledged VET's value of providing people with skills for the labour market and society. Country-specific recommendations demonstrate how VET for young people and adults extends into other policy areas. 25 Member States have had recitals relevant for VET and adult learning embedded in the 2017 recommendations without necessarily addressing these areas directly. This gives VET, with its distinctive focus and identity, a strong role at the interface of education and training, employment and economic policies.

Looking ahead, much still needs to be done towards fulfilling the common ambition for even higher quality VET systems across all participating countries. The next reporting exercises (2018 and 2019) will feed into the final report on the Riga deliverables, providing a more complete image of VET system developments towards the Bruges objectives.

Annex

Table A1. VET statistics for the candidate countries (2015, 2016)

	Albania		Montenegro		former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia		Serbia		Turkey		EU		
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	
Activity rate (20-64) [%]	71.3	73.3	68.5	69.1	70.2	69.6	68.1	69.9	59.9	60.9	70.8	71.4	
Employment rate (20-64) [%]	59.3	62.1	56.7	57.1	51.9	53.3	55.9	59.0	53.9	54.4	64.3	65.3	
Unemployment rate (15+) [%]	17.1	15.2	17.5	17.7	26.1	23.7	17.7	15.2	10.3	10.9	9.5	8.8	
Long-term unemployment rate (15+) [%]	11.3	m	13.5	13.4	21.3	19.1	11.3	9.9	2.2	2.2	4.5	4.0	
Unemployment rate by education [% aged 15+]	Low	13.4	12.7	26.3	26.2	29.9	29.2	15.0	12.4	9.7	9.9	17.4	16.1
	Medium	20.4	17.5	17.4	16.8	26.6	23.7	19.4	16.7	11.3	12.5	8.7	7.8
	High	19.4	16.9	10.2	11.9	21.1	19.4	15.3	13.9	10.9	11.8	5.6	5.1
Youth unemployment rate (15-24) [%]	33.2	28.9	37.6	35.9	47.3	48.2	43.2	34.9	18.5	19.5	20.3	18.7	
Youth unemployment ratio (15-24) [%]	14.7	13.2	11.4	11.9	15.6	15.1	13.5	10.6	7.7	8.2	8.4	7.8	
Incidence of self-employment [%]	59.0	58.9	20.9	21.5	26.0	24.0	30.1	31.7	32.9	32.4	16.1	15.8	
Participation in lifelong learning (25-64) [%]	1.0	1.1	3.0	3.3	2.6	2.9	4.8	5.1	5.5	5.8	10.7	10.8	
Tertiary educational attainment (30-34) [%]	22.1	20.9	31.0	33.9	28.6	29.1	28.9	29.9	23.6	26.5	38.7	39.1	
Underachievement [% aged 15]	Reading	50.3	a	41.9	a	70.7	a	33.1	a	40.0	a	19.7	a
	Maths	53.3	a	51.9	a	70.2	a	38.9	a	51.4	a	22.2	a
	Science	41.7	a	51.0	a	62.9	a	35.0	a	44.5	a	20.6	a
Early leavers from education (18-24) [%]	21.3	19.6	5.7	5.5	11.4	9.9	7.4	7.0	36.4	34.3	11.0	10.7	
Persons not in employment, education, training (15-24) [%]	32.8	30.0	19.1	18.4	24.7	24.3	19.9	17.7	23.9	23.9	12.0	11.5	

	Albania		Montenegro		former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia		Serbia		Turkey		EU		
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	
Students in VET programmes at upper secondary level [%]	19.5	19.5	67.2	67.1	57.7	58.2	75.1	74.6	49c	m	47.3c	m	
Students in VET programmes at upper secondary level [000]	27 2	25 4	19 7	18 8	48 1	46 7	197 5	190 8	2 788	m	10 317	m	
Educational attainment of active population (15+) [%]	Low	44.1	45.3	24.3	25.6	23.1	20.6	17.0	17.8	58.3	56.8	19.9	19.5
	Medium	37.2	36.5	47.7	44.9	54.2	54.5	58.7	57.8	20.4	20.6	48.0	47.8
	High	18.7	18.1	28.0	29.5	22.7	24.8	24.2	24.4	21.3	22.6	32.1	32.7
Public expenditure on education [% of GDP]	3.13	3.13	4.5	4.5	4.1	3.9	4.0	m	5.1	m	m	m	
Total population [000]	2 893	2 886	622	622	2 069	2 071	7 114	7 076	77 695	78 741	508 504	510 278	
Relative size of youth population (15-24) [%]	18.8	18.1	19.6	19.6	19.2	18.7	16.5	16.3	21.3	21.1	14.5	13.9	

