



# Enhancing European cooperation in VET: outcomes of the Riga cycle

Progress in common priorities for 2015-20





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for 2015-20

Final report

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# Foreword

In 2002, the Member States of the European Union launched the Copenhagen process, to reinforce and better coordinate their vocational education and training (VET) policies. In 2010, the Bruges communiqué gave new impetus to the process. In the Riga meeting in June 2015, the European Commission, EU Member States and social partners, the European Economic Area and the candidate countries reaffirmed their commitment to competitive and inclusive VET. The Riga conclusions broadened the scope of European VET policies, enshrining new priorities such as the generalisation of work-based learning and the acquisition and strengthening of key competences.

Cedefop and the ETF have been in charge of monitoring and analysing how national VET policies have taken up the Riga lines. Their present joint report shows that considerable progress has been made since 2015. New steps have been taken to develop and expand apprenticeship and dual systems, systematise school-business cooperation, and establish wide-scale graduate tracking and training needs anticipation. Retraining a growing range of vulnerable groups has become the norm. Awareness of identifying and cultivating key competences has been raised. Considerable attention is now being paid to VET teaching, in efforts to boost its attractiveness and strengthen teacher and trainer professional development.

Overall, the findings show that the progress achieved in the medium term-deliverables reinforced the 2020 vision for VET.

However, there is no doubt that challenges remain. In particular, early and systematic ex-post evaluation of policies is not yet common practice everywhere. As it is time to forge a new vision for the future of VET beyond 2020, unsettled issues need to be identified and addressed. This report helps in that regard, pointing to areas which could attract more attention in the next decade. It will assist shaping new initiatives for the future of VET policies in Europe.

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# Executive summary

In 2002 the Copenhagen process laid the foundations for a systemic approach in vocational education and training (VET) reforms at European level. It allowed for the development of tools and the political steering to support the participating countries to take ownership of their own reforms while benefitting from the experiences of others. Over the cycles of Bruges (2010-14) and Riga (2015-20), the Copenhagen process has focused on a number of deliverables and facilitated annual reporting of progress towards the achievement of these deliverables. Seventeen years later, VET national systems have undergone substantial changes for the benefit of learners, economies and societies.

Taking stock of these changes, analysing what has worked and what needs to be improved, is an important piece of evidence to help shape the way forward for the new cycle of EU cooperation in VET and related priorities for the post-2020 period.

This Cedefop-ETF Riga final report recalls the state of play in 2015 and provides an overview of what EU countries (Member States plus Iceland and Norway) and candidate countries have done over the period 2015-19 to address the five priority areas for VET agreed by their ministers in Riga in 2015. The report flags common trends across countries and aims to support their cooperation towards a common ambition for VET. While countries' policy measures may look rather similar at aggregate level, their VET systems and policies do not start from the same point, and policy actions are firmly embedded into their respective contexts. Purpose, speed and progress vary: country examples illustrate the diversity within this apparent unity. Complementary country chapters look more in depth <sup>(1)</sup>. Despite differences across countries, the evidence provided in the report indicates that VET systems

have moved forward to emphasise that VET can be a credible first choice.

Compared to the 2011-14 cycle, fewer and broader priority areas – the five medium-term deliverables (MTDs) – were agreed in Riga. When asked which MTD(s) they would assign high priority, a clear trend emerged across countries: strengthening work-based learning came first, with specific attention to apprenticeships (MTD 1), followed by access to VET and qualifications for all (MTD 3) and teacher and trainer professional development (MTD 5). Quality assurance and feedback loops (MTD 2) and key competences (MTD 4) were ranked lower by the countries.

## Continuity and change: achievements and challenges

Four of the five Riga MTDs build on priority areas of the 2011-14 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 action on several fronts, as the unprecedented refugee crisis demonstrated shortly after the decision on the five priorities.

### **MTD 1 – Promoting work-based learning in all its forms, with special attention to apprenticeships**

Promoting apprenticeships had already been high on the European policy agenda since the 2008 economic downturn. The alternation of learning in schools and enterprises was then recognised as a possible way to ease young people's transitions to the labour market, taking into account the fact that the countries with well-functioning apprenticeships showed least youth unemployment

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<sup>(1)</sup> See Cedefop (2018c) – country reports on the national policy developments in VET in 2015-17 – and ETF (2018b-f) – country reports on progress towards Riga conclusions MTDs in Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

rates. In the reporting period (2015-19), apprenticeship and other forms of work-based learning expanded and became central to several EU-level initiatives. The establishment of the European alliance for apprenticeship (EAfA) in 2013 had drawn increased attention to apprenticeships. The majority of MTD 1 related actions in the reporting period focused on apprenticeships, dual systems and alternance (ADA) schemes (56%). Most countries introduced system level reforms such as setting up or updating their legal frameworks, updating and clarifying rules and regulations or expanding apprenticeship to new programmes at higher levels. Some countries worked to clarify roles and responsibilities of different actors, especially employer organisations and chambers. This area will be on national agendas for the years to come.

Many countries focused on making apprenticeships more attractive for employers and learners. Incentives are increasingly used to encourage enterprises to offer training places; most of these are financial subsidies or tax exemptions. Some countries have started designing non-financial incentives such as developing 'labels' and certificates to signal quality training offers for companies that provide apprenticeships.

School-business cooperation was reinforced through increased participation of labour market stakeholders in shaping VET. Reported developments engaged a growing range of enterprises, sharing responsibilities and strengthening partnerships in programme design and teaching. Despite the efforts, this area requires more attention and further exchange through peer learning. One of the aspects of particular difficulty that countries reported is the distribution and coordination of learning between school and the workplace. This is also corroborated by the findings of Cedefop's thematic reviews on apprenticeship.

There was evidence in countries of good practices to boost the involvement of SMEs in work-based learning and apprenticeship. In some, SMEs were provided with toolkits (methodological guidelines and manuals) for quality placements and took part in training workshops. Apprenticeship advisors were trained to provide companies with administrative assistance and apprenticeship support services. Employers able

only to provide partial placements used shared apprenticeship, where apprentices move between different employers. Databases of SMEs interested in apprenticeships were created to support schools' and learners' search for placements. SMEs will remain one of the key target groups of policy actions in this MTD.

Work-based learning in school-based VET received less attention compared to ADA schemes, particularly 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. Some countries are restructuring their school-based programmes by requiring more VET programmes to include practical training, increasing the duration of practical training and setting up coordination functions to support school-business cooperation.

It appears that it was not clear to countries how innovation and entrepreneurship could be perceived in the context of MTD 1 or stimulated through MTD 1 initiatives. It would be worth aiming at better future understanding of these terms across countries, identifying more specific strands or areas of work that deserve attention.

## **MTD 2 – Developing quality assurance mechanisms in VET and continuous information and feedback loops**

By 2019, all countries had developed a national approach to quality assurance (QA). Many countries worked on revising their regulatory frameworks (25% of reported actions related to QA), either as part of a greater VET reform or, in some cases, focusing on consolidating their fragmented approaches and establishing comprehensive practices across the country and different sectors of education and training. National developments in this MTD emphasised ensuring quality in VET providers (44% of reported actions related to QA). Many focused on promoting self-assessment in VET schools – mostly in initial vocational education and training (IVET) – to introduce a culture of continuous improvement. A similar number of developments focused on further developing external evaluation practices, introducing quality observatories and making quality agreements with VET providers systematic. In

most cases, self-assessment and external evaluation work hand-in-hand and support putting in practice the use of the quality cycle, an important element of the European quality assurance for vocational education and training (EQAVET) recommendation. The QA national reference points supported QA-related developments, using the expertise provided by the EQAVET community of practice. They shared examples of good practice with other network members, participated in peer review activities and used *Erasmus+* funding to support the developments and implementation of their national approaches.

The analysis of national developments in the reporting period shows that the quality assurance initiatives reported under MTD 2 seldom linked to developing methodologies for qualification design and review or to developments related to national qualifications frameworks (NQFs). Only a few countries reported introducing outcome-based approaches focusing mostly on certification and examination processes. Similarly, few developments specifically addressed quality assurance of work-based learning and apprenticeships. The analysis also shows a significant variation between countries' approaches to ensuring the quality of VET providers in terms of flexibility on the mandatory or optional nature of self-assessment, on the bodies and the types of external monitoring, and the types and number of indicators used. The variation can be explained by the differences in the way VET is organised and the degree of autonomy of VET providers.

Almost half (43%) of the initiatives related to developing information and feedback loops to improve the quality and relevance of VET focused on anticipating training needs, while about one third of the countries started developing comprehensive forecasting mechanisms. Cedefop supported five of these in their endeavours to improve anticipation methods, build their capacity on skills and labour market intelligence and put in place effective policies and actions to tackle skills mismatch. Some of the approaches in the reporting period combine available statistical data with qualitative information to identify technological trends and societal changes to project future skills demand in the labour market.

Outcomes are expected to inform national, regional and local authorities responsible for VET, training providers, public employment services and employers. Countries also reported other less comprehensive approaches to informing the provision of VET programmes, such as research projects and qualitative surveys to explore current and future skills needs as well as mismatches between skills demand and supply.

But setting up mechanisms to assess, anticipate and respond 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 devoted attention to setting up standing advisory bodies to inform policy-making: 13% of actions related to information and feedback loops. Examples include government agencies, sector skills councils, national and/or regional education councils, and forums for national and/or regional public debate on education and training. A closer look at the composition of these advisory bodies points to the need for greater involvement of teachers, learners and employee representatives. The analysis also points to an increased need for local and regional autonomy in programme development and closer cooperation between providers and employers in keeping VET relevant to regional and local needs. However, many of the reported developments are dependent on EU funding which poses important issues in terms of the actual sustainability of these approaches.

The most important developments, reported by several countries, in the use of information on transition and employability of VET graduates (27% of actions related to information and feedback loops), concerned monitoring systems for graduate tracking, mainly through statistical tools and the setting up of specialised bodies to understand transitions between training and employment better. However, information on outcomes is not collected systematically. Information on VET graduate placements and the utilisation of their skills in the workplace continues to be the least used by countries. Challenges include the obstacles posed by data protection regulations, the cost of collecting such data, and



the capacity needed at system level to interpret and use these data to inform VET.

### **MTD 3 – Access to VET and qualifications for all**

Bringing together and building on several of the 2011-14 deliverables, MTD3 is the most multi-dimensional. It links with MTD 1 and MTD 4 as well as employment and social policies, not least through its strong inclusion dimension. MTD 3 has been reinforced by the 2016 *Upskilling pathways* recommendation and the European pillar of social rights; many policy actions reported by countries contribute to their objectives but have not been devised specifically in response to them. Actions in the reporting period mainly addressed training, reskilling and upskilling vulnerable groups (21% of actions); increasing permeability and flexibility (18% of actions); improving guidance (14%); recognition-validation (14%); transparency of qualifications (NQFs, European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET): 12%) and promoting equal opportunities for all (11%).

Actions on training, reskilling and upskilling at-risk groups tended to address diverse target groups: early school leavers and young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs), low-skilled, unemployed, employed people at risk of becoming jobless, parents on (or after) parental leave, the young from disadvantaged urban areas, young people with learning difficulties, people with disabilities, senior workers, refugees and other migrants. Apart from the most common approach of developing training courses for the different target groups, countries developed dedicated apprenticeship and internship schemes, established training guarantee programmes, scholarships and other dedicated financial support for training. In a few countries, the approaches to upskilling low-skilled adults aligned with the three-stage pattern<sup>(2)</sup> of the *Upskilling pathways* recommendation, most often in relation to refugees and migrants.

During the reporting period, developments related to increasing permeability and flexibility were seen as important in allowing learners

a smooth progression in education and training systems without dead ends. Main developments reported by countries include: setting up new pathways and bridging routes; making admission, progression and examination rules more flexible; opening up VET to general education and higher education students; and introducing modularisation and partial qualifications in initial VET (IVET) and continuing VET (CVET). The latter are usually linked to or reflected in NQF-related developments. Cedefop's monitoring shows that the coverage of NQFs has been growing in recent years and their comprehensive character is becoming stronger. The impact of the NQFs is growing, particularly in the review and renewal of qualifications standards and in promoting stakeholder involvement, as comprehensive frameworks act as platforms for cooperation across educational subsystems and education and labour markets. There is a growing trend among countries to open up their frameworks to include qualifications awarded outside the formal system by labour market stakeholders and international organisations. It is important that work continue in this direction in order to grow the international dimension of VET. A challenge that needs to be addressed is to continue communicating the benefits and added value of EQF/NQFs to end-users. A concrete example is systematically to include EQF and NQF levels on qualification documents (certificates, diplomas) and in registers of qualifications.

Since 2015, efforts have been made to increase quality of, and free access to, career guidance to learners and through online platforms. Developments include revising procedures, training teachers who have guidance tasks, and extending services to broader age and social groups. The trend towards web-based portals with integrated matching and self-help tools for self-assessment was already apparent in the 2011-14 reporting period; this continued and e-tools have become more prominent in the recent years. Despite the number of national initiatives implemented, the challenge is still to cease perceiving guidance as an ad hoc service, offered to the unemployed or being school-based,

<sup>(2)</sup> (a) skills assessment; (b) provision of a tailored, flexible and quality learning offer meeting the needs identified in the skills assessment; and (c) validation and recognition of the skills acquired.

but to embed it into the lifelong learning process. It is important that countries follow a holistic approach to guidance and counselling, involving stakeholders and linking it to skills assessment, validation and certification at any transition points from education to work and within both.

Countries have reinforced their work on validating non-formal and informal learning. The *Youth guarantee*, the Council recommendation on upskilling pathways, and measures for the long-term unemployed have embraced (elements of) the validation process and targeted validation activities to these groups. Progress has been made in using validation for low-qualified and low-skilled jobseekers. The large inflow of migrants in recent years has contributed to using validation more widely. The update of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning shows that countries are moving towards the creation of overarching strategies, tackling the existing fragmentation of validation systems. While there are validation arrangements in virtually all countries in at least one sector of education and training, several countries also have systematic arrangements within third sector and labour market initiatives. However, the level of connection and consistency across the different areas remains limited. A major challenge on validation in VET seems to be the professionalisation of validation practitioners. There is limited offer of training available for validation practitioners, and much of this is not a requirement. Monitoring and evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of existing validation initiatives remains limited, although more countries are establishing quality assurance systems specifically for validation. There is limited information on the number of people undertaking validation and there is still room for better co-ordination between validation and wider career guidance management practices.

#### **MTD 4 – Strengthening key competences**

Actions in MTD 4 have clearly focused on digital competences (21%), science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) competences (16%), native (15%) and foreign languages (10%) and entrepreneurship (8%). Policy developments related to learning to learn, social and civic com-

petences and cultural awareness and expression competences received less attention (10% in total). National policies often address key competences as a package. These are broad policies covering several key competences; consequently, they often limit their aims to raising awareness and setting a vision, rather than embedding them into the system. Many countries also have their own definitions for key competences.

Analysis of reported developments in digital competences reveals a significant volume of project-based initiatives compared to other policy tools, as the former react faster to changing demands. There is an increase in inter-ministerial/inter-departmental cooperation towards addressing digital competences in VET. Dedicated authorities for digital affairs are also being established. There is evidence of an increased involvement of companies and other stakeholders in the reported developments. Policies aimed at teachers and trainers are often remedy actions for those that need to upgrade their digital competences to be able to teach any subject efficiently, not only ICT. However, rarely reported by countries is how initial teacher training addresses digital competences. Also, more attention could be paid in the future to reducing digital barriers for those with special needs and senior citizens.

Looking at the totality of reported developments on key competences, most address initial VET and fewer continuing VET. Policies in IVET have mainly aimed at supporting key competence development through:

- (a) setting up strategies and action plans;
- (b) revising programmes and curricula;
- (c) improving methods for assessment of key competences;
- (d) training of teachers and trainers on learning key competences.

Policies aiming to embed key competences in VET through programme delivery and teacher training often achieve their objectives faster compared to those addressing the revision of occupational, education and assessment standards that usually require more time.

EU initiatives affect policies promoting key competences. Many of the reported developments referred to EU or international initia-

tives, for example the framework for languages (CEFR) and the EU frameworks for key competences, and digital competences (DigComp). These findings are also confirmed by Cedefop's comparative initial VET study, completed in 2019, on three key competences: digital, literacy and multilingual.

Despite the progress countries have made, efforts should continue addressing this policy area. The need for digital competences and entrepreneurship is rising since they are central to flexible learning approaches, to promoting creativity and innovation, and to supporting other key competences, such as literacy, science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The need for further work on personal, social, learning to learn, citizenship and cultural awareness and expression competences is also partly corroborated by Cedefop's opinion survey data.

#### **MTD 5 – Initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors**

Competent and motivated 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 the professional development of VET teaching and training staff. Countries' actions over the reporting period prioritised VET school teachers and trainers (69% of reported developments) rather than in-company trainers and mentors.

Redefining VET teachers' entry requirements and updating pre-service and initial in-service training (26% of reported developments) is mostly targeted at addressing insufficient preparedness of teachers with respect to the challenges they face.

Some countries in the reporting period looked for ways to address teacher shortages and make teaching more attractive by increasing salaries, developing career opportunities and attracting professionals from industry. Despite the work done, further attention is required on this area in the future.

Most countries have introduced programmes and courses for teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) (43% of reported developments), built career development opportunities, and promoted work-placements in companies to keep teachers updated on the industry, labour market and technological developments. In the reporting period, a limited number of countries have introduced specialised programmes to prepare VET school leaders for their role, which often includes taking decisions about teacher professional development. Taking into account the volume of initiatives reported for teachers' and leaders' CPD, countries will need to consider monitoring its content, quality and effectiveness for better learning.

With the development of apprenticeships and work-based learning in most of the countries, there is a growing need for more employees from companies who can act as trainers/mentors. Only 28% of reported developments focused on their training. Examples include (re) defining the requirements to become a trainer, introducing/updating training programmes, and opening up learning opportunities through school visiting schemes.

Most of the initiatives that address professional development for teachers and in-company trainers are carried out through EU-funded projects. It is important that successful practices derived from these programmes be mainstreamed in the future to form systematic and holistic policies for VET staff professional development.

#### **The Riga transversal principles**

Apart from the five MTDs, the Riga conclusions referred to transversal areas and principles which are crucial for achieving the deliverables and for modernising VET.

'Involvement of relevant stakeholders' was the most frequent transversal principle reported by countries (in 70% of actions for which a transversal principle was mentioned). The categories usually referred to public education/training and labour market authorities; regions and municipalities; VET institutions; enterprises; employer associations; sectoral organisations; chambers; professional and trade associations; and experts.

'Efficient funding' was mentioned in 19% of actions. References to 'promoting excellence/innovation' and 'supporting the learning outcomes approach' were far less frequent (4% and 6% of actions respectively).

Analysis of evidence provided shows the diverse understanding among countries of what an efficient mechanism, innovation and excellence are. Attention should be paid when developing the post-2020 priorities to providing clear definitions for such terms in order to ensure common understanding between countries.

## Key trends and messages

Other than the key achievements and challenges identified for each MTD, Cedefop and ETF analysis identified several common trends across countries and deliverables:

- (a) borderlines between VET for youths and adults, initial and continuing training are increasingly becoming less clear-cut, a trend already noticed in previous reviews. This underlines the need for greater flexibility and permeability between learning pathways and a variety of learning settings. 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;
- (b) countries increasingly mobilise international support and cooperation. Accessing EU funds has continued: mainly the ESF in the EU-28, not only for specific targeted projects but also longer-term system-level developments and reforms. Increasingly, *Erasmus+* has been used to support the work on the Riga 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. As a result, sustainable use and complementarity of national and EU funding should be further promoted to guarantee that valuable initiatives developed in the reporting

period are continued at national level, once EU funding stops.

The Bruges and Riga cycles have helped reinforce cooperation across borders and supported countries in making significant progress on the five MTDs. The existing deliverables contributed to more cooperation between systems, even more for most candidate countries.

A key message of the Cedefop and ETF analysis is the need to preserve continuity when designing the post-2020 priorities. Rather than radically changing the current deliverables, they should be fine-tuned, strengthening countries' capacity to implement work that has already started. This takes time; by September 2019, only 64% of the actions undertaken in the reporting period had reached the full-scale implementation stage, while one third of actions were still in the pipeline, whether at the legislative (12%), piloting (8.5%), design or public consultation stages.

Current deliverables could be streamlined to accommodate new themes such as:

- (a) the emergence and increased visibility of VET at higher levels (at European qualifications framework (EQF) levels 5 to 8), a notable change in recent years highlighted in the recent Cedefop study on the changing nature and role of VET;
- (b) the role of VET in providing quick responses and coping with the massive changes in occupational and qualification profiles, especially caused by the digital transformation;
- (c) career guidance and validation could become more prominent in the agenda, as it will become more difficult than ever to navigate through the new era of the digitised world of work and possible over-flexible education and training systems;
- (d) strengthening learner-centred and collaborative teaching and learning including through learning outcomes and competence-based approaches. This contributes to cultivating learners' sense of ownership and responsibility for their own learning and increasing their motivation;

- (e) international mobility of learners and VET teachers and trainers, addressed so far in parallel to the Copenhagen process;
- (f) the importance of excellence of VET at all levels to support innovation and competitiveness, embedding VET in regional economic developments.

In planning future cooperation, it is very important to take forward what has been accomplished and focus on connecting, in a meaningful way, VET policies and initiatives that address different areas.

# Policy context

2017 marked the EU 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, and the European Social Fund supported retraining of the unemployed. 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 covered issues that are topical today: anticipating and better matching skills supply and demand, removing mobility obstacles and information 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, within the Copenhagen process <sup>(3)</sup>, European cooperation in VET has been based on voluntary commitment and, increasingly, features policy learning. Inspired by the [Bologna process](#) <sup>(4)</sup> 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.

While priorities in the past had been adjusted every two years <sup>(5)</sup>, a new approach was adopted in the 2010 Bruges communiqué. Ministers

of the EU-28+ <sup>(6)</sup> (Council of the European Union and European Commission, 2010), candidate countries and European social partners set out objectives for 2020, combining them with shorter-term priority areas (deliverables). 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 A5 in the annex).

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, VET providers 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) and have been reinforced in the *European new skills agenda* (European Commission, 2016b). Together with the adult learning agenda (Council of the European Union, 2011), the five MTDs of the Riga conclusions 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

<sup>(3)</sup> See the Copenhagen declaration [here](#) and more on the EU policy in the field of VET:

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/eu-policy-in-the-field-of-vocational-education-and-training-vet\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/eu-policy-in-the-field-of-vocational-education-and-training-vet_en)

<sup>(4)</sup> The Bologna process and the European higher education area:

[https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/higher-education/bologna-process-and-european-higher-education-area\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/higher-education/bologna-process-and-european-higher-education-area_en)

<sup>(5)</sup> Communiqués of Maastricht (2004), Helsinki (2006), Bordeaux (2008) and Bruges (2010).

<sup>(6)</sup> EU Member States before 31.1.2020 plus Iceland and Norway.

**Box 1. Riga 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).

VET in many EU Member States, EEA and candidate countries. The Copenhagen process has even proved useful beyond these countries and formed the basis for VET reforms in countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina. Helping to achieve overall education and training objectives, it has supported work towards Europe's strategic goals: previously those set for 2010 <sup>(7)</sup> and then the Europe 2020 targets.

