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Trends in VET policy in Europe 2010-12

Progress towards the Bruges communiqué

Trends in VET policy in Europe 2010-12

Progress towards the Bruges communiqué

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Foreword

This is the mid-term review of progress towards the 22 short-term deliverables defined in the Bruges communiqué of 2010.

The current slow economic development and high unemployment in the EU have increased the need for policies that have a real impact in the short term. The pressure to address high unemployment, especially high youth unemployment, in several countries, is growing. Investment in skills is a challenge in times of tight budgets but the policy agenda in Europe, and in other countries such as the United States, has put more labour market relevant (vocational) education at the centre of strategies for long-term economic success and competitiveness. Vocational education and training at all levels is at the core of Europe's response to the economic crisis. Skills are also critical in addressing the consequences and challenges of an ageing labour force and rapidly changing skill needs, as well as an important facet of the strategies to develop a greener and sustainable economy.

Vocational education and training (VET) for young people and adults is an essential part of the Europe 2020 strategy. Traditional distinctions between vocational, general and higher education are blurring because of the strong vocational component of the last. VET also contributes to innovation and entrepreneurship. Despite high unemployment and weak prospects for economic growth in some countries, labour market bottlenecks are already visible for some occupations. Even in countries still in recession, unemployment coexists with unfilled vacancies, indicating structural imbalances between skills supply and demand. VET and work-based learning are attractive options for acquiring labour market relevant qualifications closely matched to needs. They serve the needs of citizens, enterprises, and society by easing access to the labour market and providing opportunities to update individuals' skills and competences. This goes hand-in-hand with the need for flexible education and training paths that offer opportunities for, and allow combining, different types and levels of education and training throughout life.

In 2002, in Copenhagen, under the Lisbon strategy and as a parallel to the Bologna process for higher education, ministers responsible for VET in the EU, EEA-EFTA and candidate countries, the European Commission and social partners agreed on priorities for VET. The core intentions were to improve lifelong learning opportunities and mobility between Member States in a single European labour market. The process of coordination that followed has supported Member

State cooperation and has become a catalyst for modernising VET systems across Europe.

The Bruges communiqué in 2010, in line with the Europe 2020 strategy and the policy priorities for VET, combines a long-term perspective with short-term measures. Pursuing short-term deliverables requires immediate action and it is important to follow developments closely; as before, Cedefop and ETF have been entrusted with this task.

This report analyses progress towards the short-term deliverables. The synthesis report indicates the overall trends and the progress of Member States. Separately published country fiches, concise information on VET systems, and statistical indicators, to be published in the beginning of 2013, will complement the report and provide further, specific data which will allow policy makers to consider concrete actions for development.

I hope that this mid-term review of progress, 10 years after the cooperation on VET was launched, can inspire European and national policy-makers and pave the way for policies and practices in the years ahead.

Christian F. Lettmayr
Acting Director

Acknowledgements

This report is the result of a team effort and reflects contributions from all working on the project. Jasper van Loo and Eleonora Schmid developed the approach, analysed the information provided by Cedefop's European network of reference and expertise (ReferNet) and other sources, and drafted the report.

The analysis in this publication also relies on the valuable contributions and advice of Cedefop experts Jens Bjørnåvold, George Kostakis, Slava Pevec Grm, Ernesto Villalba-Garcia and Loukas Zahilas as well as input by Angela Musca and Pedro Moreno da Fonseca. Marco Serafini and Alex Stimpson provided statistical data and advice. In finalising this report, Eleni Roidou took on analysis and data-management tasks. Vicky Oraiopoulou provided invaluable support throughout the project. Adriano Graziosi provided technical assistance, Stella Bochori organised the editing and Marena Zoppi and Zacharoula Fotopoulou prepared this report for publication. Special thanks go to Mara Brugia, Pascaline Descy, and Christian Lettmayr for their guidance and advice.

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Executive summary

Introduction

Attractive, open, modern and inclusive vocational education and training (VET) is a pillar of knowledge economies. Dealing with the economic crisis, and the long-term challenges that Europe faces, requires investment in people's skills: VET is an important part of that investment. In Europe, about half of all jobs require a medium level qualification, primarily acquired through VET.

There is no single European VET system. VET is very diverse and the variations in systems, providers, regions, and sectors make comparisons challenging. Complicated governance structures that affect the consistency and complementarity of policies make it difficult to point to single policies to tackle or alleviate problems. The merit of any particular policies must always be assessed taking into account the unique features of a country's VET system and the socio-economic context.

Since 2002, European countries have worked jointly on common priorities for vocational education and training in the 'Copenhagen process'. The second phase of that process started in 2010 and supports the Europe 2020 agenda. The Bruges communiqué combines the long-term vision for 2020 with a commitment to implement a series of actions (short-term deliverables, or STDs) by 2014. This report reviews what countries have done since 2010 to implement these STDs.

Main trends

Europe has done a lot to make VET more attractive, not just since 2010 but also before. Education and career fairs with a VET focus take place in all countries and skills competitions are held in most. Activities to familiarise young people in compulsory education with VET have been stepped up, in several cases using simulated or real business experience or work-experience/'tasters'. Several countries have also introduced campaigns to encourage enterprises to provide or invest in VET.

Improving mobility and recognition of skills and competences, within and across Europe's diverse VET and labour markets, requires trust. A common approach to quality assurance in VET helps create this trust. In line with the relevant recommendation (European Parliament; Council of the EU, 2009b), the majority of the countries had devised a national quality assurance approach or

were working towards this aim by 2011. They are also progressing towards a national quality assurance framework for VET providers, an objective for 2015 set out in the Bruges communiqué.

Key competences and basic skills provide the foundation for lifelong learning and career development. Including key competences in the level descriptors of national qualification frameworks (NQFs) helps to make them visible. Across Europe, they are part of IVET curricula. In two out of three countries, opportunities to improve underdeveloped key competences already existed before 2010; in those where this was not the case most are taking steps to create such opportunities. In some countries, however, foreign language learning remains an area of concern.

Work-based learning and, more specifically, apprenticeship have a long tradition in many European countries. The trend to reinforce work-based learning and to (re)introduce apprenticeship, which became apparent before 2010, has continued. Ensuring that work-based learning is of high quality, labour market relevant and accessible, is a high priority. Cooperation between the VET and employment authorities as well as social partners is common at different governance levels. Areas where progress appears slow are policies and services to support cooperation between VET and enterprises for professional development of teaching staff.

Although data on graduate transition and employability in their early career are collected in many countries, only about half report using the data systematically to inform VET provision. Monitoring can also help to support at-risk groups' participation in VET by identifying which groups partake the least and providing more background on why this is the case. Despite these potential benefits, using monitoring to support VET participation for at-risk groups is absent in many countries and is an issue that requires more attention in the coming years.

Lifelong learning plays a crucial role in the knowledge economy and individual countries; actions to support it have been at the core of joint work on common priorities since 2002. Improving lifelong learning and labour mobility requires that qualifications are comparable with each other and across borders. The aim of the European qualifications framework (EQF), endorsed in 2008, is exactly this. Most countries have decided to develop national qualification frameworks as a basis to link up to the EQF. Since early 2010, NQFs based on learning outcomes have developed dynamically across Europe, with 29 countries developing or having designed comprehensive NQFs; seven of these have entered early operational stage and four have implemented them fully. As well as ensuring qualification transparency, NQFs are sometimes seen as a regulatory

tool, as instruments to make education and training more coherent, or as a way to reinforce permeability and lifelong learning.

Making sure that knowledge, skills and competences acquired in work or elsewhere are valued has been part of European policy since 2001, but only a minority of countries had a highly developed system to validate non-formal and informal learning by 2010. In many countries, validation focuses on easing access and progression to education and training, rather than on acquiring qualifications; where this is the case, validation is often limited to VET qualifications.

More than half of the countries stimulate participation in adult learning by making access to VET easier and ensuring that learning outcomes or qualifications are valued in subsequent training and on the labour market. Most countries also encourage learning through suitable time arrangements, accessible learning venues, and good opportunities for combining learning with family obligations.

Guidance and counselling services support people in making educational and career choices and managing career transitions. Most countries have set up forums or platforms to coordinate guidance policies and provision, or integrated guidance in their lifelong learning strategies. To improve accessibility, countries have put in place, or further developed, web-based guidance. Attention to further development of counsellors' competences has increased but a practitioners' competence framework is not yet a reality in many countries.

Countries have committed themselves to promoting internationalisation and removing mobility obstacles, but few have set specific targets to increase mobility. Most learning mobility in VET is enabled through European programmes and (co)funding. Evidence on mobility outside European initiatives is difficult to capture. Crediting experience acquired during VET abroad is on the rise. The European credit system for VET (ECVET) supports borderless lifelong learning through the possibility to transfer and recognise learning abroad and by allowing people to build qualifications based on knowledge and skills acquired in different national contexts. As well as supporting cross border mobility, ECVET has also gained relevance for national and regional mobility. Countries are moving forward by revising standards and curricula and modularising, but few are ready to implement ECVET soon.

Creativity and innovation drive new ideas and support competitiveness and economic growth but the role and contribution of VET tends to be neglected. Activities focus on promoting creativity and innovation through competitions open to VET learners and institutions. While embedding innovation and creativity strategically into VET is becoming more popular, progress in including VET in

national innovation strategies appears slower. Although knowledge exchange platforms exist in half of the countries in 2012, progress has been limited. Strategies to ensure VET relevance, by enabling learners to use innovative technology through cooperation with business and industry, tend to be more common.

Entrepreneurship drives business creation but, as a general mindset, it supports problem-solving and innovative skills which are useful in daily life as well as in different working environments. VET or lifelong learning strategies that promote entrepreneurship skills and appropriate learning methods were already in place in most countries before 2010. Entrepreneurship strategies that consider VET, however, tend to be more recent or are still in the pipeline. Progress is limited in developing services that help VET strengthen ties with the business world and in guidance and counselling strategies supporting entrepreneurship.

Europe missed its 2010 target to limit the share of Europeans who leave education and training with low or no qualifications. Alarmingly high youth unemployment has increased the pressure to take action. Governments have been invited to set national targets and several received specific recommendations from the Council to reduce early leaving from education and training. In line with earlier trends, measures focus on (alternative) work-based learning options to motivate young people to stay in education and training and on easing transition into VET. Some countries are also developing modularised approaches. Guidance and mentoring, and other forms of learner support, are important parts of the package. Incentives for learners and their families to remain in VET, and for enterprises to provide training or employment, are widespread. Second chance options are also widely available. One option to address early leaving remains relatively unused: incentives for VET institutions to prevent drop out.

Low-skilled and other at-risk groups face barriers to learning and risk being trapped in low-skilled jobs, low employability and, in some cases, unemployment. Countries have progressed in opening up learning opportunities for low-skilled and other at-risk groups, but focus is needed, as many actions and initiatives are only in the preparation phase. Most countries pay specific attention to learners with migrant backgrounds by providing opportunities to learn the host country language. Using ICT to support groups at risk in gaining access to VET is an area where progress appears limited. Few countries have an ICT strategy or digital agenda that considers at-risk groups.

Outlook

Progress is visible in several areas, notably in EQF/NQF implementation, European quality assurance reference framework for vocational education and training (EQAVET), work-based learning, and reducing early leaving from education and training, but many policy measures are still in the planning stage. Areas where there has been less action so far require further attention, such as monitoring labour market outcomes and informing VET provision, using incentives, and the professional development of teachers and trainers. European tools and principles will need to interact and become more coherent to benefit European citizens fully.

In 2014, Cedefop will review achievements in the short-term deliverables and progress towards the strategic objectives of the Bruges communiqué. Maintaining momentum will be key to achieving the goals.

CHAPTER 1.

How to indicate policy progress

1.1. Introduction

Characterising the progress European countries are making towards their common priorities for vocational education and training is not straightforward. These priorities, which were set in the Bruges communiqué (Council of the EU; European Commission, 2010) complement a long-term vision with a commitment to implement 22 actions by 2014.

This report is a first step in understanding progress towards implementing these short-term deliverables (STDs). Many STDs are linked and countries can work towards them in different ways so, starting with an analysis of them, Cedefop developed an approach based on policy options and indicators for each. As many of the priorities agreed in Bruges are not new, the approach assumes that countries do not start from scratch.

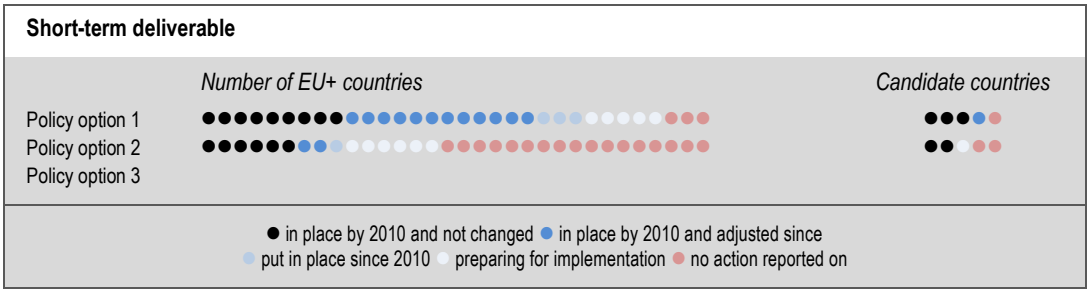
For each policy option within an STD, Cedefop has characterised the stage of development as follows:

(a) in place before 2010 and not changed;
(b) in place before 2010 and adjusted since then (e.g. by expanding a measure);
(c) put in place since 2010;
(d) preparing for implementation (e.g. discussing, agreeing on, or piloting a policy measure);
(e) no action reported on.

'Bullet charts' illustrate trends in progress towards a short-term deliverable (Table 1). Two groups of countries are presented: EU Member States, Norway and Iceland (EU+), and the five candidate countries that come under the ETF (European Training Foundation) remit (Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey). Coloured dots indicate the number of countries at any particular stage of development.

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

Table 1. **Example of the bullet charts used in this report**



Source: Author.

It is important to emphasise that these charts only illustrate trends. 'No action reported on' does not automatically mean that countries are lagging behind in making progress towards an STD. As the responsibility for VET and VET-related issues may be outside the remit of national authorities, 'no action reported on' could simply mean that information is difficult to capture. Also, as policy options can be alternatives, not all need to feature in addressing a short-term deliverable. However, when a country has not reported on any action for all policy options to address a particular STD, the assumption is that it may need more attention in the future. Progress assessment is based on two types of information. For most STDs, Cedefop has relied on information provided by its network of expertise, ReferNet. Progress related to European tools and principles ([1]) has been assessed using Cedefop's own monitoring and studies as well as external sources, for instance the 2011 EQAVET survey (EQAVET Secretariat, 2012).

The Cedefop ReferNet questionnaire (Cedefop, 2012c), which assessed development for each policy option, was completed by all partners in EU Member States except Ireland (which did not have a Refernet partner in place at the time of the survey). It also covered Norway and Iceland, which have been part of the Copenhagen process from the outset. Candidate countries (excluding Iceland) were reviewed by ETF using the Cedefop questionnaire as a base.

Within EU Member States, the Flemish, French and German-speaking communities are analysed separately for Belgium, as are England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland for the UK. This synthesis, therefore, reports on developments in 33 'countries' but excludes Ireland, though this country is included in the sections on European tools ([2]).

([1]) EQF/NQF, EQAVET, ECVET, validation and guidance.

([2]) These are referred to as EU+ countries in this report.

1.2. Outline

The report follows the structure of the Bruges communiqué. Each chapter starts with an overview of broad objectives and the STDs that are part of them. For the relevant STDs, each chapter characterises the state of play in 2010 and presents an analysis of developments and trends since then using bullet charts. Statistical information and examples of actions that countries have taken since 2010 complement this.

Chapter 2 reports on the quality, efficiency, attractiveness and relevance of VET. Chapter 3 describes progress in developing European tools and principles to support lifelong learning and mobility. Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET is discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 looks into measures to make VET more inclusive. The concluding chapter synthesises the main developments and trends and looks at challenges for the coming years to achieve the deliverables by 2014.

CHAPTER 2.

Better VET: quality, efficiency, attractiveness, and relevance

This chapter reviews the state of play in 2010 and the progress that countries have made by 2012 towards making VET more attractive and relevant, and encouraging quality and efficiency. It considers STDs 1-6.

Box 1. **Short-term deliverables on VET quality, efficiency, attractiveness and relevance**

ET 2020 objective 2 as adapted for the Bruges communiqué:
Improving the quality and efficiency of vet and enhancing its attractiveness and relevance ([a])

Bruges communiqué strategic objectives (SO) 1 and 2

SO1 Making I-VET an attractive learning option
SO2 Fostering the excellence, quality and relevance of both I-VET and C-VET

Short-term deliverables

STD1 VET attractiveness and excellence (campaigns, competitions)
STD2 Acquainting young people in compulsory education with VET
STD3 Implementation EQAVET recommendation
STD4 Key competences and career management skills in VET
STD5 A. Work-based learning, including apprenticeships
B. Cooperation between VET institutions and enterprises
C. Feedback on the employability of VET graduates for VET institutions
STD6 Monitoring systems on transitions from learning to work
STD21([b]) Structured cooperation mechanisms between VET sector and employment services

([a]) Original wording in ET 2020 (Council of the EU, 2009): 'Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training'.
([b]) Part of the transversal strategic objectives (7-11) in the Bruges communiqué.

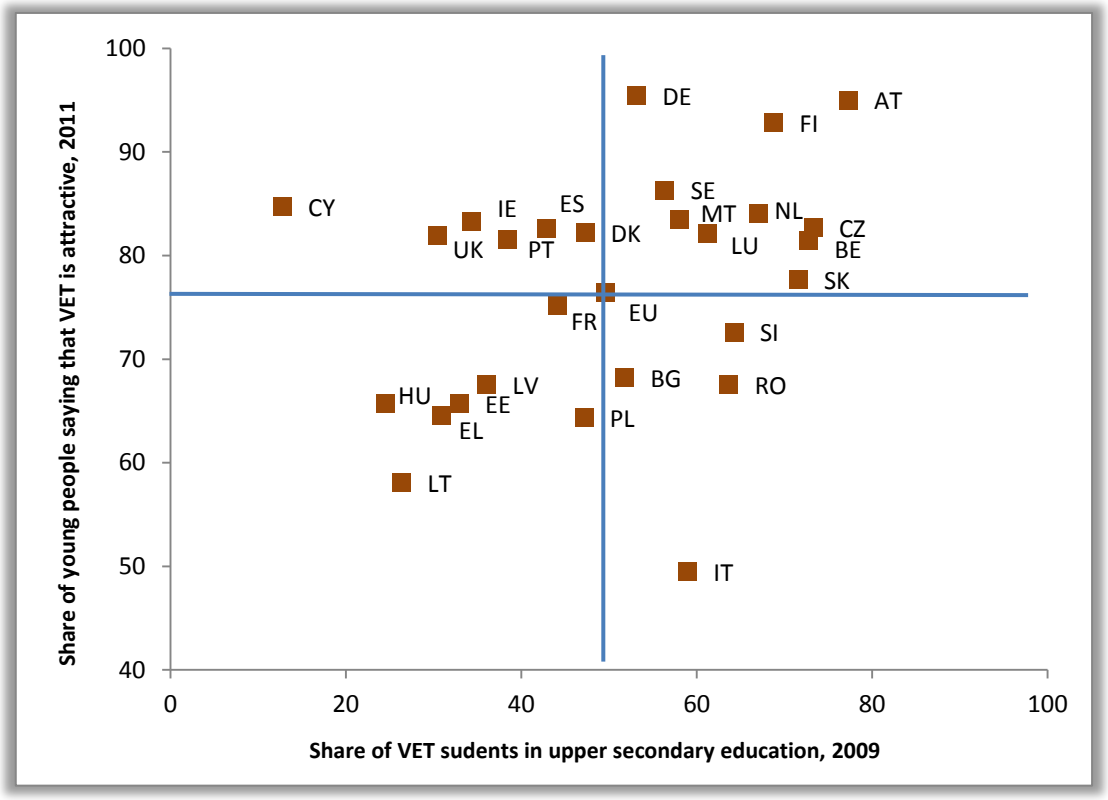
2.1. Attractive VET

VET is high on the policy agenda in Europe's effort to boost growth, jobs and competitiveness and ensure people have the skills they need to find and maintain

their employment. VET objectives range from providing access to tertiary level qualifications to offering routes to skills and employment for those who risk leaving education and training with low or no qualifications.

But image matters. Whether people view VET as an attractive option depends on country traditions, occupational image, further education and training and career opportunities, salary levels, social status, and other issues. Figure 1 helps illustrate how attractive VET is in different European countries.

Figure 1. **Share (%) of young people saying that VET is attractive (2011) and share (%) of VET students in upper secondary education (2009)**



Source: Flash Eurobarometer No 319b (European Commission; The Gallup Organisation, 2011) and Eurostat, UOE data collection; data extracted 23.11.2011.

More than 75% of young Europeans find VET attractive, but there are large differences between countries: less than half of young Italians but almost all young Germans think VET is an attractive option. Overall, about half of all students at upper secondary level are enrolled in a VET programme but shares range from 15-30% in Cyprus, Lithuania and Hungary to over 70% in, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovakia.

All countries in which a relatively low image of VET coincides with a relatively low share of VET learners in upper secondary education (Figure 1) are

taking measures to make it more attractive. Besides traditional skills demonstrations and opportunities for hands-on-experience at career fairs, promotional campaigns combine a series of activities and include different media. France introduced a national campaign promoting apprenticeship and updated and promoted its guidance and training web portal.

What is happening in Belgium (French and German speaking communities)?
Making trades a hands-on experience

Trade villages help young people discover technical and craft occupations. Young people (18-25) still in training present their skills using practical experiments. The villages are a highly valued initiative: 2 500 pupils, parents, workers and job seekers attended the villages and appreciate the hands-on experience with a range of jobs.

Source: ReferNet Belgium.

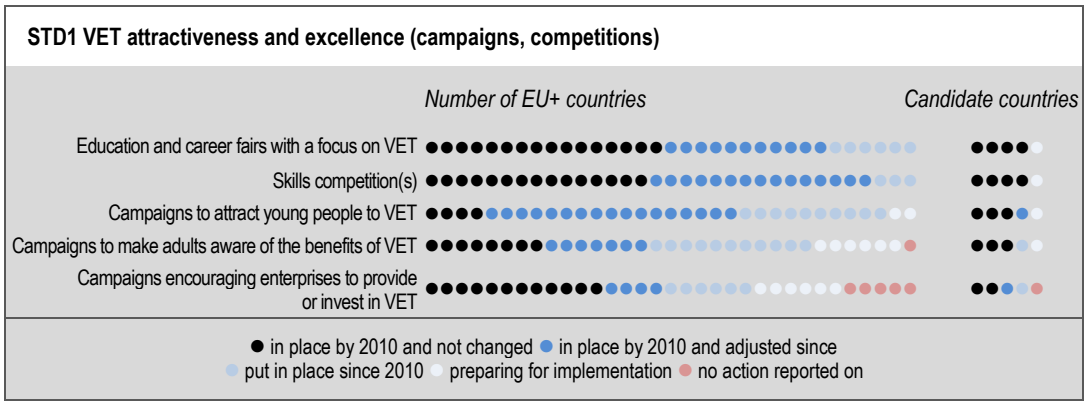
In several countries packages comprise TV/radio and other media campaigns and skills competitions, as in Lithuania where skill competitions are also held at school level. Latvia has recently become a member of Worldskills and involves VET schools in education and career exhibitions. Estonia's promotion programme (since 2008) has been complemented by a comprehensive VET website (in 2011), a TV programme in which VET students demonstrate their skills (in 2012) and guidelines for skills competitions. A media event marks the end of the national skills competitions in Hungary, which is currently reforming its VET system, and road shows are organised to raise the image of trades. In addition to its annual national career week, established in 2009, Poland's media promote VET and its reform. Like Lithuania, it encourages enterprises to provide training for VET teachers.

Improving the attractiveness of VET has been a European policy objective since the beginning of the Copenhagen process in 2002; many countries devoted a lot of attention to this issue before 2010. Table 2 shows what policies and measures to support attractiveness were in place in 2010 what and has happened since then.

