

Training & Employment

n° 114 November-December 2014

SMEs are increasingly interested in the effects of training

From a survey of their evaluation practices, it appears that firms are paying increasing attention to the effects of the training courses they offer. Although the share of firms providing training for their employees changed little between 2005 and 2010, they say they are more aware of the connections between their training provision and their economic performance. In this respect, small firms are not lagging behind

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The reform of vocational training aims to change firms' attitudes and practices with regard to training. By abolishing the compulsory expenditure on training plans, the Act of 5 March 2014 aims to help firms regard training as a factor of competitiveness in its own right. It seeks to make firms pay greater attention to their training policies by giving them greater flexibility to adapt their training provision to their economic constraints.

The European CVTS surveys (see box p. 4) provide information on the way in which firms perceive training and the purposes for which they train employees. In addition, they show that firms try to evaluate the training undertaken by their employees in several ways. These approaches to evaluation may serve as indicators of the attention paid to the effects of training, even though they cannot be used to observe the detail of the tools and modes of evaluation deployed. It has to be noted that this concern, which had always been present, intensified between 2005 and 2010, that is well before the 2014 reform was implemented.

The surveys offer three criteria, derived from three separate inputs, by which firms' attitudes and practices can be evaluated. The measurement of participant satisfaction is an assessment of a training course made 'on the spot' by

employees immediately following the event. It differs from an evaluation of skill acquisition, which aims to determine whether employee who have undergone training have appropriated the knowledge dispensed during the training course. Finally, an evaluation of the impact of training on a firm's economic performance seeks to ascertain the effectiveness of training in terms of the return to the investment made by firms (increased productivity, improved quality etc.). These criteria can be objectified with varying degrees of ease but they can all be interpreted as indicators of the degree of attention firms pay to the effects of training.

Firms more focused on the effects of training

In 2010 as in 2005, three quarters of firms provided training for at least one of their employees and the share of those that stated they evaluated the effects of training was on the rise. Over this period, evaluation practices appear to have diffused significantly more quickly among small firms than among large firms. In 2010, as a consequence, the gaps between small and large firms were tending to narrow.

In 2005, 46% of firms that provided training evaluated employees' satisfaction at the