Since 2010, in parallel to their cooperation 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 (Euro-

pean semester). The EU's economic governance process for the candidate countries, 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 included apprenticeships, reducing early leaving from education and training, improving educa-

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

tional attainment of disadvantaged groups, and reforming teacher and trainer training.

Several other EU level policy initiatives and processes have also covered VET or related issues. National 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) <sup>(8)</sup>, aims to help strengthen the 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. The alliance 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 <sup>(9)</sup>. A European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships was also adopted in March 2018, supporting work on this MTD (MTD 1) (Council of the EU, 2018a).

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. Numerous policy documents have addressed this challenge recently. The European pillar of social rights (European Commission, 2017) has laid down the principles for building a more inclusive and fairer Union. In December 2018, the opinion on the future of vocational education and training post 2020 of the Advisory

Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT) set out the vision for future VET systems in making the EU competitive, cohesive and resilient.

The ET 2020 report had already stressed the need for inclusive education and training, intercultural and citizenship competences to support the EU's core values in times of unprecedented challenges: terrorist attacks and the need to integrate large numbers of people, newly arriving from different countries and 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, the European Commission launched in 2016 a 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 61 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 new recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning was adopted on 22 May 2018 (Council of the European Union, 2018c), with implications for the related Riga priority (MTD 4).

The 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

<sup>(8)</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1147> [accessed 31.1.2018].

<sup>(9)</sup> Its members – social partners, representatives of the Member States, Cedefop and the ETF – developed relevant guiding principles (European Commission, 2016a).



a qualification at EQF level 3 or 4. Learning offers should build on assessment and validation of their skills and competences supported by guidance (Council of the European Union, 2016b).

The *Upskilling pathways* recommendation specifically reinforces the Riga deliverable on access to VET and qualifications for all (MTD 3). The European Commission adopted an implementation report (European Commission, 2019) – *Taking stock of implementation measures* – where it highlighted the achievements and the challenges. The report welcomes that several countries are ‘setting in motion new ambitious agenda to support the upskilling and reskilling of the adult population’ (European Commission, 2019, p. 28). According to the report, validation is the measure around which many of the actions evolve while digital skills are priorities in several countries. Nevertheless, outreach and motivation of adults remains a challenge as the measures outlined by Member States still target a small number of individuals.

The role of the European qualifications framework (EQF) was reaffirmed. The revised EQF recommendation (Council of the European Union, 2017a) promotes using qualifications frameworks to visualise pathways to credentials and supporting validation of people’s skills and competences. Qualification frameworks also support mobility, the regulatory framework for which was reinforced with the Council recommendation on automatic mutual recognition, adopted in November 2018 (Council of the EU, 2018b). The *ErasmusPro* initiative, aiming to boost long-duration mobility of VET learners and apprentices, had been introduced in 2017.

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 Member States to develop national skills strategies and monitors pro-

gress<sup>(10)</sup>. As part of the new skills agenda, this initiative also relates to MTD 4.

Skills mismatch has increased since the outbreak of the crisis; concerns that it 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 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). It 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 lifelong 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<sup>(11)</sup>. The ‘social scoreboard’ to track Member State performance, includes the early leaving and NEET indicators. It is intended to inform the European Semester of economic policy coordination<sup>(12)</sup>.

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).

<sup>(10)</sup> European Commission website on [the digital skills and jobs coalition](#).

<sup>(11)</sup> Delivering on the European pillar of social rights: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1226&langId=en> [accessed 31.1.2018].

<sup>(12)</sup> <https://composite-indicators.jrc.ec.europa.eu/social-scoreboard/>  
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1196&newsId=9163&furtherNews=yes> [accessed 31.1.2018].

## 2015-16: baseline and countries' priorities

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.

This report covers the period from spring 2015 to spring 2019. It presents an overview of national developments regarding the five MTDs agreed in Riga. It focuses on countries' priorities in terms of MTDs and the policy measures selected to address them. To guide the information collection, Directors General for VET were invited in early 2016 to indicate deliverables and areas their countries were prioritising or intending to focus on. The report highlights the reforms as shaped by national contexts.

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

- (a) this stand-alone cross-country synthesis report;
- (b) individual country chapters which are presented separately <sup>(13)</sup>.

To contextualise the developments, this cross-country synthesis has started with setting the policy context (Chapter 1).

Chapter 2 recalls the situation in 2015 and what countries' priorities were in 2015-16. Chapter 3 synthesises the main development lines in countries' VET policies during 2015-19. In doing so, it examines continuity between Bruges and Riga.

Chapter 4 focuses on major developments by individual MTD. Information was collected through a same questionnaire addressed to all participating countries. Cedefop's ReferNet partners provided the information for the EU-28+; for the candidate countries, the final respondents were the Directors General for VET. The informa-

tion on the EU-28+, also drew on other sources: the EQAVET Secretariat surveys 2016-18; the 2016 validation inventory; Cedefop's country reviews on apprenticeship; and work on statistical data. The analysis of findings aims to reflect on the achievements within the reporting period.

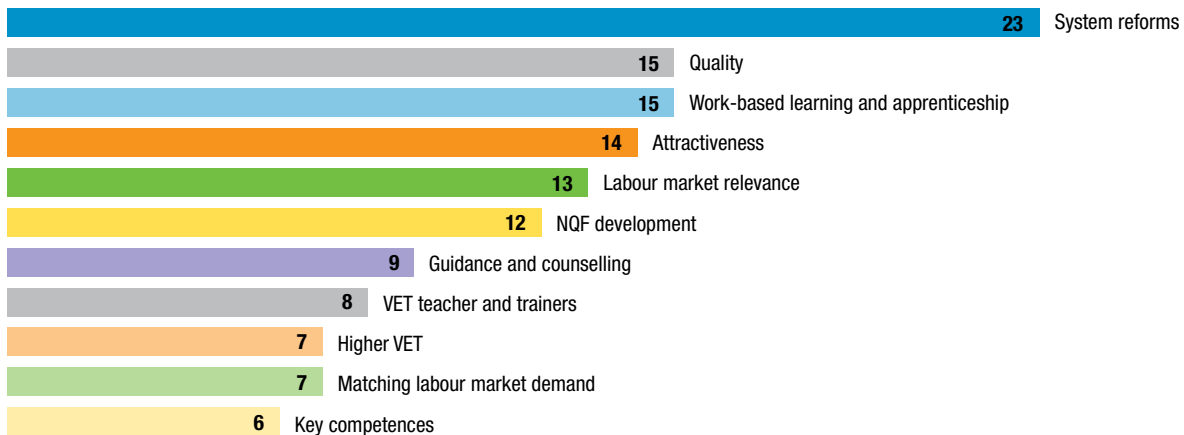
Chapter 5 reflects on common or popular trends emerging from the review and continuing work and discussions on VET development over time. This chapter proposes points for further consideration in the period post 2020.

Cedefop is responsible for information and analysis on EU Member States, Iceland and Norway (EU-28+); the ETF 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 handled by the two agencies.

The monitoring framework of the Riga cycle is based on three principles: to focus on countries priorities in terms of MTDs, extensive involvement of Directors General for Vocational Education and Training (DGVTs) and Advisory Committees for Vocational Training (ACVTs), and clustering the countries. It includes three phases, with 2015 as a starting point, an interim report (2017) and final report (forthcoming 2020) based on yearly monitoring of policy developments and outcomes. The monitoring and analysis delivered solid outcomes that were discussed at regular intervals at the ACVT and DGVT meetings and with the participating countries. This approach has helped to coordinate policies at European level with progress in the countries and informed the ACVT opinion on the future of VET. As an evolving system it can improve some areas, such as addressing missing data and the perceived 'burden' for countries in reporting.

<sup>(13)</sup> Country chapters are published online on Cedefop's website at: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/vet-policy-developments>

Figure 1. Focus of VET policy reform 2010-14



NB: The figures indicate the number of countries reporting reforms and developments in the specific field.  
Source: Cedefop (2015b). *Stronger vocational education and training for better lives*. Briefing note, March 2015.

## 2.1. Baseline: the situation in 2015

Based on information about progress in the 2011-14 Bruges deliverables, this section summarises where countries stood in 2015 in terms of the Riga MTDs (Cedefop, 2015a and 2015b). It involves statistical VET-related information from Cedefop and the ETF, including country performance against the ET 2020 targets.

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

At the beginning of the reporting period, EU-28+ countries were in the course of carrying out the VET reform engaged at Copenhagen and reinforced in Bruges; the wake of the economic crisis was an influence. 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 respective 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 Bru-

ges 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 striven 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 or similar schemes in non-traditional sectors or in higher education. However, involving small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in apprenticeships was proving a challenge. Ensuring the quality of work-based learning was considered an area for improvement. Image problems prevailed.

In the EU, on average, the proportion of upper secondary students in work-based VET amounted to 34% (Table 1) <sup>(14)</sup>.

<sup>(14)</sup> Data available at EU level did not necessarily convey the full picture. For statistical purposes, work-based IVET considers enrolments in combined work and school-based VET as opposed to both mainly school-based and mostly work-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. Apprenticeships are accounted for in work-based IVET, provided that these conditions are met (Cedefop, 2017a).

In several countries, initiatives were being taken to set up closer and more regular relationships between public authorities, education institutions and 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 but there were obstacles in the form of privacy protection legislation. The use of collected data for assisting the design of VET provision or helping at-risk groups was limited.

On the inclusiveness front – a concern given high youth unemployment – measures tended to focus on young people in transition to the labour market. Reducing the number of early leavers from education and training or helping them reintegrate into schooling was a top priority. Incentives for learners, enterprises and VET institutions were used to tackle this challenge. Apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning became major components of youth guarantee plans. 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 (including guidance) to raise training participation among the low-skilled and other at-risk groups were being expanded. Adult participation in lifelong learning reached 10.7% in 2014 and 2015, while the EU goal for 2020 is 15% (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. Validation arrangements tended to cover only a specific part of education and training; opportunities were still little known among citizens, particularly those who they could benefit most. Priority was being given to linking validation settings to NQFs, as proposed in the related Council recommendation (Council of the European Union, 2012).

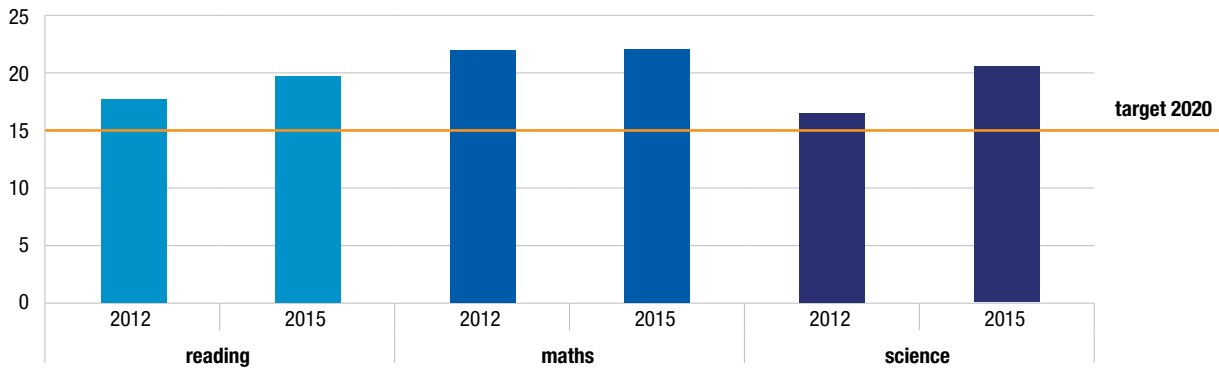
Key competences (MTD 4) are essential for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion, lifelong learning and employment. Key competences had received increasing attention during 2011-14, particularly basic skills and opportunities allowing the young and adults to acquire, 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 (Cedefop ReferNet, 2016a). 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 (see Figure 2).

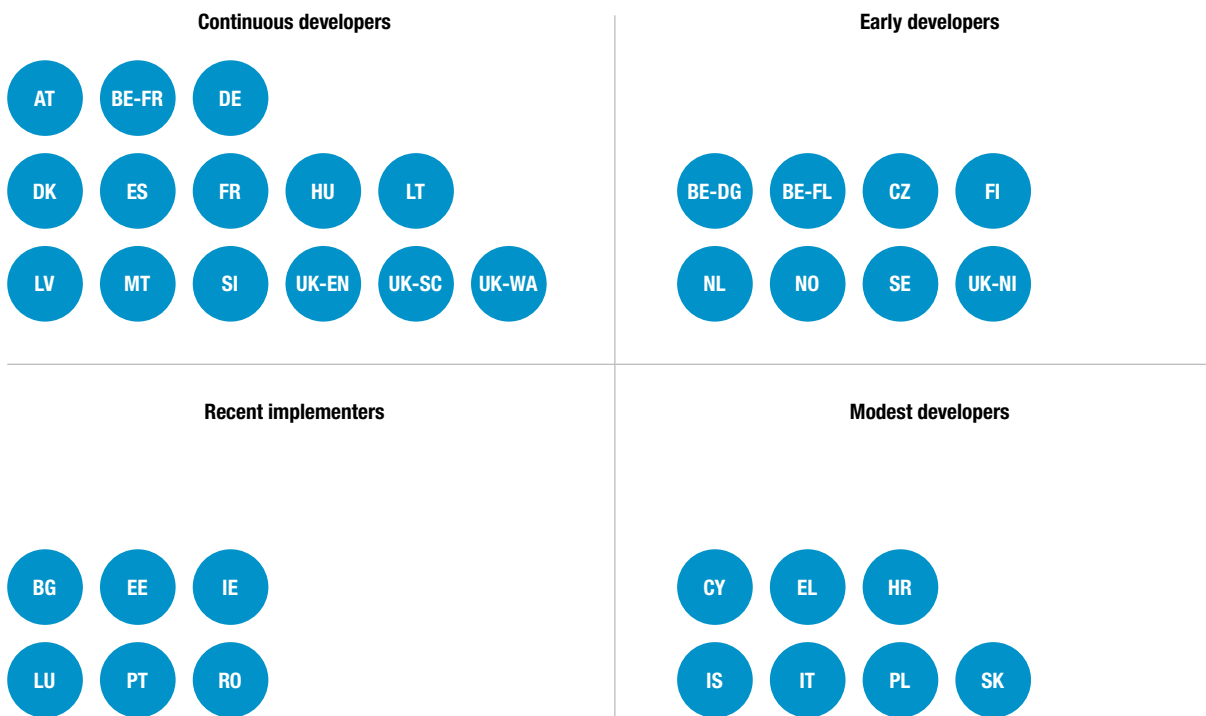
PIAAC results (OECD, 2013) – though very different across countries, even among people with similar qualifications – signalled that information-processing skills, like literacy and numeracy, required more attention in VET. As skills also need to be used to avoid losing them, working environments that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

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).

Figure 3. The EU-28+ in 2015



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

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 for their work; yet, about one in three of those employees were at risk of digital skill gaps (Cedefop, 2015c). According to the Euro-

pean 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

Table 1. **Framework data: EU averages in 2014-15**

<b>Access, attractiveness and flexibility</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>%</b>
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
<b>Skill development and labour market relevance</b>		
Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET	2014	1.0
STEM graduates from upper secondary IVET (% of total)	2014	30.0
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
<b>Overall transitions and labour market trends</b>		
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*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop research paper; No 61. Annex Masterfile indicators.

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 was provided systematically, such as for key competences, 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 but teacher training in enterprises was 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 en route to 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.

### 2.1.2. Candidate countries

This section is largely based on the ETF analysis of the progress made towards the Bruges Deliverables in 2012-14 by North 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<sup>(15)</sup> in 2010-14 and the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA)<sup>(16)</sup>. 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 the ETF's work and support provided to this country in recent years within the ETF's 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 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 increasing 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, widespread and persisting. 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.

<sup>(15)</sup> 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 website (ETF 2017a-f) and the full reports are on the [Torino process platform library](#).

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

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; yet these remained exceptions, rather than a common feature of 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 VET quality assurance 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 experiences in need of evaluation and mainstreaming as appropriate. The 2014 Bruges reporting showed that Montenegro and Turkey were more advanced: national quality assurance approaches were developed and based on stakeholder involvement, national reference points established, and EQAVET indicators partially introduced. However, even these two countries had a lot still 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 graduate tracer studies 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 and 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 qualification types and 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. Montenegro referenced its NQF to EQF in November 2014, and referencing activities were advancing in Turkey and North 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 North 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 devel-



oped 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, from 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 North 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<sup>(17)</sup> 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 North 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, and 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, but the 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 show that participation of teachers in continuing profes-

sional development remained low in most countries<sup>(18)</sup>. A major issue of the pre-service preparation of VET staff in vocational 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; the skills and competences they offered had limited relevance and applicability.

## 2.2. Countries' initial priorities for 2016-20

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

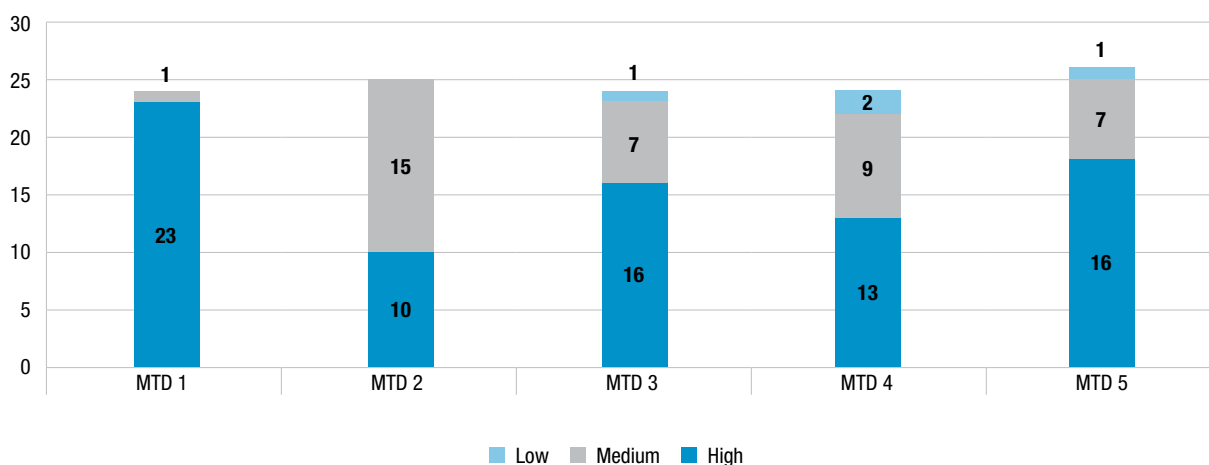
A survey among Directors General for VET in early 2016 (Cedefop, 2016a) highlighted that, from among the responding countries (Figure 4):

- (a) all but one country gave high priority to work-based learning (MTD 1);
- (b) 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 two thirds of the respondents;
- (c) more than half of the countries gave high priority to MTD 3 (access for all);
- (d) more than half assigned medium-level priority to quality assurance and feedback loops (MTD 2);

<sup>(17)</sup> North Macedonia did not take part in the 2012 PISA round.

<sup>(18)</sup> See ETF (2016a) – a summary of the mapping exercise on CPD for VET teachers in south-eastern Europe – and ETF (2016b-f) – the national reports.

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



NB: 26 respondents.

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

(e) only a few countries assigned low priority to any of the MTDs.

The survey also explored how the EU-28+ intended to address the MTDs and their specific focus areas (Figure 5, Table A 2 and Table A 3 in the 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. However, 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.

Under MTD 2, work on EQAVET was generally continuing. Most respondents reported work on feedback loops in IVET and more than half 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 peo-

ple, 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 the Riga conclusions were endorsed. Some were also referring to apprenticeships and initiatives to acquire key competences for these target groups.

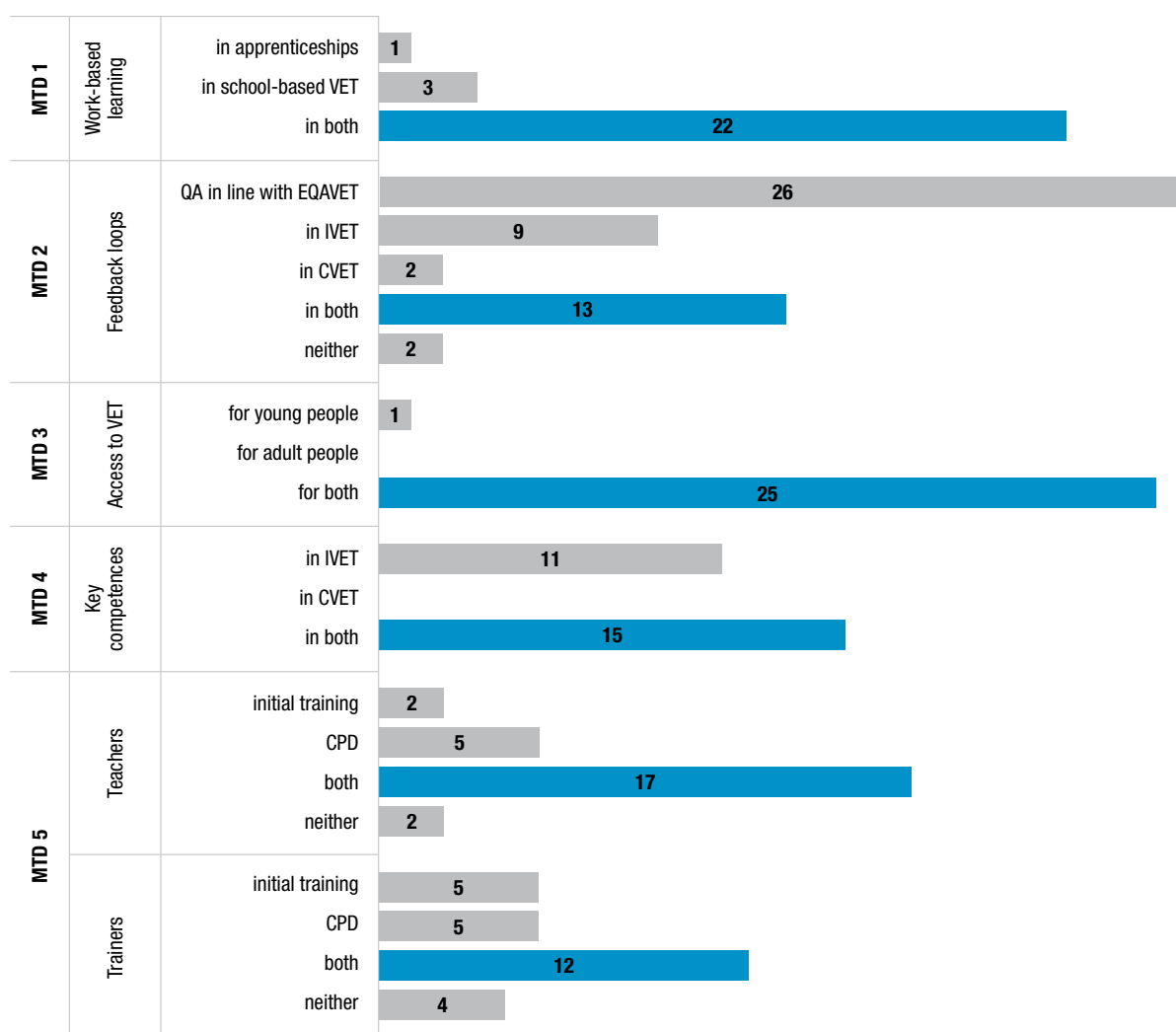
While work on key competences (MTD 4) for IVET was on the agenda in all countries, just over half reported promoting them in CVET; in most cases the aim was to strengthen their visibility, importance and recognition with a focus on learning outcomes. Actions tended to relate to language, digital and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

### 2.2.2. Candidate countries

Candidate countries classified the five MTDs according to urgency for action based on evidence consistent with relevant reporting exercises (economic reform programmes, Small Business Act). Subsequently they identified one priority

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).

