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No 25

Policy handbook

Access to and participation in
continuous vocational education
and training (CVET) in Europe



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Foreword

This policy handbook is one of the EU-level deliverables agreed by Member States and the European Commission in the Bruges communiqué (Council of the European Union (EU) and European Commission, 2010). Its purpose is to assist policy-makers, enterprises, social partners, training providers and other stakeholders to reinforce high-quality continuous vocational education and training (CVET) and to increase both access and participation. It provides policy guidance illustrated by concrete examples of effective practices from the Member States, which can serve as sources of motivation to promote CVET at national, regional and local levels.

CVET is a main pillar of adult lifelong learning and is crucial to reaching the Education and training 2020 (ET 2020) target of 15% average participation by adults (age 25-64) in lifelong learning by 2020. Progress towards this goal has been limited and the 15% target has not yet been met in most countries. Opening access to and raising adult participation in lifelong learning lies at the heart of current EU education and training policies. CVET is relevant to two key objectives in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy (European Commission, 2010a): supporting smart growth and inclusive growth.

CVET is not only a means of increasing productivity, economic growth, employability, innovation and competitiveness, but also of improving equity, social cohesion and participation of disadvantaged groups in the labour market and in society.

This handbook assists policy-makers and other stakeholders in strengthening the contribution of CVET in reaching the lifelong learning benchmark and the Europe 2020 objectives.

The handbook focuses on policy-makers and the role of enterprises. It shows how policy-makers and social partners can encourage and support enterprises in CVET and gives useful information for enterprises on how to make the most of it. Enterprises play a key role in CVET because a major part is employer-provided. For them, CVET is important in terms of updating and renewing the knowledge, skills and competences of their workers and adapting to fast-changing technological and socioeconomic developments.

The handbook uses information from recent studies, policy evaluations and academic research, including Cedefop, the European Commission and Eurostat data and analysis. It highlights the importance of CVET for smart and inclusive growth, illustrates the benefits of CVET, gives an overview of its current state in Europe, and describes success factors and good practices for widening access

and participation. It complements the policy handbook *Work-based learning in Europe: practices and policy pointers* on initial vocational education and training (IVET) (European Commission, 2013a).

I hope you will find this handbook a useful tool in attracting more learners to CVET as a first step towards their employability, or/and as a way of increasing their career prospects and continuing to acquire skills to help them meet the increasing challenges of the labour market. Promoting CVET is the joint task of the education and employment sectors, as well as of employers who are keen on increasing their competitiveness.

Joachim James Calleja
Director

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Executive summary

Aims of the handbook

Promoting high quality CVET for all is a shared responsibility and requires action and commitment of policy-makers at all levels, of employers, social partners and other stakeholders. This handbook serves as a tool for them. It provides policy guidance illustrated with concrete examples of effective practices from diverse settings around Europe. It is based on information from academic research, recent studies and policy evaluations, including data and analysis from Cedefop, the European Commission and Eurostat.

The handbook gives an overview of the benefits (Chapter 2) and the current situation of CVET in Europe (Chapter 3), and shows why CVET is important. It describes success factors and good examples of practices for widening access and participation and ensuring high-quality CVET provision (Chapter 4), and ends with some conclusions (Chapter 5).

The handbook is one of the EU-level deliverables agreed by Member States and the Commission in the Bruges communiqué (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2010), and contributes to reaching the Education and training 2020 target of 15% average participation by adults (age 25-64) in lifelong learning by 2020.

Scope and key messages

The economic and social benefits that CVET has to offer for individuals, enterprises and society as a whole are significant and manifold. CVET contributes, for example, to an individuals' employability, personal development and life satisfaction. It helps enterprises to respond to increasing global competition and to changing technological and socioeconomic requirements. For the economy and society as a whole, CVET is a key driver for smart and inclusive growth, promoting competitiveness, social cohesion and equity.

Statistical data on CVET provision, access and participation across the EU-28 show that Europe is not yet making full use of the many benefits of CVET. There is still unequal distribution of CVET opportunities, with the most vulnerable groups receiving the least training. Major barriers remain to individual CVET participation (such as time and costs), and enterprise training provision (such as awareness of training needs). More could be done to use different forms of learning provision, such as non-formal learning and informal learning at the

workplace, for example, through new models of learning-conducive work organisation. Some progress has been made towards the 15% benchmark of adult participation in lifelong learning but, with an EU-28 average of 10.4% in 2013, there is still some way to go.

Several key factors and conditions for enhancing CVET and increasing participation rates are described in the handbook and illustrated with practice examples:

- (a) to open up access and to reach the most vulnerable groups: guidance services, tailored learning provision, the use of work-based learning and comprehensive human resource management (HRM) strategies in enterprises are necessary;
- (b) quality in and relevance of CVET are critical, because high quality CVET that is relevant to the requirements of employers and employees can increase participation and willingness to invest in learning;
- (c) using validation – or competence assessment – in enterprise HR development strategies is important because much learning takes place outside formal education and training, for example, through informal learning at the workplace. Outcomes need to be made visible to be used to their full extent, for example, for personnel development in enterprises or to open up progression routes in formal education and training;
- (d) with costs as one of the main barriers, financial incentives and funding mechanisms can contribute to increasing CVET access, participation and provision;
- (e) small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) face multidimensional challenges when it comes to HR development and CVET. They need to be supported and develop approaches that fit their particular needs;
- (f) national and European social partners play an important role in fostering the provision of CVET, opening up access for all and increasing participation; they can, for example, mobilise resources through collective bargaining and act as learning providers;
- (g) the potential of CVET to encourage innovation in enterprises is not yet being fully exploited in Europe. Promoting learning at the workplace through learning-conducive work environments and using synergies between learning and innovation policies are crucial.

Several factors are essential in taking forward and implementing these key points in a sustainable way:

- (a) collaboration: CVET is a shared responsibility and effective collaboration between all stakeholders, both horizontally and vertically, is needed. Enterprises should, for example, join forces and collaborate (horizontally)

- with other enterprises when it comes to skill needs analysis or training provision, to benefit from economies of scale. This is particularly important for SMEs, who face certain constraints due to their size. Vertical collaboration includes cooperation between different stakeholders, including social partners, regional governments and VET providers. Collaboration can range from local partnerships to international networks. Policy-makers can promote active commitment and the idea of CVET as a shared responsibility through various measures, for example, using cost-sharing schemes for financing CVET or through promoting corporate social responsibility among enterprises to encourage learning provision for disadvantaged groups;
- (b) integrative strategies: CVET must be an integral part of coherent and comprehensive strategies on various levels:
- (i) enterprises need to develop comprehensive, forward-looking HRM strategies and integrate CVET firmly into them. Different CVET measures, such as the creation of learning-conducive working environments, the use of validation practices and flexible training provision, need to be systematically linked and form an overall approach, together with wider HRM measures and enterprise policies as a whole;
 - (ii) policy-makers at national, regional and local level need to make CVET an integral part of relevant policies, for example, active labour market, innovation or migration policies, to ensure a comprehensive approach, aiming for synergy across different policy areas. Combining different policy measures, incentives and support services for both individuals and enterprises is important to encourage CVET provision and participation and to ensure high quality CVET. National, regional and local level strategies need to be linked. To meet the actual needs, to ensure success and to assure most efficient investment in CVET, policy-making needs to be based on concrete evidence and policies need to be reviewed regularly.

CHAPTER 1.

The importance of CVET in Europe

CVET can be defined as all 'education or training after initial education and training – or after entry into working life – aimed at helping individuals to:

- (a) improve or update their knowledge and/or skills;
- (b) acquire new skills for a career move or retraining;
- (c) continue their professional development' (Cedefop and Tissot, 2004).

It may encompass any kind of education and training: general, specialised or vocational, formal or non-formal, etc. (ibid.).

CVET is crucial for:

- (a) individuals, because it contributes to their employability and helps them to prepare for change and transition in their work as well as between jobs. It is also a main pillar of their lifelong learning;
- (b) enterprises in terms of updating and renewing knowledge, skills and competences of their workforce. CVET is an essential tool in responding to increasing global competition and to changing technological and socioeconomic requirements. Trends towards an ageing society and longer working lives make it, for example, necessary that people regularly update and broaden their knowledge, skills and competences through CVET;
- (c) the economy and society as a whole, because it promotes smart and inclusive growth.

Europe's CVET landscape is marked by diversity and heterogeneity. This is also due to particular characteristics of CVET:

- (a) CVET operates in specific (national, regional, sectoral and local) contexts, and relies heavily on the country context, including economic structure in terms of sectors and size of enterprises, how access to occupations or functions is regulated, and lifelong learning culture;
- (b) CVET is intrinsically linked to the labour market and the way this is structured;
- (c) CVET is delivered by a wide range of stakeholders and institutions, in formal education and training as well as outside.

The diversity of CVET is a key factor in ensuring the relevance of knowledge, skills and competences to labour market needs. However, its diversity represents a challenge as regards transparency and coordination. To benefit from the full potential that CVET has to offer, it must be based on a good understanding of the needs of the labour market, the economy and society.

Due to its potential and importance, CVET has received increasing attention at EU policy level over recent years. It is relevant to two of the key objectives in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy (European Commission, 2010a):

- (a) support smart growth: CVET as a means to increase productivity, economic growth, employability, innovation and competitiveness;
- (b) promote inclusive growth: CVET as a means to improve equity, participation of disadvantaged groups in the labour market and in society, increased social cohesion.

To support the Europe 2020 strategy, the Member States, the European social partners and the European Commission agreed on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) and defined an agenda for this cooperation for vocational education and training (VET) in the Bruges communiqué (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2010).

As a key component of lifelong learning, CVET is crucial to reaching the ET 2020 target of 15% average participation of adults (age 25-64) in lifelong learning by 2020. Progress towards this goal has been limited and the potential of CVET seems to be not yet fully utilised: the EU-27 average adult participation in lifelong learning has stagnated at around 9% over recent years and increased to 10.4% in 2013. Opening access to and raising adult participation in lifelong learning lies at the heart of current European education and training policies. For example, the renewed European agenda for adult learning identifies the provision of learning opportunities for all adults, especially for disadvantaged groups such as the low-qualified, as a main challenge to be addressed in Europe with joint efforts of all EU Member States (Council of the EU, 2011).

The Bruges communiqué places great importance on developing flexible and high-quality CVET and highlights the need to aid access to, and increase participation in, CVET. Participating countries, the European social partners and the Commission have committed themselves to strategic objective three, 'enabling flexible access to training and qualifications' to raise participation and contribute towards reaching the 15% benchmark. With regard to CVET, countries have, among other measures, agreed to (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2010, p. 10):

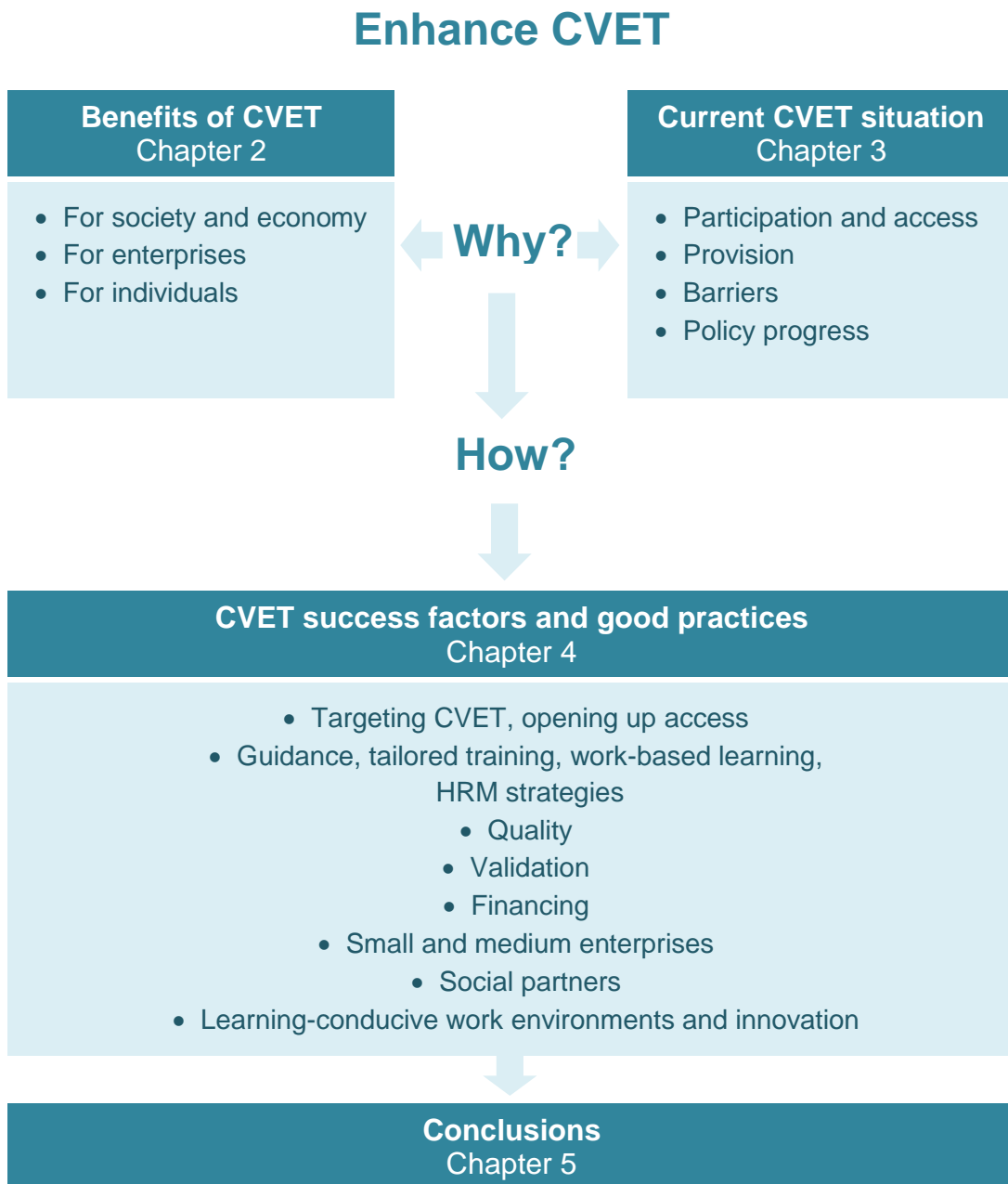
- (a) encourage flexible CVET arrangements, using all types of learning, including, for example, work-based learning;
- (b) actively encourage individuals to participate in CVET and VET-providers to increase their involvement;
- (c) encourage training institutions and employers to collaborate, especially for CVET for the low-qualified.

To support the efforts of the Member States as well as strategic objective three, the European Commission has agreed on various actions. Producing this *Policy handbook on access to and participation in CVET* is one of them.

The purpose of the handbook is to highlight how Member States, social partners, enterprises and other stakeholders can increase access to and participation in CVET and reinforce high-quality CVET provision. The handbook focuses on policy-makers and on the role of enterprises and how they can be encouraged and supported when it comes to CVET. More specifically, the handbook:

- (a) shows why CVET is important by providing information on its benefits (Chapter 2) and on the current situation in Europe (Chapter 3);
- (b) describes how to improve CVET and how to increase access and participation and describes success factors and good practices for widening access and participation and ensuring high-quality provision (Chapter 4);
- (c) offers some conclusions (Chapter 5).