Education and career fairs with a VET focus take place in all countries and skills competitions are held in almost all. Two main trends are visible in new or changed campaigns to attract young people to VET. A number of countries are improving the use of the internet to promote VET: Belgium (FL), Belgium (FR), Germany, Estonia, France, Poland, and Slovenia. Several are increasingly promoting VET opportunities that meet current or future labour market needs or

shortages: Croatia, Germany, Lithuania, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Turkey.

Table 2. **State of play and progress towards STD1**



Source: Cedefop (based on ReferNet) and ETF.

What is happening in Luxembourg?
Girls' day – Boys' day

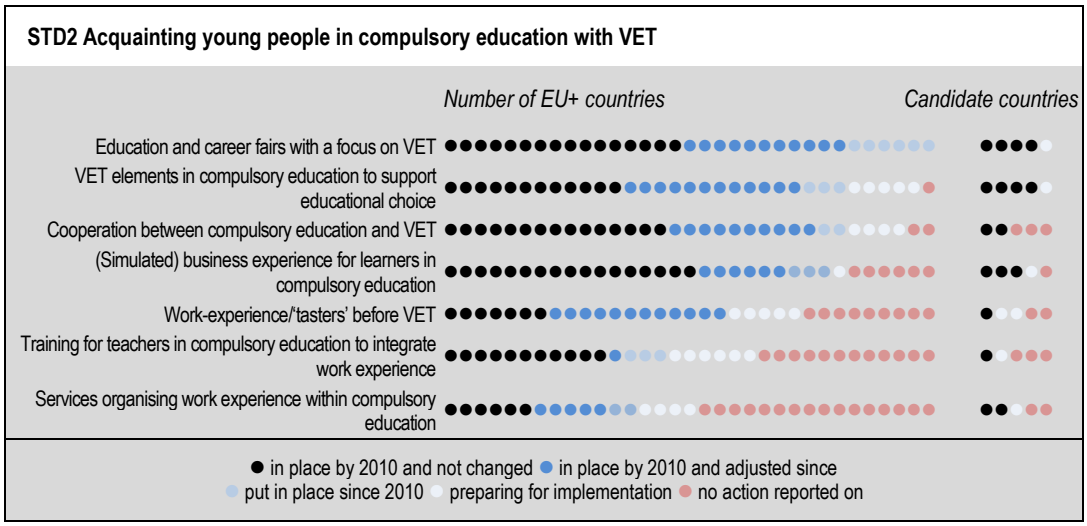
GDBD gives boys a chance to discover jobs and careers that are atypical for boys and girls the chance to do the same for jobs and careers atypical for girls. Getting to know those jobs through visits helps broaden professional choices. The initiative promotes gender equity, helps to get young people acquainted with trades, and improves the match between available training places at enterprises and the pupils.

Source: ReferNet Luxembourg.

Campaigns to encourage enterprises to provide or invest in VET sometimes include financial support for apprenticeship places or encourage enterprises to strengthen cooperation with VET institutions to support VET teacher and trainer competence development (Luxembourg, Poland, Montenegro, Turkey). With one candidate and six EU+ countries having introduced such campaigns since 2010 and six more preparing them, some progress has been made. Even though some countries did not explicitly report on campaigns, in most some form of encouragement exists, often through financial incentives (see also STD 16). In Sweden, where apprenticeship has recently been introduced as a mainstream form of VET, incentives to enterprises are indirect. Government grants are allocated to IVET schools/providers and parts of the funding are redirected to enterprises.

Many countries integrate VET elements in compulsory education to support educational choice and familiarise young people ([3]) with the job world (STD2, see Table 3). Almost all without these elements have introduced them since 2010 or are preparing for implementation. Existing initiatives have been adapted to focus on career orientation or guidance (Germany, Greece, Hungary, Malta, Austria, Sweden) or new ways to bring VET into the classroom (Cyprus, Lithuania, Norway, Romania, Slovakia). Several countries are preparing to strengthen ties between compulsory education and VET. In Slovakia, the need for stronger cooperation is being discussed, while France is opening up VET classes for students in compulsory education with difficulties.

Table 3. **State of play and progress towards STD2**



Source: Cedefop (based on ReferNet) and ETF.

Giving learners a taste of VET through simulated or real business experience or work-experience/'tasters', is less common, but available in most countries: three have introduced business experience in compulsory education since 2010. In Greece, an association for entrepreneurship provides programmes for learners in secondary education. Estonia has integrated entrepreneurship skills in the national curriculum and increased the number of schools offering entrepreneurship education. Malta gives students business experience in a real or simulated environment during the last years of compulsory education while in the UK (Wales) there is an initiative to bring young people, teachers and

([3]) Based on the state-of-play in the majority of the EU Member States in 2011, compulsory education was defined as education addressing learners from 5/6 to 15/16 (*Source*: Eurydice).

employers together ('The real conversation'). Experience arrangements with companies are also being developed in Turkey.

What is happening in Iceland?

Introduction to jobs fair – Ask whatever you want

In an area of Iceland with low upper secondary attainment and high unemployment, a fair was held that introduced future job possibilities and explained what types of education jobs require. People working in 80 different professions showed their work to over 700 students. Students could ask anything they want: what are the daily challenges of the job? What are the working hours like? And what is the salary? The interest in the fair was much larger than expected. The next edition will have to be held in a bigger facility.

Source: ReferNet Iceland.

Examples of changes in work experience or 'taster' schemes are the Belgian German Community, extending its tasters to the health sector, and Romania, encouraging students in the last year of lower secondary school to spend time in a company to help educational choice.

What is happening in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia?

Entrepreneurship will pave your way

The course on 'Innovation and Entrepreneurship' is introduced in years 1, 2 and 3 of secondary school. In 2013, further extension of this course in grades 8 and 9 in primary school is foreseen. This initiative is widely accepted and the curriculum and teaching materials were developed accordingly. Implementation results will be analysed after the first cohort has completed the course. The stakeholders are the Bureau for Development of Education and experts from VET centres, secondary schools, universities and curriculum developers.

Source: ETF questionnaire on policy reporting – former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Fewer than half the countries train teachers in compulsory education to integrate work-experience but six EU+ countries and one candidate country are starting to prepare their teachers in this respect (Austria, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Romania). Lithuania holds seminars for teachers on integrating work experience, Luxembourg has a career week where teachers gain insight into the latest sectoral trends, and Austria piloted a framework for teacher development. Services organising work experience within compulsory education are absent in about half of the countries.

2.2. Fostering quality: implementing EQAVET

High quality and labour market relevance are prerequisites to making VET attractive. Mobility and recognition of skills and competences within and across Europe's diverse VET systems and labour markets require mutual trust: a common approach to quality assurance is necessary to build and sustain such trust. Voluntary joint work on VET has included a strong focus on this issue during 2002-10.

In 2009 a recommendation proposed a European framework (EQAVET) (European Parliament; Council of the EU, 2009b) as a reference base for Member States to establish or improve their own quality assurance systems for VET ([4]). A European network has been set up to develop tools and principles that support quality-assurance related work nationally, regionally and locally. The Bruges communiqué (Council of the EU; European Commission, 2010) included commitment to implementing the EQAVET recommendation.

By 2011, 27 countries reported having national reference points (QANRP) in place ([5]) to promote the EQAVET approach and inform stakeholders about relevant developments as set out in the recommendation. Eleven of these have been established since 2010 (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK (Scotland)). At the time of the 2011 EQAVET survey ([6]), Belgium (FR), Estonia, France, Iceland, Latvia and Poland had not set up NRPs and there were none reported for the candidate countries.

QANRPs do not necessarily fulfil all the tasks that are set out in the recommendation. For example, not all implement quality assurance and introduce self-evaluation systems or help VET providers identify areas for improvement. They may, however, have other responsibilities: the Portuguese NRP accredits VET providers. This may be explained by different modes of VET governance.

([4]) This chapter is based on data and results derived from a survey carried out by the EQAVET network Secretariat in 2011 (EQAVET Secretariat, 2012). All EU countries plus Norway participated in the survey. Belgium (FL), Denmark, Latvia, Malta, Norway and Portugal submitted their answers in 2012. The Belgium German-speaking community is not included and Iceland did not participate. Information on the other candidate countries was provided by ETF.

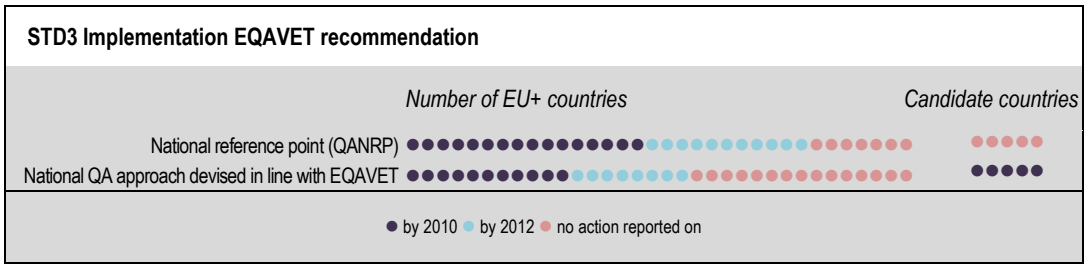
Given the cut-off date for this publication, it was not possible to include the results of the 2012 survey.

([5]) Belgium's three communities are considered in most STDs; in the 2011 EQAVET survey only the Flemish- and French-speaking communities participated; the UK counts as four countries.

([6]) Autumn 2011.

All deal with IVET, though not necessarily with all types of programmes, and several also support VET for adults. QANRP governance models vary. A few countries, for instance Estonia ([7]), Malta and the UK (Scotland), consider cooperation with higher education crucial. Given national work on qualifications frameworks for lifelong learning and the commitment to improving progression opportunities, this is surprising. However, in a number of countries the QANRP is located under the same roof as the EQF and/or ECVET coordination points and supports the related work (Annex 1).

Table 4. **STD3 State of play and progress towards STD3**



Source: Cedefop based on 2011 EQAVET survey and ETF.

2.2.1. National quality assurance approach

By 2011, 19 countries reported having devised a national quality assurance approach in line with EQAVET (Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, France, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Finland, Sweden and the UK (England, Wales, Northern Ireland). Ten further countries were preparing one (Belgium (FL), Belgium (FR), Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and the UK (Scotland)).

In Germany, Estonia and Sweden, for example, a national quality assurance approach is included in legislation. Most countries have quality standards for VET providers ([8]) which are often part of legislation and are also used as a condition to accredit/approve and/or allocate funding.

Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia consider the EQAVET recommendation a cornerstone or, at least, a source of inspiration for developing their national approaches. The Turkish quality assurance reference framework has been designed to improve VET quality in a holistic way, taking into account EQF, ECVET, and the European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS). The

([7]) In Estonia, the higher education quality agency is currently acting as the EQAVET NRP.

([8]) Which types of standards this refers to is, however, not clear from the responses.

quality assurance approach in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia includes school self-assessment linked to performance indicators, which are, however, not VET-specific.

2.2.2. Evaluation

In line with the recommendation, countries increasingly combine internal and external evaluation to improve VET quality. In most IVET contexts relevant methodologies have been developed with ESF and Leonardo da Vinci cofunding and are also frequently used.

In many countries legislation requires VET providers to evaluate systematically their activities, as well as the quality and effectiveness of the training they offer. In Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Hungary, Montenegro, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia this includes mandatory self-assessment reports and plans for improvement. These reports also inform external evaluations. Although not mandatory, self-assessment is widely used by IVET providers in Austria. Similarly, in SIovenia approximately 78% of VET providers are developing quality assurance systems, mostly as a result of earlier work on quality assurance (Cedefop, 2011b).

Evaluation methods that combine control and support with empowerment of providers predominate, while traditional forms of inspection are used only by a few countries.

As most countries state they have devised evaluation methodologies at national level, and self-assessment tends to be carried out under national/regional frameworks, it can be assumed that countries are progressing towards the objective set out in the Bruges communiqué: to establish – by the end of 2015 – at national level a common quality assurance framework for VET providers that is compatible with EQAVET. What the EQAVET survey does not reveal, however, is if national frameworks/measures also apply to workplace learning, which is part of the objective to be met.

2.2.3. Involving all those concerned

According to the EQAVET survey, stakeholders, notably VET providers and employer and employee associations, are playing an important role in developing national quality assurance approaches. National institutions that are responsible for developing VET qualifications have been included in Belgium (FR), Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Romania, Sweden, and the UK (Northern

Ireland) ([9]). Involvement seems to be high in planning and implementation but more limited in evaluation and review stages.

Teachers and learners are apparently involved to a much lesser degree. Similarly, only some countries involve their higher education sector although this could help to build trust and improve permeability.

What is happening in Finland?

A holistic approach to quality assurance

Finland's quality assurance (QA) system covers all types of VET and involves all actors. There is no obligation to set up a QA system but the government has set the target for all VET providers to have one in place by 2015. A working group is preparing evaluation criteria. VET providers are free to choose the methods they think appropriate. An evaluation in 2009 showed that the majority of VET providers have used the quality recommendation systematically. Self-evaluation and external evaluation are combined. Centrally collected data help to monitor VET at national or provider level. Most of the EQAVET indicators are used as part of performance-based funding, for instance 'investment in training of teachers and trainers', participation and completion rates in VET programmes, 'destination and share of employed learners after completion', and unemployment rates.

Source: 2011 EQAVET survey (EQAVET Secretariat 2012), Cedefop (2011b), ReferNet Finland, Ministry of Education Finland.

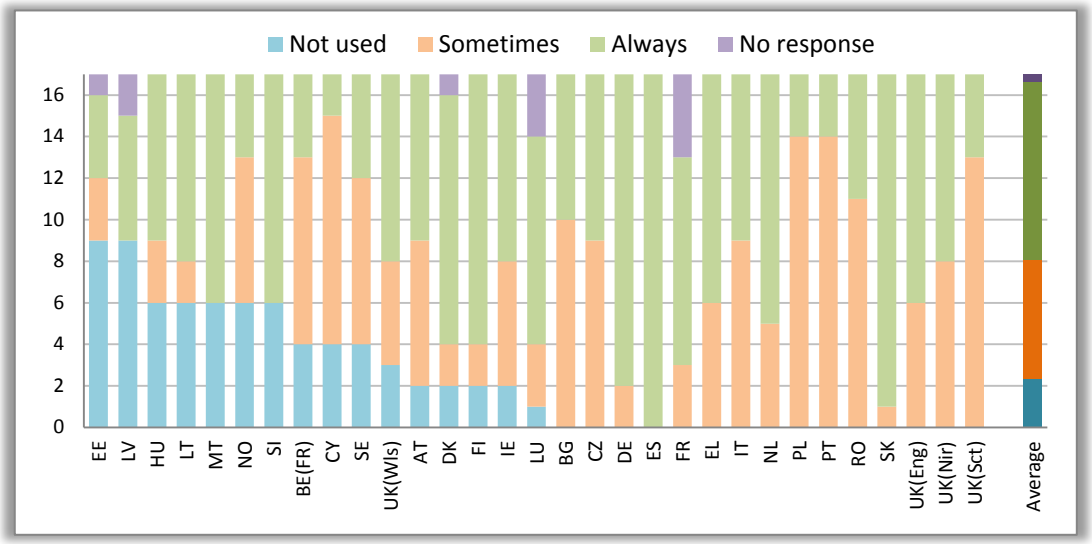
2.2.4. Using indicators

The EQAVET framework includes a set of common indicators; most of the indicators that countries use are in line with this set. The EQAVET survey suggests that of the 17 indicators for IVET, on average more than half are always used. The indicators that are used most for IVET relate to participation, completion, unemployment and mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market. Outcome indicators, notably those on destination and employability of VET learners, score lowest in the 'always used' category.

'Effectiveness of schemes used to promote better access to VET' and 'effectiveness of mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market' are among the indicators that countries use less frequently. A third of the countries do not apply the indicator on the 'satisfaction rate of individuals and employers'. This coincides with the findings of STDs 5c, 6, 19 on monitoring transition and employability which indicate comparatively little progress to date.

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

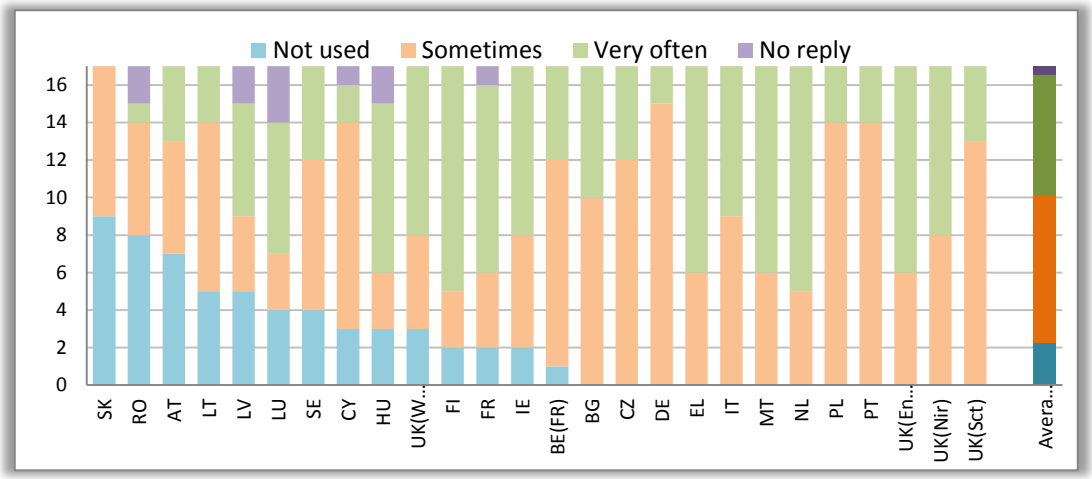
Figure 2. **Use of EQAVET indicators in IVET**



NB: BE (FL), did not provide data on the use of indicators for IVET. IS did not participate in the survey.
Source: Cedefop based on 2011 EQAVET survey (EQAVET Secretariat 2012).

For CVET, seven indicators are applied very often, eight sometimes. In most cases, participation and unemployment rates are used. Bulgaria, Ireland, Greece, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Finland, and the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Wales) 'very often' use more indicators than the average. Again, the 'pure' outcome indicators and the qualitative ones – 'effectiveness of mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market' and 'effectiveness of schemes used to promote better access to VET') - are among those that countries use the least.

Figure 3. **Use of EQAVET indicators in CVET**



NB: BE (FL), DK, EE, ES, NO and SI did not provide data on the use of indicators for CVET. IS did not participate in the survey.
Source: Cedefop based on 2011 EQAVET survey (EQAVET Secretariat 2012).

2.3. Basic skills and key competences

Good basic skills are the foundation for lifelong learning. A lack of basic skills early in life can have serious consequences later on. Table 5 gives an overview of the share of low-achieving 15-year olds for three basic skills surveyed in PISA (OECD, 2009): reading, mathematics and science. It gives a rough indication of how countries do in terms of providing these skills to young people up to the point where many of them start initial VET. This also illustrates the challenge that VET faces in achieving its double aim of excellence and inclusion.

Table 5. **Countries with relatively high shares (compared to the EU average) of 15-year-olds below proficiency level 2 on the PISA reading, mathematics and science scale**

Reading EU average 20%	Mathematics EU average 22.2%	Science EU average 17.7%
BG, CZ, EL, IT, LT, LU, AT, RO, SI, SK; HR, ME, RS, TR	BG, CZ, EL, ES, FR, IT, LV, LT, LU, HU, PT; HR, ME, RS, TR	BE, BG, EL, ES, FR, IT, IS LU, RO, SK, SE; HR, ME, RS, TR

NB: The EU average is based on 18 countries for which comparable data exist and is taken from the Commission progress report 2010/11: progress towards the common European objectives in education and training (2010/11) indicators and benchmarks.

Source: Pisa 2009 Results (Annex B1) and European Commission progress report 2010/11. Date of extraction: 18.4.2011.

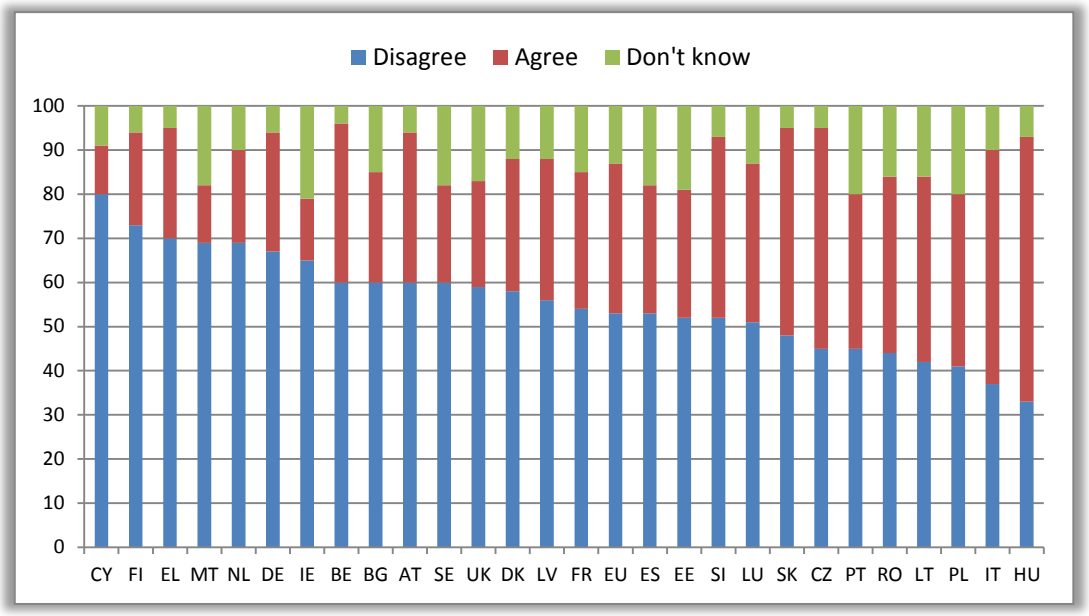
2.3.1. Acquiring key competences in and through VET

Key competences are assets that help people find a job, perform well in it, shape their career, find personal fulfilment and become active European citizens. Initial education and training should help all young people to develop these skills and adult learning should allow European citizens to maintain and build on them (European Parliament and Council, 2006) ([10]).

Empirical evidence and previous education and training policy reviews suggest that VET does not sufficiently support key competence development. A special Eurobarometer survey of 2011 (European Commission; TNS Opinion & Social) gives a differentiated view, asking people's general opinion on the statement: 'In VET, people do not learn skills such as communication or teamwork' (Figure 4).

([10]) Key competences as defined in the relevant EU recommendation (European Parliament and Council, 2006) comprise literacy and communication in mother tongue and (two) foreign languages, numeracy, basic competences in science and technology, digital skills as well as sense of initiative and entrepreneurship (see STD15), cultural awareness, social and civic competences and learning to learn skills.

Figure 4. **Degree of agreement with the statement 'In VET, people do not learn skills such as communication or teamwork'**



Source: Special Eurobarometer No 369b (European Commission; TNS Opinion & Social, 2011).

A majority of respondents believe that VET offers learners the opportunity to develop communication and teamwork skills. Only in the Czech Republic, Italy and Hungary do the majority think that VET does not transmit these skills. Citizens appear positive about the contribution of VET in providing communication or teamwork skills in Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Malta and the Netherlands.

In many countries, NQF level descriptors include key competences, suggesting they can be acquired in VET programmes that prepare for the relevant qualifications (for further information see STD 8).

Key competences are part of IVET curricula in all countries and have been introduced in the revised curricula of Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia, albeit to varying extent and, in some cases, implicitly, depending on type and level of programmes and local curricula adjustments (within VET school-autonomy). They are either integrated as subject areas, cross-curricula objectives, or both, and are often to be demonstrated in exams.

Although in several countries they have been part of VET for a long time, the EU recommendation gave impetus to strengthening them and inspired a renewal of curricula and standards. In the UK, key competences have recently been rebranded and have become part of apprenticeship programmes (England, Wales, Northern Ireland). They can be acquired as components of certificates or stand-alone qualifications. In the candidate countries, in the last decade, the

explicit focus on learning outcomes and, to a lesser extent, on key competences has led to important curriculum reforms underpinned by revision of national legislation.