Legend: a: not applicable; b: break in series; c: ETF calculation; d: different definition; e: estimation; m: missing; p: provisional.

NB: (*) No longer in education or training, 1-3 years after graduation.

Broad educational attainment levels: Low: ISCED 0-2; Medium: ISCED 3-4; High: ISCED 5-8. ME - Low: less than primary, primary; Medium: vocational education after primary, secondary; High: tertiary.

RS - Low: no formal education, incomplete primary, primary; Medium: secondary; High: higher school, university.

Unemployment rate/Unemployment rate by education/Long-term unemployment rate: MK, TR: 15-74; Youth unemployment rate/ratio, NEETs: AL: 15-29. Underachievement (PISA): RS: 2012.

Source: National Statistical Offices, Eurostat, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, ILO, OECD.

Table A2. EU-28+ MTD priority level

		MTD 1			MTD 2			MTD 3			MTD 4			MTD 5		
		H	M	L	H	M	L	H	M	L	H	M	L	H	M	L
1	AT	X				X			X			X			X	
2	BE (fl)	X			X				X			X			X	
	BE (fr)	X			X			X			X				X	
	BE (de)	X				X		X			X					X
3	BG					X										
4	HR	X			X			X			X			X		
5	CY	X				X		X			X			X		
6	CZ	X			X			X						X		
7	DK	X			X			X					X		X	
8	EE															
9	FI															
10	FR	X				X		X				X				X
11	DE	X			X			X			X			X		
12	EL	X				X				X		X		X		
13	HU	X				X			X		X			X		
14	IS															
15	IE	X			X			X			X			X		
16	IT	X				X		X				X		X		
17	LV	X				X			X		X			X		
18	LT															
19	LU															
20	MT	X			X			X			X			X		
21	NL		X			X			X		X			X		
22	NO													X		
23	PL	X				X		X			X	X		X	X	
24	PT	X				X		X				X		X		
25	RO	X				X		X				X		X		
26	SK	X				X			X			X		X		
27	SI	X				X		X				X			X	
28	ES	X			X				X				X		X	
29	SE	X			X			X			X			X		
30	UK															
Total		23/26	1/26	0/26	10/26	15/26	0/26	16/26	7/26	1/26	13/26	9/26	2/26	18/26	7/26	1/26

NB: H: high priority level; M: medium priority level; L: low priority level.

26 respondents; empty cells indicate that countries did not provide relevant information at the time
EE, IS, LT, LU and UK (4 VET systems) did not provide any feedback.

FI provided only general feedback as it was preparing a comprehensive VET reform at the time which included the Riga MTDs and came into effect in January 2018.

PL indicated high and medium priority for both MTD 4 and MTD 5.

CY, IT and AT: the responsible Ministries/authorities provided joint feedback.

FR: both the General Delegation for employment and vocational training and the Ministry of Education, higher Education and Research provided feedback.

Source: Cedefop, based on a survey carried out among DGVT in early 2016 (Cedefop, 2016a)

