



In the finishing straight: From Copenhagen to Bordeaux



Towards a European VET area

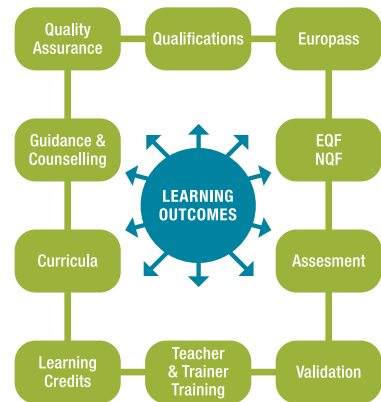
Vocational education and training (VET) is crucial to Europe's efforts to reposition itself in the global economy and respond to the social challenges posed by ageing societies. To provide the knowledge and skills base for Europe to prosper, European ministers from 32 countries, the European Commission and European social partners agreed a policy agenda for VET in the Copenhagen process in 2002.

Reviews of the process every two years have underlined the focus on VET's quality, attractiveness, good governance, and efforts to meet target dates to implement common European principles and tools. Countries have worked on these areas emphasising equity and relevance to the labour market. Cedefop's analysis and countries' self-assessment show a closer alignment of national priorities and the European agenda in 2008. Although progress varies, a European VET area is emerging.

Progress in implementing European tools

Common European tools, principles and guidelines, based on learning outcomes, are central to the Copenhagen process. Member States have made remarkable progress in implementing them. A wide and varied range of actors have been engaged through consultation, networking and peer learning.

Increasingly, European tools are part of VET policy mixes to achieve shared priorities. The shift to emphasising the outcomes of learning is influencing the content and organisation of education and training in Member States.



EQF: towards national implementation

The principles of the European qualifications framework (EQF) are broadly accepted. The EQF is seen as building bridges between all types of learning. Nearly all countries are rapidly developing National qualifications frameworks (NQFs) to link to the EQF. Even outside the EU, the EQF is regarded increasingly as a reference point.

Validation of learning experience: high priority

Validation of non- and informal learning is a priority in almost all countries. In some, individuals can already have their learning experience identified, assessed and validated. Others are discussing and planning.

Europass: making a difference to citizens

Europass is used in all 32 countries. Its success is demonstrated by its steadily increasing use. Since 2005, over 12 million citizens have visited Cedefop's Europass website (<http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu>). Well above expectations.

Credit system for VET: on its way

Credit systems are not yet commonplace in European VET systems. Bringing the European credit system for VET (ECVET) to maturity still requires substantial work and investment. Promising results are expected from pilot projects testing the ECVET.

Quality assurance: key to success

Confidence in the quality of learning outcomes is indispensable for the EU tools to succeed. Many countries regard work on NQFs, standards, curricula and more social partner involvement as contributing to quality in VET. There is a trend towards monitoring and evaluation in line with the common quality assurance framework. Teachers and trainers are increasingly understood as key to successful change. Strategies to equip them for their new roles are emerging.

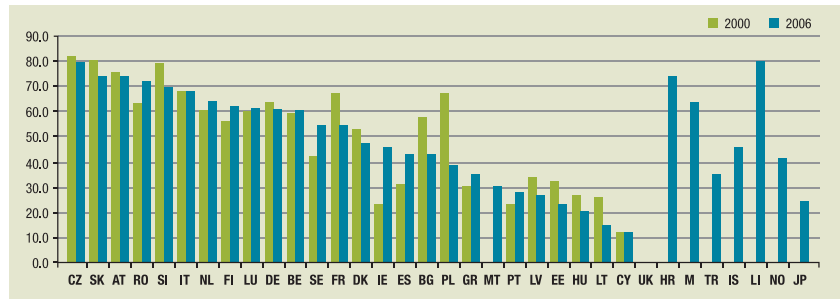
National priorities: challenges and progress

**Initial VET:
graduate numbers vary**

To develop and increase initial VET

Over 50% of upper secondary education graduates in the EU come from vocational and pre-vocational programmes, but with significant differences across countries.

VET graduates in upper secondary education as a % of all graduates, ISCED 3, 2000 and 2006



Data source: Eurostat (UOE), 2000 and 2006, AT and HU data for 2001, data not available for the UK and MT (2000).

To increase the number of VET graduates, most countries are trying to attract more young people, of all abilities and backgrounds, into VET. However, more effort is needed owing to demographic change and increasing skill needs.