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.

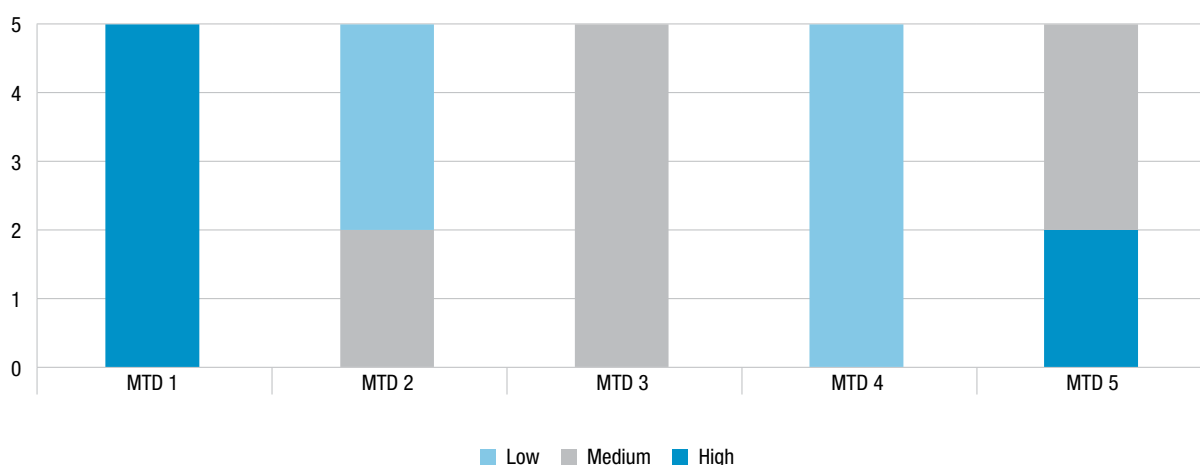
As shown in Figure 6, all candidate countries selected MTD 1 as their top priority.

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.

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).

#### 2.2.2.1. 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 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 allowing sufficient time to implement policy choices. The *ex-ante* impact assess-

ment 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.

#### 2.2.2.2. 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 VET system levels.
- (c) Work-based learning now anchored in many VET programmes:
  - (i) Albania has 98 VET qualifications based on occupational standards;
  - (ii) Montenegro has developed 220 occupational standards and 53 qualification standards;
  - (iii) Serbia has 69 VET qualifications 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.

2.2.2.3. *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.

# National VET policies: 2015-19 developments at a glance

## 3.1. 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, is meant to help achieve the Bruges communiqué's 11 strategic and four overarching objectives for 2020.

The 22 deliverables in the Bruges cycle comprised several with a narrow focus and others that were much broader. Several deliverables contributed to more than one strategic objective and also to the overall objectives. 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 Bruges 2011-14 short-term 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 the correspondence between Bruges and Riga objectives.

Continuity in the relationship between deliverables and strategic objectives aims 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 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.

## 3.2. Policy developments

### 3.2.1. 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 as well as devising new types of initiative.

Some reform strands have become more prominent. These include developing apprenticeship, improving school-business cooperation, and promoting school self-assessment. Examples of VET graduate tracking and anticipating skills needs existed and have become more common. Other actions that had been initiated before Riga and were amplified since include 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.

Some other emerging trends are more novel. In work-based learning, some countries have started to extend apprenticeship to higher education; providing SMEs with scaffolding learning and support to enable sustainable involvement in apprenticeship and work-based learning schemes; setting up coordinators tasked with boosting school-business cooperation; and further opening up apprenticeship to disadvantaged learners. In the area of key competences, financial literacy seems to be emerging as a key competence, and developing systematic strate-

gies for key competences in the young and adults (as with digital competences) also appears as an emerging trend. In VET teaching, reforming the systems for the continuing professional development of VET teachers and trainers, particularly through in-company traineeships for teachers, is also certainly among the new trends.

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

By September 2019, 64% of the actions undertaken in the reporting period had reached the full-scale implementation stage (compared to 33% in September 2018). 12% were still undergoing the legislative process (32% one year earlier). 8.5% of actions were in the piloting phase (13% one year earlier), and the rest was still at a preliminary stage, whether first announcement (1.5% against 4% in 2018), design phase (7% against 14% in 2018) or public consultation (1% against 3% in 2018) <sup>(19)</sup>.

While preparing these actions, the EU-28+ took the Riga transversal principles <sup>(20)</sup> into account, although to varying extents. It was most often reported (in 70% of actions for which a transversal principle was mentioned) that relevant stakeholders were being involved: public education/training and labour market authorities; regions and municipalities; VET institutions; enterprises; employer associations; sectoral organisations; chambers; professional and trade associations; and experts. These stakeholders most frequently participate in shaping VET policies and study programmes, and the governance of VET institutions. Teachers' unions and trade unions in general may also be involved, but are mentioned less often. Reference is also sometimes made to research organisations and learners.

'Efficient funding' was also sometimes claimed (19% of actions). Reference to 'promoting excellence/innovation' and 'supporting

the learning outcomes approach' were far less frequent (4% and 6% of actions respectively). However, the Riga conclusions do not provide any definition or criteria that would allow for identifying whether a funding mechanism is 'efficient', nor what exactly is meant by 'innovation' and 'excellence'. Subjective views may have guided statements in these areas. Also, explicit support to the learning outcomes approach appears to be comparatively low; this can be understood, however, since not every policy action (such as promoting guidance or making the VET teaching profession attractive) has to do with this transversal principle.

Each MTD featured specific trends. Apprenticeships, dual systems and alternance schemes attracted 56% of all identified actions in MTD 1, which also covers other forms of work-based learning <sup>(21)</sup>. 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 for their own customers. Examples of legal requirements to take up apprentices are also appearing. A few countries are developing apprenticeship in the public sector.

In MTD 2, about a half (44%) of the actions on developing quality assurance mechanisms have been specifically targeted at VET providers <sup>(22)</sup>, the rest being more generally addressed to setting up an overall approach to quality assurance (25%), increasing the use of indicators (7%), and quality assuring qualifications (5%). Almost half (43%) of the actions for developing information and feedback loops focused on anticipating training needs, while the remainder was addressed to graduate tracking (27%) and setting up formal information/feedback channels (13%).

MTD 3 is multifaceted, at the crossroads of easing entry, progression and completion; reskill-

<sup>(19)</sup> In 6% of cases, the status of actions could not be determined.

<sup>(20)</sup> See Box 1.

<sup>(21)</sup> (a) school-based VET with on-the-job training in the workplace; and (b) school-based VET with in-school work-based/practical training.

<sup>(22)</sup> Self-assessment, external evaluation and accreditation.

ing and upskilling; formal and non-formal VET; embracing both young and adults; and reaching out at-risk groups. Actions in the reporting period mainly addressed training, reskilling and upskilling vulnerable groups (21% of actions); increasing permeability and flexibility (18% of actions); improving guidance (14%); recognition-validation (14%); qualification transparency (NQFs, ECVET: 12%) and promoting equal opportunities for all (11%).

Action in MTD 4 has clearly focused on native and foreign languages (25% of actions), digital competence (21% of actions), and maths/science/technology (15% of actions). Key competences have been emphasised in national education/VET/lifelong learning strategies. IVET and CVET curricula and programmes have been revised accordingly. Specific dedicated strategies, campaigns and public agencies were set up, for example on digital competence or literacy. A trend to develop tools supporting key competences (competence mapping tools, tools to support the acquisition of digital skills, learning-to-learn, entrepreneurship competence and other emerging key competences) is on the rise.

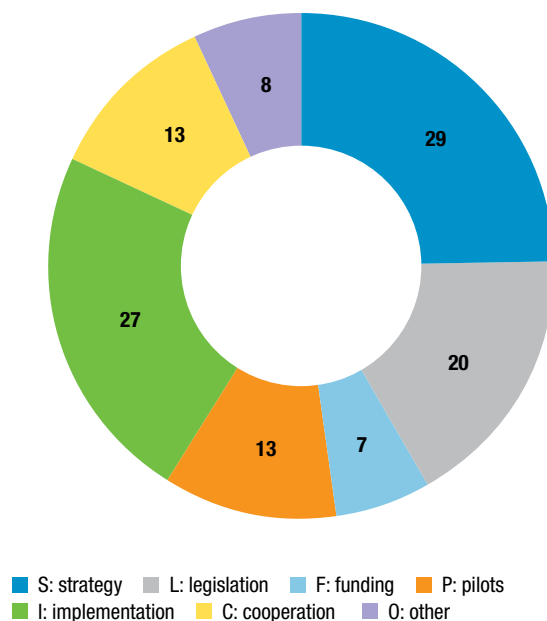
In MTD 5, 69% of actions were oriented towards VET school teachers. Depending on the country, measures aimed at redefining access requirements, attracting practice experts, building career systems, or promoting work-placements in companies for teachers. But, given the increasing trend towards workplace-based learning, training of in-company trainers has also received more attention. While access requirements are being reinforced, focus has also been on improving their training competence and their understanding of school and curriculum.

### 3.2.2. 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 2015-19 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 7.

Figure 7. **Developments in candidate countries by category**



Source: ETF section in Riga monitoring 2017 – Preliminary findings (Cedefop and 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 VET legislation has 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 North 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 inherited from the past; this is es-



pecially so in the western Balkans, though others are new, 'produced' in 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 <sup>(23)</sup>. Tracer systems were introduced in Albania, are being prepared in Montenegro, and are planned in North 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 during 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, North Macedonia has reinforced its institutional framework for NQF implementation. Albania and Serbia have progressed development of comprehensive NQFs, preparing or updating laws, setting up working groups, and surveying and revising qualifications. Referencing the NQFs of North 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 North 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.

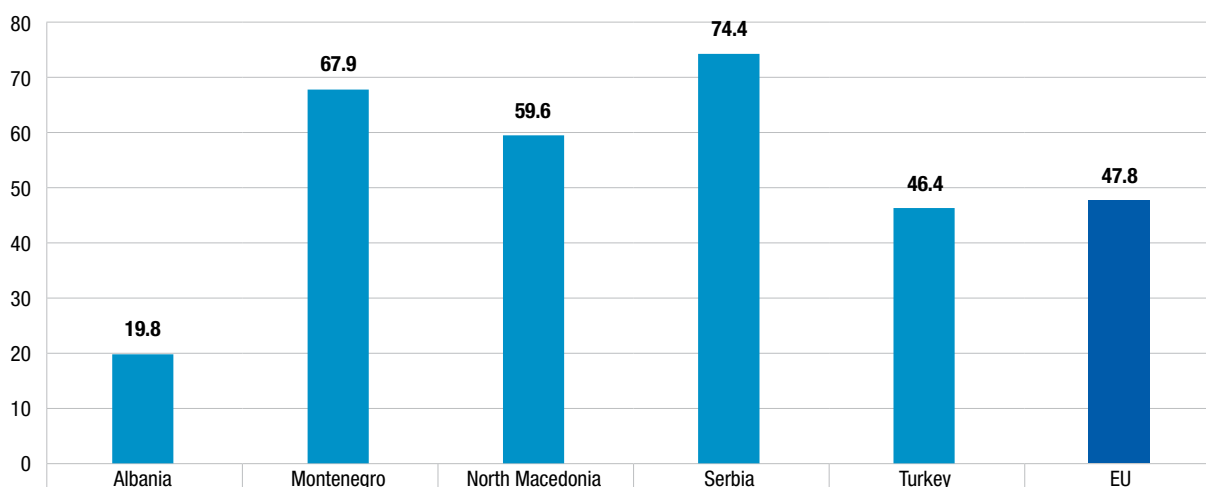
As key determinants of education and training quality, teachers and trainers in VET are at the heart of national VET reforms. The candidate countries have provided information about a considerable number of actions taken that concern teacher and trainer recruitment, induction, career paths and professional 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, persists. 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

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<sup>(23)</sup> Turkey already has such an information system in place.

Figure 8. Share of VET enrolment in upper secondary education (%), 2017



Source: ETF database, Eurostat.

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 North Macedonia and Montenegro: pilot activities targeting VET teacher training in enterprises and the intention to mainstream them.

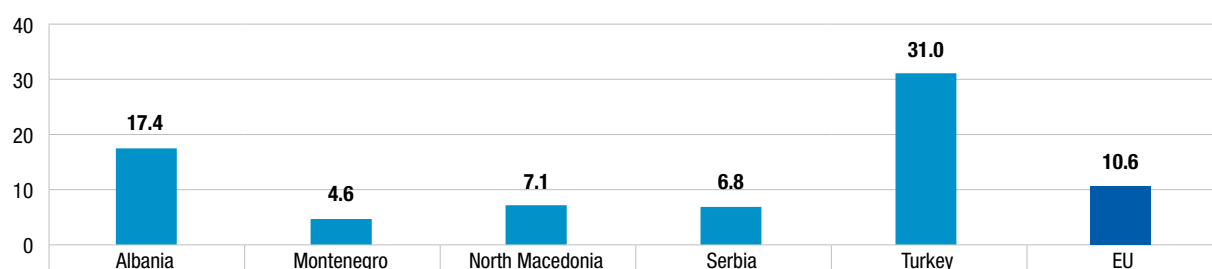
The candidate countries have committed to increasing the opportunities for work-based learning; since 2015, they have focused their efforts mainly on introducing or expanding apprenticeship schemes. The western Balkan candidate countries have recently taken serious steps to make formal apprenticeships 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 8 illustrates, ranging from approximately half to three quarters of all upper secondary education students; the share in Albania in 2017 was close to 20%.

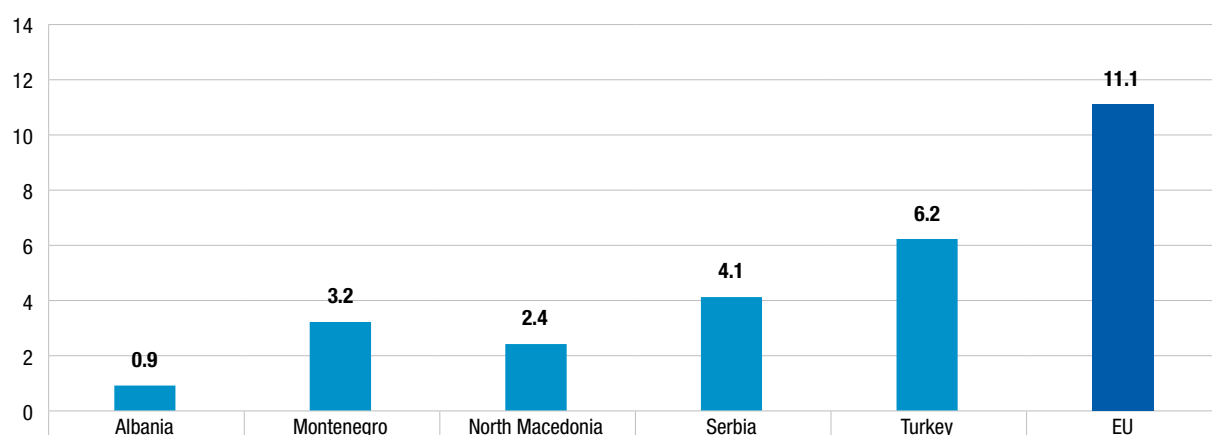
The objective of engaging more people in VET can be achieved not only by attracting new learners, but also by keeping VET learners within the system. Having them participate, learn and graduate with a proper qualification maximises the contribution of VET to combating early leaving from education and training. The performance of the region on this indicator in 2018 was mixed: Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia were already below the EU 2020 benchmark of 10%, scoring 4.6%, 7.1% and 6.8% respectively. Turkey and Albania lagged far behind, recording rates of 31% and 17.4% respectively (Figure 9)

Figure 9. **Early leavers from education and training (% aged 18-24), 2018**



Source: ETF database, Eurostat.

Figure 10. **Adult participation in lifelong learning (% aged 25-64), 2018**



Source: ETF database, Eurostat.

While the attractiveness of IVET in the candidate countries is generally high, participation in continuing training continues to face considerable problems: the countries seriously underperform in adult participation in lifelong learning, with the respective rates in 2018 ranging between 1% and 6%, (Figure 10). The candidate countries need to continue their efforts to build equitable and accessible VET systems, and to develop adult learning and validation of non-formal and informal learning procedures and mechanisms.

The candidate 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.

# National policy developments by MTD

## 4.1. EU-28+

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

Work on apprenticeships – and more generally on expanding work-based learning – has been continuously high on national agendas over the reporting period. Challenges in this endeavour have been discussed at meetings of the Advisory Committee and Directors General for VET and at various events. An overview of mainstream apprenticeship schemes in the EU-28+ was published in 2018 (Cedefop, 2018d) <sup>(24)</sup>.

This section focuses on developments in 2015-19 as reported by Cedefop's ReferNet <sup>(25)</sup>. It also draws on some of the information gained while Cedefop was supporting countries in their efforts to establish or improve apprenticeships.

By September 2019, 64% of the actions taken in this MTD during the reporting period had reached the full-scale implementation stage: 7% were in the piloting phase and 14% still in the legislative pipeline. Among the Riga transversal principles, 'involving stakeholders' was mentioned in 80% of actions for which information was available.

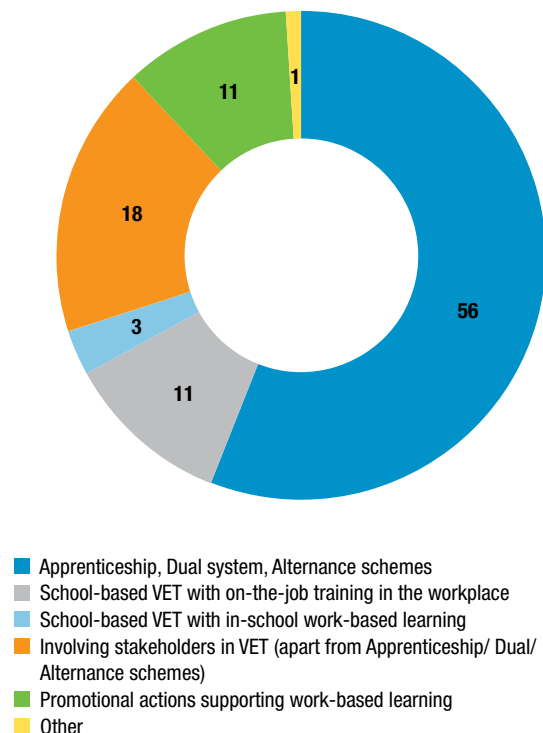
Countries' actions have been as manifold as their contexts and development stages prior to 2015. Member States' initiatives during the reporting period developed along five major lines:

- (a) introducing or reforming apprenticeship, dual system or alternance schemes;
- (b) developing workplace-based on-the-job training (including traineeships and internships) into school-based VET;

- (c) developing in-school work-based learning into school-based VET (through on-site labs, workshops, kitchens, restaurants, junior/practice firms, simulations or real business/projects assignments);
- (d) further involving stakeholders in VET;
- (e) promotional actions supporting work-based learning (campaigns, fairs).

Actions in relation to apprenticeships <sup>(26)</sup> have been the most popular (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Major policies related to work-based learning, EU-28+



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

<sup>(24)</sup> 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.

<sup>(25)</sup> References to countries are as examples and not necessarily exhaustive; also, apprenticeships in other countries may already have had these features in place before 2015.

<sup>(26)</sup> As national concepts and use of terms may differ from those at EU level, examples grouped under apprenticeship may not always fully fit.

#### 4.1.1.1. *Introducing/reforming apprenticeship, dual VET, and alternance schemes*

All Member States currently have apprenticeships, dual VET or other alternance schemes in place. In the reporting period, apprenticeships/dual VET schemes were introduced in Bulgaria, Czechia, Greece, Latvia, Romania and Slovakia. Apprenticeship was reintroduced in Slovenia. In Lithuania, limited opportunities for apprenticeship existed before 2015 and were then extended. Most countries had received related

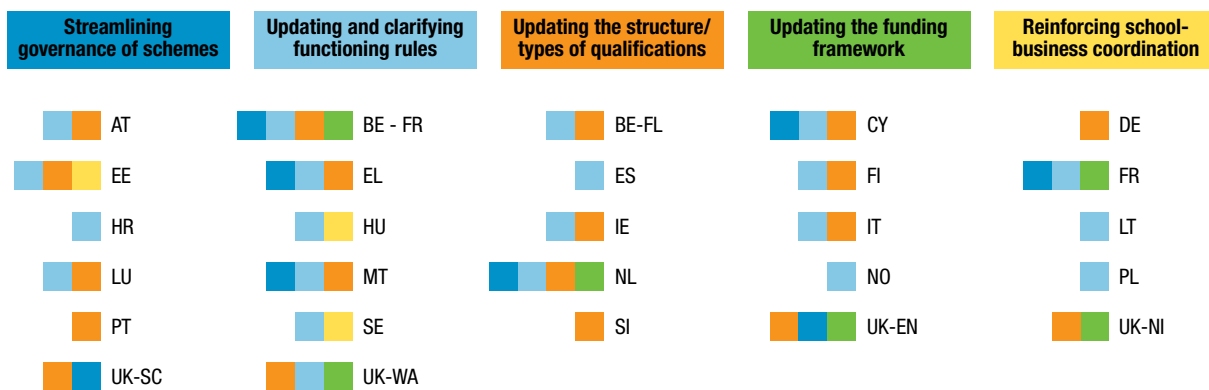
recommendations in the context of the EU-level economic policy coordination.

Most countries adjusted or reformed any existing apprenticeships. Reform of apprenticeships, dual systems and alternance schemes targeted the system as a whole, training organisations, and learners.

#### (a) System-level reforms

Figure 12 shows the main types of reform.

Figure 12. **Reforming apprenticeships, dual systems and alternance schemes**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

#### Box 2. System-level reforms: examples <sup>(27)</sup>

##### 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). Most 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 stand-

<sup>(27)</sup> More details can be found in the respective country chapters at: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/vet-policy-developments>

ards, apprentice 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 Belgium (fl), 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.

### 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.

### Reinforcing school-business coordination

In Estonia, within the framework of the *Labour market and education cooperation* programme, education-business coordinators were introduced into schools, tasked with finding enterprise partners and coordinating cooperation in apprenticeship training. VET schools received support to strengthen cooperation between employers and education institutions for developing work-based learning. Cooperation activities supported under the projects included: training company instructors; preparing, rolling-out and evaluating work-based learning activities; piloting and developing new forms/models of work-based learning; introducing short-term internships for VET teachers in enterprises; and involving representatives of business in teaching. National and regional coordinators have also been set up in Sweden, to assist schools in their collaboration with local enterprises.

### Introducing new apprenticeship degrees

In UK-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 an annual pay bill in excess of GBP 3 million (EUR 3.38 million) have to pay 0.5% to supplement government apprenticeship funding.