Table A3. EU-28+ developments planned for 2016-20 per MTD per focus area

		MTD 1			MTD 2			MTD 3			MTD 4		MTD 5						
		Apprenticeships	WBL in schools based VET	Other	QA in line with EQAVET	Feedback loops IVET	Feedback loops CVET	Other	Access to VET for young people	Access to VET for Adult people	Other	Key Competences in IVET	Key Competences in CVET	Other	Initial training for teaching in VET schools	Initial training for trainers in enterprises	Continuing training for teaching in VET schools	Continuing training for trainers in enterprises	Other
1	AT	X	X	-	X	X	-	-	X	X	-	X	-	-	X	X	X	-	-
2	BE (fl)	X	X	-	X	X	-	-	X	X	-	X	-	-	X	X	-	X	-
	BE (fr)	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	X	-	X	-
	BE (de)	X	X	-	X	-	X	-	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	-	X
3	BG	-	X	-	X	X	-	-	X	X	-	X	X	-	-	X	X	-	-
4	HR	X	X		X	X	X		X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	
5	CY	X	X	-	X	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	-
6	CZ	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	X	X	-	X	-	-	X	-	X	X	-
7	DK	X	-	-	X	X	-		X	X	X	X	-	-	X	-	X	-	-
8	EE																		
9	FI																		
10	FR	X	X	X	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	X	-
11	DE	X	X	-	X	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	-
12	EL	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-
13	HU	X	X	-	X	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	-
14	IS																		
15	IE	X	X	-	X	X	-	-	X	X	-	X	-	-	X	X	X	X	-
16	IT	X	X	-	X	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	X	-	-
17	LV	-	X	-	X	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	-
18	LT																		
19	LU																		
20	MT	X	X	-	X	X	-	-	X	X	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
21	NL	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	-	X	-	-
22	NO	X	X		X	X	X		X	X		X	X		X		X	X	
23	PL	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	-
24	PT	X	X	-	X	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	-
25	RO	X	X	-	X	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	X	-
26	SK	X	X	-	X	X	-	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	X	-
27	SI	X	X	-	X	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	X	X	X	-
28	ES	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	X	X	X	X	-	-	X	X	X	-	-
29	SE	X	X	-	X	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	-	-	X	X	X	-	-
30	UK																		
	26/32	23/26	25/26	5/26	26/26	22/26	15/26	-	26/26	25/26	7/26	26/26	15/26	1/26	19/26	17/26	22/26	17/26	1/26

NB: 26 respondents; empty cells indicate that countries did not provide relevant information at the time. Some countries not reporting on work planned for one or more focus area(s) under a specific MTD have indicated that the relevant issue(s) would be addressed in the context of another MTD.

EE, IS, LT, LU and UK (4 VET systems) did not provide any feedback.

FI provided only general feedback as it was preparing a comprehensive VET reform at the time which included the Riga MTDs and came into effect in January 2018.

CY, IT and AT: the responsible Ministries/authorities provided joint feedback.

FR: Both, the General Delegation for employment and vocational training and the Ministry of Education, higher Education and Research provided feedback.

Source: Cedefop, based on a survey carried out among DGVT in early 2016 (Cedefop, 2016a).

Table A4. **Key competences, variety of national definitions in the EU-28+**

<p>Communication in the mother tongue is sometimes merged with foreign languages, for example in Spain and Finland. The name may also be more nuanced: for instance 'language culture and occupational language' in Lithuania; and 'communication in national languages' in Luxemburg, as the country has three official languages. Communication in foreign languages is part of five basic skills in Norway but is not explicit in VET. In Finland, communication is combined with media skills.</p>
<p>Maths is often separated from the 'maths, science and technology' competence, as is the case in the Czech Republic, Ireland, Iceland, Norway (numeracy) and Portugal. In France, the term 'technological culture' is used.</p>
<p>Digital competence is sometimes combined with maths and technology as in Spain and Finland. Given the complex nature of the competence, the names also vary: for instance 'information and communications technology' in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Latvia and Portugal; 'computing' in France; and 'informatics' in Bulgaria.</p>
<p>Learning to learn is referred to as 'learning skills/competence' in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Latvia and 'effective and independent learning' in Hungary.</p>
<p>For interpersonal, intercultural and social/civic competences various terms are used which imply their specific focus: 'acting independently in social and working life' and 'working in heterogeneous groups' in Slovakia; 'citizenship education' in Belgium and the UK-EN; 'moral and civic education' in France; 'career and civic competence' in the Netherlands; and 'skills for life' in the UK-WA. In Denmark civic competence is split from 'interpersonal, intercultural and social competence'.</p>
<p>Most national terms for entrepreneurship competence include the words 'initiative' and 'entrepreneurship'. Exceptions are 'social and labour market competence' in Finland and 'enterprise education' in the UK.</p>
<p>Cultural awareness and expression can be linked to social competence, as in Finland, and combined with civic competence, as in the Czech Republic.</p>

NB: Examples are not exhaustive.