2.3.2. Promoting foreign language skills

School-based IVET usually includes at least one mandatory foreign language. In some countries up to three are mandatory, in training for certain sectors (e.g. tourism) and attainment levels are defined. In others, one or more other languages are optional (around 40% of learners in upper secondary VET in the EU learned two or more in 2010).

Despite considerable improvement, statistical data suggest that in 2010 around 6% of learners in upper secondary VET (ISCED 3) still did not learn foreign languages. For Belgium (FR), Hungary, Iceland and Portugal the figure was more than 20%. In the UK a survey in 2012 revealed that 68% of employers are not satisfied with young people's foreign language skills and the share of those in general education learning no foreign language exceeds 50%.

There is a trend towards defining standards for expected outcomes, with at least half of the countries applying the levels of the common European framework of reference for languages (Council of Europe, 2001) ([11]). Germany and Austria, for instance, also offer their learners the opportunity to acquire international certificates. Increasingly, VET programmes combine acquiring occupational and language skills (content and language integrated learning (CLIL), 'learning through languages') or offer some bilingual programmes or modules, as in Bulgaria, Spain, Italy, Lithuania, Hungary, Austria, and Slovakia for example, and make use of the language portfolio.

2.3.3. Fostering innovative and entrepreneurial skills

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

([11]) http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/Linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf.

As well as placements in enterprises, simulated or real business experience has been a common method of promoting entrepreneurship skills in school-based VET and is being expanded. Some countries see development of entrepreneurial skills as inherent in apprenticeship training (see also Section 2.4. and STD 15 for more comprehensive information on entrepreneurship).

2.3.4. Making up for deficits

In 19 countries, opportunities to make up for deficits in key competences (e.g. for learners who previously did not achieve expected outcomes) were either already in place before 2010 or have been adjusted since. In another ten, measures have recently been (or are being) implemented. These include adjustment of curricula to learners' needs in 'mainstream' VET, 'bridge programmes' and learner support to make transition into VET easier (see Section 5.1.).

Opportunities to make up for deficits in key competences are offered either as part of IVET or CVET, as boundaries are not clear cut ([12]). Most countries with CVET or LLL strategies promoting key competence development ([13]), advocate 'key competences for all'; information on explicit policies or objectives for CVET/adult learning seem to be less frequent (e.g. Estonia, the Netherlands) ([14]). Others focus on specific groups, such as learners with a migrant background (e.g. Germany, Austria) and the low- or unskilled (e.g. the Czech Republic, Portugal, the UK (England, Scotland)). This may be explained by the fact that key competences are usually part of personal development plans and programmes that address low-qualified people (see also Section 5.2.).

While opportunities for adults to improve their key competences were in place before 2010 or adjusted since then in about half of the countries, a third are currently preparing to implement relevant measures.

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

([13]) Specific language programmes in CVET are not included here.

([14]) The question to ReferNet did not refer to specific programmes that providers tend to offer, but to policy priorities as defined in LLL or VET strategies. The information received, however, frequently related to specific measures or programmes.

What is happening in Bulgaria?
I can and I can do more

Bulgaria invests in its employed and the self-employed by organising training on key competences and vocational skills. This helps improve adaptability and prepares people for new career steps. Everyone can apply for training and the application is made easy. Each citizen is entitled to one training exercise on key competences and one leading to a vocational qualification. The initiative is a great success: 24 000 people took part in the first phase ('I can') started in 2010 and there are over 40 000 participants in the second stage of the project ('I can do more') started in 2011.

Source: ReferNet Bulgaria.

2.4. Work-based learning and cooperation with business

Work-based learning helps bridge education, training and work. It enjoys a long tradition in many European countries. However, making reliable comparisons between countries on the extent of work-based learning in VET is not easy, as definitions vary greatly. Table 6 gives a summary overview of the share of students in upper secondary VET that are attending work-based programmes and the trends therein.

Table 6. **Share (2010) and changes therein (2006-10) of students in upper secondary VET attending work-based learning programmes**

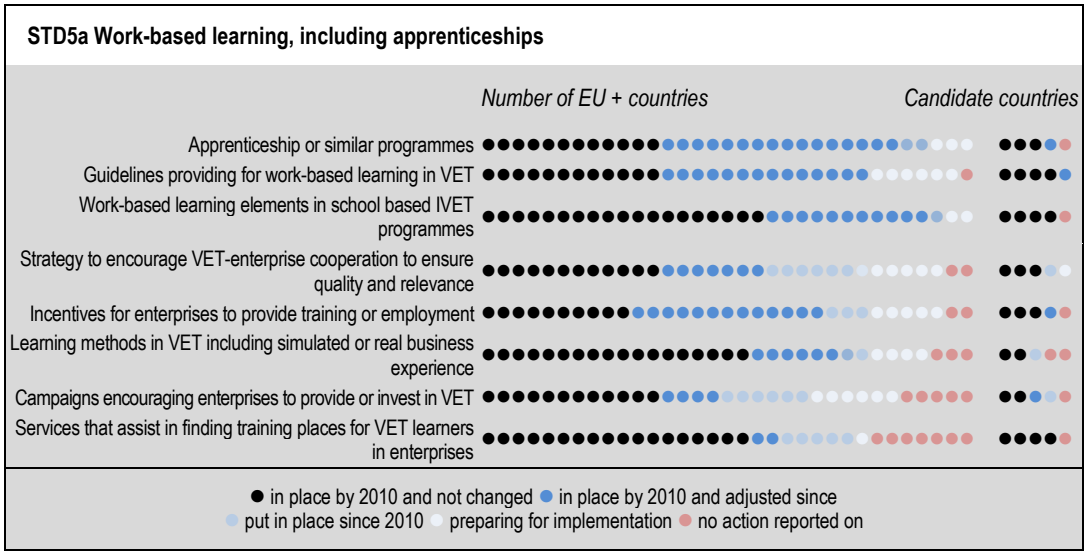
	Low share	High share
Decreasing share	BE, ES, PL	CZ, DK, IS, SK
Increasing share	FI, FR, IE, LU, NL, NO	AT, HR, DE, HU, CH, TR

NB: For several countries, no reliable data are available.
Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems.

2.4.1. Simulated and real work-experience

Work-based learning is being reinforced in 10 out of 17 EU+ and two candidate countries for which data are available. Some countries have experienced an increase from a starting point where the share of work-based learning is low (Finland, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway) while for another group of countries, where work-based learning already played an important role (Austria, Croatia, Germany Hungary, Switzerland, Turkey), it became even more widespread. Table 7 shows policies and measures to support work-based learning and cooperation with business in place in 2010 and what has happened since then.

Table 7. **State of play and progress towards STD5a**



Source: Cedefop (based on ReferNet) and ETF.

Not surprisingly, work-based learning and apprenticeship or similar programmes in VET are present in almost all countries, and all countries where some features of work-based learning were not in place in 2010 have taken action since then. Such actions often concern new or changed regulations on work-based learning (the Czech Republic, Finland, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, Lithuania, Sweden, the UK (England)) that prescribe modes of learning, introduce new programmes or regulate practical organisation. The UK (England) new rules, for the first time, set a minimum duration of 12 months for apprenticeship to help improve relevance of training.

What is happening in Austria?

The fast lane: apprenticeship as entry ticket to higher education

Options to move into higher education after apprenticeship (and school-based IVET that do not include entry tickets as part of the package) have existed for a long time. Since the late 1990s, acquiring the general entry ticket has become easier, with a modular exam that includes validation opportunities. However, it means completing initial training first and fees apply in optional preparatory courses. As this exam proved successful among more mature learners, the government and social partners started piloting a fast lane for apprentices in 2008. The pilot qualifies them as a skilled worker and gives them a general entry ticket to higher education at the same time. It allows young apprentices to prepare for higher education entry exams free of charge. Its aim is to expand progression opportunities, promote lifelong learning and to make apprenticeship more attractive. Although participation is still rather low, it had more than tripled by 2010 and has since then risen again by 30%.

Source: ReferNet Austria.

In several countries these amendments aim at supporting young people 'at risk' (see STD16, Section 5.1.). France introduced a law stating that apprentices with terminated contracts can continue their training for up to three months and Austria guarantees training in supra-company apprenticeships for those without a place in an enterprise or a school. Croatia has developed apprenticeship for learners enrolled in three-year programmes whereby work-based learning (i.e. apprenticeship training) is regulated by the law on trade and crafts while Greece has improved its apprenticeship schemes in several regions.

What is happening in Hungary?

Three-year VET programme in vocational schools

The Hungarian government aims to raise the prestige of VET, attract more students to it and bring supply more in line with labour market demands. The current restructuring of the VET system increases the share of work-based elements and is based on the assumption that unmotivated and low-achieving students can be kept aboard if they do not have to continue their education in the classroom. From 2012 onwards, the current skilled-workers programmes are replaced by modern three-year training inspired by the dual principle. The Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry plays a key role, as it will take on VET-related tasks previously performed by the state. Students can enter at age 14 and may obtain a vocational qualification as early as the age of 17.

Source: ReferNet Hungary.

Significant progress has been made in making sure that work-based learning is relevant and of a high quality through strategies to foster VET-business cooperation. Some examples of measures that were put in place are new adult education training centres involving employers (Denmark), a national plan for quality assurance in VET involving social partners (Italy), and the qualification-employment programme focused on upgrading staff during periods of work-time reduction in cooperation with employers (Portugal).

Some countries are preparing greater enterprise involvement in VET curricula and planning (Estonia, Lithuania, Poland); the UK national occupational standards strategy requires consultation with employers on skill needs to ensure CVET relevance.

What is happening in Sweden?

Local councils bridging school and the world of work

Local programme councils were established in 2011 to make upper secondary VET more relevant. These councils contribute to cooperation between VET and the world of work, assist VET providers in arranging training places and participate in organising and assessing diploma projects. Schools can deviate from national programmes after consultation with the local programme council. Students are not forgotten, the councils consulting with them to get their point of view.

Source: ReferNet Sweden.

Incentives for enterprises to provide training or employment are not static, but evolve dynamically: 13 EU+ countries and one candidate country have made changes or adjustments to measures that were already in place by 2010. Such adjustments concern employment subsidies to enterprises to train or employ the unemployed (Belgium, Lithuania, Portugal) and new or increased bonuses for companies that train (Denmark, Germany). Eight countries are preparing, or have introduced, new measures to provide financial support to enterprises for apprenticeship places. Norway increased its grant scheme for apprentices with special needs and high risk of drop out.

What is happening in Estonia?

Laying the groundwork for partnerships

In Estonia, schools are responsible for the practical training in IVET programmes. It is up to them to find suitable partners in the business world. Common training principles are not developed and there is a need to train supervisors in companies. Two local initiatives lay the groundwork for partnerships between schools and enterprises. Agreement on training content and arrangement principles and training for supervisors and assessors are important first steps. There are signs that there are many benefits to good supervision and assessment: this not only helps building skills, but also helps learners to understand their skills better in a work context and to set goals for further self-development.

Source: ReferNet Estonia.

Learning methods in VET that include simulated or real business experience were in place in 23 EU+ and two candidate countries by 2010. In five countries and one candidate country, business experience is currently being introduced in VET learning methods. In Denmark, a foundation for entrepreneurship develops learning methods, while Estonia introduced entrepreneurship camps in some

VET schools, where students put together a business plan in 12 hours. Poland introduced innovative entrepreneurship tools that include virtual business games.

In most countries, services help VET learners to find training places in enterprises. Countries that recently started to develop such services strengthen the responsibility of VET schools in supporting students in finding training places (Estonia, Romania) or see a role for industry chambers in providing this service (Lithuania).

What is happening in the UK (Scotland)?

Apprenticeship vacancy service run by … apprentices

Scotland's national vacancy service for youth employment and training helps young people to find apprentice and trainee opportunities. It also supports employers and training providers by targeting the youth labour market more effectively. The initiative is expanding fast: its website reaches over 12 500 unique users each month and has over 4 000 subscribers. What is unique about this initiative? It is run by a team of people who are modern apprentices themselves.

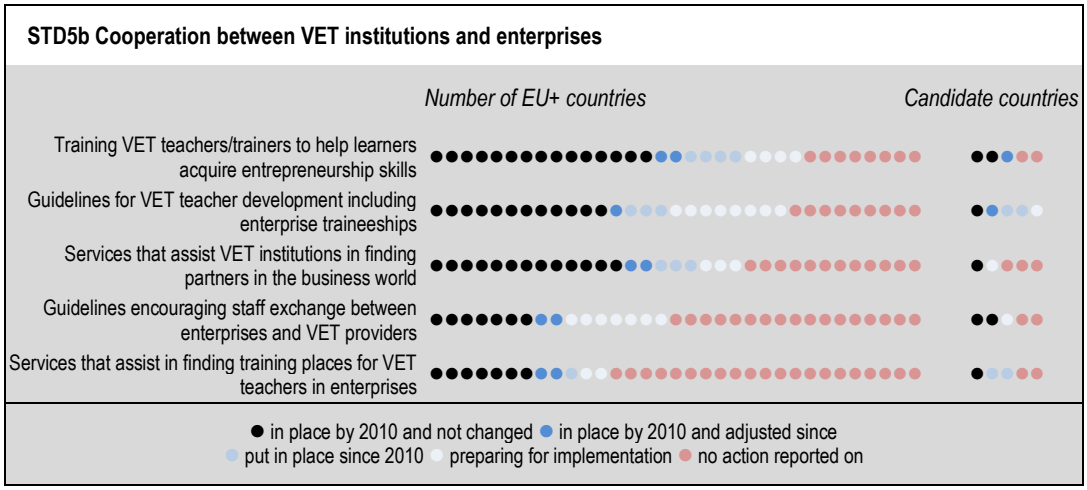
Source: ReferNet UK.

2.4.2. Bridging schools and enterprises

Table 8 shows how VET cooperates with business to support teacher development. By 2010, 17 countries were training their VET teachers and/or trainers to help learners acquire entrepreneurship skills, which may involve VET-business cooperation. Several other countries have started doing so since then, though these did not include Italy, which did not report any particular action on this short-term deliverable. Germany's entrepreneurial spirit initiative encourages teachers through professional development and a dedicated web portal. Portugal created a training benchmark for entrepreneurship and business creation (four short-term training units), which helps to prepare teachers. Slovakia introduced several accredited teacher training programmes.

Areas with low progress are services that support cooperation between VET and enterprises for professional development of teachers within firms. Staff exchange between enterprises and VET providers and teacher traineeships in firms appear limited.

Table 8. **State of play and progress towards STD5b**



Source: Cedefop (based on ReferNet) and ETF.

What is happening in Serbia?

Social partnerships are central to successful alignment of education, qualifications and the world of work

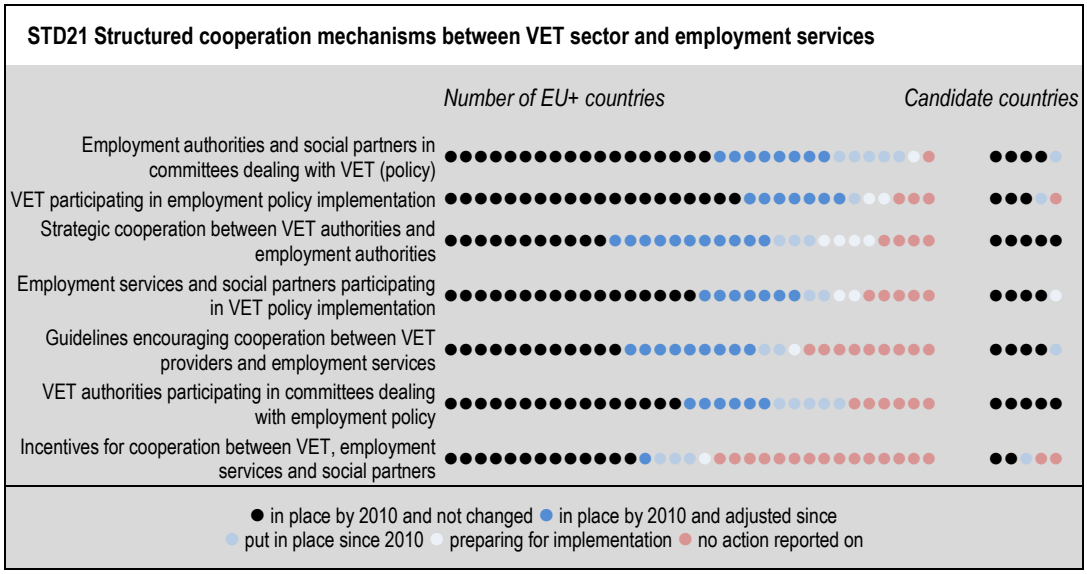
Various sectoral committees have been set up recently, their respective members representing the public institutions and the private sector. In line with the provisions related to their legal mandate, the Sector Committees are the main constituencies for the broad agenda of VET, qualifications needed in the various sectors, and dialogue between the public and the private sector. The initiative was taken by the Institute for improvement of education, the VET Centre and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia

Source: ETF questionnaire on policy reporting – Serbia.

2.5. Cooperation with employment services

Cooperation with the employment sector is addressed in one of the transversal objectives of the Bruges communiqué. STD 21 calls for structured cooperation mechanisms between the VET sector and employment services as well as social partners. Table 9 gives an overview of such mechanisms and highlights the main trends since 2010.

Table 9. **State of play and progress towards STD21**



Source: Cedefop (based on ReferNet) and ETF.

Links between the VET and employment sectors at different strategic levels are not always mandated by regulations or guidelines and often already existed before 2010. By 2012 employment authorities and social partners are participating in committees dealing with VET and VET policy in virtually all EU+ and four candidate countries. The reverse (VET authorities taking part in forums on employment policy) is less common but, in most countries, VET participates in employment policy implementation. In all but five countries, employment services and social partners participate in VET policy implementation.

What is happening in Turkey?

VET policy and employment services join efforts to combat unemployment

This initiative aims to equip a million citizens in five years (in particular the unemployed) with qualifications demanded by the labour market, through investment in machinery and equipment in 111 schools, training of some 6 000 trainers, practical training in enterprises financed partially by the national employment agency and local labour market needs analyses organised by chambers of trade and industry. In 2010 a memorandum of understanding for the 'specialised career development centres project (Skills 2010)' was signed by the Ministries of Labour and Education and, the TOBB Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges and the TOBB Economics and Technology University.

Source: ETF questionnaire on policy reporting – Turkey.

There is also strategic cooperation between VET authorities and employment authorities in most countries, including all the candidate countries. Such cooperation is often dynamic: 11 countries have adjusted the arrangements since 2010. However, incentives are not widely used to support cooperation between VET and employment services.

What is happening in Italy?

Making the most of labour market training measures

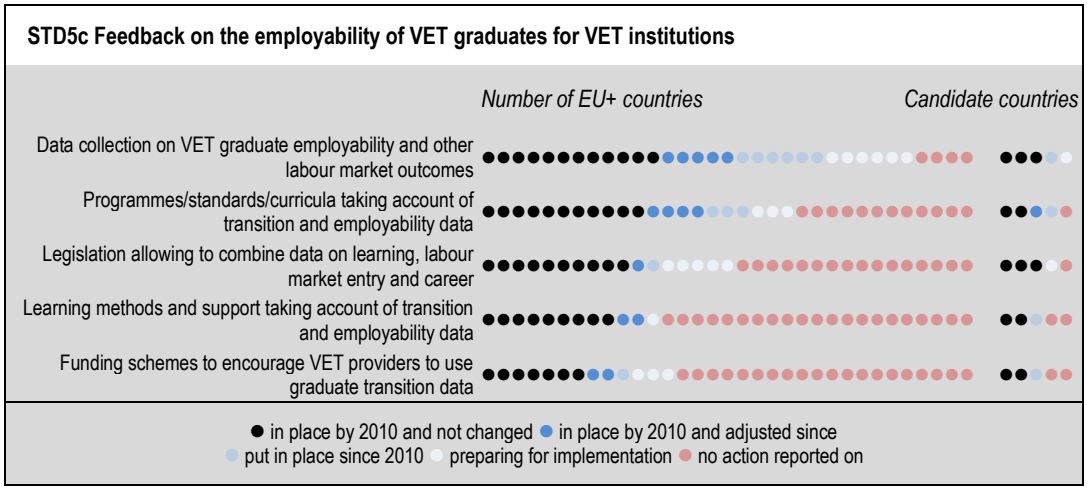
The Italian government, the regions and the social partners have agreed to use funding to train the low-qualified and those affected by the economic downturn. Several measures aim to make the most of those funds: an observatory on skill needs in local economic sectors, more outcome-based learning methodologies in VET, strengthened incentives for adults (new employment opportunities, use of sectoral training funds), and a quality assurance system at regional level.

Source: ReferNet Italy.

2.6. Monitoring employability and transitions

Responsiveness to labour market needs requires feedback on how well VET graduates perform in the labour market. Data on transitions from learning to work and on the employability of VET graduates can help VET institutions adapt programmes and curricula. Table 10 shows what countries are doing to ensure adequate feedback of VET graduate employability to VET institutions.

Table 10. **State of play and progress towards STD5c**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

Data collection on the employability of VET graduates and other labour market outcomes was in place in about half of the EU+ and three candidate countries in 2010. By 2012, six more EU+ and one candidate country were collecting data and six EU+ and one candidate country are currently preparing to start collecting data on their VET graduates. Most of those countries carried out major studies on their VET graduates (Denmark, Estonia, France, the UK (England)) or started collecting data for evaluation purposes (Cyprus, Portugal, Slovenia, the UK (Wales)). Only Greece, Iceland, Italy and Slovakia reported no action since 2010.

Data on employability are being collected or will be collected in the near future in many countries, but only in about half of all countries do these data systematically inform VET provision, i.e. programmes, standards, curricula and provision. In about two thirds of the EU+ and two candidate countries, learning methods and learner support do not take account of transition data. There are two barriers. In some countries, combining different data sources to get a complete picture of graduate transitions may be hampered by privacy legislation. In addition, incentives to encourage VET institutions to use transition information are not yet common practice.

What is happening in the Netherlands?

An ambitious action plan for future VET policy

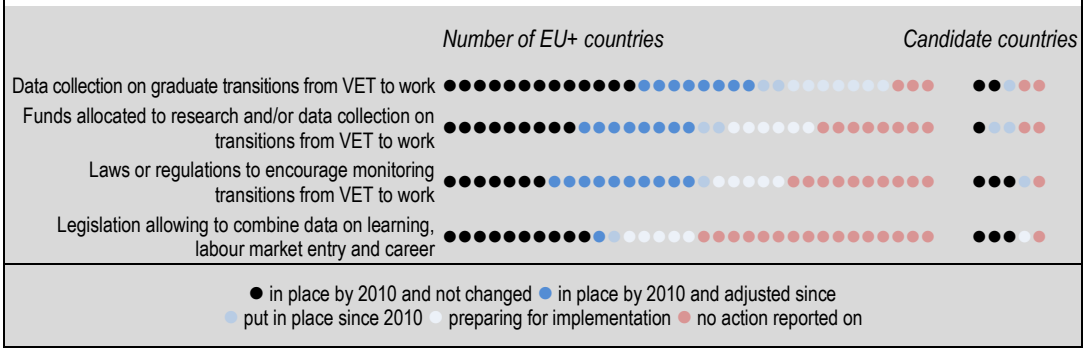
The Dutch medium-term plan of upper secondary VET aims to raise the quality of VET, to simplify the system and to improve VET governance and management. Within these priorities, actual steps to be taken involve an interactive policy-making process with all stakeholders. The use of a toolkit to promote good management and a digital system to monitor truancy and drop-out. A quality network among providers (tools developed under the previous strategic programme) will be encouraged

Source: ReferNet Netherlands.

Tracking VET graduate employability can be part of monitoring systems on the transition from learning to work. Table 11 shows that most countries were already collecting data on graduate transitions in 2010 and that nine countries and one candidate country have started data collection or are preparing it. Almost two-thirds have laws or regulations on research or data collection on transitions from VET and/or support it financially. Examples of initiatives in preparation to fund transition monitoring include a national survey of young people aged 16-22 (Italy), funding to establish a human resources forecasting system (Lithuania) and funding by the employment service to monitor VET pilot projects (Slovenia).