Figure 1 **Overview of the handbook**



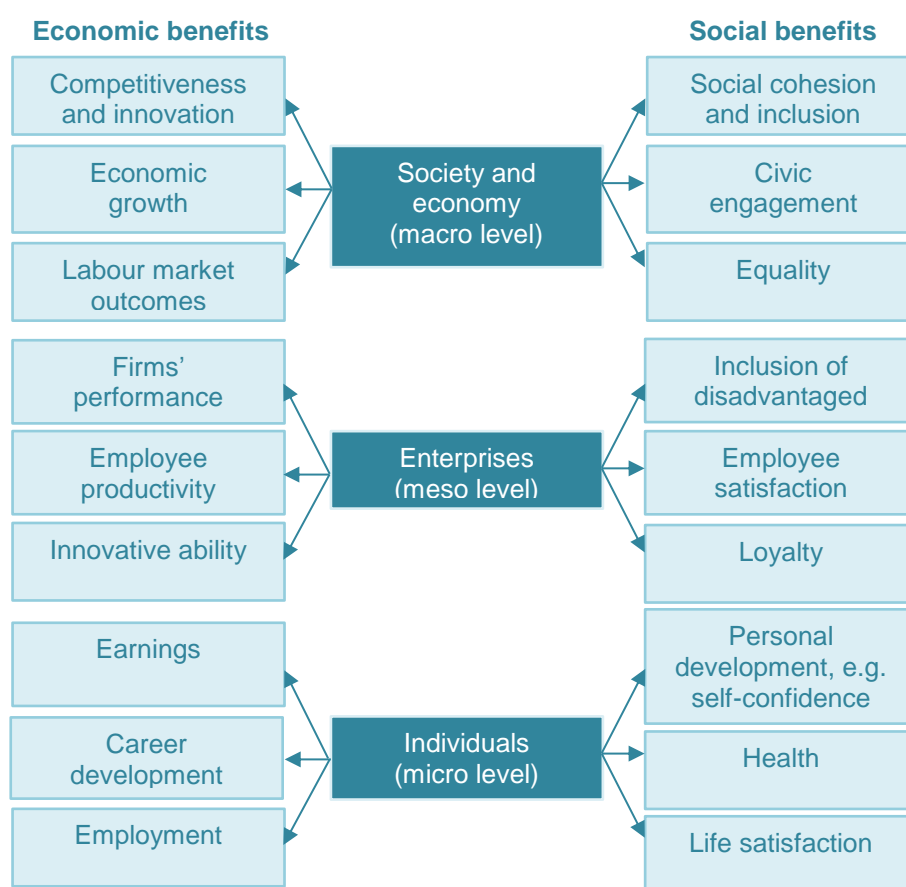
Source: Cedefop.

CHAPTER 2.

Benefits of CVET

Why is it worth taking action and investing more efficiently in CVET? CVET provides many benefits for individuals, enterprises and the economy and society as a whole. These benefits justify increased efforts, and making them visible is important because they tend to be underestimated and insufficiently emphasised (Cedefop, 2012a; 2014a). Over recent years, Cedefop has investigated the impacts of VET in general (including IVET and CVET), but also of CVET in particular, on various levels, and highlighted its benefits (Cedefop, 2011a; 2011b; 2011c; 2011d; 2011e; 2011f; 2012a; 2012b; 2014a). Examples of benefits according to their dimension (economic or social benefits) and level (micro, meso, macro) are shown in Figure 2. They often reinforce each other.

Figure 2 **Examples of benefits of CVET**



Source: Adaption from Cedefop 2011a, p. 7.

2.1. Benefits of CVET for individuals

Several studies show positive effects for individuals of VET on wages and employment status (Cedefop, 2011a; 2011d; FIBS/DIE, 2013). A protective effect against the risk of unemployment can be found and CVET returns are, on average, 10% for men and 7% for women (Cedefop, 2011d); they are in line with those for general education. CVET can increase career development opportunities and improve professional status but it also generates benefits to individuals that go beyond the economic. Among the social benefits of CVET are positive changes in self-rated health, lack of chronic health conditions, more civic participation, and more satisfaction with job or main activity over time, particularly for individuals in their early careers (age 26-45) (Cedefop, 2011f). Another significant return concerns the positive influence of parents, especially mothers, on their children: parents who took part in VET programmes tend to provide a family environment that is more stimulating for learning and are more dedicated to learning activities (Cedefop, 2011a). CVET can also foster self-esteem and confidence in the learner and generally have positive effects on personal development, attitudes, motivation and quality of life.

Research indicates that the pay-offs of CVET seem to depend on the existence of a work organisation that enables individuals to make use of the competences gained (Cedefop, 2011f; 2012b). They also stress the importance of creating adequate working environments, implementing wider comprehensive HRM measures along with providing CVET (see Sections 4.1 and 4.7).

‘Scandinavian countries can be viewed as countries with a holistic approach to improving working conditions to preserve individuals’ ability to work at a high level over the life course; this affects social outcomes for individuals positively, which is highlighted by the overall strong associations of CVET and social outcomes in Sweden’ (Cedefop, 2011f, p. 92).

2.2. Benefits of CVET for enterprises

CVET has a positive impact on the economic performance of firms (Cedefop 2011a; 2011b; 2012b). Most studies concentrate on productivity: companies that do not invest in training report lower productivity and profitability than those that do. There are various explanations for this: for example, CVET increases job satisfaction, which, in turn, leads to productivity-enhancing behaviour:

‘where people are more satisfied with their jobs, they are more motivated, which has the potential to increase productivity by reducing employer costs (such as

lowering recruitment costs through improved labour retention) and increasing output (for example, by workers putting in more effort)' (Cedefop, 2012b, p. 9).

'Research on vocational training and performance of enterprises in Austria highlighted positive relationships between corporate productivity and CVET in the short and medium term. Companies doubling their investment in training increased their productivity by 4% and pay higher wages' (Cedefop, 2011a, p.14).

Positive effects of CVET are not limited to increased productivity, but also persist across other performance indicators such as quality, innovation and employment growth (Cedefop, 2011b). As part of HRM practices, CVET can be used to attract and retain workers within the firm (Cedefop, 2012b). This is especially important in view of demographic change and counteracts fear of loss of investment arising from the assumption that newly trained employees might be poached by other companies. Employees generally perceive an employers' investment in training as a signal reflecting the value attached to them (Cedefop, 2014a), with potential positive effects on job satisfaction and loyalty. Further, CVET is crucial to knowledge transfer in organisations; this is especially important in the context of an ageing workforce and the need for intergenerational knowledge transfer (Cedefop, 2012a; European Commission, 2006). To obtain the full benefits of training, enterprises must integrate it in a wider set of HRM policies and practices (Cedefop, 2011c; 2011g).

2.3. Benefits for society and the economy

For the economy and society as a whole, CVET is a key driver for both smart and inclusive growth. In terms of economic benefits, it:

- (a) has positive impacts on labour market outcomes, as it can lead to higher participation on the labour market and lower unemployment (Cedefop, 2011a);
- (b) contributes to competitiveness, productivity, innovation performance and – more generally – economic growth (Cedefop, 2011a; 2012f; 2014a).

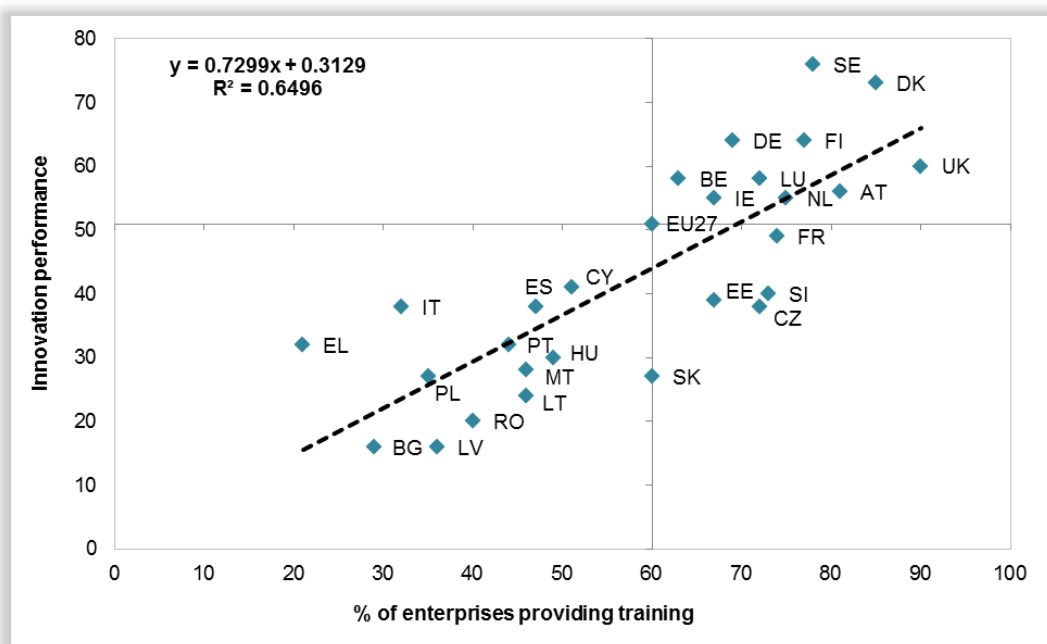
A recent Cedefop study on the macroeconomic benefits of VET shows that vocational skills made positive contributions to growth in average labour productivity between 1980 and 2007 in five out of the six countries investigated, but also highlights that their role is often underrated. Growth accounting tends to underestimate the contributions of skills to productivity performance because it is difficult to take account of complementarities between different production inputs, for example, the role of skills in the effective use of new technologies.

Source: Cedefop, 2014a.

The full benefits of CVET in a broad sense, including work organisation and workplace learning, are still underestimated and underused in Europe (Dehmel and van Loo, 2014). This is also confirmed by research on the impact of learning in enterprises on innovation. Findings show that learning-intensive forms of work organisation and learning at the workplace – besides other, more formal and organised modes of CVET – have a positive impact on innovation performance at country level. They are at least equally important predictors of innovation performance as well-established indicators (such as attainment rates in tertiary education): countries with a high percentage of enterprises that provide continuing training (see Figure 2) and with a high percentage of enterprises with learning-conducive work organisations have higher innovation performance (good examples are Denmark and Sweden) (Cedefop, 2012f; OECD, 2010). Opportunities for learning at the workplace through learning-conducive work environments (characterised by, for example, task complexity, variety and autonomy, team work) are a particularly important factor (see also Section 4.7 of this handbook).

Investments in CVET can also counteract the outdatedness of human capital (skills obsolescence). This is a common feature in modern economies and is likely to grow in significance due to intensified economic and technological change (Cedefop, 2010a).

Figure 3 Relationship between training enterprises and innovation performance



Source: Cedefop 2012f, p. 42.

Macro-social benefits of CVET are even more difficult to measure than economic ones and are interconnected:

- (a) high employment can lead to higher life satisfaction and more stable societies;
- (b) social integration is usually seen as the main return on labour market participation (Cedefop, 2011a).

Most countries report positive effects on the integration of disadvantaged groups (*ibid.*). Research on particular target groups, such as the low-qualified unemployed (Cedefop, 2013a) or ageing workers (Cedefop, 2012a), shows that investment in their learning – tailored to their particular needs (see Section 4.1 of this handbook) – can support their inclusion in the labour market and also society, leading to increased social cohesion. Since education equality has a significant impact on macro-social benefits (Green et al., 2008), it is important to consider how CVET can improve this and be an integrative part of a wider, macro-social policy framework on equality and inclusion (Cedefop, 2011e).

CHAPTER 3.

CVET access, participation and provision

This chapter gives an overview of the current state of CVET in Europe, as seen from European statistics on lifelong learning provided by Eurostat, the statistical office of the EU.

European statistics on adult learning

The adult education survey (AES) and the continuing vocational training survey (CVTS) are carried out by Eurostat every fifth year, both with a reference period of 12 months. They complement the information on adult learning participation collected quarterly by the labour force survey (LFS) (reference period of four weeks prior to the survey). While the LFS collects only basic information on participation in adult learning, the AES and the CVTS give an in-depth picture on adult learning (for example, on participation more specifically related to CVET, but also on training providers, types of training, spending, barriers for participation and provision). CVTS collects information specific on enterprise characteristics and training strategies for in-depth analysis. Latest data are from 2010 (CVTS4) and 2011 (AES2).

Cedefop provides a detailed comparative analysis of the CVTS3 (Cedefop, 2010b) as well as the CVTS4 together with the AES2 (Cedefop, forthcoming c).

3.1. CVET participation and access

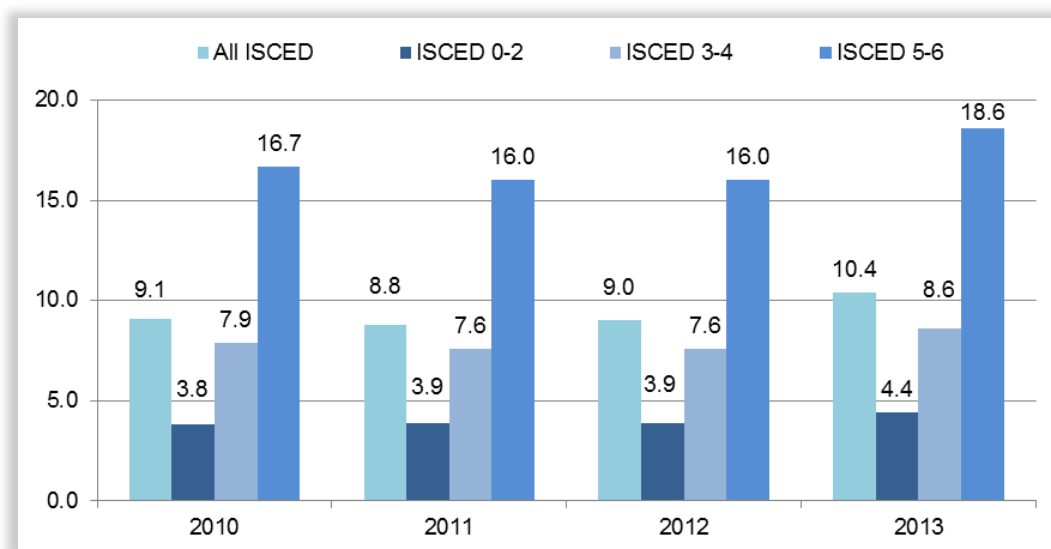
Although some progress has been made, the EU-28 is still far from reaching the ET 2020 benchmark of at least 15% average adult (age 25-64) participation in learning by 2020. While there has been stagnation at around 9% average participation over recent years, a rise to 10.4% is reported for 2013 (see Figure 4) ⁽¹⁾. There are notable differences between the EU Member States. The north European countries such as Denmark and Sweden stand out with considerably higher proportions of their respective populations participating in lifelong learning (above 25%). By contrast, Bulgaria, Greece and Romania, reported rates of less than 3% over the past years.

Who participates in learning? Data on gender differences indicate that there are only small or no gender inequalities; on EU-28 average, female participation is slightly higher (11.3% compared to 9.5% for males in 2013). In countries with low overall lifelong learning rates, participation decreases with age. The biggest

⁽¹⁾ Eurostat, LFS [trng_lfs_01] [accessed 4.6.2014]. However, the increase in 2013 might be due to changes in the methodology.

inequalities can be found with regard to education attainment. As Figure 4 shows, the highly-qualified (those that have completed tertiary education (ISCED 5-6)), participate by far more in lifelong learning than the low-qualified, (those that have at most lower secondary education (ISCED 0-2)). Raising participation of the low-qualified figures highly on the EU policy agenda and is also a major concern for policy-makers at national levels.

Figure 4 **Adult (age 25-64) participation in lifelong learning by education attainment (LFS data)**



Source: Own calculations based on Eurostat LFS [trng_lfs_02] [accessed 4.6.2014] ⁽²⁾.