Source: ReferNet.

## (b) Reforms targeted to training organisations

This second type of reform aimed to:

- (a) push companies to upgrade their work-based learning practices (Greece, Spain, Malta,);
- (b) stimulate companies' supply of training places: through financial incentives (Belgium (fr), Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Netherland, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, UK-England); non-financial stimuli (Belgium (fr), Estonia, Malta, Norway); or via legal requirements (Norway);
- (c) provide training enterprises with support (Croatia, Cyprus, Poland);
- (d) involve the public sector in taking on apprentices (France, Norway, UK-England);
- (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, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, United Kingdom).

**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. This 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 21%) and 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 SME employees 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 includes provision for 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 an associated 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 from 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.

In Croatia, the *Erasmus+* funded *Cap4App* project (2016-18), run by the Croatian Chamber of Economy (CCE) in cooperation with major national stakeholders and the Austrian Federal Chamber of Economy, aimed to support SME involvement in apprenticeships. The project facilitated the implementation of apprenticeship programmes by SMEs. Apprenticeship advisors were trained to provide administrative assistance and counselling services to SMEs and VET schools for the introduction of apprenticeship schemes. Project results included toolkits for apprenticeship advisors, a guidebook for the introduction of apprenticeships, and a training programme for in-company mentors.

### **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 UK-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 included incentives for learners to enrol in apprenticeship programmes through award of specific scholarships (Belgium (fr), Denmark, Estonia, Croatia Hungary, Slovakia); tax exemptions (Latvia); increasing apprentice remuneration (France, Malta, Slovakia); and infor-

mation and guidance including taster days in companies (Belgium (de), France). Efforts were also made to open up apprenticeship further to disadvantaged groups of learners (Belgium (fr), Estonia, Austria, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, UK-Scotland) or to learners experiencing difficulties with completing the standard apprenticeship pathway (Norway).

### **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 much in 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 UK-Scotland, the 2015 Equalities action plan for modern apprenticeships addressed young people from ethnic minority backgrounds, young disabled people, and care leavers entering modern apprenticeships. It also tackled gender imbalances, such as the lower number of women 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.

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.



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.

#### 4.1.1.2. *School-based VET with work-place-based on-the-job training*

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

- (a) refining and further structuring the framework for work placements (France);
- (b) increasing the duration of practical training in school-based VET (Cyprus);
- (c) expanding practical training in school-based VET through requiring more VET programmes to include practical training (Belgium (fl), Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland);
- (d) setting up coordinators to aid cooperation between schools and businesses (Czechia);
- (e) setting up incentives for greater participation of learners in school-based VET (Estonia, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia).

### Box 5. Reforming workplace-based on-the-job training in school-based VET: examples

#### Refining and further structuring the framework for work placements

In France, 2016 regulations complemented, refined and improved the rules for organising work placements, including planning, follow-up and assessment, and objectives setting, teaching methods and support provision. More than 350 internship hubs (*pôles de stages*) aimed to organise schools and businesses into local networks and support students in finding work placements were also rolled out.

#### 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 an enterprise, or through a virtual training enterprise, or through apprenticeship. Companies that have training capacity are listed on a national register 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; the extent varies by education level (basic, upper-secondary, post-secondary).

In UK-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 in 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 Czechia, 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 teacher internships in companies, and keeps close contact with stakeholders, such as representatives from chambers of commerce and sector councils.

Source: ReferNet.

#### 4.1.1.3. School-based VET with in-school work-based learning

Action in this strand consisted of promoting investment to upgrade work-based learning in in-school facilities. In Spain, the royal decrees that regulate VET qualifications in the education system updated requirements for facilities (workshops, laboratories) and equipment; education institutions must comply with these in order to be authorised to deliver work-based learning programmes. In Poland, calls for projects were launched, inviting projects for the reconstruction of school workshops and laboratories, and for equipping schools with tools and appropriate materials.

#### 4.1.1.4. Increasing stakeholder involvement in VET

Main actions in this strand focused on strengthening cooperation between schools and businesses through (Box 6):

- (a) setting up a national/regional education-economy council (Belgium (fr), Ireland, UK-Scotland);
- (b) participation of enterprises/the business world in programme design (Czechia, Ireland, Croatia, Poland, UK-England);
- (c) participation of experts from enterprises in teaching (Czechia, Estonia);
- (d) participation of trade unions and other stakeholders in designing VET policies (Bulgaria).

### 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 standards 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 the institution and representatives of the 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 Czechia, obliged schools to develop cooperation with employers in related study fields. Schools 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 Czechia, the 2016 amendment of the School Act, obliging schools to develop cooperation with employers, allows experts from practice to participate in theoretical training at school and in the practice part of final examinations.

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.

#### Involving trade unions and other stakeholders in designing VET policies

In September 2018, Bulgaria established a Consultative Council for VET with the participation of employers' organisations, trade Unions, the Council of University Rectors, and civil society representatives. The council aims to support the Minister for Education and Science in implementing secondary VET reform, including the development of dual VET. It is intended to work as a space for structured dialogue between stakeholders to coordinate actions, preparing recommendations and proposals for necessary legislation changes.

Source: ReferNet.

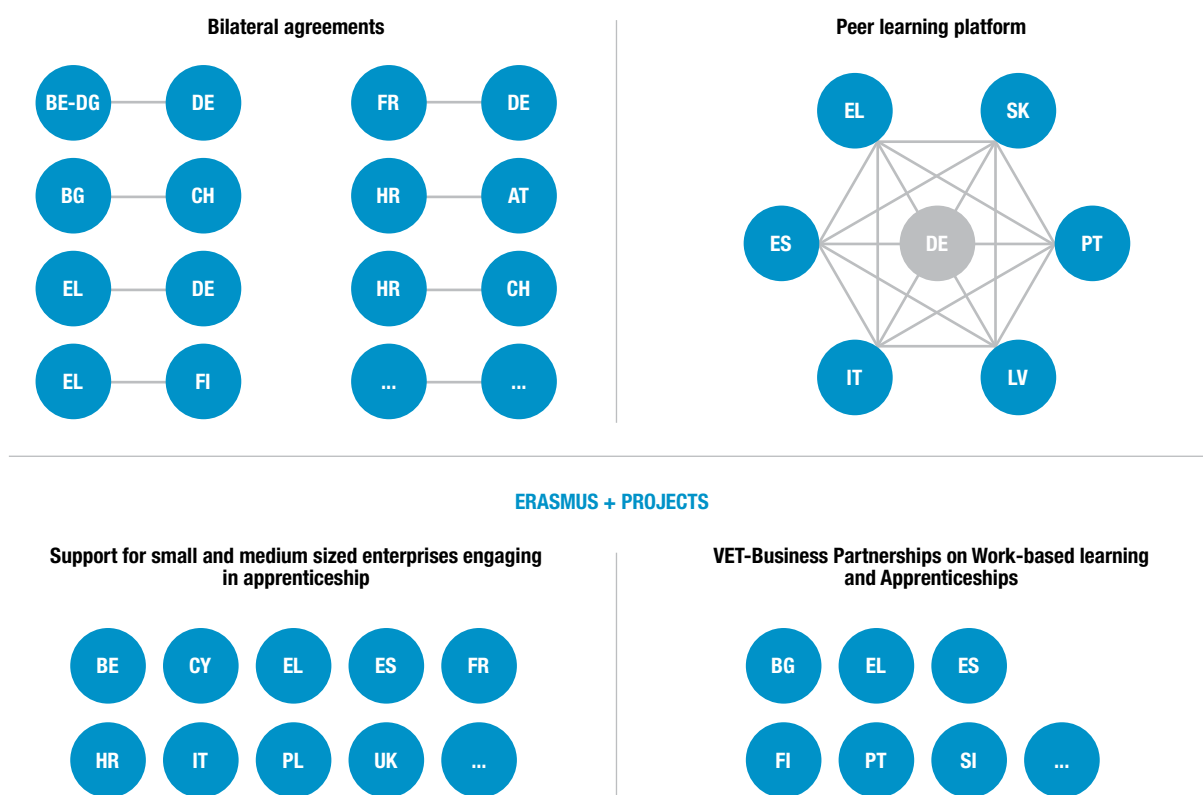
#### 4.1.1.5. International peer learning and support

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 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 promoting work-based learning/apprenticeships and make VET more attractive. Countries also participated in the Cedefop thematic country review of apprenticeships programme (Croatia, French-speaking region of Belgium, Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Lithuania, Malta, Slovenia, Sweden) <sup>(28)</sup>.

<sup>(28)</sup> See [Cedefop's web page on apprenticeship](#).

Figure 13. **International policy learning and support: examples**



Source: Cedefop and Cedefop based on ReferNet.

**Box 7. Informing policy by learning from others: examples**

In 2015-16, the Education and Employment Ministry in Malta and MCAST worked towards amending 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 paid 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. According to the new law, apprenticeships can be introduced in these programmes, so 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: Cedefop (2017b). *Apprenticeship review: Slovenia. Putting apprenticeship on track in Slovenia*. Luxembourg: Publication Office. Thematic country review.

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

In the Riga conclusions, all partners committed to develop quality assurance mechanisms in VET and, as part of quality assurance systems, establish continuous information and feedback loops.

By September 2019, 64% of the actions taken in this MTD during the reporting period had reached full-scale implementation; a further 7% were in the piloting phase. However, there were also 24% of actions still in the design phase. Among the Riga transversal principles, ‘involving stakeholders’ was mentioned in 61% of actions for which information was available.

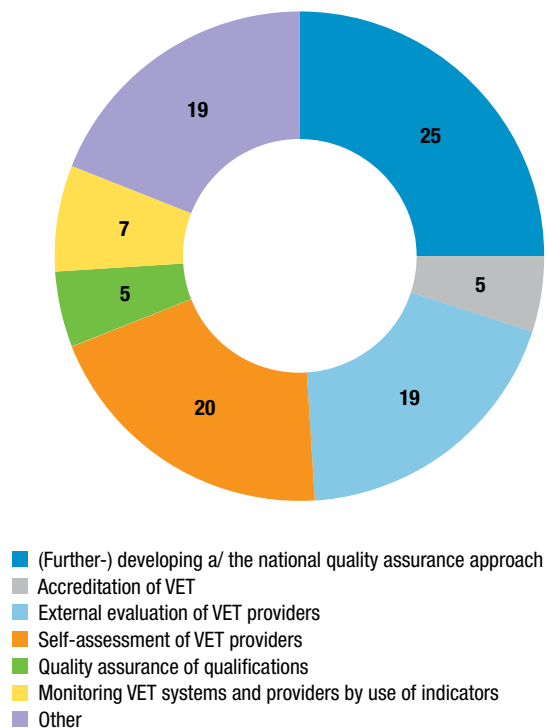
##### 4.1.2.1. Developing quality assurance mechanisms

Action in this area has been mostly oriented towards VET providers specifically (44% of actions, including self-assessment, external evaluation and accreditation) and more generally to the quality assurance approach (25% of actions). Developing the use of indicators (7%) and quality assuring qualifications (5%) have also been addressed, although to a lesser extent.

##### Actions directed towards VET providers

Enrooting quality assurance in VET providers’ culture, practices and operations has been the major focus of action to develop quality assurance mechanisms. Action has been mainly targeted at promoting and supporting self-assessment practices (20% of actions) through setting up assessment criteria (as in Czechia), providing guidelines for self-assessment (Finland, Croatia, Malta), developing a full-fledged methodology for self-assessment (France) and making self-assessment a regulatory obligation (Bulgaria). External evaluation of providers has been equally

Figure 14. Major policies related to developing quality assurance mechanisms, EU-28+



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

addressed (19% of actions) through establishing quality observatories (Luxembourg), setting up education inspectorates (Bulgaria) or assessment/investigation bodies (Belgium (fr), Norway), updating the inspection framework (the Netherlands), and evaluating VET programmes (Ireland, Malta, Sweden). UK-England developed an original peer-learning mechanism.

### Box 8. Rooting quality assurance in VET providers: examples

In France, a *Guide for self-assessment of apprenticeship centres* was issued in 2016 <sup>(29)</sup>. It set out 68 assessment criteria grouped into seven assessment areas, intended for assisting apprenticeship centres in identifying their strengths and weaknesses. The assessment exercise was meant to lead to remedial actions.

In Bulgaria, since January 2017, all vocational training centres must provide self-assessment reports specifying their achievements and good practices, drawbacks and proposals for improvements. These reports serve as a basis for ex-post control.

In 2017, following the 2016 amendment of the *Tertiary VET Act*, a national complaints board for Tertiary VET was established in Norway. The Board's mission is to process student complaints on individual decisions in relation to tertiary vocational education, with the aim of guaranteeing students' rights and ensuring equal treatment nationwide. In UK-England, the Department for Education launched in 2017 a £15 million fund to boost the quality of education offered across the further education sector. The main phase of this Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) will partner strong colleges with those in need of improvement to share best practice and drive up standards. Colleges that need support to improve will be able to apply for a grant to work with a stronger 'partnering' college; together they will create an action plan to tackle the issues they face. Evaluation of prior piloting in fourteen colleges showed that the mechanism increases awareness of good practice, fosters mutual learning and enables rapid action to improve quality.

Source: ReferNet.

#### Developing the quality assurance approach

Action has consisted of updating the approach to quality assurance in VET, making it more comprehensive and consistent. In general, the outcome took the

form of a plan, programme or framework, as was the case in Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Italy, Norway, Slovenia. Similar work was also undertaken in the Belgium (fl), Latvia, Portugal, Romania and UK-Scotland.

### Box 9. Reinforcing the national quality assurance approach for VET

In the reporting period, Slovenia was running a national project to develop a common model of quality assessment and quality assurance at all levels of formal education, from kindergarten to high school. This would include a common quality assurance framework with recommended standards and indicators in five areas: learning achievements, professional development, social climate, leadership/management and self-evaluation.

In Italy, the EQAVET NRP used European and national joint funding to support updating the national approach to VET quality assurance. It also developed instruments and tools to promote a quality assurance culture in national and regional bodies responsible for VET, as well as in teachers, trainers and learners, particularly for self-assessment and peer-review. Closer cooperation with social partners to revise the national approach has been achieved under the umbrella of the EQAVET NRP and the supervision of the Ministry of Labour. The National plan for quality of education and training was revised in 2017 and was approved by the State-Regions Conference on 21 December 2017. The plan constitutes a framework within which territorial declinations are allowed, in compliance with the autonomy of regions. It aims to reduce and prevent training failure and dropout through the continuous improvement of the training supply as well as the promotion of a quality culture.

Source: ReferNet.

<sup>(29)</sup> CNEFOP (2016). *Guide d'auto diagnostic des CFA*. [https://www.fcu.fr/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/guide\\_dautodiagnostic\\_des\\_cfa\\_-\\_cnefop-414942.pdf](https://www.fcu.fr/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/guide_dautodiagnostic_des_cfa_-_cnefop-414942.pdf)

### Monitoring VET systems and providers by using indicators

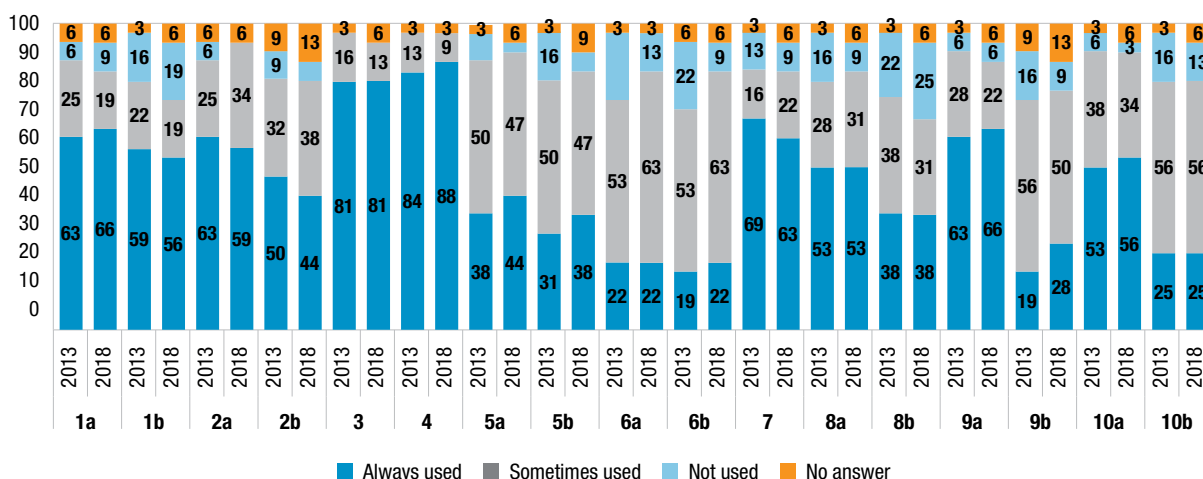
The EQAVET recommendation includes a set of 17 indicators to support evaluation and quality improvement of VET systems and providers. Figure 16A (IVET) and Figure 16B (CVET) compare the use of respective indicators in 2013 and 2018. It appears that the overall trend in the use of the indicators has not been growing over the period; this applies to both IVET and CVET. Indicator 2a (share of teachers and trainers participating

in further training) is the only one which has increased in use in IVET and CVET. In IVET, the use (whether systematic or occasional) of indicators has increased for seven indicators (2a, 5a, 5b, 6a, 6b, 8a, 9b), decreased for six (1a, 1b, 3, 8b, 9a, 10a), and stagnated for four (2b, 4, 7, 10b). In CVET, the use of indicators has increased for two indicators (2a, 2b), decreased for nine (1b, 3, 4, 5a, 5b, 7, 8b, 9a, 10a), and stagnated for six (1a, 6a, 6b, 8a, 9b, 10b).

Table 2. EQAVET indicators

<b>1a</b>	Share of providers applying internal quality assurance systems defined by law/at own initiative
<b>1b</b>	Share of accredited VET providers
<b>2a</b>	Share of teachers and trainers participating in further training
<b>2b</b>	Amount of funds invested
<b>3</b>	Participation rate in VET programmes
<b>4</b>	Completion rate in VET programmes
<b>5a</b>	Destination of VET learners
<b>5b</b>	Share of employed learners after completion of training
<b>6a</b>	Occupation obtained after completion of training
<b>6b</b>	Satisfaction rate of individuals and employers
<b>7</b>	Unemployment rate
<b>8a</b>	Participation of vulnerable groups in VET
<b>8b</b>	Success rate of vulnerable groups in VET
<b>9a</b>	Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market
<b>9b</b>	Effectiveness of mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market
<b>10a</b>	Information on schemes used to promote better access to VET
<b>10b</b>	Effectiveness of schemes used to promote better access to VET

Figure 15. Use of EQAVET indicators in IVET, 2013 and 2018 (% over 32 VET systems: UK-England, Belgium (de) and Iceland did not take part in the survey)

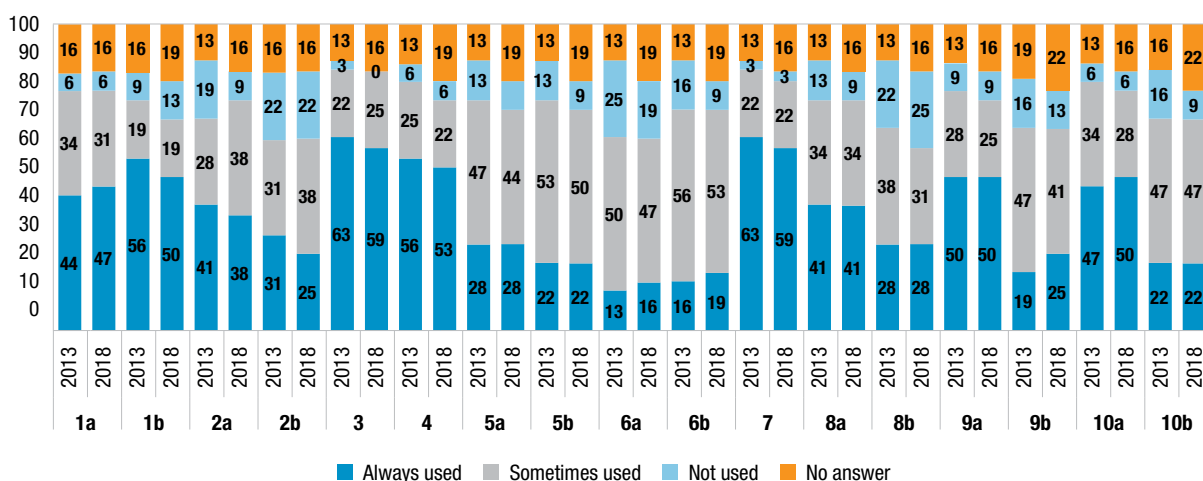


- 1a: Share of providers applying internal quality assurance systems defined by law/at own initiative
- 1b: Share of accredited VET providers
- 2a: Share of teachers and trainers participating in further training
- 2b: Amount of funds invested
- 3: Participation rate in VET programmes
- 4: Completion rate in VET programmes
- 5a: Destination of VET learners
- 5b: Share of employed learners after completion of training
- 6a: Occupation obtained after completion of training

- 6b: Satisfaction rate of individuals and employers
- 7: Unemployment rate
- 8a: Participation of vulnerable groups in VET
- 8b: Success rate of vulnerable groups in VET
- 9a: Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market
- 9b: Effectiveness of mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market
- 10a: Information on schemes used to promote better access to VET
- 10b: Effectiveness of schemes used to promote better access to VET

Source: Cedefop calculations based on data from EQAVET Secretariat survey 2016/19.

Figure 16. Use of EQAVET indicators in CVET, 2013 and 2018 (% over 32 VET systems: UK-England, Belgium (de) and Iceland did not take part in the survey)



- 1a: Share of providers applying internal quality assurance systems defined by law/at own initiative
- 1b: Share of accredited VET providers
- 2a: Share of teachers and trainers participating in further training
- 2b: Amount of funds invested
- 3: Participation rate in VET programmes
- 4: Completion rate in VET programmes
- 5a: Destination of VET learners
- 5b: Share of employed learners after completion of training
- 6a: Occupation obtained after completion of training

- 6b: Satisfaction rate of individuals and employers
- 7: Unemployment rate
- 8a: Participation of vulnerable groups in VET
- 8b: Success rate of vulnerable groups in VET
- 9a: Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market
- 9b: Effectiveness of mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market
- 10a: Information on schemes used to promote better access to VET
- 10b: Effectiveness of schemes used to promote better access to VET

Source: Cedefop calculations based on data from EQAVET Secretariat survey 2016/19.



### Assuring the quality of qualifications

Emphasis here has been put on developing methodologies for learning-outcomes-based qualifications (Portugal); ensuring the quality of learning-outcomes-based certification processes (Greece); increasing the competence and independence of examination board members (the Netherlands); and strengthening employer participation in examination processes, particularly in the design of examination tasks (Poland). Croatia started to harmonise VET exams nationwide.