Table 11. **State of play and progress towards STD6**

STD6 Monitoring systems on transitions from learning to work



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

CHAPTER 3.

Accessible and open VET: lifelong learning and mobility

This chapter assesses the situation in 2010 and reviews progress that countries have made during 2010-12 to make lifelong learning and mobility a reality through VET. It considers short-term deliverables (STDs) 7-12.

Box 2. **Short-term deliverables dealing with lifelong learning and mobility**

ET 2020 objective 1:
Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality

Bruges communiqué strategic objectives (SO) 3 and 4

SO3 Enabling flexible access to training and qualifications

SO4 Developing a strategic approach to the internationalisation of I-VET and C-VET and promoting international mobility

Short-term deliverables

STD7 Participation in CVET in line with ET 2020 15% benchmark

STD8 Comprehensive NQFs based on learning outcomes linked to EQF

STD9 Procedures for the validation of learning supported by EQF/NQFs

STD10 Integrated guidance services closely related with labour market needs

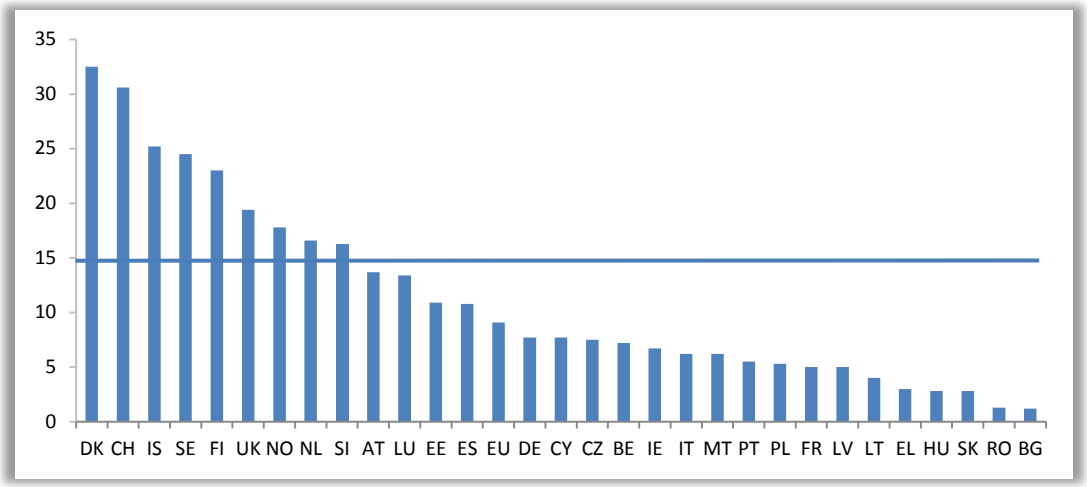
STD11 ECVET implementation in line with the recommendation and participation in testing ECVET

STD12 Internationalisation and mobility in VET

3.1. Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning plays a crucial role in the knowledge economy. EU 2020 calls for lifelong learning participation of 15% for the population aged 25-64 by 2020. Figure 5 shows that several countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK) already met that target in 2010. But in eight countries only 5% or less of the population participated in LLL in 2010 (Bulgaria, Greece, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia).

Figure 5. **Participation in lifelong learning (adults aged 25-64 who received education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey), 2010**



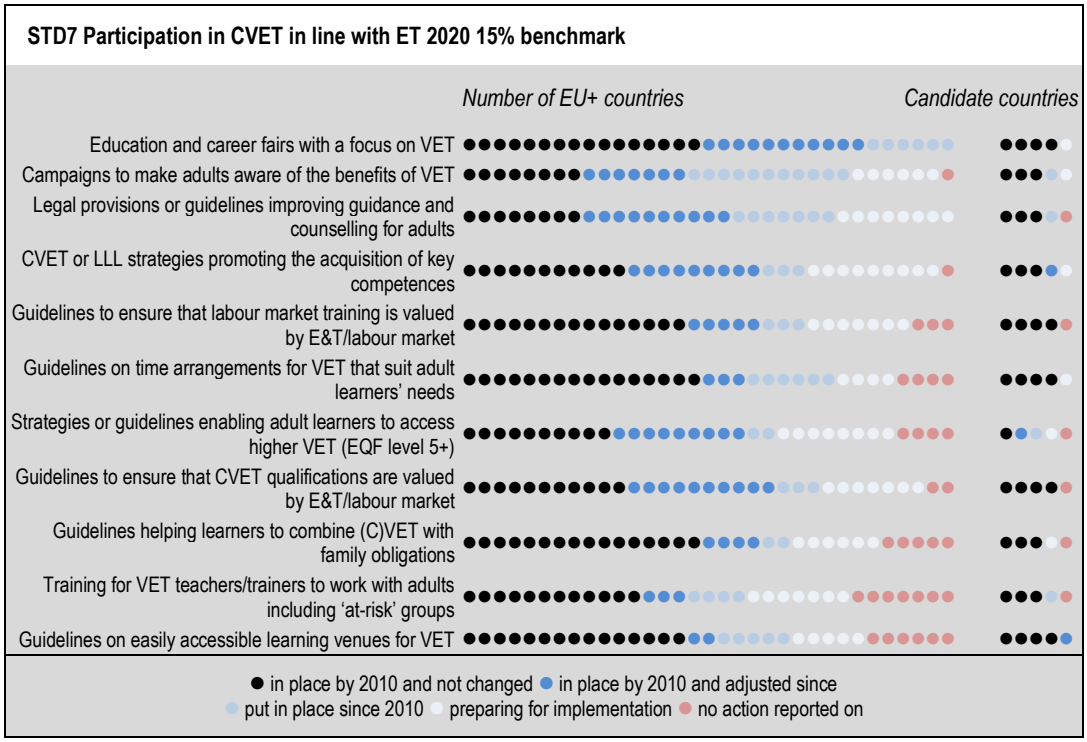
Source: Eurostat, labour force survey 2010; data extracted 2.8.2012.

In the first phase of the Copenhagen process, policies supporting CVET gradually received increasing attention and countries are progressing further in devising and amending measures to encourage participation. Table 12 shows policies and measures to support LLL in place in 2010 and what has happened since then.

Campaigns to make adults aware of the benefits of VET were in place in 2010 in about half of the countries. In 2012, education and career fairs exist to promote VET for adults in all countries and campaigns in most. Campaigns focus on the importance of professional development and adult learning and/or new training opportunities (Cyprus, Greece, Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia). Croatia, Estonia and the UK (Scotland), for example, introduced learning weeks open to adults.

Legal provisions or guidelines to improve guidance and counselling for adults were in place in 18 EU+ and three candidate countries in 2010. Of these, more than half took action to change or complement existing initiatives. They include guidance as a right in legislation for adults in training or in validation of prior learning schemes in Iceland, dedicated guidance centres in Poland, and improved guidance for enterprises and their employees in Denmark. (For further information on guidance, see STD 10, Section 3.4.)

Table 12. **State of play and progress towards STD7**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

What is happening in Croatia?

A life-long learning week

Every year there is an awareness-raising Life Long Learning Week, growing in popularity, to familiarise citizens and media about the opportunities in education and training. A broad range of activities is initiated by the agency for VET and adult education. National, regional and local stakeholders are involved, as well as professional organisations, chambers of commerce and employment services.

Source: ETF questionnaire on policy reporting – Croatia

CVET or LLL strategies that promote acquisition of key competences are widespread. By 2010, 20 EU+ countries and four candidate countries had such a strategy. Since then, three countries put a strategy in place and nine EU+ and one candidate country are preparing to do so. Examples of preparations are stepping up basic skills for low-qualified adults (Iceland), the introduction of six key competences in general curricula for upper secondary education (Iceland), and developing a common frame of reference for basic knowledge and skills (France).

What is happening in Iceland?

Aunt Frida explains Iceland – Icelandic for everyone

A large part of the population in Iceland was born abroad and many people want to learn more Icelandic. Course attendance is high, but there is also a need to provide online learning, so teaching material has been republished as e-content. The online material features a range of elements: learning materials and audio, assignments, revision exercises, and explanations. It also integrates cultural aspects, provided by 'Aunt Frida'.

Source: ReferNet Iceland.

Since 2010, six EU+ countries have introduced guidelines on time arrangements to suit adult learner needs, through part-time training opportunities (Estonia), modularisation of formal VET for adults and opportunities for blended learning (Austria), the right to take time off for learning in large enterprises (the UK (England, Wales)), and the statutory right to training adapted to needs and life situation (Norway).

What is happening in Italy?

Labour market reform to foster growth

A new law in Italy aims to make the labour market dynamic and inclusive to support growth and quality employment: skills play a leading role. The law includes the right to lifelong learning and features provisions that ensure that peoples' cultural and professional potential is recognised and valued.

Source: ReferNet Italy.

New guidelines to ensure that training and qualifications are valued on the labour market and in education and training include involving the world of work in recognition of learning outcomes and training certificates (Belgium (FR)), introduction of the qualifications framework for LLL (Denmark), and legislation that requires that active labour market training measures are based on national vocational qualification framework standards (Czech Republic) (see also sections 3.2 and 3.3).

What is happening in Lithuania?

LLL is not only a matter of more employee training

Lithuania is boosting LLL participation through a grant scheme to enterprises. With a total budget of over EUR 100 million, it is planned that 63 000 people will have taken part in training by 2015. But the grants do not only finance training courses. They also support the organisation of workplace learning, the improvement of qualifications of HR specialists, new methods of work organisation that are conducive to learning, and research that uncovers training needs in sectors.

Source: ReferNet Lithuania.

Since 2010, four EU+ countries and one candidate country introduced training for VET staff to work with adults and at-risk groups, and seven countries are preparing for this. Guidelines on accessible learning venues for VET were in place by 2012 in 22 countries while five were preparing to implement such guidelines. Belgium (FL) is discussing the deployment of mobile training centres, the Czech Republic is establishing VET school networks that act as lifelong learning centres, sectoral practical training centres in Lithuania have hostels for people outside of the region, and Poland is implementing distance learning in lifelong learning.

What is happening in Slovakia?

Changing stance on tax incentives for learning

Slovakia failed to reach the 2010 LLL benchmark of 12.5%. An LLL strategy is in place, but fiscal incentives are needed to boost participation. The 2012 action plan identifies fiscal instruments that work best using experience from other countries. Whereas earlier attempts to deviate from the flat tax model and introduce co-financed LLL with public money failed, there is now political agreement and a generally more positive stance towards tax deductions promoting learning.

Source: ReferNet Slovakia.

Good access to higher level VET helps adult learners further expand their skills and careers. In 2010, 19 EU+ and two candidate countries already had strategies or guidelines in place that open up higher level VET for adult learners. Recent initiatives to promote access to higher VET are quite diverse. Belgium, Estonia, Lithuania, Austria and Slovenia apply validation/recognition of prior learning or experience. A law in France outlines the aim of allowing people to progress at least one level of qualification during their professional life. The Maltese government grants scholarships to adults that help them access higher

level VET. The UK has preparatory programmes for learners that want to access higher education without entry requirements. The 'Education can work' initiative in Iceland helps the unemployed restart education (including higher VET) and funds preparatory courses for those who need them.

3.2. Qualification frameworks

The explicit aims of the EQF endorsed in 2008, are to promote lifelong learning, help compare qualifications and assist mobility across countries. These objectives can only be met if countries relate their qualifications levels to the eight levels of the EQF. The recommendation (Council of the EU, 2008a) invited them to do so by 2010 and to indicate the correspondent EQF levels on certificates and diplomas by 2012. With few exceptions, most countries decided to develop NQFs as a basis to link up with EQF ([15]).

3.2.1. From design to operation

By the beginning of 2010 most European countries, including the candidate countries, were still at an early stage of developing their NQFs; only Ireland, France and the UK already had NQFs, having devised them before 2005 and EQF development. In the Bruges communiqué, countries confirmed their commitment to implementing the EQF recommendation.

Since then, NQFs based on learning outcomes have developed dynamically across Europe and levels based on learning outcomes are becoming the main principle for classifying qualifications. The objective is to make it easier to understand what learners are expected to know, be able to do and understand, how qualifications relate to each other, and to use them for employment, mobility and further learning. But discussions in Germany and the Netherlands illustrate how the focus on learning outcomes can challenge implicitly established hierarchies and incite debates on the value of qualifications and their parity of esteem.

([15]) The information on this STD is based on EQF/NQF monitoring, in particular Cedefop's mapping of NQF developments and countries' referencing reports informing on how they are linking up to EQF. For further information see Cedefop 2012a and 2012d. The ETF provided additional information on Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

Out of the 39 NQFs ([16]) in 35 countries ([17]), the majority comprise eight levels, like the EQF, and have been designed to include all types and levels of qualifications. However, not all frameworks are de facto comprehensive. Those of the Czech Republic, France, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and the UK (England, Northern Ireland) cover a certain range of qualifications or consist of various frameworks. In others, qualifications are included following a step-by-step approach, as in Germany.

The way comprehensive frameworks are structured and bridge different parts of education and training vary, reflecting countries' national, political and cultural contexts. Some (e.g. Belgium (FL), Germany, Slovenia, Finland, the UK (Scotland)) are based on a coherent set of descriptors across all levels; others (e.g. Bulgaria and Denmark) reserve certain levels (EQF 6-8) for qualifications from higher academic education. By devising two parallel strands for qualifications awarded in higher education and outside (mainly vocational qualifications) at NQF/EQF levels 6-8, Austria has developed an alternative approach.

By mid-summer 2012, only the first generation NQFs in Ireland, France and the UK, plus Malta were at an advanced operational stage. However, the NQFs of Belgium (FL), Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal had moved from adoption to early operational stage.

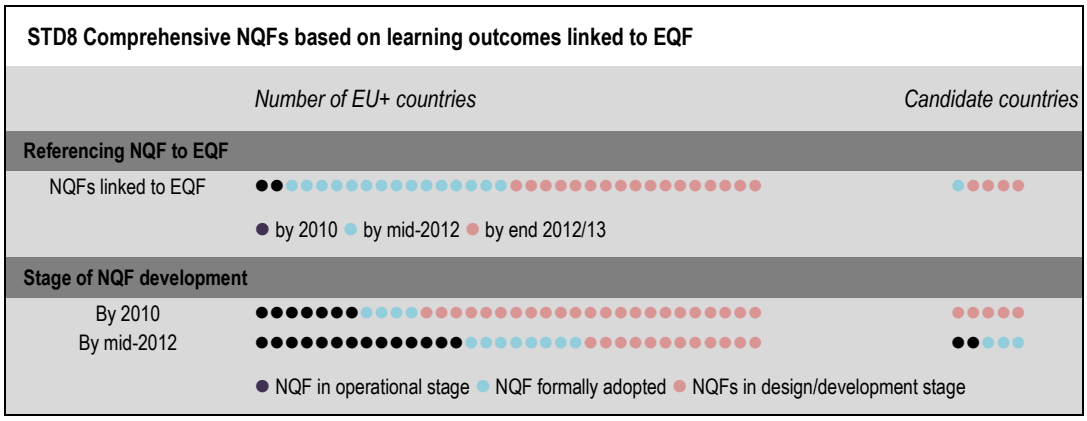
In addition, Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Montenegro, Norway and Slovakia had formally adopted their NQFs, with two further countries, Finland and Sweden being close to this stage. Having adopted its framework for VET, Turkey has moved to developing a comprehensive NQF.

([16]) In the UK, England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland have individual frameworks; Belgium is developing separate frameworks for Flanders and the French- and German-speaking communities.

([17]) 27 EU Member States, EEA countries (Liechtenstein and Norway) and candidate countries (Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey). This section does not include information on Liechtenstein.

3.2.2. Dynamic development of comprehensive NQFs

Table 13 **State of play and progress towards STD8**



Source: Cedefop and ETF.

3.2.3. Indicating the links

In compliance with the recommendation, 15 countries had linked their NQFs to EQF by mid-2012: Austria, Belgium (FL), Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK (England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland). The remaining countries are expected to complete this task by 2013.

To benefit citizens, education and training institutions and employers, NQF/EQF levels need to become visible. The Danish national database ([18]) exemplifies how NQF can be made visible to citizens and how its rationale, use and added value can be explained in a simple manner.

In line with the recommendation, certificates, diplomas and Europass documents should feature the corresponding EQF levels. Respective NQF/EQF levels are already indicated on all VET qualifications included in the relevant national registers in the Czech Republic and France. Where EQF (and NQF) levels will be indicated varies: in qualifications databases, on certificate supplements only, on all certificates and diploma (Bulgaria, Finland, Iceland, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden) or both (Estonia). In the UK, awarding bodies are free to decide whether or not certificates and diplomas will include EQF levels, a decision which will most likely ultimately depend on demand.

In more than half of the NQFs, level descriptors include key competences. For example, analytical/problem solving, communicative and/or social skills are included in Austria, Belgium (DG, FL), Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark,

([18]) http://en.iu.dk/transparency/qualifications-frameworks.

Germany, Estonia, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Slovenia, Finland, and the UK (Scotland). This not only reflects different understandings of the EQF 'competence' pillar but also illustrates two other important issues:

(a) while several countries reprofile the 'competence' pillar to include social, personal and transversal competences, others take it as a holistic concept to reflect people's ability to apply knowledge, skills and other competences at work and in learning contexts (e.g. Belgium, Germany, France, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Slovenia);

(b) as qualifications and VET, notably IVET programmes, are closely linked in several countries, key competences in NQF level descriptors signal that they are also part of curricula, albeit to different extents (see Section 2.3.).

3.2.4. Different roles

NQFs have other objectives in addition to shedding more light on qualifications systems. In some cases, for instance in France and the UK (England), they play a regulatory role, particularly in the latter case, where different bodies design and award qualifications which are not necessarily linked to specific programmes from the outset.

Other countries see the NQF as a tool to make their education and training system more coherent and reinforce its lifelong learning dimension. Permeability between VET and HE is an explicit aim of NQFs in Germany, Austria and Romania. Croatia, Iceland, Poland and Romania expect the NQF to stimulate development of new programmes, pathways or qualification standards or promote approaches to validating non-formal learning (for further information see Section 3.3.). Although NQF developments in the candidate countries ([19]) are at very different stages, the EQF and the associated work on NQFs act as a lever for progress.

3.2.5. Joint commitment

In all countries, including the candidate countries, different stakeholders – mostly social partners - have been involved in NQF design, allocation of qualifications to EQF levels or consulted at different stages. This process has been particularly thorough in Austria, Germany, Finland and Sweden and throughout the development of Czech framework for vocational qualifications. The example of

([19]) Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. Iceland, which had already participated in the Copenhagen process, before becoming a candidate country, is not included here.

France indicates that broad stakeholder involvement, including social partners, is key to ensuring ownership, trust and inclusiveness of the NQF in the operational stage. The Croatian framework started in 2006 as a major national initiative in good cooperation with the social partners; other key stakeholders have been involved in the design process since 2010.

In some countries the national EQF coordination points, which have information and dissemination tasks, also support stakeholder coordination. Some help implement the NQF and/or are in charge of the relevant register. They may also be involved in the work on EQAVET or ECVET (Annex 1). The first generation frameworks (i.e. those in France, Ireland and the UK) also illustrate that NQFs need to be constantly further developed and renewed to reflect changes in the qualification systems.

3.3. Validation

Valuing knowledge, skills and competence acquired on the job, through volunteering, in family life or other situations, to use people's full potential for learning and work, has been part of the European policy agenda since 2001. Common European principles for validating non-formal and informal learning (Council of the EU, 2004a), a working group (cluster) at EU-level and European guidelines (Cedefop, 2009) have helped support developments in the Member States ([20]). Nevertheless, by 2010 only Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway and Portugal had a highly developed validation system. Seven other countries (Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Romania, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom) had well established but partial systems, for instance within specific education and training subsystems, or a national one that was still in its initial phase. Greece, Cyprus and Hungary offered hardly any opportunities for validating non-formal and informal learning.

In the Bruges communiqué, countries committed themselves to start developing validation procedures supported by NQFs and guidance. Since then, the work to establish NQFs has not only stimulated reflections on how to integrate qualifications acquired outside formal education and training but also on

([20]) The information on this STD draws on: Cedefop (2012e), Cedefop (2012g), European Commission (2012a), European Commission, Cedefop, GHK Consulting (2010), European Commission (2012b); information gathered in the context of Cedefop's mapping of NQF developments, countries' NQF-EQF referencing reports and work in the EQF advisory group; information provided by ETF on Croatia, the former Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

how to establish or strengthen links with validation schemes (e.g. Bulgaria, Hungary).

Some countries, notably Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, are working on criteria and procedures to include certificates and qualifications awarded within CVET, active labour market measures or by the voluntary sector. In England, employers are encouraged to develop their own qualifications and get them accredited to be included in the qualifications and credit framework (QCF).

Recent NQF developments have triggered further work on validation in Bulgaria, Latvia, Malta, Austria, Poland and Sweden. In Germany the work on validation is considered an integrated part of developing an NQF and is therefore being strengthened.

This is also evident in the candidate countries – apart from Iceland – where the concept of non-formal and informal learning is relatively new and development is at an early stage. Its acceptance, and in particular the focus on learning outcomes, is closely linked to their work on NQFs, as exemplified by Croatia, Montenegro and Turkey. Legislation on adult education includes some concepts and references on validation in Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia. In Turkey, pilots were carried out in priority economic sectors in 2011 and an agency has been designated to ensure implementation.

What is happening in Montenegro?

Flexibility is the name of the game in obtaining training and qualifications

In Montenegro, validation opportunities and procedures are part of the NQF legislation, which also defines standards for institutions to carry out validation. In addition, awareness-raising activities aim at encouraging citizens to get their knowledge, skills and competence recognised. Alternative routes to awarding vocational qualifications have been made possible through close cooperation between the Education and Labour Ministries. From now on, citizens can get their skills recognised through formal vocational qualification and certification process. This flexible system is an important stepping stone for the recognition of non-formally and informally gained skills and competences.

Source: ETF questionnaire on policy reporting – Montenegro.

In many countries social partners play an active role in setting up national validation systems and in defining standards; this is the case in Denmark, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria and Finland, for instance. In Germany, chambers of industry and commerce play an important role in awarding VET qualifications.

Although many countries are devising or extending relevant schemes, approaches differ, and are difficult to compare. In Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Austria, Slovenia and Slovakia, validation systems exist in one or more, but not in all, sectors. Recently adopted legislation in Italy prepares the ground for a comprehensive approach and minimum standards for the services to be provided. There are also local or regional (bottom-up) initiatives.

What is happening in Austria?

'Yes, you can': alternative route to regular qualifications as skilled workers

A regional initiative in Austria has piloted an alternative path to acquiring the apprenticeship-leave exam. The initiative makes use of a provision in the training act (since 1969) that allows taking the exam without having done the relevant apprenticeship under certain conditions. The regional government and social partners joined forces to make this easier using validation, a portfolio approach and individual training plans. At the outset, people's skills are compared to the relevant training profile and exam regulation. Skills assessment by apprenticeship-leave examiners follows the training and leads to regular qualifications as 'skilled workers'. With demand rising, more occupations will become accessible through this route. It addresses people over 22 without formally completed initial training, those that have not worked in 'their occupations' for over five years, those who have gathered work experience and skills non-formally abroad or through volunteering, and people who hold unrecognised qualifications. The key to success has been the commitment of all actors. An amendment to the legislation in 2011 now allows using validation for certain parts of the apprenticeship exam.

Source: ReferNet Austria.

Many validation arrangements focus on supporting access and progression to education and training programmes, for instance through exemptions, or admission to exams that award official qualifications. To date, few countries allow all official national qualifications to be acquired through validation, but recent reforms have made this possible for instance in Iceland and Luxembourg (apart from the Baccalaureat). In France, all vocational qualifications included in the national register must also be obtainable through validation. But even in those with comprehensive approaches, validation tends to focus on, or is most common in, VET, as in Belgium (FL), Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia and Spain. In Slovakia, legislation permits obtaining full or partial qualifications in VET or higher education; the qualifications that people can acquire are, at maximum, one level above those they achieved through formal education and training.