**Demographic decline and
increasing skill needs**

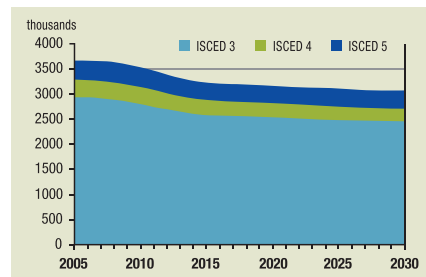
If VET participation and graduation rates remain constant, the number of upper-secondary VET graduates is expected to fall by 500 000 from 2005 to 2030, with the steepest fall between 2009–15.

Skill needs will rise dramatically across all sectors and occupations. In the period 2006–20, half of all job openings to fill new jobs or replace people leaving the labour market are expected to require medium-level qualifications, in particular vocational qualifications.

**Increasing skill
shortages?**

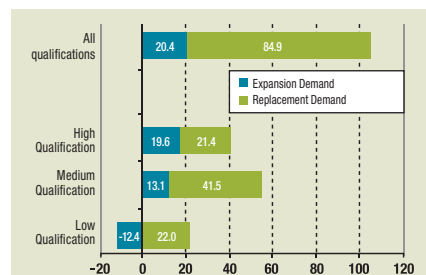
Fewer labour market entrants with VET qualifications, high replacement demand and increasing skill requirements have severe implications for the skilled labour supply, threatening increasing skill gaps and shortages. A real risk as Europe already has 78 million low-skilled people of working age 25–64.

Number of VET graduates (15–24), EU, by ISCED levels, 2005–2030



Source: Cedefop, 2008 (a)

Demand by level of qualifications, EU, 2006–2020, change in 000s



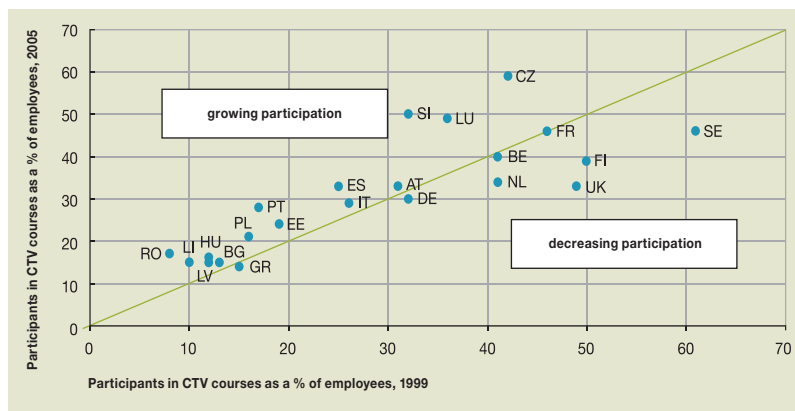
Source: Cedefop, 2008 (b)

Progress in CVT participation in most Member States

To raise participation and investment in continuing vocational training

In 2005, 33% of employees in the EU participated in continuing vocational training (CVT) organised by enterprises. Newer Member States are catching up, some by investing more in human resources. Participation rates fell in other Member States with traditionally high CVT participation.

Employees participating in CVT courses as a % of all employees (all enterprises), EU, 1999 and 2005

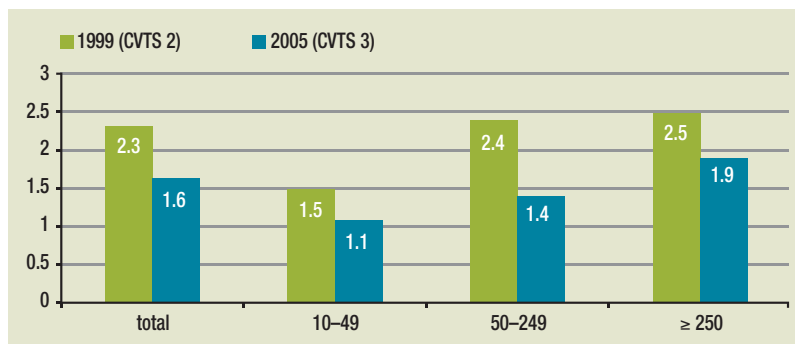


Data source: Eurostat, CVTS 1999 and 2005, 2005 data are provisional
 Note: DK and NO are excluded because of limited comparability of 1999 and 2005 data
 No 1999 data for CY, MT, SK. No 2005 data for IE

Lower CVT investment by enterprises

Expenditure on CVT courses by enterprises fell at EU level from 2.3% of labour costs in 1999 to 1.6% in 2005 with the largest drop in medium sized companies.