Source: Cedefop based on [ReferNet \(2016\)](#). *Key competences in vocational education and training reports*. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series.

Table A5. **Bruges – Riga: a simplified overview**

From 2010 to 2020		
Bruges short-term deliverables 2010-14	Bruges strategic objectives 2010-20	Riga medium-term deliverables and transversal areas 2015-20
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving the quality and efficiency of VET and increasing its attractiveness and relevance • making lifelong learning and mobility a reality • promoting creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship • promoting equity, social cohesion and attractive citizenship 	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organise activities to promote VET attractiveness and excellence (campaigns, skills competitions etc.). 2. Support activities to acquaint compulsory education pupils with vocational trades and career possibilities. 3. Take measures to implement the EQAVET recommendation and progress towards national quality assurance frameworks for VET. 4. Ensure that key competences and career management skills are integrated in IVET curricula and can be acquired through CVET opportunities. 5. Governments, social partners and VET providers should make the necessary arrangements to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ maximise work-based learning/apprenticeships, to help increase the number of apprentices by 2012; ○ create opportunities for greater cooperation between VET institutions and enterprises, for example through teacher traineeships in enterprises; ○ provide VET institutions with feedback on the employability of VET graduates. 6. Pursue work on setting up monitoring systems on transitions from learning to work. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Making IVET an attractive learning option. 2. Fostering excellence, quality and relevance of IVET and CVET. 	<p>MTD 2: Further develop quality assurance mechanisms in line with the EQAVET recommendation and, as part of QA systems, establish continuous information and feedback loops to IVET and CVET systems based on learning outcomes.</p> <p>MTD 4: Further strengthen key competences in VET curricula and provide more effective opportunities to acquire/develop them through IVET and CVET.</p> <p>MTD 1: Promote work-based learning, with special attention to apprenticeship-type training, by involving social partners, companies and VET providers, as well as by stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship.</p> <p>MTD 5: Introduce systematic approaches and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development for VET teachers, trainers and mentors in school and work-based settings.</p>

Bruges short-term deliverables 2010-14	Bruges strategic objectives 2010-20	Riga medium-term deliverables and transversal areas 2015-20
<p>7. To maximise VET's contribution to the ET 2020 15% benchmark on adult participation in lifelong learning, review the use of incentives, rights and obligations for all stakeholders, and take appropriate action to encourage participation in CVET.</p> <p>8. Implement the EQF recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o develop comprehensive NQFs based on the learning outcomes approach; use NQF as a catalyst for: more permeability between VET and higher education, developing/maintaining VET at post-secondary or higher EQF levels, realising flexible learning pathways; o referencing NQF levels to EQF levels by 2012. <p>9. Develop and promote the use of procedures for validating non-formal and informal learning supported by EQF/NQFs and guidance.</p> <p>10. Provide integrated (education, training, employment) guidance services related with labour market needs.</p> <p>11. Progress towards implementing ECVET in line with the recommendation; participate in tests for mobility.</p> <p>12. Take appropriate measures to boost mobility in VET, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o encourage more IVET students and VET professionals to participate in transnational mobility; o encourage local and regional authorities and VET providers to develop an internationalisation culture and strategies, including cross border mobility; o address legal and administrative obstacles related to transnational mobility of apprentices and trainees; o encourage professional chambers, business and other organisations to support host and sending enterprises in providing appropriate conditions for apprentices/trainees in transnational mobility; o ensure the provision of language learning and intercultural competences in VET curricula; o make optional use of other EU tools for enhancing mutual recognition of qualifications/competences. 	<p>3. Enabling flexible access to training and qualifications.</p> <hr/> <p>4. Developing a strategic approach to internationalisation of IVET and CVET and promoting international mobility.</p>	<p>MTD 3: Enhance access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible and permeable systems, notably by offering efficient and integrated guidance services and making available validation of non-formal and informal learning.</p> <p>MTD 4: key competences (see above).</p> <p>Transversal.</p>