In some countries, people have the legal right to have their non-formally and informally acquired knowledge, skills and competence validated: this applies in France, Ireland, Norway, Slovenia and Sweden. But if this regulation is not binding, procedures differ, or people are simply not aware of existing opportunities, take-up will be limited. Clarity and trust are preconditions to break down cultural and institutional barriers and bring about a shift in mind-sets.

This is the case in Greece and Portugal. In Greece, validation arrangements are weakly developed, mainly because achievements from non-formal and informal learning are considered inferior to those of the formal system. Even though it does not include the higher education sector, Portugal illustrates the impact of a national strategy accompanied by explicit quality assurance mechanisms. As part of a large-scale strategy to upgrade the population's attainment levels, validation has made visible the available skills potential and has given around a million people the opportunity to identify and demonstrate their actual skills and competences.

Even countries that have highly developed validation systems do not necessarily have an overall strategy in place. In Austria, where various elements exist for qualifications and different parts of the education and training system, the need to develop a coherent approach is acknowledged in the lifelong learning strategy endorsed in 2011. To prepare the ground for a national strategy, Luxembourg and Malta have recently prepared or revised their legal frameworks, adapting general education and VET legislation to create extensive validation mechanisms. Legislation adopted in 2011 in Romania provides for better integration of NQF and validation, as qualifications obtained this way can – in theory, at least – be related to all levels.

Having a strategy and/or a qualifications (and credit) framework that theoretically allows all of them to be acquired through validation, as in Ireland or the UK, does not necessarily translate into implementation or high-take up. In contrast, some countries may not have a clear national legal or policy framework but have bottom-up initiatives with very high levels of take-up.

Also, as a new Cedefop study points out, validation systems used in enterprises to assess and record competences of employees and recruits, rarely interact with those of the public sector. This calls for measures that enable employees to use their validated skills for further education and training and new jobs outside their current working environment (Cedefop 2012g, forthcoming).

High youth unemployment, the need to upskill people with low formal qualifications, and the aim to increase the participation of mature learners in higher education, have reinforced the need to establish comprehensive validation systems.

As a response to the weaknesses in different approaches to validation, the European Commission has prepared a proposal to be endorsed by the Council in autumn 2012 recommending that Member States establish national validation systems and link these closely to the qualifications frameworks (European Commission 2012b).

3.4. Guidance in line with labour market needs

High quality guidance and counselling services are crucial in helping people make suitable choices and manage transitions at different stages of their education, career and personal lives. The analysis of Cedefop's ReferNet responses to progress towards several STDs highlights the specific role that information, guidance and advice/counselling have in developing flexible learning and career pathways ([21]). Policy measures pay particular attention to the following areas and the links between them:

(a) easing transition into VET and the labour market;
(b) helping prevent early leaving from education and training;
(c) helping develop learning to learn and career management skills;
(d) (re)integrating at-risk groups, young people and adults into education and training and employment;
(e) assisting validation of non-formal and informal learning.

3.4.1. Towards strategic and coordinated approaches

Guidance and counselling services are usually offered within education and training and by the employment sector. Situations tend to be more complex with a number of other providers, e.g. social partner organisations or other stakeholders at national, regional and/or local level.

Two Council resolutions (Council of the EU, 2004b, 2008b) have addressed the need for better policy level coordination and cooperation, professionalisation of guidance staff, improved quality of service provision, and guidance methodologies. To support this work, the European Commission set up a European lifelong guidance policy network (ELGPN) in 2007 ([22]).

([21]) This section draws on Cedefop's most recent guidance policy review (Cedefop, 2011a) and information available through the European lifelong guidance policy network (ELGPN), including its progress report 2012. ETF provided the information on the five candidate countries under their remit.

([22]) To date, 29 countries, including Croatia, Iceland, Norway and Turkey, are members. Belgium and Bulgaria have observer status.

Nearly all countries have established national lifelong guidance forums or similar platforms to help coordinate policies and the activities of different providers (e.g. guidance network in Austria). Most countries have developed lifelong guidance strategies or have integrated guidance in their lifelong learning strategies. Some countries, such as France, Iceland and Sweden, have made access to information and guidance a legal right while others have reinforced their services. It is difficult to identify clear trends in policies aimed at improving guidance for adults.

Examples of new initiatives include the forthcoming implementation of a new vocational guidance system for IVET in Bulgaria and special counselling units that pool expertise to assist learners in the Czech Republic. Efforts to develop integrated all-age and/or comprehensive services for all target-groups, as in the UK or the new 'guidance house' in Luxembourg, which regroups all administrations and services that support young people and adults, illustrate the need for collaborative working methods.

Reinforced interest in career guidance has also led to various new initiatives in the candidate countries since 2010. These include specific strategies (Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia) and action plans, cooperation between education and employment services, or setting up operational structures, such as career guidance centres (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

3.4.2. Towards easy access to guidance

Information, guidance and counselling services should be open and (more) easily accessible to all citizens. To this end, alongside traditional face-to-face counselling, many countries have put in place or further developed a wide range of portals and web-based services. They tend to offer a range of self-help tools, in particular self-assessment, e-guidance and increasingly integrate social media (e.g. Bulgaria, Denmark, Ireland, Latvia, Norway, Romania). In several countries, web portals and services have been created with ESF support (e.g. the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Hungary (since 2010)). Many mirror the variety of providers and/or reflect different target groups, such as youth or adults. Portugal has recently developed a comprehensive national e-guidance site which offers an online portfolio that can be shared with firms or schools.

What is happening in France?

All guidance information in one portal for all

Combining guidance information already available, France created a national portal which provides free, complete and objective information on careers, training courses and opportunities. The portal also refers to services that can provide good career guidance. It features 2 000 career information files, over 200 000 initial and continuing training options and videos and based on real experiences. Since it became operational end 2011, more than 3 500 people a day visit the portal.

Source: ReferNet France.

Technology helps to widen access to flexible and cost-effective services, but self-help is not necessarily an option for everyone or useful at all times. A combination of national services by web, phone, email, and social media are, for instance, available in Denmark and England.

What is happening in Denmark?

Chatting about future education opportunities at the weekend

The Danish e-Guidance initiative expands guidance by using today's IT possibilities to make it more flexible. All adults interested in further education and training can receive guidance via e-mail, chat, SMS, telephone or Facebook, not only during office hours but also on evenings and during weekends. During the first eight months of operation, almost 50 000 guidance sessions were provided and half of these took place via chat sessions.

Source: ReferNet Denmark.

Specialised guidance services for specific groups (e.g. the unemployed, low-qualified, people with special needs, migrants and ethnic minorities, young people, women) exist only in around a third of the countries.

3.4.3. Empowering people through career management skills

To make suitable choices of learning and career paths and improve chances of finding jobs, knowing where to find information and advice is not enough. People also need to be able to identify their interests, talents and learning needs. Countries are collaborating to develop a shared understanding of career management skills. This work started before 2010 through ELGPN. Cedefop's most recent guidance policy review (Cedefop, 2011a) points to the variety of approaches used to promote these skills. The analysis of this STD and STDs 2, 4, 16 and 17 confirms this variety but also indicates some common trends.

Career management skills are usually an integral part of curricula (e.g. Ireland, Slovenia, the UK) and either subject-based (e.g. Austria, France, Malta, Turkey), cross-curricular (e.g. the Czech Republic, Estonia, Sweden), or both (Finland). In Finland's VET, they support learning to learn skills and translate into credit points. Sweden has integrated them in adult education/training, within guidance courses to support accreditation of prior learning. In active labour market measures, they mostly form part of guidance support. A more comprehensive national approach has recently been developed in Portugal to support guidance activities in schools, VET centres, employment services and companies.

In several countries, the main aim of career management skills development is to support transition to upper secondary education and/or into VET. Increasingly, they are also included in apprenticeship support services (e.g. Belgium). Alternative or bridge programmes for the young who have not found a training place embrace them as one of their key features (e.g. Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Luxembourg, Romania and the United Kingdom).

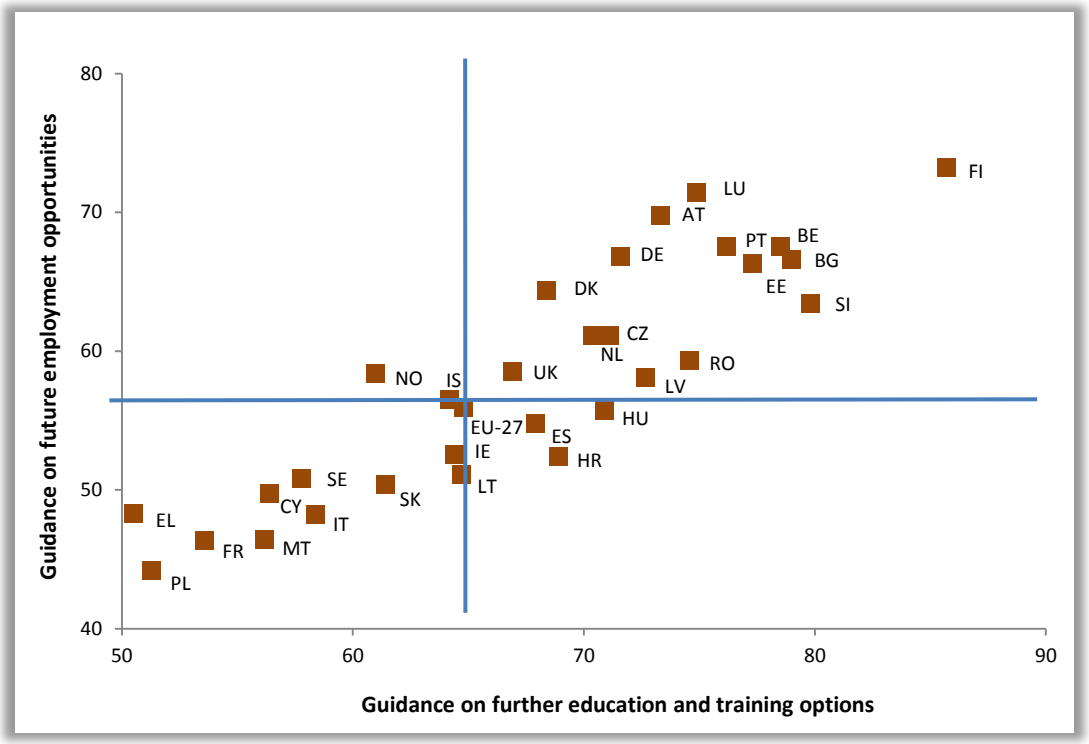
3.4.4. Towards better guidance quality

A recent Eurobarometer (European Commission; The Gallup Organisation, 2011) asked people to grade the guidance and counselling they received during their education. In all countries but Turkey, guidance received on further education and training options was rated higher than that on future employment opportunities (Figure 6).

Interestingly, the Eurobarometer (European Commission; The Gallup Organisation, 2011) suggests that those who left school without, or with only lower secondary, qualifications were the least likely to be satisfied with the guidance they had received at school. More specifically, less than 40% of those two groups were satisfied with the counselling they had received on future employment and further education opportunities. This is low in comparison to other groups with higher attainment levels.

To make guidance more effective and efficient, decision-makers require better information on expected outcomes and more evidence on its impact. Quality standards can help improve provider customer relations. As evaluation and data availability seemed fragmented, ELGPN initiated discussions on evidence-based guidance policy and system development in 2009-10. They also reviewed approaches and frameworks to assure the quality of guidance services across education and employment.

Figure 6. **Rating guidance and counselling on further education and training options and employment opportunities**



Source: Flash Eurobarometer No 319b (European Commission; The Gallup Organisation, 2011).

By 2010 ([23]) work on quality assurance mechanisms for guidance comprised a variety of initiatives. They either followed a more quantitative approach (e.g. indicator and benchmark-based systems as in Denmark) or softer approaches that focused on quality assurance frameworks (Ireland, the UK), self-evaluation (Austria), external evaluation (Germany, Cyprus) or support to practitioners (e.g. for career education and guidance at Swedish schools). In some cases, research and longitudinal analyses on quality and impact of guidance services were carried out, as in the UK (England), also taking account of costs and benefits (Hungary).

In the period 2011-12, this work has been taken forward, with Denmark and Germany applying a more indicator-driven, i.e. quantitative, approach and other countries turning more towards softer approaches, as in evaluating quality based on 'customer' career management skills. Elements of quality check-lists are being (further) developed in all countries (European Commission; ELGPN, 2012).

([23]) This information draws on Cedefop's guidance policy review (Cedefop, 2011a).

What is happening in the Czech Republic?
A system to make CVET more attractive

A pilot information system for decision-makers and practitioners on major mismatches between labour demand and supply helps to adjust the programme offer with the aim of making CVET more attractive. It includes information modules for sector skills councils, training staff and guidance counsellors. Guidance counsellors can propose better CVET opportunities as they have access to suitable opportunities for people facing restructuring or new skill needs.

Source: ReferNet Czech Republic.

In Latvia, efforts to improve services have been affected by financial constraints where the need to prioritise support for jobless people has made it necessary to postpone the creation of career education and support centres. Following reorganisation of employment services in the Czech Republic, intended to improve cost-effectiveness, guidance and counselling services have been outsourced. The impact of this measure is not yet known.

As demand for high-quality services is increasing, and counsellors' roles are becoming more complex, practitioner competences are receiving more attention. Even before 2010, several countries focused on qualifications, standards for and certification of guidance staff working in the employment sectors and teachers acting as counsellors (e.g. Estonia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland and Turkey); others devised legislation and pre-service (e.g. Austria, Denmark) as well as in-service training programmes (e.g. Bulgaria, Greece, Norway, Romania).

Developments since 2010 in Finland, Hungary, Norway, Romania and the United Kingdom confirm this trend. In Lithuania, Malta and Slovenia, for instance, training for guidance staff and/or career guidance teachers has been supported by ESF initiatives. However, developing a practitioner competence framework is a more challenging goal.

3.5. ECVET

Creating a borderless lifelong learning and working area and flexible, individualised learning paths requires that people can 'take learning along'. To

this end, in 2009, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union recommended devising a credit system for VET (ECVET) (2009a) ([24]).

3.5.1. Objectives

ECVET has a double objective: a) help transfer and recognise learning that has taken place during a stay abroad; b) ease lifelong learning by allowing people to transfer and accumulate knowledge and skills from different national contexts to build up recognised qualifications.

To make this possible, certain conditions have to be met. One of the main preconditions is that qualifications, standards, programmes, curricula and assessment, focus on learning outcomes. Modules or units help to support transfer of learning. A point system is intended to aid crediting by indicating the relative weight of the units with regards to the overall qualification. The point system should be compatible with the credit transfer system used in higher education (ECTS) and be closely linked to EQF and validation.

To encourage policy-makers and potential users, objectives and added value need to be clear. Real commitment requires the cooperation of different partners involved in defining qualifications, delivering education and training, and assessing and certifying learning outcomes. The ECVET recommendation invites Member States to create these conditions, pilot and test the scheme and apply it gradually to VET qualifications at all EQF-levels from 2012 onwards. Initial evaluation is foreseen for 2014 to guide future steps and full implementation.

There has been common agreement that a credit system would bring added value for international mobility in VET. Most countries have been involved in projects, usually supported by the EU-LLL programme, in particular Leonardo da Vinci, to test credit schemes for mobility purposes. In 2011, Member States applied for EU-LLP funding to create an ECVET expert network. While experimentation and testing for cross-border learning mobility remain significant, ECVET has also gained relevance for national and regional mobility.

Increasingly, countries are seeing the benefits of ECVET for increasing progression opportunities within their own national education and training systems. Germany and Finland, though coming from different starting points, illustrate this trend. Finland, which already had a credit system in place, used to see international mobility as the main added value of its ECVET approach. Years

([24]) This section in based on Cedefop's ECVET monitoring reports, in particular Cedefop, 2010a; Cedefop, 2012f and interviews held in 2012. It also draws on Cedefop, 2012b. Information on Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey was provided by ETF.

of testing have shown the benefits for its competence-based approach and recognition of prior learning for mobility within the system

Germany, which is currently testing an ECVET blueprint for mobility within EU projects, has piloted units and credits to improve progression within VET and between VET and higher education.

3.5.2. ECVET readiness

By 2010, modules or units of learning outcomes were already an integral part of VET qualifications, for instance in Spain, France, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden and the UK. Finland, Sweden and the UK also had credit systems in place. Slovenia applied the same credit point convention for VET and higher education.

It is evident that developing ECVET and NQF are linked, as the focus on learning outcomes is at the core of both. Apart from Croatia and Malta, most countries did not decide to combine the two processes from the outset to set up a qualifications and credit framework. In the UK, the combined credit and qualifications framework is a recent development.

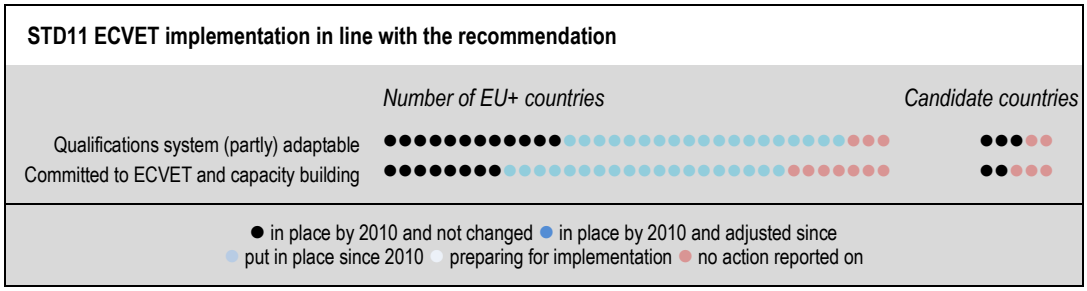
The majority of countries have prioritised establishing NQFs. In fact, several, as for instance Belgium (FL) and Bulgaria, consider having an NQF in place as a prerequisite for ECVET.

Education and training and qualifications systems are becoming more ECVET-ready step by step. Several countries have revised or are revising standards and curricula, as in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania. Some have modularised or are modularising their curricula and qualifications or base them on units (for example, Croatia and Lithuania). As part of its recent VET reform, Luxembourg is developing modules and a credit system.

However, system readiness does not necessarily translate into a quick move towards implementation. Only in some Member States do representatives believe that their countries will be prepared to start implementing ECVET soon. Austria, for instance, which has since long worked on making its systems more permeable, seems less convinced about the added value a credit system could bring. There is also concern about potential bureaucratic burdens. Belgium (FL) and Ireland are hesitant, the latter not really convinced a point system is needed.

Similarly, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia do not intend to develop a credit system for VET. ECVET points tend to be valued in systems that already use credit points. Others, where transfer of learning outcomes and recognition has worked so far without credits, are less convinced.

Table 14. **State of play and progress towards STD11**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

3.5.3. From commitment to testing: building capacity

Belgium (FR), Latvia and Finland have committed themselves to ECVET. Several other countries have integrated provisions for ECVET implementation in their legal framework, for instance within their specific NQF regulations. Belgium (FR), Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Greece, Iceland, Latvia, Montenegro, and Romania belong to this group of countries. Legislation adopted in 2011 stipulates that Polish qualifications be based on units of learning outcomes in line with the ECVET proposal. Croatia, Montenegro and Turkey are regulating the development of a credit system, with ECVET being the guiding principle closely associated with NQFs. A further group state that their legislation or regulatory framework is already compatible with ECVET (e.g. France, Ireland, Slovenia and the UK).

Another group of countries has moved a step further and is preparing the grounds for ECVET proposals through feasibility studies (e.g. the Czech Republic and Sweden), analyses and testing. Collaborating with the Chamber of Commerce, the French Education Ministry is leading a project to examine how its VET qualifications compare with the principles of ECVET. Latvia, supported by EU-funds, has analysed qualifications and occupational standards to identify equivalences and allocate credit points. The need to consolidate VET reforms and the lack of resources have delayed formal decisions in Italy and Portugal.

Countries that have been or are currently testing credit or conversion systems include Germany, Malta and Turkey. Following a decision in 2007, Turkey has piloted an ECVET model for 50 occupational areas with the aim to scale it up nationwide by the end of 2012. Germany has piloted units and credits for transfer over a period of five years (2007-12). Finland is planning to introduce ECVET in all vocational qualifications by 2014, drawing on ample experience with its own credit system. This will also imply revision of qualification requirements and information for, and training of, stakeholders.

Steering groups exist or are being set up in Germany, Finland, Sweden, and the UK (Northern Ireland) to support ECVET developments and ensure

collaboration by different stakeholders. Committees and working groups also include social partners as, for example, in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Austria, Romania, Finland and the UK (Northern Ireland). In most cases, Education Ministries are leading the work on ECVET, cooperating with other relevant ministries, qualification authorities and/or national institutions with VET responsibilities.

In addition, ECVET coordination points have been set up in most countries as at mid-2012. Switzerland and Turkey also have designated contact points. The official nomination or mandate is pending for some remaining countries (Italy, Latvia, Austria, Poland and Portugal). Some, such as France, Poland and Portugal, have delegated tasks directly to their representatives in the ECVET user group. This indicates progress and readiness to increase activities, especially as the ECVET recommendation, contrary to those on EQF and EQAVET, does not invite Member States to set up national coordination points.

There are attempts to create synergy between the tools, at least at institutional level, presumably encouraged by the close links between EQF/NQF and ECVET and the recommendation's (European Parliament and Council, 2009) advice to apply the common principles for quality assurance, i.e. EQAVET (see also Sections 2.2 and 3.2, and Annex 1).

3.6. Internationalisation and mobility

Mobility can contribute to intercultural understanding and may later motivate people to move abroad for further learning or work. Europe's flagship initiative Youth on the Move (European Commission, 2010b) promotes mobility to improve education and training quality, make it more equitable, and increase young people's employability.

The Bruges communiqué supports this aim by promoting internationalisation strategies ([25]). Countries agreed to address mobility obstacles, ensure that EU tools help recognise the competences and qualifications obtained, and encourage assistance for host and sending organisations. The recommendation,

([25]) In this first Bruges monitoring exercise, the section on mobility aims to address the main issues of STD, drawing on information collected in the context of VET in Europe 2011 (Cedefop, 2011b). For the 2013 monitoring exercise, Cedefop plans to include mobility in the ReferNet questionnaire. Please note that some of the aspects included in the Council recommendation on mobility (Council of the EU, 2011a), which covers the whole education and training spectrum for young people, form part of other STDs, for instance STD 4-Key competences, STD 11-ECVET.

which was endorsed in the subsequent year, reiterated the need to support apprentice learning mobility (Council of the EU, 2011a).

European benchmarks have been agreed: for VET, at least 6% of Europe's 18-34 year-olds with an initial qualification should have had minimum two weeks of VET-related study or training abroad by 2020 or less if documented by Europass (Council of the EU, 2011b). This section examines the current position or recent developments in different aspects of mobility in VET.

A Eurobarometer on attitudes to VET (European Commission; TNS Opinion & Social, 2011) suggests that more than a third of the respondents to the survey believe that learning abroad is not possible but the younger generation and people currently taking VET disagree with this view.

Mobility initiatives, notably outgoing mobility, are at the core of national strategies on opening VET up to international cooperation. As Cedefop's 2010 policy report stated, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway already had internationalisation strategies for VET in place by then (Cedefop, 2010b). The UK's strategy focuses on VET at college level but does not cover apprenticeship. Increasingly, international dimensions are integrated in education and training policy and development plans, as is the case in Belgium (FR), Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovenia and Finland.

Many countries have bilateral agreements, partnerships between municipalities and/or regions. Nordplus for the Scandinavian and Baltic countries, with its long tradition, is among the most widely known initiatives. Schemes may also extend beyond Europe to include, Canada, China, India or the USA. Institutional twinning, joint education projects and programmes contribute to internationalising VET.

In decentralised education and training systems, however, data on these initiatives are difficult to get and reviews of international cooperation and mobility are scarce. Recent initiatives include a survey of Czech VET schools (planned for 2011), a study on internationalisation in Finnish adult education, and a study in Germany which revealed that around 7% of companies send apprentices abroad, more than two-thirds from SMEs.