Data (AES2) on job-related and employer-sponsored training also shows that it is unevenly and unequally distributed and confirms inequalities in the participation of particular groups such as older workers, the unemployed, the inactive and low-qualified adults. Most non-formal education and training is job-related and employer-sponsored, therefore the individuals' labour market status plays a role: average participation in the EU-28 countries is considerably lower for the inactive (15.4%) and unemployed (22.8%) than for employed adults (45.2%) ⁽³⁾. In 2011, EU-28 average participation in job-related non-formal education was 15.2% for the low-qualified, 28.6% for the medium-qualified and 48.8% for the high-qualified ⁽⁴⁾. This means that the last group participates

⁽²⁾ Limited comparability of 2013 data with previous years due to changes in the LFS methodology.

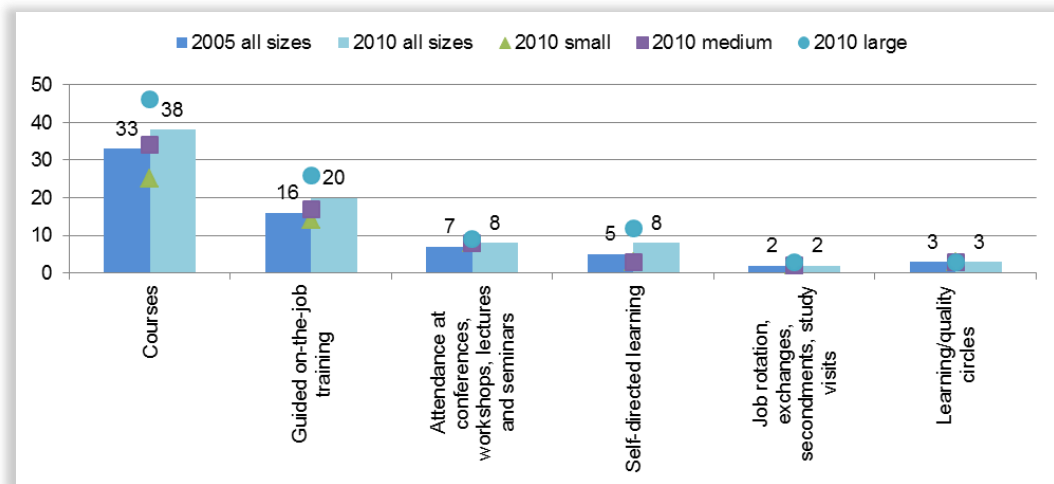
⁽³⁾ Eurostat, AES2 [trng_aes_103] [accessed 23.7.2014].

⁽⁴⁾ Eurostat, AES2 [trng_aes_122] [accessed 5.6.2014].

roughly three times as much than the low-qualified. These inequalities can have various causes (Cedefop, 2010b; 2011g; see also Section 3.3). For example, employers tend to focus their training on younger employees and on those that are already highly qualified, often due to expectations of higher returns on investment (Cedefop, 2011g).

Participation in employer-sponsored training also depends on the size of the enterprise. Across the EU-28, employees attended CVET courses more often if they worked in large companies (Figure 5). The general trend of participation increasing with the size of the enterprise seems to apply not only to courses, but also to other forms of CVET.

Figure 5 **Employee participation in CVET by size of enterprise and form of learning (% of all employees in all training and non-training enterprises), EU 2005 and 2010**



NB: (CVTS4, [trng_cvts42] [accessed 15.7.2014]).
Source: Cedefop.

What are benefits of training? According to the European working conditions survey (EWCS), among all employees who received employer-sponsored training in the previous 12 months:

- (a) nearly 90% agree that it has improved the way they work;
- (b) nearly 70% believe that their job is more secure and their prospects for future employment are better after the training (Eurofound, 2012).

3.2. CVET providers and types of provision

Many different providers offer learning opportunities for adults. According to Eurostat estimates, employers are among the most common providers of non-formal education and training activities, offering close to one third (32%) of such activities in the EU-27 in 2011 (AES2) ⁽⁵⁾; the second biggest are non-formal education and training institutions (17.7%). Commercial institutions where education and training is not the main activity (such as equipment suppliers) (10.9%) are closely followed by formal education institutions (9.8%) ⁽⁶⁾. Other providers that have smaller shares include non-profit organisations (such as cultural associations), non-commercial institutions (such as libraries), individuals, employers' organisations and chambers of commerce and trade unions (ibid.). There are, however, variations between the EU Member States. For example, the relative importance of non-formal education and training institutions was particularly high in Poland (53.6%) and Slovenia (45.7%) (ibid.).

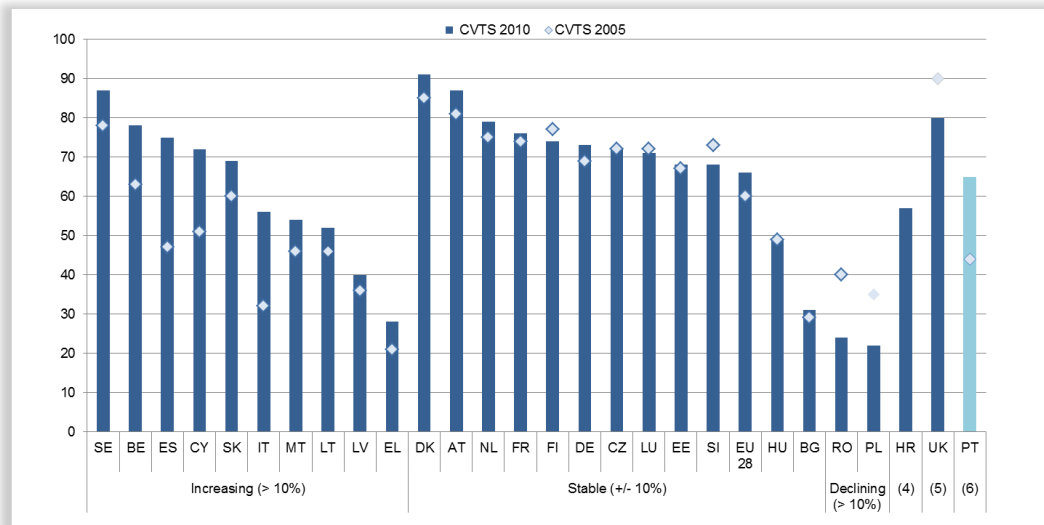
Employer-sponsored training (fully or partly financed by the employer and/or during paid working time) is one of the main pillars of lifelong learning for adults across Europe. But how many enterprises actually provide training? According to Eurostat estimates (CVTS4), around two thirds (66%) of all enterprises with 10 or more employees in the EU-28 provided any type of training (courses or other forms of CVET, see Figure 6) in 2011, showing a slight increase compared to the 60% in 2005 ⁽⁷⁾. Figure 5 illustrates the differences between countries and shows that the divergences between the different Member States have not been reduced yet since 2005.

⁽⁵⁾ Eurostat, AES2 [trng_aes_170; all estimates] [accessed 3.6.2014]. Data are based on the AES. CVTS data on providers, which tend to be assessed as the most reliable ones, are collected but not published.

⁽⁶⁾ Eurostat, AES2 [trng_aes_170; all estimates; includes unreliable data from Bulgaria, Greece and Romania] [accessed 3.6.2014].

⁽⁷⁾ Eurostat, CVTS [trng_cvts02; all estimates] [accessed 3.6.2014]. In 2012, enterprises with 10 or more employees employed approximately 93.1 million people. This represents 71.3% of all European jobs (European Commission, 2013c, p.10).

Figure 6 **Training incidence: enterprises providing any type of training (courses or other forms)**



NB: CVTS4 (2010) compared to CVTS3 (2005). (4): no participation in CVTS3; (5): data for CVTS3 not comparable; (6): data for CVTS4 not fully comparable.

Source: Cedefop (forthcoming c), based on Eurostat dissemination databases [access date 3.4.2014, own calculation].

Training provision in enterprises is related to different factors, such as economic sector and enterprise size. In every country, large enterprises offer more training than small ones, but there are differences across type of training and across country.

What types of learning opportunities do enterprises provide? Among all EU-28 enterprises that trained, 56% offered courses and 53% offered other forms of training (CVTS4) ⁽⁸⁾. This includes five types of training, which illustrate the broad spectrum of less formalised forms of learning that can be used in enterprises (Eurostat, 2012):

- planned training through guided on-the-job training;
- planned training through job-rotation, exchanges, secondments or study visits;
- attendance at conferences, workshops, trade fairs and lectures;
- planned training through participation in learning or quality circles;
- planned training by self-directed learning (as in self-directed e-learning).

⁽⁸⁾ Eurostat, AES2 [trng_cvts02; all estimates] [accessed 3.6.2014].

The EU-28 average, between 2005 and 2010, has experienced a moderate increase in both the provision of courses (from 49% to 56%) and other forms of learning (from 48% to 53%) ⁽⁹⁾.

Looking at other forms of learning, the CVTS covers the less formal types. This is generally more difficult to capture, as it often occurs at the immediate workplace, making it sometimes difficult to distinguish between work and learning (Moraal and Grünewald, 2004). How can informal (not planned) learning while working be measured? The EWCS includes several indicators (such as on work organisation) that help measure the learning-conduciveness of workplaces in European enterprises (Eurofound, 2012). There is general agreement that non-formal learning and informal learning at the workplace – fostered, for example, through new models of work organisation – are increasingly important (see Cedefop, 2012f; European Commission, 2010b; OECD, 2010; see also Section 4.7). The EU, alongside national policies, should support all forms of learning. Policy-makers can for example:

- (a) implement policies to raise awareness of different forms of learning and their benefits (by public-relations campaigns and marketing measures);
- (b) provide consulting and guidance services for enterprises to find the right mix of different forms of learning provision;
- (c) use publicly-funded programmes to stimulate development in certain fields, such as the promotion of learning-intensive forms of work organisation to encourage learning while working (Cedefop, 2012f).

3.3. Barriers to CVET provision and participation

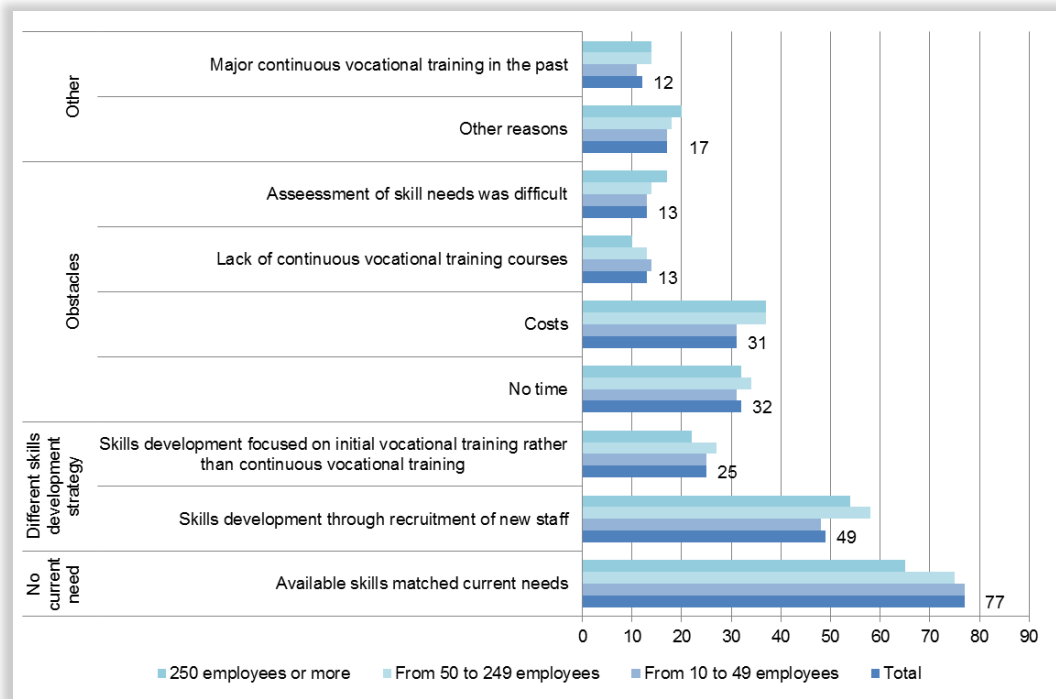
Enterprises benefit in many ways from offering CVET (see Chapter 2), and those that do not provide CVET are waiving possible returns. What reasons do enterprises have for not providing CVET? The four main reasons reported by non-training enterprises in 2005 (CVTS3) as well as in 2010 (CVTS4) remain the same. Most non-training enterprises see ‘no need’ for training, either because the skills and competences of their staff correspond to the current needs of the enterprise (77% for EU-28 in 2010, all enterprises) or because they prefer to fill skill gaps through recruiting new employees (49%) ⁽¹⁰⁾. This is followed by obstacles hindering CVET provision. Among them there is ‘no time’ because of high staff workload and limited time available (32%) and high costs (31%).

⁽⁹⁾ Eurostat, AES2 [trng_cvts02; 2010 data estimates] [accessed 3.6.2014].

⁽¹⁰⁾ Eurostat, CVTS4 [trng_cvts08] [accessed 3.6.2014].

Overall, the reasons for not providing training differ little between enterprises of different size. There are also other reasons for not providing CVET, for example, a focus on IVET and not CVET, a lack of suitable CVET courses on the market, or difficulties in assessing enterprise needs.

Figure 7 **Reasons given by employers for not providing training**



Source: Own, based on CVTS4 [trng_cvts08] [accessed 16.7.2014].

The high percentage of enterprises that do not see a need for developing existing workers' skills and competences is striking. Policy-makers could respond with:

- (a) campaigns to raise awareness of the benefits of training;
- (b) strategies to support the assessment of skill needs;
- (c) encouragement to raise CVET provision in enterprises and adult participation in lifelong learning, since employer-provided CVET is one of the main pillars of lifelong learning for adults.

According to the AES2, around 60% of adults (age 25-64) in the EU-28 reported that they did not take part in any formal or non-formal education and training (during the 12 months prior to the survey) in 2011. Why do adults not participate in lifelong learning? If participation rates are to be increased, understanding perceived barriers is important. Among the three main obstacles

to participation in lifelong learning reported by all individuals (no matter if they took part in learning or not) are ⁽¹¹⁾:

- (a) lack of time due to family responsibilities;
- (b) conflicts of training with the work schedule;
- (c) costs (training too expensive to afford).

This is confirmed by other studies which also show that time and costs are the greatest obstacles (see Rubenson and Desjardins, 2009; AES1) ⁽¹²⁾. Therefore, policies that promote flexible ways of participation, for example, through the provision of education leave, evening/weekend courses, e-learning, or modular training, plus instruments that give financial support, such as loans, tax reduction, or training vouchers, remain highly relevant. Apart from these obstacles, there are other reasons why adults do not participate. Many do not perceive it as needed for their job ⁽¹³⁾, which raises questions about individuals' awareness of learning needs and calls for stronger guidance services.

3.4. Policies and progress towards higher CVET rates

What progress has been made towards the Bruges communique short-term deliverable (STD) 7: 'increasing participation in CVET in line with the ET 2020 benchmark of 15% average adult participation rate in lifelong learning' that the EU Member States agreed on? What are the trends in VET policies in Europe implemented to achieve this goal? Cedefop reviews what countries have done since 2010 and monitors the policy progress (Cedefop, 2012g; forthcoming a). The approach is based on policy options that represent different ways in which a country can work towards achieving a goal. Figure 7 shows that the policy options to reach higher CVET participation are broad and cover a wide range of possibilities to increase lifelong learning and to open access for all adults. They include:

- (a) promotion activities;
- (b) legislative/regulatory measures;
- (c) strategies and guidelines.