#### 4.1.2.2. Continuous information and feedback loops

To be relevant to the world of work, IVET and CVET need to embrace labour market trends. Feedback loops are necessary to inform the 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. Actions taken in 2015-19 can be grouped in three main strands:

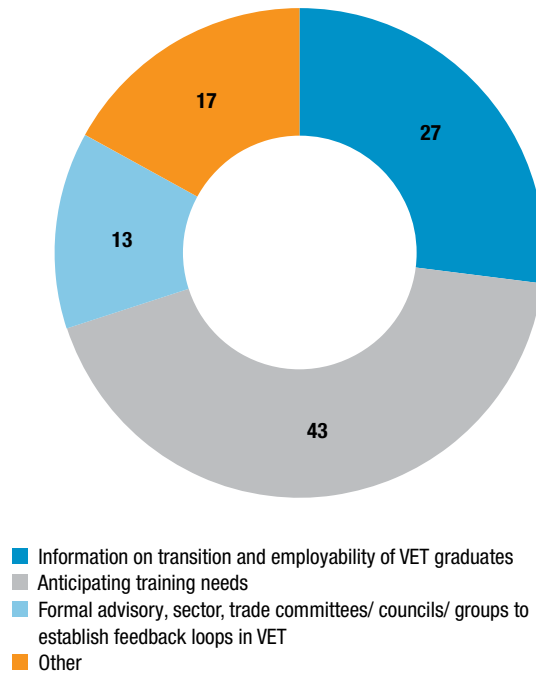
- (a) anticipating training needs (43% of actions);
- (b) graduate tracking (27% of actions);
- (c) developing mechanisms for continuous information and feedback loops (13% of actions).

See Figure 17.

#### Anticipating training needs

This strand of action aims to identify future labour market trends and needs, with a view to adjusting VET curricula and qualifications accordingly. Trends and needs analysis takes into account changes in labour requirements in sectors (particularly as driven by demography, technology and regulations). Translating labour market intelligence into effective policies requires collaboration and interaction between stakeholders, including ministries, public employment services, social partners and experts, locally, regionally and nationally. Over the reporting period, significant developments in this strand of action could be found in Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Greece,

Figure 17. Major policies related to continuous information and feedback loops, EU-28+



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

Iceland, Latvia, Malta, Slovenia and Slovakia (Box 10).

#### Graduate tracking

A Council recommendation on graduate tracking was adopted in November 2017 (Council of the EU, 2017), reinforcing this specific Riga deliverable. Action in this strand aims to provide information about the transition of VET learners and apprentices from education/training to employment. A challenge which several countries had to address has been to link students' administrative education/training data and labour market data. Developments in this policy strand could be found in Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Ireland, France, Luxembourg, Austria, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom (Box 11).

### Box 10. Identifying and anticipating training needs

In 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 combine 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; and 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. The government will receive a summary of OSKA results every year.

In Slovenia, the public employment service completed in 2018 the 'occupational barometer' pilot project, intended to foresee future changes in the labour market. Occupations were classified in three groups: shortage, balance and surplus. The main reasons identified for shortages were lack of candidates for the occupation; lack of knowledge, skills and competence for the specific occupation; and poor working conditions (wages, shift-work, hard physical work). Research findings will be used to determine training for the unemployed.

Source: ReferNet.

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

France: The 2016 Labour Law created new obligations for information to be provided by training institutions and apprentice training centres. It is now mandatory for them to provide information on participation and completion rates as well as the destination and employment rates of their graduates. These data are to be aggregated at education district – *académie* – level and broken down according to school-based and apprenticeship pathways.

Poland: the Education Research Institute launched in 2016 a project to link administrative data from social security and education resources – professional and educational trajectories – to monitor the paths VET graduates are taking.

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 UK-England (Ofsted) and the Department of Education agreed to share sensitive data.

In Bulgaria, an *Erasmus+* project *Tracking learning and career paths of VET graduates* was launched in November 2018. The project aims to develop a tracking system for VET graduates from initial vocational education and training schools and institutions. The tracking system will gather graduates' qualitative and quantitative data related to further education, employment, career paths, and skills and competences in the labour market. It is expected to inform the quality assurance system of VET providers and the design of VET qualifications and programmes as well as the provision of vocational guidance.

Source: ReferNet.

**Box 12. Developing mechanisms for continuous information and feedback loops: examples**

In Luxembourg, the Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth created the *Lëtzebuurger Bildungsdësch*, a national conference on education which comprises all major stakeholders (including scientific experts and civil society) to shape the outlining of educational policies. This platform of discussion and reflection will allow for a larger, continuous debate, independent of the political changes in the country.

In Ireland, following the adoption of a National skills strategy in early 2016, the Department of Education and Skills set up and funded nine regional skills forums in May 2016. The forums are part of the national strategy. Their main purpose is to facilitate cooperation and engagement between employers and education and training providers to make sure that the content of programmes is aligned to regional labour market needs. Each forum is guided by a steering group and a manager who liaise with employers and education/training providers. In April 2017, a National Skills Council was launched, within the framework of the National skills strategy. The National Council, chaired by the Minister for Education and Skills, oversees and advises on identified skills needs and how to ensure delivery of corresponding skills.

In Poland, the Ministry of National Education established in January 2018 a Vocational School Heads Council. 42 head teachers from vocational schools from all regions of the country, representing different sectors, were appointed to the council. It will be a consultative body supporting the ministry in developing new initiatives and policies in VET (initiation of changes, consultations, participation in the development of regulations).

Source: ReferNet.

**Developing mechanisms for continuous information and feedback loops**

A few countries have devoted attention to setting up standing advisory bodies to inform policy-making. This includes government agencies (such as Kompetanse Norge in Norway), sector skills councils (Hungary, Latvia), national education councils (Greece, Latvia, Poland), and forums for national and/or regional public debate on education (UK-England, Ireland, Luxembourg).

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

MTD 3 has many dimensions 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 or the labour market, and vice versa. 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 help 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 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.

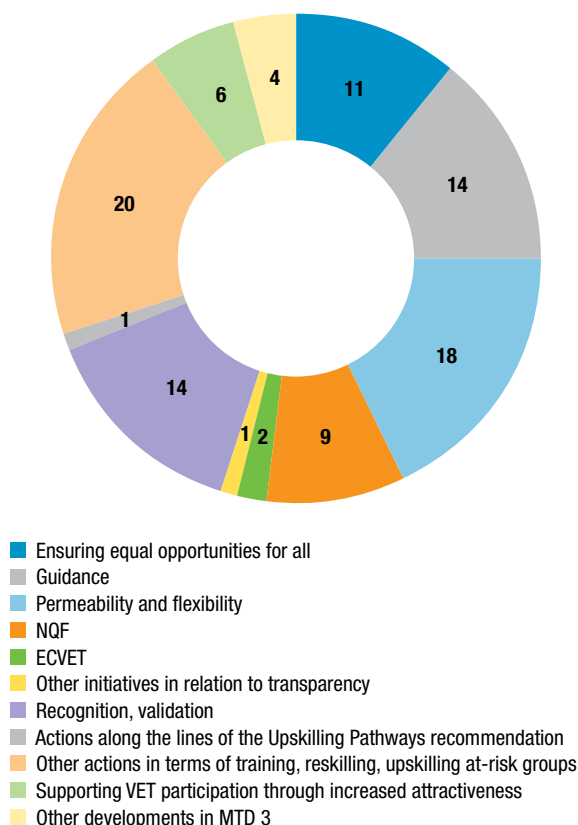
By September 2019, 68% of the actions carried out in this MTD during the reporting period had reached full-scale implementation; a further 10% were still at the legislative stage. ‘Involving relevant stakeholders’ was mentioned in 50% of the actions for which the Riga transversal principles were claimed to have been considered.

Actions supporting access for all to VET and qualifications have mainly focused on:

- (a) training, reskilling and upskilling at-risk groups, including upskilling pathways (21% of actions);
- (b) increasing permeability and/or flexibility (18%);
- (c) improving guidance (14%), recognition-validation (14%) and transparency (NQFs, ECVET, other: 12%);
- (d) ensuring equal opportunities for all (11%).

See Figure 18.

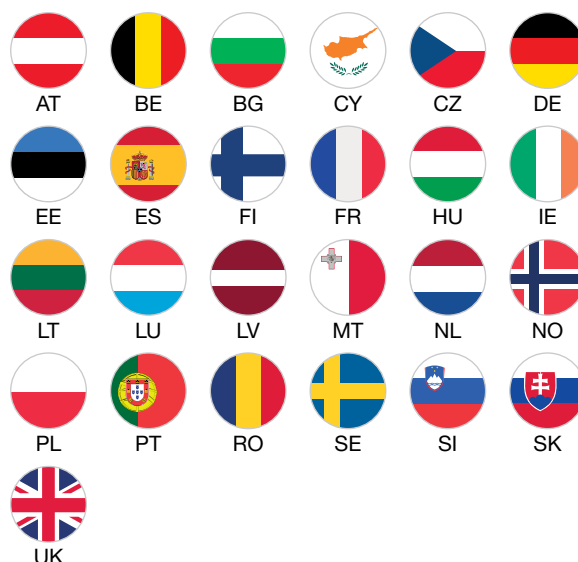
Figure 18. Major policies related to MTD 3 – Access to VET and qualifications for all, EU-28+



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

#### 4.1.3.1. Training, reskilling and upskilling at-risk groups

The following 25 countries have been particularly active in this area:



Actions have tended to address an increasing range of target groups, including early school leavers and NEETs, the low-skilled, the unemployed, employed people at risk of becoming jobless, parents on (or after) parental leave, the young from disadvantaged urban areas, young people with learning difficulties, people with disabilities, senior workers, refugees and other migrants.

As well as developing training courses (the basic approach that all countries practiced), the main types of actions included: facilitating access to existing apprenticeship schemes (Belgium (fr), Belgium (de), Czechia, Sweden); developing dedicated specific apprenticeship and

internships schemes (Belgium (fr), Bulgaria); setting up training obligation until a minimum age (Austria); establishing training guarantee programmes (Germany, Austria); developing scholarships and other dedicated financial support for training (Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Spain, Lithuania, Sweden, UK-England).

A few actions in this area were aligned with the *Upskilling pathways* recommendation. The recommendation points to interventions targeted at providing low-skilled adults with skills, knowledge and competence relevant for the labour market, following a three-stage pattern (skills assessment; provision of a tailored, flexible and

### Box 13. Training, reskilling and upskilling at-risk groups: examples

#### Training obligation

In Austria, new legislation on training obligation until the age of 18 entered into force in July 2017. Young people who would otherwise not continue education and training beyond compulsory schooling (age 15) or discontinue a programme they have taken up, will have to undertake some form of training until they have passed age 18. Those who do not get a place in a school or in a company to do an apprenticeship must participate in VET training centre programmes (*überbetriebliche Lehrlingsausbildung*), or attend a so-called production school, or follow other labour market policy measures targeted to this group. 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 school leavers and young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs).

#### Training guarantee

In Germany, the 2015-18 *Alliance for initial and further training* between the Federal Government, the Länder, business and industry, unions and the federal employment agency aimed to reduce the number of young people without school certificate and give each person in need a path that can lead to a VET qualification. Within the alliance, sectors have committed to providing 20 000 places annually for introductory training. 17 500 young people took up this type of training in 2015, 20 000 in 2016. Evaluations proved that around 70% of young people moved into regular apprenticeships within six months after completing this programme. The partners also agreed to offer training places for assisted VET (*AsA*) for disadvantaged learners; this includes mentoring adapted to trainee needs. Trainees are eligible to receive a basic training allowance during the prevocational phase. They can also receive continued support throughout prevocational training and apprenticeship from the same provider. In 2016, 11 600 young people started this assisted training. As of 2016, a process to help find training places/apprentices has been put in place: every young person who is still looking for a training place on 30 September of a given year will receive three offers for company-based training.

#### Providing low-qualified adults with upskilling pathways

In 2015, the Vienna branch of the public employment service piloted the scheme *Competence checks for the occupational integration of refugees (Kompetenzcheck zur beruflichen Integration von Asylberechtigten)* to assess educational attainment, skills and competences and prior work experience. Between August and December 2015, a total of 898 recognised refugees took part in five-week assessment courses, led by native-speaking trainers in

Arabic, Farsi, Russian and French, in which data on participants' qualifications were collected in collaboration with training firms, enterprises and educational institutions. The aim was to use the check results to tailor training to the needs of learners and in line with labour market demands; an example is a programme combining German courses, occupational guidance, mentoring, vocational qualification, and work placement.

In Germany, the project *USE OPPORTUNITIES! With partial qualifications towards recognised vocational qualification (CHANCEN NUTZEN! Mit Teilqualifikationen Richtung Berufsabschluss)* started in October 2017 for a period of three years. An initiative of the chambers of industry and commerce, it aimed at developing standardised framework conditions for the qualification of low-skilled and unskilled adults aged over 25. Emphasis was on developing training modules geared to regional needs and certification of partial qualifications to give unskilled and low-skilled adults the opportunity to acquire subsequently a complete vocational qualification or at least an upgradable qualification. The project included the establishment of a coordination office for the control, quality assurance and monitoring of activities, the development of guidance and support structures, and cooperation with the Federal Education Ministry (BMBF) for the development of the training modules.

In 2015, the Swedish government started consultations to create fast tracks for newly arrived immigrants, to reduce the time from arrival to entry in occupations that face skills shortages. An agreement involving employer and employee organisations assigned the public employment service 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 a focus on occupations that face skills shortages.

In Poland, the Ministry of Investment and Economic Development launched in October 2018 the project '*CHANCE: new opportunities for adults*' (2018-21). The project is aligned to the *Upskilling pathways* recommendation. Its goal is to design and pilot innovative models to support different groups of adults with low levels of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. The models will consist of effective ways of reaching and motivating selected target groups, skills assessment, individually adjusted learning offer, and validation of learning outcomes. They will be based on the learning outcomes approach. Actions will provide beneficiaries with the opportunity to validate their acquired skills and progress towards higher Polish qualifications framework levels relevant to the labour market.

Source: ReferNet

quality learning offer; and validation and recognition of the skills acquired), supported by guidance and by making best use of the potential of digital technologies. Actions somewhat close to these lines could be found in Germany, Austria, Poland, Finland and Sweden, most often in relation to handling refugees and migrants.

#### 4.1.3.2. Increased permeability and/or flexibility

Major development lines in the reporting period can be grouped as follows (Box 14):

- (a) setting up new pathways and bridging routes (Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, Norway, Slovakia);
- (b) making admission, progression and examination rules more flexible (Estonia, Norway, Spain, Sweden);

- (c) a shift to more often use of modularisation, ECVET points or partial certification in IVET and CVET curricula (Cyprus, Czechia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden);
- (d) opening up VET to general education or higher education students (Germany, Norway).

#### 4.1.3.3. Improving guidance

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 individual pathway suitable to them 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. Making systems more flexible and permeable: examples****Developing new pathways and bridging routes**

In Denmark, 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. EUV, a new VET programme for adults (aged 25+), was also set up. This 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 undertake an internship.

In Estonia, an orientation year was developed to facilitate transitions from compulsory education to VET and/or to the labour market. The orientation year is targeted mainly at pupils with difficulties in deciding their field of studies, SEN learners, learners who have dropped out from VET or upper-secondary general education, learners with a migrant background, or those lacking the basic skills to complete the VET curriculum.

Norway developed the certificate of practice (*Praksisbrev*) in 2016. This is a two-year practical training programme carried out in a company. Subjects comprise core components (work-oriented Norwegian, maths and social science) along with local components geared towards local labour demand. Certificate of practice programmes are offered by counties: each county is obliged to offer at least one such programme. Certificates of practice are targeted at upper secondary school pupils who have low motivation for ordinary school and greater interest in practical work, as well as adults such as migrants or the low-educated adults. Holders of a certificate of practice may proceed towards a trade- or journeyman's certificate.

In Slovakia, a concept of 'shortened study' (ISCED 353) was developed in 2015/16, targeted at young people and adults who want quickly to broaden or deepen their qualification or acquire another to improve their employability. Shortened study programmes last either one or two years, and lead to a certificate of apprenticeship.

**Making admission and examination rules more flexible**

In Estonia, regulation was amended to allow SEN students the choice of graduating with a school examination instead of a professional examination.

France is piloting a new approach to allow upper secondary VET graduates holding a *baccalauréat professionnel* accessing higher technological education (in *section de technicien supérieur*). Admission was previously granted as preference to holders of a *baccalauréat* obtained in technological education. Normally, the higher technological education institutions select their students. In the new approach, 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.

In UK-England, steps have been taken to improve access to apprenticeships for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The requirements for Entry level 3 (EQF 4) have been adjusted for those with a current or previously issued Education health and care plan or statement of SEN or learning difficulty assessment who, as a result of their learning difficulties or disability, cannot meet the English and mathematics requirements, but who could otherwise meet the occupational requirements of their apprenticeship. British sign language (BSL) has been accepted as an alternative qualification to functional skills in English for apprentices where BSL is their first language.

**Developing modularisation and partial certification**

In the Netherlands, certificates as parts of a full diploma/qualification were introduced in upper secondary not-publicly financed VET as of September 2016. The objective is to make VET more accessible for adults. 38 optional subjects (*keuzedelen*) that could be awarded through such a partial qualification process were identified and selected by the Cooperation Organisation for Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market.

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.

Source: ReferNet.

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

Since 2015, efforts have been made to increase the quality of, and free access to, career guidance in schools and through online platforms (Box 15). Developments include revising procedures, training teachers who have guidance tasks, and extending services to broader age and social groups. The trend towards web-based portals with integrated matching and self-

help tools for self-assessment and e-guidance has continued.

Countries active in guidance include:



### Box 15. Information and guidance: examples

Estonia set up mobile workshops in spring 2017. These are equipped with modern technology and tools and go to young people aged 10 to 15, offering them attractive activities and directing them towards more informed career choices. The focus of the first mobile workshops was 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.

In the United Kingdom, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) developed a career education standard that was made available to all schools as of 2016/17. The standard sets out what children and young people (3 to 18 age range) will learn, and what parents/carers, teachers/practitioners, employers and SDS itself will do: support their learning, building on what has been achieved by them; reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and complexity; and address concerns about workload through the provision of support and resources. Prior to implementation, 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, and developed the offer further in advance of its introduction. Young people, teachers, parents and carers and SDS staff were an integral part of the process.

In Sweden, the Government proposed in January 2019 an amendment to the Education Act aiming to introduce individual career guidance for all learners. Compulsory education would include an activity called 'Future choices', of a total 80 hours in grades 7 to 9 to teach learners about working life, career paths and vocational areas before they proceed to upper secondary education.

Source: ReferNet.



#### 4.1.3.4. *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 *Upskilling pathways* recommendation, 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 et al., 2017) <sup>(30)</sup>, 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. Progress has been made in using validation for the low-qualified and low-skilled jobseekers. The *Youth guarantee* and the large inflow of migrants in recent years also may have contributed to using validation more widely.

Over the reporting period, all countries except Czechia, Croatia and Hungary have been active in area validation.

#### 4.1.3.5. *Improving transparency: NQFs, ECVET and related initiatives*

Developments in national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) have increased transparency across systems and borders and support comparability of qualifications at European level.

NQFs help reduce barriers to progression and support recognition and validation processes.

All countries have developed a qualifications framework or have revised it (Ireland, France, UK). As a general trend, Member States have developed comprehensive NQFs aiming to cover all levels and types of qualification, including those awarded by private and international organisations and companies. Most NQFs have reached operational stage: they include a significant number of qualifications, and the related databases and other tools are accessible to stakeholders and end-users. Some countries have been working towards strengthening the legal basis of their frameworks (Greece, Cyprus, the Netherlands). NQF and EQF levels are increasingly being included in qualifications databases, Europass supplements, new certificates and diplomas. Visibility and use of NQFs by the labour market has increased; more companies have heard about them; employers are aware of levels and make use of them while developing occupational and qualification standards.

ECVET developments have mainly consisted of testing mechanisms through pilot projects (Germany, Lithuania); testing ECVET for international mobility (Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal); exploring the potential of ECVET for recognition, validation and permeability (Malta, Portugal); involving ECVET credit points in the development of modular programmes (e.g. Lithuania); having ECVET expert teams provide information, training and assistance to VET institutions and other potential users (Germany, Latvia).

Other initiatives in support of qualifications transparency mainly related to streamlining occupational and training profiles (Belgium (fr)) and making systematic use of the learning outcomes approach in all curricula (Malta).

#### 4.1.3.6. *Ensuring equal opportunities for all*

A range of powerful initiatives have been undertaken, oriented towards ensuring reinforced rights to groups in need of more protection. Students with disabilities, special education needs, or disadvantaged backgrounds have been the main target groups.

<sup>(30)</sup> See also Cedefop's analysis and overview on NQF developments in European countries during 2015-16 (Cedefop, 2018b).

Countries involved in this strand of MTD 3 include:



#### 4.1.4. MTD 4 – Key competences in both IVET and CVET

Eight key competences for lifelong learning were endorsed at European level in 2006 (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2006). They complement but also 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

#### Box 16. Equal opportunities for all: examples

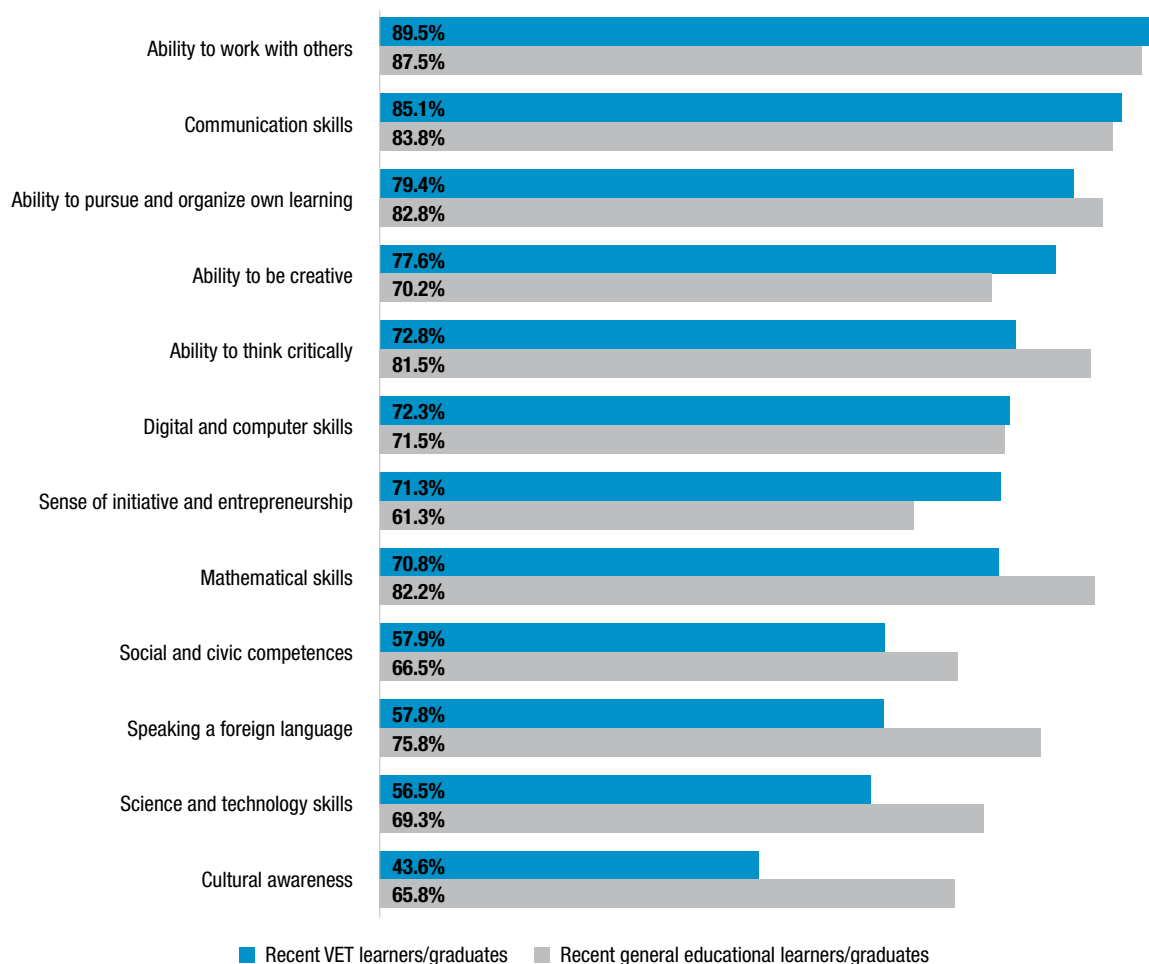
In Czechia, an amendment to the School Act came into force in September 2016, legally guaranteeing targeted support for children with special needs. Schools (including VET schools) are now legally entitled to additional funding for the necessary measures required for teaching children with special needs. This amendment covers all children with special educational needs based on health as well as cultural and social reasons (e.g. Roma children). The amendment also covers talented children.