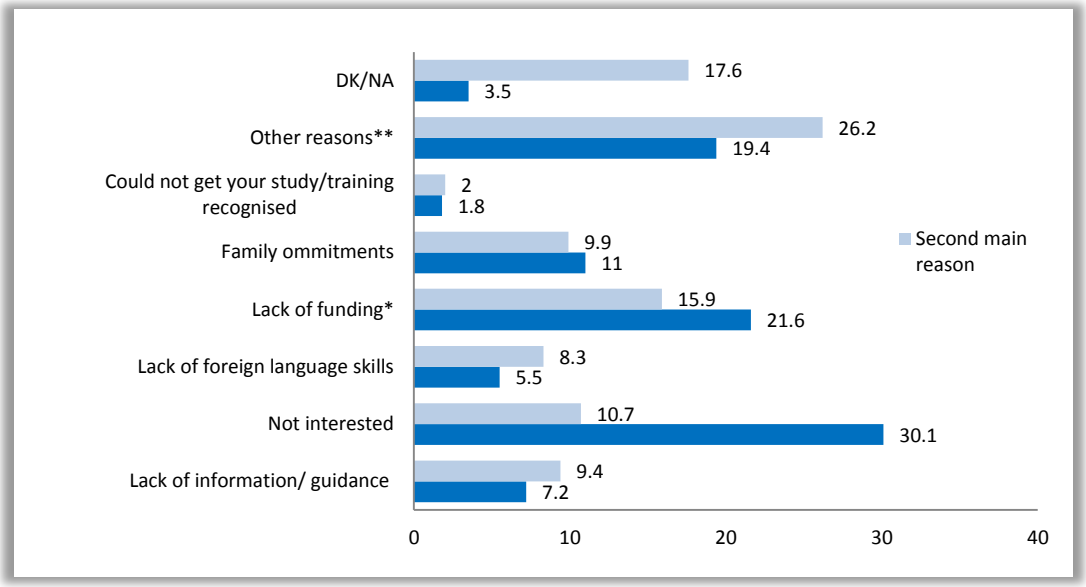
Only a few countries have set themselves specific national targets to increase mobility, such as Germany, Lithuania and Finland. Despite efforts to increase the mobility of young people in apprenticeships and other alternance schemes, learners in VET schools still tend to be the main beneficiaries, an issue raised, for instance, by Italy and Finland.

EU-funds, notably EU-LLP but also the Structural funds (e.g. in Italy within EFS 2007-13 programming), INTERREG (e.g. Ireland, the UK (Northern Ireland and Wales)), and, in some cases, Youth in Action (Belgium, the UK), are still the

main source for mobility in VET. This includes projects and networks for inclusion, notably within ESF, as well as initiatives for teachers and trainers. Some countries have increased national funding (e.g. Germany, Slovenia, Finland) to step up mobility opportunities or other internationalisation activities. To encourage mobility among apprentices, countries earmark higher shares of the Leondardo da Vinci funding for this target group (e.g. Norway, Romania).

There are still several barriers to mobility which are highlighted by Eurobarometer (European Commission; The Gallup Organisation, 2011). Scarce funding is still one of the main obstacles, e.g. in Estonia, Hungary and Slovakia. 'Lack of funding/too expensive stay abroad' was number two on the list of reasons for 15-34 year-old respondents not to participate. In response, Norway, gives apprentices access to its state education loan fund.

Figure 7. **Main reasons for not having been abroad, EU-27, % 15-35 year-olds**



(*) Including national/regional student loans or grants could not be transferred abroad.
(**) Including legal obstacles and concerns about the quality of the training or other activities available abroad.
Source: Flash Eurobarometer No 319b (European Commission; The Gallup Organisation, 2011).

Poor language skills are also frequently cited as a main mobility obstacle but not among young people (see also STD4).

Legislative or regulatory frameworks in several countries allow recognition of experiences acquired during cross-border learning mobility (e.g. Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria, Portugal and the United Kingdom). Even in the absence of specific legislation or regulations, there seems to be a trend towards crediting experience acquired abroad: this happens mainly if the

mobility initiative is part of or integrated into the VET programme (e.g. Denmark, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden), within Leonardo da Vinci (e.g. Hungary), or if work placements are a prerequisite for completing VET school or access to higher level training (e.g. Bulgaria, Lithuania, Malta). According to Cedefop's ReferNet, Europass mobility, which helps record work placements in companies or stays in (VET) institutions abroad, is widely used and in some cases even mandatory (e.g. Bulgaria, Austria).

Measures and channels used to support and encourage host and sending organisations have remained conventional, with few countries recently introducing new activities; in one example, Germany has introduced mobility advisors at economic chambers (ESF support) and VET schools have taken over administrative issues. Lists of companies that run mobility projects and a database with companies interested in acting as hosts are available in Norway and Slovenia. In 2011, Austria started to subsidise wages for apprentices abroad but countries generally do not report financial incentives to encourage employers to participate in mobility initiatives.

Apart from in Turkey, which has been part of the Leonardo da Vinci programme since 2004, VET transnational mobility is still lacking a relevant legal and administrative basis and appropriate financial resources in most candidate countries. Croatia joined the EU lifelong learning programme in 2011. Bilateral agreements within regional or local institutions generally shape mobility initiatives. Progressive participation of candidate countries in the LLL programme is seen as the most relevant lever for developing transnational mobility in VET.

CHAPTER 4.

Modern VET: creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship

This chapter assesses the state of play in 2010 and reviews progress that countries have made during 2010-12 in creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET. It considers short-term deliverables 13-15.

Box 3. **Short-term deliverables dealing with creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship**

ET 2020 objective 4:
Enhancing creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship

Bruges communiqué strategic objectives (SO) 5

SO5 Fostering innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, as well as the use of ICT (in both I-VET and C-VET)

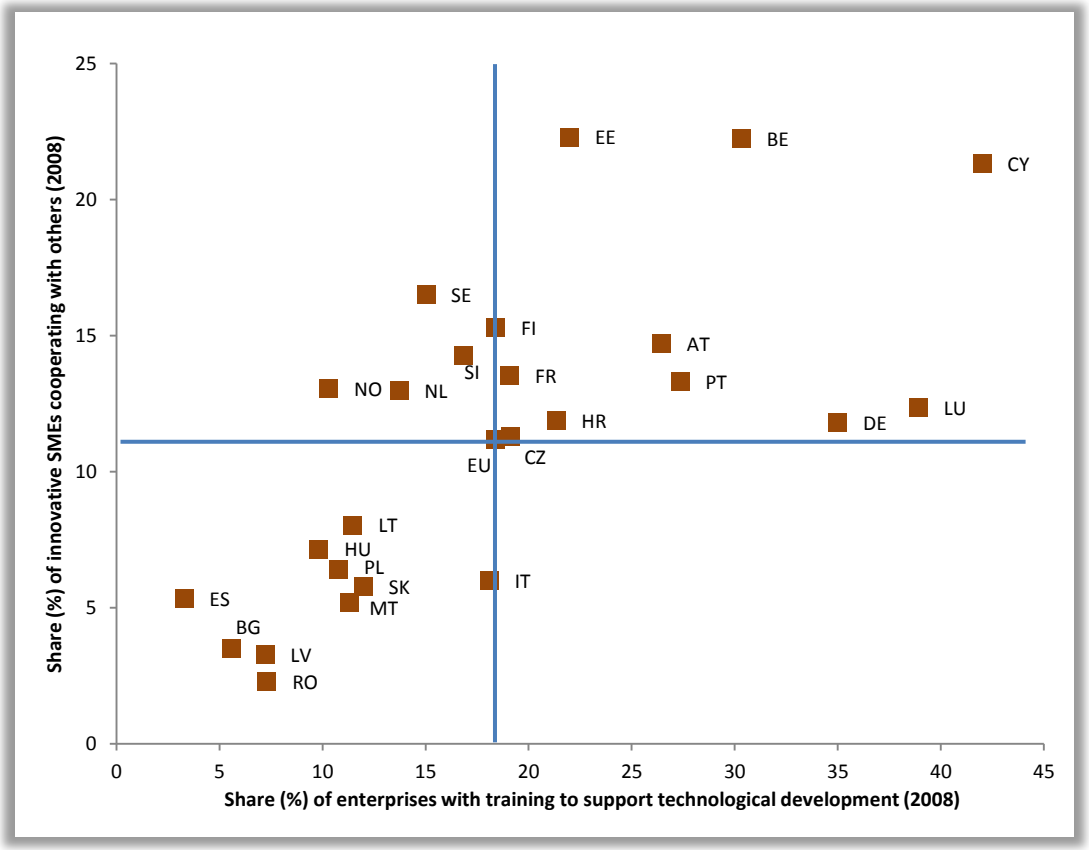
Short-term deliverables

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

4.1. Creativity and innovation

Creativity and innovation in VET are important as they drive new ideas in business and industry, support competitiveness through the development of new technologies, processes, and services and ultimately impact on growth and prosperity. The innovation climate in a country depends on many factors. Alongside dedicated human and financial resources, continuous investment in skills and the flow of creative ideas through cooperation are crucial dimensions. Nationally, the share of enterprises training their staff to support technological development and the share of innovative SMEs that cooperate with enterprises, VET or other stakeholders can be used as proxy for these attributes (see Figure 8). These dimensions are central to the priorities for VET on creativity and innovation in the Bruges communiqué.

Figure 8. **Share (%) of enterprises with training to support technological development (2008) and share (%) of innovative SMEs cooperating with others (2008)**



NB: Data are not available for all EU countries; EU average includes EU countries except DK, IE and the UK for the share of enterprises with training to support technological development; EU average includes EU countries except EL for the share of innovative SMEs cooperating with others.

Source: Eurostat and Regional Innovation Scoreboard (European Commission, 2009); data extracted 6.8.2012.

On average, in the EU, almost one in five enterprises trains staff to support innovation while 11.2% of innovative small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) cooperate with others. Cooperation between innovative SMEs goes hand in hand with investment in training. Countries with an above average share of innovative enterprises investing in training tend also to have many SMEs that cooperate with others. The conditions for innovation and creativity appear to be less favourable in 10 countries (Bulgaria, Spain, Italy Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia).

What is happening in Latvia?

A week of creativity: the power of social media

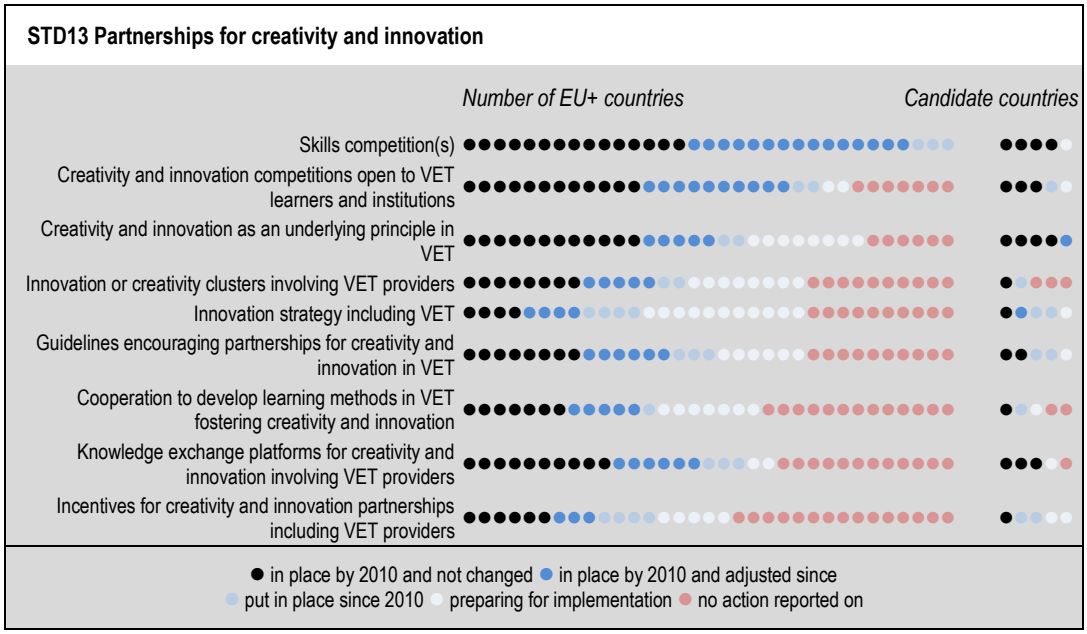
The action week 'CREATE' held in spring 2012 showed the creative potential of Latvia and promoted the potential of creativity in all aspects of society. During the event, a memorandum to establish the creative Latvia platform was signed by four ministries. The event had the immediate impact of putting creativity in the picture, not only by attracting visitors but especially through social media. Whereas 1 900 persons attended the events in Riga in person, around 150 000 persons were reached through Facebook.

Source: ReferNet Latvia.

National policies for innovation and competitiveness related to education and training tend to focus on higher education. The same is true for innovation scoreboards and similar initiatives to measure a country's competitiveness and capacity to innovate. VET potential and contribution tends to be neglected.

Table 15 presents an overview of the policies and measures to support creativity and innovation in place in 2010 and highlights recent trends. Along with skills competitions, creativity and innovation competitions open to VET learners and institutions are common in many countries. Ten countries adapted, changed or stepped up their innovation competitions between 2010 and 2012. Belgium introduced a new contest for innovation and sustainable development, the Czech Republic started a new competition on innovative teaching and the design of digital material for teachers, and in Latvia, a new education innovation project competition started. Lithuania introduced competitions among training companies and Slovenia held a creativity and innovation week. The excellence and innovation in education initiative in Greece includes a competition to reward good practice in learning.

Table 15. **State of play and progress towards STD13**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

In 17 EU+ and in all candidate countries, creativity and innovation was already an underlying principle in VET by 2010; a further 10 countries have taken steps in this direction since then (see also Section 2.3.). Belgium (FR) launched a creativity programme in 2010 that advocates adapting education and training policies to support creativity and innovation. Slovakia created new VET centres to support innovation and creativity and adopted new strategies on the knowledge economy and science and technology in 2011. Sweden's strategy for entrepreneurship in education and training aims to turn ideas into action by starting new businesses while in Croatia, the 2008-13 VET development strategy embeds principles linked to innovation.

What is happening in Cyprus?

Promoting green skills

Following a study on green skill needs, Cyprus developed an action plan on promoting green skills and designated 2011 as the year of green skills. The plan aims to promote green skills in developing human resources, for the unemployed, enterprises and employees. It also targets improving the infrastructure and systems to promote green skills. The action plan did raise awareness, as it sparked interest in green skills training and received a lot of attention in the media. In 2011, almost 6 000 people participated in green skills training programmes.

Source: ReferNet Cyprus.

There has been progress in terms of including VET in innovation strategies since 2010. By 2010, only eight EU+ countries and two candidate countries had innovation strategies that included VET. Since then, more have reached this stage while a further third are preparing. Innovation or creativity clusters that include VET and guidelines encouraging partnerships and cooperation to develop learning methods in VET that foster creativity and innovation are also becoming more common. However, most countries that have taken action here since 2010 are still in the preparation stage.

What is happening in Germany?

VET as a crucial element in high-tech and innovation strategy

The German high-tech and innovation strategy 2020, which is supported by an advisory body from research, business and industry, sees VET as central to securing a strong skills base. It focuses on optimising knowledge, technology transfer, and the future world of work. Innovation and technology policy supports SMEs in securing skilled workers in several respects: monitoring skill needs; improving VET; including education and training in technology transfer; raising young people's interest in acquiring qualifications in STEM; and creating competence centres. The public-private partnership initiative for innovation is part of the high-tech strategy and aims to establish long-term links between science and industry. Funding is foreseen for 15 years in several stages and covers CVET as well as higher education institutions.

Source: ReferNet Germany.

Knowledge exchange platforms for creativity and innovation are present in around half of the countries in 2012, but 12 did not report on this element. Slow progress in some countries could be due to missing incentives. Half of the countries did not report on incentives for creativity and innovation partnerships including VET providers. Examples of incentives promoting partnerships are financing VET schools to become involved in competence centres (Estonia), making funding for higher VET dependent on cooperation and partnerships with enterprises and social partners (Sweden) and national and ESF funding for developing modern training material where priority is given to projects involving partnerships (Latvia).

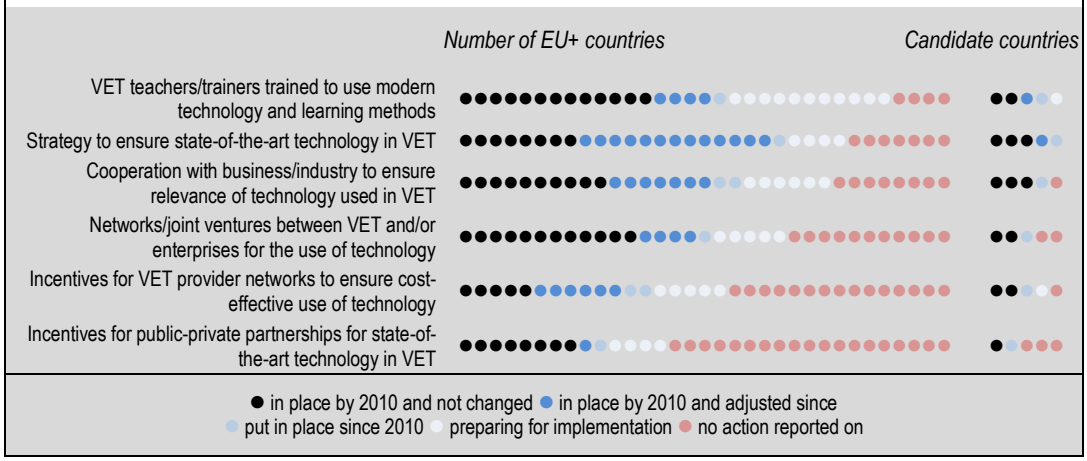
Several countries focus on measures that combine promoting creativity and innovation with entrepreneurship. The strategic development plan in Belgium (FR) foresees the development of enterprise networks, Estonia is to establish centres of competence in 2014 to drive entrepreneurship at regional level, and technical and professional networks are promoted in Italy. The French partnership to create mini enterprises encourages innovation and creativity and also stimulates entrepreneurship.

4.2. Using innovative technology effectively in VET

Using innovative technology in VET stimulates creativity and innovation, but also fosters the labour market relevance and quality of VET. Table 16 reviews what choices countries have made to ensure that VET providers use effective, innovative and quality-assured technology.

Table 16. **State of play and progress towards STD14**

STD14 Effective and innovative, quality-assured use of technology by all VET providers



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

By 2010, a large majority of countries already had a strategy in place to ensure that VET uses state-of the art technology, with more than half having made adjustments since. Another five EU+ and one candidate country have acted since 2010 to put in place such a strategy. Examples of recent initiatives include setting up regional technology centres in Belgium (FR), regulations that identify crucial areas of technology for SMEs which are a point of reference for higher VET (Italy), changes in funding for upgrading VET school equipment (Hungary), an improved framework for practical training agreements for students in companies that includes principles to ensure the best use of technology in training (Romania), and increased funding for technology in VET (the UK (England)).

What is happening in Slovakia?

Business taking the lead in developing a VET programme

A Slovak gas supplier and the Chamber of Trades jointly analysed skill needs in the gas industry and the challenges that VET schools face in providing the right skills. This led to the development of a new VET programme and study facilities (equipment, learning materials, teaching aids) at three VET schools. Partnerships between schools and business strengthened VET delivery, secured the quality of training, and helped to create jobs for graduates. The initiative won the second prize in the 2012 competition on good cooperation between schools and business.

Source: ReferNet Slovakia.

By 2012, VET is cooperating with business and industry to ensure relevant technology in 17 EU+ countries plus four candidate countries, while another eight are taking action to promote such cooperation. In most countries VET-enterprise cooperation takes the form of networks or joint-ventures.

What is happening in Slovenia?

Joint action for training

A training centre at Velenje focuses on increasing the use of renewable energy sources through state-of-the-art VET; it promotes interdisciplinary approaches, exchange of experience, and transfer of knowledge and is an example of an inter-company training centre. Such centres are set up jointly by VET institutions and local companies and train young people and adults (including the unemployed). They operate by mutual agreement, with companies usually providing premises and technology and VET institutions providing know-how and personnel. These joint ventures have proved successful, but tight budgets may jeopardise participation by some partners.

Source: ReferNet Slovenia.

Incentives for VET provider networks and public-private partnerships are not yet commonly available in most countries, but some recent progress is visible. Estonia's development plan for VET aims to increase the efficiency of cooperation with local government and the third sector to ensure better use of resources. Latvia is improving its VET network by establishing competence centres that support VET schools with up-to-date teaching methods and materials. To ensure state-of-the-art technology in higher VET, Sweden requires its institutions to cooperate and form partnerships with enterprises and social partners to be funded.

What is happening in Belgium (FL)?

State-of-the-art not only in technology, but also in ensuring access to all

The 72-hour initiative helps young people in VET schools gain access to state-of-the-art equipment in the training facilities of the employment service. As the unemployed also use these facilities, planning is a core concern. Special attention is especially needed to avoid unemployed trainees being pushed away by VET students.

Source: ReferNet Belgium.

It is crucial that VET teachers and trainers are trained to use modern technology learning methods. About half of the countries already paid attention to this in 2010 and several others reported they are preparing to offer such training to their VET staff. Initiatives include retraining pedagogic specialists to help teachers use state of the art technology (Bulgaria), national training on active learning methods for VET teachers (Estonia), the implementation of a policy to help trainers use ICT skills in education and keep up with technological developments (Cyprus), teachers working in inter-company training centres to keep up to date (Slovenia), and opportunities for VET teachers to take part in workplace internships (Sweden).

What is happening in the UK (Wales)?

YES, you can!

The Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy (YES, started in 2004) continued with a new action plan for 2010-15. The plan fosters entrepreneurial spirit, helps young people develop relevant skills and so helps increase the number of enterprise start-ups. It outlines measures to promote the value of entrepreneurship, provide learning opportunities (and materials), and support young people who intend to set up their own business. It is a joint activity by the departments of education and enterprise and stakeholders have helped develop it. Such a strategy really works: the number of young people interested in setting up their own business has increased and in 2010 the proportion doing so was higher than the UK average.

Source: ReferNet UK.

4.3. Entrepreneurship

Eurobarometer has focused several times on citizens' opinions on entrepreneurship. To the 2011 Eurobarometer question (European Commission; The Gallup Organisation) 'would you like to set up your own business in the future', almost 43% said yes. Reasons for not starting one's own business

include too high risk (14.9%), the perception that setting up a business is too complicated (13.3%), inadequate entrepreneurship skills (6.8%) and no access to finance (6.6%). Table 17 gives an overview of recent trends in actions and policies that countries have pursued to address these barriers to entrepreneurship.

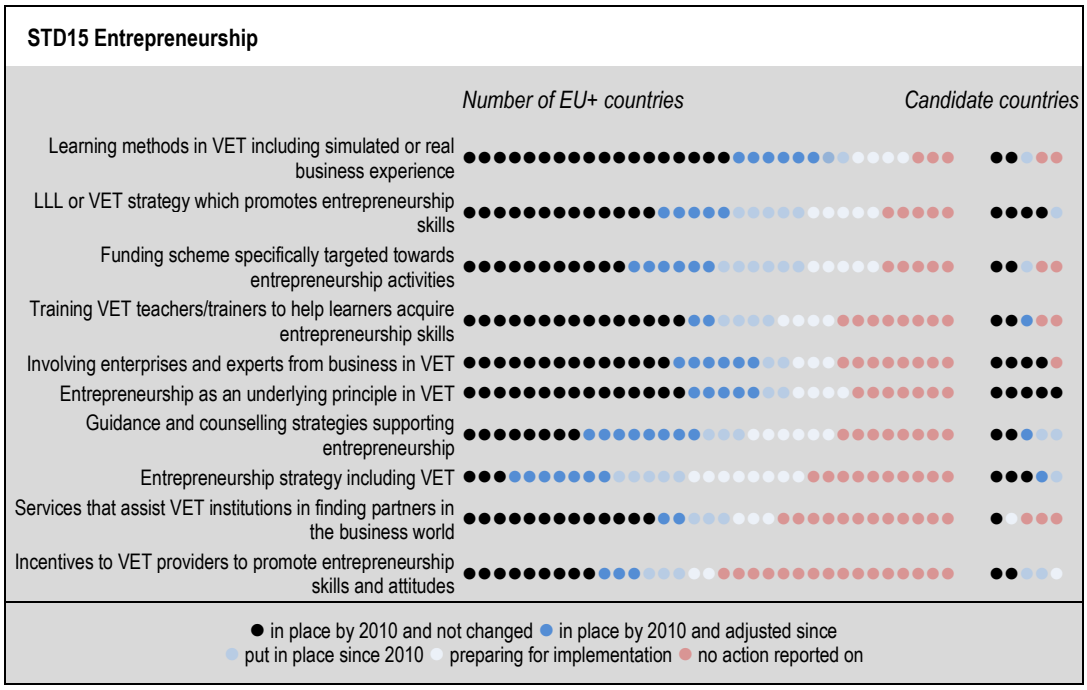
What is happening in Luxembourg?