The bullet charts (Figure 8) illustrate in how far such policies are implemented in Europe and reveals trends (Cedefop, forthcoming a). Analysis for

⁽¹¹⁾ Eurostat, AES2 [trng_aes_176] [accessed 3.6.2014].

⁽¹²⁾ Cross-period comparison with the AES1 is not possible due to changes in the methodology but the trends in the perceived barriers remain.

⁽¹³⁾ Eurostat, AES2 [trng_aes_176] [accessed 23.7.2014].

the period 2010-14 shows that countries are making efforts to adjust their measures towards more coherent CVET policies: adopting new laws, regulations or other forms of legislation is most common in promoting CVET. Such measures often concern laws establishing entitlements to CVET. Guidelines and strategies are also important and awareness campaigns and career fairs to promote CVET have been widely used in most countries.

Promoting adult learning, engaging adults and enterprises

In Germany, an information campaign to promote VET for adults (2011) has recently been complemented with a campaign promoting inclusion of disabled adults.

Candidate countries promote VET for adults mostly through active labour market policy measures (as in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), a wide offer of VET courses and programmes (Turkey) and regularly hold awareness campaigns such as the adult education festival in Montenegro.

Source: Cedefop, forthcoming a.

Strategies to promote CVET or lifelong learning can have different focuses, for example, the inclusion of disadvantaged adults or the acquisition of key competences.

Country examples: CVET or lifelong learning strategies promoting key competences

Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Malta have adopted (re)new(ed) CVET or lifelong learning strategies that promote key competences. The new Croatian education, science and technology strategy sets out the conditions to include more adults in lifelong learning and promotes key competences. Some strategic measures include second chance programmes promoting key competences or curricula that emphasise them (such as the implementation of the new competence-based national curriculum for VET by 2015 in Cyprus). In Slovakia, companies in industry that apply for the European Social Fund (ESF) support for CVET (since 2013) are required to consider key competence development in their projects.

Source: Cedefop, forthcoming a.

CVET needs to be attractive, so the value of qualifications must be assured. Guidelines to ensure that qualifications achieved through CVET or labour market training are valued by employers and education and training were already in place in more than half of the EU+ countries before 2010. Arrangements vary between countries.

Making CVET attractive

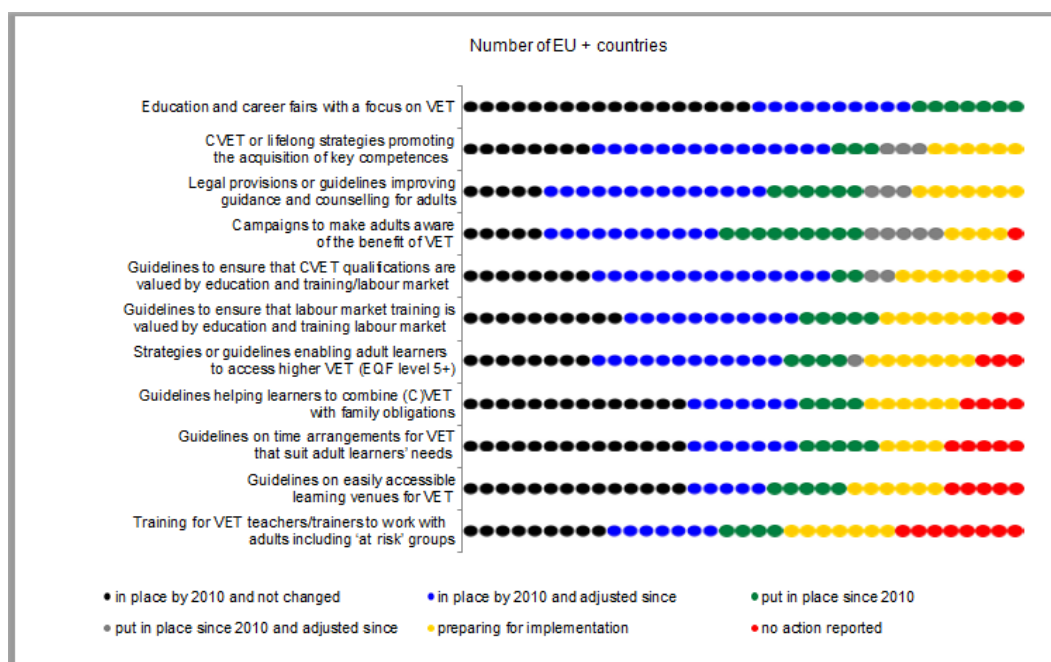
Agriculture skills training for job seekers of all ages in France is coupled with advice from professionals based on an agreement (2011) between the government and social partners from the sector. With 85% of the trainees indicating that they became active in agriculture or in related areas after training, the initiative is a success.

To ensure that training provision is aligned to labour market needs and to give learners the best progression opportunities possible, the United Kingdom (Wales) is introducing a funding model that requires providers to use labour market intelligence when planning their activities.

Federal and *Länder* governments in Germany offer funding (2011-20, ESF support) to universities to establish academic continuing education and to offer a wider range of continuing education and training programmes, which may be practice-based, accompany employment or take the form of dual study programmes, also improving permeability.

Source Cedefop, forthcoming a.

Figure 8 Progress towards Bruges short-term deliverables 7: participation in CVET in line with ET 2020 15% benchmark



Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet and the European Training Foundation (ETF) (Cedefop, forthcoming a).

Making learning arrangements suitable to the needs of learners and making learning venues easily accessible has been a priority for some countries since 2010, but more efforts need to be made, for example, with measures that ease combining CVET with family obligations and create suitable time arrangements to fit learner needs. Analyses show that comprehensive CVET policies require several complementary measures.

This chapter has provided an overview of the current state of CVET in Europe and shown that policy-makers face several challenges that need to be addressed to broaden access, increase participation and promote high-quality CVET. Key challenges that have direct impact on levels of access and participation include:

- (a) the fragmented nature of CVET provision;
- (b) the unequitable distribution of CVET opportunities, with the most vulnerable groups receiving the least training;
- (c) barriers to CVET participation (for example, time and costs) and provision (for example, awareness of training needs).

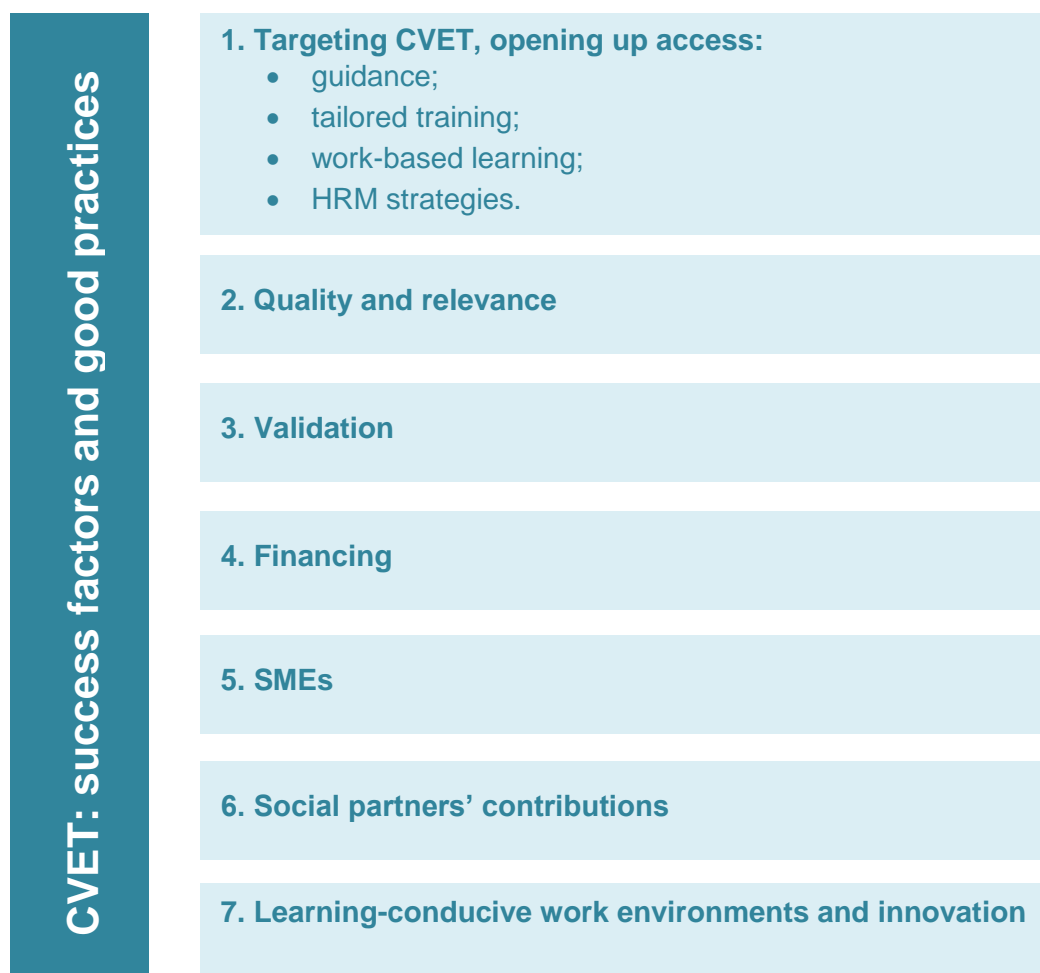
Chapter 4 outlines ways to overcome these challenges and serves as a source of inspiration. Key challenges and solutions are summarised in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4.

Success factors and good practices

What can be done to use the full potential that CVET has to offer for smart and inclusive growth? How can individuals, enterprises, the economy and society make the most of the benefits that CVET provides? This chapter describes success factors and good practices for ensuring high-quality provision and widening access to, and participation in, CVET. It aims to be a source of inspiration for all stakeholders and offers suggestions for key actions for decision-makers.

Figure 9 **Overview of conditions for enhancing CVET: success factors and good practices**



Source: Cedefop.

4.1. Opening up access to specific target groups

Vulnerable groups such as the low-qualified, older workers and migrants particularly need targeted support to raise their participation in lifelong learning and help them tackle labour market challenges. Figures show that training provided by employers is often unevenly and unequally distributed, and that disadvantaged groups are generally less likely to participate in lifelong learning (see Chapter 3). Reasons for this are manifold and include (Cedefop, 2011g; 2013a):

- (a) difficulty in accessing existing forms of training, due to external constraints imposed by human resources (HRM) priorities;
- (b) scarcity of suitable training provision;
- (c) lack of information and guidance;
- (d) other factors such as learning or language difficulties, poor self-confidence, lack of motivation and negative previous education experiences;
- (e) fewer learning-conducive work environments compared to other groups.

In times of demographic change and increasing skill demands, successful integration of vulnerable groups into society and the labour market is important for both economic and social purposes. The decline of birth rates in recent decades, along with progressive retirement (especially of the ‘baby boomers’, born between 1945 and 1965), leads to challenges in the labour market such as low replacement rates of qualified labour and changing age structures in enterprises. Further, Cedefop’s work on skills shows that most jobs – including those qualified as elementary – require increasingly higher skills or more complex skills sets, and it forecasts increasing demand for highly skilled professionals.

Targeted support from all stakeholders is needed to help vulnerable groups tackling labour market challenges and raising their participation in lifelong learning. What is the particular role of enterprises here? How can they support vulnerable groups and how can enterprises be supported? Though each vulnerable group has its own particularities, several general key success factors can be identified:

- (a) guidance services;
- (b) tailored learning;
- (c) work-based learning;
- (d) HRM strategies.

4.1.1. Guidance services and awareness-raising

Guidance enables individuals to identify and reflect on their capacities, competences and interests, to make education, training and occupation decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings (van

Loo et al., 2011). It plays a crucial role in reaching specific target groups such as older workers (Cedefop, 2011i) or migrants (Cedefop, forthcoming b), in socially responsible restructuring practices in enterprises (Cedefop, 2010b), and generally in supporting lifelong learning for all.

Why should employers provide guidance services to their employees? Through effective career guidance:

- (a) employees can become more aware of changes in the workplace, within their job or in the organisation and keener on keeping their skills current;
- (b) employers can explore the full potential of their workforce, adapt quickly to changing contexts and increase productivity (Cedefop, 2008a).

Despite mutual benefits, guidance for those in employment is still low (ibid.). Further, similar to CVET provision, this guidance mainly focuses on certain employees such as graduates and managers, while vulnerable groups are often less likely to receive guidance (ibid.). Employer engagement in guidance should be encouraged by policy-makers, for instance by:

- (a) making employers aware of their benefits;
- (b) giving examples of guidance practices in enterprises (Cedefop, 2008a);
- (c) providing support, particularly to SMEs.

Sustainable and successful guidance approaches are based on the following principles (Cedefop, 2011g; 2011i; forthcoming b):

- (a) recognising the diversity of different target groups and responsiveness to their needs; individual work and learning needs, goals and preferences need to be taken into account;
- (b) guidance approaches must be easily accessible, systematic and comprehensive: individuals need to be informed about guidance options and able to access them without barriers (in the case of guidance for migrants, it might be important to provide information in all relevant languages); guidance provision should be systematic and comprehensive, with links to other relevant services, such as employment or social security;
- (c) qualified personnel with appropriate resources: to ensure high quality, guidance should be provided by adequately trained staff with appropriate resources (such as time);
- (d) integration in wider strategy: guidance must be an integral part of comprehensive strategies (such as HRM strategies in enterprises, active labour market policies or national migration strategies);
- (e) joint support by all stakeholders: the provision of guidance is not just the responsibility of a few actors. National governments, regional and local authorities, private and public employers, the social partners, non-governmental organisations and others have a key role to play in developing

and implementing guidance approaches. In some countries (for example, the UK), unions provide guidance and learning services through union representatives who act as ‘learning ambassadors’ (see Section 4.6). Cross-sectoral and stakeholder cooperation and coordination are important to meet all needs.

How guidance services and information on lifelong learning opportunities can become better targeted to those who are currently not using CVET is crucial, and much still needs to be done in this respect (Cedefop, 2013c). While there seems to be no single solution, several key aspects can be identified, such as (ibid.) tailoring initiatives to the particular needs of vulnerable groups, taking key stakeholders such as refugee organisations on board, and using adequately trained and experienced staff (see, for example, the Female migrants fit for the labour market (*Migrantinnen fit für den Arbeitsmarkt*) (PIA) programme below). Further, guidance can also help policy-makers, training providers and other stakeholders to target CVET offers better to the needs of vulnerable groups. This is possible if the knowledge and experience from guidance, for example, on characteristics and individuals’ needs, is systematically fed back (Cedefop, forthcoming b).

Programme PIA ⁽¹⁴⁾

The main purpose of the German guidance programme PIA is to empower migrant women to integrate into the labour market. They become better informed about training options as well as validation and recognition procedures; activities include interviews, assessment, profiling, language training, information and coaching. The personnel involved in the activities is specialised in andragogy, consulting, economics, labour market analysis, marketing, HRM, intercultural competences, and often has experience of migration. The programme has combined funding from national authorities and the ESF. It relies on cooperation between job centres, private employment agencies and employers who want to contribute to society (corporate social responsibility) and, at the same time, access potential employees.

Source: Cedefop, forthcoming b.

Many countries have implemented specific guidelines or legal provision to support guidance for adults. They are in place in 28 EU+ countries, while others (Belgium (FR), Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Italy, Romania and Slovenia) are preparing for implementation (Cedefop, forthcoming a).

⁽¹⁴⁾ Project website: <http://www.berami.de/index.php?p=74> [accessed 10.9.2014].