In the Netherlands, in response to a range of surveys showing that students do not always have equal opportunities, and the trend of growing inequality, an action plan for equal opportunities in education has been rolled out since October 2017. Schools, municipalities and other regional institutes can apply for a grant for the development of interventions, research and knowledge-sharing to support equal opportunities. To develop networks for experience-sharing, an alliance for equal opportunities (*Gelijke Kansen Alliantie*) was initiated including [an online platform](#). Parents, teachers, school directors, researchers, employers and social institutions were encouraged to join the alliance. Actions include strengthening parent involvement; investing in cultural education in pre-vocational education; and funding initiatives to involve role models (senior students) from higher professional education or universities in supporting young people who, given their socioeconomic background, are not familiar with higher education.

In UK-England, the *Apprenticeship diversity champions network* (ADCN) was established in February 2017. The network comprises employers committed to working alongside the Department for Education and the National Apprenticeship Service to help promote diversity within apprenticeships. In February 2018, the piloting phase of another project started. The *5 Cities* project covers five major cities across England that have pledged to work with the government to drive up apprenticeships among underrepresented groups and ensure they are accessible to individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Mayor of each city leads coordinated action with local partners and the National Apprenticeship Service to help break down barriers and provide individual support, including promoting higher and degree level apprenticeships as a great way to work with some of the UK’s key employers while learning at some of the UK’s top universities.

Initiatives in UK-Scotland include: the *Scottish attainment challenge* (2015), targeted at improving literacy and numeracy of pupils from deprived areas, and supported by the *Attainment Scotland* fund (GBP 180 million for 2016-19); the *Attracting diversity* project, supporting Scottish colleges seeking to increase the participation of underrepresented groups through assessing underrepresentation data, setting targets in relation to improving participation, developing an understanding of barriers, and delivering and evaluating positive action initiatives to improve participation; and the Gender action plan of the Scottish Funding Council (2016), targeted at tackling gender imbalances at subject level in colleges and universities.

Figure 19. **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 aged 16 to 21. Source: Cedefop opinion survey on VET (Cedefop, 2017c).

the European Union, 2010); OECD’s key competences (OECD, 2005); ILO’s core competences (ILO, 2009); and 21st century skills (Dede, 2009). A new recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning was adopted on 22 May 2018 (Council of the EU, 2018c).

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.

VET is a vector for the acquisition of key competences. In Cedefop’s 2016 opinion survey on VET (Cedefop, 2017c), interviewees were asked if they had developed key competences at upper secondary education. Figure 19 compares interviewees’ responses in VET and general education. Respondents from VET were more likely than those from general education to say that they developed entrepreneurship, creativity, communication, digital and team-working skills.

However, more than a third thought they did not (sufficiently) develop their social and civic

### Box 17. Redesigning key competences in Belgium

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, a public debate on the attainment targets (learning outcomes) for secondary education including initial VET took place between February and June 2016. It involved around 40 000 participants, half of which were young learners. In January 2018, the decree on the renewal of the learning outcomes for compulsory education (for all pupils) was adopted by the Flemish Parliament. The decree stipulates 16 key competences, based on the results of the public debate. These include: physical and mental wellbeing; Dutch; other languages; digital and media literacy; social competences; civic competences; historical awareness; spatial awareness; sustainable development; economic and financial competences; judicial competences; learning and research competences (critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, etc.); self-consciousness and self-expression; entrepreneurial competences; cultural consciousness and expression. These key competences are broad thematic domains to be operationalised in attainment targets. Development committees, comprising representatives of education networks, teachers and academics, were established.

Source: ReferNet.

competences, foreign languages, and science and technology skills. More than half felt VET did not (really) help them develop cultural awareness. They were also less satisfied with their critical thinking skills. These lower scores signal areas of concern <sup>(31)</sup>.

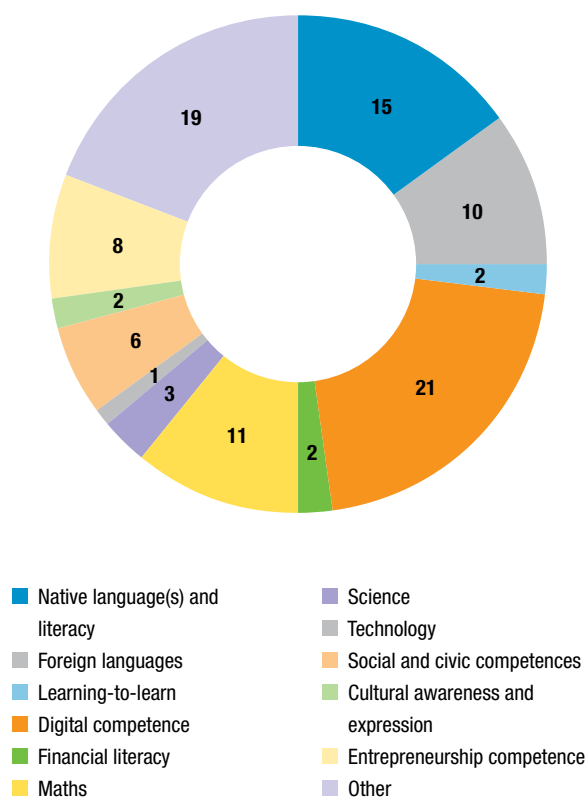
In the reporting period, action to reinforce key competences has included holding expert and public consultation (Croatia); defining national lists of key competences (Belgium (fl)); setting up strategies, programmes and action plans (Bulgaria, Estonia); updating curricula (Estonia, Cyprus); and developing tools to assist the mapping of key competences (France, Norway) and e-learning (Lithuania).

Developments seem to have been more delayed in this MTD than in others. By September 2019, only 41% of the reported actions had reached the full-scale implementation stage; 20% were in the piloting phase, and another 20% undergoing the legislative process. 14% of the actions were still in the design phase.

In terms of taking on board the Riga transversal principles, ‘Involving relevant stakeholders’ was referred to in 56% of actions, and ‘supporting the learning outcomes approach’ in 23%.

Five broad subject domains have been most prominent (see Figure 20):

Figure 20. Respective shares of main domains in MTD 4, EU-28+



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

<sup>(31)</sup> These 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.

- (a) languages (25% of actions);
- (b) digital competence (21%);
- (c) maths, science, technology (15%);
- (d) social and civic competences, and cultural awareness (8%);
- (e) entrepreneurship competence (8%);
- (f) financial literacy (2%);
- (g) learning to learn (2%).

However, the variety of key competences addressed in countries is wider. For example, the key competences outlined in the decree on learning outcomes adopted in January 2018 in Belgium (fl) also include physical and mental wellbeing, historical awareness, spatial awareness, and sustainable development. In UK-Wales, planning and organisation, and personal effectiveness were also mentioned.

#### 4.1.4.1. *Native language(s) and literacy, and foreign languages*

Action to reinforce competence in native language(s) and literacy was carried out through: explicitly listing the subject in an updated regulation (Belgium (fl)); surveys (Slovakia) and updating performance measures (UK-England) to take stock of the situation; expanding course provision, particularly in higher education (UK-Wales); raising the requirements for admission from compulsory schooling to VET (Denmark); updating the procedures for VET exams (Czechia, UK-Northern Ireland); increasing the availability of teaching resources (UK-Wales); opening up to innovative learning and teaching methods (e-learning in Belgium (fr), language camps and site visits in Estonia, m-learning in Germany, shared teaching in Greece); and reinforcing the teaching competence of country language teachers (Estonia). While the general trend was to raise the requirements, the need for flexibility may have also been acknowledged: in the Netherlands, to keep learners motivated, examination requirements were adjusted to the abilities of specific learner groups.

Foreign languages have been supported through setting up strategies (Ireland), developing e-learning (Poland), and providing immersion courses abroad (Belgium (fr)) (Box 18).

#### 4.1.4.2. *Learning-to-learn and financial literacy*

A few countries (including Cyprus and Lithuania) reiterated their commitment to supporting the reinforcement of the learning-to-learn competence. Financial literacy emerges as a new key competence and has been supported through funding and the development of training, standards and teaching resources in some countries (Czechia, Slovakia, Spain) (Box 19).

#### 4.1.4.3. *Digital competence*

The topic that has attracted most attention across countries is digital competence. Comprehensive digital strategies have been designed (Box 19) addressing learners and teachers; provision of appropriate infrastructure and learning tools is also a feature (Austria, Croatia, Estonia, Belgium (fr), Luxembourg, Norway). Courses on digital skills, the internet and programming have also been offered in schools and to the wider public, including disadvantaged groups (Belgium (fr), Bulgaria, Czechia, Croatia, Luxembourg, Cyprus). In Germany (the *Digital media in VET* programme) and Italy, funding and tax incentives were provided to support investment contributing to the acquisition of digital competence. Cyprus introduced the European computer driving licence (ECDL) certification programme, for participation on a voluntary and free-of-charge basis. In Ireland, the *Explore* programme was launched in June 2018, to provide older workers in the manufacturing sector with training on basic digital skills.

#### 4.1.4.4. *Maths, science, technology*

Mathematical competence was reaffirmed as crucial and emphasised in curricula in Belgium (fl) and Cyprus. Revision of the mathematical component of the upper secondary curriculum was undertaken in Croatia, Ireland, Norway, UK-England and UK-Northern. The mathematical requirements for admission from compulsory schooling to VET were raised in Denmark. Luxembourg developed *mathemaTIC*, an online maths teaching and learning platform for school learners. Greece introduced joint teaching in math classes in upper secondary VET (EPAL). UK-England piloted the *Texting students and study supporters* programme to assist upper

## Box 18. Literacy and foreign languages: examples

### Promoting literacy in Malta: the *Reading ambassadors* programme

The official website of the Maltese government presents the initiative as follows: ‘The *Reading ambassadors* programme is a school-based literacy initiative that promotes a positive attitude towards reading through organised events involving local personalities that have been appointed by the Ministry of Education. During these events, the chosen reading ambassadors read to different classes, in either Maltese or English, and then discuss the book with the students. A forum involving the whole school is held in the school hall, where students ask the reading ambassadors questions related to reading and their experiences. The diverse group of reading ambassadors includes singers, actors, footballers, presenters, broadcasters and journalists. The activity comes to an end with one of the ambassadors singing one of their songs.’

### 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.

### Foreign language strategy in Ireland

In Ireland, a foreign languages strategy was published in December 2017 to increase the diversity and provision of foreign language learning opportunities, and improve awareness of the benefits of language learning for career and study abroad opportunities. While the strategy places less emphasis on the FET sector (including VET), improved foreign language uptake and proficiency in earlier years in the education system (in lower and upper secondary school) will have an impact on the language skills of learners entering VET programmes in the future.

Source: ReferNet.

## Box 19. Learning-to-learn, financial literacy and digital competence: examples

### Learning to learn

In Lithuania, the design of an interactive e-learning tool to develop learning to learn and entrepreneurship competences was started in November 2017, within the framework of the ESF-funded project *Development of Lithuanian qualifications system* (first stage). The tool is to be integrated into 180 vocational education and non-formal adult education programmes.

### Financial literacy

The new national [standard for financial literacy](#) introduced in Slovakia in 2017 addresses areas like planning, income and labour; consumer protection; counteracting corruption and fraud through financial responsibility of consumers; consumers’ decisions and financial management; loans and debts; savings and investment; risk management and insurance. Grants are available for schools, including VET, to train teachers in financial literacy. A board game *Financial odyssey* was designed for secondary students. A dedicated web portal has been created to inform schools, adult learning providers, citizens and also media about financial literacy issues.

### Digital strategy

In Austria, the education ministry presented in 2017 the digitalisation strategy *School 4.0. – Now we are going digital*. It focuses on: providing digital and critical thinking competences for learners from primary education onwards; digital skills for teachers through a new course from school year 2017/18 onwards, supported by establishing a national digital learning centre and future learning labs in colleges, where teachers can experiment with digital tools; modernising infrastructure and equipment at schools, including tablet and laptop computers for pupils; digital learning tools, including open education resources. Upon receiving training, teachers are required to prove their competences by a portfolio.

In Italy, within the framework of the National Plan Industry 4.0, the Ministry of Economic Development proposed in December 2017 to focus companies' investment in continuing training on a few specific topics, mainly related to digitalisation and information technology, and to the introduction of new machinery. Companies that invested in training activities in 2018 were to receive a tax credit, equal to 40% of the cost of the employee during the training period. Eligible training contents are those targeted to the acquisition or consolidation of knowledge in the technologies covered by the Industry 4.0 Plan: big data and data analysis; cloud and fog computing; cyber security; visualisation systems and augmented reality; advanced and collaborative robotics; man-machine interface; internet of things.

Source: ReferNet.

secondary students' achievement in maths. In Czechia, the assessment of learning outcomes in maths was made centralised.

Science competence was also emphasised in curricula in Cyprus. Revision of the technological competence component of VET curricula was started in Croatia. In UK-Scotland, a science technology engineering and maths education strategy was adopted in November 2017. The strategy aims to improve levels of STEM enthusiasm, skills, and knowledge in order to raise attainment and aspirations in learning, life and work; and to encourage the acquisition of more specialist STEM skills required to gain employment in the growing STEM sectors of the economy, through further study and training. The STEM strategy also applies to CVET.

#### 4.1.4.5. *Entrepreneurship competence*

Developments in this strand comprised more emphasis on entrepreneurial skills in VET curricula (Cyprus); actions to promote entrepreneurial spirit (Austria); introducing entrepreneurship-related education programmes (including for teachers) and teaching resources (Belgium (fr), Estonia, Poland); and establishing in-school mini-enterprises that simulate real business (Bulgaria, Luxembourg). In Lithuania, the design of an interactive e-learning tool to develop entrepreneurship

competence was started in 2017. Since 2015, Romania has been promoting entrepreneurship education through business-plan competitions at local, regional and national levels.

#### 4.1.4.6. *Social and civic competences, and cultural awareness*

Social and civic competences include behaving in line with democratic principles, active citizenship, respect for human rights and environmental protection. Social and civic competences were reaffirmed as central to national education strategies (as in Czechia). Related educational standards were upgraded in VET curricula (Latvia, the Netherlands). Educational resources were made available (as with the online anti-radicalisation materials developed by the Education and Training Foundation in UK-England). Guidelines were issued for teachers (Slovakia). Procedures for the assessment and certification of related learning outcomes were updated (Italy). Citizenship training for refugees and migrants was offered (Luxembourg). To promote cultural awareness, Cyprus introduced music as a compulsory subject in the first year of studies in secondary VET.

## Box 20. Promoting entrepreneurial spirit in Austria

Since September 2017, secondary schools may invite successful women entrepreneurs to talk directly in class about their work as entrepreneurs, and answer pupils' questions. Within the policy action *Women entrepreneurs go to school (Unternehmerin macht Schule)* <sup>(32)</sup>, women entrepreneurs inspire pupils to pursue an entrepreneurial career. Acting as their own example, they report on the opportunities that entrepreneurship opens up and what can be achieved with entrepreneurial spirit. As role models, women entrepreneurs particularly motivate schoolgirls to seek a self-employed professional future. On the accompanying website, schools can register for a visit of an entrepreneur and find work materials for teachers and pupils to prepare and follow up the school visit (case studies, good practice, worksheets and presentation documents, explanatory videos). With the online test *Do you have entrepreneurial spirit*, pupils can explore their own entrepreneurial spirit. Women entrepreneurs can also register on the website to feature as role models.

Source: ReferNet.

### 4.1.5. 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 more visible.

Committed and competent teachers, trainers and other VET professionals were acknowledged as key agents for high quality IVET and CVET in the Bruges communiqué. Although there was no deliverable focusing on their professional development at that time, 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 and investigated by Cedefop (Cedefop, 2015d) and the European Commission. The

Commission's 2017 study provided a comprehensive overview of governance and professionalisation arrangements for teachers and trainers in work-based learning/apprenticeships (European Commission, 2017d). This section focuses on developments in 2015-19 as reported by Cedefop's ReferNet.

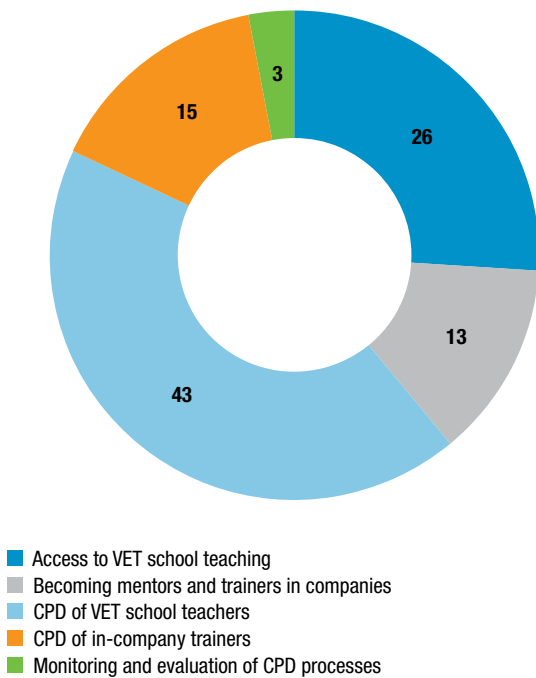
Of the five MTDs, this one is where reform implementation has been the most advanced. By September 2019, 81% of the actions taken in the reporting period had reached the full-scale implementation stage. Another 5% were still in the piloting phase and 9% were undergoing the legislative process. Among the actions for which it was reported that the Riga transversal principles had been taken into account, 'involving relevant stakeholders' was mentioned in 67% of cases and 'supporting the learning outcomes approach' in 10% of cases.

As can be seen in Figure 21, measures supporting the development of VET teaching and training professions have addressed VET school teachers and trainers more (69%) than in-company trainers and mentors (28%). Continuing professional development has attracted much more attention (58% of actions) than professions' entry requirements and procedures (39%).

<sup>(32)</sup> An initiative of the Austrian Economic Chamber and the Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs, with support of the Ministry of Education, Science and Research.



Figure 21. **Respective shares of main actions supporting the development of VET teaching and training professions, EU-28+**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet.

#### 4.1.5.1. Access to the profession of teaching in VET schools

Actions on access to VET school teaching include:

- (a) (re)defining entry requirements and/or entry procedures (Czechia, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, UK-Wales);
- (b) upgrading/updating pre-service and/or initial in-service teacher training programmes (Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Romania, Slovakia, Finland, UK);
- (c) introducing/upgrading measures to attract new teachers, including attracting experts from the world of work (e.g. UK-Scotland).

Redefining entry requirements and updating pre-service and initial in-service training is mostly targeted at addressing observed insufficient preparedness of teachers with respect to the

challenges they face. This relates particularly to pedagogical/didactical competences and linking theory with practice. Several countries have also pointed out that teacher training programmes do not always 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.

Updating entry requirements and procedures has also been intended for more appropriately making the most of potential second-career teachers (as in the Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, UK-England). Several countries are facing teacher shortages as many teachers will soon retire. In addition, salaries in VET teaching can often not compete with those in other economic sectors. These challenges have also been addressed through attractiveness measures such as increased salaries (Iceland, Latvia, Slovakia); improved status, including streamlined titles and more job stability (Belgium (fr), Spain); and promotional campaigns (Germany, UK-Scotland). Attracting professionals from enterprises is also expected to help improve VET's relevance.

#### 4.1.5.2. Continuing professional development of VET school teachers

Action in this strand has followed four main lines:

- (a) introducing/updating requirements (as in Belgium (fr), Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Cyprus), programmes and courses (Croatia, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Slovenia, UK-England,); developing innovative learning approaches (Spain, Portugal) and support measures (Belgium (de), the Netherlands, Norway);
- (b) introducing opportunities for teacher visit/traineeship/working in company and for cooperation with in-company mentors (Czechia; Denmark, Norway, Slovenia);
- (c) introducing career development opportunities for teachers, including in terms of reaching leadership positions (e.g. Czechia, Spain);
- (d) supporting VET school leaders and their professional development (Estonia, Cyprus, UK-England).

### Box 21. Adjusting pathways for joining the VET teaching profession: examples

In Slovakia, the 2015 legislation amending the 2009 Pedagogical Staff Act has made qualification requirements more flexible when it comes to practice experts from business and industry. Specialists in occupation-oriented areas are exempted from the qualification requirements in pedagogy, provided that they teach at most 10 hours per week.

In Norway, a national VET teacher promotion initiative was launched in October 2015, aiming to attract new teachers to ensure sufficiency and quality of VET teaching staff. This builds on previous successful pilots. The programme is based on scholarships and flexible educational pathways for skilled workers. A scholarship scheme for non-qualified VET teachers who want to complete VET teacher education has been set up. Since 2016, the programme gives grants to those who are not yet employed in schools so that they may apply for a scholarship aiming at becoming VET teachers.

In UK-England, to attract new categories of teachers and address the issue of teaching force shortage, the Education and Training Foundation launched in September 2017, in partnership with the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, the *Further forces* programme. The objective is to retrain armed forces service leavers to teach technical subjects, including science, engineering and technology, as well as valuable life skills, in the further education and training sector (including general further education colleges, independent training companies and organisations who have substantial in-house training programmes) in England. The University of Portsmouth and the University of Brighton have been awarded national contracts to train (Portsmouth) and mentor (Brighton) the prospective teachers. These undergo in-service training and receive a nationally recognised teaching qualification on completion of the programme. Delivery of training and employment opportunities started in September 2017.

Source: ReferNet.

### Box 22. Continuing professional development of teaching staff in VET schools: examples

#### Innovative approaches for teacher CPD

In Spain, the National Institute of Education Technologies and Teacher Training (INTEF) has been developing interactive and multimedia digital education resources, including CPD for teachers. These include differentiated open and online courses, for example nano massive online open courses (NOOC) for teachers to explore, learn and be assessed either on a key competence element, or a skill or area of knowledge over a period of time from a minimum of one hour up to a maximum of 20 hours; a self-paced open online course (SPOOC) INTEF, an experimental self-learning initiative oriented to the development of professional skills, in which learners can attain their own learning objectives at their own pace, develop their autonomy as learners in digital contexts, improve their digital competence and demonstrate it in an aggregated digital product, valuable for the education community; a *Digital competence portfolio* for teachers; an *Open badge backpack* for the acknowledgement of professional competences; and *Edupills*, a mobile app for micro self-training aimed at the improvement of digital competences. INTEF also promotes networking among teachers to exchange resources and experience.