With a little help from an expert – Mini-enterprises

Mini-enterprises keep pupils busy for a year and that year is a break from traditional classes. Instead of passively receiving information, pupils have to take responsibility and take decisions. They are guided by a teacher, who acts like a coach. Schools need external support to make mini-enterprises successful. In Luxembourg, a network of entrepreneur-advisors has been created. These experts participate at crucial moments, for instance when product choice decisions need to be taken.

Source: ReferNet Luxembourg.

Table 17. **State of play and progress towards STD15**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

By 2010, more than a third of the EU+ and almost all candidate countries had an LLL or VET strategy in place that promotes entrepreneurship skills; a third also had a funding scheme specifically targeted towards entrepreneurship

activities. Significant progress has been made since then through a range of new initiatives. Bulgaria included the development of entrepreneurial skills as a horizontal priority in the national LLL strategy for 2008-13. Estonia, Malta and Sweden emphasise entrepreneurship as an important key competence in curricula. The Lithuanian programme for the development of the adult education system includes a module on entrepreneurship. Iceland started to fund entrepreneurship in compulsory and upper secondary schools. Bulgaria introduced a scheme that supports the unemployed to become self-employed by offering entrepreneurship training. In Croatia, a 2010-14 Strategy for entrepreneurial learning has been adopted, introducing entrepreneurship as key competence in all forms, types and levels of education.

What is happening in Portugal?
Training entrepreneurs

Productivity increases, competitiveness and the development of the Portuguese economy crucially depend on the skills and capacities of entrepreneurs managing micro-business and SME. But just training is not enough. A Portuguese initiative developed management skills by combining management training with management counselling. How to convince entrepreneurs to take part? It turned out that giving participants priority access to support programmes targeting SMEs was a strong motivation.

Source: ReferNet Portugal.

In 2010 only 10 EU+ and four candidate countries had an entrepreneurship strategy that includes VET, but such strategies are quickly becoming more widespread. Germany launched a national business start-up strategy to foster entrepreneurial spirit in 2010. The Romanian strategy for the development of SMEs includes the development of a system for entrepreneurship education. A draft action plan for youth policy elaborates a genuine entrepreneurship strategy in Slovakia.

Some progress has also been made in anchoring entrepreneurship as an underlying principle in VET and involving enterprises and experts from business in VET, but in 25% of the countries neither of these options to promote entrepreneurship in VET exists. Next to more conventional ways, such as involvement in curricula and exams, other approaches to involving enterprises in VET include meetings between young learners and young entrepreneurs in the Belgian German Community, the Spanish school and business week, and the ambassadors for women entrepreneurship initiative which delivers lectures in Swedish VET institutions.

What is happening in Romania?
Who has the best business plan?

Romania is organising a business competition to stimulate entrepreneurial competence. It is held at local, country, regional and national level. Teams of students develop business ideas and present their work to a jury of school representatives, inspectors and social partners. Business plans are not always realistic, as students sometimes have difficulty understanding the economic environment and teachers do not always have the right training to support their students. Despite that, for the last four years, there have been eight winners at regional level and one national winner with promising business plans.

Source: ReferNet Romania.

Services to help VET find partners in the business world are in place in 18 EU+ countries and one candidate country as of 2012, but progress has been limited. Different actors are involved: local development agencies (Belgium), social partners (Denmark), sectoral councils (Latvia), industry chambers (Lithuania, Slovenia), the development agency (Malta) and a university enterprise network (for further education in the UK (England, Wales)). Incentives to VET providers are not used much to promote entrepreneurship skills in VET and progress has been slow: in 2012, almost half of the countries did not have them in place. Good examples of incentives are competitions innovation and business ventures open to VET providers in Spain and Lithuania.

Adapted learning methods are important for entrepreneurship and those that include simulated or real business experience were already a feature of VET in most countries in 2010. Since the 1990s, training, junior or mini-firms or production schools have become a feature of some VET programmes in about half of the countries. Increasingly, e-portals and e-learning programmes are being used. Recently, five countries have started to prepare new initiatives. In Denmark, a foundation which develops entrepreneurship teaching courses and learning methods was launched in 2010. France introduced business projects in vocational baccalaureates where students manage fictive companies and in Lithuania, entrepreneurship modules that integrate business experience are being developed. The ‘enterprising schools’ pilot project in Poland introduces innovative entrepreneurship tools that bring virtual games into the classroom.

What is happening in the UK (Northern Ireland)?

Made, not born

Northern Ireland's renewed Skills Strategy 'Success through skills - Transforming futures' (launched in 2011) aims to upskill the workforce as Northern Ireland has a comparatively large share of low-qualified people and many graduates from higher education move away. The strategy includes the 'Made not Born programme', initiated by the Department for Employment and Learning. The programme encourages development of leadership and management skills and features coaching and mentoring for business leaders and entrepreneurs. A campaign held in 2010-11 featured multimedia resources, roadshows, masterclasses, leadership development, and entry into the management programme. Management and leadership skills are developed in four week off-the-job training combined with a 20 week placement where participants complete a work-based business Improvement project with a host employer.

Source: ReferNet UK.

Since 2010, four countries have introduced and another four have been preparing teacher training on entrepreneurship. Germany and Romania have set up dedicated websites to support teacher professional development. Portugal created a training benchmark for entrepreneurship and business creation, and Slovakia introduced several accredited entrepreneurship programmes for teachers. Lithuania and Finland are developing methodological guidelines on transferring entrepreneurship skills to students, and Norway has launched a digital resource bank that provides good practice examples of teaching methods focused on entrepreneurship.

Several countries recognise that entrepreneurship guidance and counselling drives business success. Austria, Spain and the UK (Wales) use ICT to assess entrepreneurship attitudes and motivation. The state-regions agreement on measures combating unemployment in Italy supports guidance and counselling that promotes entrepreneurship. Portugal is preparing online entrepreneurship counselling. The French business creation agency introduced an action plan to coordinate the provision of information and support for self-employed. In the Netherlands and Spain, chambers of commerce promote entrepreneurship counselling. Eight countries, however, did not report on any action to promote guidance and counselling for aspiring entrepreneurs.

CHAPTER 5.

Inclusive VET: equity, social cohesion and active citizenship

This chapter assesses the state of play in 2010 and reviews progress that countries have made during 2010-12 to make IVET and CVET more inclusive and cohesive. It considers short-term deliverables 16-19.

Box 4. **Short-term deliverables dealing with inclusive IVET and CVET**

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

Bruges communiqué strategic objectives (SO) 6

SO6 Realising inclusive IVET and CVET

Short-term deliverables

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

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

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

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

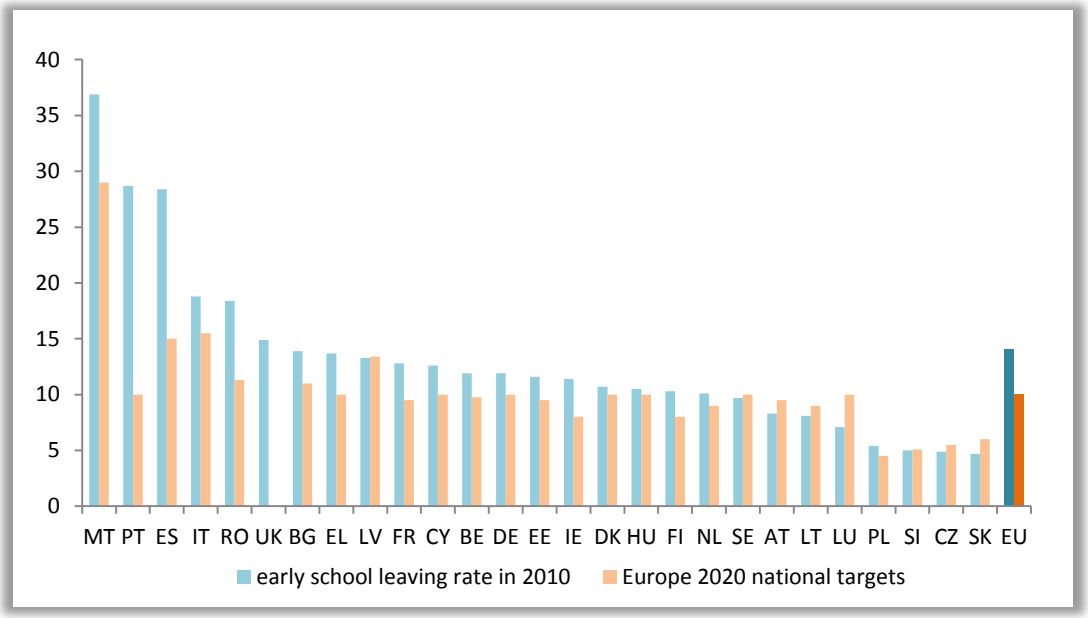
5.1. Early leaving from education and training

Early school leaving in the EU remains an important problem. Although it decreased from 17.6% in 2000 to 13.5% in 2011, Europe had clearly missed its target of reaching 10% by 2010 (Eurostat). Early leaving from education and training without effective measures afterwards makes young people vulnerable to getting trapped in low-skill/low-pay jobs or unemployment.

Figure 9 gives an overview of early leaving from education and training in the EU in 2010. It displays the percentage of the population aged 18-24 with, at most, lower secondary education that is not in further education or training alongside each Member State's national target for 2020. The share of those leaving education and training early varies widely between European countries,

ranging from well over 25% in Malta, Portugal and Spain to around 5% in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia.

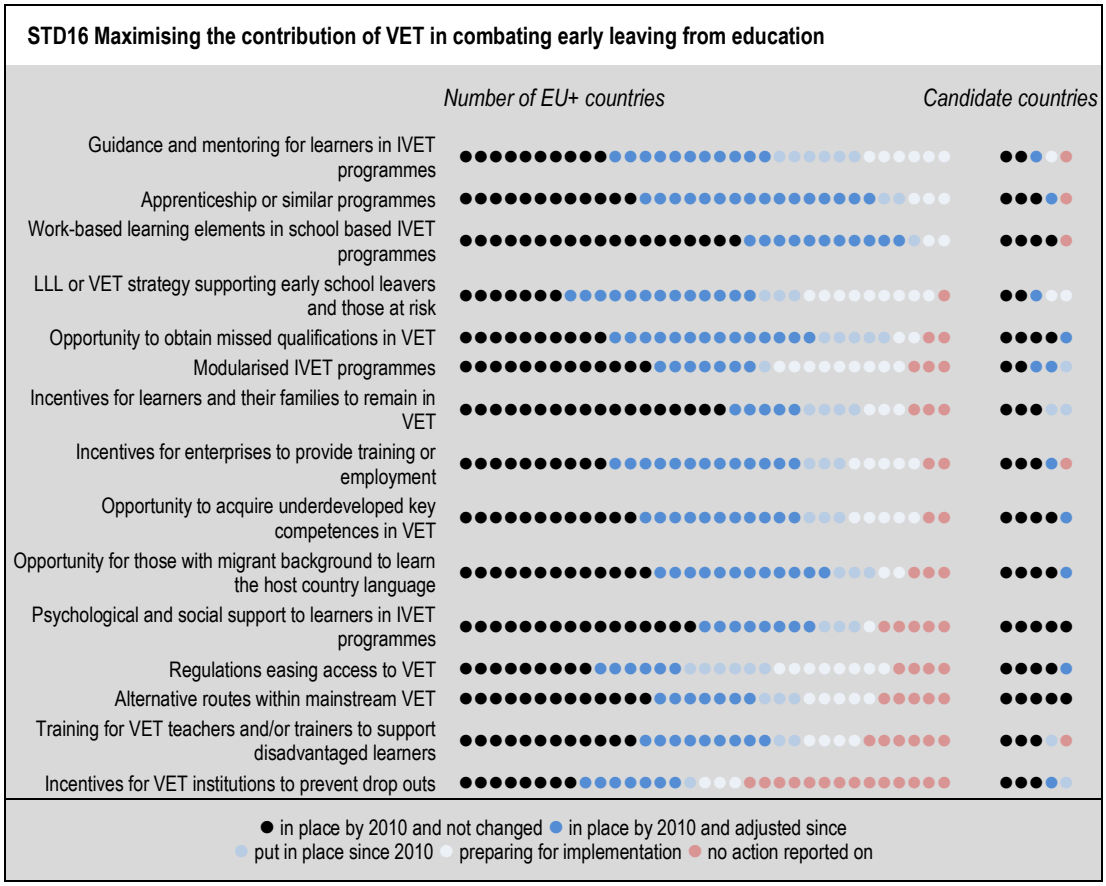
Figure 9. **Early school leaving rates in the EU in 2010 and Europe 2020 national targets (in %)**



NB: No national target for the UK available.
Source: Eurostat, labour force survey; data extracted 6.8.2012.

Table 18 shows that countries take action on several fronts to tackle early leaving from education and training through VET. Initiatives evolve dynamically: many of the measures and initiatives already in place by 2010 have been adjusted since then. Candidate countries have reinforced their measures since 2010 and combined them with language policies and initiatives to alleviate poverty. About two thirds of the EU+ countries had a lifelong learning or VET strategy in place in 2012 that supports those who left early or those at risk of doing so. Nine further countries are preparing to implement such a strategy. Strategies focus on different aspects. Estonia and Latvia focus on improving VET opportunities for different target groups and the development of support systems. A French law strengthens monitoring youth at risk and introduces personal action plans to return to school or working life. The UK focuses on creating new apprenticeship, training and work experience places.

Table 18. **State of play and progress towards STD16**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

In addition to apprenticeship or similar programmes, work-based learning elements in school-based VET, and flexible training (modules), which can motivate young people to stay in education, all countries provide guidance and mentoring for learners in IVET programmes (see Section 3.4. for further information on guidance and counselling).

In 2012, psychological and social support to support learners at risk of leaving IVET early is available in most EU+ countries and all candidate countries. The countries that took action between 2010 and 2012 to increase assistance to learners did so by expanding support capacity at schools, providing more personalised services or upgrading support by involving more professional staff (e.g. psychologists). At Slovenian and Czech VET schools, teachers with a guidance role and psychologists cooperate to support at-risk learners. Increasingly learners, notably apprentices, have access to mentoring and coaching (Germany, Latvia, Austria, the UK (England and Wales)).

What is happening in Finland?
Faster and more flexible

Finland's high rate of population ageing drives the need to shorten VET completion times and reduce drop-out. A comprehensive programme includes an application system that eases entry into VET, supports the opportunity to complete both general and vocational upper secondary programmes and safeguards adequate resources for guidance and counselling. The aims are to ensure that 64% of those starting in 2011 complete their qualification on time and to reduce the drop-out rate in VET to 6% by 2014.

Source: ReferNet Finland.

To reduce early leaving from education and training, many countries also pay specific attention to those with a migrant background. In 2010, they had the opportunity to learn the host country language in 25 EU+ countries and all candidate countries; five EU+ countries have introduced these opportunities since 2010 or are preparing to introduce them. Initiatives include an NGO in Slovakia that supports language learning by stimulating contact between migrants and the majority population and a Norwegian grant scheme for developing teaching aids for learners with a migrant background. Greece offers migrants over 16 language and cultural/history training which gives access to official language exams.

Access to VET is gradually increasing through new regulations. Less than half of the countries had such regulations in 2010 but, since then, many have introduced them or are preparing to do so. The German-speaking community in Belgium has put in place a preparatory apprenticeship year leading to graduation from secondary school. Hungary introduces bridge programmes for low achievers and those who would otherwise not complete compulsory education. Romania changes the design of IVET pathways with the aim of adapting them better to student needs and aspirations.

Alternative or bridge programmes for the young who are unlikely to find or have not found a training place embrace career management skills as one of their key features (e.g. Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Luxembourg, Romania, Turkey, the United Kingdom). Together with basic skills training, coaching, mentoring and psychological support, they form 'packages' that countries tend to use to reduce early leaving from education and training and youth unemployment.

What is happening in Sweden?
New introductory programmes

The earlier individual programme was replaced by five introductory programmes in 2011. These are a good foundation for further education and give learners who are not eligible for a national programme adapted education that leads to establishment on the labour market. They remedy missing subjects or insufficient grades, are sometimes tailor-made for individual learners, or in the case of immigrant youth focus on learning Swedish to progress to upper secondary or other forms of education. Introduction programmes are full-time and follow a plan that is determined by the organiser. Individual plans support learning and the programmes lead to an upper secondary school certificate.

Source: ReferNet Sweden.

Alternative routes within mainstream VET, which can be options for early leavers or those at risk of doing so, are increasingly a feature in national VET systems but most of the countries that took action since 2010 are still preparing to put these options fully in place. In the Netherlands, opportunities to enter VET at several moments during the year are expanding. The UK (Wales) is introducing a new one-year VET programme for 16-24 year olds to acquire foundations skills for progression into full apprenticeship.

What is happening in Norway?
New opportunities in VET

'New opportunities' is a national initiative aiming to increase successful completion of upper secondary education and training from 70 to 75% and reduce the high drop-out in VET. There are several strands: intensified follow-up of the learners with the poorest results; development of basic skills; teacher networks for teaching innovation; summer courses or jobs for pupils at risk of dropping out; and improved collaboration to help young people who are neither in school, nor employed, return to school or apprenticeship. The initiative is showing clear results: lower drop-out rate, fewer learners in risk categories, and more successful VET learners in most counties.

Source: ReferNet Norway.

Focusing on key competences is a clear area of progress. By 2010, a large majority of countries provided opportunities to acquire key competences to help learners remain in education and training or reintegrate successfully. Nine more, including one candidate country, have taken action since then. New initiatives include grants for apprentices to learn a language abroad, in Belgium (FR), VET programmes that help students develop key competences and lead to a

secondary education certificate in Spain, and the integration of key competences in IVET curricula and compensation classes in VET in Poland, which develop missing language and communication skills.

Virtually all countries offer opportunities to obtain missed qualifications in VET. These are often linked to two types of initiatives: second chance options or programmes (Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, the UK) and validation and recognition schemes (Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia).

Modularisation enables learners in VET to acquire a qualification in more flexible ways. Almost all countries that have taken steps to modularise IVET since 2010 are not yet at the stage of full implementation. Several countries have put in place laws or regulations for modularisation (e.g. Bulgaria, Estonia, Luxembourg, Malta) while others have started developing modularised VET programmes (e.g. Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia).

What is happening in Germany?
Joining forces

Although the number of young people without a training place is decreasing, many still struggle to find an apprenticeship contract. A 'national pact', initiated by the Education ministry together with the federal employment agency and social partners in 2004, aims to prevent unnecessary waiting and helps learners manage the transition from general education to VET. The renewed pact of 2010, which also includes the regions (Länder), aims to create synergies between different measures and outlines the tasks of the various parties in improving coordination. It helps ensure that learners are fit for VET and that every young person willing and able to learn can find a training place or an opportunity to acquire a qualification. Key features include assessing learner competences and introductory programmes supported by mentoring. Some of the programmes also provide an introductory qualification that can be accredited towards regular apprenticeship.

Source: ReferNet Germany.

The use of incentives for learners and their families to remain in VET are widespread. In most countries, these incentives take the form of allowances, grants, scholarships, etc., which are sometimes linked to attendance or performance. Some countries use other types of incentive: Bulgaria aims to stimulate learners to remain in VET by ensuring that it is of a high quality; in Denmark there is a proposal to lower unemployment benefits for younger people to the level of student grants to make staying in education and training a more attractive option; some Spanish VET providers have prize draws for those

finishing the training programme; Lithuanian VET schools provide large scale hostel accommodation for learners outside the region; and Malta has increased the number of childcare centres to make it easier for young parents to remain in VET and obtain a qualification.

What is happening in France?

Out-of-the-box thinking to support innovation in educating youth

Addressing significant early school leaving and high unemployment among young people in France sometimes requires unconventional approaches. A fund that promotes experimentation was established in 2009 and finances over 380 experimental projects. Practice has shown that experimentation within clear limits can contribute to knowledge about what measures are effective and inform evaluation practice.

Source: ReferNet France.

A large majority of countries support their efforts to retain young people by giving enterprises incentives to provide training or employment. Many offer incentives to firms in the form of tax deductions, subsidies or grants, and bonuses to cover the costs of training apprentices. Some have a different approach. Sweden funds companies to develop apprenticeship training and the UK (England) started piloting incentives to employers to develop their own training solutions. Germany plans to simplify training profiles, curricula and standards to make it easier for enterprises to start offering training.

What is happening in Denmark?

More training places needed

To make sure that, by 2015, 95% of youth will complete at least secondary education, the Danish government is promoting new training places, which have been in short supply. In 2011, 9 000 extra training places were created and bonuses to enterprises creating them were increased. The government created 2 200 places in the public sector and 1 500 places in colleges. Creating new training places does not only help young people to successfully complete school. It also helps to make IVET more attractive. Many young people considering IVET do not choose it as they fear not being able to find a suitable training place.

Source: ReferNet Denmark.

Although many countries are taking action on several fronts, incentives for VET institutions to prevent drop-outs remain relatively unused: 14 countries do

not have them and progress since 2010 has been limited. Several types of incentive are possible. Funding for VET based on filled study places (e.g. the Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia) acts as an incentive to retain as many learners as possible. The Netherlands makes funding for specific early school leaving measures dependent on performance and reward schemes for VET providers based on the success of learners in finding relevant stable jobs are being discussed in the UK (England).

What is happening in Greece?
Giving extra attention

The Greek education ministry has designated geographical areas as educational priority areas. These areas are supported with plans to reduce failure and early leaving from education and training to fit their situation and promote social inclusion. A pilot took place in the three priority areas in the Attica region. How well does targeting the needs of learners locally at different education and training levels work? A planned follow-up and evaluation will give more answers.

Source: ReferNet Greece.

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

With lower participation in learning, the low-skilled and other groups that face barriers to learning risk exclusion. The combination of jobs becoming more knowledge-intensive and insufficient learning opportunities makes these groups vulnerable to becoming trapped in low-skilled jobs, low employability and an increased risk of unemployment.