Bruges short-term deliverables 2010-14	Bruges strategic objectives 2010-20	Riga medium-term deliverables and transversal areas 2015-20
<p>13. Encourage partnerships for creativity and innovation.</p> <p>14. Encourage effective and innovative, quality assured use of technology by all VET providers supported by equipment, infrastructure and networks, with continuing improvements reflecting developments in technology and pedagogical understanding.</p> <p>15. Take measures to promote entrepreneurship, e.g. by promoting key competence acquisition, experiences in enterprises, and involving experts from businesses.</p>	<p>5. Fostering innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, as well as the use of ICT in IVET and CVET.</p>	<p>MTD 1: Promoting work-based learning/apprenticeships (see above)</p> <p>MTD 4: key competences (see above).</p>
<p>16. Take preventive and remedial measures to maximise VET's contribution to combating early leaving</p> <p>17. Consider measures to raise participation of low-skilled and other at risk groups in education and training including by developing flexible CVET pathways and using guidance and support services</p> <p>18. Use ICT to maximise access to training and promote active learning, develop new methods in work and school based VET to facilitate the participation of at risk groups</p> <p>19. Use existing monitoring systems to support participation of at risk groups in VET</p>	<p>6. Realising inclusive IVET and CVET.</p>	<p>MTD 3: access to VET and qualifications for all (see above).</p>

Bruges short-term deliverables 2010-14	Bruges strategic objectives 2010-20	Riga medium-term deliverables and transversal areas 2015-20
<p>20. Establish communication strategies for different stakeholder groups, focused on implementation and the added value of tools (ECVET, ECTS, referencing of NQFs to EQF, quality assurance systems in line with EQAVET).</p> <p>21. Set up structured cooperation mechanism between VET sector and employment services at all levels including the social partners.</p> <p>22. Contribute to improving EU level data on IVET students, including mobility and employability.</p>	7. Greater involvement of VET stakeholders and greater visibility for the achievements of European cooperation in VET.	Transversal
	8. Coordinated governance of European and national instruments for transparency, recognition, quality and mobility.	Transversal
	9. Intensifying cooperation between VET policy and other relevant policy areas.	
	10. Improving the quality and comparability of data for EU policy-making in VET	EU-level support
	11. Making good use of EU support	

Source: Cedefop and ETF, based on the Bruges communiqué and Riga conclusions.

Abbreviations

ACVT	Advisory Committee for Vocational Training
Belgium (de)	German-speaking Community of Belgium
Belgium (fl)	Flemish Community of Belgium
Belgium (fr)	French Community of Belgium
CPD	continuing professional development
DGVT	Directors General for vocational education and training
EEA	European Economic Area
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European structural and investment funds
ETF	European Training Foundation
LLL	lifelong learning
MTD	medium-term deliverable
TVET	technical vocational education and training (term used by UNESCO)
UK-EN	United Kingdom – England
UK-NI	United Kingdom – Northern Ireland
UK-SC	United Kingdom – Scotland
UK-WA	United Kingdom – Wales
VET	vocational education and training (term used by EU)

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European cooperation in VET: one process, many stops

Developments in vocational education and training
policy 2015-17

Developments in five priority areas for VET, agreed in 2015 by the EU-28, Iceland, Norway, candidate countries, the European Commission and EU social partners, are at the centre of this report. Work in 2015-17 signals continuity with earlier national strategies and initiatives. It confirms the recent focus on apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning, and increasing attention to widening access to VET and qualifications, two areas that have been reinforced by EU-level policy packages. The report also presents measures taken in: VET teacher and trainer professional development, key competence provision, and quality assurance, including actions to make use of information on skills intelligence. Complementing this report, individual country chapters offer more detailed information on national developments. Though their long-standing collaboration, countries aim at achieving common objectives set for 2020. As policy-makers are reflecting on their vision for VET and collaboration beyond 2020, this interim report also discusses these trends from a forward-looking perspective.

**CEDEFOP**European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

Europe 123, 570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE
PO Box 22427, 551 02 Thessaloniki, GREECE
Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020, Email: info@cedefop.europa.eu

visit our portal www.cedefop.europa.eu



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