#### 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 in their teaching career, such as through introducing a VET school leader postgraduate examination.

Spain launched in June 2015 a training course to strengthen the management capacity of school boards. The course aimed to provide 150 teachers (including from VET) from all autonomous communities, interested in accessing a school management position, with the necessary skills, through a modular 120-hour programme.

#### Supporting VET school leaders and their professional development

In Cyprus, an in-service training programme for school leaders was set up in 2016. 15 newly promoted headmasters and 59 deputy headmasters of secondary general and technical schools successfully completed the programme. An additional round took place in the school year 2017/18, with 14 newly promoted headmasters of secondary general and technical schools successfully participating. In autumn 2017, a short four-day training programme was implemented for 115 deputy headmasters.

In UK-England, the Department for Education launched in October 2017 the *National leaders of further education* (NLFEs) programme. National leaders of further education are specified as serving college leaders who have a strong track record of delivering improvement, both at their own colleges and in working with others. They are tasked with providing strategic mentoring and support – including developing the skills of senior staff – to other colleges that need to improve, especially those which have been judged as ‘requires improvement’ or ‘inadequate’ by the Inspectorate of Education and Training Provider (Ofsted), and need to improve significantly in one or more areas. NLFEs may be approached by other colleges seeking improvement support, or the Further Education Commissioner may broker a partnership with an NLFE and a college. NLFEs may also make an approach to a college to seek to establish a partnership. An NLFE (including their team) is expected to commit a minimum of 10 days per year to their role, and to undertake at least one major improvement project partnering with another college. New NLFEs attend an induction workshop.

Source: ReferNet.

#### 4.1.5.3. *Becoming mentors and trainers in companies*

Policies to structure access to mentoring and training roles in companies continue to develop. This trend is mainly linked to the need to complement the reform of apprenticeship and other forms of workplace-based learning. Actions in this area have mainly consisted of:

- (a) re/defining the requirements to become a mentor/trainer, including developing standards/profiles (as in Belgium (fr), France, Luxembourg, Hungary, Poland);
- (b) introducing/updating training programmes (whether optional or compulsory) to become an in-company trainer (Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Slovenia, Finland);

- (c) introducing/updating measures to increase the availability of qualified mentors/trainers in companies (France).

#### 4.1.5.4. *Continuing professional development of trainers/mentors in enterprises*

Actions in this area have mainly consisted of:

- (a) setting up plans or framework guidelines for the continuing training of in-company mentors and trainers (Belgium (fr), Greece);
- (b) developing programmes and courses (Czechia, Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania);
- (c) opening up learning opportunities through school visiting schemes (Norway, Slovenia).

### Box 23. **Adjusting the requirements and training programmes to become a mentor/trainer: examples**

In the French Community of Belgium, the Competence Validation Consortium (CVDC) set out a definition of the profession of in-company tutor, including the related key activities and skills, specified in a vocational certification profile. Following this, in cooperation with VET providers, a validation frame of reference was adopted, indicating how to establish and verify that the skills have been mastered. A total of 13 centres now offer this validation service in Wallonia and in Brussels and the first candidates were validated in 2016.

In France, the 2015 circular addressing the introduction of apprenticeships into the non-industrial and non-commercial public sector required that apprenticeship tutors (*maîtres d'apprentissage*) are familiar with the apprentice recruitment procedure; receive prior training on what is expected from them, including their responsibilities in the role; and exchange with peers.

In Bulgaria, a programme for mentor training was endorsed by the Ministry of Education and Science in April 2019. It is targeted at the acquisition of basic pedagogical and psychological knowledge and skills for working with trainees in work-based learning settings.

Source: ReferNet.

#### 4.1.5.5. *Monitoring and evaluation of CPD processes*

Measures in relation to this strand could be found in Denmark, Germany, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia and the United Kingdom. UK-England provides the best and most systematic example of this category of action. The Education and Train-

ing Foundation, launched in July 2016, is a further education workforce data system to inform policy-makers and enable learning providers to collect, analyse and benchmark their workforce data. This goes along with ETF reports on initial training of further education teachers. In October 2017, the ETF started a study on the training needs of

### Box 24. **Continuing professional development of trainers/mentors in enterprises: examples**

#### **Developing programmes and courses**

In Czechia, a 40-hour training course for in-company trainers was designed and piloted in 2015 within the ESF-supported *Pospolu* project. It focused on: familiarising them with 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. The course also gives the opportunity to have one's competences recognised by taking an exam, in line with the 2006 legislation on validation and recognition of continuing training outcomes.

#### **School visiting schemes**

In Norway, the 2015 VET teacher promotion initiative includes measures to increase the access of company trainers (instructors) to school visiting schemes that allow better knowledge of the curricula and school-based learning components. In-company trainers are expected to gain increased expertise in the use of curriculum, instruction and adapted training.

In Slovenia, in-company trainers may also participate in a 2016-20 work exchange programme of the Education Ministry (*Improving the professional competences of teachers*), which gives them access to opportunities for job rotation with VET school teachers.

Source: ReferNet.

further education teachers. This systematic analysis engages with every level of the workforce and aims to provide baseline data to ensure that future training for teachers and trainers is aligned with their professional needs and priorities. The analysis will be carried out through two surveys with a target of several thousand responses. A telephone survey explores training needs from the perspective of organisations within the sector, while an online survey via email explores training needs from the perspective of individuals.

## 4.2. Candidate countries

### 4.2.1. MTD 1 – Work-based learning/ apprenticeships

Analysis of the MTD 1 reports submitted by the EU candidate countries reveals that their efforts during 2015-20 continue to focus mainly on apprenticeship schemes and dual VET. Work-based learning (WBL) in school-based VET is also receiving increasing attention. Overall, different countries are at different development stages; some still at an early stage and others expanding their WBL. Preferred policy options during the reporting period 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.

#### 4.2.1.1. *Introducing/reforming apprenticeships*

##### **Preparing the ground for introducing formal apprenticeships in the western Balkan candidate countries**

To introduce apprenticeships into 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. North Macedonia developed a national vision for work-based learning and apprenticeships in its comprehensive education strategy for 2018-25, together with an action plan and a technical VET concept paper (2016). Serbia has elaborated on a concept for introducing dual education which in 2018 has been mainstreamed in the whole system.

New laws on craftsmanship were adopted in North Macedonia (December 2015) and in Albania (June 2016), enabling apprenticeship schemes in handicrafts and for adults, with a special focus on the unemployed. A new VET Law in Albania (February 2017) allows for introducing dual VET elements and recruiting school-business liaison personnel in all major VET institutions. Serbia adopted the Law on Dual education in 2017 and three new bylaws in 2018/19. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (CCIS) has adopted three other legal acts to facilitate implementing the above law. Two more legal acts are being prepared. The CCIS will have a key role in the *Dual and entrepreneurship education track* that will commence in the academic year 2019/20.

Amendments to different laws in education, including on VET, were adopted in 2017 in Montenegro, all promoting apprenticeships. For example, the changes foresee apprentices' health and pension contributions to be paid from the State budget in the first two years of apprenticeships, so that the schemes become more attractive to employers and involve them more broadly. From school year 2017/18 apprenticeship is part of the VET offer for students attending three-year educational programmes.

With regard to preparing for implementation, Albania has developed a roadmap for introducing wider scale work-based learning. A feasibility study from the United Nations Development Programme (2018) defines strategies for private sector involvement in VET/work-based learning, following consultations with numerous employers.

The rolling-out of dual VET in Montenegro continued successfully in 2018. Compared to the previous year, the dual model increased its coverage, student numbers, employer involvement, occupational profiles and the num-

ber of municipalities involved. Serbia will pilot the *Dual and entrepreneurship education track* in the 2019/20 school year, with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry having the key role. All candidate countries have joined the European alliance for apprenticeships.

**Making existing apprenticeships more attractive and accessible, promoting entrepreneurship through apprenticeships in Turkey**

Turkey addressed the steadily falling number of apprentices, a trend of the past 10 years, by amending 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 (December 2016) has helped more learners/VET providers to find apprenticeship places and more companies to find apprentices (Box 25). As a result, the number of participating students increased by 80% in 2017 and by 62% by 2018, compared to 2016. The reasons behind the 10% drop in 2018 compared to 2017 are not clear and need to be carefully analysed and addressed to ensure the sustainability of the 2016-17 reform.

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

The candidate countries have also reported developments in work-based learning in school-based VET, mostly to improve VET learners' practical training in companies. Examples include:

- (a) in North Macedonia, 54 grants were awarded in 2016 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 were finalised in 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 *Soli-*

**Box 25. New approaches to apprenticeships in Turkey**

The recent amendments to the Apprenticeship Law (December 2016) in Turkey, in effect since the school year 2017/18:

- apprenticeships are included in compulsory education to give the opportunity to more young people to follow this VET pathway, while helping crafts and 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) cannot 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 are covered by the State;
- students who have successfully completed apprenticeship training are 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) provides a TRY 50 000 grant (approximately EUR 7900) and a TRY100 000 (approximately EUR 15 810) <sup>(33)</sup> interest-free loan to graduates who open their own business, promoting entrepreneurship through apprenticeships.

<sup>(33)</sup> Currency conversion based on 2019 exchange rates.

- dar* Switzerland <sup>(34)</sup>. The publication informs employers 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;
- (d) in July 2018, the Vocational Training Centre (VTC) in Durres, Albania, started implementing WBL in the cookery profession, including two weeks in the VTC and two weeks in the businesses (hotels, restaurants). The activities were supported by the German provider of international cooperation services for sustainable development and international education work (GIZ) <sup>(35)</sup> project ProSEED;
  - (e) the multifunctional centre in Kamza, Albania organised WBL in many occupational profiles and mediated internship contracts for third and fourth year students; first and second year students were provided practical lessons in the school workshops. These activities were also supported by the GIZ. The *Skills for jobs* project, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, enabled internships in more than 400 companies for students in the six VET schools;
  - (f) within the Swiss supported project *Education for employment in North Macedonia* (E4E@mk) employers, VET schools and the municipality in Prilep cooperated to provide placements for students in companies for practical training and for summer practice. A working group was established to develop guidelines for effective summer practice, to be piloted and adopted in 2019. Also, a report was prepared on the current cooperation between companies and VET schools in the country's four regions;
  - (g) the *Skills development and innovation support* project in North Macedonia, implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science, has a grant programme for the business sector to cooperate with the VET schools, thanks to a loan from the World Bank. All the 25 companies who received the grant in October 2018 have started implementing project activities (expected completion June 2019);
  - (h) the *20-20-20* project (started in 2017) in Skopje, North Macedonia, is a cooperation project between the power company EVN and a VET school. The company furnishes labs to meet current labour market needs and provides internships and mentors for students;
  - (i) North Macedonia included internships in the National action plan for active labour market measures to improve the skills and qualifications of unemployed to integrate them better in the labour market. Over 50% of the young people who participated in this programme were employed following the internship. In 2018, 1 263 internship contracts were concluded within the internship programme;
  - (j) in December 2018, the North Macedonia Government adopted the Draft Law on Internship and submitted it for further parliamentary procedure;
  - (k) stronger cooperation between education/training and the business world was reported by the candidate countries in the context of the new WBL developments. North Macedonia and Serbia laid the legal basis for structured and multi-stakeholder governance of WBL. In North Macedonia, a broad-based national working group is preparing a concept paper on WBL. In Serbia, a commission comprising government, municipalities, schools and employer representatives was established to coordinate and monitor dual education implementation.

#### 4.2.2. 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 (QA) 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

<sup>(34)</sup> 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.

<sup>(35)</sup> <https://www.giz.de/en/aboutgiz/profile.html>

by North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey only. It is supplemented by the annual Riga reports of the candidate countries, as well as by the 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.

#### 4.2.2.1. *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 reports it has used the EQAVET framework; Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia say that their national approaches, though developed independently, are compatible with it. The national approaches in North Macedonia and Serbia were developed in 2015-16. In April 2018, Serbia adopted the law on the national qualifications framework, which lays the legal foundation for quality in the qualifications system with strong employer involvement. Turkey adopted its national education quality framework, of which VET is a part, in 2015. In 2018, it passed a regulation which sets the quality criteria that must be satisfied before issuing any qualification certificate (including vocational) in the country.

During the reporting period, in Montenegro the new *Rulebook on content, shape and form of assessing quality of education* was drafted, unifying the methodology for external and internal evaluation for schools. Albania is working towards a comprehensive national quality assurance approach in VET. In 2018, the UNDP *Skills development for education (SD4E)* programme supported the country to define the features of a quality assurance framework in the Albanian VET system, including self-assessment, accreditation of VET providers, inspection and monitoring.

All national approaches share an emphasis on achieving learner employability. The ultimate indicator of good-quality VET provision is that the skills acquired are relevant to the labour market. The quality assurance approaches in North

Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey apply to IVET and CVET. During the reporting period, Serbia adopted new elements concerning the overall QA approach and regulations that lay the basis for QA of WBL and qualifications, specifically in teaching and school management. The Serbian Chamber of Commerce (CCIS) adopted regulations setting standards for the QA of work-based learning. Other candidate countries do not address work-based learning in the context of quality in either IVET or CVET, highlighting room for improvement and for making them more comprehensive.

The quality assurance approaches have been devised with a broad range 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: 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 North 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 North Macedonia and Turkey; to teachers/trainers in North 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 North 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. By contrast, all approaches have been formally agreed – in relevant strategies in North 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 to mainstream it in the near future.

The recommendation underlines that the EQAVET framework should also be applied to VET providers. North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey report that such common national approaches for VET providers have already been devised and are compatible with EQAVET. All have been formally approved and partially implemented. In the case of North 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.

#### 4.2.2.2. *Evaluation and alignment with EQAVET indicators*

In line with the EQAVET recommendation, candidate countries are increasingly combining internal and external evaluations to improve VET quality. Albania's VET system went through institutional restructuring and governance reforms in the reporting period, but for Turkey, Montenegro and Serbia, external evaluation of VET providers is a mandatory continuous activity. In North Macedonia, a working group set indicators and tools for external evaluation, to be piloted from 2019. 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 North Macedonia. In Turkey self-assessments are not obligatory, yet many schools conduct them. In Albania, a ministerial order from May 2018 makes self-assessment obligatory for all VET providers. A self-assessment tool had been developed and piloted in some VET institutions; with UNDP support, a self-assessment manual was drafted in 2018 and the process was supported by teacher training. In the reporting period, Montenegro made preparations to extend internal evaluation to adult education pro-

viders, including CVET institutions, by starting to develop methodology for such evaluations.

There are differences across the candidate countries in application of the EQAVET indicators and/or proxies. North Macedonia and Serbia always apply three to four indicators out of 17 to assess quality in IVET, while Turkey uses all, but only occasionally ('sometimes'). In CVET, Turkey uses only two indicators systematically; North 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 used less often.

#### 4.2.2.3. *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 North 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 already done so, some of the actions, with Turkey and North 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 for this, but it did not apply for the 2017-19 period.

#### 4.2.2.4. *Building tracking systems in VET*

The candidate countries have reported activities related to improving data on transitions and employability of VET graduates. Those in the western Balkans took 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 North Macedonia. The tracer system in Albania will track graduates from both IVET and CVET, while the systems in Montenegro and North 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. More specifically, since 2017 Turkey has established the *Initial vocational and technical education e-graduate* tracking system. Among other things, the system looks at links between education system learning outcomes and the skills applied by VET graduates in both waged employment, and self-employment or entrepreneurship careers. It represents good practice both within the Turkish policy environment and among Western Balkan and Turkey's economies.

#### 4.2.3. **MTD 3 – Access to VET and qualifications for all**

The candidate countries addressed the issue of access to and participation in VET in 2015-19 by a diversity of actions.

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

North Macedonia has adopted a comprehensive education strategy 2018-25, aiming for a new concept for admission to secondary VET and relevant amendments to the legislation. Adult education was also incorporated in the strategy with the goal of attracting 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 in the organised industrial zones <sup>(36)</sup>, but also in other areas.

##### 4.2.3.2. *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 country has also established affirmative measures for their Roma and Egyptian population, easing access to lower secondary VET. North Macedonia is improving interethnic integration in schools. In 2018, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Serbia adopted a bylaw on educational institution procedures, a new bylaw on additional education, health and social support for children, pupils and the young (Serbia) which regulates the detailed requirements for assessing the needs for pro-

<sup>(36)</sup> 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.

viding additional educational, health and social support to the child, the student and the adult, as well as the composition and method of work of the cross-sectoral Commission.

As of January 1, 2018, Serbia has become the 31st member of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. Its membership will contribute to achieving Serbia's aims in relation to inclusive education by cooperating with other members, enabling access to data on good practice and analyses in different education systems, and through technical support.

The Swiss funded project *E4E@mk* is working on social inclusion and Serbia has set up medical commissions to support enrolment for students with health issues. It also exercises positive discrimination for schools where minorities and special education needs (SEN) students are educated, by waiving the compulsory minimum class size requirement of 30 students and allowing smaller classrooms. The *Schooling of girls* project was launched in April 2018 in Turkey. Additionally, the country has made provisions for SEN students to be included in regular schools by supporting them with an individualised education programme and changes in the school environment. 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 also had to provide for Syrian refugees, whose numbers had exceeded 3.6 million by the time of writing. All refugees are entitled to free enrolment at the education ministry's public education centres in Turkish language and skills-training courses; these do not lead to formal vocational qualifications but support graduates in their income generation.

Albania invested efforts in improving the physical infrastructure of VET institutions to ensure better access and participation: the country reported activities such as building safe dormitories for girls/women, and making learning venues wheelchair accessible with funds from the State budget and donors.

#### 4.2.3.3. *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. After successful piloting through the project, during 2017 and 2018, MoESTD changed the legislative framework to allow implementation of dropout prevention and intervention measures (piloted and proved to be effective within the project) and to establish conditions for scaling up the model to all schools. Today, the plan for dropout prevention is an integral part of the Individual education plan. A knowledge resource package, consisting of a *Guidebook for school for the implementation of the dropout prevention* and a *Guidebook on new approach to remedial teaching* were disseminated to schools from all local self-governments in Serbia; these support project sustainability and the feasibility of the model's implementation in schools that were not part of the project. All the publications mentioned are available, free of charge, in electronic form to all the schools and all other interested parties.

Training on how to implement the model has been developed and is accredited by the minister for education; it is available on the list of training seminars of public interest. The resource package has been distributed in hard copies to more than 800 schools in Serbia; more than 200 schools have been supported in dropout prevention by the training and that number is increasing. Representatives of 50 schools that obtained approval from MoESTD to engage pedagogical assistants attended the training. One of the results was that all the participating schools developed action plans for dropout prevention and these plans become an integral part of the school development plan (one of the main school strategic documents).

North Macedonia put actions in place to prevent early school leaving. Montenegro has developed a protocol on the treatment and prevention of student dropout, prescribing procedures for relevant institutions. In Albania, a coaching approach to preventing dropout was piloted in the Swiss-funded *Skills for jobs* project.

#### 4.2.3.4. *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; the amended Law on the Albanian qualifications framework (AQF) was adopted in May 2018. Three new bylaws, which address sector councils, lifelong learning qualifications in the AQF and detailed descriptions of the qualification levels, were submitted for approval in November 2018.

Following 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: they have the right to continue to higher education by completing the difference courses in the relevant subject area.

North 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. Modular programmes continue to be developed and adopted (16 programmes in seven sectors, based on 49 occupational standards).

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

The candidate countries reported several activities aimed at establishing or improving their national validation systems. Albania set the legal basis for its validation system through the provisions of the newly adopted VET Law (February 2017) and the 2018 amendments to the 2010

Law on the Albanian qualifications framework. Serbia has developed a concept of recognition and validation of prior learning in accordance with its adult education law. Piloting the concept is foreseen for 2019.

In 2016, North Macedonia developed a roadmap for establishing a validation system. In 2018, a working group was established to propose amendments to the laws and bylaws that would enable setting up the validation system. Training sessions have been organised for assessors and advisors. Validation guidelines (for both, staff and candidates) are under development. There is a coordination body in place that monitors validation progress in the country.

Turkey and Montenegro have started implementing validation of non-formal and informal learning. Both these countries have adopted relevant legislation, developed procedures and identified institutions to conduct validation for qualification levels 1-5. Turkey already has a functioning validation system; from 2015 until May 2018, 347 714 certificates for VET qualifications had been issued (Akkök, 2019). In 2018, the regulation on quality assurance came into force, the Turkish qualifications framework (TQF) communication strategy and quality assurance handbook were approved, the qualifications database in Turkey has been enriched, and the TQF website has been improved and translated into English and Arab to increase the employability of Syrian refugees. TQF quality assurance structures and practices, which are comparable, transparent, and compatible with international approaches, are structured at national level for the first time and an integrated quality assurance approach adopted and implemented through the monitoring and harmonisation tasks of the TQF Councils.

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 to acquire national vocational qualifications (testing and certification) has been transferred from the examination centre to licensed training providers. In 2019, the country adopted methodology to enable obtaining a qualification or part of it through validation.

#### 4.2.3.6. *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 guidance and counselling services in VET schools. The new VET Law in Albania establishes career guidance in all schools, though practical developments in this area are mostly project-based and donor-driven. A career guidance service centre will be set up in the capital as a community service with special emphasis on the young. Guidance to students and training for professionals is also supported. Montenegro continued implementing the lifelong career development strategy 2016-20; its action plan for 2019-20 was adopted in 2018. Representatives of line ministries, employers, universities and schools monitor its implementation as a coordinating body. A manual has been developed to support career guidance and counselling of SEN students in VET schools; prior to this there had been a training programme for teachers from 23 vocational and mixed schools on career guidance. In Serbia, a bylaw to complement the law on dual education was adopted to regulate career guidance and counselling for students in dual education.

Turkey has the most developed counselling system among the candidate countries, with services provided in both the education and employment sectors. The education ministry has developed a web-based career information system <sup>(37)</sup> comprising self-assessment tools, education and training opportunities and labour market information.

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

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

The candidate countries interpret key competences according to the 2006 EU recommendation (Council of the European Union, 2006) and use curricula as the main tool for promoting them. In Albania, upper secondary VET curricula promote all key competences, except ‘learning to learn’. 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 is not comprehensively or systematically monitored. All candidate countries report gaps and lack of data. Mother tongue, foreign languages and mathematics are assessed nationally through *matura* examinations or international surveys, such as the 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.

All the candidate countries have made efforts to accommodate the EU key competence recommendations through a cross-curricular approach. However, their approaches to this area differ. For example, some address aspects of the entrepreneurship key competence within the wider curriculum: in Kosovo creativity falls under the wider curriculum area of ‘creative thinking’, while Serbia focuses on interpersonal competences, such as problem solving, in primary and secondary education. These reflect key areas of the European entrepreneurship competence framework (*EntreComp*). In North Macedonia, aspects of entrepreneurship key competence

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

are included under the ‘life skills’ curriculum. Bosnia and Herzegovina had already established the entrepreneurship key competence within its common core curriculum but implementation of the curriculum by the range of education authorities across the State has been weak. However, Albania recognises entrepreneurial learning as a key feature for development in the 2016-21 education strategy. Bosnia and Herzegovina’s plans to cross reference its existing curriculum with *EntreComp* are also promising. In Montenegro, the Bureau for Education Services used *EntreComp* as a reference tool to introduce entrepreneurship key competences in pre-school education (Bacigalupo et al, 2016). In addition to these approaches, most economies also offer entrepreneurship as a subject in its own right.