Legal provision and guidelines for guidance

The European resource kit for policy-makers produced by the European lifelong guidance policy network (ELGPN) has been translated into national languages and actively disseminated in several countries, including Bulgaria, Spain, Croatia, Austria, and the UK (England).

Guidance for young learners and adults is included in the sectoral plans agreed between the Dutch government and social partners and jointly financed by the State. The amended VET law emphasises guidance.

Source: Cedefop, forthcoming a.

Guidance services are important in making individuals aware of lifelong learning opportunities, but there are other ways of providing information and raising awareness, such as social media or targeted activities by NGOs, chambers and trade unions (see Section 4.6). Guidance strategies benefit from being complemented by effective outreach strategies aimed at raising awareness and motivation among potential learners.

ELGPN

The ELGPN aims to support the development of lifelong guidance, and European cooperation on it, in both education and employment. It provides useful sources of information for policy-makers and practitioners, such as a database with lifelong guidance policy initiatives and practices, and descriptions of guidance systems ⁽¹⁵⁾.

4.1.2. Tailored training provision

Tailoring training provision to the specific needs of the learner is crucial. It can increase individual motivation and improve the outcomes of the training, and stimulate further learning. Tailoring the provision requires:

- (a) initial and continuing assessment of learner needs, including recognition of prior learning, whether from formal education or non-formal and informal learning. This is particularly relevant since the learning of vulnerable groups often happens outside the formal system; older workers have, for example, often acquired valuable knowledge, skills and competences during their working lives. Existing European guidelines (Cedefop, 2009e) and recommendations (Council of the EU, 2012) and the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning ⁽¹⁶⁾, including its thematic

⁽¹⁵⁾ <http://www.elgpn.eu/> [accessed 10.9.2014].

⁽¹⁶⁾ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/projects/validation-of-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory-scope.aspx> [accessed 10.9.2014].

- report on validation for specific target groups (European Commission et al., 2010), are valuable sources that also provide concrete examples of practice;
- (b) individual training plans: individual training plans should be set up based on identified learning needs, then regularly revised, also taking account of enterprise needs and its HR development strategy;
 - (c) adequately trained teachers and trainers;
 - (d) continuing guidance services and other support measures (such as childcare provision);
 - (e) the use of flexible training approaches that allow for individualisation, such as modular courses with flexible organisation and sequencing of learning, granting learners the capacity to choose when, what and how they will learn. Since learning styles and preferences differ, learning measures need to be designed accordingly. Certain forms of learning seem to be more suitable than others to particular target groups, for example, work-based learning.

Skills audits (*bilans de competences*)

In France, skills audits (*bilans de competences*) are well-developed tools. They are regulated by legislation and mostly for workers, but also for jobseekers. Skills audits allow individuals to analyse their professional and personal competences, their aptitudes and motivation, with a view to defining a professional or retraining project. A skills audit is personalised and does not lead to the award of a qualification.

According to the labour code (Article R6322-35 and followings), a skills audit:

- (a) can be requested by an employee or the employer, but cannot be imposed. It is assimilated to training activity and can be requested as part of the individual right to training and training leave;
- (b) must be carried out by an external accredited provider and include a preliminary phase, an investigation phase and a conclusion phase. The procedure must last at least 24 hours in total, including 10 hours of face-to-face interviews taking place over a period of three weeks to three months;
- (c) provides results in a synthesis document drawn up by the professional counsellor. It is confidential and summarises the competences and aptitudes uncovered and how these relate to the objectives of the candidate; it includes one to three proposals for career evolution as well as an action plan. Advice is given on necessary steps to reach the objectives in question.

Source: Cedefop and Duchemin, forthcoming.

4.1.3. Work-based learning

Work-based learning offers great potential for vulnerable groups. It is considered beneficial for older workers, as it is closely linked to professional practice and previous experience (Cedefop, 2012a). Work-based learning is also particularly powerful for the low-qualified (Cedefop, 2013a) who have often not been successful at school and have negative prior experience with formal education and training. Others may have left school early to start working at a young age,

without taking up learning later on. To most low-qualified adults, however, it is difficult to take up 'traditional' school training later in life, so work-based learning has the potential to be more attractive, relevant and suitable (ibid.).

Work-based learning can be defined as all formal, non-formal and informal learning in which work and work tasks are the predominant context for learning. It does not necessarily take place in one's own workplace, but generally in work-based contexts. It encompasses learning that takes place not only in real workplaces, but also elsewhere, for example, in simulated work environments designed to have characteristics of real workplaces. Work-based learning may be combined with other forms and lead to multiple types of learning such as individual, group and organisational. Work-based learning can be promoted in different ways in enterprises:

- (a) as part of training provision, for example, CVET courses that use work simulations, or planned and guided on-the-job training;
- (b) through learning-conducive work organisations and workplaces, which favour characteristics such as autonomy, teamwork, task variety and task complexity (see Section 4.7);
- (c) a combination of both; this requires comprehensive integration of various forms of learning with wider HR and management practices.

Employers do not only benefit from providing work-based learning to their own employees, but also to other groups such as unemployed adults. Enterprises that participate in work-based learning programmes for the (re-)integration of low-qualified unemployed adults into the labour market highlight benefits to recruitment (Cedefop, 2013a). They use work placements to test the suitability of potential candidates: many enterprises have developed close relationships with training organisations and rely on them to make a preselection and to provide a steady stream of potential recruits. For participants, the connection to employment opportunities is a major attraction. The involvement of employers and the establishment of close cooperation and relationships of trust is a key success factor.

Evidence suggests that active labour market policies would benefit from including more programmes that encourage employer-involvement and provide learning opportunities which combine the development of key competences and occupational skills through work-based learning (ibid.).

4.1.4. HRM strategies

Enterprises need to have comprehensive, forward-looking HRM strategies that systematically integrate different measures into a comprehensive overall approach. Interrelated key determinants can, for example, be identified for the

successful integration of older workers and adaptation to demographic change, (Cedefop, 2012a):

- (a) health and functional work capacities (physical, mental and social capacities); support age-appropriate ergonomics and preventive health programmes that promote physical, mental and social health;
- (b) values, attitudes and motivation; combat negative stereotypes and build on positive perceptions of age, such as experience, loyalty, reliability; raise older workers' self-image as learners;
- (c) work environment, work organisation, management and leadership; introduce flexible working and retirement schemes and management approaches that are adapted to an ageing workforce;
- (d) education and training; promote learning and ensure that it is tailored to the particular needs of older workers; use the potential of intergenerational learning.

Comprehensive age management strategy

BMW group's age management strategy Today for tomorrow (*Heute für morgen*) is a holistic model with five fields of action in an integrated approach:

- (a) qualifications: investment in training and education, including specific training for older workers, focusing on work-oriented learning and information technology qualifications;
- (b) health management: providing a variety of measures and learning activities to promote and improve the health of their workforce, such as ergonomics, exercise and diet;
- (c) work environment: introducing productivity-improving changes such as managing health care, enhancing worker skills and the working environment, change management processes and working time policies;
- (d) retirement models: providing a range of retirement options and a profit-sharing scheme for future retirees;
- (e) communications and change management: developing awareness among managerial staff of the changes taking place, including training about handling demographic change, monitoring the training and performance of older workers, and an electronic portal for employees.

With the involvement of all employees, from production managers to line workers, BMW has developed a new type of production line (Line 2017) adapted to an ageing workforce. A total of 70 changes were introduced to workplace equipment that reduced physical strain and the chances of error, such as magnifying lenses to minimise sorting errors. BMW reports that the total costs were only EUR 40 000, but increased productivity by 7% in one year and dropped absenteeism to below 2%. This initiative is a good example of how enterprises can redesign the work environment for, and also with, older workers.

Source: European Commission et al., 2012; Loch et al. 2010.

There still seems to be a so-called 'ageing paradox': although employers view population ageing as an important trend that may have negative consequences for their business, they are not sufficiently adapting their HRM strategies accordingly (Dehmel and van Loo, 2012). Larger employers are more likely to have comprehensive age management strategies than SMEs (European Commission et al., 2012) so focus should be on supporting the development of adequate approaches in SMES. This is a joint responsibility of employers, trade unions and public authorities, at national, regional, local and sectoral level.

Empowering vulnerable adults to tackle labour market challenges: examples of successful initiatives

Empowering vulnerable adults to tackle labour market challenges (Cedefop, 2013c) presents 29 successful initiatives that focus on providing vulnerable adults (migrants and ethnic minorities, low-qualified and older workers) with support for successful integration into the labour market: information and lifelong guidance, access to vocational programmes, opportunities to learn and stay longer in employment, and opportunities to upgrade, assess and recognise their skills and competences.

All initiatives have been selected by participants in study visits for education and vocational training specialists and decision-makers, a programme coordinated by Cedefop on behalf of, and in cooperation with, the European Commission, from 2007-13. Each description presents the context where the practice is implemented, its objectives, expected outcomes and target groups, main actors involved, activities undertaken, duration, impact, potential for transferability to other contexts and contact information. This can help decision-makers and practitioners to find partners for cooperation projects and networks at national and European levels.

Key actions

Enterprises:

- (a) develop comprehensive, forward-looking HRM strategies that explicitly cover all groups, including the disadvantaged, and integrate CVET firmly into these strategies; revise them regularly;
- (b) tailor CVET to the needs of different target groups, for example, by using assessment of learners' needs, flexible training approaches and guidance services;
- (c) use the full potential of different forms of CVET, for example, work-based learning.

Policy-makers:

- (a) support enterprises, particularly SMEs, through different measures, such as concrete practice examples and suggestions or targeted funding;
- (b) successful integration of vulnerable groups requires joint action. Promote cooperation among national governments, regional and local authorities, NGOs, social partners and enterprises.

4.2. CVET quality and relevance

Quality assurance and improvement, as well as relevance, are critical to CVET success. High quality CVET that is relevant to the requirements of employers and employees can increase participation and willingness to invest in learning. Access to high quality CVET that meets enterprises' requirements can stimulate them to invest more in training.

A European quality assurance reference framework for VET was established in 2009 to improve VET quality ⁽¹⁷⁾. It provides a common, overarching framework and tools to improve, monitor and evaluate quality assurance policies and practices. The quality cycle for quality assurance and improvement in VET is structured around four repeated steps for continuous improvement. Quality criteria and indicative descriptors at system and at provider level are set out for each phase. It is useful for enterprises who want to ensure and improve quality in their CVET.

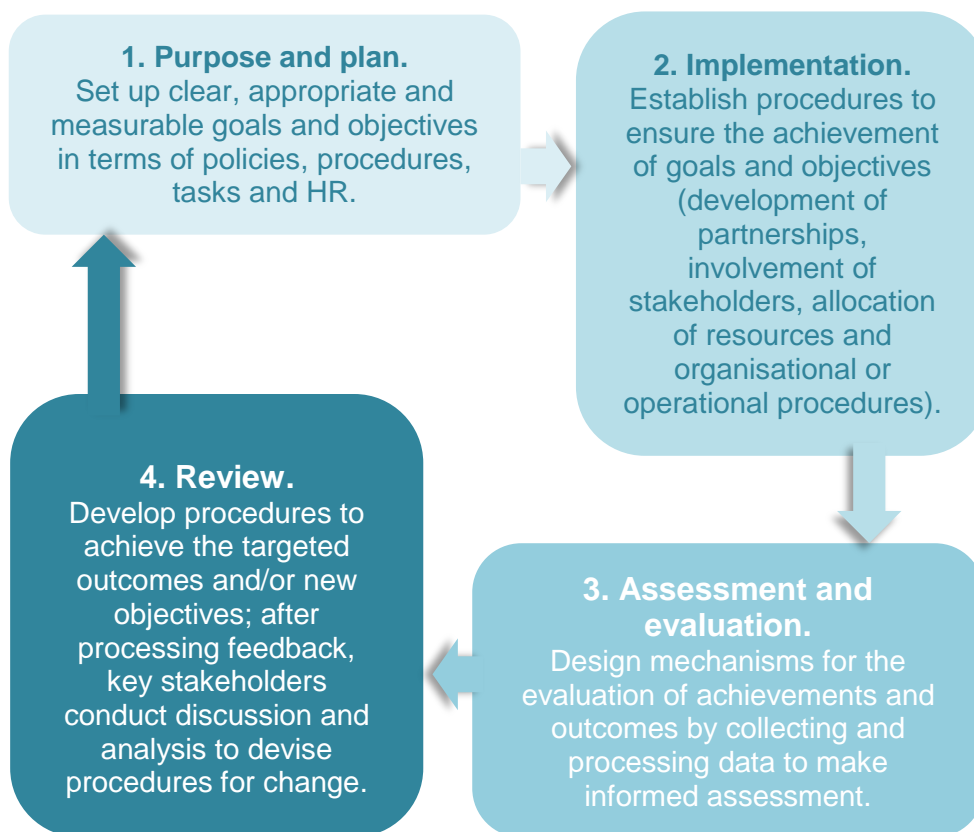
The quality cycle was developed by the EQAVET network ⁽¹⁸⁾ a platform that brings together the EU Member States, the social partners and the European Commission. Key activities in their 2013-15 work programme are sectoral workshops, with a focus on work-based learning and CVET (European Commission and EQAVET, 2013).

As an integral part of EQAVET, quality assurance national reference points in EU Member States provide support in developing and implementing national approaches to quality assurance, disseminate information on EU developments, and raise awareness of quality assurance. They also offer advice to stakeholders.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European quality assurance reference framework for VET (2009/c 155/01).

⁽¹⁸⁾ <http://www.eqavet.eu> [accessed 10.9.2014].

Figure 10 **European quality assurance in VET (EQAVET) quality cycle**



Source: European Commission and EQAVET, 2013.

The progress report confirms that EQAVET has contributed to advancing quality in VET in European countries, notably through the development of practical tools (European Commission, 2014). Today, most Member States have quality standards for VET providers; they are mainly used as a condition for funding, accreditation and/or are required as part of legislation (ibid.). However, further efforts for CVET, such as quality assurance approaches for CVET providers and measures that are 'geared to the diverse reality of continuing VET and to the specific features of work-based learning' (European Commission, 2014, p. 9) are needed. Quality assurance measures include:

- (a) internal quality assurance approaches (Cedefop, 2014b);
- (b) external quality assurance mechanisms, where the existence and use of appropriate procedures is verified by external bodies.

Ideally, both complement each other: internal quality management needs to correspond to the requirements of national and/or other relevant accreditation schemes, for example, sectoral ones. Accreditation of VET providers or CVET programmes is a driving force for improving quality in VET (Cedefop, 2011h).

Sectoral example of quality assurance framework

The quality framework established by the European Banking Training Association (EBTN) ⁽¹⁹⁾ is characterised by strong focus on delivery of certificates on assessment of learning outcomes, agreed between the European bank training network and its member organisations, and application of a standard examination model. The framework asks for a system of quality assurance that includes regular evaluation, review and updating of assessment procedures. The accreditation system was introduced with the aim of increasing visibility and comparability among organisations from different countries and supporting the employability and mobility of employees in the European financial services sector.

Source: Cedefop, 2011h.

For enterprises, the quality of CVET provision is of critical importance to ensure maximum returns on HR development investments. A quality approach to all the components (planning, implementation, evaluation, review) of CVET as integral part of a wider HR development strategy is indispensable. Cedefop studies that analyse *Quality in VET in European SMEs* (Cedefop, 2009e; 2010c) recommend stronger support mechanisms for SMEs to upgrade quality in training services.