What is happening in Cyprus?
Tackling the crisis: preventing unemployment

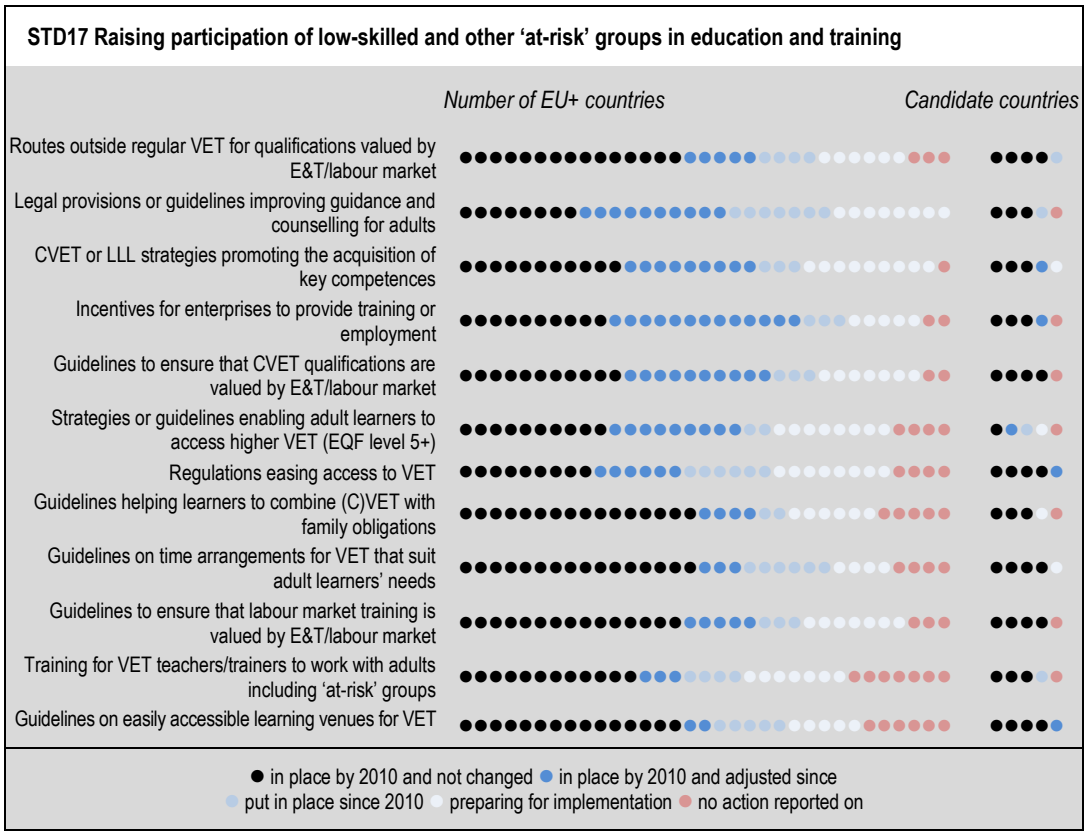
The action plan to tackle the negative impact of the economic crisis has three pillars: preventing unemployment, employability, and employment and training. Actions include on-the-job training programmes, training for the unemployed, ESF cofunded schemes for unemployed and economically inactive women, and job placement schemes. The job placement schemes in particular were very successful. Contact with the world of work (work placement, traineeships) will be promoted in all measures in the action plan.

Source: ReferNet Cyprus.

Table 19 gives an overview of the choices that countries are making to help low-skilled and other groups at risk to return to learning and upgrade their skills.

Since 2010, countries have progressed significantly in opening up learning possibilities for the low-skilled and other at-risk groups. Northern Ireland's renewed skills strategy, for example, aims to upskill the large share of low-qualified people in its workforce. This includes improving their basic skills.

Table 19 **State of play and progress towards STD17**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

What is happening in Slovenia?

Stepping up adult participation in learning in Slovenia

Although participation in adult learning in Slovenia is higher than the EU-27 average, as in other countries, low-skilled and older people are lagging behind and have been hit hard by the crisis. In response to increasing unemployment, the government has reinforced its measures to promote adult learning. Funding earmarked to help the unemployed has increased (from 35% of the budget for adult learning in 2009 to 44% in 2010). The 2011 white paper on education proposed measures to introduce the right for low-skilled people to upgrade their educational attainment to at least ISCED level 3B. Programmes include basic skills training and validation, and exemption opportunities to make progression easier. The 2011-12 national reform programme includes measures to reduce educational deficits and promote adult learning. Learning is tailored to adult needs:

- interviews and competence assessment are held at the outset;
- individual learning plans take prior knowledge, skills and competence into account;
- exams can be modularised and accumulated instead of taking account only of final exams

Source: ReferNet Slovenia.

However, much remains to be done in the coming years as, for many of the available options in Table 19, a lot of countries are still in the preparation phase. This is the case in particular for CVET or lifelong learning strategies promoting the acquisition of key competences (see Section 2.3.4.), legal provisions or guidelines improving guidance for adults, and regulations easing access to VET.

What is happening in Spain?

Using VET to combat the crisis

The Spanish national programme for qualification and improving employability of young people under 30 years combines training and counselling to improve labour market perspectives. The training provides participants with the skills that correspond to the realities of the new requirements of the production system, and is focused on growing sectors. With a budget of over EUR 85 million, 60 projects, and more than 33 000 participants, the programme is a major undertaking.

Source: ReferNet Spain.

It is the aim of 24 EU+ and the five candidate countries to stimulate the participation of low-skilled and other at-risk groups through routes to qualification outside regular VET that are valued by education and training and on the labour market. In Denmark there is a proposal to allow young people to complete a course at a school of production. In Malta, a new private international vocational

college providing recognised full-time VET has opened. Portugal is introducing short alternative courses that lead to partial qualifications through a new regulation. Flexible training programmes in Montenegro last two or three years. The law on VET stipulates that the VET qualification obtained in informal education may be recognised.

What is happening in Estonia?
VET after drop-out

Estonia has a CVET programme for former drop-outs, helping them to graduate from VET. Implementing the programme showed that a targeted approach is important for success. First, drop-outs are not interested in rejoining the specialty they have left in the past, which means that a wide choice of study options and retraining should be available. Second, former drop-outs do not enjoy studying with young VET learners in the same class, but prefer separate study groups. Estonia addressed both issues in 2011.

Source: ReferNet Estonia.

Most countries undertaking action in this area focus on validation/recognition of earlier experience leading to qualifications (e.g. Belgium (FL), the Czech Republic, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Slovakia). Although the need for guidance services to accompany validation of non-formal and informal learning is widely recognised, measures to improve guidance for adults rarely refer to this issue. Available information suggests that this support mostly still needs to be developed (for further information on guidance see Section 3.4.).

What is happening in Malta?
Acquainting unemployed youth with work works

Malta's youth employment programme introduces 16-24 year old job seekers, who have not worked before, to work environments. Individualised support is crucial. Personalised attention turned out to be the driving force behind the willingness and enthusiasm to learn. The majority of youths participating in the programme found employment after completing the training.

Source: ReferNet Malta.

Accessibility to learning venues for VET is improving, with several countries taking action since 2010. In some countries, legal provisions to ensure access to VET for disabled learners are in place. Examples of new initiatives that promote access in general are ongoing discussions in Belgium (FL) on mobile training

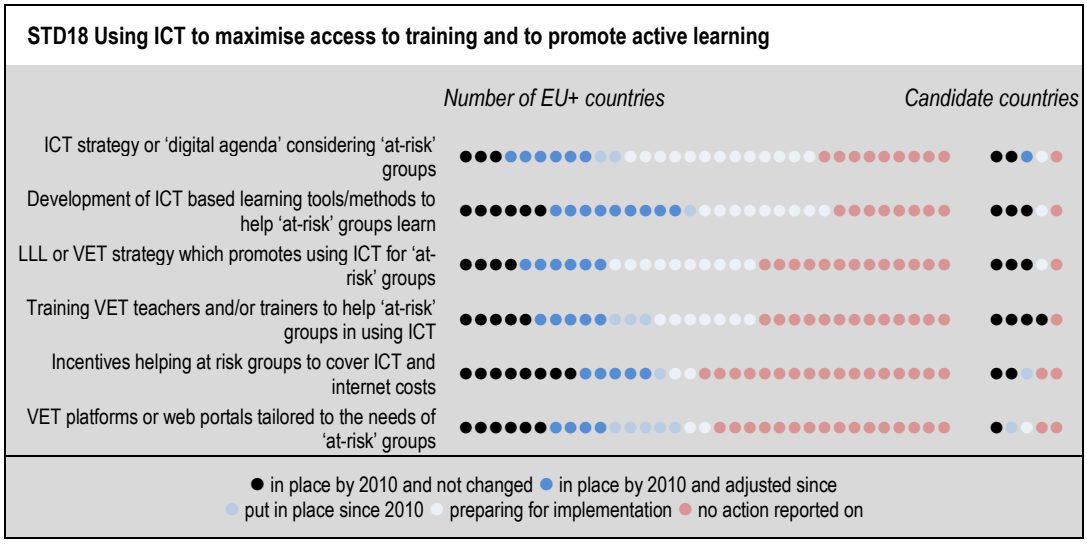
centres, legislation enabling each education institution to provide IVET and CVET (Lithuania) and VET school networks acting as regional lifelong learning centres (Czech Republic). Portugal has started a project that counters barriers to physical access to VET by developing and implementing distance learning in lifelong learning. Six EU+ countries, however, did not have accessibility guidelines in 2010 and have undertaken no action since then.

An area where seven countries did not report on action since 2010 is training for VET teachers and trainers to work with adults and at-risk groups, but some progress is visible. Italy is preparing teacher training focused on working with the Roma, Sinti and Caminanti minorities. The Czech Republic adopted a national action plan for inclusive education. Lithuania started to develop further in-service training for teachers to deal with at-risk groups, while the national curriculum for Norwegian VET teachers states that they should be able to work with people from different backgrounds.

5.3. Using ICT to support groups at risk

The Bruges communiqué recognises the power of using ICT to increase access to training and to promote active learning among at-risk groups. Table 20 shows that in 2010, only a minority of countries had policies, strategies or initiatives in place to use ICT to maximise access to training for at-risk groups. While there has been some progress since then, most countries that took action have not yet reached the stage of complete implementation.

Table 20. **State of play and progress towards STD18**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

ICT strategies in place by 2010 or introduced since then either target at-risk groups directly or implicitly consider them by promoting digital inclusion of all citizens. Some strategies (e.g. Austria, Luxembourg, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) address digital exclusion by making internet access easier and more affordable. Many LLL or VET strategies that promote digital inclusion for at-risk groups focus on promoting ICT/e-literacy for all (e.g. Belgium (FL), Bulgaria, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria), or on equipping the education system with modern ICT technology (Croatia, the Czech Republic, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, Sweden, Turkey).

What is happening in Poland?
Lamplighters showing the way

Research has shown that it is not equipment and access, but the low level of knowledge about the internet and its advantages that is a key barrier to use it for people 50 years or over. This reduces opportunities for upgrading and hampers career opportunities. A new campaign relies on a network of 2 600 volunteers (called lamplighters) that promote the internet among older people and show how to use it, especially in rural areas and small towns. Lamplighters can win grants to organise local internet training.

Source: ReferNet Poland.

ICT-based learning tools and methods for learners at-risk and using the web to reach them is far from common. Among countries that do develop ICT-based learning tools and methods for at-risk groups, examples of initiatives are a website that allows users to have any computer text read out and exercises for learners with poor literacy/numeracy skills in the education web portal in Denmark; e-courses for people with special needs in Estonia; e-learning programmes for the unemployed in Spain; locally developed ICT tools and resources for special needs education in Finland; and e-books for VET that can be adapted to learners with special needs in the UK. Austria has a multilingual education and career portal for the migrant community.

What is happening in the UK (England)?

E-books and open resources helping at risk learners

E-books and open education resources encourage the use of digital materials for initial and continuing VET (including work-based learning). They make off-campus access to learning systems easier and help address the specific needs of learners with disabilities. Since 2011, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the education advisory service on technologies for inclusion have concluded partnerships to encourage take-up of mainstream and specific technologies to assist disadvantaged and disabled learners. Competitions stimulate the development of software and applications. Piloting e-learning content and digital resources helps teachers and trainers support learners. The material is available free of charge and can be adapted to suit different contexts and needs.

Source: ReferNet the UK.

Norway mandates universal accessibility of web portals by law. Lithuania has a long tradition of free public internet access points and prioritises the unemployed, disabled and rural area residents in its recently started e-training for citizens' initiative. In Hungary, there is a discussion on individualising learning for Roma and migrant youth using ICT.

Not using the possibilities that ICT can offer to support groups at risk also reflects in the little attention paid to training VET teachers and trainers. In 2012, 13 countries did not report on any teacher training initiatives in this field. Examples of countries that did report on such training are Bulgaria (a new training scheme for pedagogic specialists working with special needs learners), Estonia (training for VET teachers on creating e-courses for people with special needs), and France (development plan for the use of ICT in schools foreseeing each institution having a teacher in charge of digital pedagogy to advise on the training needs of colleagues).

What is happening in Latvia?

E-skills: here, there and everywhere

A plan to promote e-skills in Latvia targets several at-risk groups. To reach them all, e-skills training is available in many different settings: the unemployed learn them in day training centres, retired citizens at social care institutions. Local government staff are trained as well and there is a pilot project offering e-skills to prisoners. The consultants working with at-risk groups are not forgotten: they learn in one-stop-agencies to keep abreast with the latest developments.

Source: ReferNet Latvia.

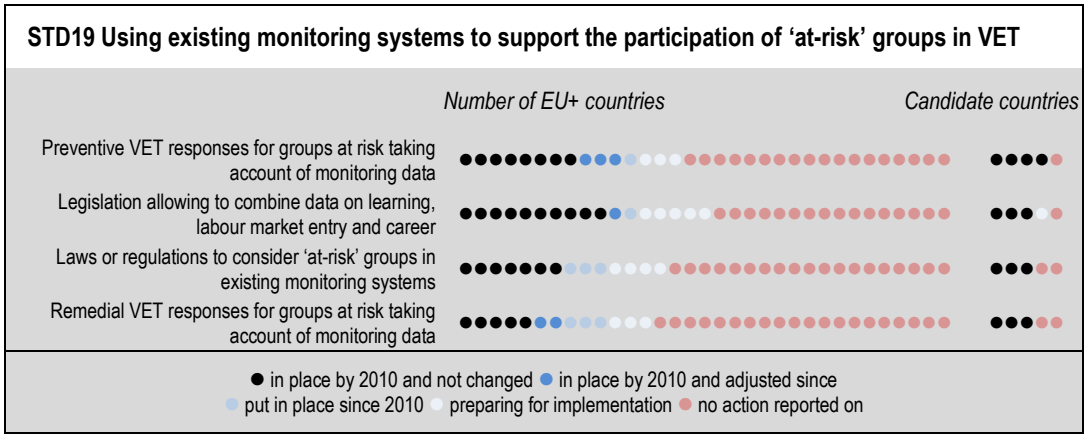
5.4. Monitor groups at risk to support their VET participation

Monitoring is also an important element in supporting VET participation for groups at risk. Monitoring not only identifies which groups are participating least in VET, but can also provide more background on the reasons for this in terms of learning problems or barriers that groups at risk face.

Table 21 gives an overview of what countries have done to support the participation of at-risk groups in VET using their existing monitoring systems. It is obvious this is not taking place in most countries and progress since 2010 is limited. In several countries, privacy legislation may be an obstacle to such monitoring, while, in others, the legal basis for monitoring at risk groups is not in place.

Examples of countries that do monitor at-risk groups are France, which implemented an interministerial data exchange system to prevent early leaving from education and training and support those leaving without qualifications, and Finland, which includes at-risk groups in its national monitoring system. In some countries, legislation allows combining data on learning and the labour market (e.g. Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Finland, the UK). In Belgium (Brussels) a cooperation agreement between employment services and VET providers enables linking data to improve knowledge about learning paths. In Montenegro, 'MONSTAT' data are taken into account in policy-making and in decisions on employment programmes and adjustments to VET, such as special guidance, adapted training programmes and the second chance project.

Table 21 **State of play and progress towards STD19**



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and ETF.

Countries planning new initiatives could see the benefit of using monitoring data to develop measures to prevent early school leaving already taking place in Belgium (FL, FR) and Germany. Remedial approaches based on monitoring data in Sweden require municipalities to follow up young people not in school to offer them alternatives; the UK (Northern Ireland) is currently implementing a strategy for NEET based on monitoring data.

Countries that take action in the coming years to expand the use of monitoring systems will profit, as they will have much better evidence to design and implement appropriate VET responses for at-risk groups. This will benefit the people concerned but also contributes to a better and more effective use of resources in VET.

CHAPTER 6.

Conclusions and policy messages

6.1. Key areas of progress

The analysis in this report shows that actions taken to achieve the short-term deliverables in the Bruges communiqué focused on four main areas ([26]):

(a) EQF/NQF implementation;
(b) EQAVET;
(c) preventing and addressing early leaving from education and training;
(d) work-based learning.

Most countries did not start from scratch as they have been working for a decade on common priorities for VET. For the majority of STDs, a series of policy initiatives were already in place by 2010; in many cases, policies and measures are not new. They extend, amend and complement initiatives that were already in place.

The trend towards work-based learning was already apparent. In addressing early leaving, countries have placed the emphasis on supporting transition into VET from general education or from being neither in a job nor in education and training (NEET). This may not only be linked to the economic crisis, but also to the fact that the benchmark for early school leaving had not been met by 2010.

6.2. Focus on synergies between tools and principles

Although European tools and principles have strong political backing, there are still challenges ahead.

While NQFs have developed dynamically, not all include all the qualifications that can be acquired at all education and training levels and sectors. To succeed, they need to be maintained and updated and become visible to citizens and labour market actors.

Work on NQFs has increased debates on the value and/or parity of esteem of qualifications acquired within different parts of education and training and

([26]) These areas are in line with what countries planned to prioritise in spring 2011. In a survey among Directors General for VET by the European Commission, countries had been asked to indicate their priorities. Fourteen Member States plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey and UEAPME responded.

outside formal learning. While this debate has drawn attention to the validation of non-formal and informal learning, few countries have comprehensive and well-developed validation systems in place. Where they exist, take-up is still low.

Guidance and counselling will need to be reinforced to support the use of validation. Links to (other) recognition practices still need strengthening. Validation and ECVET could contribute to making education and training systems more flexible. To be trusted, validation processes need to be credible, i.e. they need to be quality assured.

Countries are currently developing quality assurance approaches with a focus on VET providers: by end-2015 they are expected to have devised a national quality assurance framework. Increasing use of validation, and integrating non-formally and informally acquired qualifications into NQFs, may lead to increased demand for quality-assured qualifications and standards.

Although national readiness and commitment to apply ECVET has increased since 2010, most countries have given priority to NQFs. Progress on ECVET has been rather slow and several countries question its added value.

If validation, credit transfer and qualification frameworks cover only parts of education and training, they will reproduce the hierarchical structures they are meant to bridge.

While each of the tools and principles has its own purpose, they need to interact to benefit citizens fully. To do so, their implementation should be (more) coherent. Involving all stakeholders at all stages is crucial. Currently the common tools and principles are monitored individually but a collective approach may be more suitable.

6.3. Weaknesses

This section focuses on STDs and policy options for which many countries have not reported having taken action before or after 2010. These conclusions are meant to inspire countries by pointing out possible actions that may help them to achieve their goals. Taking into account context, national characteristics and VET systems, countries themselves are best able to judge whether particular actions or initiatives fit their situation and can help to support progress.

6.3.1. Monitoring

Information on the transition of VET graduates and their later employability can help increase the labour market relevance of VET and help accommodate the needs of at-risk groups.

Many countries are already collecting data on graduate transitions from VET to work but longer-term follow-up is less frequent and the use of information from monitoring to inform VET programmes, standards and curricula, or to adjust learning methods, appears limited. Monitoring groups at risk and their labour market performance – and the use of this information to provide VET tailored to their needs - is also not yet a reality in many countries. This correlates with the findings that outcome indicators (e.g. satisfaction of individuals and employers, graduate occupations, graduate employment shares, success rate of vulnerable groups) are used less frequently than others as part of national work on quality assurance in VET (see Section 2.2.4.).

Considering that measures targeting at-risk groups, are high on national policy agendas, this is surprising. However, privacy legislation could be an obstacle to combining different types of information to establish feedback mechanisms that link labour market entry and VET graduate career paths.

Even in countries with established monitoring systems that do not face obstacles in privacy legislation, more can be done to ensure that they systematically inform VET programmes, standards and curricula or to adjust learning methods or support. More systematically considering at-risk groups in monitoring, and new or improved funding schemes, could help to encourage VET providers to make more and better use of graduate transition data.

6.3.2. Incentives

Incentives in VET have to be judged on their merits in particular contexts and country settings, but they may be powerful motivators for change in cases where regulation or legislation is not the best option. Few countries reported on incentives encouraging partnerships for creativity and innovation, VET provider networks for cost-effective use of technology, public-private partnerships for state-of-the-art technology in VET, and cooperation between VET, employment services and social partners.

Few also reported on incentives for VET providers to promote entrepreneurship or to prevent early leaving from education and training. As a range of other actions are taken in these areas, incentives could complement them. While additional funding may not be feasible in times of budgetary constraints and may not always create the intended effect, non-monetary incentives could be considered. These could, for instance, include awards or performance criteria for external or self-evaluation within providers' quality assurance systems.

6.3.3. Teachers and trainers

Teachers and trainers do not only implement policies but also drive change and progress in VET. For the period up to 2014, the Bruges communiqué includes only one STD set out for action at country level that partly relates to VET teachers. However, their competence and professional development are also crucial to several other STDs. It should be a concern that this synthesis of progress shows limited training opportunities in VET staff core competences, like helping learners acquire entrepreneurship skills and working with adults and at-risk groups. Teacher and trainer development could contribute significantly to achieving the related STDs.

6.4. The challenge

The challenge for the coming years is to keep the momentum. Many of the initiatives introduced since 2010 are still in the preparation phase and need to be fully implemented to become new sources of progress in the coming years. In times of crisis, and increasing pressure on public budgets, this is not straightforward. It requires innovative leadership, a focus on ‘doing more with less’ and a vision that recognises that strong VET systems are drivers of future growth and prosperity in Europe.

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Annex 1

ECVET coordination points, EQF coordination points, EQAVET national reference points

Country	ECVET coordination points	EQF coordination points	EQAVET national reference points
AT	tbc	❍*	❍*
BE (FL)	❍	●	●
BE (FR)	❍	❍	To be appointed
BG	❍	●	●
CH		❍	
CY	●	●	●
CZ	●	●	●
DE	❍*	❍	❍*
DK	tbc	❍	❍
EE	❍	❍	To be appointed
EL	●	●	●
ES	●	●	●
FI	●	●	●
FR	❍	❍	To be appointed
HR		❍	
HU	❍	❍	❍
IE	❍	●	●
IS	●	●	To be appointed
IT	tbc	●	●
LT	●	❍	●
LU	●	●	●
LV	tbc	❍	To be appointed
MT	❍*	●*	●
NL		❍	❍
NO	tbc	❍	❍
PL		❍	to be appointed
PT	●	●	❍
RO	●	❍	●
SE	❍	❍	❍
SI	●	●	●
SK	●	❍	●
TR		❍	
UK (England)	❍	❍	❍
UK (N.Ireland)	●	●	❍
UK (Scotland)	●	●	❍
UK (Wales)	❍	●	●

❍ National coordination or reference point.
● Same institution acts as national coordination/reference point.
* Different institution, but under the same roof.

Source: Cedefop ECVET monitoring, EQAVET secretariat survey, EQF European Commission.

Annex 2

Acronyms and definitions

Country codes

BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CZ	Czech Republic
DK	Denmark
DE	Germany
EE	Estonia
IE	Ireland
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FR	France
IT	Italy
CY	Cyprus
LV	Latvia
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
HU	Hungary
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands

AT	Austria
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
FI	Finland
SE	Sweden
UK	United Kingdom

NO	Norway
CH	Switzerland
HR	Croatia
IS	Iceland
ME	Montenegro
(to be defined)	former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
RS	Serbia
TR	Turkey

Institutions and organisations

ETF	European Training Foundation
Eurostat	statistical authority of the European Union
Eurydice	European network to inform on education systems and policies in Europe
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
ReferNet	Cedefop's European network of reference and expertise in VET

Others

CLIL	content and language integrated learning
ELGPN	European lifelong guidance policy network
EQAVET	European quality assurance reference framework for vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
ECVET	European credit system for vocational education and training
EU+	EU Member States, Norway and Iceland
NQF	national qualifications framework
STD	short-term deliverable

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

Trends in VET policy in Europe 2010-12

Progress towards the Bruges communiqué

Luxembourg:
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Trends in VET policy in Europe 2010-12

Progress towards the Bruges communiqué

European countries have set themselves 22 specific goals by 2014 to support their long-term vision for vocational education and training (VET). This report is a first step in understanding progress by mid-2012 towards these goals, endorsed in 2010 in the Bruges communiqué to help achieve the Europe 2020 agenda. Attention has clearly focused on helping young people remain in, and return to, education and training through work-based learning routes. Building on their joint work in the last decade, countries have advanced in setting up qualifications frameworks and devising approaches to assure quality in VET, but much work is still in the planning stage. More attention to the professional development of VET staff, better monitoring of VET labour market outcomes, and considering incentives where appropriate, could help progress in the coming years.

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