Given the newness of entrepreneurship key competence in education policy, cross-curricular approaches take time to develop, and require piloting and improvements along the way. This calls for a more developed, system-based approach to preparing teachers – those in service and future intakes – to meet the demands of employers and build a more entrepreneurial spirit and mindset among young people. In 2015-19, few developments were reported in this area. Strategic documents adopted during the reporting period in North Macedonia reiterate the importance: the TVET concept paper (2016) and the Competitiveness strategy and action plan 2016-20 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). New modularised and outcomes-based curricula, which will be implemented in 2019/20 in North Macedonia, include most key competences.

National competence standards for teachers and principals across schools in Montenegro – according to the Bureau for Education Services – require that teachers promote students’ acquisition of key competences and soft skills, including critical thinking and decision-making, cooperation, problem solving, creativity, adaptability, persistence, empathy and solidarity. Each module of the 16 new competence-based programmes, recently introduced in VET schools,

includes a prescriptive standard, which outlines the key competences to be acquired in that module. Turkey organised training for teachers on all key competences except financial literacy; this is the least promoted competence in all candidate countries in the reporting period. However, in Serbia the law on primary education recognises it as a necessary learning outcome to continue education and be actively involved in family and community life.

#### 4.2.4.2. *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 key competences without specific reference to any of the eight included in the EU recommendation.

### 4.2.5. **MTD 5 – Professional development of teachers and trainers**

#### 4.2.5.1. *Initial training for teachers in VET ‘schools’: changing models in the western Balkans to address existing gaps*

Developments reported during 2015-19 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, VET teacher study programmes were revised in North Macedonia, to align them with the requirements of the laws on teachers for primary and secondary education and higher education, adopted in 2014 and 2015. The focus 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. Serbia has introduced various programmes for in-service teacher training in entrepreneurship key competence development and the use of active learning methods. There is project-based teacher training on the devel-

opment of learning outcomes: in primary education, the training includes project teaching, project planning, entrepreneurship, and monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. In secondary education and VET, the training looked at the use of active learning methods.

Pre-service teacher development is the next challenge in Serbia. Teacher materials are currently available for download on the interactive web platform. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development has now published a *Guide for pupils' cooperatives*, which provides a practical roadmap for establishing pupils' cooperatives, as well as understanding of entrepreneurship and the development of entrepreneurial teacher and student competences.

#### 4.2.5.2. 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 for teachers' professional development. 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 foreseen. The 2016 TVET concept paper for North Macedonia highlights the importance of design and quality assurance measures for TVET teachers and trainers' continuing professional development (CPD), based on training needs assessment and strengthening the capacities of training providers. The new VET Law in Albania envisages school development units in charge of VET teacher and instructor CPD, among other functions. Under the IPA sector reform programme, in 2016-18 the National Agency for VET and Qualifications (NAVETQ) in Albania provided a 24-day basic pedagogy programme to 71% of the VET teachers in the country, meeting the target. Other trainer and teacher training activities were donor-driven pilots, by German GIZ and within the Swiss *Skills for jobs* project.

In Serbia, in September 2018, 102 VET teachers from 42 schools were trained in the transport, agriculture and food processing sectors on how to implement WBL. In April-May 2018, 19 training seminars for 614 teachers from 232 schools were held on implementing the *matura* and the final exam. These seminars were also attended by employers' representatives and social partners, who will play the crucial role as external assessors in the final VET exams. In 2018, the top 11 VET schools were granted around EUR 70 000 to act as resource centres for other schools by organising training seminars, roundtables, networking activities and practical workshops for colleagues from other schools, encouraging the new modality of school-based CPD. The project *Networking of agricultural schools in Serbia* aims to improving VET teacher digital competences, using and creating digital learning materials; 33 teachers from 28 secondary agricultural schools attended the training and an online platform *AgroNet Serbia* was set up to host the created content. A teacher education portal was developed in partnership with UNICEF Serbia.

In North Macedonia, in accordance with the new modularised curricula, 28 instructors were equipped to deliver training on the shift to learning outcomes to around 2300 participants (teachers, directors, pedagogues and psychologists) in all secondary vocational schools in the country. The catalogue of training programmes for VET teachers in Montenegro for 2018 and 2019 was supplemented with 13 new teacher training programmes adopted by the National Education Council.

The VET Centre in Skopje developed and ran a company-based training programme for teachers of vocational theory and practical training as a pilot in 2016. In the same year Montenegro also developed a small pilot project for training VET teachers in enterprises: 20 teachers participated in this pilot, managed by the education ministry in cooperation with the VET centre and the Chamber of commerce, and with ETF support. Turkey, in contrast, reports placing greater focus on VET teacher distant and online training.

#### 4.2.5.3. *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 challenge for VET policy-makers in the western Balkans. In Serbia, the Law on dual education (2017) defines the terms and conditions for becoming in-company trainers; its by-law specifies procedures and preconditions for trainer exams (2018), including the learning content and outcomes. The designated training organiser CCIS has already trained 322 instructors with support from Austrian Development Agency and German GIZ. In Montenegro, the terms and conditions for becoming in-company trainers were revised in 2017 through amendments to the VET law.

Related CPD activities within donor-supported projects included:

- (a) the *YES* project in North Macedonia, implemented from 2010 to June 2016, trained mentors from companies; the training included a module for working with SEN students to enable them 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 GIZ. In 2017/18, 19 new schools joined the project and 84 instructors from 45 companies received training as electrician, industrial mechanic and fashion tailor;
- (c) the *Skills for Jobs* project supported and launched an in-company mentors training programme in cooperation with SFIVET (Swiss Federal Institute for VET) and NAVETQ in Albania;
- (d) in North Macedonia, a total of 400 in-company trainers were trained in an initiative organised by the Chamber of Commerce and delivered by the VET Centre. Another training programme had been developed and accredited by the National Education Council and included in the catalogue of professional development programmes for teachers in Montenegro. In 2018, with the support of the

ETF, 88 in-company trainers were trained in selected regions.

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.



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

### 5.1. 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 2015-19. The type and speed of action vary by MTD and from one VET system to another, depending on country context and starting point. 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 predates 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.

2015-19 has also been a period of transition in several national policies. Longer-term strategies and initiatives were coming to an end by 2014-16 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 recent initiatives build on previous projects or are related to them. Implementation and outcomes of strategies and achievements of longer-term quantitative and qualitative targets, set by several countries, may go beyond 2020.

The dividing line between IVET and CVET is being increasingly blurred. Even before Riga some Member States 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, along with its increasing variety of actors. VET also takes place as upskilling or reskilling within active labour market policies. In candidate countries, however, less emphasis may have been placed on CVET.

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.

### 5.2. 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 (EAfA) (2013) and reinforced by Member States' work on youth guarantees and country-specific recommendations. Policy support has become even stronger since then (see Chapter 1).

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 offered fertile ground for further coop-

eration, 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 of them (MTDs 3 and 4). 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 not silos, so 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 seems less evident than that 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;
- (b) in MTD 2, 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 use of EQAVET indicators is not showing any significant progress;
- (c) common features in MTD 3 include structural changes to make VET pathways more flexible, broaden access to VET and im-

prove progression opportunities. Countries have also reinforced their work on validating non-formally and informally acquired skills and on recognition of qualifications or prior formal learning. In the Member States, this may be linked to the recommendations on validation, youth guarantees and supporting the 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;

- (d) MTD 4 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 <sup>(38)</sup>. Increasing the autonomy of VET schools/providers in shaping their curricula makes the picture foggier. Nevertheless, countries appear to be strengthening the visibility, importance and recognition of key competences. In most cases they focus on literacy, language and digital skills;
- (e) 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. Several countries have started improving teachers' salaries, status and career progression. In countries that introduce or expand apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning, more company staff are receiving 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.

The candidate countries focused efforts on improving their approach to assuring VET quali-

<sup>(38)</sup> See the [EU-28+ country chapters on key competences in upper secondary VET](#), a Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspective series.

ty at system and provider level, and making use of the EQAVET reference framework. Progress achieved since 2015 has been modest, with some results systemic while others remain pilot experience in need of evaluation and mainstreaming as appropriate.

### 5.3. Prospects and challenges

This monitoring exercise has also highlighted promising prospects, alongside the shortfalls, that could deserve more attention in future.

Of particular interest among the prospects is the approach to further involving SMEs in work-based learning and apprenticeship. Several countries have addressed this crucial topic in ways which, put together, yield a holistic and consistent model of what could be considered good practice in the future. In some countries, SMEs were provided with toolkits for quality placements and invited to participate in training workshops <sup>(39)</sup>. Methodological guidelines for them to take on apprentices were also developed <sup>(40)</sup> and guidebooks for the introduction of apprenticeships were prepared <sup>(41)</sup>. Focus was also on establishing apprenticeship support services and training apprenticeship facilitators. Apprenticeship advisors were trained to provide SMEs with administrative assistance and counselling services. An example was reported of a network for dual training where SMEs can discuss the key challenges they face and receive advice <sup>(42)</sup>. Particular attention was paid to training in-company mentors <sup>(43)</sup>, in one case specifically on-site, with a mobile team set up to offer modular training adapted to enterprise needs at its premises <sup>(44)</sup>. In-company trainers were given access to work exchange and visiting schemes that allow them to improve their knowledge of curricula <sup>(45)</sup>. Shared apprenticeship, where apprentices move between different em-

ployers, was put in place for employers that can only provide partial placements <sup>(46)</sup>. Databases of SMEs interested in apprenticeships were created to support schools and learners in searching for placements <sup>(47)</sup>. Although it is too early to already have an overall evaluation of initiative results, it can be sensed that a holistic approach combining all these angles is likely to be successful in involving SMEs in taking up apprentices.

Among the shortfalls, the low number of initiatives along the lines of the 2016 *Upskilling pathways* recommendation is concerning. The recommendation focuses on providing low-skilled adults with skills, knowledge and competence relevant for the labour market, following a three-stage pattern (skills assessment; provision of a tailored, flexible and quality learning offer; and validation and recognition of the skills acquired) supported by guidance and by making the best use of the potential of digital technologies. Although some country initiatives meet some of these features, only one country <sup>(48)</sup> reported action with explicit reference to the recommendation and including all the distinctive features.

Another point that could also be considered is the linking between all strands of the VET policies. As already noted, VET policies should not be approached as silos. Another example is the mobility side, especially as addressed by the *Erasmus+* and *ErasmusPro* programmes. While learner and teacher mobility is part of the stakeholder approach to running apprenticeship, securing the quality of VET, enhancing equity, developing key competences and organising the professional development of teachers and trainers, learning mobility as a topic was not directly addressed in the Riga conclusions and could not be taken on board in this Riga monitoring. Better capturing the broad picture of VET policies would require a more holistic approach beyond 2020.

<sup>(39)</sup> See for example Poland and Cyprus country chapters.

<sup>(40)</sup> See for example Latvia and Germany country chapters.

<sup>(41)</sup> See for example Croatia country chapter.

<sup>(42)</sup> See Spain country chapter.

<sup>(43)</sup> See for example Croatia and the French Community of Belgium country chapters.

<sup>(44)</sup> In the Brussels region.

<sup>(45)</sup> See for example Norway country chapter.

<sup>(46)</sup> See for example UK-Wales country chapter.

<sup>(47)</sup> See for example Croatia country chapter.

<sup>(48)</sup> See Poland country chapter.

## 5.4. Past reflections, future lessons

### 5.4.1. Maintaining positive momentum

The Riga deliverables have helped encourage cooperation across borders. This is particularly evident in work on apprenticeships and is 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 the ETF. The European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships, adopted in 2018 based on a European social partner initiative, complements the policy package for the Member States and can be 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 maintaining to cover all deliverables systematically.

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 skills agenda. Countries are taking steps to improve 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 crucial. 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.

### 5.4.2. 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 recommendation 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 <sup>(49)</sup>.

This final report on developments in the Riga cycle takes stock of achievements but also suggests steps forward. It takes part in the general reflection 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 findings and reflections, some common trends emerge:

- (a) work-based learning is being strengthened and expanding to different types and levels of VET;
- (b) vocationally oriented education and training at higher levels is expanding and borderlines with '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 becoming more closely integrated; VET is differentiating further, as new stakeholders and providers enter the sector;
- (c) rapid structural changes require flexible responses to meet new sector-specific needs;

<sup>(49)</sup> Cedefop web page on the [Peer learning conference on the impact of NQFs: do national qualifications frameworks make a difference?](#) Thessaloniki, 9 and 10 November 2017.

- sufficient key competences skills are a condition for reskilling and upskilling;
- (d) the influence that internationalisation has on VET is becoming faster and stronger.

These trends underline the need for increased flexibility and permeability. They also call for 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 national 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 in 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.

# Acronyms/Abbreviations

<b>ACVT</b>	Advisory Committee for Vocational Training
<b>ADA</b>	dual systems and alternance
<b>BE (de)</b>	German-speaking Community of Belgium
<b>BE (fl)</b>	Flemish Community of Belgium
<b>BE (fr)</b>	French Community of Belgium
<b>CEFR</b>	EU frameworks for key competences, languages
<b>CPD</b>	continuing professional development
<b>DGVT</b>	Directors General for Vocational Education and Training
<b>EAfA</b>	European alliance for apprenticeship
<b>EEA</b>	European Economic Area
<b>EQAVET</b>	European quality assurance for vocational education and training
<b>EQF</b>	European qualifications framework
<b>ESF</b>	European Social Fund
<b>ESIF</b>	European structural and investment funds
<b>ETF</b>	European Training Foundation
<b>MTD</b>	medium-term deliverable
<b>NQF</b>	national qualifications framework
<b>NRP</b>	national reference points
<b>TQF</b>	Turkish qualifications framework
<b>TVET</b>	technical vocational education and training (term used by UNESCO)
<b>QA</b>	quality assurance
<b>UK-EN</b>	United Kingdom – England
<b>UK-NI</b>	United Kingdom – Northern Ireland
<b>UK-SC</b>	United Kingdom – Scotland
<b>UK-WA</b>	United Kingdom – Wales
<b>VET</b>	vocational education and training (term used by EU)
<b>WBL</b>	work-based learning

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- European Commission's web page on education initiatives: recommendations on key competences for lifelong learning. [https://ec.europa.eu/education/initiatives/key-competences-framework-review-2017\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/initiatives/key-competences-framework-review-2017_en)
- European Commission's web page on a digital single market: the digital skills and jobs coalition. <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-skills-jobs-coalition>.
- Peer learning conference on the impact of NQFs: *Do national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) make a difference? Measuring and evaluating NQF impact*. Thessaloniki, 9 and 10 November 2017; organised by Cedefop, the European Commission and Quality and Qualifications Ireland. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/events/peer-learning-conference>
- ReferNet, Cedefop's European network of expertise on vocational education and training. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet>

# Annex

Table A1. **VET statistics for the candidate countries (2015, 2018)**

	Albania		Montenegro		North Macedonia		
	2015	2018	2015	2018	2015	2018	
Activity rate (20-64) [%]	71.3	74.8	68.5	70.5	70.2	70.4	
Employment rate (20-64) [%]	59.3	65.6	56.7	59.8	51.9	56.1	
Unemployment rate (15+) [%]	17.1	12.3	17.6	15.2	26.1	20.8	
Long-term unemployment rate (15+) [%]	11.3	8.3	13.5	11.4	21.3	15.5	
Unemployment rate by education [% aged 15+]	Low	13.4	9.9	28.3	20.1	29.9	23.8
	Medium	20.4	14.3	19.3	16.7	26.6	21
	High	19.4	14.0	10.3	10.3	21.1	17.8
Youth unemployment rate (15-24) [%]	39.8	28.3	37.6	29.4	47.3	45.4	
Youth unemployment ratio (15-24) [%]	12.5	10.1	11.3	9.7	15.5	14.5	
Incidence of self-employment [%]	59	55.5	20.9	21.9	26.1	23.6	
Participation in lifelong learning (25-64) [%]	1.1	0.9	3.0	3.2	2.6	2.4	
Tertiary educational attainment (30-34) [%]	22.1	27.3	31.0	32.4	28.6	33.3	
Underachievement [% aged 15]	Reading	50.3	a	41.9	A	70.7	a
	Maths	53.3	a	51.9	A	70.2	a
	Science	41.7	a	51	A	62.9	a
Early leavers from education (18-24) [%]	21.3	17.4	5.7	4.6	11.4	7.1	
Persons not in employment, education, training (15-24) [%]	29.6	26.5	19.1	16.2	24.7	24.1	
Students in VET programmes at upper secondary level [%] *	19.5	19.8	67.2	67.1	59.5	59.3	
Students in VET programmes at upper secondary level [000] *	27 2	25 1	19 7	18 7	50 0	45 2	
Educational attainment of active population (15+) [%]	Low	44.1	43.2	9.1	9.6	23.2	19.2
	Medium	37.2	36.8	62.8	62.6	54.2	56.4
	High	18.7	20	28.1	27.7	22.7	24.4
Public expenditure on education [% of GDP] *	3.1	3.2	4.5	4.5	4.1	4	
Total population [000]	2 885	2 870	622	622	2 069	2 075	
Relative size of youth population (15-24) [%]	20.6	19.5	18.4	18.3	17.3	15.9	

Legend: a: not applicable; m: missing; (\*) Most recent year available,

NB: Broad educational attainment levels: Low: ISCED 0-2; Medium: ISCED 3-4; High: ISCED 5-8. Underachievement (PISA): Serbia (2012).

Source: ETF database, Eurostat, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, OECD.

	Serbia		Turkey		EU	
	2015	2018	2015	2018	2015	2018
	68.1	72.5	59.9	62.3	77.1	78.4
	56.0	63.1	53.9	55.6	70.0	73.1
	17.8	12.9	10.3	10.9	9.4	6.8
	10.6	6.5	2.2	2.4	4.5	2.9
	15.6	12.6	9.7	9.9	17.4	13.3
	19.4	13.8	11.3	12.1	8.7	6.2
	15.3	10.9	10.8	12.2	5.6	4.1
	43.2	29.7	18.5	20.2	20.3	15.2
	12.7	8.9	7.7	8.8	8.5	6.3
	30.2	28.2	32.9	32.0	16.1	15.3
	4.8	4.1	5.5	6.2	10.7	11.1
	28.9	32.8	23.6	28.8	38.7	40.7
	33.1	a	40.0	a	19.7	a
	38.9	a	51.4	a	22.2	a
	35.0	a	44.5	a	20.6	a
	7.5	6.8	36.4	31	11.0	10.6
	20.1	16.5	23.9	24.4	12.0	10.5
	75.1	74.4	49	46.4	47.3	47.8
	1 97 5	1 87 3	2 788	2 713	10 312	10 234
	16.5	16.2	58.3	55	19.9	18.7
	59.1	58	20.4	21.2	48.0	47.2
	24.4	25.9	21.3	23.8	32.1	34.1
	4.0	m	5.8	5.7	5.02	m
	7 114	7 001	77 695	81 257 239	508 520	512 379
	14.1	13.5	21.3	20.3	14.5	14.2

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

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

NB: 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 initially 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 adults	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	-	-
	BE (fl)	X	X	-	X	X	-	-	X	X	-	X	-	-	X	X	-	X	-
2	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+**

**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.

Maths is often separated from the '**maths, science and technology**' competence, as is the case in Czechia, Ireland, Iceland, Norway (numeracy) and Portugal. In France, the term 'technological culture' is used.

**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, Czechia, Latvia and Portugal; 'computing' in France; and 'informatics' in Bulgaria.

**Learning to learn** is referred to as 'learning skills/competence' in Bulgaria, Czechia and Latvia and 'effective and independent learning' in Hungary.

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-England; 'moral and civic education' in France; 'career and civic competence' in the Netherlands; and 'skills for life' in the UK-Wales. In Denmark civic competence is split from 'interpersonal, intercultural and social competence'.

**Cultural awareness and expression** can be linked to social competence, as in Finland, and combined with civic competence, as in Czechia.

NB: Examples are not exhaustive.

Source: Cedefop based on Cedefop ReferNet country chapters 2016 on key competences in VET; a Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/key-competences-in-vet>

Table A5. Bruges – Riga: a simplified overview

From 2010 to 2020		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improving the quality and efficiency of VET and increasing its attractiveness and relevance</li> <li>• making lifelong learning and mobility a reality</li> <li>• promoting creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship</li> <li>• promoting equity, social cohesion and attractive citizenship</li> </ul>		
Bruges short-term deliverables 2010-14	Bruges strategic objectives 2010-20	Riga medium-term deliverables and transversal areas 2015-20
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organise activities to promote VET attractiveness and excellence (campaigns, skills competitions etc.).</li> <li>2. Support activities to acquaint compulsory education pupils with vocational trades and career possibilities.</li> <li>3. Take measures to implement the EQAVET recommendation and progress towards national quality assurance frameworks for VET.</li> <li>4. Ensure that key competences and career management skills are integrated in IVET curricula and can be acquired through CVET opportunities.</li> <li>5. Governments, social partners and VET providers should make the necessary arrangements to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maximise work-based learning/apprenticeships, to help increase the number of apprentices by 2012;</li> <li>• create opportunities for greater cooperation between VET institutions and enterprises, for example through teacher traineeships in enterprises;</li> <li>• provide VET institutions with feedback on the employability of VET graduates.</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. Pursue work on setting up monitoring systems on transitions from learning to work.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Making IVET an attractive learning option.</li> <li>2. Fostering excellence, quality and relevance of IVET and CVET.</li> </ol>	<p><b>MTD 2:</b> 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><b>MTD 4:</b> Further strengthen key competences in VET curricula and provide more effective opportunities to acquire/develop them through IVET and CVET.</p> <p><b>MTD 1:</b> 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><b>MTD 5:</b> 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"> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• referencing NQF levels to EQF levels by 2012.</li> </ul> <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"> <li>• encourage more IVET students and VET professionals to participate in transnational mobility;</li> <li>• encourage local and regional authorities and VET providers to develop an internationalisation culture and strategies, including cross border mobility;</li> <li>• address legal and administrative obstacles related to transnational mobility of apprentices and trainees;</li> <li>• encourage professional chambers, business and other organisations to support host and sending enterprises in providing appropriate conditions for apprentices/trainees in transnational mobility;</li> <li>• ensure the provision of language learning and intercultural competences in VET curricula;</li> <li>• make optional use of other EU tools for enhancing mutual recognition of qualifications/competences.</li> </ul>	<p>3. Enabling flexible access to training and qualifications.</p> <p>4. Developing a strategic approach to internationalisation of IVET and CVET and promoting international mobility.</p>	<p><b>MTD 3:</b> 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><b>MTD 4:</b> 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><b>MTD 1:</b> Promoting work-based learning/ apprenticeships (see above)</p> <p><b>MTD 4:</b> 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><b>MTD 3:</b> access to VET and qualifications for all (see above).</p>



# Enhancing European cooperation in VET: outcomes of the Riga cycle

## Progress in common priorities for 2015-20

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 2015-19 shows 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; these two areas 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. The report offers an overview of the progress made since 2015 and the state of play of VET policies in participating countries at the end of the Riga cycle, pointing out challenges for the future.

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