Sources for the development of quality approaches for CVET

There are various other useful sources of inspiration and guidance for stakeholders that complement the material provided within the framework of EQAVET ⁽²⁰⁾. The European Commission's thematic working group on Quality in adult learning (2012-13) has developed recommendations for policy-makers and a toolbox of practical tools, such as a framework for the accreditation of providers and a staff quality checklist, along with a staff profiling grid (European Commission, 2013g). The European Commission's study *Quality in the adult learning sector* (European Commission, 2013h) also provides relevant information. The quality assurance in lifelong learning network highlights good practice and puts forward recommendations to support cooperation ⁽²¹⁾. Further, there is much Cedefop work on quality in VET with encompassing analyses, recommendations and practice examples (Cedefop, 2009a; 2010c; 2011j; 2011h; forthcoming d).

Among the various factors that contribute to quality in CVET, key drivers are trainers (Cedefop, 2011g). Solid initial training and continuous professional development, as well as improvements of their status and recognition, are crucial, especially considering the increasing complexity of their work (Cedefop, 2011g; 2013b). Research shows that trainers do often not engage in training due

⁽¹⁹⁾ <http://www.ebtn-association.eu/> [accessed 10.9.2014].

⁽²⁰⁾ <http://www.eqavet.eu> [accessed 10.9.2014].

⁽²¹⁾ <http://www.qalll.eu/> [accessed 10.9.2014].

to many reasons, such as lack of incentives (for example, improved career prospects), limited training opportunities and insufficient recognition and support by employers (Cedefop, 2011g; European Commission, 2008).

‘The training and professional development of trainers require further strategic action, as well as imaginative and flexible approaches, since trainers are the champions of quality in continuing training’ (Cedefop, 2011g, p. 95).

Having professional standards and competence frameworks for trainers, at national and/or sectoral level, can contribute to enhancing qualification and status of trainers. The introduction of quality assurance mechanisms can also improve the situation of trainers, as in quality standards for CVET providers that include qualification and professional development requirements for trainers.

Key driver to quality: professional development of CVET teachers and trainers

Since 2010, most trainers in Ireland have been required to undergo continuing professional development. In Slovakia, ESF projects supported the development of modularised training programmes for CVET trainers. Training teachers and trainers to work with adults has been a priority in Montenegro. The country’s adult education law prescribes such training and the VET centre has organised it.

Source: Cedefop, forthcoming a.

On a system level, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance mechanisms should be linked and work together systematically (Cedefop, 2013e).

Links between quality assurance and qualifications frameworks

The 2008 EQF recommendation lays out in Annex III the principles of quality assurance that must underpin implementation of the framework. This has been taken forward in the 10 criteria governing referencing of NQFs to the EQF. Criteria five and six explicitly refer to the need to document existing quality assurance arrangements, underlining the importance of these for ensuring confidence when comparing NQFs. The 2009 recommendation on EQAVET further states that the framework should ‘support the implementation of EQF, in particular the quality of the certification of learning outcomes’ (Cedefop 2013e, p. 1).

Closely related to quality is the issue of CVET relevance. Continuous and systematic renewal is of critical importance because CVET needs to reflect the requirements of enterprises and employees. Relevance of the CVET offer – both in terms of forms of learning used as well as in terms of content – can increase participation. Further, access to CVET that meets enterprises’ requirements can stimulate more investment in training.

As shown in a study on IVET, labour market research and skills forecasting play a crucial role in supporting improvements, and efficient feedback mechanisms need to be in place to ensure that their findings are taken into account (Cedefop, 2013d). This is at least equally as important for CVET and mechanisms that build on the following characteristics seem beneficial:

- (a) the use of existing up-to-date sources of information and expertise, as well as the generation of own knowledge, for example, through comprehensive HRM strategies in enterprises (see Section 3.1);
- (b) cooperation between different stakeholders, for example, through networks such as the Irish skillsnet (see Section 4.5) or the contribution of social partners to the identification of skill shortages and training needs through sectoral training funds that support forecasting activities (see Section 4.6);
- (c) responsiveness and continuous dialogue between CVET providers and enterprises, as well as other stakeholders, to ensure that informed decisions and actions are taken in due course.

Skill supply and demand forecasts

Cedefop's skill supply and demand forecasts provide comprehensive information on future labour market trends in Europe. They support labour market actors (employers, policy-makers, social partners) in making informed decisions ⁽²²⁾.

4.3. Validation in HR development strategies

Much learning is taking place outside formal education and training, for example, through informal learning at the workplace, or during leisure time activities. Older workers have often acquired valuable knowledge, skills and competences during their working lives; low-qualified adults might have accumulated skills in non-formal and informal contexts, even if they have not achieved any formal qualification. Making visible, valuing and using knowledge, skills and competences – no matter where and how they were acquired – is crucial, and validation is the key instrument.

⁽²²⁾ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/projects/forecasting-skill-demand-and-supply/skills-forecasts.aspx> [accessed 10.9.2014].

Key actions

Enterprises:

- (a) ensure that systematic and effective quality approaches to all phases of CVET (planning, implementation, evaluation, review) are in place. The quality circle and other material by EQAVET provide useful sources;
- (b) ensure that CVET is relevant to you and your employees' current and future needs, and cooperate with other stakeholders in this respect.

Policy-makers:

- (a) trainers are key drivers of quality. Ensure adequate initial training and continuous professional development of trainers and improve their status and recognition;
- (b) establish a quality assurance approach for CVET providers;
- (c) support enterprises, especially SMEs, in developing and implementing quality assurance mechanisms for CVET, for example, by promoting the instruments developed by EQAVET or by encouraging sectoral approaches;
- (d) ensure links between quality assurance mechanisms and qualification frameworks;
- (e) implement and support mechanisms that promote relevance of CVET, such as labour market research and forecasting activities and effective feedback mechanisms which ensure that findings are taken into account.

Validation is the process of identifying, assessing and recognising knowledge, skills and competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal settings. In enterprises, it is usually referred to as competence assessment (Cedefop, 2014b). Over recent years, validation has become a cornerstone in lifelong learning policies because of its potential to broaden access to, and increase participation in, lifelong learning. The 2012 Council recommendation on validation reflects its increasing importance (Council of the EU, 2012). Validation plays an important role in:

- (a) strengthening individual employability and mobility;
- (b) improving the functionality of the labour market;
- (c) increasing participation in learning, especially for disadvantaged groups (ibid.).

The learning of vulnerable groups often happens outside formal education and training. Reasons for this vary and include prior negative experience (Cedefop, 2013a) or lacking opportunities. Validation opens up access and stimulates participation in lifelong learning in various ways. It is an alternative method of gaining access to formal qualifications, even for those who may not, for various reasons, be able or wish to engage in education and training in formal settings (European Commission et al., 2010). Getting a formal qualification might then open up other education pathways and encourage further learning.

To make use of the full potential of validation, it is important to stress that ‘validation cannot be the exclusive responsibility of education and training authorities. It involves a broad group of stakeholders, including employers, trade unions, chambers of commerce and industry, education and training institutions as well as civil society organisations’ (Cedefop, 2014b, p. 5).

All stakeholders need to work together, with a coherent approach to validation. A recent Cedefop study that examined the use of validation in more than 400 European enterprises showed that it is largely firm-specific; the study also identified a lack of connection between validation (assessment) practices in enterprises and public validation practices, which leads to the problem that employees can rarely use the assessment results outside the particular company. As they remain invisible for other labour market actors, transferability and comparability across companies is hampered, neither building on nor contributing to the full potential that validation has to offer (Cedefop, 2014b).

Validation: comprehensiveness and take-up

In France, Ireland, Norway, Slovenia and Sweden, adults have the legal right to have their non-formally and informally acquired knowledge, skills and competence validated. But take-up can be limited if this regulation is not binding, procedures differ, or people are simply not aware of existing opportunities. Employees should get the chance to use their validated skills for further education and training and new jobs outside their current working environment.

Source: Cedefop, forthcoming a.

Validation practices should be an integral part of HR development strategies in enterprises. They offer many benefits and enterprises can use validation for (Cedefop, 2014b; 2009e):

- (a) recruitment of new employees: to complement the information provided through qualifications, certificates and other documents, and to check if a candidate really fits the particular post; selecting inappropriate recruits can be very costly;
- (b) personnel development: to determine learning needs and to tailor CVET around this information; resources might be saved if the time to complete a qualification can be reduced; further, validation can increase employees’ self-assurance, their motivation in learning and be a useful tool in guidance provision;
- (c) career progress and promotion decisions: to identify and develop successors or for management positions;
- (d) organisational change: to have comprehensive information on available human capital; this is important in case of company restructuring, if

- employees must be reallocated to other activities; validation is also an important tool for supporting redundant workers;
- (e) other reasons, such as reintegrating employees after long-term absences, mapping human capital in the company's knowledge management systems or as part of quality assurance/management systems. Validation has also some other positive 'side' effects. An employee's reflection on his/her own practice can stimulate new developments in terms of work organisation (Cedefop, 2009b).

The degree of systematisation and formalisation of validation approaches in enterprises differs and depends on sector and enterprise size. Large enterprises and those that have a sizeable share of 'knowledge workers' use more comprehensive and formalised approaches. The range of methods and instruments for validation is broad and includes:

- (a) CV screening;
- (b) interviews;
- (c) observation;
- (d) work samples;
- (e) simulations;
- (f) psychometric tests.

Among the success factors for validation in enterprises are (Cedefop, 2014b):

- (a) ensuring adequate competence and experience of assessors, including proper training;
- (b) having a person evaluated by more than one assessor;
- (c) careful identification and definition of job requirements as a basis for specifying assessment criteria;
- (d) defining assessment criteria and scales as precisely as possible; they should be related to, and specified by, concrete behaviour;
- (e) using a mix of assessment methods and instruments to increase reliability;
- (f) high standardisation and systematisation of the overall process;
- (g) embedding validation as an integral part of business HR development strategy;
- (h) encouraging employee acceptance of validation, for example, through good prior communication and information, creating an atmosphere of openness and trust, and involving employees or their representatives.

Practical tools for developing validation approaches

Two practical tools help in developing validation practices. The European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning provides regularly updated information on current practices in Europe, a catalogue of good practice examples, and thematic studies (such as validation methodologies) ⁽²³⁾. The European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning (Cedefop, 2009e) give expert advice for stakeholders involved with validation at national, regional and local level. Cedefop work on validation also provides analyses, recommendations and concrete examples for validation in enterprises (Cedefop, 2014b).

Due to their limited resources, SMEs face diverse challenges and would profit from more collaborative, inter-firm initiatives. An example is developing joint assessment standards among organisations within an association or a group, such as an umbrella organisation of hospitals and care centres. Another type is (sectoral) initiatives of employer associations and trade unions, partly governed by collective agreements, such as in the metalworking industry in France (Cedefop, 2014b). Overall, however, few companies participate in such initiatives, although they offer many benefits, such as increasing transferability of validation results through common standards and approaches, and making more sophisticated validation approaches affordable to SMEs (Cedefop, 2014b).

Examples of collaborative, inter-firm validation approaches

Organised within the business association *Wirtschaftskammer Österreich*, the Austrian banking industry developed a validation and certification scheme for specialists in security papers administration. It aims at safeguarding the transparency and quality of employee competences. Certification is carried out by an independent, accredited body using standards defined and adopted by the industry. Receiving the certificate requires two years of relevant job experience, an employer's recommendation, and written and oral examinations. Validity of the certificate is limited in time and requires recertification.

Koivupirtin säätiö, a foundation working in the social care sector in Finland and providing housing services for the elderly, is participating in the *Palkeet* project with several similar organisations. A joint skill charting, with three different sections, has been developed to assess:

- (a) different daily routines;
- (b) procedure skills;
- (c) employee knowledge of different diseases.

There are 84 items listed in the *Palkeet* skill-charting; numeric grades from one to five are used. Competence assessment at *Koivupirtin säätiö* is not only based on the 'skill charting, but complemented by other measures such as client feedback and performance reviews.

Source: Cedefop, 2014b.

⁽²³⁾ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/projects/validation-of-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory.aspx> [accessed 11.9.2014].

Key actions

Enterprises:

- (a) embed validation as an integral part in your HR development strategy and use its full potential, for example, for recruitment, organisational change and personnel development;
- (b) review your validation practices and make sure that you use key success factors for validation, such as adequately trained assessors and a combination of different assessment methods;
- (c) join forces with other enterprises to develop common standards and approaches, and to benefit from transferability of validation results as well as from the possibility to develop more sophisticated practices.

Policy-makers:

- (a) promote the development of collaborative, inter-firm initiatives that use common validation standards and approaches, for example, through awareness-raising and the provision of advice, guidance and financial support;
- (b) support initiatives that allow adults to use the knowledge, skills and competences validated in enterprises for further education and training and labour market mobility.

4.4. Financial schemes and shared investment

Costs remain one of the main obstacles to training, both for individuals and companies (European Commission, 2012; Institute for Education and Socioeconomic Research and Consulting (Forschungsinstitut für Bildungs- und Sozialökonomie) (FIBS) and German Institute for Adult Education (Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung) (DIE), 2013). Financial incentives and funding mechanisms can help increase CVET access, participation and provision.

‘Ensuring a viable and transparent system for the funding of adult learning, based on shared responsibility with a high level of public commitment to the sector and support for those who cannot pay, balanced distribution of funds across the lifelong-learning continuum, appropriate contribution to funding from all stakeholders and the exploration of innovative means for more effective and efficient financing’ is therefore a priority in the renewed European agenda for adult learning (Council of the EU, 2011). It also calls for making better use of existing financing instruments. The Bruges communique sets the objective of establishing appropriate frameworks with the right mix of incentives, rights and obligations to support enterprise investment in training (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2010). Shared responsibility between public authorities,

enterprises and individuals is important when investing in learning (ibid; European Commission, 2012).

Toolkit for funding policies and instruments

To improve the efficiency, effectiveness and coherence of funding for adult learning, the European Commission set up a thematic working group on financing adult learning (2012-13). The group developed suggestions for policy-makers and a toolkit of different instruments that can be used to review and develop funding policies (European Commission, 2013b). It also provides practice examples. Other useful sources of information are the European Commission's recent study on *Financing the adult learning sector* (FIBS/DIE, 2013) and Cedefop work on financing VET (Cedefop, 2008b; 2009b; 2009c; 2009d; 2012c; 2012e).

Cost-sharing approaches (contribution by at least two parties) exist in many different forms in the Member States. Some approaches target individuals and some target enterprises (European Commission, 2012).

4.4.1. Financial incentives for individuals to stimulate participation

- (a) Loan schemes: these can be public or private and allow individuals to borrow financial resources – often subsidised by the government – to cover (part of) their CVET-related costs. Repayment is either in fixed instalments (mortgage-type or conventional loans), or dependent on the borrower's income (income-contingent loans) (Cedefop, 2012c). Cedefop's review of loan schemes in 33 European countries shows that most aim at higher education, not CVET, and reveals some principles for design and implementation of schemes: extended eligibility, flexible repayment with built-in income safeguard, and synergies with other financing instruments, such as grants to support disadvantaged groups (Cedefop, 2012c).
- (b) Tax-based schemes: participation in CVET can be encouraged through various tax incentives, for example, tax allowances or tax credits (Cedefop, 2009b; 2009c). As they favour the employed with high incomes, additional measures such as tax-based schemes targeted to particular groups or income-related grants should be used to complement financing through taxation (ibid.). Tax incentives seem an effective means to stimulate participation but, on their own, they are insufficient and should be considered as a supplementary and not as a main tool (ibid.).
- (c) Individual learning accounts, vouchers and training allowances: these are the most widely used instruments in Europe (European Commission, 2012). They give individuals purchasing power (in the form of vouchers or money) for learning and result in demand-led financing that affects the supply (Cedefop, 2009d; 2011g). Giving freedom of choice to learners could increase their motivation. It could also lead to stronger competition on the

training market and increase the quality, relevance and diversity of training provision. Mechanisms such as the accreditation of programmes eligible for submission of vouchers can be used to ensure that supply meets the required standards. Further, comprehensive and easily accessible information systems, enabling information flow between supply and demand side, are necessary (European Commission, 2012; Hundt, 2001). As disadvantaged groups seem to have difficulties in making use of subsidies and in taking considered decisions based on available information (FIBS/DIE, 2013), support mechanisms such as guidance services need to be in place.