Expenditure of enterprises on CVT courses as a % of total labour costs by enterprise size, EU 25, 1999 and 2005



Data source: Eurostat, CVTS 1999 and 2005
 Note: 2005 data are provisional

New financing mechanisms

In response, countries have encouraged greater shared responsibility for training among state, enterprises and individuals. They have developed cost-sharing policies and new instruments, such as tax incentives, vouchers, learning accounts, saving schemes and loans, often combining them. Sectoral training funds, co-managed by social partners have improved alignment of training to sectoral needs.

**Lifelong learning for all
– special initiatives for
vulnerable groups**

To increase access to VET by addressing equity

Countries are increasingly providing targeted VET and support for low-skilled people, migrants, ethnic groups, early school leavers, older workers and disabled people. These measures ease transition from education to work or re-entry into education and training and the labour market.

Examples of good practice range from tailor-made training to inclusive education. Some countries are (re)introducing apprenticeship or alternance training to encourage people to stay in or re-enter education and training. Guidance and counselling support choices on work and learning and validation of non-formal and informal learning is a tool to make better use of skills and knowledge acquired in the labour market. There is a trend to combine targeted support, mentoring and language learning to help migrants succeed in VET.

**Foreign language
learning and mobility:
still a challenge**

To advance language learning and mobility

Foreign language skills are essential for mobility to learn and work and for the competitiveness of European enterprises. The EU's aim is to learn at least two foreign languages, but only 28% of upper secondary VET students do so. Almost two thirds learn one and 6% none. To promote mobility, some countries include foreign language learning in training for teachers and trainers.

Cross-border learning can foster personal, professional and intercultural skills. Although countries support mobility, only 0.3% of VET students participate in EU mobility programmes (Leonardo da Vinci).

Improve evidence on VET

To improve monitoring of performance and progress in VET

Many Member States have improved political and legal frameworks to collect data and developed integrated statistical systems for education and training. These are increasingly register based and provide more comprehensive data than surveys. Some 11 Member States, as well as Iceland, Norway and Turkey would be in favour of extending current European benchmarks specifically for VET.

Sources:

- Reports from Directors-General for vocational education and training, 2008
- ReferNet National Policy reports, 2008
- Cedefop. *Implications of demographic change for vocational education and training in the EU*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2008 (a) (forthcoming)
- Cedefop. *Future skill needs in Europe: Focus on 2020*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2008 (b)

Further information: www.trainingvillage.gr

VET beyond 2010

**Continuity,
consolidation
and change:
irreconcilable?**

VET is undergoing systemic change, strongly supported by European cooperation. There is evidence that countries wish to continue the reform process. Europe's major challenges and priorities remain valid beyond 2010, with some changes of emphasis and new issues emerging.

Beyond 2010, countries anticipate national and European VET policy agendas to focus on:

- **learning outcomes based curricula and teaching** as well as improved methods to measure, assess and validate competence;
- **continuing to implement common European tools**, principles and guidelines, as well as national qualifications frameworks;
- creating better **links between the Copenhagen and Bologna processes** to make European tools more coherent and validation of non- and informal learning more widespread;
- **making VET more attractive** by improving its quality and finding the right balance between trust and control, and between excellence and equity;
- resolving the dilemma of demanding **VET teachers and trainers** to be not only highly competent teachers, but also 'jacks-of-all-trades';
- examining the **content and methodology of VET**;
- providing more training opportunities and intergenerational learning to support **people at risk** in particular low skilled people, early school leavers, older workers and migrants and those who need to reconcile work and family commitments;
- increasing cross-border learning in VET and job **mobility** by improving foreign language skills and recognition of competences acquired abroad;
- improving **governance** at all levels, based on autonomy, accountability and learning partnerships and ensuring efficient allocation, equitable distribution and sustainability of **national and EU VET funding**;
- **anticipating future skills** and fostering responsiveness of VET to the needs of the knowledge-based economy and demographic change.

Monitoring progress, joint research and evaluations, benchmarks for VET and improving data are preconditions for informed VET policy-making. Policy learning and support are gaining in importance. Concepts and tools need to be understood at grassroots level for Europeans to benefit from them. This takes time. Continuity, consolidation and change are not easy to reconcile.



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