- (d) Training leave: time constraints – due to family responsibilities or work schedules – are one of the main reasons for not participating in learning (AES). Granting paid or unpaid leave for learning purposes, based on statutory rights and/or through collective agreements, is a major support instrument used in almost all European countries, often combined with other financial incentives (Cedefop, 2012d). SMEs experience difficulties in using training leave due to work organisation and limited HR (ibid.).

4.4.2. Employer incentives to stimulate CVET provision and participation

- (a) Compulsory arrangements: levy schemes. Financial commitment by employers to CVET can be ensured through compulsory levy schemes, of a certain percentage (fixed by governments or collective agreements) of company's payroll (European Commission, 2012). They can be at sectoral level in the form of sectoral training funds (Cedefop, 2008b), or at national or regional level. Some countries, including France, have 'train-or-pay' schemes in which companies can reduce or exempt their levy obligation if they finance employee training (Cedefop, 2008a).
- (b) Non-compulsory arrangements: subsidies, tax incentives and payback clauses. Subsidies can be used to share the employers' direct and indirect costs of training; they are often targeted, perhaps to SMEs or disadvantaged learners. Employer investment in CVET can also be encouraged through various incentives such as tax allowances, exemptions or credits (Cedefop, 2009b; 2009c). Payback clauses are used in most European countries and address the companies' fear of failed investment in HR development if an employee leaves (shortly) after training (Cedefop, 2012e). This can be regulated at national, social partner or company level and involves the repayment of training costs if the employee decides to end the employment relationship.

Cedefop database on cost-sharing schemes

The new, regularly updated Cedefop database on financing adult learning (<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/FinancingAdultLearning/> [accessed 11.9.2014]) provides information on design and performance of cost-sharing schemes in 27 EU Member States for adults (age 25 and above) to increase participation and private investment in formal and non-formal education and training, including higher education. The schemes covered are: training funds, tax incentives, grants, vouchers/individual learning accounts, loans, training leave and payback clauses. In all schemes, at least two parties contribute to the costs: governments – including EU funding – companies/employers and individuals/employees.

Despite their many potential advantages, financial schemes have possible drawbacks that vary among the instruments and should be taken into account when designing and implementing measures (for an overview, see European Commission, 2013b). Among these are heavy administrative burdens and deadweight losses. The latter occur if financial incentives do not result in increased participation or provision, where high-skilled individuals – in the case of tax incentives – or large enterprises – in the case of levy schemes – would have paid for training themselves if no financial support was available. It is important to avoid reinforcing inequalities of participation in training by specific categories of adults or types of enterprises (Cedefop, 2011g); effective monitoring and evaluation can help.

Since funding is only one of many factors that determine CVET access, provision and participation, financial schemes need to be combined with a range of other instruments (Cedefop, 2011g). Those illustrated in this handbook include initiatives that encourage partnerships and involvement of all stakeholders, and services that provide guidance for learners and advice to enterprises. This is especially important when it comes to groups such as SMEs or disadvantaged adults.

Key actions

Enterprises:

- (a) make efficient use of the financial incentives and funding schemes available for enterprises to support learning and encourage employees to invest in their learning, using funding opportunities provided to them;
- (b) use partnerships and network approaches to learning, for example, at sectoral level, to share costs for training and benefit from economies of scale;
- (c) review investment in training regularly and see that available resources are used as efficiently as possible.

Policy-makers:

- (a) make sure that the system for funding CVET is transparent and easy to use for individuals and companies. Provide targeted advisory services to particular groups such as SMEs or disadvantaged adults;
- (b) ensure coherence and efficiency of the funding system and implement effective monitoring and evaluation arrangements;
- (c) use a combination of incentives, rights and obligations to stimulate enterprise investment in CVET;
- (d) explore innovative means of funding CVET through cost-sharing approaches;
- (e) encourage enterprises, individuals and other stakeholders to invest in CVET, for example, through awareness-raising campaigns about the benefits of investing in learning.

4.5. HR development and CVET provision in SMEs

Representing more than 99% of all enterprises in the EU, SMEs are the backbone of the European economy (European Commission, 2013c) ⁽²⁴⁾. SMEs tend to be less formal and unstructured in their approaches to CVET or – broader HR development – than larger enterprises, with on-the-job competence development as a natural part of day-to-day work and a predominance of non-formal learning. Especially in micro and small enterprises, practice usually critically depends on the initiative of one or two persons, typically the company-owner or manager (Cedefop, 2008b; 2011h). SMEs face several constraints when it comes to HR development and CVET (European Commission, 2009a):

- (a) organisational barriers;
- (b) lack of financial resources;
- (c) mismatch between actual training needs and supply.

⁽²⁴⁾ SMEs are defined as enterprises with fewer than 250 employees.

Practical questions they face include (ibid.):

- (a) how to identify training suited to the particular needs of the enterprise;
- (b) how to organise training and working tasks in a way that allows employees to participate in training without disrupting normal business;
- (c) given limited HR, how to deal with programme administrative requirements and incentives that promote CVET.

To overcome these obstacles, SMEs need the following in place:

- (a) support measures, including information and guidance: adequate support measures for SMEs are important. They should include a combination of different policy measures (such as programmes that encourage partnerships between enterprises and other actors, see below), funding opportunities and systematic information and guidance (European Commission, 2009a). They have to be adapted to the particular needs of SMEs and should be flexible, easily accessible and simple. For example, training vouchers appear to be advantageous for funding SMEs because of 'their simplicity, their positive impact in raising awareness of training needs, and their efficiency in meeting supply and demand, while respecting freedom of choice' (Cedefop, 2011g, p. 70; 2009b; European Commission, 2009a). Comprehensive information and guidance services are also needed. A European Commission study on training in SMEs comes to the conclusion that 'plenty of opportunities exist for SMEs, but the right information is often missing. SMEs might not always be aware of these opportunities, considering them inaccessible or not intended for them' (European Commission, 2009a, p. 80). This highlights the need for supporting SMEs in accessing information, taking decisions, applying for measures and implementing them;

Guides for training in SMEs

The European Commission's *Guide for training in SMEs* (European Commission, 2009a) provides key actors involved in SME training (company owners, social partners, training providers) with information on how training and skills development can be developed. It is built around three topics:

- (a) improving framework conditions of training and skills development;
- (b) developing suitable training methods and techniques;
- (c) addressing current and structural challenges of competence development.

The guide is accompanied by an annex with 50 examples of good practice (European Commission, 2009b), and also gives useful information on European initiatives and support measures. Further information and practice examples can be found in various Cedefop work (Cedefop, 2008b; 2009e; 2011h).

- (b) suitable learning approaches: learning provision needs to be adapted to the specific needs and constraints of SMEs (European Commission, 2009a). Flexible forms of learning, such as using coaches in the workplace to teach

new tasks, self-regulated learning or distance learning through modern technologies can be beneficial in various ways: these include potential supply-related reasons (absence of relevant training centres close by), and organisational ones (difficulty in sending a worker out, as this might cause disruption of work) (ibid.). The *Guide for training in SMEs* (European Commission, 2009a; 2009b) shows a rich diversity of innovative practices and can inspire action. Learning opportunities of a more non-formal and informal nature seem particularly suitable for SMEs, and the creation of learning-conducive work environments (see Section 4.7) should be supported. Due to the prevalence of informal learning in SMEs, validation of learning outcomes acquired on the job plays a significant role in encouraging learning and opening further education and training opportunities for employees in SMEs (Cedefop, 2011g);

Open educational resources (OER) in CVET

New technologies provide innovative ways of teaching and learning. Among them are OER, 'learning resources that are usable, adaptable to specific learning needs, and shareable freely' (European Commission, 2013d, p. 3), such as massive open online courses (MOOCs). MOOCs are online course aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web. They provide access not only to course materials such as videos, readings and problem sets but also interactive forums allowing learners, educators, and institutions to create, share and discuss content. MOOCs started off in higher education, but have now also entered the business world and provide enterprises with new CVET opportunities (Gurden, 2014):

- (a) (groups of) enterprises or sectoral bodies, can develop their own MOOCs;
- (b) enterprises/employees can use already existing MOOCs that fit their needs.

- (c) partnerships: SMEs have less capacity than large enterprises to operate comprehensive HR development strategies, but partnership approaches are a powerful way of overcoming constraints and so should be encouraged (Cedefop, 2009a; 2011g; European Commission, 2009a). Partnerships between enterprises and other actors (social partners, technology centres, public authorities and VET providers) allow economies of scale through common needs analysis and joint training provision. They also offer other opportunities that go beyond pure HR development issues, such as platforms for creating new business contacts and networking, for establishing joint work and common strategies to respond to sectoral changes, and for innovation transfer. Such partnerships are also crucial for the development of learning regions (Cedefop, 2003; 2007).

Network approaches to learning

In Ireland, there has been significant policy emphasis on a network approach to training involving SMEs, leading to several initiatives such as the Irish skillnets programme ⁽²⁵⁾. Skillnets has operated since 1999, is mandated by the department of education and skills and funded through the national training fund. It supports the development of enterprise-led learning networks which promote capacity building and engagement in learning. There are several reasons for the success of these networks: they match specific SME training needs, offer solutions for organisational barriers, and assist in anticipating change. Skillnets also focus on disadvantaged groups such as the unemployed, who receive support in finding employment, for example, through integrated training with employees and work placements in areas of employment potential.

Source: Cedefop 2009e; European Commission, 2009b; Skillnets, 2012.

Key actions

Enterprises:

- (a) use flexible and diverse forms of learning as well as innovative practices to adapt learning to the specific needs and constraints of the enterprise, including distance learning and coaching in the workplace;
- (b) develop partnerships between enterprises and other actors to benefit from economies of scale in CVET/HR development, through common need analysis and joint training provision;
- (c) take advantage of opportunities provided specifically to SMEs.

Policy-makers:

- (a) implement easy-accessible, flexible and comprehensive support systems for SMEs which include information and guidance services for CVET-related issues, such as funding opportunities;
- (b) support the development of partnerships and innovative learning approaches for SMEs, for example, through publicly-funded programmes.

4.6. The crucial role of social partners

National and European social partners play a crucial role in promoting CVET, opening up access for all and increasing participation rates (Cedefop, 2011g; OECD, 2003). Their commitment is very important, as is their cooperation

⁽²⁵⁾ <http://www.skillnets.ie> [accessed 11.9.2014].

through social dialogue or joint initiatives. The joint strategy of the European social partner organisations ⁽²⁶⁾ focuses on four priorities (ETUC et al., 2002):

- (a) anticipation and identification of competence and qualification needs;
- (b) recognition and validation of competences and qualifications;
- (c) information, support and guidance;
- (d) mobilising resources.

They are followed up through joint work programmes (ETUC et al., 2011), with these four priorities mirroring the broad field of social partners' activities in CVET.

National social partner involvement in CVET varies across Europe, but the general tendency is towards more involvement (Eurofound and Cedefop, 2009). Promoting social partner involvement in providing and encouraging access to training is an increasingly important public policy strategy (Cedefop, 2008b). As social partner active contribution is important to all the themes of this handbook, reference to their roles and practice examples that show their involvement can be found throughout. Key activities in widening access to, participation in, and provision of CVET are:

- (a) contribution to quality, transparency and efficiency of CVET systems and their further development: social partners play an important role in steering and developing CVET at national, regional, sectoral and local levels, participating in committees or boards of institutions that govern CVET (Cedefop, 2008b). Their contributions are also crucial for implementing policies and ensuring transparency, efficiency and high quality. Social partners are also involved in skills recognition and certification processes, and in quality assurance mechanisms such as the accreditation of training providers;
- (b) identification of and alignment to skill shortages and training needs: social partners' joint contribution in the identification of skill shortages and training needs, at company level (needs of employees and employers), as well as at sectoral and national, regional and local level, is crucial to inclusive and smart growth in Europe. Social partners also play a major role in adapting to changing needs, drawing on various mechanisms. Through sectoral training funds (Cedefop, 2008a), they can fund and steer skill shortage forecasting

⁽²⁶⁾ European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), BusinessEurope, the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and the European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest.

- activities while aligning learning provision to specific sector needs or targeting particular groups such as the low-qualified or older workers;
- (c) mobilisation of resources through collective bargaining: collective bargaining practice on CVET issues differs among EU countries, but has an important role in promoting learning (Eurofound and Cedefop, 2009), as it can set framework conditions and mobilise resources. Collective bargaining agreements can include training rights for employees, so widening participation by disadvantaged groups that often tend to be excluded. They can also specify contributions to sectoral training funds. In Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and Poland, social partners jointly establish and govern bipartite or tripartite sectoral training funds (often assisted by public authorities) based on voluntary or compulsory training levies or taxes and used to finance learning (Cedefop, 2008a);

Collective bargaining

The cornerstone of Belgian collective bargaining on CVET is the inter-professional agreement signed every two years by the social partners. It sets the framework for pay increases and regulates important issues such as paid education leave, time credits or outplacement. It also sets policy objectives for the financial contribution from employers to the sectoral bilateral funds, participation in training programmes, and target groups deserving special attention. Sectoral bargaining further articulates these issues according to the specificities of the various sectors to achieve intersectoral goals. However, the CVET provisions of the collective agreement are formulated as objectives rather than as an obligation.

Source: Eurofound and Cedefop, 2009.

- (d) direct support and provision of learning: social partners play a key role in learning, such as motivating employees and employers, providing information and guidance, raising awareness of available sources of funding and implementing outreach strategies for disadvantaged groups facing particular barriers. In Austria, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, trade union representatives act as 'learning ambassadors', encouraging employees to take on learning and providing continuous support, while also advising companies on their training needs and helping them to create learning cultures (Cedefop, 2008b; 2011g). Social partners also act as learning providers, through measures such as union learning programmes or sectoral initiatives. A network approach to training is particularly important for SMEs (Cedefop, 2009e; European Commission, 2009). An example of an enterprise-led partnership is the Irish skillnets programme (see Section 4.5).

Union learning representatives (ULRs) as learning ambassadors ⁽²⁷⁾

In the UK, ULRs have been instrumental in promoting learning in enterprises. The UK Employment Act 2002 provides a statutory right to paid time off work for appropriately trained ULRs to carry out a range of duties such as analysing learning or training needs, arranging and supporting learning and training, consulting employers about carrying out such activities and undergoing training relevant to their functions. ULRs must be members of an independent trade union, recognised by their employer, and elected by their union in the workplace. Since ULRs are recruited directly from employee representatives, they are well-placed to identify the particular needs of workers and companies and also to engage those learners (disadvantaged groups) that might otherwise be hard to reach. One ULR key contribution is widening participation in CVET. Union learning projects and the activities of the ULRs are funded by the union learning fund established in 1998 to support learning ⁽²⁸⁾. ULRs are provided with training courses, support mechanisms and resources.

Key actions

Enterprises:

Support and use the initiatives that social partners provide, for example, union learning programmes.

Policy-makers:

- (a) promote social partners' involvement in CVET through various measures, such as giving them a role in steering and developing CVET at national, regional, sectoral and local levels by making them part of committees that govern CVET;
- (b) support social partners' initiatives, for example, setting up of sectoral training funds or their activities as learning providers.

4.7. Supporting innovation through learning

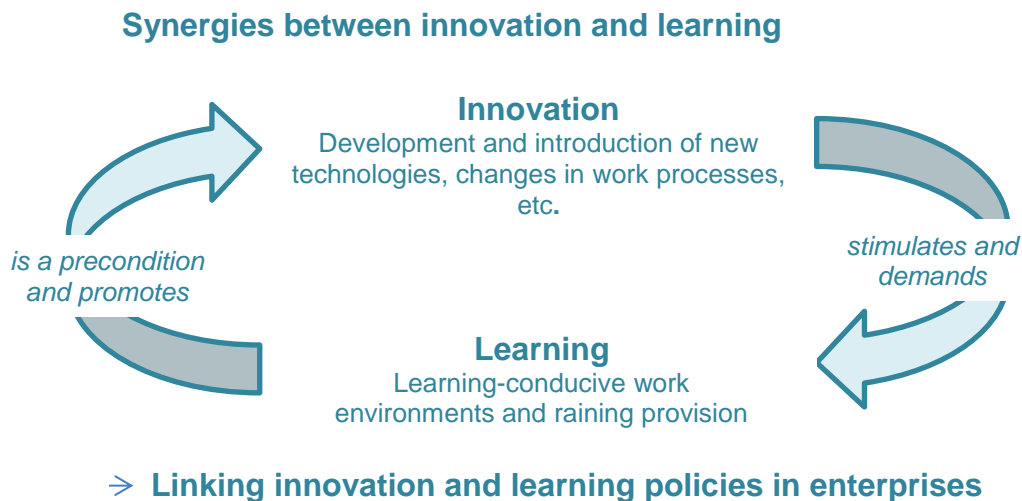
Innovation is a key success factor in the face of increasing global competition and fast-changing economic environments. Enterprises that possess innovative capacity can respond quickly to new developments, can drive change themselves and can actively contribute to smart growth. The EU underperforms in this respect compared to other world economies such as Japan and the USA (European Commission, 2013e). Despite growing awareness that innovation and

⁽²⁷⁾ <http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/our-work-and-projects/widening-participation/union-learning-reps-ulrs> [accessed 11.9.2014].

⁽²⁸⁾ <http://www.unionlearningfund.org.uk/index.cfm> [accessed 11.9.2014].

learning benefit each other, the potential of CVET to promote innovation is not being fully exploited in Europe; a stronger focus on CVET as well as better links between innovation and CVET strategies and policies are needed (Cedefop, 2012f; Dehmel, 2014).

Figure 11 **Innovation and learning**



Source: Dehmel, forthcoming.

What can enterprises and policy-makers do to promote learning – and also innovative capacity – in enterprises? Research shows that two CVET factors have a positive impact on innovation performance, at least at country level:

- (a) learning-conductive work environments (leading to workplace learning);
- (b) more formal and organised modes of CVET (such as CVET courses).

Learning at the workplace, through learning-conductive work environments, plays a major role (Cedefop, 2012f; OECD, 2010). The EWCS conducted by Eurofound every five years covers learning-relevant issues of work organisation (such as task complexity) and reveals the extent to which employees in Europe are working in environments that encourage learning while working (Eurofound, 2012). Enterprises can support learning while working through a variety of measures (Cedefop, 2011g; 2012f; Dehmel, forthcoming):

- (a) task variety and complexity: involving employees in a variety of tasks that give them novel or challenging work situations. Engagement in the full work process (phases of planning and organising as well as implementing and assessing one's own work and correction) are beneficial. With complex work tasks, the need for reflection and thinking processes grows, (implicitly) motivating employees to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and competences;

- (b) autonomy in employees' scope for action and decision, such as the freedom to exercise control over work processes. High autonomy includes the ability to choose or change the method of work, the order of tasks and the speed or rate of work;
- (c) team work: working together with others, employees may observe and learn new practices from others. At the same time, they are confronted with new perspectives, which encourage them to challenge and reflect on their own routines and practices;
- (d) learning climate and culture: organisations need to establish suitable hierarchies and administrative structures and encourage an organisational culture which is marked by principles of transparency, openness and cooperative leadership (Hundt, 2001). The more open a company is, and the more it is characterised by sharing power, the more eager the employee is to apply his/her skills to the work and to deal with challenging tasks; this, in turn, increases learning (Marsick and Watkins, 2003; Roßnagel, 2011). Problems such as work pressure and high workloads may have negative effects on learning;
- (e) mentoring, in a trusted one-to-one relationship between a professional, more advanced person (mentor) and a less experienced employee (mentee). The mentor supports the mentee for purposes of knowledge, skills and competences development and improving performance at individual, team or organisation level by providing advice, feedback and the voice of experience and by creating learning opportunities (Ellinger et al., 2011).

'For companies, growth of personnel is a goal to be pursued, to some extent, through off-the-job training, but, above all, through on-the-job training. Yet the desired outcomes are not to be attained simply through formal, non-formal and informal training. It is the outcome of the learning potential of each company, that is to say, the content of work, the career prospects offered to personnel, the values shared and the sense of belonging that is created, the benefits, and the culture of training (...)' (European Commission, 2013f, p.86).

Forms of work organisation and impact on innovation

Four basic forms of work organisation can be identified, corresponding to different types of employee learning at the workplace. The first two are more learning-intensive:

- (a) discretionary learning forms: high learning and problem-solving, high levels of discretion in work, high complexity and low repetition, autonomous teamwork, responsibility for quality control;
- (b) lean forms: learning and problem-solving but lower discretion, job rotation, team organisation, importance of quality management (norms and production targets);
- (c) Taylorist forms: relatively low learning and problem-solving, little discretion, work rate constraints, repetitiveness and monotony, hierarchical organisation of work;
- (d) traditional forms: simple management structures, some discretion but little learning and problem-solving;
- (e) evidence shows positive correlations between 'discretionary learning' forms of work organisation and innovation performance.

Source: Lorenz and Valeyre, 2005; OECD, 2010; Cedefop, 2012f.

Although research confirms positive relations between learning at the workplace and innovation, analysis of innovation policies and 1030 publicly-funded innovation programmes in the EU-27 plus Norway shows few programmes that promote innovative ability by addressing organisational structures and processes at the workplace, aiming at more learning-conducive work environments and thus higher intensities of workplace learning (Cedefop, 2012f). Policy-makers should develop such programmes and include social partners and other stakeholders (Cedefop, 2012f). They should also be used to raise awareness of and focus attention on the importance of learning-intensive forms of work organisation and workplace learning for innovation, as such awareness seems lacking in many European countries. For this purpose, particular design features such as accompanying measures (such as conferences and seminars) should be considered.

Programmes and initiatives linking workplace organisation, learning and innovation

Sweden has a rich history of programmes that deal with workplace and organisation design (focus on topics such as job redesign, group work, factory layouts and workplace democracy) and aim at increasing the innovative capacity of organisations. The management and work organisation renewal programme of the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation, is an example of such a programme (Cedefop, 2012f) ⁽²⁹⁾. It 'focuses on organisational conditions (work organisation, management models, learning environment) which will safeguard and develop ideas for innovation and development generated by the employees or other actors. The goal is new or improved working methods and organisational solutions that will strengthen the innovative capacity' (Larsson, 2010).

In April 2013, the European Commission launched the European workplace innovation network (EUWIN) ⁽³⁰⁾. EUWIN is open to organisations, social partners, policy-makers and researchers. It is a learning network that promotes EU-wide knowledge-sharing on workplace innovation.

Key actions

Enterprises:

- (a) exploit the potential of CVET to foster innovation;
- (b) create learning-conducive work environments: use modern forms of work organisation, ensure task variety and complexity, autonomy and teamwork, and establish a learning culture and climate.

Policy-makers:

- (a) raise awareness of the importance of CVET and learning-conducive work environments for innovation, for example, through awareness-raising campaigns;
- (b) implement publicly-funded programmes that link workplace organisation, learning and innovation in enterprises;
- (c) ensure the involvement of key stakeholders, such as social partners.

⁽²⁹⁾ <http://www.vinnova.se/en/Our-activities/Strategically-important-knowledge-areas/Production-Materials-and-Natural-Resources/Management-and-Work-Organisation-Renewal/> [accessed 11.9.2014].

⁽³⁰⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/innovation/policy/workplace-innovation/euwin/index_en.htm [accessed 11.9.2014].

CHAPTER 5.

Conclusions

CVET is important. The benefits it can offer individuals, enterprises and society as a whole are significant, but statistical data on CVET provision, access and participation across the EU-28 reveal that we are not yet using its full potential. Active commitment is required, with involvement of policy-makers at all levels, enterprises, social partners and VET providers and practitioners, along with joint effort and effective collaboration between these key stakeholders. This handbook focuses on the role of enterprises, provides useful information for them, and also shows how enterprises can be encouraged and supported by other stakeholders when it comes to providing high-quality CVET for all. It highlights key points and actions that are considered important, summarised below.

5.1. Enterprises

5.1.1. Comprehensive HRM strategies with high quality CVET for all

Enterprises benefit from developing comprehensive, forward-looking HRM strategies, integrating CVET for all target groups. Different CVET measures such as learning-conducive working environments, flexible and tailored training provision, various forms of learning, validation practices and guidance services, need to be used and continuously improved, based on appropriate quality assurance instruments. Different CVET measures have to be systematically linked and form a comprehensive overall approach, together with wider HRM measures, and enterprise policies as a whole. Personnel development is more than just providing the right training: it is about creating an organisational culture that promotes learning:

- (a) using suitable leadership approaches;
- (b) implementing adequate hierarchical and administrative structures (transparency, openness);
- (c) offering career prospects and a variety of development opportunities for personnel;
- (d) developing shared values and a certain sense of belonging.

5.1.2. Collaboration

Effective collaboration, both horizontal and vertical, is crucial for enterprises when it comes to CVET and HRM:

- (a) horizontal collaboration means cooperation between enterprises, among others as regards:
 - (i) skill needs analyses;
 - (ii) validation approaches (see the approach used in the social care sector in Finland, Section 4.3);
 - (iii) quality assurance (see the quality assurance framework of the EBTN, Section 4.2);
 - (iv) training provision (see the Irish skillsnets networks, Section 4.5);
- (b) vertical collaboration means cooperation between different stakeholders: for example, between enterprises, social partners, non-governmental organisations and regional governments.

Collaboration can range from local partnerships to international networks. Joining forces is important for enterprises of all sizes but particularly for SMEs, which face constraints of size and benefit from economies of scale. The benefits of collaboration can go far beyond simple HR development issues and can lead to new business contacts and networks, and innovation transfer.

5.2. Policy-makers

5.2.1. CVET as integral part of coherent and comprehensive strategies

National, regional and local policy-makers need to make CVET an integral part of relevant policies, for example, active labour market policies, research and innovation, and migration, to ensure a comprehensive approach and synergy effects across different policy areas. Combining different policy measures, incentives and support services for both individuals and enterprises is important to encourage CVET provision and participation and to ensure high quality. National, regional and local strategies need to be systematically linked. Further, it seems beneficial to invest more effort in embedding national skill strategies firmly in the wider institutional environment, and in trying to identify and remove institutional barriers for more training (Markowitsch et al., 2013).

5.2.2. Evidence-based policy-making and monitoring

To meet identified needs, to ensure success and to assure most efficient investment in CVET, it is important to base policy-making on firm evidence, and to review policies regularly. This requires:

- (a) comprehensive and comparable data on CVET;
- (b) cooperation between different institutions that collect and work with CVET and CVET-related data, both national and international;

- (c) effective monitoring systems;
- (d) high-quality research.

5.2.3. Stimulation of CVET provision, access and participation

A combination of various measures – systematically linked, adopted to the particular context and targeted to different groups – can stimulate CVET provision, access and participation:

- (a) targeted to enterprises:
 - (i) awareness-raising campaigns about the benefits of CVET;
 - (ii) consulting and guidance services to assist enterprises: assessing skill needs, developing CVET strategies, finding the right mix of different forms of learning, and creating a learning culture;
 - (iii) promotion and support of inter-firm collaboration as well as collaboration between enterprises and other stakeholders such as social partners and regional governments;
 - (iv) combination of incentives, rights and obligations to stimulate enterprise investment in CVET, and transparent, easy-to-use system for funding CVET;
 - (v) particular, comprehensive support measures for SMEs, including advisory services;
- (b) targeted to individuals:
 - (i) provision of flexible learning paths and various forms of learning (including using modern technologies) that suit the needs of different target groups;
 - (ii) easily accessible and comprehensive guidance services to assist individuals in identifying their learning needs, finding suitable CVET provision; guidance services need to be linked to other relevant areas, such as employment services;
 - (iii) transparent system of incentives and rights to encourage all adults to participate in learning, such as training leave and learning vouchers. Measures to reduce the social and economic barriers that hinder access to lifelong learning opportunities for disadvantaged groups such as the low-skilled;
- (c) targeted to social partners:
 - (i) encouraging and supporting social partner initiatives that stimulate CVET provision, access and participation, for example, sectoral training funds or ULR;

- (d) targeted to training providers:
 - (i) promotion of a variety of training providers (big, medium, small, operating locally and globally), as this can increase variety in training offers and the likelihood of finding solutions for training needs and new developments;
 - (ii) initiatives that ensure promotion and improvement of quality in CVET, for example, through quality assurance mechanisms for CVET providers and systematic professional development of trainers.

5.2.4. Promote active commitment and the idea of CVET as a shared responsibility

CVET is a shared responsibility and requires active commitment of all stakeholders, including the adult learners themselves. Active commitment and shared responsibility can be promoted by:

- (a) supporting social partners' involvement in the CVET system, for example, by making them part of committees that govern CVET or involving them in quality assurance systems;
- (b) using cost-sharing schemes for financing CVET;
- (c) promoting corporate social responsibility among enterprises, encouraging them to take 'responsibility for their impact on society' (European Commission, 2011), and to support, for example, learning of disadvantaged groups.

The handbook serves as a tool for all stakeholders to take these points forward and the examples of policies and practices from diverse settings across Europe provide useful material for further improving CVET.

List of abbreviations

AES	adult education survey
CVET	continuous vocational education and training
CVTS	continuing vocational training survey
DIE	Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung [German Institute for Adult Education]
EBTN	European Banking Training Association
ELGPN	European lifelong guidance policy network
EQAVET	European quality assurance in VET
ESF	European Social Fund
ET 2020	education and training 2020
ETF	European Training Foundation
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
EU	European Union
EUWIN	European workplace innovation network
EWCS	European working conditions survey
FIBS	Forschungsinstitut für Bildungs- und Sozialökonomie [Institute for Education and Socioeconomic Research and Consulting]
HR	human resources
HRM	human resource management
IVET	initial vocational education and training
LFS	labour force survey
MOOCs	massive open online courses
OER	open educational resources
PIA	Migrantinnen fit für den Arbeitsmarkt [female migrants fit for the labour market]
ULR	union learning representative
VET	vocational education and training

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Policy handbook

Access to and participation in continuous vocational education and training (CVET) in Europe

Continuous vocational education and training (CVET) for all is essential to respond to increased global competition and changing technological and socioeconomic requirements. What can be done to make use of the full potential that CVET has to offer individuals, enterprises, society and the economy? How can participation in CVET be increased and access to it extended, especially for disadvantaged groups that traditionally participate the least? How can high-quality provision be ensured?

This CVET policy handbook addresses policy-makers, enterprises, social partners and other stakeholders. It aims at strengthening CVET by providing policy guidance illustrated with concrete examples of effective practices. It highlights the importance of CVET for smart and inclusive growth and shows the benefits of investing in it. It gives an overview of the current position in Europe and describes success factors and good practices for widening access and participation and for promoting high-quality CVET provision for all.

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